

Planning & Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Commencing: 6.00pm
13 January 2005
Bourne Hill
Salisbury

MINUTES

Present

Councillor P D Edge (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs E A Chettleburgh (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mrs P J Bissington
Councillor Ms S C Mallory
Councillor W R Moss
Councillor A G Peach
Councillor L Randall
Councillor Mrs C A Spencer
Councillor I R Tomes

In Attendance

D Crook (Policy Director)
A Davies (Democratic Services Officer)
A Rountree (Planning Officer)
J Sage (Conservation Officer)

Councillor Mrs M M A Peach (Deputy Portfolio Holder, Planning and Economic Development)

Apologies

Councillor A J A Brown-Hovelt
Councillor Mrs J A Green

Public/Observers

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100. Public Questions/Statements

There were no public questions or statements

101. Councillor Questions/Statements

There were no Councillor questions or statements

102. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2004 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

103. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

104. Planning and Economic Development Draft Portfolio Plan

The Panel considered the previously circulated draft portfolio plan and the Policy Director gave a presentation outlining the main issues from the plan. During the discussion, the following points/questions were raised/asked:

- With reference to the requirement for savings as outlined in the Gershon review, could substantial savings in relation to IT be expected?

The Policy Director replied that IT efficiency savings had already been garnered. The Council was now under a duty to publish an annual statement, detailing efficiency savings.

- What level of “freeze” could be expected on low priority services?

The Policy Director referred Panel Members to page 3 of the draft portfolio plan. In terms of those services classed as essential, no cuts would be made. For very important services, efficiency savings may need to be considered. If savings are required then those services falling within the important and desirable categories would need to be targeted.

The Policy Director added that the Cabinet view was that statutory services and those services that met the Council’s political priorities, e.g. affordable housing, were classified as priority services. CCTV, Tourist Information Centres, Economic Development, Historic Buildings and Special Events all represented discretionary services and since they were not directly linked to the Council’s political priorities they had received a lower ranking.

- With reference to regional planning, there appeared to be less opportunity for Councillor involvement in regional decisions.

The Policy Director replied that the portfolio plan simply made reference to the regional spatial strategy. Further reports on this would come before Members in due course and if the Panel still felt that there was a democratic deficit, these concerns could be duly raised.

- Concern was expressed that a reduction in Historic Building Grants could result in a drop in the standards of repair work undertaken.

The Policy Director replied that the Cabinet was aware of this, but took the view that the funding available for historic building repairs was so small that the owners of these buildings should be able to meet the costs themselves.

- Concern was expressed that in an effort to meet the BVPI targets in relation to planning, the views of Parish Councils were being overlooked.

The Policy Director replied that the North-West Area Team Leader was currently preparing a further report on this for consideration by the Panel.

The Policy Director added that meeting BVPI targets impacted on the level of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) received. Last year Salisbury District Council had received £130,000 via the PDG and all of this money had been spent on improving the planning service. The greater part of the PDG had been spent on recruiting extra staff, some had been spent on new equipment and some had been earmarked for work on the City Centre vision. If more funds were received this year, the funding of staff would continue, capital planning projects would be financed and any surplus could be spent at the Council’s discretion.

RESOLVED – That it be noted that the Panel is still concerned about the changes to the level of Parish Council involvement in the determination of planning applications and the effect this has may have on the quality of decisions being taken.

105. Shop Front Design Leaflet

Members considered the previously circulated report of the Conservation Officer. During the consideration of this item, the following comments/suggestions were made:-

- Further guidance notes on signs and advertising would be useful. The Conservation Officer replied that the leaflet could not be overly prescriptive and was intended for guidance purposes.
- In future reprints of the leaflet, Members suggested that it would be useful to include before and after photographs.
- Members requested that the current positioning of the page numbers of the leaflet be repositioned to a more obvious location.
- Members suggested that it would be useful to distribute the leaflet via the following channels:-
 - Estate Agents
 - City Centre Management
 - Development Services/ Forward Planning and Conservation in connection with change of use applications and pre-application discussions with Planning Officers

RESOLVED – that the Cabinet be recommended to adopt the shop front design leaflet as supplementary planning guidance.

106. Update on Scrutiny Reviews

The Panel noted that the Churchfields Review had been postponed and the Hotel Conference Centre Review was due to next meet on Friday 14th January at 10am.

107. Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the next meeting had been arranged for 14th February at 6pm.

The meeting concluded at 7.15pm