

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2014, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A Jackson (Chairman/Leader)
Councillors M Alexander, M Carver,
L Haysey, P Phillips, S Rutland-Barsby and
M Tindale.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, S Bull, M McMullen,
P Moore, C Rowley, P Ruffles, K Warnell and
J Wing.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood 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

507 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT
2014/15**

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report setting out the 2014/15 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement together with the proposed Prudential Indicators. He also referred to the investment

performance over the previous year.

The Executive noted that the Audit Committee, at its meeting held on 22 January 2014, had received the report.

The Executive commended the proposals as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the 2014/15 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.

508 **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2013/14 (REVISED) TO 2016/17**

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report setting out proposals for the Council's Capital Programme for 2013/14 (Revised) – 2016/17. The joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees, at their meeting held on 14 January 2014, had supported the proposals.

The Executive Member highlighted that the proposed programme of over £11M for the four year period as now detailed in the report submitted, was not fully funded and would require “internal borrowing” or “disinvestment” of approximately £5.3M.

A number of questions were asked in respect of swimming pools, disabled facilities grants and capital grants.

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support advised that Officers had regular meetings with Stevenage Leisure Management at which capital improvements as appropriate were discussed. In respect of capital grants, she stated that she would be happy to review conditions if appropriate. She explained the priority given to rural areas and that funds left over in this year would be allocated to the towns.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services explained the dip in demand for disabled facilities grants, but that working with Hertfordshire County Council, he was confident that the budget would be fully spent by the end of the year.

In response to a question on the re-profiling of slippage, as detailed in the summary of the programme at Essential Reference Paper 'B', the Director of Finance and Support Services stated that this related to number of smaller schemes. She undertook to provide a written breakdown to the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport.

The Executive commended the proposals as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the comments of the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees of 14 January 2014, be received; and

(B) the new Capital Programme for the period 2013/14 (Revised) to 2016/17, be approved.

509 **FEES AND CHARGES 2014/15**

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report setting out proposed fees and charges for 2014/15. The joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees, at their meeting held on 14 January 2014, had supported the proposals now detailed. The Executive Member advised Members that car parking charges would be the subject of a separate report at the next Executive meeting.

The Executive commended the proposals as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the comments made by the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees of 14 January 2014 be received; and

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

510 **REVENUE ESTIMATES, SERVICES - 2013/14 PROBABLE, 2014/15 ESTIMATE**

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report on the service estimates. The joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees, at their meeting held on 14 January 2014, had supported the proposals.

The Executive supported the proposals now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the comments of the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees of 14 January 2014 be received; and

(B) the probable Revenue Estimates for 2013/14 and the draft Revenue Estimates for 2014/15, as now submitted, be approved.

511 **CONSOLIDATED BUDGET REPORT 2014/15 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report recommending the revenue budget for 2014/15. The joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees, at their meeting held on 14 January 2014, had supported the proposals now detailed.

The Executive Member highlighted the uncertain future of the New Homes Bonus on which a Government announcement was expected later this year. He referred to the stress testing of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) undertaken, as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'C'. This illustrated the resilience of the MTFP given different hypothetical scenarios.

The Executive Member highlighted the outcome of the pension fund triennial valuation review and consequent impact on employer contributions. He also referred to the

unidentified efficiency savings figures in the MTFP and the continuing efforts of Officers to reduce these further.

The Executive Member reminded Members of the continuing freeze on council tax and the projections within the MTFP that the freeze continue for the next two years 2014/15 and 2015/16. He proposed an amendment to the MTFP by suggesting the projected council tax increase for 2016/17 and 2017/18 be reduced from 2% to 1%. If approved, this amendment would increase the figures shown for unidentified efficiency savings by approximately £700k over the two years. The Executive supported this amendment.

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport referred to the Authority's previous experience on pensions and hoped that advantages could be obtained in the timing of the payment.

In response to a question from Councillor J Wing, the Director of Finance and Support Services clarified how retained NNDR was allocated and the assumptions built into the MTFP.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the probable outturn for 2013/14 be approved and it be agreed that any variation at outturn showing an improved position against the underspending now submitted, be put to the cost of the priority spend reserve;

(B) the revenue budget for 2014/15 be approved and, in support of the 2014/15 budget, a one-off payment be made from the reserves of £1.008m to fund a one-off payment to the Pension fund to cap the increased deficit repayments to £600k pa for future years;

(C) the medium term financial plan to 2017/18 be approved, subject to the amendment of the

projected council tax increase for 2016/17 and 2017/18 being reduced from 2% to 1%; and

(D) there be no increase in Council Tax for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

512 HERTFORD THEATRE SEATING REFURBISHMENT

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support submitted a report on the outcome of a procurement exercise for new seating at Hertford Theatre. She also sought approval for a capital allocation to meet the costs as now detailed in the report submitted.

The Executive supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the tender price for seating refurbishment at Hertford Theatre, as contained in the report, be approved, and capital provision of up to £109,000 be made available for this project.

513 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 21 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

514 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors L Haysey and S Rutland-Barsby declared disclosable pecuniary interests in the matter referred to at Minute 517 – Hertingfordbury Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, in that they were Chairman and member respectively of the Hertingfordbury Conservation Society. They both left the room whilst the matter was considered.

515 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY

The Executive received a report detailing those issues referred to it by the Scrutiny Committees, which were noted.

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.

516 DEVELOPING AN INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Finance and Support Services submitted a report setting out the progress to date in developing an Investment Strategy. He detailed the specific areas being actioned, the advice that was being sought, the overall current performance of the existing investment portfolio and the next steps, as set out in an indicative programme.

The Executive noted the progress made to date.

RESOLVED – that (A) progress to date be noted; and

(B) the draft outline programme be noted and that a further progress report be submitted to a future Executive meeting.

517 HERTINGFORDBURY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport submitted a report on the Hertingfordbury Conservation Area Appraisal following public consultation. He detailed the outcome of the public consultation in the report now submitted.

The Appraisal identified the special character of the Conservation Area together with the elements that should be retained or enhanced and those which detracted from the identified character. Once adopted by the Council, the Appraisal would become a 'material consideration' in the process of determining planning applications. It would also link into the development of neighbourhood planning.

The Executive Member advised that a further representation

from a local resident had been received, which he suggested should be explored further by Officers. Therefore, he sought authority, in consultation with the local Ward Member, to further amend the appraisal, as necessary, prior to submission to Council.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Hertingfordbury Conservation Area Appraisal be supported;

(B) authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, to make any further minor and consequential changes to the Appraisal which may be necessary; and

(C) authority be delegated to the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, in consultation with the local Ward Member, to further amend, as necessary, the appraisal depending on the outcome of further investigation of the matters now detailed, prior to submission to Council for adoption.

518 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK -
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2013

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on finance, performance and risk monitoring for November/December 2013.

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services provided a verbal update in respect of NI 191 (Residual household waste per household) and NI 192 (Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting).

The Executive approved the proposals now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the budgetary variances set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report be noted;

(B) the additional budget approval for ICT training against the Planning Contingency Budget of £12,000, as detailed in paragraph 2.32 of the report, be noted;

(C) the slippage on the 2013/14 Capital Programme of £9,400 as detailed at paragraph 2.32, be approved;

(D) the transfer of the capital budget for the Wallfields Server Room Fire Suppression scheme to the Refurbishment of Wallfields as detailed at paragraph 2.32, be approved;

(E) the various changes to the ICT Capital schemes, with an overall net impact of Nil as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'D' of the report, be noted;

(F) the 2013/14 Savings progress as detailed at Essential Reference Paper F of the report, be noted; and

(G) the controls and scores listed in the strategic risk register for the period October to December 2013, as detailed at paragraph 2.35, be approved.

The meeting closed at 7.59 pm

Chairman
Date