

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2013, AT 7.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Taylor (Chairman).
Councillors D Abbott, M Alexander,
D Andrews, W Ashley, P Ballam, E Bedford,
E Buckmaster, S Bull, M Carver,
Mrs R Cheswright, K Crofton, A Dearman,
J Demonti, P Gray, L Haysey, T Herbert,
Mrs D Hone, A Jackson, G Jones,
G Lawrence, J Mayes, G McAndrew,
M McMullen, P Moore, W Mortimer,
M Newman, T Page, P Phillips, M Pope,
J Ranger, C Rowley, P Ruffles, S Rutland-
Barsby, N Symonds, M Tindale, A Warman,
G Williamson, N Wilson, M Wood,
C Woodward, B Wrangles and J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services
Adele Taylor	- Director of Finance and Support Services

601 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the press and public to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast.

She referred to the recent events she had attended and highlighted the charity event on 17 February 2013, at the Ancient Raj, Sawbridgeworth. She thanked all the raffle prize donors and was pleased to report that £974.85 had been raised for the Great Ormond Street Hospital neo-natal care unit.

602 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2013, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

603 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 5 FEBRUARY 2013

In respect of Minutes 604 – 608, which were all items relating to the Council's budget for 2013/14, the Executive Member for Finance gave a presentation.

The Executive Member explained the budget assumptions built into the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the additional 1% grant from the Government, which he believed should be passed on to the council taxpayer. Therefore, he proposed a 1% cut in council tax (see Minute 608 below). He reminded Members that council tax had been frozen for the previous two years and believed that the proposed cut was affordable in the medium term. In addition, the reduction would not prevent further investment in economic development initiatives and recycling improvements. He reminded Members that parking charges would be frozen for the fourth year in a row and that separate proposals on these and recycling would come forward in due course.

The Executive Member referred to changes in the council tax support regime. He acknowledged the difficulties some residents would face and advised that the revised scheme

would be reviewed later in the year. He reminded Members of other forthcoming changes in the benefits regime and referred to the impact on the Revenues and Benefits service. The new shared service arrangement with Stevenage Council had provided increased resilience.

The Executive Member also drew attention to investments and the increased income arising from structured deposits. Other investment opportunities would continue to be explored.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 5 February 2013, be received.

(see also Minutes 604 – 608)

604 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

RESOLVED – that (A) the 2013/14 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy and Prudential Indicators for East Herts Council be approved; and

(B) the Policy on Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) be approved.

605 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13 (REVISED) - 2015/16

RESOLVED – that (A) the comments of the Joint Scrutiny Committees of 15 January 2013, be received; and

(B) the new Capital Programme for the period 2012/13 (revised) to 2015/16 as now submitted, be approved.

606 FEES AND CHARGES 2013/14

RESOLVED – that (A) the comments of the Joint Scrutiny Committees of 15 January 2013, be received; and

(B) the increases in fees and charges as detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report submitted, be approved.

607 SERVICE ESTIMATES - PROBABLE OUTTURN FOR 2012/13, REVENUE BUDGET 2013/14

In response to a question from Councillor M Wood, the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support provided reassurance that there would be flexibility in respect of community planning and community engagement grants and that she would speak to Officers.

RESOLVED – that (A) the comments of the Joint Scrutiny Committees of 15 January 2013 be received;

(B) the probable Revenue Estimates for 2011/12 and the draft Revenue Estimates for 2012/13, as now submitted, be approved, subject to the amendment of budget code CCC8, as now detailed; and

(C) further consideration be given to reviewing the use of capital salaries in light of the changing balance between capital and revenue budgets.

608 CONSOLIDATED BUDGET REPORT AND 2013/14 – 2016/17 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Council approved an amendment to recommendation (F) that there be a 1% cut in council tax for 2013/14.

RESOLVED - that (A) the comments and proposals of the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees of 15 January 2013, be received;

(B) the probable outturn for 2012/13 be approved and it be agreed that any variation at outturn showing an improved position against the under spending now reported, be put to the cost of change reserve;

(C) additional earmarked reserves, as now detailed, be approved;

(D) the revenue budget for 2013/14, as now detailed, be approved;

(E) the Medium Term Financial Plan to 2016/17, as now submitted, be approved; and

(F) there be a 1% cut in council tax in 2013/14 and a zero increase projected for 2014/15.

609 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE: MINUTES
- 6 FEBRUARY 2013

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Control Committee meeting held on 6 February 2013, be received.

610 JOINT MEETING OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES: MINUTES
- 12 FEBRUARY 2013

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees held on 12 February 2013, be received.

611 MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2013/14

The Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services submitted a report containing the recommendations of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) following its review of Members Allowances. He drew attention to an additional recommendation of the IRP set out in Essential Reference Paper 'C' as now tabled.

Councillor M Wood expressed his disappointment that the IRP had not recommended increasing the Basic Allowance. He reminded Members that the level had been frozen for some years and that the benchmarked data set out in the report indicated that East Herts was falling behind comparable Authorities in the County. He suggested that the IRP should

be asked to look at this aspect again.

The Leader expressed some sympathy for Councillor M Wood's view but questioned the practicalities of deferring a decision. He believed the recommendations should be accepted but that further submissions be made to the IRP.

The Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services reminded Members that a decision on the 2013/14 scheme was required by 1 April 2013. It would be possible for the IRP to be asked to consider further submissions and for backdating a new level, if it was minded to do so.

Council approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the allowance levels within the 2012/13 scheme be retained for 2013/14 (1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014), save for:

- the consolidation of the IT expense payment of £420 per annum into the Basic Allowance subject to the qualification below relating to SRAs;
- the application of the multipliers to arrive at the SRAs payable shall be to the Basic Allowance (as amended), less the consolidated IT expense payment of £420;
- an increase in SRA payments to Development Control Committee Members to £270 (2012/13: £240) per annum;
- the mileage allowance payable in respect of use of own motor vehicle being revised to 45p (2012/13 -45p) per mile for the first 50 miles of a journey and 25p (2012/13 - 18p) per mile thereafter;

(B) the existing 2012/13 Allowances Scheme be amended, with effect from 1 April 2012, by the consolidation of the IT expense payment of £420 per annum into the Basic Allowance subject to the qualification that the application of multipliers to arrive

at SRAs shall be to the Basic Allowance (as amended)
less £420.

The meeting closed at 7.47 pm

Chairman

Date