

**At a meeting of the MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on THURSDAY, 16<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2012 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Tate in the Chair

Councillors Anderson, G. Miller, Mordey, Oliver, Stewart, Walker, S. Watson, Wilson and Wood.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors S. Watson and Wilson.

**Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2012**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2012 (copy circulated), be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest (including Whipping Declarations)**

Item 4 – Reference from Cabinet – 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2012 – Budget and Service Reports

Councillor Tate declared personal interests as Chair of Hetton Home Care Services Voluntary Management Committee, a Local Authority Director of Newcastle International Airport, a Member of Hetton Town Council, Chairman of the ITA Scrutiny Committee, a member of the LGPS, a member of the GMB and a member of the Empire Theatre Trust.

Councillor Stewart declared a personal interest as a member of UNISON.

Councillor Walker declared personal interests as a member of the Empire Theatre Trust and the LGPS.

Councillor G. Miller declared personal interests as a member of the GMB and the LGPS.

**Reference from Cabinet – 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2012 – Budget Service Reports**

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report seeking the Committee's advice and consideration on a number of reports (copies circulated) which were considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2012 as follows:-

- (A) Collection Fund 2011/2012;
- (B) a. Capital Programme 2012/2013 and Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2012/2013, including Prudential Indicators for 2012/2013 to 2014/2015;
- b. Revenue Budget and Proposed Council Tax 2012/2013 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/12 to 2014/2015;
- c. Draft Council Tax Leaflet 2012/2013.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Malcolm Page, Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services presented the report highlighting the key issues with regard to the Capital Programme 2012/2013, the Collection Fund 2011/12 and the main Revenue Budget proposals. Mr. Page together with Sonia Tognarelli, Head of Financial Resources then proceeded to address questions and comments from Members in relation to the following issues:-

- the operation of the Council Tax Freeze Grant,
- 'one off' spending pressures including Inward Investment, the Private Housing Stock Survey, the delivery of efficiencies, the Olympics and the renewal of Wellness Centre Equipment,
- the current position with regard to the reform of the National Non Domestic Rates.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Page and Ms. Tognarelli for their report, commented that Officers and the Cabinet were to be congratulated on the preparation of the 2012/13 budget and moved that the Cabinet actions be supported.

Accordingly it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the Cabinet's action with regard to the preparation of the 2012/13 budget be supported and that the Committee's comments be reported to the Council meeting to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2012.

### **Policy Development and Review 2011/12: Progress on Reviews**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an update on the progress in relation to the two policy reviews being undertaken by the Management Scrutiny Committee into Self Regulation and Illegal Money Lending respectively.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer briefed the Committee on the report highlighting that the final self regulation workshop, as detailed in paragraph 5.1 of the report, previously scheduled for Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> March would now be held on Monday,

5<sup>th</sup> March, 2012. In addition the final meeting with Shiney Row Advice Centre had been arranged for Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February at 2.00 p.m.

Councillor Wood referred to the note of the 'At What cost – Money Lending' Focus Group held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2012 attached at Appendix 2 of the report as being a very good summary of what had been an extremely worthwhile and interesting meeting.

The Chairman having thanked Mr. Cummings for his report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Welfare Reform – Presentation**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which introduced Fiona Brown, Head of Transactional Services who was to provide Members with a presentation giving an overview of the Welfare Reform Bill together with actions being taken or planned to mitigate the negative impact of the proposed changes.

(For copy report and presentation – see original minutes).

Ms. Brown delivered a comprehensive powerpoint presentation highlighting:-

- the background to the Welfare Reform Programme
- the impact on:-
  - people of working age
  - people with a disability and carers
  - children and young people
  - pensioners
- changes with regard to Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance
- the potential impacts on Services including:-
  - Health
  - Social Care
  - Transactional Services
- what the Council and Partners were doing in response to the reform including details of Sunderland's Welfare Reform Project.

Ms. Brown then addressed questions and comments from Members regarding:-

- support being given to people affected by the reforms
- how Housing Benefit would be administered in the future
- concerns regarding the emphasis being place on E claiming
- concerns that changes to tax credit would have the opposite effect than intended i.e. encouraging those in employment/women to give up work rather than encourage the jobless to seek work
- measures to cope with the effect of the transition from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payment

A number of Members having expressed concern that the reforms would unfairly target the most vulnerable in society, the Chairman thanked Ms. Brown for her presentation and it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report and presentation be received and noted.

### **Early Retirement on the Grounds of Efficiency**

The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated Members on the current process for early retirement on the grounds of efficiency and the number of applications received to date.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members having congratulated Ms. Stanhope on the report and welcomed the Council's proactive approach to the issue, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Apprenticeships in Sunderland City Council**

The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an update on the progress of the Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme and as requested by Members, an identification of the existing apprenticeships within the Council.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were informed that currently there were 85 apprentices employed with the Council in a variety of roles, 52 of which were aged from 16 to 18 years of age. The aim was for an apprentice to progress into employment although this was difficult at the present time and could not be guaranteed.

The Chairman having thanked Ms. Stanhope for her report, it was:-

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

### **Centre for Public Scrutiny Parliamentary Seminar**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) in respect of the above matter.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members having been advised that Councillor Mordey who had attended the seminar was not present at tonight's meeting, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that consideration of the report be deferred to a future meeting to allow Councillor Mordey the opportunity to provide feedback to the Committee.

### **Scrutiny Committees Work Programmes for 2011-12**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) attaching for Members' information the variations to the Scrutiny Committee work programmes for 2011/12 and providing an opportunity to review the Committee's own work programme for 2011/12.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Nigel Cummings, Scrutiny Officer having briefed the Committee on the report, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that the variations to the Scrutiny Committee's Work Programmes for 2011-12 and to its own work programme as detailed on appendices 1 and 2 to the report be noted.

### **Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1<sup>st</sup> February 2012 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012 which relate to the Management Scrutiny Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

9. RESOLVED that the Executive's Forward Plan for the above period be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) R.D. TATE,  
Chairman.