

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

10 May 2011

Scrutiny of the Business Plan 2011 – 2015

Purpose

1. To determine how best to scrutinise the parts of the Business Plan relevant to the Environment Select Committee.

Background

2. The revised draft Business Plan was formally adopted at Council on 22 February having been approved by Cabinet the previous week. The 4 year Plan sets out how the Council intends to meet the challenges of reduced resources, legislative change and demographic impact whilst delivering the Council's vision to create stronger more resilient communities and achieving its goals. The Plan describes the changing landscape and strategic direction of the Council and gives a number of benefits and outcomes to the action it will take. The Financial Plan also approved by Council forms an appendix to the Business Plan (all councillors have copies of these documents and the latest version should be retained for future reference).
3. The focus of the Joint Scrutiny meeting on 10 February was the revenue and capital budget 2011/12 but did touch on some of the longer term issues in the Financial Plan as well as references to the Business Plan.
4. The Liaison Board met in the afternoon following the Joint Scrutiny meeting when it received the draft Business Plan. The Liaison Board decided to ask each select committee with the support of scrutiny officers to identify the themes and individual topics from the Business Plan that fell within their remit and ensure that this then became the focus for revising the forward work programmes of the committees.

Approach

5. It was felt that a common approach across the select committees would provide consistency for the future. The select committees already have a guide for how they should run their meetings and also recently discussed optimum size of agendas and briefing arrangements etc. This will also be turned into a guide for

consideration by the Liaison Board at the next meeting. A discussion paper on the benefits of having a positive working relationship with the Executive and the actions necessary to achieve this was also adopted by the Liaison Board last summer. The resulting protocol will be considered as part of the wider governance review on involvement of backbench members in decision making called for by the Leader.

6. Scrutiny officers in consultation with the chairmen and vice-chairmen have been through the Business Plan and have identified the following themes as relevant to the **Environment Services Select Committee**:

Theme	Plan References	£ Budget	Comments and Scrutiny approach
Protecting the Economy	P54	£4 million investment over four years	This is a new area for the committee to scrutinise.
Highways maintenance	P57		The committee has maintained an interest in this area receiving a number of briefings from the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood and Planning.
Waste Management	P58	£23m investment over 4 years	The transformation of the Waste Service has been followed by a task group and more recently by the committee.
Leisure Services	P59	£4.4m investment over four years	The committee has followed the transformation of the service.
Energy efficiency	P64	£4.7m investment over four years	The committee has maintained an ongoing interest in this area.
Housing	P68		The main focus for the committee to date has been the towards the delivery of the west Wiltshire PFI scheme.

7. Scrutiny officers, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Executive members, partners and directors, will undertake a work planning exercise around the above themes to establish their delivery, timescales, budget and potential scrutiny approaches. As mentioned above, this exercise should inform a revised work programme and be the priority for any future scrutiny activity. A draft revised work programme will be presented to the Committee for consideration at the next meeting.
8. The Select Committee needs to be aware of the budget implications for support services for 2011/12 and this should be taken into account when determining the future work programme of the Committee, particularly in terms of how much activity can be supported at any one time. The capacity of elected members especially those that lead on key activities should be also taken into account. The Liaison Board and Scrutiny Manager will continue to monitor the overall position regarding workload and pressures but this needs to be done in conjunction with the need to deliver positive outcomes for the Council as a whole.
9. In looking at priorities, it is also important to remember that the focus for O&S Select Committees should be on strategic and policy development matters and not 'local issues' which should be retained for consideration at Area Board level.
10. The forward planning activity outlined in this report should allow for better management of work flow and hopefully scheduling and communication of briefings and meetings. The adoption of the new Business Plan will mean that the current departmental delivery plans will be reviewed. These will also provide helpful detail on relevant themes and activities.

Recommendation

11. The Select Committee is asked to:

- (i) note that Council on 22 February adopted the 4 year Business Plan on recommendation from Cabinet;
- (ii) note the decision of the Liaison Board on 10 February that work is undertaken to identify relevant content from the Business Plan for the individual select committees;
- (iii) agree the list of themes set out above but acknowledging that further refinement will be made when more detail emerges; and
- (iv) recognise the budget implications and the demands on the leading scrutiny members in determining priorities and workload.

Paul Kelly

Scrutiny Manager (and Designated Scrutiny Officer)

Appendices

Appendix A - current Forward Work Programme