

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 8 September 2004.

PRESENT

Mr. N. J. Brown CC (in the Chair)

Mrs. C. E. Brock CC
Mr. S. J. Galton CC
Mr. Mike Jones CC
Prof. M. E. Preston CC
Mrs. M. L. Sherwin CC

Mr. B. Chapman AE, CC
Mr. P. A. Hyde CC
Mr. P. C. Osborne CC
Mr. N. J. Rushton CC
Mr. R. M. Wilson CC

By Invitation

Mr. D.R. Parsons CC – Leader of the Council
Mr. R. Miller CC – Deputy Leader of the Council.

121. Question Time.

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

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

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

123. Urgent Items.

There were no items of urgent business.

124. Declarations of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no declarations made under Overview and Scrutiny Procedure, Rule 16.

126. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 36.

127. Budget 2004/05 - Efficiency Savings.

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Resources setting out how the efficiency savings agreed as part of the 2004/05 budget were intended

to be achieved. A copy of the report marked 'A' is filed with these minutes.

A supplementary report, setting out additional information on the efficiency savings was tabled at the meeting, and a copy is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr. D.R. Parsons CC, Leader of the Council, and Mr. R. Miller CC, Deputy Leader of the Council.

In reply to questions the Commission was advised as follows:

General

- (a) the efficiency savings required amounted to 0.9% of the budget;
- (b) the savings identified were a target to be achieved;
- (c) in accordance with the decision of the Council the savings would not impact on frontline services;

Education

- (d) the £40,000 saving on the Education Psychology Service was being achieved through deleting long term vacancies resulting from difficulties in recruiting Educational Psychologists;

In addition the Education Psychology Service had been reorganised and the Service had now recruited Assistant Psychologists to undertake some "low-level" work previously undertaken by Education Psychologists. The Education Scrutiny Committee had been advised of the proposals and the service to schools and pupils had not been diminished.

- (e) not all service units which were now subject to efficiency savings had been underspent in previous years. Details of relevant service unit budgets could be provided on request;
- (f) the £15,000 reduced client support costs related to the decision not to re-tender but rather to extend the term of 2 contracts, catering and grounds maintenance.

Social Services

- (g) the efficiency savings had been achieved through:-
 - (i) reviewing the existing staffing levels and structures and re-orientating the service to meet the new requirements on Social Services Departments.
 - (ii) exploring external funding opportunities, e.g. 2 Fte Job Coaches funded from the Work Steps Scheme (formerly Job Plus), funding from the Health Service for 0.7 Social Work post relating to learning disabilities, and using Supporting People funding where appropriate.

- (iii) improving procurement processes e.g. training services.
- (iv) general efficiencies.

Frontline services had been protected.

- (h) there were a number of vacant posts within the establishment but these related to difficulties in recruiting staff particularly social work staff.

Highways, Transportation and Waste

- (i) given the heavy reliance on income to fund staffing costs (60% of the budget) and the potential variation in these funds, it was considered necessary and prudent to 'carry' a large managed vacancy factor. However where a vacancy occurred which might impact on frontline staff and services, every effort was made to recruit, redeploy or buy in resources to ensure frontline service delivery was maintained.
- (j) the full year effect of the organisation change would be higher than the £46,000 reported (estimated at £200,000) as this figure was a part year figure and included severance costs.

Chief Executive

- (k) whilst some of the efficiency savings (training and SRB) arose from action taken in previous years the savings requirement for central and corporate departments had to be seen in the context of the comments in the CPA concerning the lack of corporate capacity.

Resources

- (l) the savings on administration and on Internet/Network Computer Hardware were achieved through lower procurement costs and deletion of an administrative post.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

128. Date of Next Meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 17 November 2004 at 2.00 p.m.

2.00 p.m. – 2.55 p.m.
8 September 2004.

CHAIRMAN

