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Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Friday, 7 February 2014

STRATEGY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 7 February 2014
5.00pm - 6.56 pm

Present: Councillors Pitt (Chair), Cantrill (Vice-Chair), Ashton, Benstead, Boyce, Herbert, Owers and Rosenstiel

Executive Councillors:

Leader: Councillor Bick

Deputy Leader and Executive Councillor for Housing: Councillor Smart

Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources: Councillor Smith

Executive Councillor for Community Wellbeing: Councillor Brown

Executive Councillor for Public Places: Councillor Reiner

Executive Councillor for Planning and Climate Change: Councillor Ward

Executive Councillor for Environmental and Waste Services: Councillor Swanson

Officers Present:

Chief Executive: Antoinette Jackson

Director of Resources: David Horspool

Director of Customer and Community Services: Liz Bisset

Director of Environment: Simon Payne

Director of Business Transformation: Ray Ward

Committee Manager: Glenn Burgess

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

14/16/SR Apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

14/17/SR Declarations of interest

Councillor	Item	Interest
Boyce	14/19/SRb	Personal: Resident of Mitcham's Corner and Member of the Friends Group.

14/18/SR Public Questions

None were received.

14/19/SR Amendments to the Budget Setting Report February 2014**14/19/Sra Executive Amendment**

The Director of Resources explained the purpose of the meeting and introduced the Executive Amendment.

The following questions were put by Members on the items in the Executive Amendment and answered (A) as listed:

- i. Clarity was sought on the likely impact on outstanding appeals when accounting for business rates moved from a cash basis to an accruals basis. A) The Director of Resources responded that over £4m was tied into outstanding appeals dating back to 2010, and noted that this was not an unusual position for a Local Authority. Officers had requested more information on the possible implications of these changes and would update members in due course.
- ii. Clarity was sought on earmarked reserves for retained business rates. A) The Director of Resources responded that it is a technical process required for moving from a cash position to accruals based one.
- iii. Further information was requested on the pension contribution and the evaluation process for the Local Centres Improvement Programme. A) The Director of Resources responded that risks are factored in when re-evaluating contributions and that it was important to take a medium term view.
- iv. Questioned whether, in light of the short timescales, the 6 year Local Centres Improvement Programme had been costed accurately, and whether alternative uses for the funds had been considered. A) The Leader responded that the detail of the Programme had already been considered and the late availability of the funds had enabled it to be progressed at short notice. Alternative options for the funds, such as adding to reserves or savings targets, had been considered. However as targets in both of these areas were already being met, the Local Centres Improvement Programme was deemed the best option.
- v. Clarity was sought on the selection process, costings, and Officer capacity for delivering the Local Centres Improvement Programme. A)

The Leader responded that, whilst the current allocation would only allow for 3 local centres to be progressed, it was hoped that additional funding could be identified in future years. The first priority centre would be Mitcham's Corner with an audit process in place to identify the additional two centres. With regard to Officer capacity it was noted that the funding would allow for additional staff support where required. In response to a further question the Director of Environment confirmed that the Environment Scrutiny Committee would have an opportunity to input into the overall programme whilst Area Committees would be consulted on the detail of individual schemes.

- vi. Further clarity was requested on the initial costings of the Local Centres Improvement Programme. A) The Director of Environment responded that the costings had been informed by other projects undertaken in the City but would be monitored and reviewed where required. It was noted that the initial £50,000 in 2014/15 would be specifically linked to urban design and project management work.
- vii. Further information was requested on the Green Deal Communities Fund. A) The Executive Councillor for Planning and Climate Change agreed to email further information to all members of the committee.
- viii. Further information was requested on Icelandic bank investments. A) The Director of Resources agreed to email further information to all members of the committee.
- ix. Further information was sought on the additional investment in the commercial property portfolio. A) The Director of Resources responded that the additional £216,000 would increase options for adding to the Council's property portfolio. He confirmed that the income assumption was that it may take up to 6 months to identify a suitable property.

14/19/SRb Labour Amendment

The Leader of the Labour Group introduced the item.

The following questions were put by Members on the items in the Labour Amendment and answered (A) as listed:

- i. Clarity was sought on which roundabouts had been identified for additional sponsorship (LS1) and if the County Council had been consulted. A) Councillor Owers responded that, whilst initial discussions with Officers had highlighted additional capacity in this area, specific locations had yet to be identified. No potential issues with the County Council had been identified by Officers.

- ii. Clarity was sought on the savings identified by returning planning from Area Committees to the central Planning Committee and if this was based on current delegations. A) Councillor Owers responded that the £3,400 represented the minimum saving pending a fuller review and was based on current delegations.
- iii. Concern was raised that by returning all planning to the central Planning Committee the valuable input of Ward Councillors may be lost.
- iv. Further information was requested on the City Centre Accessibility Review (FPPF1). A) Councillor Owers responded that Councillor Bird had been looking at this issue for a number of years and the review would look at improving access and navigation within the City Centre for the elderly, infirm and disabled. Work would be undertaken with the County Council and local businesses to address issues and the review would include a full time Officer post and a small projects budget.
- v. Clarity was sought on the proposals to increase charges at public toilets. Charges had originally been brought in to deter vandalism and increasing charges in order to make a profit would mean a change in Council policy. A) Councillor Owers responded that it would be a change in policy in order to make a small profit.
- vi. Concern was raised that a 50% increase in the charges at public toilets may have a negative impact on transgender people many of who prefer to use individual cubicle toilets. A) Councillor Owers agreed to raise this with Officers and reflect this in the Equalities Impact Assessment if required.
- vii. Questioned whether a budget of £9,000 in a single year to extend the programme of 'Community Clear-Out Days' would be enough to make a difference. A) Councillor Owers responded that this would be an initial trial to identify what impact this investment could have. If successful it could be extended for future years.
- viii. Clarity was sought on the following with regard to the Sharing Prosperity Fund (LB3):
 - What measures of success would be expected?
 - Relationship between the Sharing Prosperity Fund and the Community Development grants programme?
 - Ideas for the £500,000 initial lump sum funding?A) In response Councillor Owers confirmed the following:
 - The measures of success would be dependent on the nature of the individual schemes.

- Whilst there would be some overlap with the Community Development grants programme the criteria for the Sharing Prosperity Fund would be sharper and cover a wider remit.
 - The £500,000 lump sum would finance a longer term comprehensive anti-poverty strategy.
- ix. Concern was raised that area based criteria was being proposed for the Sharing Prosperity Fund. A) Councillor Owers responded that this was an improvement on ward based criteria.
- x. Concern was raised that the Labour Group were not proposing enough support for the Keep Cambridge Moving Fund. A) Councillor Owers responded that the Labour Group understood the potential problems that would be caused by the A14 improvements but did not deem it necessary to put a lump sum into the fund in the first year.

14/20/SR Additional Executive Amendment: City Centre Accessibility Review

Councillor Cantrill proposed the allocation of £15,000 in 2014/15 for a City Centre Accessibility Review.

The committee resolved unanimously to endorse the proposed amendment and:

- i. To authorise the Section 151 officer to make necessary changes to the Budget Setting Report 2014/15, to be considered by Council at the meeting on 27 February 2014, to reflect the impact of changes for:

(a) Inclusion of new item PPF [New] City Centre Accessibility Review

The meeting ended at 6.56 pm

CHAIR

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