

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 1 February 2006.

PRESENT

Dr. M. O'Callaghan CC (in the Chair)

Mr. J. G. Coxon CC  
Mr. S. J. Galton CC  
Mr. D. W. Houseman CC  
Mr. John Legrys CC  
Mrs. R. Page CC

Mrs. J.A. Dickinson CC  
Dr. S. Hill CC  
Mr. Mike Jones CC  
Mr. P. C. Osborne CC  
Mr. E. D. Snartt CC

By Invitation.

Mr. D.R. Parsons CC – Leader of the Council.  
Dr. R.K.A. Feltham CC – Cabinet Lead Member – Resources.

46. Mrs. A.C.M. Pullen.

The Chairman reported the sad death of Mrs. A.C.M. Pullen. Mrs. Pullen served on the County Council from 1985 to 2005.

Members stood in silent tribute to the memory of Mrs. Pullen.

47. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2006 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

48. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

49. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

50. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

51. Declarations of interest.

The following members of the Committee declared personal non-prejudicial interests in their capacity as District Councillor in relation to the proposals in the budget relating to the Local Area Agreement and Concessionary Travel:-

Mr. Coxon, Mrs. Dickinson, Mr. Galton, Dr. Hill, Mr. Houseman, Mr. Jones, Mrs. Page and Mr. Snartt.

52. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the Party Whip.

53. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that there were no petitions to be presented.

54. Revenue Budget 2006/07 and Capital Programme 2006/07 and 2008/09 - Chief Executive's Department Budget.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive and Director of Resources concerning the Revenue Budget 2006/07 and Capital Programme 2006/09 in relation to the Resources Department. A copy of the report marked 'B' is filed with these minutes.

During the course of the ensuing discussion the following comments were made:

REVENUE BUDGET 2006/07

Growth

(i) Strategic Spatial Planning

The funding was to provide an additional post to assist the County Council's strategic planning function in supporting the work of the Regional Assembly. This was in response to late Government Amendment to the Planning Bill to retain the statutory role of County Councils in strategic spatial planning.

(ii) Member Development

The growth was to support developments in member training and in particular to buy in the time of a trainer to assess members' training needs and to organise training events.

Savings

(iii) Support to services in local communities including the Rural Partnership

The proposed savings would be achieved by small reductions in the Rural Community Council grant, the budget support for Market Towns and in some rural partnership projects.

The Cabinet Lead Member indicated that he would look further at the impact these proposals would have to ensure that services to communities were not adversely affected.

(iv) Urban Development and Community Information

These savings would be achieved by a reduction in the matched funding for the Leicestershire Online Research Atlas (LSORA) which would mean that the database could not be developed further. The Cabinet Lead member indicated that he would look again at the implications of this.

In addition a £20,000 saving would be achieved when an existing service level agreement in relation to urban development ended in March 2006.

(v) Community Safety Grants

The Cabinet Lead Member indicated that he would look again at these proposals to assess their impact particularly in relation to current schemes.

General

(vi) Customer Services

The amount included in the budget was in relation to County Hall reception staff who had transferred from the Property Department and other staff who were developing customer care standards and providing customer service training and support to all departments of the County Council.

The Contact Centre was separate from this budget and its development would be considered as part of the change management programme.

(vii) Best Value

The budget for Best Value was utilised to support a range of activities including the increasing demands being placed on the Council in relation to consultation. It would be appropriate to alter the description of this budget line.

(viii) Tourism

This sum was the County Council's contribution towards LeicesterShire Promotions. (LSP). The County Council had a service level agreement with LSP which was regularly monitored. The Scrutiny Commission had previously considered a detailed report on the activities and performance of LSP and received presentations from its Chief Executive.

## Change Management Programme

- (ix) As part of the Change Management Programme there would be a review of a number of projects including the Contact Centre, e-procurement and Electronic Document Record System. A report on the Change Management Programme would be submitted to the next meeting of the Commission.

## Local Area Agreement

- (x) The proposal to use one-off funding was to support the new governance arrangements and to pump prime certain activities within the LAA. This level of expenditure was in line with the experience of other Councils who had negotiated and were implementing Local Area Agreements, the process being heavily resource intensive. If the targets within the LAA are successfully delivered the County Council and partners would stand to gain a reward grant of up to £13million.

## Capital

The proposed Capital Programme was noted without comment.

### RESOLVED:

That the comments now made in respect of the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme of the Chief Executive's Departments be noted and forwarded to the Cabinet.

## 55. Revenue Budget 2006/07 and Capital Programme 2006/07 and 2008/09 - Overall Position.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Resources to the Cabinet on 13 January setting out the overall position on the Revenue Budget 2006/07 and Capital Programme 2006/07 to 2008/09. A copy of the report marked 'BB' is filed with these minutes.

The Commission also considered a report setting out the comments of the Scrutiny Committees on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme relating to their respective service areas. A copy of that report marked 'CC' is also filed with these minutes.

The Director of Resources advised the Commission as follows:-

- (a) The final information from District Councils on the Collection Fund surpluses and tax base indicated that the County Council would benefit from an additional £167,000.
- (b) An additional £220,000 had been forecast as a result of other changes mainly arising from interest on balances.
- (c) The final revenue grant settlement has resulted in the County Council losing £142,000.

- (d) The outlook for 2007/08 and beyond was that the County Council would be faced with further expenditure pressures. In view of this there would be a continuing need to look critically at low priority service areas as well as generating further efficiency savings.

In response to questions the Commission was advised:-

(i) Staffing

The proposals in the budget would result in 47fte posts being lost. The majority of these were as a result of restructuring within the Education Department, where it was anticipated that there would be 20 redundancies but allowing for early retirements it was anticipated that this would amount to approximately 6.5 posts made compulsory redundant.

The budget proposals would also result in the creation of an additional 21 posts across the County Council departments.

(ii) Attracting External Funding

In determining how to implement savings reductions in the Environmental Action and Regeneration budget, consideration would be given to ensuring that these savings did not impact on the County Council's ability to attract external funding.

(iii) Job Evaluation

A sum of £4.5million had been set aside, separate from the County Fund Balances, to fund the costs that had been awarded against the County Council by the Employment Appeals Tribunal. An appeal against this decision was being pursued. It was estimated that the provision would be sufficient to cover legal costs.

(iv) County Fund Balances

The County Fund Balance at the end of 2005/06 was £8.5million which assumed a £2million contribution from the current year's underspend. The Director of Resources indicated that he was undertaking a risk assessment and would be advising the Cabinet at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> February on the appropriate level of balances.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the current position on the overall Revenue Budget 2006/07 and Capital Programme 2006/07 and 2008/09 be noted and the comments now made be forwarded to the Cabinet ;
- (b) That the comments made by Scrutiny Committees in relation to the Revenue Budget 2006/07 and Capital Programme 2006/07 and 2008/09 be noted and forwarded to the Cabinet.

- (c) That the decision of the Resources Scrutiny Committee to establish a five member panel to undertake on energy audit be supported.

56. Date of Next Meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Commission be held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2006.

CHAIRMAN

2.00 p.m. – 3.15 p.m.  
1 February 2006.

