

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD,
ON TUESDAY 21 APRIL 2009, AT 7.30
PM

PRESENT: Councillor A P Jackson (Chairman/Leader).
Councillors M R Alexander, L O Haysey, T Milner,
R L Parker and M J Tindale.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, W Ashley, K A Barnes,
N Clark, J Demonti, R Gilbert, J Mayes,
N C Poulton, J O Ranger, S Rutland-Barsby,
J P Warren, C Woodward and B Wrangles.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Caroline Goss	- Communications Officer
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community and Cultural Services
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

732 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of
Councillor M G Carver.

733 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor B Wrangles declared a personal interest in the matter referred to at Minute 742 – Transfer of Community Meals Service, in that she was a volunteer for the WRVS.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

ACTION

734 “EVERYONE MATTERS” – A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR EAST HERTS

The Leader of the Council submitted a report outlining the statutory work undertaken with partner organisations in producing a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of East Herts. The Strategy was detailed at Appendix ‘A6’ of the report now submitted.

The SCS had been developed through evidence base from a variety of sources and a number of consultations, as detailed at Appendix ‘B6’ of the report now submitted. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was producing an action plan, as detailed at Appendix ‘C6’ of the report now submitted, that would implement the Strategy.

The Leader stated that the Strategy set out the LSP’s overarching vision and shared ambitions for East Herts over the next 15 years with an action plan outlining how the ambitions would be realised in the District. The framework for delivery and monitoring would be reviewed annually to ensure that targets for delivery were achieved.

The Leader referred to the important relationship with, and clear link to, the Local Development Framework (LDF), the portfolio of spatial planning documents that would shape the future of East Herts and deliver sustainable development. Both the East Herts SCS and

the LDF shared the same vision and themes. There were also strong links to other Council and partnership strategies, such as the Housing Strategy, East Herts Public Health Strategy, Community Safety Plan and the Children's Trust Action Plan.

The Community Scrutiny Committee had considered the Strategy, at its meeting held on 7 April 2009 and had supported its adoption.

The Executive endorsed the Strategy as now submitted.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the comments and recommendations of the LSP Board of 17 April 2009, be received;

(B) the comments of Community Scrutiny Committee be received; and

(C) the Strategy for implementation across the Council be endorsed. CE

**735 EAST HERTS ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY
AND ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2008-12**

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report seeking approval of the Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan for 2008 – 12.

The Department of Communities and Local Government had produced strategic guidance in 2008 to emphasise the importance of good asset management at the local level. The Council was required to ensure that it conformed with best practice and addressed outstanding actions in the Use of Resources Action Plan.

The Executive Member commended the proposed Strategy and Plan for 2008-12 as an appropriate

response to the current need to adopt a strategic approach to asset management in line with corporate priorities and other strategic plans. He commented that significant investment and disposal decisions would be the subject of thorough option appraisal and whole life costing. Independent consultants would be used to undertake this in the case of any proposed capital investment of £500,000 or more in property. Training to enable asset management staff to apply these techniques to other significant projects below this threshold had been arranged.

It was also suggested that, as the Key Improvement Priorities and Asset Register were working documents which would be subject to change throughout the Plan period, the Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support, in consultation with the Director of Internal Services, be authorised to agree non-material changes as and when required.

In response to a question from Councillor N Clark on whether training for Officers on property appraisals involving assets of less than £500,000 had been organised, the Executive Member stated that this had been arranged for 18 May 2009.

Councillor N Clark sought details on which projects in 2008 had been subject to full option appraisal by external consultants and was advised that this information could be obtained from Officers outside of the meeting.

The Executive endorsed the Strategy and the Plan as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the Asset Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan 2008 to 2012 be approved; and

(B) the Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support, in consultation with the

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Director of Internal Services, be authorised to agree non-material changes as required from time to time.

736 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE DATA QUALITY STRATEGY

The Leader submitted a report proposing revisions to the Data Quality Strategy following recommendations made by the Council's External Auditors after the 2007/08 Data Quality Audit.

The External Auditors had found that whilst the Council's processes for securing good data quality were good, this had yet to translate into an understanding of the outcomes from having good quality data, nor had they become embedded for ensuring good quality data from partners. Therefore the main revisions to the Strategy centred on Partnerships. Other sections that had been revised included information on National Indicators, Data Quality Champions and background information with regards to the new Use of Resources framework.

The Executive supported the revised Strategy as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the amended Data Quality Strategy, as now submitted, be amended.

737 CAR PARK FEES AND CHARGES – AMENDMENT TO OFF-STREET RESIDENTIAL SEASON TICKETS 2009/10

The Executive Member for Planning Policy and Transport submitted a report proposing revised charges on off-street residential season tickets for 2009/10 and the withdrawal of the season tickets a year earlier than previously agreed. In his absence, the Executive Member for Community Safety and Protection detailed the proposals.

The Executive recalled that, these charges related to thirteen season tickets that were the remnant of a small-scale scheme, which was no longer considered appropriate for East Herts. Therefore, it had been agreed to discontinue them over a period of three years, during which the charge would be raised until it matched the true cost of parking. The first such increase had been applied in 2008/09 and further increases were due to be applied in 2009/10 and 2010/11, which was currently scheduled to be their final year of operation.

The 2009/10 charge for these season tickets had been set at £801.58 including VAT. Following a request by Members to review this increase, it was proposed to reduce the charge for 2009/10 to £600 including VAT. It was also proposed that the scheme be discontinued at the end of 2009/10, a year earlier than previously agreed.

In response to a question from Councillor C Woodward, the Executive Member explained the rationale for the proposals.

The Executive supported the proposals as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) a change to the charge for residential off-street season tickets previously set, as now detailed, be approved; and

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(B) 2009/10 be the final year in which these season tickets will be sold.

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RESOLVED ITEMS

738 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive

meeting held on 17 March 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

739 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY

The Executive received a report detailing those issues referred to the Executive by the Scrutiny Committees. Issues relating to specific reports for the Executive were considered and detailed at the relevant report of the Executive Member.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

740 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AT GRANGE PADDOCKS AND HARTHAM LEISURE CENTRES (LEISURE CONTRACT VARIANT BID 2)

The Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture submitted a report proposing capital investment of up to £3,584,900, subject to final negotiation, to improve the Hartham and Grange Paddocks leisure centres in accordance with the business case set out at Appendix 'B9' of the report now submitted.

The Community Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 7 April 2009, had supported the proposal to refurbish Grange Paddocks as a priority with some lesser improvements to Hartham Leisure Centre to be considered. The Committee also requested that Officers obtain a validation of the financial analysis and assumptions provided by SLM Limited contained within the business case.

The Executive Member thanked the Scrutiny Committee and expressed her regret at not being able to attend the meeting. She explained that, as a result of its comments, the plans and figures for Hartham had been reconfigured.

The Executive Member referred to the need to ensure that the financial analysis contained within the business case was validated. Therefore, she proposed that the matter be

deferred to a special Executive meeting in two weeks.

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support also commented on the figures within the business case and concurred with the proposal to defer the matter.

The Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture also commented on e-mail communication that had been sent the previous week and advised Members of the need to view the bigger picture. She commented that whilst it would be important to examine the financial analyses, Members also needed to consider the social investment, which she believed could not be quantified.

In response to a comment by Councillor J O Ranger, the Leader and the Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support both stated that it was not always appropriate to use the same discounted cash rate in every analysis.

The Executive agreed to defer the matter for consideration at a special Executive meeting in two weeks.

RESOLVED – that (A) the matter be deferred to a special Executive meeting in two weeks; and DIS

(B) Officers be requested to validate the financial analysis and assumptions contained within the business case. DCCS/
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741 PROPOSAL TO CONVENE AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING PANEL

The Executive Members for Housing and Health and Community Safety and Protection submitted a joint report seeking approval to convene a panel that would consider a range of options for the provision of affordable housing in East Herts.

The Executive was reminded that the Community Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 27 January 2009, had considered options for the provision of affordable housing during the economic downturn. The Committee resolved that the Council should support the appraisal of individual sites with a view to funding the conversion of units to either social and intermediate rent or supporting Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in bidding to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to do the same. The Committee further resolved that the Council should liaise with developers to actively encourage the utilisation of unsold homes through innovative new schemes.

The Executive noted that, due to the current economic climate, the Council was receiving a range of requests for support from RSLs that differed from those that had been requested in the past. These options were being presented on an almost daily basis and generally required a rapid response, so that the RSLs could take advantage of the new positions they were able to negotiate with developers or others.

It was proposed that a panel be convened to meet regularly to consider the options being put forward. This panel would consider each scheme on its merits as well as the whole range of implications, from affordability to planning considerations and the need to create sustainable communities. It would exist to ensure that East Herts was in a position to allow others to take advantage of opportunities for providing affordable housing, whilst evaluating the risks to the Council and the wider community.

It was recommended that the panel should comprise the relevant portfolio holders with remits for both housing and development control, i.e. Housing and Health and Community Safety and Protection. Officers from both relevant services would also sit on this panel and liaise with Legal services in relation to section 106 agreements. It was suggested that the Executive Member for Housing and Health be empowered to make decisions on the proposals

being brought forward, following consultation with the panel.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) an affordable housing panel be convened on a regular basis to consider whether and how to support a range of options for the provision of affordable housing in East Herts;

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(B) the panel comprise the two Members whose portfolios cover both housing and development, i.e. Councillors Parker and Alexander, plus officers from the Health and Housing Department and Planning and Building Control Department;

(C) the resolution of the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting of 27 January 2009 to (1) appraise individual sites with a view to funding the conversion of units to either social and intermediate rent or supporting RSLs in bidding to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to do the same and (2) liaise with developers to actively encourage the utilisation of unsold homes through innovative new schemes, be supported; and

(D) the Executive Member for Housing and Health be empowered to make decisions with regard to the matters considered by the panel, following consultation with that panel.

742 AGREEMENT WITH HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FOR TRANSFER OF COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE ON A THREE YEAR TAPERED SUBSIDY ARRANGEMENT

The Executive Member for Housing and Health submitted a report detailing the arrangements negotiated with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) for the transfer of the Community Meals service.

The Executive recalled that, at its meeting held on 6 January 2009, it had agreed to accept HCC's offer to assume responsibility for the provision of Community Meals in the District, for implementation after the end of the current contract with WRVS on 30 July 2009.

The Executive Member referred to the agreement attached at Appendix 'A11' of the report now submitted, which set out the detail of the handover subsidy arrangement between East Herts Council and HCC. He detailed the issues that had been addressed in relation to a liability ceiling of £25,000 on start-up costs and also for such a payment to be made in 2010/11.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Wrangles for WRVS staff, the Executive Member undertook to request Officers to respond in writing.

The Executive approved the proposal as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that further to the resolution of 6 January 2009, to accept in principle, Hertfordshire County Council's offer to assume responsibility for the future provision of Meals on Wheels, the Director of Customer and Community Services be authorised to enter into the agreement with Hertfordshire County Council, as attached at Appendix 'A11' of the report submitted.

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743 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK – FEBRUARY 2009

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on the finance, performance and risk monitoring for the month of February 2009.

RESOLVED – that (A) the budgetary variances set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report submitted, be noted.

(B) any extra Investment Income generated over the sum in the probable estimate be put into the Equalisation Reserve; and	DIS
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(C) the £132,167 additional LABGI funding be carried forward in the General Reserve.	DIS
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744 OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC RISK MONITORING REPORT (1 OCTOBER – 30 DECEMBER 2008)

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on action taken to mitigate and control risks tracked by operational and strategic risk registers during the period October – December 2008.

The Executive noted the report.

RESOLVED - that the progress in taking action to mitigate and control risks tracked by operational and strategic risk registers during the period 1 October to 30 December 2008, be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm

Chairman
Date