

COMMUNITY PROTECTION & COHESION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Protection & Cohesion Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 20th January 2011 at 4.00 pm in Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT: A.A. Meredith (Chairman), D.G. Allen (Vice-Chairman) and A.A. Mackenzie.

OTHER MEMBER PRESENT: Councillor M.B. Hosken (Cabinet Member – Community Protection & Cohesion).

OFFICERS PRESENT: R. Partington – Assistant Chief Executive, J. Eatough – Head of Governance, C.J ones – Head of Family & Community Services, J. Bedesha – Safer Communities Strategic Manager, R. Peach – Finance Manager, S. Jones – Scrutiny Officer and A. Roberts – Democratic Services Officer.

CPCSC-7 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13th September 2010 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman and the notes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 7th December 2010 be received for noting.

CPCSC-8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors R.T. Kiernan, K.L. Tomlinson and H.J. Unwin.

CPCSC-9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR PARTY WHIP

None

CPCSC-10 SERVICE & FINANCIAL PLANNING STRATEGY 2011/12-2013/14 – COMMUNITY PROTECTION & COHESION

The Chairman referred the Committee to the Training and Briefing Session that occurred on the 4th January 2011 and that following the budget presentation that had been given the Committee members discussed the topics and questions that it wished to raise on the budget proposals linked to it's Council priority.

Members were reminded that the agreed questions had been dispatched to them prior to this meeting to the appropriate Cabinet Member – Councillor M.B.Hosken and senior officers. The Committee also noted that the appropriate senior officer was in attendance in order to respond to the questions that had been raised.

Question 1 – Please could you summarise what you see as the key impacts of the staffing and non-staffing savings on the delivery of services and how local residents would be affected?

The Assistant Chief Executive advised the meeting that in connection with each of the proposed saving proposals that the probable impact associated with the proposed savings had been indicated within the budget documentation. This showed

that the anticipated impact of the non-staffing savings was minimal, and the staffing impact was anticipated to be minor although this was not yet known because the restructure was not yet complete. In connection with Item 25 for example the savings target of £12500 related to reductions in Community Safety in relation to equipment, printing, stationery and mobile phones.

Question 2 – Please could you confirm the total reductions in relation to Item 23 concerning the small reductions in the H&S non-staffing budget?

The Head of Governance informed the Committee that the reductions related to reduced spending towards equipment, printing, stationery and mobile phones and equated to £1600 for 2011/12, £1600 for 2012/13 and £2900 for 2013/14.

Question 3 – In relation to the Housing Service please could further details be provided in connection with the reduced repair & maintenance expenditure on handbacks?

The Assistant Chief Executive informed the meeting that this question coupled with the questions numbered 4 and 5 were not for this particular Council priority as these functions had been transferred to Adult Care & Support Priority Area. However, the responses would be provided.

Members were advised by the Finance Manager that this particular budget head related to the repair costs of temporary housing that was transferred back into private ownership. The saving had been calculated at £40000 from an original budget allocation of £64000 with the reduction as a result of the lower number of residential properties that were required for temporary accommodation.

Councillor Mackenzie – requested details of the total costs that were expended in 2009/10 together with the number of properties that were in the ownership of the Council and those properties that are rented from private landlords. The Finance Manager informed the meeting that he was not aware of the split but that he would report back to the Committee with the actual answer in due course.

Question 4 – Please could you advise as to the level of the proportion the £4000 proposed saving towards the budget for maintenance and improved income collection?

The Assistant Chief Executive informed the Committee that the total budget in this regard totalled £150000 and that the proposed saving target of £4000 equated to about 2.5%. There had been spending on maintenance on an Invest to Save basis so that there was a current overspend but this would result in a substantial overall saving in future.

Question 5 – Please could there be confirmation as to how support to families needing emergency accommodation when there was a £100000 reduction to the Bed & Breakfast costs? Please could confirmation be provided as to the alternative provision that was being put in place?

The Assistant Chief Executive commented that the proposal was not a reduction in bed and breakfast accommodation but a reduction in the numbers that required temporary accommodation had reduced. There were approximately 70/80 people

currently in temporary accommodation. He mentioned to the Committee that the cost of each individual bed and breakfast unit was in the region of £300/£350 per week, although the cost of bed and breakfast was reduced by the ability to obtain Housing Benefit Subsidy Grant. Bed and Breakfast accommodation was only used in cases of emergency and the number of people being placed in B&B accommodation had significantly reduced over recent years due to a number of initiatives that had been put in place. Members were further informed that the total cost of bed and breakfast accommodation was £600000 in 2008/09; £450000 in 2009/10 and £350000 had been allocated for the ensuing 2011/12 financial year.

Councillor Mackenzie enquired as to the number of houses that the Council held and as to whether the number had increased. The meeting was informed that there was a requirement to have less than 49 houses otherwise the Council would be required to have a Housing Revenue Account, and that the number Council and private properties for temporary accommodation 2008-09 and 2010-11 would be provided after the meeting.

Question 6 – Does the Council fund any of the Youth Offending Service, and if so, would the funding be affected?

The Head of Family & Community Services confirmed that at present the Council contributed a total of £600000 into the Youth Offending Services – other external agencies also contributed sums of their individual budgets into the service. It was confirmed to the Committee that there were no proposals currently to reduce the investment into the service, although due to the late notification of the grant the amount had not been confirmed.

Question 7 – Has there been an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the Anti-Social Behaviour hotline to show savings?

The meeting was advised by Councillor M Hosken – Cabinet Member: Community Protection & Cohesion that the present reporting system would remain for a further period of 6 months. In relation to any assessment he announced that there was insufficient data in order to complete this because the scheme had not been in operation long enough to undertake an assessment. However initial indications gathered so far did evidence that the scheme had been successful. The meeting was further advised that the number of calls reporting such incidents to the police had reduced since the introduction of the ASB Hotline and that people were using the line to report ASB which would previously have gone unreported.

Councillor M Hosken extended an invitation to the Scrutiny Members to visit the Hotline Centre in order to assess the programme for themselves.

The Cabinet Member and officers presenting information left at the end of this part of the meeting. The members of the Committee considered whether there were any concerns or comments they would like to make to the Community Focussed Efficient Council Scrutiny Committee about the budget proposals relating to the Community Protection & cohesion priority area. The Committee agreed that there were no comments they would like to make.

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm.

Chairman:

Date: