



St Edmundsbury  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# B382

## Council 14 December 2010

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

***Written report by Cllr Nigel Aitkens  
Chairman of the Policy Development Committee***

This report covers the meeting of the Committee held on 24 November 2010.

#### **1. *Delivering a Sustainable Budget 2011/2012***

- 1.1 The Policy Development Committee plays an integral role in delivering a sustainable budget for the Council, by scrutinising recommendations for savings, increases in income and growth.
- 1.2 The Committee considered a paper which set out the background to the 2011/2012 budget, and the progress made to date on delivering a balanced budget. Proposed savings for 2011/2012, which currently amounted to £1.901m, were discussed in detail by the Committee, which recommended that all proposals be considered for inclusion in the 2011/2012 budget. Next the Committee considered the proposed growth areas for 2011/2012, again discussing many of these in detail, and recommended them all for inclusion in the 2011/2012 budget. The Committee also recommended the use of £0.685 from the General Fund Reserve to help meet the 2011/2012 Dynamic Review-Innovation, Value and Enterprise (DR-IVE) target.
- 1.3 Taking into account this growth, the remaining budget gap for 2011/2012 was £242k, and officers were working on proposals to fill this gap. Members noted, however, that the detailed outcome of the Coalition Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, which would be known in early December, may have an adverse effect on the gap.

#### **2. *Review of the Capital Programme***

- 2.1 A formal review of the Council's five year capital programme is undertaken annually at this time of year as part of the budget setting process, with the aim of keeping the programme up to date and to identify any pieces of work which are no longer a priority.

2.2 The Committee carried out this year's annual review of the programme, which had been updated and rescheduled to take into account approved changes to the programme as well as latest estimates on the timing and scheduling of projects. Recently completed major projects included The Apex and Haverhill Community Football Project. The Committee recommended approval of the rescheduled Capital Programme.

### **3. *Review of the policy, effectiveness and management of Article 4 Directions***

3.1 The Committee had previously raised concerns about the issues associated with Article 4 Directions, in particular that residents may be unaware of the requirements of the Directions, and it was requested that a review be undertaken of the use of Article 4 Directions within the two Bury St Edmunds conservation areas.

3.2 Members discussed the use of Article 4 Directions, why the Borough Council had them, the workload they generated and the implications of not having them. Members were in agreement that the main issue with regard to Article 4 Directions was that home owners were often not aware of the policy, and there was therefore a danger that people would make changes to their properties, and then be required to change them back.

3.3 A number of measures were discussed which could be introduced to achieve a greater proactive approach to improve awareness of Article 4 Directions, such as facilitating the formation of residents' associations, offering further seminars and workshops for residents, contacting letting agencies and landlords, and producing newsletters and updates, and a number of recommendations were made in this regard. Members were keen that these actions should be rolled out across all the conservation areas in the Borough, in order to make the public aware of what they could and could not do, whilst at the same time protecting the heritage of these important areas. The Committee also recommended that consideration be given to extending Article 4 Directions to other conservation areas in the Borough, with the support and co-operation of residents and parish councils.

### **4. *Overview and Scrutiny Structure***

4.1 The Committee was the third of the Council's three scrutiny committees to consider a report which reviewed the Council's scrutiny structure. As explained in the reports from the two other scrutiny chairmen, the current scrutiny structure had been in place since 2002, with little change taking place. In the current financial climate, where all areas of the Council were being reviewed with regard to efficiency and reduction of bureaucracy, it was considered an opportune time to examine the scrutiny structure.

4.2 The Committee made the same recommendation as the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, namely, that the Council's scrutiny structure be amended along the lines of Option 2 as set out in Report B270, with the removal of the Policy Development Committee, policy reviews being carried out by 'task and finish' groups of a new Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the budget responsibilities of Policy Development Committee (including Dynamic Review-Innovation, Value and Enterprise (DR-IVE) and Policy Based Budgeting) transferring to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

4.3 The Committee also recommended that 'task and finish' groups should be encouraged as the preferred method of scrutiny for reviews, that no Member should be a full Member of both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, and that consideration be given to increasing the number of Members on the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.