

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 22 January 2013

Present:

Councillor	J Hale (Chair)	
Councillors	A Cox	R Gregson
	S Williams	S Whittingham
	P Doughty	J Williamson
	S Hodrien	P Gilchrist
	C Muspratt	

53 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members of the Committee were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non pecuniary interests, in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and state the nature of the interest.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor John Hale declared a personal interest by virtue of a relative's involvement with Connexions.

54 BUDGET 2013/16 - INITIAL PROPOSALS

The Chair indicated that at its special meeting held on 5 December 2012, the Committee asked for further information regarding some of the proposals, this had yet to be provided.

The Committee were invited to consider the following savings options agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 20 December, 2012 (minute 144 refers) and which fell under the remit of this Committee.

The Chair expressed a view that the Committee had not received adequate information to enable them to make appropriate comments and commented that there was had been visit to the Government by Party Leaders to make representations regarding the funding cuts to the Authority, the outcome of which is still to be determined.

Move to four yearly elections

The Chair indicated that that he did not support the proposals to move to four yearly elections and raised concern that this would impinge on the publics' right to hold the Council to account on a regular basis.

A Member expressed a view that this proposal be supported as it would be a significant saving to the Council, Another Member indicated that Councillors should not be immune from contributing towards the budget savings.

The Chair indicated that it wasn't the Councillors contributing the budget savings it was the public having their right to vote on regular basis restricted.

In response to Members, Mr Surjit Tour, Acting Head of Law, HR and Asset Management indicated that if Members were minded to accept this proposal a full consultation process would be undertaken with the public seeking their views.

Destination Marketing

The Chair indicated that he did not support the proposals as it was felt that this generated a lot of income and tourism for Wirral.

Pest Control

The Chair informed the Committee that this proposal entailed the reduction of staff from five posts to four.

Home Insulation Programme

The Chair informed the Committee that 59% of the installations had been met and that £60,000 would be retained for those in special need.

Restructuring of Departments

In response to Members Chris Hyams, Head of HR & Organisational Development explained the rationale and future planning in relation to restructuring, redundancies, voluntary redundancies and redeployment.

Review and Reduce Suppliers

In response to Members, Jim Molloy, Finance Consultant indicated that following feedback received from the LGA regarding the Council's procurement processes, the Department through the Improvement Plan were looking at improving current processes, for example, purchase order system. Mr Molloy indicated that category managers were to be appointed to have responsibility over individual areas of spend i.e. Adult Services. Advice was also being sought from other Authorities regarding best practice.

Review of VAT

In response to Members, Mr Molloy indicated that this would be a one off exercise undertaken by an independent expert to see if any savings could be identified.

Implementation of Category Management

In response to Members, Mr Molloy indicated that the Finance Department would be undertaking some joint working with other Local Authorities on this. He explained that

to avoid being reliant on certain suppliers a balance was needed between the Authority and the supplier. To achieve the anticipated savings a number of suppliers were needed for each service, the Department would work with its partners to do this.

Each year suppliers will be asked to provided us with a reduction in cost, this would be done year on year.

In response to members questions regarding the anticipated expenditure, Mr Molloy agreed to provided information on this to Members

Education Psychologists

The Chair indicated that he had been contacted by a lot of worried parents regarding this proposal and asked the Cabinet to look at this again.

Resolved –

That the Cabinet minute 144 be noted, subject to the noting of comments made by this Committee.
