

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 8th January, 2010

## Meeting of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Members present: Councillor Hartley (Chairman);  
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Lavery); and  
Councillors Adamson, Attwood, Austin, D. Browne,  
M. Browne, W. Browne, Campbell, Convery, Hendron,  
N. Kelly, C. Maskey, McCann, Newton, Rodgers,  
Rodway and Stoker.

Also attended: Councillor Jones.

In attendance: Mr. P. McNaney, Chief Executive;  
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;  
Mr. C. Quigley, Director of Legal Services;  
Mrs. J. Thompson, Director of Finance  
and Resources; and  
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 5th January.

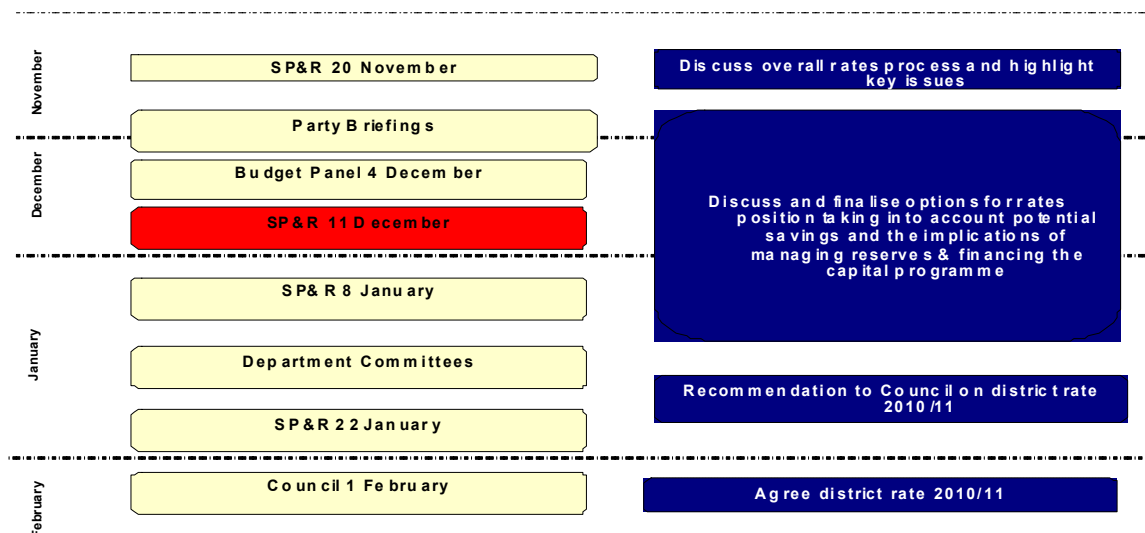
### Financial Estimates and District Rate 2010-2011

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### “Relevant Background Information and Purpose of Report

**Members will recall that, at the November meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the following process was agreed for setting the district rate and agreeing the estimates for 2010/11.**

## Timetable for Rate Setting Process 2010-2011



The purpose of this report is to:

- update Members on progress;
- agree a number of outstanding rates issues;
- set the cash limits for Departmental Committees; and,
- agree the estimates for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

### Key Issues

#### A. UPDATE ON PROGRESS

At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 11 December 2009, the following was agreed:

- (a) a further £1m to be invested in the City Investment Strategy;
- (b) a minimum of £2.5m to be set aside as a contribution from the rates to reserves;
- (c) a £1m efficiency programme to be developed and reported back to the Committee; and
- (d) the £2m savings from the efficiency programme and the voluntary redundancy (VR) exercise to also be invested in reserves, with a maximum of £1m of this to be potentially invested in the capital programme when capital plans are agreed.

The table below summarises the current position in relation to the rate setting for 2010/11, taking into consideration the above recommendations of 11 December 2009, Departmental estimates have been reduced by the £2m savings from the efficiency programme and VR exercise and the £2m has been invested in reserves. As can be seen from the table, the overall rates position is a 7.81% increase which equates to a 3.35% increase to the domestic ratepayer. Members should note that 68% of the increase in the rate is attributable to the need to replenish reserves. Departmental estimates, which equate to 90% of overall Council expenditure, are proposed to increase the rates by some 0.59% reflecting a concerted drive to control costs and maximise savings.

Each main element of the table is discussed in more detail in the report below.

### Current Estimated Rate Increase

|   | 2010/11 Increase  | % Rate Increase |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| Departmental Estimates                      | 768,511           | 0.59%           |
| City Investment Strategy                    | 1,000,000         | 0.76%           |
| Current Capital Programme                   | 1,667,315         | 1.28%           |
| General Exchequer Grant                     | (125,566)         | (0.10)          |
| <b>Rate Increase before Reserves</b>        | <b>3,310,260</b>  | <b>2.53%</b>    |
| Movement in Reserves                        | 6,900,000         | 5.28%           |
| <b>District Rate Increase</b>               | <b>10,210,260</b> | <b>7.81%</b>    |
| <b>Average impact on domestic ratepayer</b> | <b>24.38</b>      | <b>3.35%</b>    |

#### **B. RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES**

Following the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 11 December, there were a number of issues that needed to be confirmed or further reports were to be provided to the Committee. These issues are set out below and were discussed at the Budget and Transformation Panel on 21 December.

(i) Movement in Reserves

- (i) The reserves in Belfast City Council had historically been in a strong position, being some £15.4m at the end of 2007/08. However, since then reserves have been significantly reduced due to:
- (ii) the need to repay the Land and Property Services (LPS) some £4.1m because of their over estimation of how much the rates would yield in 2007/08;
- (iii) the use of reserves to fund the capital programme; and
- (iv) the contribution from reserves to the overall rate setting process.

Most recently, in December 2009, the Director of Finance and Resources reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that by the end of 2009/10 the reserves were forecast to be some £4.3m. Members were informed of the urgent need to build reserves to a more acceptable level given the size of the organisation.

Best practice advice from CIPFA and advice from the Local Government Auditor would indicate that the reserves should be in the range of £8m to £10m. Given that the proposed Local Government Finance Bill (which is subject to public consultation and then implementation) will mean a more prescriptive approach to maintaining reserves and the fact that 2010/11 is the last year of the freeze on the regional rate, it was recommended that the replenishment of reserves should be prioritised in 2010/11.

Members therefore agreed that a minimum of £2.5m should be set aside as a contribution from the rates to reserves. Additionally, it was also agreed that the £2m savings from the VR exercise and the efficiency programme should be invested in the Council's reserves, with the potential for up to £1m of this to be used to finance new capital projects should they be agreed and approved. This would give a minimum reserves position at the end of 2010/11 of some £7.8m (being £4.3m from 2009/10 plus £3.5m of investment from 2010/11 after the potential application of £1m savings to the capital programme).

Compared to the 2009/10 estimate, this means an increase in the rates for the movement in reserves of some £6.9m, representing a 5.3% increase on the district rate. This would place the reserves in a much stronger position and give the Council a much sounder financial base to deal with future economic uncertainties, any downturn in rates income, unplanned expenditure and the implications of RPA.

(ii) Financing of the Capital Programme and City Investment Strategy 2010/11

Up to this year the Council has been able to pay for its capital expenditure through revenue contributions and use of internal cash. In basic terms this means the Council has been able to pay for capital schemes with its own money rather than having to borrow. The financial position of the organisation, as previously has been reported, has now changed. This means that the organisation must borrow up to £58m to finance current committed schemes in the capital programme. All the money does not need to be borrowed in 2010/11 but it does mean there will have to be a stepped increase in the rate over the next four years in order to meet this financial commitment. For 2010/11, capital financing will need to be increased by £1.67m which is the equivalent of a 1.28% increase in the rate. In addition, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed on 11 December that a maximum of £1m of the investment in reserves may be redeployed to finance new capital commitments, when capital plans are agreed. This will have no impact on the 7.81% proposed district rate increase but would mean a move between reserves and capital financing.

A further £1m has also been agreed to be invested in the City Investment Strategy in 2010/11.

(iii) Allocation of Thematic Budget

It was agreed at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 11 December that a further report would be brought to Members as to how the thematic budget could be allocated in 2010/11. The thematic budgets were first established by Members in 2009/10 in recognition that the cross-cutting work which the Council is trying to encourage could not be solely delivered within functional budgets and that expenditure needed to be re-orientated towards community planning outcomes. It was agreed that a budget of £500,000 should be used to kick start projects and build the infrastructure required to deliver thematic working. In June 2009 the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to allocate the budget as follows:

- |                                   |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| • Older People                    | £87,000  |
| • Health & Well Being             | £100,000 |
| • Safer City                      | £145,000 |
| • Better Care for the Environment | £57,000  |
| • Children and Young People       | 100,000  |

Examples of how the budget has been used in 2009/10 include:

- Fuel Stamp Scheme
- Good Morning Project
- Older Peoples Convention
- Community Safety Warden posts
- Development of Safer City Plan
- Joint funding with Public Health Agency and Health and Social Services Trust for Health and Well Being posts
- Alcohol and obesity projects
- Neighbourhood Programme for young people
- City Centre Programme for young people
- Biodiversity DVD
- Waste Categorisation Survey

In order to maintain momentum of these various projects it is recommended that the thematic budget is allocated as follows for 2010/11:

|                                   |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| • Older People                    | £82,000  |
| • Health & Well Being             | £100,000 |
| • Safer City                      | £140,000 |
| • Better Care for the Environment | £78,000  |
| • Children and Young People       | £100,000 |

Update reports on the use of this budget will be provided to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee during the year.

(iv) £1m Efficiency Savings

Members will recall that, at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 11 December, it was agreed that further work would be undertaken by officers in order to develop an efficiency programme to meet a target of £1m efficiency savings and that Members would be updated on progress at this meeting.

Following detailed engagement with Departments, the table below summarises where the proposed £1m savings could be found.

| <b>Efficiency Savings</b> | <b>Council<br/>Total</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Agency Costs              | 291,700                  |
| Consultants               | 385,500                  |
| Advertising & Marketing   | 114,075                  |
| Landfill Contract         | 48,000                   |
| Miscellaneous             | 179,625                  |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>1,018,900</b>         |

Each main element of the table is discussed in more detail below.

#### Agency Costs

The Procurement Unit is currently in the process of tendering for a new contract for the supply of agency workers. A relatively new procurement technique known as 'Reverse Auctions' will be used to fix the contract price. With this approach tenderers bid against each other in real time rather than by submitting a fixed tender. This approach has already been successfully used by the Council to procure a new stationery contract with savings of over £100,000 secured. In terms of agency contracts other public sector bodies in NI have used the same approach with savings realised ranging from 5% to 10%. Based on these figures, it is therefore recommended that the agency budget for 2010/11 is reduced by £291,700 in anticipation of the savings emanating from the new agency contract.

#### Consultants

As part of the comprehensive mini budget review the budgets for the use of external consultants were reviewed in order to identify opportunities where work planned to be done by external consultants could be done in-house. As a result it is recommended that the use of external consultants budget for 2010/11 is reduced by £385,500.

#### Advertising and Marketing

The Head of Corporate Communications reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee last month on how the Council has developed a more corporate approach to effective communications. As a result of this work, the Council is now better placed to negotiate advertising and marketing contracts and, consequently, the advertising budget can be reduced by £114,075 with minimal adverse impact on advertising outputs and outcomes.

**Landfill Contract**

The Director of Health and Environmental Services has been able to revise downwards the estimated gate fee for the landfill contract from £28.50 to £28.00 per tonne based on refined aggregate waste quantity projections for the Arc21 councils. This will result in £48,000 of savings for 2010/11.

**Miscellaneous**

The comprehensive mini budget review identified a number of areas of smaller discretionary spend which can be reduced with minimal impact on service delivery. Examples include the hire of external rooms and external hospitality. It is recommended that £179,625 is reduced from these smaller miscellaneous budgets in 2010/11.

**Future Efficiency Savings**

The table below shows the efficiency savings that Members have agreed since the start of the efficiency programme in 2006/07. If the Members agree to the proposed efficiency savings it will mean that the Council will have saved almost £9m through the corporate efficiency programme. Departments have also made significant savings over the same period whilst maintaining existing services.

| <b>Year</b>    | <b>Efficiency Savings</b> |
|----------------|---------------------------|
|                | £                         |
| <b>2006/07</b> | <b>1,154,010</b>          |
| <b>2007/08</b> | <b>1,500,000</b>          |
| <b>2008/09</b> | <b>1,220,000</b>          |
| <b>2009/10</b> | <b>3,010,433</b>          |
| <b>2010/11</b> | <b>2,001,969</b>          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>8,886,412</b>          |

The savings to date have been delivered without Members having to make difficult decisions about changing how the organisation works; little invest to save financing has been required (except for the severance costs of VR) and front line services have not been adversely affected. The next few years, however, are going to be tougher as our income from fees and charges and the rate base continues to decline because of the economic recession. We have also reached the point where there is limited opportunity for further quick efficiency gains. This means that the Council needs to find new ways to deliver



further efficiency savings on an on-going basis. This is likely to require invest to save money, changing how the organisation works and tough choices having to be made by Members. It is therefore recommended that there is continued engagement with the Budget and Transformation Panel on a future efficiency programme and that a detailed report is brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in March with proposals for how further efficiencies can be delivered.

(v) **Estimate Penny Product (EPP)**

This provides an estimate of what the rates will yield in income for the Council for 2010/11. As the council is dependent on the district rate for 74% of its income it is essential that as accurate as possible EPP is provided by Land and Property Services (LPS). The final EPP has been received from LPS and this shows a 1.0% increase from last year. This is better than expected given the current economic climate and it would appear that the work Council officers are doing in conjunction with LPS to try to maximise the collectable rate is starting to bear fruit.

C. **SET THE CASH LIMITS FOR DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEES AND AGREE THE ESTIMATES FOR SP&R COMMITTEE**

As outlined in the table in section A above, Departmental estimates have increased by £768.5k to £125.1m in 2010/11. This represents an increase of 0.62% over 2009/10 or a 0.59% in the overall district rate. The key drivers to the Departmental estimates are:

*Costs which fall outside the control of BCC:*

- Rates - the rates budget i.e. rates that the Council must pay for its premises, has increased by £580k to £2.5m for 2010/11. This is mainly due to the reopening of the City Hall and the Ulster Hall.
- Superannuation - this cost has been increasing over the past number of years. The estimate for 2010/11 sees another actuarial increase which has increased the employer's superannuation contribution from 16% to 17%. This amounts to an increase of £671k.
- Loss of External Income - the economic downturn continues to impact on a number of services and as a result budgeted income has fallen by just over £1.3m in 2010/11. The main areas of budgeted reduced income are:

|                            |          |
|----------------------------|----------|
| ▪ Building Control Service | £626,250 |
| ▪ ISB                      | £33,000  |
| ▪ BIS                      | £200,000 |
| ▪ Investment Income        | £460,000 |

- **Council efficiency programme and voluntary redundancies** - the Council has approved a voluntary redundancy (VR) exercise which will cost £2.3m in 2009/10 but will produce annual savings of £1m per annum. The Council has also continued with the efficiency programme which was initiated three years ago. If the Chief Officers proposals are agreed, a further £1m of efficiency savings will be achieved in 2010/11. A detailed analysis of these savings has been outlined earlier in this report.
- **Departmental Savings/Growth** - Departmental growth/savings are a net cost to the Council of £200k. An analysis of departmental savings and growth is outlined in the commentary on each Committee's estimate which can be found below.

A summary of these key drivers by Committee is outlined in the table below:

|   | SP&R              | H&ES            | P&L             | DEV             | TOWN PLANNING | Dept Total        |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <b>2009/10 Estimate</b>                   | 28,788,068        | 42,612,828      | 30,450,003      | 22,473,931      | 28,450        | 124,353,279       |
| <b><u>Uncontrollable costs</u></b>        |                   |                 |                 |                 |               |                   |
| Rates - utilities                         | 345,660           | 18,008          | 67,210          | 149,303         | 0             | 580,181           |
| Superannuation                            | 24,981            | 343,763         | 273,047         | 29,457          | 0             | 671,248           |
| Loss of ext income                        | 693,000           | 626,250         | 0               | 0               | 0             | 1,319,250         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                              | <b>1,063,641</b>  | <b>988,021</b>  | <b>340,257</b>  | <b>178,760</b>  | <b>0</b>      | <b>2,570,679</b>  |
| <b><u>Councilwide Savings</u></b>         |                   |                 |                 |                 |               |                   |
| Voluntary Redundancies                    | -556,559          | -180,001        | -246,484        | 0               | 0             | -983,044          |
| Efficiencies                              | -464,630          | -208,700        | -201,850        | -143,745        | 0             | -1,018,925        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                              | <b>-1,021,189</b> | <b>-388,701</b> | <b>-448,334</b> | <b>-143,745</b> | <b>0</b>      | <b>-2,001,969</b> |
| <b><u>Departmental Savings/Growth</u></b> | <b>-329,256</b>   | <b>-154,505</b> | <b>450,281</b>  | <b>234,561</b>  | <b>-1,280</b> | <b>199,801</b>    |
| <b>2010/11 Estimate</b>                   | 28,501,263        | 43,057,644      | 30,792,206      | 22,743,507      | 27,170        | 125,121,791       |
| Inc/(dec) £                               | -286,804          | 444,816         | 342,204         | 269,576         | -1,280        | 768,511           |
| % Inc/(Dec) from 2009/10                  | -1.00%            | 1.04%           | 1.12%           | 1.20%           | -4.50%        | 0.62%             |
| <b>% of District Rate</b>                 | <b>-0.22%</b>     | <b>0.34%</b>    | <b>0.26%</b>    | <b>0.21%</b>    | <b>0.00%</b>  | <b>0.59%</b>      |

One of the key tasks for Members is to agree the estimates for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and to set cash limits for the Departmental Committees. The following section of the report provides an overview of the estimates for 2010/11 and more detail is provided in the appendices to this report.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

A spending limit of £28,501,263 is recommended for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in 2010/11. This represents a decrease of £286,804 or 1.00% over last year. The main items of expenditure are outlined at Appendix 1 and 2.

Setting aside the additional costs outside the control of BCC and the Departments' contribution to the Council-wide efficiency savings which are explained separately, the Department has a net reduction in expenditure of £329,256 compared to 2009/10. Within this net decrease, the Chief Executive's Department has reduced its budget by £36k. The Legal Services Department has increased external income by £100k. BIS have reduced their employee costs by £340k mainly by not renewing secondments. Furthermore, budgeted licence costs in ISB have been reduced by £100k and Project and Corporate Systems on-costs have been reduced by £66k. The Property and Projects Department has increased income from rent reviews by £180k. In addition, there is potential for increased income from electricity generation. This is a new and volatile area but, if income materialises, it should provide some capacity for the Council to provide invest to save funding for the next efficiency programme or meet potential additional costs of RPA.

**Health and Environmental Services Committee**

A spending limit of £43,057,644 is recommended for the Health and Environmental Services Committee in 2010/11. This represents an increase of £444,816 or 1.04% over last year.

Setting aside the additional costs outside the control of BCC and the Department's contribution to the Council-wide efficiency savings which are explained separately, the Department has a net reduction in expenditure of £154,505 compared to 2009/10. Within this net reduction, the Department has had to provide for additional Landfill Tax costs of £542k due to the annual increase in the landfill tax rate of £8 per tonne announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the March 2007 budget.

However, in order to counteract this and limit expenditure, the Department has introduced its own savings proposals for 2010/11. These savings include a reduction of £306k in waste costs, £80k reduction in external services contracts for the Public Conveniences and a reduction of £137k for Waste Education and Projects.

**Parks and Leisure Services Committee**

A spending limit of £30,792,206 is recommended for the Department in 2010/11 which represents an increase of £342,204 or 1.12% over last year.

Setting aside the additional costs outside the control of BCC and the Department's contribution to the Council-wide efficiency savings which are explained separately, the Department has a net increase in expenditure of £450,281 compared to 2009/10. Within this net increase, the Department has included £150k to support the development of a Leisure Strategy for Belfast and the Parks Improvement Plan which was outlined to the Parks and Leisure Committee in February 2009. The Department has also included £500k for the implementation of the condition survey of Leisure Centres which has recently been completed.

However, in order to counteract this and limit expenditure, the Department has increased income for 2010/11. The Department has increased Leisure Centre income by £90k with the continuation of the BOOST means-tested benefit system and the early opening scheme. The Zoo income is also estimated to increase by £269k reflecting the impact of the extended shop and new entrance facilities recently opened, as well as building on the successful visitor numbers currently being experienced.

**Development Committee**

A spending limit of £22,743,507 is recommended for the Department in 2010/11 which represents an increase of £269,576 or 1.20% over last year.

Setting aside the additional costs outside the control of BCC and the Department's contribution to the Council-wide efficiency savings which are explained separately, the Department has a net increase in expenditure of £234,561 compared to 2009/10. Within this net increase, the Department has increased its budget for arterial routes by £329k. This is to ensure that the Council maintains the capacity to engage in local regeneration (Renewing the Routes) activity and completes the implementation of ongoing initiatives.

However, in order to counteract this and limit expenditure, the Department has introduced its own cost reductions for 2010/11. These cost reductions include a reduction in the SNAP budget of £74k in order to match the budget to expected actual spend.

**Town Planning Committee**

Provision for expenditure by this Committee during the coming year is £27,170, a reduction of £1,280 from the current year. As Members will be aware this budget is principally a contingency to enable the Committee to commission a modest level of specialist advice on key planning issues on the understanding that should there be more significant research etc required, e.g. in relation to RPA changes, further funding will be made available to the Committee. The slight reduction in the budget recognises that current financial pressures on the Council affects all activities.

**D. Summary of Implications for the Overall Rate Position**

The table below summarises the current rate position discussed above and its impact on the ratepayer. Out of the £24.38 average increase per annum for each ratepayer, some £16.48 relates to the need to strengthen reserves and some £1.83 per annum relates to Departmental estimates.

**Implications for Ratepayers**

| <b>PROPERTY</b>                       | <b>Ave Capital Value/NAV</b> | <b>Increase in Rate Bill</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b><i>Domestic Properties</i></b>     | <b>£</b>                     | <b>£</b>                     |
| Terrace House                         | 86,425                       | 18.32                        |
| 3-Bed Semi-Detached House             | 132,173                      | 28.02                        |
| 4-Bed Detached House                  | 293,843                      | 62.29                        |
| Apartment                             | 83,379                       | 17.68                        |
| Average Capital Value                 | 115,000                      | 24.38                        |
| <b><i>Non-Domestic Properties</i></b> |                              |                              |
| Office Property                       | 12,728                       | 235.47                       |
| Retail Property                       | 10,247                       |                              |

Work is ongoing on a communication statement on key messages for the rates announcement which will be discussed further at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 22 January.

**Recommendations**

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and agree:

- (a) That the current capital programme commitments should be financed through an increase in the rate of 1.28% with the potential for up to £1m of reserves to be available to fund new capital commitments (section B ii above);
- (b) The proposals for the allocation of the thematic budget of £500k for 2010/11 (section B iii above);
- (c) The proposals for the £1m efficiency programme for 2010/11 and that more work is needed to develop the efficiency programme for the medium term (section B iv above);
- (d) The cash limits which will be reported to Committees in January – Health and Environmental Services, Parks and Leisure, Development and Town Planning Committees (section C above); and
- (e) The estimate for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (section C above)

**APPENDIX 1**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

A spending limit of £28,501,263 is recommended for the Committee in 2010/11 which represents a decrease of £286,804 or 1.00% over last year. The main items of expenditure of the Committee are outlined at Appendix 2.

This is represented by:

|                                  | £                 |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Chief Executive's Department     | 4,682,011         |
| Legal Services Department        | 823,945           |
| Finance and Resources Department | 9,907,087         |
| Property and Projects Department | 11,484,170        |
| Corporate Priorities             | <u>1,604,050</u>  |
|                                  | <u>28,501,263</u> |

As can be seen from the table above the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee Estimates are made up of the spending of the four corporate departments along with a corporate priorities budget. Each of these elements are discussed in more detail below:

## Departments Estimates

### Chief Executive's Department

A spending limit of £4,682,011 is recommended for the Chief Executive's Department for 2010/11 which represents a decrease of £257,930 or 5.22% over last year. This excludes the budget of £27,170 allocated for the support of the Town Planning Committee.

Through the council's mini budget review, the VR exercise and the corporate efficiency programme the Department will be able to deliver some £400k of efficiency savings. One of the key areas of work which will contribute to the savings is a review of the business support arrangements and how these can be better aligned across the Chief Executive's Department and Legal Services. In addition, as indicated in the Rightsizing exercise report presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 11 December, efficiencies can also be achieved in Committee and Members' Services due to revised governance and committee arrangements which has reduced the workload in this area. Members have been assured that there will be full consultation with them on the review of Committee and Members' Services.

### Legal Services Department

A spending limit of £823,945 is recommended for the Legal Service's Department for 2010/11 which represents a decrease of £67,030 or 7.52% over last year.

The net decrease in the Department's budget has been brought about by increasing external income by £100k.

### Finance and Resources Department

A spending limit of £9,907,087 is recommended for the Finance and Resources Department for 2010/11 which represents an increase of £86,703 or 0.88% over last year. The main items of expenditure of the department are outlined at Appendix 2.

The Finance and Resources Department has been hit particularly hard by the economic recession and this will continue to be the case in 2010/11. External income is budgeted to reduce by £693k compared to 2009/10 - BIS (£200k), ISB (£33k) and investment income due to lower interest rates and reduced bank balances (£460k).

Despite this loss of external income, the Department has restricted its budgetary increase to £86,703 through implementing council wide efficiency savings of £284,520 and voluntary redundancy savings of £137k. In addition, BIS have reduced their employee costs by £340k mainly by not renewing secondments.

### **Property and Projects Department**

A spending limit of £11,484,170 is recommended for the Department for 2010/11 which represents an increase of £325,230 or 2.91%. The main items of expenditure of the Department are outlined at Appendix 2.

In setting the budget for 2010/11, the Department has had to provide for additional expenditure of £422k due to the reopening of the City Hall. Despite this cost pressure, the Department has restricted its budgetary increase to £325k through implementing council wide efficiency of £22,360 and voluntary redundancy savings of £176k and increasing income from rent reviews by £180k.

### **Corporate Priorities**

A spending limit of £1,604,050 is recommended for the Corporate Priorities budget for 2010/11 which represents a decrease of £373,780 or 18.90%.

The corporate priorities budget is used to deliver corporate work which benefits the whole organisation and would not normally be funded through functional budgets. This includes:

- The corporate thematic budget amounting to £500,000 which is discussed in detail in section B(iii) of this report.;
- The ICT budget amounting to £800,000 which relates to expenditure on ICT projects which will improve the information management in the organisation as a whole and deliver efficiency savings; and,
- Other projects amounting to £300,000 which mainly relate to building organisational capacity.

In addition, there is potential for increased income from electricity generation. This is a new and volatile area but if income materialises, it should provide some capacity for the council to provide invest to save funding for the next efficiency programme or meet potential additional costs of RPA.



APPENDIX 2

STRATEGIC POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MAIN ITEMS OF ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE 2010/11

|                                     | <u>Net Expenditure</u> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
|                                     | <u>2010/11</u>         |
|                                     | <u>£</u>               |
| <u>Chief Executive's Department</u> | 4,682,011              |
| Corporate Communications            | 1,027,877              |
| Committee & Members Services        | 2,437,028              |
| Good Relations                      | 478,892                |
| Business Support                    | 738,214                |
| <br>                                |                        |
| <u>Legal Services</u>               | 823,945                |
| <br>                                |                        |
| <u>Finance &amp; Resources</u>      | 9,907,087              |
| Human Resources                     | 1,599,878              |
| Financial Services                  | 2,510,545              |
| I.S.B.                              | 2,505,377              |
| Internal Audit/Audit Panel          | 647,077                |
| Project & Corporate Systems         | 348,639                |
| Pensions                            | 1,900,000              |
| Directorate                         | 395,571                |
| <br>                                |                        |
| <u>Property and Projects</u>        | 11,484,170             |
| Facilities Management               | 12,850,998             |
| CIT Operations and Initiatives      | 1,842,568              |
| Projects, Procurement and Estates   | -3,209,396             |
| <br>                                |                        |
| <u>Corporate Priorities</u>         | 1,604,050              |
| Corporate Thematic Priorities       | 500,000                |
| IT Projects                         | 800,000                |
| Other                               | 304,050                |
| TOTAL                               | 28,501,263''           |

The Director of Finance and Resources drew the Committee's attention to various aspects of the report and reminded the Members that the amount of money to be invested in the City Investment Strategy and the amount to be contributed from the rates to Council reserves had been agreed previously by the Committee at its meeting on 11th December. She pointed out that the cash limits proposed for the several Departmental Committees represented an increase of only 0.59% from the previous district rate and this demonstrated that the Departments had been working extremely hard to ensure that the budgets were scrutinised so that any increase was kept to a minimum. She pointed out that the lead-in time needed to secure efficiency savings would be greater in the future, given that the Council will have achieved by 2010/11 almost £9 million of savings since the 2006/07 financial year and that most of the easy to implement initiatives had already been pursued. To this end, she would be submitting a report to a future meeting regarding the introduction of a planned programme of efficiencies for future years.

In answer to Members' questions, the Director of Finance and Resources assured the Committee that there had been detailed scrutiny of the Departmental Estimates and that the Departments were examining closely employee costs and that a report thereon would be submitted to a future meeting. She provided information regarding the total amount that the Council spent on agency staff and consultants and undertook to provide figures on other issues directly to the Member who had raised the matters. She pointed out that discussions had been held with Land and Property Services regarding the Estimated Penny Product and reminded the Committee that considerable work had been undertaken recently with that Service by Council officers to ensure that such estimates would be more accurate in the future than had been the case in the past.

During discussion, a Member suggested that it would be useful for the Committee to consider setting a target for future rate increases and that this matter should be considered in the first instance by the Budget and Transformation Panel.

Following further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Rodgers,  
Seconded by Councillor Stoker,

That the Committee:

- (i) agrees that the current capital programme commitments be financed through an increase in the rate of 1.28% with the potential for up to £1m of reserves to be available to fund new capital commitments;
- (ii) agrees the proposals for the allocation of the thematic budget of £500k for 2010/11;

- (iii) agrees the proposals for the £1m efficiency programme for 2010/11 and that more work is needed to develop the efficiency programme for the medium term;
- (iv) agrees that the cash limits as set out in the report be reported to the Departmental Committees in January; and
- (v) approves the estimate for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in the sum of £28,501,263.

On a vote by show of hands fourteen Members voted in favour of the proposal and none against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Chairman