

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECOVERY BOARD

Thursday, 2 September 2004

PRESENT: Councillor Hadland (in Chair); Councillors Barron, Church, Marriott and Woods

Jon Warlow
Nick Wood
Vaughan Shayler
Phil Hamberger
Tony Du Sautoy
Sue Croughan
Kathy Sugden
Ringo Sandhu

ACTION

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Larratt A Turrell and S.Wade.

2. NOTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 22 AND 23 JULY 2004

The notes of the meeting held on 22 July and the reconvened meeting held on 23 July at Sedgebrook Hall were agreed subject to the addition of Councillor Woods in the list of those present at the 23 July meeting. T.Du Sautoy

Tony De Sautoy advised that the concept of "Change Champions" had been discussed further within the political groups as suggested and that although nominations had been received from one group, another group was not so keen on the process. Therefore further discussion needed to take place and a report would be brought back to the Recovery Board meeting next week.

3. RECOVERY PLAN ANNEX

V Shayler referred to the Recovery Plan Annex, copies of which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that we had been asked to further work up the annex to gain clearer definition in terms of the projects, particularly around defining outcomes and performance measures. Approval to the proposed format of the annex as submitted, was sought from the group. It was noted that this was a means of providing an easy to understand format with one project per page, including a one to one relationship between measures and targets. Councillor Church commented that targets were meaningless unless there was something to measure them against and suggested that a further column be included to show the actual position of the project to measure the target against. This was agreed.

It was also agreed that the outcomes would be re-phrased into plainer, easier understood sentences.

Some concern was expressed over the fact that discussions were still taking place regarding the format rather than the actual content when there was another monitoring board meeting due in a couple of weeks. V Shayler explained that the ODPM had stressed the need for the correct format and that the revised content would then duly follow. Some further discussion on this point and the current position with regard to the project then ensued, it being noted that all was within the timescales expected by the Government office. It was noted that Pat Coleman had agreed that one project from each of the 6 priorities should be submitted to the Monitoring Board on 16 September for discussion and that these were in hand.

The format of the annex was then duly adopted by the Group as the final format.

4. PROPOSALS FOR REPORTING

V Shayler referred to the note circulated with the agenda which set out the suggested format for reporting proposals through the various tiers from the Monitoring Board up through to Council. It was noted that some considerable time had been spent on discussing how to monitor and take on changes to the annex and how best to deal with this. He then took the group through each step set down in the report and sought approval from the group accordingly.

Some discussion on how this system was arrived at and what comprised key changes then ensued. It was noted that this format had been based on a diagram taken from the Recovery Plan and the governance arrangements described therein. It was noted that there would be a direct reporting line from the Recovery Board to full Council on key issues. The issue of a method of reporting the minutes of this meeting to full Council also arose. J Warlow advised that there were constitutional issues involved here and that he would speak to the Borough Solicitor on this aspect to ensure that the correct procedures were followed in accordance with the Borough Council's constitution.

J.Warlow

5. CHANGE REQUESTS REPORT

R Sandhu referred to the report circulated with the agenda advising that this set out all the requests for change that had been considered by the Change Programme Management Board on 25 August. He drew attention to a number of the requests that had been specifically recommended to this Board for their consideration as examples of the type of requests they would be asked for input on.

R.Sandhu

These were:- C.11 (4) - The Implement Procurement Partnership Strategy Project which was requesting a change of project title to Devise Service Partnership Strategy.

C.11 (4) – (see above) with a request to redefine Milestones following project definition.

S.14 - Implement Call/Contact Centre Project with the request to merge

this with S.11 - Implement Phased One Stop Shop in Guildhall.

H8 – Options Appraisal stage 1 (HRA) request to breakdown project to a max 8 concise milestones.

The Recovery Board duly agreed to recommend approval for each of these projects. It was noted that in future it would be useful to have these requests in advance of the meeting.

6. SERVICE BUDGET PRIORITIES UPDATE

It was noted that the two page report circulated with the agenda was basically a summary of the work in progress. Comment was made that at present the aim was to try to provide options up to £4 million pounds and so far there was a short fall of £1.5 million pounds. It was noted that this report would be discussed more fully at Sedgebrook 3 in a few weeks time. In the meantime Senior Management Team would look at other options that could be brought forward. It was suggested that before the next session at Sedgebrook it would be beneficial for members to have a briefing session and as such it was suggested that members of the Recovery Board meet with the Management Team at the beginning of the week of Sedgebrook 3. At the same time the opportunity to discuss how the agenda for Sedgebrook 3 could best be executed could be discussed.

T Du Sautoy

J Warlow then briefly outlined the proposed format for the 1½ days of Sedgebrook 3 which was seen primarily as an opportunity to discuss priorities and it was hoped that this would result in some clear direction and priorities. It would commence with an introduction to the session and include establishing continuity of the recovery process. Then a discussion on prioritisation would be kept to a fairly limited duration. This would be followed by an initial introduction on the list of options. The afternoon of the first day would be taken up in discussing the big structural issues and include a presentation on the Gershon report and how this would impact upon authorities. The remaining half day would be given over to allow members time to deliberate on the options.

Kathy Sugden commented that the GMB had produced a very useful document on procurement and undertook to e-mail and also to send hard copies to members of the Recovery Board for their information.

Councillor Marriott made the comment that any consultation on the budget should be an important role of the Overview and Scrutiny process rather than Executive. Councillor Hadland made the comment that in terms of the consultation the greatest measure of consensus that could be achieved at the earliest possible stage must be to the benefit of the authority. He stressed the need to have a committed view in order to achieve some consensus as early as possible. Councillor Church made the comment that as a starting point it might be more useful to see where there were disagreements. It was noted that all these aspects would be raised at the briefing sessions and fully discussed at Sedgebrook.

7. CIRCULATION OF DRAFT REPORTS/POLICY DOCUMENTS

Councillor Woods raised this issue advising that it had arisen as a result of

his requesting a copy of the Environmental Options report and being told that this could not be made available to him as it was still in its draft format. He expressed the view that members of the Recovery Board should be able to have access to any reports in their draft format. Obviously the element of confidentiality would be observed. Some discussion regarding the Environmental options report then ensued it being noted that the report had been produced by external consultants. The basic principle regarding draft reports was then outlined ie that they remained within the domain of the portfolio holder until the necessary consultations had taken place and the report finalised and duly circulated to the Executive, the circulation of which included all members. This would have applied to the Environmental options report that Councillor Woods was referring to which was in a draft format when he first enquired about it. However Councillor Woods reiterated the point that members of the Recovery Board should be able to view reports at this stage should they so wish. Some further discussion on this point ensued it being recognised that there were different issues involved between in-house reports and those that had input from outside consultants. Also it had to be recognised that there could be problems in releasing external draft reports too widely too early. However the comments made for an early release of draft reports were duly noted.

8. DISCUSSION ON PERFORMANCE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

P Hamberger advised that he would be seeking members views on this prior to submitting a report to the next meeting of the Recovery Board. V Shayler commented that it was a case of ascertaining member requirements on what performance management information was required to enable members to manage delivery of the Recovery Plan.

P.Hamberger
T Du Sautoy

9. UPDATE ON CAPACITY FUND BIDS

J Warlow advised that five bids were being worked up at present all of which were in a draft format and which he would e-mail out to members of the Recovery Board for information. One of bids was a structure review, another was elected member capacity building programme, with a third being for Interim Service Capacity Building. Two further bids were in the discussion phase at present, one was dealing with developing people and managing a local authority and the second dealt with establishing the Programme Support Function and Business Change Manager development support.

V Shayler

Councillor Church enquired how much it was costing to fund a facilitator for Sedgebrook 3. V Shayler advised that the fee had as yet to be determined but that it was expected that PWC would be reducing their original fee for Sedgebrook 2, which would be taken into account in the negotiations.

10. UPDATE ON PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Discussion of this item was deferred until the next meeting.

11. PROPOSED STANDARD AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE

MEETINGS

Discussion of this item was deferred until the next meeting.

12. LETTER FROM PAT COLEMAN - RECOVERY PLAN

Copies of a recent letter from P Coleman dealing with overall views and comments on the Recovery Plan had been circulated with the agenda for information. It was agreed that this would be circulated to all members.

V.Shayler

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

14. DATES OF FUTURE RECOVERY BOARDS AND GMB MEETINGS

It was agreed that consideration of these dates be deferred until the next meeting on Thursday 9 September at 5 pm at the Guildhall.

The meeting concluded at 1910 hours.

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