

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2015, AT 7.00 PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors R Beeching, E Buckmaster,
S Bull, G Cutting, G Jones, J Jones,
M McMullen, P Moore, T Page, M Pope,
P Ruffles, N Symonds, J Wing and M Wood.

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

502 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL
INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2015/16**

The Executive considered a report setting out the proposed Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy and Prudential Indicators for 2015/16. The Leader advised that a revised Essential

Reference Paper 'C' on the Prudential Indicators, which included the latest figures available, had been tabled.

The Audit Committee, at its meeting held on 21 January 2015, had supported the recommendations as now detailed.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy, as now submitted, be approved;

(B) the Prudential Indicators, as now submitted, be approved; and

(C) the counterparty listing, as now submitted, be approved.

503 **CONSOLIDATED BUDGET REPORT AND 2015/16 –
2017/18 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

The Executive considered a report setting out the Council's budget proposals for 2015/16, which included:

- the 2014/15 Revised Revenue Estimates;
- the 2015/16 Revenue Budget;
- the 2015/16 Schedule of Charges;
- the 2014/15 (Revised) to 2017/18 Capital Programme;
- the refreshed Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP); and
- the Council's Reserves.

The Leader referred to the comments of the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees, held on 20 January 2015, and set out the Executive's response. In respect of staffing resources within Building Control and Enforcement, the Executive supported the underlying principle and was open to any business case for additional resources

coming forward for consideration, where capacity issues had been identified. The Leader reminded Members of the ongoing Building Control partnership project and that some caution was needed in this respect.

In relation to leaf clearance, the Leader reminded Members of the rationale for previous decisions and that this was not a District Council function. However, the Executive supported the principle of partnership working and was open to ideas coming forward from community groups.

In respect of freezing charges where the Council had discretion, the Executive supported this. The Executive also supported the suggestion that Scrutiny Committees in 2015/16 be asked to review charges relevant to their specific areas. The Leader stated that the suggestion relating to Hertford Theatre's flexibility on charges was also supported by the Executive.

Finally, in respect of the use of capital funding for leisure facilities, the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support undertook to ask Officers to look at this, but expressed caution, given the costs of running a swimming pool. She acknowledged the need for more sports pitches in Bishop's Stortford but questioned the land supply for them. She referred to the need to work closely with schools to encourage them to open up their facilities for community use. The Executive Member also reminded Members of the funding that would become available from the Bishop's Stortford North development, which would allow a complete review of leisure across Bishop's Stortford.

A number of Members commented. In respect of leisure facilities, some Members referred to the need to expand and/or refurbish Grange Paddocks to provide a 50m pool, which could become a magnet for sporting excellence. Some believed that contrary to national trends, there was a growing demand for swimming in Bishop's Stortford. Mention was also made of Bishop's Stortford having the

lowest number of sports pitches in Hertfordshire.

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support reiterated that the Executive would consider a business case that came forward. She agreed that Bishop's Stortford needed more sports pitches and encouraged those Members who were school governors to push for greater community access to school pitches.

Councillor M Wood referred to the hazards caused by leaves and their impact on grass verges and gullies, and spoke of the health risks for the elderly on footways where leaves had not been cleared. The Leader reiterated that the Council could look at assisting on specific activities, but that a budget line could not be reintroduced. He asked Members to encourage community groups to contact the Council to see what was possible.

In response to a request by Councillor R Beeching, the Director of Neighbourhood Services undertook to circulate advice to parish and town councils on insurance liability and indemnity issues in respect of the use of volunteers for leaf clearance, litter picking, etc.

Councillor G Jones referred to other items on the agenda and whether additional resources were needed in areas of where performance was below target, such as time taken to process housing benefit claims. The Director of Finance and Support Services advised that investment in staffing resources had been made in this area and that Members could expect to see improved performance.

Councillor J Wing referred to his comments made at the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees in relation to charges for pre-application advice to charities and community groups and reiterated his desire for such charges to be waived. In doing so, he declared his position as a trustee of Ware Museum. Councillor G Jones advised by stating that this point had been answered by the Executive Member for Finance at that

meeting.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

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

(B) the Revised Revenue Estimates for the current financial year 2014/15 as set out in section 4 of the report submitted, including the proposed contributions to and from Reserves as detailed at paragraph 4.3 of the report submitted, be approved;

(C) the Revenue Budget underspend for 2014/15 be transferred to the Collection Fund Reserve and the New Homes Bonus Priority Spend Reserve as set out in paragraph 4.5.2 of the report submitted;

(D) the 2015/16 Revenue Budget be approved including:

- the new budget growth as set out in section 6 of the report submitted;
- the new budget savings as set out in section 6 of the report submitted;
- the Contingency Budget as detailed at paragraph 8.3 of the report submitted;
- the use of Earmarked Reserves as set out at section 9 of the report submitted;
- consideration of the advice from the Director of Finance and Support Services on the levels of reserves and robustness of the estimates in setting the budget as required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 and detailed at section 15 of the report submitted;

(E) the East Herts element of the Council Tax Bill is frozen at the 2014/15 rate, as detailed at

section 11 of the report submitted;

(F) the proposed 2015/16 Schedule of Charges, as set out in section 7 of the report be approved;

(G) the discounts in charges being proposed for those Private Hire and Hackney Carriages that are able to transport a wheelchair using person whilst s/he remains in the wheelchair, as set out at paragraph 7.6 of the report, be approved;

(H) the new Capital Programme for the period 2014/15 (Revised) to 2017/18, how the programme will be funded, and the consequential revenue budget implications, as detailed at section 12 of the report, be approved;

(I) the refreshed Medium Term Financial Plan covering 2014/15 (Revised) to 2018/19, as set out at section 13 of the report submitted, be approved; and

(J) the proposed changes to the Council's Reserves, as set out in table 10, section 14 of the report submitted, be approved.

504 APOLOGIES

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

505 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader welcomed the press and Members to the meeting.

He reminded Members that the scheduled presentation to Members on 4 February 2015, regarding the development proposals for Bircherley Green, Hertford had been cancelled at the request of the developer. Members would be advised if any further date was arranged for this particular presentation.

506 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 6 January 2015, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

507 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.

508 BISHOP'S STORTFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - SILVERLEYS AND MEADS WARDS

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport submitted a report detailing the outcome of the Independent Examiner's report into the Bishop's Stortford Neighbourhood Plan and proposing a referendum.

The Executive noted that the Independent Examiner had recommended that the Plan should proceed to a referendum subject to minor modifications, which ensured that relevant criteria had been met. The Executive Member thanked Members and the public in Bishop's Stortford for their hard work to date. Councillor G Jones referred to the work of the neighbourhood planning team and the need to avoid complacency in the referendum.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the recommendations and modifications made by the Independent Examiner of the Bishop's Stortford Neighbourhood Plan for Silverleys and Meads Wards, as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'C' to this report, be accepted; and

(B) Officers be requested to make the necessary arrangements to hold a Neighbourhood Plan Referendum for Silverleys and Meads Wards.

509 REVIEW OF RESIDENT PERMIT PARKING SCHEME CHARGES

The Executive Member for Economic Development submitted a report on resident parking permit charges. He explained the current financial position, which showed that the current schemes had operated at a net deficit of £34k in 2013/14.

He advised that requests from residents for new schemes were being received and that the Council needed clear charging principles in order to be able to assess new schemes coming forward. He proposed that Environment Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider the criteria against which requests for new schemes could be assessed.

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport suggested that existing schemes also be included in the scrutiny review, which was supported.

In response to comments about the impact of displaced parking on areas just outside of resident schemes and the ability of the elderly to pay for visitors' permits, the Executive Member for Economic Development commented that these would be factors, among others, for the review to consider whether a scheme should be implemented and how.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the current financial status of the Council's resident permit parking schemes be noted;

(B) the charging principles advocated for 2015/16 be endorsed, subject to a further review during that year;

(C) support for a freeze to permit charges in 2015/16 be confirmed; and

(D) Environment Scrutiny Committee be requested to consider and make recommendations on the criteria against which existing resident parking schemes and requests for new schemes can be assessed.

510 PLANNING PEER CHALLENGE

The Leader of the Council submitted a report providing details of the Planning Peer Challenge and an action plan to implement the proposed recommendations. Given the timescales involved going beyond the elections in May 2015, the Leader advised that he had asked the Executive Member for Community and Partnership Liaison to oversee the implementation of the action plan recommendations.

In response to Members' comments, the Leader acknowledged that the action plan needed further development and invited Members to advise the Executive Member for Community and Partnership Liaison of any gaps identified.

Members commented on various issues identified within the Peer Challenge, including Member/Officer relationships, the quality of highways advice and whether the Development Management portfolio holder should be a member of the Development Management Committee. The Leader responded to these points and looked forward to the development of the action plan.

The Executive approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the content of the report be noted;

(B) the action plan, as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted, be approved; and

(C) the Executive Member for Community and

Partnership Liaison, in conjunction with Officers, be requested to develop the detail of the action plan in (B) above.

511 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK - DECEMBER 2014

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on finance, performance and risk monitoring for December 2014.

In respect of the use of the RingGo scheme, the Executive Member for Economic Development assured Members that the needs of the elderly would be taken account of.

The Executive approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the budgetary variances set out in paragraph 2.1 and the forecast outturn position in paragraph 3.4 of the report submitted be noted;

(B) the current position and action proposed to address seven performance indicators that are currently off target be noted; and

(C) the risk controls, as detailed at paragraph 6.1 of the report submitted, be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.58 pm

Chairman
Date