

## **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

### **RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Monday, 10th February, 2014

**Present:-** Councillors John Bull (Chair), Roger Symonds (Vice-Chair), Colin Barrett, Paul Myers, Charles Gerrish, Patrick Anketell-Jones (In place of Barry Macrae) and Nigel Roberts

#### **54 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **55 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### **56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Barry Macrae sent his apologies; he was substituted by Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones.

#### **57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

#### **58 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN**

There was none.

#### **59 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING**

Councillor Liz Hardman made a statement on Children's Services Funding. In her statement Councillor Hardman asked that £300k be put back into the budget, ring fenced for Children's Centres. She also asked that, regarding the new model of service for Children's Centres, a one off resource be found to enable a smooth transition.

Councillor Eleanor Jackson made a statement asking that £60k be put back into the budget to maintain the bronze level of security for vulnerable people in sheltered accommodation. Councillors Gerrish and Roberts stated that they had been contacted by concerned residents on this issue.

The Chairman thanked the Councillor for their statements.

## **60 MINUTES - 18TH NOVEMBER 2013**

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

## **61 COUNCIL BUDGET 2014/15 AND MEDIUM TERM PLANS**

The Chairman outlined the proposed structure of the debate. He explained that he would firstly ask Tim Richens, Divisional Director – Business Support to give an introduction to the budget report. He would then ask Andrew Pate, Strategic Director – Resources to comment on the Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) Panel's minutes. He explained that Ashley Ayre Strategic Director – People and Communities was in attendance to address any of the Panel's questions regarding Children's Services followed by general debate on the budget and on PDS comments. The Panel will then put forward their recommendations which will be put forward to the Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

Tim Richens, Divisional Director – Business Support introduced the report "Medium Term Service & Resources Planning 2014/15 – 2015/16, & Budget and Council Tax 2014/15" (page 5, Agenda item 8). He highlighted some sections of Appendix 1 (page 11).

Andrew Pate, Strategic Director – Resources outlined the process of the Council budget setting. He referred members to the comments from PDS Panels (page 19) in their November meetings on the Medium Term Plans. He also referred to the report (page 15) where some of the points raised by PDS Panels are summarised.

Ashley Ayre Strategic Director – People and Communities, explained that there is a report on "Re- structuring of Early Years, Children Centre and Early Help (0-11) Services 2014-2016" on the Cabinet agenda for 12<sup>th</sup> February.

The Panel raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Gerrish asked Ashley Ayre to comment on the observations of Councillor Hardman in her statement at Item 6. The Strategic Director explained that £500k had been put back into the budget for Children's Services and £300k would go directly to Children's Centres and £200k would go back into direct support for children with additional needs. He further explained that the £500k has enabled the protection of targeted services for families with children with additional needs.

Councillor Barrett asked that the increase in the hire charge for youth groups using Weston Children's Centre be considered again as it may cause some groups to fold. The Strategic Director explained that the charge had been £10 per hour which was not economic and not nearly at market rates. He explained that there would be consultation on charging policy and there would be an opportunity to comment on this.

There was some discussion around a proposal from Councillor Bull on Children's Centres which was agreed and is shown at points 2 and 3 of the resolutions below.

#### The Revenue Budget 2014/15 (page 14)

Following a query from Councillor Gerrish, The Divisional Director for Business Support explained that there are some estimates as to the cost of administering business rate relief but exact amounts are not known until claims come in. There was some discussion around a proposal from Councillor Gerrish which was agreed and is shown at point 4 of the resolutions below.

Councillor Bull referred to the 'Time Out' Club and asked if they will be provided for. Councillor Gerrish explained that if the Council move out of the Riverside building in Keynsham, the landlord has said that Time Out will have to move out too. He asked that the landlord be encouraged by the Council/Property Services to be positive in handling Time Out and the Town Council – both of whom would welcome support on this. Councillor Bellotti – Cabinet Member for Community Resources gave his reassurance that he would talk to his colleagues about this issue, he stated that he would make sure that Time Out did not suffer.

#### The Capital Budget for 2014/15 (page 28)

Councillor Barrett asked that the residents of Weston be involved in the future plans for the village regarding flood defence schemes. The Divisional Director explained that, regarding the grant from the Environment Agency, the Council will need to have reassurance of budgetary adequacy and full knowledge of risks involved in any proposed scheme. Councillor Gerrish stated that a key priority for the Environment Agency Flood and Coast Committee (on which he is a representative) in financing schemes is to protect the highest number of properties.

Councillor Gerrish made the general point that recent bad weather had brought unexpected issues (at Midford Road and Kelston Road for example) and will bring unknown costs and he wished to log that this is recognised and work should be done on additional funding for structures. The Divisional Director stated that there are a range of provisions for unknown costs such as contingency funds.

Councillor Paul Myers asked about a transport scheme in Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Westfield which would enable a carnival event. Councillor Bellotti (Cabinet Member for Community Resources) advised the Councillor to email the highways department and copy in Caroline Roberts (Cabinet Member for Transport) and himself.

Councillor Anketell-Jones asked about parks funding and how this is allocated. He felt that there is an inequitable distribution of resources as play equipment in his ward is very run down. The Cabinet Member for Resources explained that the parks funding mentioned is additional spend and that in the budget there is money for parks maintenance. Councillor Gerrish advised close engagement with the police regarding the location of skate parks.

Councillor Anketell-Jones asked if the Victoria Art Gallery had to save £50k again this year. The Cabinet Member stated that it did apply this year and explained that

he had met with the Friends of Victoria Art Gallery and spoken about charging for special exhibitions and other possibilities to generate income.

The Chairman thanked officers and members. He outlined the resolutions of the Panel and explained that he would take these to the meeting of the Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> February.

The Panel **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the conclusions and resolutions from the other PDS Panels and refer them on to the Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014 for consideration; and
2. To recommend that the Cabinet earmark for the 2015/16 budget £300k to go into Children's Services ring fenced for Children's Centres to allow them to stay open from 9am-5pm. The Panel suggest that this be financed by the on-going resource allocation for the financial planning reserve; and
3. To recommend that the Cabinet set aside £200k of the one off headroom allocation money from the financial planning reserve to enable the smooth transition to the new model for Children's Centres; and finally
4. To ask that the Cabinet give active consideration in its budget setting to additional provision for bus services in new estates/developments.

## **62 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE**

Councillor David Bellotti – Cabinet Member for Community Resources, updated the Panel on the following:

- Community Asset Transfer – a list for the coming year is set out in the budget report. Councillor Bellotti stated that he is happy to take further suggestions;
- Grand Parade and Undercroft – all is going according to plan. He stated that the Council had only committed to phases 1 and 2;
- Keynsham Regeneration – this project is on budget and on time.
- Cattle Market/Corn Market – The closing date has passed and there are a good number of bids. He stated that the Cabinet will look at the bids and share information when appropriate.
- Midsomer Norton regeneration – all progressing on time.
- Procurement – Some progress being made, slow but in the right direction. He stated that he would report to the Panel on an annual basis showing percentages of local businesses.
- Property – there will be more news in the next few weeks

The Panel raised the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Barrett spoke about Percy Boys Club and explained that it was their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017. Councillor Bellotti explained that they had been offered a lease for 99 years on a peppercorn rent. On the issue of procurement champion, Councillor Bellotti advised speaking to the Group Leader.

**63 PANEL WORKPLAN**

The Panel noted the future workplan.

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm

Chair(person) .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**