

Budget and Transformation Panel

Minutes of Meeting No. 9

Tuesday 9 March 2010

Present:

Cllr T Hartley	SF (Chair)
Cllr D Browne	UUP
Cllr P Convery	SDLP
Cllr M Jones	ALL
P McNaney	Chief Executive
J Thompson	Director of Finance and Resources
R Cregan	Improvement Manager

Apologies:

Cllr R Newton	DUP
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1. Visit Land and Property Services

Alan Bronte and Iain Greenway from LPS and Donal Rogan (BCC) were in attendance for this item.

The Chair welcomed the officials to the meeting. He then explained that the work of LPS is critical to the success of the council as 75% of its income comes from the rate. He also stressed that many rate payers who are caught between capping and rate relief thresholds struggle to pay rates.

The Chair acknowledged that the working relationship between the two organisations had greatly improved and that a number of improvements had been made. Members then raised a number of concerns in relation to the following areas:

- Rates collection levels
- Vacant property control
- Estimated Penny Product
- Actual Penny Product
- Level of debt
- Cost of collection.

LPS officials outlined the work being done to improve the systems, processes, data collection and training and how this will start to be reflected in improved LPS performance.

Action Required:

Following an open and frank discussion the following actions were agreed:

1. A suite of indicators would be implemented from the start of the new financial year covering the following areas:
 - Rates collection
 - Vacant properties
 - Timeliness of Estimated Penny Product and Actual Penny Product notifications
 - Deviation from Estimated Penny Product and Actual Penny Product
 - Cost of Collection
 - Debt recovery
2. The council and LPS would work together to agree an action plan for further improvement work, particularly taking into consideration how the council can help facilitate change in the political environment/legislation.

2. Proposed process for preparation for 2011/12

The Director of Finance and Resources outlined the key aspects of the rates setting process for 2011/12. A copy of the proposed process is provided at Appendix One. The Panel agreed with the process and noted the importance of building on the work done in the setting of the rate for 2010/11.

Action:

In April the Director of Finance and Resources will provide the Budget Panel with an overview of spend across the council and further details on the efficiency programme.

In May the Director of Finance and Resources will discuss with the Budget Panel and the Strategic and Policy Resources Committee the setting of an indicative rate and efficiency target for 2011/12.

3. Efficiency Programme

The Director of Finance and Resources informed Members of the continuing work she is doing with the other directors to identify areas where future efficiency savings can be made. A number of potential work streams have been identified which are:

- Assets and Land
- Procurement
- Challenge to Budgets
- ICT
- Service Reviews
- Income Generation

Action:

The Budget Panel agreed that the future efficiency programme could be developed in the context of these areas and that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee should be requested to endorse this approach.

Appendix One: Proposed Preparation Process for 2011/12

Proposed preparation process for 2011/12

March	Budget Panel and SP&R 19 March	Agreement on rates process for 2011/12 and Overview of efficiency programme
April	Budget Panel April	Planning process for 2011/12 Overview of spend across Council
May	Budget Panel and SP&R May	Indicative rate and efficiency target For 2011/12
Jun-Aug		Prepare for detailed rates exercise. Challenge of budgets and realignment. Progress efficiency programme
Sep-Oct		Preparation of draft estimates by Department
November	SP&R November	Highlight key issues
December	Budget Panel and SP&R December	Discuss and finalise options for rates position taking into account potential savings and the implications of managing reserves & financing the capital programme
January	SP&R January	
	Department Committees	
	SP&R January	Recommendation to Council on district rate 2011/12
February	Council 1 February	Agree district rate 2011/12