



## Budget Strategy Task and Finish Group

Notes of the meeting held at County Hall, Colliton Park,  
Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1XJ on Monday, 5 December 2016.

### **Present:**

Robert Gould (Chairman)  
Peter Finney, Paul Kimber, Mike Lovell and William Trite.

Officers Attending: Richard Bates (Chief Financial Officer), Jim McManus (Chief Accountant), Patrick Myers (Assistant Director - Design and Development) and Helen Whitby (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

(Notes: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Group to be held on **Friday, 13 January 2017.**)

### **Apologies for Absence**

49 Apologies for Absence were received from Steve Butler, Andy Canning and Janet Dover.

### **Notes of Previous Meeting**

50 The notes of the meeting held on 17 October 2016 were confirmed.

### **School Transport Appeal Process**

51 Following consideration of a report on the School Transport Appeal Process by the Assistant Director – Design and Development at a meeting on 17 October 2016, the Group considered a further report which set out more detailed proposed changes to the appeal process.

The Assistant Director explained that he had reviewed practice in other local authorities, prior to recommending the two stage appeal process. This would ensure that policy and procedure had been applied correctly at Stage One, with parents having the right to appeal any decision at Stage Two. He suggested that a Task and Finish Group be established to look at this in detail.

With regard to member involvement, the Group noted that other local authorities had independent panels to undertake this duty so as to avoid any compromise of the local member's position. The additional cost of having independent panel members was recognised. To overcome this, and maintain member accountability and oversight, it was suggested that a pool of members could be identified to undertake this duty so as to avoid any local member issues. The need for local members to be aware of any appeals for their constituents and the value of their local knowledge was emphasised, whilst recognising the need for data protection to be maintained.

Members agreed that a Task and Finish Group be set up to establish a new policy and procedure. The Task and Finish Group would comprise Deborah Croney, Mike Lovell, William Trite, Kate Wheller and a Liberal Democrat, nominated by the Group Leader, and would meet early in the New Year to undertake this piece of work. The Assistant Director, the Service Director – Environment, and a representative from Legal Services would be asked to support the Task and Finish Group.

### **Resolved**

1. That a Task and Finish Group comprising Deborah Croney, Mike Lovell, William

- Trite, Kate Wheller and a Liberal Democrat, nominated by the Group Leader, be set up to establish a new policy and procedure for school transport appeals.
2. That advice be sought from the Monitoring Officer to establish the timeline to introduce the new arrangements.
  3. That six monthly reports are prepared to observe trends to appeals both for volume and costs.

### **Financial Matters**

52

(a) Autumn Statement

The Chief Financial Officer explained that the Autumn Statement had not contained any changes to departmental expenditure and there were no policy costings for any changes. So the forthcoming grant cuts remained unchanged.

(b) Budget

A report on the current budget situation was to be considered by the Cabinet on 14 December 2016, which would include a number of risks for the Authority, some of which were significant. Members briefly discussed some of these including the implications of changes to pensions contributions, any further reduction in the Education Services Grant, the Better Care Fund, the Children's Services base budget, the Adult and Community Services budget, the cost of Local Government Reform, local business rate retention and the Authority's level of reserves. Lobbying by various organisations to influence Central Government would continue.

The financial settlement was expected to be announced the following week and an update on this would be provided for the next meeting, along with updates on the Children's and Adult and Community Services budgets.

### **Resolved**

That reports on the financial settlement and the Children's and Adult and Community Services budgets be provided for the next meeting.

### **Work Programme**

- 53 The Group considered and agreed its work programme. Items set out in note 52 above were added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Meeting Duration: 2.00 pm - 2.40 pm