

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD ON 24 MAY 2011

Membership

* G Butland	* G L Mitchinson
* W J C Dick	* M J Page
* N Edey	* J W Pike
* M C M Lager (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs I Pummell
* A M Hedley	A Turrell
* M J Mackrory	* T C Smith-Hughes (Chairman)
* S Mayzes	* R Walters (Substitute for J Roberts)
* Mrs V Metcalfe	* J A Young (Vice-Chairman)

(* present)

Councillor A Durcan was also in attendance.

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Mrs Hannah Cleary, Governance Officer

Mrs Vivien Door, Committee Officer

37. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Apologies

J Roberts

Mrs I Pummell

A Turrell

Substitutions

R Walters

38. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

39. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

40. Membership of the Committee

The Committee noted report ES/027/11 by the Governance Officer. The Chairman welcomed Councillor S Mayzes to the Committee and thanked Councillor C Griffiths for his work.

41. Revenue and Capital Budget 2011/12 and Beyond Update

The Committee considered report ES/028/11 by Councillor Finch, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and the Transformation Programme.

Councillor Finch, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and the Transformation Programme, and Mr Peter Lewis, Interim Assistant Director, Financial Strategy, were in attendance to introduce the report and answer questions.

The Committee discussed the information about the 'pupil premium' and the conditions for usage as set out on pages 2 and 3 of the report, and **agreed** that the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee be asked to monitor the allocation of this funding to ensure the most effective and appropriate usage.

Councillor Mitchinson expressed concern at the details of the Council's redundancy scheme as set out on page 4 of the report, with the view that the scheme was overly generous, and asked if there was any difference between the packages for voluntary and compulsory redundancy. Councillor Finch explained that the Council's scheme was within the mid to lower quartile of Local Authority redundancy schemes, with others offering more generous redundancy packages. Councillor Finch confirmed there was no difference between the packages offered for voluntary and compulsory redundancies. Whilst £6.5 million had been placed in central redundancy reserves for both 2011/12 and 2012/13 to support staffing changes made through the Transformation Programme and New Ways of Working initiatives, redundancy payments after 2013/14 would be funded from Directorate budgets. The Council had applied to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for capitalisation of redundancy payments, the criteria were very narrow (0.5% of revenue budget and over 10% of reserves) and the Council had not been eligible. However, the Council was making a further application to the DCLG.

The Committee **agreed** that it should continue to receive summary reconciliations of quarterly financial reports as set out in Appendix 1 of report ES/028/11.

Councillor Smith-Hughes thanked Councillor Finch and Mr Lewis for attending.

42. Performance Indicator on Overall Satisfaction with Essex County Council

The Committee considered report ES/029/11 by the Governance Officer. Mr Duncan Wood, Head of Research and Intelligence, was in attendance to introduce the report and answer questions. Mr Wood informed the Committee that there was no central reporting for the data analysis as the data was taken to the specific Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) as part of its performance.

The Committee **agreed** that:

- i) The data analysis for each DLT be presented at Cabinet;

- ii) The data analysis should be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee as part of its performance management role.

Councillor Smith-Hughes thanked Mr Duncan Wood for his attendance.

43. Coroners Service

The Committee considered report ES/030/11 by Alex Hallam, Deputy County Solicitor, who was in attendance to introduce the report and answer questions.

After discussion of this item the Committee **agreed**:

- i) That a report of the Committee's findings and recommendations in relation to this topic be presented for consideration at the 19 July meeting;
- ii) Details of the funding sources for the Service and further information in relation to the 8% budget increase be presented at a future meeting;
- iii) Details of the jurisdiction areas of each Coroner be presented at a future meeting;
- iv) Details of the impact of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 on the Service be presented at a future meeting.

Councillor Smith-Hughes thanked Alex Hallam for her report and attendance.

44. Risk Management and Contracting Arrangements – Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations

The Committee considered report ES/031/11 by Councillor Louis, Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Commercial Services, who had conveyed his apologies to the Committee for being unable to attend. Mr Peter Geall, Head of Infrastructure Strategy, was in attendance to answer questions.

The Committee **agreed** that it was pleased with the progress made against the recommendations.

Councillor Smith-Hughes thanked Mr Geall for attending.

45. Forward Look

The Committee considered and **agreed** report ES/033/11 by the Governance Officer.

46. Date and time of next and future meetings

The Committee noted that the next ordinary meeting was scheduled for Thursday, 23 June 2011, at 10.00 am, in Committee Room 2.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12.05 pm.

Chairman
23 June 2011