

**STRATEGIC (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE**

**31<sup>st</sup> AUGUST 2011**

**PRESENT:**

Councillors, Tittley (Chairman) Norman (Vice-Chairman) Spruce (Vice-Chairman) Mrs Arnold, Mrs Barnett, Humphreys, Isaacs, Pearce, Powell, D. S. Smith, Thomas, Wilson and Mrs Woodward.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.17 Councillors, Mrs Flowith, Mrs Richards and Wilcox attended the meeting)

Councillor Lewin and Mr Grant Patterson from the Audit Commission also attended the meeting.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** There were no apologies for absence.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

No declarations of interest were made.

**MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2011 were taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the addition of Councillors Humphreys and Thomas to the list of those Members submitting apologies for absence.

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to the addition of Councillors Humphreys and Thomas to the list of those Members submitting apologies for absence, the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2011 be approved as a correct record.

**STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2010/2011**

The Committee received the District Council's Statement of Accounts for the period 1st April 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

It was noted that the production of the Statement of Accounts was a requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 and that there had been a change in the Accounting Standards used in that the International Financial Reporting Standards had been adopted.

The report was debated in detail and it was noted by the Committee that the Council had improved its General Reserves Position by £415k by transferring £84k into that account. The Committee congratulated the Officers involved as it had been envisaged that funds would need to be transferred from the General Reserve.

The Committee noted that there had been underspend in the Capital Spend and this had been due to a number of factors, including the transfer of Chasewater Dam to Staffordshire County Council and slower progress on the Parks restoration project due to a variety of issues including bad weather.

It was reported that the District Council's Pension Liabilities were more favourable than first thought. Members noted that payments from the scheme would be calculated using the lower Consumer Price Index rather than the Retail Price Index,

however although this produced a reduction in the District Council's liabilities, it also meant that those in receipt of a local government pension would receive less income.

Mr Grant Patterson from the District Council's external auditors, The Audit Commission, presented his findings to date and reported that the audit had gone well and that he was grateful for Officers' cooperation. Mr Patterson commented that there were no significant issues arising out of his work to date and if nothing changed, an unqualified opinion would be given.

The Committee thanked the Officers for the work undertaken to produce the report.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted and that the Council be recommended to approve and sign the Statement of Accounts 2010/2011

### **REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2010/11:**

The Committee received a report on the Council's financial performance against the revised budget for 2010/11.

It was reported that the funding gap was estimated at £4.77m and that £3.3m savings over a three year period had been found. It was noted that more savings would need to be identified and accordingly the Budget Reduction Task Group would continue to meet to assist with this. Officers were congratulated in generating a total of £11.329m savings between 2008 - 2014 whilst continuing to provide high levels of service.

The Committee then asked for more information in specific areas.

#### Car Parks:

It was asked if the strategy was correct as the report showed that visitors to the area had increased but car park revenue had decreased. It was noted that 2010/11 had seen a fall in car park use and this may be because of consumers' concern regarding their potential lack of disposable income and rising fuel prices. It was also asked if the high number of coaches to the City Centre was having an effect and it was noted that the area had always been considered coach-friendly and this would continue. The Committee were notified that after technical problems, the pay by phone system was now working and would be available in all car parks soon. It was asked if there would be Christmas parking offers this year and it was noted that discussions had not yet commenced, however similar discussions in previous years had proved unsuccessful, as traders had not been supportive of such a scheme.

#### Parks:

There was concern that expenditure on parks was decreasing but their value to communities were just as high. It was noted that the cost of locking and unlocking parks was increasing and although alternatives were being contemplated, there were issues that needed careful consideration.

#### The Garrick:

It was noted and those involved were congratulated regarding the decrease in expenditure of 7% from 2009/10. It was also reported that the demand for catering had fallen and accordingly trade in the Green Room had decreased. Future plans for the Garrick were discussed and it was noted by the Committee that the plans formed a medium/long term strategy with some associated initial costs.

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

## **ANNUAL REPORT ON TREASURY MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND ACTUAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2010/11:**

The Committee received a report on the Treasury activity during 2010/11 and the actual Prudential Indicators for 2010/11.

The Officers were thanked for their work and creating an easy to interpret report.

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

## **WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme and Forward Plan. The Committee agreed to disband the Equalities Task Group, as it was considered that Equalities was integral to all strategy and thus should be considered by the Committee as a whole.

**RESOLVED:** That the Forward Plan be noted and the Work Programme be noted and amended as necessary.

(The Meeting finished at 8.55pm)

CHAIRMAN