

EXTRACT FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION

4.00PM 14 JULY 2009

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors; Pidgeon, (Chairman) Alford, Bennett, Elgood, Morgan, Older, Peltzer Dunn, Pidgeon (Deputy Chairman), Wakefield-Jarrett, McCaffery and Kennedy

PART ONE

12. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

12A. Declarations of Substitutes

- 12.1 Councillor Pidgeon was acting as Chairman for the meeting as Councillor Mitchell was unable to attend for personal reasons.

Councillor Meadows had given her apologies.

Councillor McCaffery was acting as substitute for Councillor Mitchell.

Councillor Kennedy was acting as substitute for Councillor Randall.

17 SCRUTINY OF BUDGET PROPOSALS

- 17.1 The Head of Overview & Scrutiny presented the report to the Commission, explaining that it had been requested following last year's scrutiny of the budget proposals. The report provided a comparison of budget scrutiny arrangements in a number of local authorities.
- 17.2 The Head of Strategic Finance and Procurement confirmed that the most significant change was to the budget timetable for next year, outlined in 3.4.8 of the report appendix. Budget strategies would be submitted to Cabinet on 3 December. The comparisons that had been carried out showed that most authorities produced their key budget information in January/ February.
- 17.3 It had been proposed at Cabinet that, for Brighton and Hove, budget strategies would be produced for 3 December, so the bulk of the budget information would be in the public domain from that time. It was proposed that the strategies would include information on budget proposals for the next three years, including the direction of travel for the directorate, strategic context, financial and service pressures for

each service, any proposals to re-invest into the service, value for money information, key risks, staffing implications and bench marking for each service amongst other things.

This timetable would ensure that the Commission had further time to consider what scrutiny might be needed of the proposed budget strategies and the overall budget package.

- 17.4 Councillor Peltzer Dunn commented that it had been interesting to see information about other authorities and asked what the scrutiny benefits were considered to be for the proposed arrangements. The Head of Overview & Scrutiny said that it was generally considered advantageous to have further time for consultation and scrutiny.
- 17.5 Councillor Elgood welcomed the proposals, noting that the previous administration had published their budget proposals in November/ December each year. Councillor Elgood said that he would like to see individual Commission meetings for each budget area; he would also welcome the opportunity to scrutinise opposition budget proposals. Both of these suggestions were supported by other Commission members.
- 17.6 The Head of Overview & Scrutiny confirmed that the Commission could hold individual meetings for each section of the budget proposals, or this could be devolved to each Scrutiny Committee. It was suggested that the best way forward would be for Overview & Scrutiny to work with the Finance Team to draw up a proposed scrutiny timetable.
- 17.7 Councillor Wakefield-Jarrett thought it would be useful for individual committees to look at their budgets; she asked whether public consultation was carried out on the budget proposals or whether this was planned.

The Commission heard that budget consultation was carried out with the Budget Review Group, which had cross-party representatives on it. The Group had recently discussed consultation for next year. Last year, 1, 500 responses had been received to the budget questionnaire, a 26% response rate. Local businesses were invited to respond separately.

- 17.8 **RESOLVED** – (a) that the updates be noted and (b) that Overview & Scrutiny work with the Finance Team on proposals for future budget scrutiny.