

Minutes of: PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 30th January 2012

PRESENT: Councillor McInnes (In the Chair)
Councillors L Barnes, Morris, Roberts, Robertson
and Stansfield

Irene Divine (co-opted Member)

IN ATTENDANCE: Janice Crawford, Finance Manager
Matthew Parkes, Rossendale Transport Ltd
Alistair Nuttall, Rossendale Transport Ltd
Phil Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer
Councillor A Barnes, Leader of the Council
Councillor Marriott (Portfolio Holder for Finance and
Resources)
Councillor Cheetham, Chair of Rossendale Transport

2 Members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aldred and Brendan O'Reilly (Rossendale Transport).

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2011, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for discussion.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Robertson declared a personal interest as she was on the Board of Rossendale Transport.

Councillor L Barnes declared a personal interest as she was on the Board of Rossendale Transport.

Councillor Marriott declared a personal interest as he was on the Board of Rossendale Transport.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair agreed to deviate from the Procedure for Public Speaking and allow the members of the public to ask questions as the reports were discussed.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided clarification for the Committee on a question asked at the last meeting on the performance figures within the last integrated performance report in relation to the average fuel used rather than actual tonnage of waste collected.

The Operations Manager confirmed that fuel used is monitored because it is the biggest area of expenditure and one that the Operations team are working on to reduce. Average tonnage is detailed in NI 191 (residual household waster per household).

The Finance Manager informed the Committee that total cost variances within the fuel budget were being monitored with a split between usage and unit price.

Data collected during 2011/12 would now be used as a benchmark baseline for future comparisons of fuel usage performance.

7. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA)

The Chair informed the Committee that she had agreed to the above report being sent to the Committee for information only.

The information contained in the above report for the period from 1st October to 31st December 2011, indicated that the council had authorised directed surveillance on nil occasions. No requests had been refused.

The Chair indicated that if any Member had a question they should inform the Scrutiny Support Officer who would ensure their question was answered by the relevant Officer.

Resolved:

That the information be noted.

8. LOCAL LAND CHARGES DEBT

The Finance Manager presented a report which provided an update on the collection of works in default debts. This was referred for future monitoring by the Policy Scrutiny Committee following concern raised by Members about the amount of debt outstanding to the Council recorded within the Land Charges Register, which showed over 500 charges lodged against properties since 1974 and amounting to £307k which had not been collected.

Since the report to Policy Scrutiny in September 2011, officers have further analysed debts raised since 2006 which can still be pursued through the courts, totalling £78.3k. Of this amount £21.5k has been received with a further £20.8k being repaid gradually under approved instalment plans.

The Finance Manager gave an overview of how the Council intend to pursue the remainder of the debts and suggested actions which were as follows:

- Continue to collect the £20.8k outstanding on invoices being paid by instalments, ensuring that any slippage in payments is referred immediately for legal pursuit
- Maintain current legal proceedings with the £22.3k, which have or could lead to County Court Judgements (CCJs) and the subsequent enforcement, ensuring that any CCJs obtained are fully enforced to obtain the funds
- Continue the recovery of £8.3k which is still to be considered for legal action. There are 24 invoices which make up this total, with a maximum single value of £1,332 and only 5 invoices over £500. This will be undertaken on a priority basis of value, age and likelihood of recovery
- The remaining £234k of charges prior to 2006 on the Local Land Charges Register would be recovered following any pre-sale searches.

Officers would review individual cases to determine if any since 2000 might meet the Council's new enforced sales policy to speed up the recovery process.

A member of the public raised concern about the wording of a sentence within the report, which the Finance Manager provided clarification.

It was suggested that the Performance Scrutiny Committee receive an annual update of activity to enable them to continue to monitor the outstanding debt.

Resolved:

1. That the Committee note the recovery process and the proposed actions to pursue these debts.
2. That an Annual update report be presented to the Performance Scrutiny Committee at the end of the Council's financial year.

9. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) under Part 1 Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and information which is subject to any obligation of confidentiality as defined in Part 1 Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Stansfield asked that thanks be given to Michelle Hargreaves, Committee Officer, who had supported the Committee in the absence of the Scrutiny Support Officer and also welcomed the Scrutiny Support Officer on her return to work.

NB: Alistair Nuttall, Matthew Parkes and Councillor Cheetham joined the meeting for the following item.

10. ROSSENDALE TRANSPORT LIMITED

Alastair Nuttall, Managing Director of Rossendale Transport presented an update on the number of changes made to the service network, both in Lancashire and Transport for Greater Manchester.

Matthew Parkes, Finance Director presented information on their budget.

Members raised questions to which the Directors of Rossendale Transport responded.

Resolved:

That the Committee noted the information presented by the Directors of Rossendale Transport.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm at finished at 8.10pm

Signed:
(Chair)

Date: