

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Resources Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING DATE:	16 January 2012	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER
TITLE:	Resources Medium Term Plan – Issues from November Panel meeting	
WARD:	ALL	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 - Performance Management Resources Appendix 2 - ICT – Mouchel plus measures of output & value Appendix 3 - Community Safety Savings proposals and budget analysis		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 Panel members identified the following issues as requiring further consideration as part of the service action plans and budget reports to be considered in January 2012:

- Revenues and Benefits – future changes in the service and maintaining levels of experience staff.
- Electoral Services – future change in voter registration and implications for increased workload.
- Corporate Budget Lines – more information was requested on this area.
- Improvement and Performance – the Panel wished to look at possible savings in this area, especially from performance management.
- IT and Transformation – the Panel wished to see more information and reassurance on the Mouchel contract. Also on IT, the Panel asked if there was a measure of value/output.
- Equalities – the Panel had concerns on reductions proposed.
- Community Safety - the Panel had concerns on reductions proposed.

1.2 This report sets out brief answers to those questions and supplements the service action plans which are also on the agenda. By reading the notes to this report in conjunction with the service action plans the full information should be obtained.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Resources Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the answers to the questions and formulate any recommendations to the Cabinet and relevant portfolio holder as appropriate.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 These are set out in the report and also appears alongside the Service Action Plans. The totals for the department remain the same as when the Medium Term Plan was drafted and financial impacts published in November.

4 THE REPORT

4.1 Customer Services Revenues and Benefits:

- The Service Action Plan explains the changes taking place and these have been designed to ensure that experienced staff is retained to help manage the related project work associated with Universal Credits and the new Council Tax Benefits system.
- A separate meeting of the panel is being organised, probably sometime in March, to discuss these changes including the impact on the Council's front office/one stop shops.
- The regulations for Council Tax Benefits are only just emerging and a project delivery plan is being developed. This will need to be done in conjunction with the software suppliers and there is provision for a national model scheme but with local variations encouraged.

4.2 Electoral Services:

- The issues raised relating to voter registration were discussed at the special panel meeting on 14th December 2011. The resource implications of the changes do not apply until 2013/14.

4.3 Corporate Budget Lines:

- These will be set out in the Resources PDS meeting scheduled for the 6th February alongside the feedback from other panels. This timing enables the corporate lines to be reviewed in a corporate context rather than a departmental/panel specific context.

4.4 Improvement and Performance:

- The level of resources required for the performance management function was questioned at the November meeting given the changes to the performance management requirements of Councils and some recent simplifications. A note setting out the detail is attached as Appendix 1.

4.5 Information Technology:

- The panel asked for more information about the Mouchel contract and also measures of output and value. Information is attached as Appendix 2.

- The possible extension of the Mouchel contract is presently under consideration and the panel will be verbally updated. The Council's position is protected in that the staff are locally based and the relevant assets remain in the ownership of the Council. TUPE applied when the contract was established and will also apply when it comes to an end.
- The panel may also wish to review the emerging IT strategy at a future date. The strategy will help a series of savings in future years but also some improvements with rationalisation of systems, mobile working, flexibility through thin client to replace desk top devices etc.
- The Service Action Plan shows the savings at departmental level in 2012/13. Only about a third of the IT budget is in the Resources department. The rest relates to spend within the various services and a significant proportion is not with Mouchel.

4.6 Equalities:

- A saving of £70,000 equivalent to or 40% of the Equality budget is proposed. This will be achieved by reduced staffing (approximately one FTE) and a reduction in the corporate reasonable adjustment budget.
- This means that services, elected members and strategic partners will need to address issues of inequality, discrimination and unfair treatment in employment and service delivery with less independent advice, guidance and support. The intention is to achieve efficiencies and build on the improvements recently achieved whereby equalities is mainstreamed into services.
- Services will have reduced opportunity to supplement their own budget when having to provide alterations to the working environment for Disabled staff. The existing budget has been underspent so there is no evidence at this stage that this reduction will give rise to unmet needs.

4.7 Community Safety:

- The Panel expressed concern about the level of savings. The savings proposed are to absorb the loss of grant of £61,000 and a further cut of £95,000. The remaining grant from Government of £62,500 is expected to be lost in the following year (2013/14). A Police & Crime Commissioner is expected to be elected in November 2012 but there is uncertainty about the budget that the commissioner will have for community safety albeit the funding for Councils is being removed.
- A note setting out the detail is attached as Appendix 3.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 A risk assessment of the Council's budgets and reserves will be contained in the final budget papers to be presented to Cabinet and Council in February.

6 EQUALITIES

6.1 The associated equalities impact assessments are published on the Council website and a link will be provided for panel members. To be lawful the decision making process needs to take into account equalities issues.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The corporate implications of this report have been considered by Strategic Directors Group (SDG), including the Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer.

7.2 Further consultation has taken place as part of the previous Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy processes. Members of the Council are being consulted about the emerging new Vision and Values.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 All the following issues are relevant to Service Action Planning: *Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Sustainability; Human Resources; Property; Young People; Human Rights; Corporate Plan; Health & Safety; Impact on Staff; the Legal Considerations.*

9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Council Solicitor) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report.

Contact person	<i>Andrew Pate, Strategic Director - Resources - tel 01225 477300</i>
Background papers	<i>Equalities Impact Assessments</i>
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