

FINANCE & AUDIT SCRUTINY PANEL 20 JANUARY 2009

Present :- Councillor Sue Lissimore (Chairman)
Councillors John Bouckley, Martin Goss, Dave Harris,
Jon Manning, Gerard Oxford, Laura Sykes and
Dennis Willetts

Substitute Members :- Councillor Kevin Foster for Councillor Kevin Bentley
Councillor Jackie Arnold for Councillor Jackie Maclean
Councillor Nigel Higgins for Councillor Nigel Offen

47. Minutes

The minute for each of the meetings held on the 18 November 2008 and 25 November 2008 was confirmed as a correct record.

48. Work Programme

Mr. Robert Judd, Scrutiny Officer addressed the panel explaining that in order that the 2010-11 Budget reports are published on time for the Finance and Audit Scrutiny meeting, asked the panel to consider moving the meeting date from the 19 January 2010 to the 26 January 2010.

Councillors Arnold and Willetts said the administration set out the budget timetable at the beginning of each and this should be adhered to. Councillor Arnold said moving the meeting of this panel to the day before the Cabinet meeting, to discuss the budget papers, would not allow for serious scrutiny of the detail of the report.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources addressed the panel explaining that the lateness in the publication of the budget papers this year was not unique, that these papers had been 'to follow' consistently over the years, and was in the main due to the lateness of receiving, for example, Government grant money.

Mr. Ian Vipond, Executive Director, addressed the panel, to explain that a follow-up review of the Firstsite:Newsite project would, as per the panel's resolution on 25 November 2008, be respected in full.

Mr. Vipond said all the funding partners had agreed to a full independent external review at the completion of the project. In the meantime, Mr. Vipond said the Audit Commission were also carrying out an independent review of the project and these reports are usually made public. Mr. Vipond suggested to the panel that once the Audit Commission review, currently in progress, was complete, the panel could review this report and then take a view on what further work is required.

Councillor Lissimore voiced her concern that the independent reviews are completed behind closed doors and that as the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Panel was the only place for a public hearing, she was keen for this matter to continue.

Mr. Vipond said it would not be possible with the pressure of current work streams to undertake an internal review at present. Mr. Vipond advised the panel to consider the results of the Audit Commission's independent review before deciding on the detail of any future work.

Councillor Manning said he would rather the panel review Firstsite:Newsite at the appropriate time that would enable a proper examination, though he felt this should be done as soon as possible.

RESOLVED that the panel;

- i) Noted the current 2008-09 work programme.
- ii) Agreed that officers should review the panel's meeting date of the 19 January 2010 (to scrutinise the 2010-11 Revenue Budget), to be sure the members of the public and members receive the prerequisite five clear working days access to the documents.
- iii) Agreed to the review of the Freedom of Information Audit on 24 March 2009.

49. Risk Management - Top Five Risk Report

Mr. Charles Warboys, Head of Resource Management attended the meeting for this item, explaining that the risks within the note to members are kept under constant review, though if reported on a month to month basis, members will see very little change in the content.

RESOLVED that;

- i) The panel noted the update on the top five strategic and renaissance risks.
- ii) The panel agreed that in the future the panel would receive a one-off report at the beginning of the municipal year listing all strategic and renaissance risks, and thereafter, only update reports following any changes.

50. Budget report to the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Panel on 27 January 2009

Councillor Arnold commented that it would be helpful to panel members if the Budget papers noted the impact of changes, thereby enabling members to see why, and the effects of the decision(s) taken. Councillor Arnold said this would increase member's understanding and would enable the panel to do its job of scrutiny properly.

Mr. Warboys said there was no intention to provide such a specific appendix within the Budget papers, though appendix D did to some extent address the point raised by Councillor Arnold.