

## **STRATEGIC (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE**

**26 JANUARY 2011**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors Smedley (Chairman), Jackson (Vice Chairman), Brookes, Constable, Derrick, Mrs English, Mrs Holt, Humphreys, Lewin, Norman, Smith, Tittley, and Wilks.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from Councillors Hogan (Vice Chairman), Adams, Atkins and Tranter.

(In accordance with Council Procedure No.17 Councillors Greatorex, Mrs Fisher, Mrs Flowith, Mrs Richards, Roberts, Mrs Stanhope and Wilcox also attended the Meeting)

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Strategic (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee held on the 9 November 2010 were taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Smith to the list of those Members present.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Smith to the list of those Members present, the Minutes of the Meetings held on the 9 November 2010 be approved as a correct record.

### **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT 2011-14**

Members considered a report on the Treasury Management strategy for 2011-14. It was reported that local authorities were required to determine a Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) and Prudential Indicators on an annual basis. It was noted that the submitted TMSS also incorporated the Investment Strategy and that together these documents covered the financial and investment strategy for the forthcoming Financial Year.

Members noted the main risks to the District Council's treasury activities as detailed in the report.

The TMSS also took into account the impact of the District Council's Revenue Budget and Capital Programme on the Balance Sheet position, the current and projected Treasury position, the Prudential Indicators and the outlook for interest rates.

It was further noted that financial training would be offered to all Members of the new Council following the May 2011 local elections.

**RESOLVED:** That the content of the report be noted.

## **DRAFT STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR 2011-12**

Consideration was given to a report detailing the draft Strategic Plan Action Plan for 2011-12.

It was reported that the District Council's Strategic Plan 2008-12 set out the ambitions and priorities for the District Council over a four year period and that priority actions identified within the plan were converted into an agreed one year Action Plan on an annual basis.

Members considered the content of the revised and consolidated Action Plan that had arisen from the Service and Financial Planning process and noted that this was the last year of the current Strategic Plan and work would commence shortly to explore the requirements for the 2012-16 period.

It was noted that since the Service Plans had been produced, a reduction in formula grant had been levied which was going to severely impact on the District Council's service delivery. As a result of the necessity to find budget reductions, it may be necessary to review this Action Plan during the course of the year.

**RESOLVED:** That the content of the draft Strategic Action Plan 2011-12 be noted, and that Cabinet be requested to include an additional item into the actions under Tourism to explore conferencing opportunities in the District.

## **PETITIONING SCHEME**

A report was submitted for consideration regarding the District Council's Petitioning Scheme.

It was reported that the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill 2009 required local authorities to respond to petitions and formulate a published petitioning scheme including the option to make and submit a petition in electronic format known as e-petitions.

A report on the District Council's Petition Scheme was considered by Council on 14 December 2010 and Members had reservations regarding the number of signatures required to trigger a report to Cabinet and if this was the appropriate mechanism by which a petition should be considered. It was thought more appropriate that petitions containing 1,000 or more signatures be considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee

It was noted that the Localism Bill which had its first hearing in Parliament on 14 December 2010 would make the petitions system discretionary but would allow a petitions system to be used to cover its referenda element.

Members were advised that by the end of December 2010 one petition containing, at that time, three signatures had been received calling for the broadcast of all meeting of the District Council over the Internet.

**RESOLVED:** That a report be prepared for consideration by Cabinet regarding the issues raised by the Scrutiny Committee.

## **NOTES OF THE PARTNERSHIPS TASK GROUP – STAFFORDSHIRE & STOKE ON TRENT WASTE JOINT MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The Notes of the Partnerships Task Group – Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Waste Joint Management Board were received for information.

**RESOLVED:** That the content of the report be noted.

### **WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme and Forward Plan.

**RESOLVED:** That the content of the Forward Plan and Work Programme be noted.

### **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED:** “That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972”

### **THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY FOR 2011-14 (REVENUE AND CAPITAL)**

Members considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2011-14 (Revenue and Capital)

**IN PRIVATE**

**THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY FOR 2011-14  
(REVENUE AND CAPITAL)**

**Not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the  
Local Government Act 1972**

Members considered a report regarding the proposals for the District Council's three year Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011-2014 and the outcome of the Expenditure Review 2010. It was noted that any comments made as a result of the scrutiny of this report would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 1 February 2011.

It was reported that the ability to deliver the outcomes set out in the Strategic Plan 2008-12 was dependant on the resources available over the remaining one-year period. It was noted that it was the District Council's policy to make appropriations from General Reserves to finance Net Operating expenditure in a planned and prudent manner, whilst maintaining a level of reserves to mitigate the financial business risk over the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits was of the opinion that the estimates were robust and that the District Council's proposed reserves were adequate.

It was noted that there was a statutory duty on an Authority to review its budget from time to time during the year and to take any necessary action in the event that there had been deterioration in the District Authority's financial position. The District Council reviews the Budget on a quarterly basis and it was confirmed that this practice would continue.

Members were advised that Expenditure Reviews undertaken in recent years had resulted in £1.385m being taken out to the Council's Budgets for three years from 2008/9 and £3.391m for three years from 2009/10 and that £8.030m, had been taken out of our Budget since 2008/09.

The total funding gap was noted as being £4.744m over a three year period, 2011/12 to 2013/14 after having used £1.991m in General Reserves as detailed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2011-14.

It was proposed that a Budget Reduction Programme be mapped out and begun. This would necessitate reducing the operational activity of the District Council.

**RESOLVED:** That the content of the Report be noted.

CHAIRMAN

(The Meeting closed at 7.50 pm)