

Thursday, 3rd December, 2015

Present:- Councillor Mike Stubbs – in the Chair
Councillors Fear, Hambleton, Loades, Pickup, Waring and Williams

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Wallace and Cllr Wilkes.
Cllr Holland was in attendance as a substitute for Cllr Sweeney.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair confirmed that the Council Leader would be in attendance at the March meeting of the Committee to provide a presentation on the Co-operative Council.

4. **PROCUREMENT CHAMPION**

The Business Improvement Manager introduced a report covering the Procurement structure and processes within the organisation such as contract procedural rules and financial regulations.

It was confirmed that the Council's current (sub-OJEU) procurement thresholds were:

£5,000 >< £30,000) - a minimum of two written quotations;
£30,000 >< £50,000 - a minimum of three written quotations;
£50,000>) Contract Procedural Rules shall apply and officers will be required to undertake a compliant tender process, seeking to attract a minimum of 4 tender responses.

The Committee thanked the Business Improvement Manager for the presentation.

Resolved: That the report be received.

5. **PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS' PROTOCOL**

The Democratic Services Manager and Head of Planning introduced a report requesting the Committee to consider the recommendations from the Constitution Review Working Group in relation to the following:

- Members' Protocol on Planning Matters
- Substitutes on the Planning Committee

Officers confirmed that the main differences between the new protocol and the previous version were that the previous version had also included guidance for

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officers. The protocol had also been updated to reflect legislative changes in the Localism Act concerning predetermination.

Members were supportive of the updated protocol but stressed that it should not in any way seek to stifle debate. Members also requested that Officers continue to look at and improve the training provided to members of the Planning Committee.

Members were also supportive of the recommendation that substitutes for the Planning Committee be appointed at the February meeting of Full Council.

Resolved:

- a) That the members' Protocol on Planning Matters be submitted to Full Council in February 2016 for approval
- b) That substitutes for the Planning Committee be appointed at the full Council meeting in February 2016.

6. REVENUE BUDGETS 2016-17 - FIRST DRAFT SAVINGS PLAN

A report was submitted to inform the Committee of the current proposals being considered to balance the 2016/17 revenue budget.

The Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) confirmed that this report would be presented to the Committee again before going to Full Council in February.

Members queried what the current budget gap was and it was confirmed that this was £1.478 million in respect of 2016/17 and that this would need to be closed in order to balance the budget.

The Committee considered the proposed savings and funding strategies that it was hoped would help to close the budget gap, the Officer confirmed that most of the saving areas had already happened or were in the process of happening.

Members queried whether the Council had considered using open source software and it was confirmed that yes this was being considered with other Partners as an option for the new office building.

Members queried whether the savings relating to Community Centres were done or still ongoing. It was confirmed that most were complete and that there could be more in the future but that was still to be decided.

Members queried the situation regarding staffing and it was confirmed that savings had been made through staff taking flexible early retirement or voluntary reductions in hours and vacant posts.

A request was made that Officers consider the money currently provided to VAST and the contribution that was being made to the Council.

Resolved:

- a) That the Committee note the proposals as set out in the appendix to the report.

b) That the Committee identify any areas where further information is required for consideration at its meeting in January.

c) That the Committee suggest any further areas of savings that should be considered.

7. SCALE OF FEES AND CHARGES

A report was submitted to provide the Committee with an opportunity to scrutinise the draft proposals of the scale of fees and charges to apply from 1 April 2016. This is due to be considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 20 January.

It was confirmed that a 2% increase had been built in across the board except for certain fees such as some planning fees which were statutory. The fees for Jubilee 2 and Kidsgrove Leisure Centre had been frozen as the leisure facilities were struggling against strong competition; it was intended to do a wider piece of work in relation to this.

Members considered that the rates charged for the hiring of Council rooms was very cheap. Officers considered that perhaps more could be done to advertise the availability of the rooms and that The Head of Communications would be starting a piece of work focusing of advertising and billboards in the near future.

The suggestion was also made as to whether the Council could look into providing skip hire.

Resolved:

a) That the Committee recommend to the Cabinet approval of the proposed Scale of Fees and Charges for 2016/17.

b) That the comments on the proposals be noted.

8. WORK PLAN

The Chair informed the Committee that the Joint Committee scheduled for the 16th December had been postponed to take into consideration any recommendations made by the Asset Management Committee.

The Chair proposed that the item on the Community Infrastructure Levy be moved to the March meeting which would coincide with the report being considered by the Economic Development Committee.

The Chair also informed the Committee that due to the additional meeting of the Full Council on 27th January the next meeting of this Committee would now be on 28th January 2016. Go Kidsgrove would also be added to the agenda for this meeting and the Chair would be invited to attend.

Resolved:

That the changes to the meeting dates be noted.

9. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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No questions had been received.

10. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

11. DATE AND TIME AND NEXT MEETING

Thursday 28th January 2016 and 7pm.

COUNCILLOR MIKE STUBBS
Chair