

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES
10 DECEMBER 2008**

Present: Councillors Cartwright (in the Chair), Forward (as the duly appointed substitute for Councillor Barlow), Martin (from 6.20pm) and Sabetian

Apologies were received from Councillors Barlow, Bing and Stevens.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following councillor declared an interest in the minutes as indicated:

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Martin	7	Personal – Member of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) if discussed

14. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meetings held on 17 September 2008 be approved as a true record.

15. QUARTER TWO PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Jane Hartnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Sustainability, presented the Quarter Two Performance report.

The report advised members of the performance against the 2008/09 targets in Part II and Part III of the Corporate Plan, together with related budget issues within the Personnel & Organisational Development and Corporate Resources Directorate.

Neil Dart, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources, gave the committee an overview of the Council's financial position in light of the recent economic downturn. He explained that, since the last meeting in September, the financial climate generally had worsened and this had had an impact on the Council's finances as a whole. He commented however, that he was confident the budget for this financial year would be balanced through increased savings and efficiencies.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES 10 DECEMBER 2008

Other issues raised included Equalities, the Foreshore Trust negotiations and sickness absence levels. Verna Connolly, Head of Personnel and Organisational Development, explained that, while the Council had been working within the Local Government Equalities Standard, this would be replaced by a new Framework from April 2009. In order to reach the equivalent of the old Level 3 within a reasonable timescale - by autumn 2009, a temporary Equalities Project Officer was now in post. With regard to sickness absence levels, Verna Connolly explained that there had been some staff hospitalised in recent months, many of which required extensive aftercare. Neil Dart explained that there were issues with the Foreshore Trust surrounding ownership of land; this meant that negotiations were still ongoing and the Council were currently receiving counsel's advice. Members were concerned that the issues had not yet been resolved, but accepted that the Council were doing all they could to try and achieve a settlement.

Members also raised concerns over waiting times to the Revenues and Benefits telephone lines. Jean Saxby, General Manager for Benefits, explained that much work had been completed in trying to reduce the amount of time callers were left waiting for a Customer Services Officer, and this work would continue to be ongoing. Members thanked Jean for her comments and extended thanks to staff for their continued efforts.

Members also asked about office moves and flexible working. Mark Bourne, Head of ICT Services, explained that much work was being done to achieve smarter working, allowing people to work more flexibly both at home and in the field. Cllr Cartwright asked if this would be extended to councillors, especially with regard to storage. Mark Bourne gave a brief overview of the Sharepoint system, which allowed documents to be stored electronically and allow specific users access. Cllr Cartwright suggested that this be raised at the next meeting of the Member Training and Development Group.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. staff in the Corporate Resources Directorate and Personnel and Organisational Development service be thanked for their hard work; and**
- 2. the committee noted that action is being taken to improve any shortfalls in performance and/or to address risks highlighted.**

16. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CABINET DECISIONS

This item was moved up the agenda at the request of the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Sustainability, as one particular decision followed on from the previous agenda item.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES
10 DECEMBER 2008**

Katrina Silverson, Scrutiny Officer, presented a report on the recent Cabinet Decisions made since the last formal meeting, highlighting areas that fell within the Committee's remit.

Jane Hartnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Sustainability explained to the committee that, on 3 November, Cabinet had agreed to consult internally and externally on the re-drafted Council Priorities; she referred members to the Cabinet report. Members were asked for their initial comments on the priorities and were reminded that they would also have another opportunity to comment at this committee in February 2009.

Cllr Cartwright asked that a more explicit mention of Equalities be included under 6c of the Cabinet report. He suggested that more reference be made towards ensuring staff-related Equalities targets were met. Cllr Sabetian suggested that, under 4c of the Cabinet report, reference be made to physical regeneration being promoted at the current time, in order to safeguard employment throughout the economic downturn.

Councillor Pragnell also alerted the committee to a misprint in the Cabinet report under 6e. This should read, 'at/or above minimum requirements' as opposed to, 'at our above minimum requirements'.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

17. UPDATE ON MOTION TO COUNCIL: WEBCASTING AT MEETINGS

Mark Bourne, Head of ICT Services gave a brief update to the committee on the progress of this project. There had been a number of meetings including a visit to East Sussex County Council and interviews with the Head of Destination Management and Marketing, and also a representative from Public-i. A draft report was now in the process of being drafted and would be presented to the committee in March 2009, subject to the group's approval.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

18. UPDATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Councillor Cartwright updated the committee on the progress of this project. The project's objectives had been fully reviewed and the lead officer was currently drafting the final report for the group's consideration.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR RESOURCES
10 DECEMBER 2008**

19. UPDATE ON SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ON STREET PARKING AND USE OF PARKING SURPLUS

Councillor Cartwright updated the committee on the progress of this review. The review was currently at the draft report stage and the review team would be meeting again in the New Year to discuss this.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

20. UPDATE ON SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SHARING SKILLS AND TRADING SERVICES

In the absence of Councillor Bing, Graham Belchamber, Scrutiny and Democratic Services Manager updated the committee on the progress of the review. This had been a long and detailed project for the review team and was now at the draft report stage. A further meeting had been scheduled with members to discuss the draft report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

21. COMMUNITIES IN CONTROL: IMPROVING LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY CONSULTATION

Graham Belchamber, Scrutiny and Democratic Services Manager presented the Council's response to Central Government consultation on Communities in Control: Improving Local Accountability.

He explained that the consultation had involved lead members and senior officers. The response had also been discussed with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S). The consultation asked for views on a number of areas including joint O&S committees for Local Area Agreement scrutiny, resource implications for O&S, procedures for O&S involvement in petitions and remote attendance at committee meetings.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.45pm)