

RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7th January, 2008

PRESENT – Councillor Haszeldine (in the Chair); Councillors Coultas, Francis Johnson, Lewis, Maddison, Richmond, A. Scott, and Walker. (9)

APOLOGIES – Councillors Burton and Swainston. (2)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE – Councillors Chapman and Mrs. H. Scott. (2)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE – Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and David Hall, Assistant Director, Accounting Services and Local Taxation, within the Corporate Services Department.

R69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations of interest reported at the meeting.

R70. FUTURE OF COMPLAINTS HANDLING - Consideration was given to a 'call-in' from the Cabinet meeting held on the 11th December, 2007 (Minute C1305)/Dec/07) in relation to the future of complaints handling within the Authority. The 'call-in' was taken in accordance with the Council's Constitution and had been signed by three Members of this Scrutiny Committee.

The Members who had requested that the decision be 'called-in' outlined their reasons for that decision and requested further information from the Officers on the actual number of complaints received within the Authority and the savings that would be achieved in other areas of the Council if the proposals were approved and a centralised complaints unit was established.

Discussion ensued on the availability of the information in relation to the number of complaints received within the Authority; the need for further improvements to be made to the Council's current complaints procedure to drive continuous improvement in service delivery; and the necessary investment to implement those improvements; the advantages in establishing a Central Complaints Unit to improve consistency with complaints handling and recording to ensure learning is achieved; the Corporate priority of the Council to improve customer services; the current process for handling complaints; the support of the Council's Corporate Management Team to the initiative; and the funding of any additional posts which might be required to establish and operate a Centralised Corporate Complaints Unit and the budgetary implications.

RESOLVED – That Cabinet be advised that this Scrutiny Committee supports, in principle, the implementation of a streamlined 2 stage complaints process that is managed centrally but has some concerns about the funding of any Centralised Complaints Unit in view of the current budgetary considerations and that it be requested to ask the Officers to look further into alternative options of how any Centralised Complaints Unit could be funded.