

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
ON TUESDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 2004 AT  
4.00 PM

---

PRESENT: Councillor H G S Banks (Deputy Leader in the  
Chair).  
Councillors M R Alexander, D Clark,  
A P Jackson, N C Poulton and R L Parker.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors W Ashley, J Demonti, R Gilbert,  
D E Mayes, M J Tindale and M Wood.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Miranda Steward	- Executive Director
Rachel Stopard	- Executive Director
Alison Brown	- Communications Officer
Simon Drinkwater	- Assistant Director (Law and Control)
Andrea Gilmour	- Development Control Manager
Neal Hodgson	- Assistant Director (Regulatory Services)
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Claire Potts	- Planning Officer
Jan Spong	- Environmental Health Manager (Commercial)
Georgina Stanton	- Assistant Director (Communications and Customer Services)
David Tweedie	- Assistant Director (Financial Services)

240 APOLOGY

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

241 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Leader announced that the Communications section had won first prize for its work in improving internal communications within the Council, in a competition organised by the Institute of Public Relations. He offered his congratulations to all staff involved.

The Deputy Leader referred to the delay in the Local Minerals Plan Public Inquiry, and stated that it was being rearranged for October/November 2004.

Finally, the Deputy Leader announced that the Leader had been appointed as a member of the Local Government Association Improvement Board.

242 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors M R Alexander and D Clark declared personal and prejudicial interests in the matter referred to at Minute 247 – Development Brief for Former Glaxo's premises at Bury Green, and both left the Chamber whilst this matter was considered. Councillor M R Alexander stated that he was in receipt of a pension from GlaxoSmithKline, and Councillor D Clark stated that her husband was an employee of GlaxoSmithKline.

**RECOMMENDED ITEMS****ACTION**243 **EAST HERTS EMPLOYMENT LAND STUDY**

**The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report drawing attention to the final Report and accompanying Executive Summary of the Employment**

**Land Study 2004.** He sought approval for publication of the document as a technical study, which would support the Local Plan Second Review process, and inform future decisions concerning employment land in the District. He drew Members' attention to the final version of the Executive Summary, which had been circulated on the supplementary agenda.

**The Employment Land Study** was commissioned by the Council in order to provide up-to-date information on requirements for current and future employment land. This was in response to the proposed changes to Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing, which could place extra pressure on the redevelopment of employment sites for alternative uses.

**The Executive** noted that as a result of the revision of the Local Plan Second Review timetable, as agreed by Council on 28 July 2004, there was an opportunity to incorporate the findings of the Study into the Local Plan Second Review, prior to the Re-Deposit Version of the Plan being published. Amendments would involve updating supporting text to include reference to the Study, and also some changes to policies where the Study had made recommendations to the Council regarding specific Employment Areas. This would ensure that the Local Plan would reflect the most up-to-date position and have a firm evidence base. These amendments would be considered by the Local Plan Executive Panel, and subsequently, Executive and Council.

**The Executive** noted that in a planning policy context, employment land related to the business use classes. This included: B1 a) Offices; B1 b) Research and Development; B1 c) Light Industry; B2 General Industrial; and B8 General Industrial. It was also noted that the Study focused on the sites that were designated as Employment Areas in the Adopted Local Plan and Local Plan Second Review.

**The Executive Member** stated that the Study had concluded that the majority of the Employment Areas

were of good or average quality and should remain in employment use. The poorer quality areas could be improved through external intervention, principally in the form of infrastructure improvements. The Study also suggested that some Employment Areas had potential, and could benefit from mixed-use development. This could facilitate an improvement in their quality and employment capacity (i.e. in terms of increased worker density/number of jobs).

The Executive noted the Employment Areas suggested for mixed-use development, as detailed in the Study.

In the short to medium term, industrial space was in short supply, especially at the small end of the spectrum, and most especially in Bishop's Stortford. The Study recommended that the Council should consider releasing more land for industrial/business development in Bishop's Stortford. Elsewhere, there was scope for the controlled loss of industrial/warehousing land – in accordance with the conclusions of the qualitative assessment of sites.

In response to questions from Councillor R Gilbert, the Executive Member undertook to arrange for a written answer to be provided on the issues of Stansted Airport commuters, and the balance between industrial and office uses.

APP

The Executive supported the proposals as now detailed.

**RECOMMENDED** - that the final version of the Employment Land Study 2004 carried out on behalf of the Council by Roger Tym and Partners (in partnership with King Sturge), be approved and published, as a technical study for the purpose of informing the Local Plan Second Review process and future decisions concerning employment land in the District.

APP

**244 LOCAL AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE 2005/06**

**The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report outlining the process to be followed for setting the budget in 2005/06, and receiving guidance of the likely level of Council Tax for 2005/06. This report marked the first stages of the General Fund Revenue budgetary cycle for 2005/06.**

**At the end of November 2004, the Government would release the provisional Revenue Support Grant settlement for the year coming, and this would be followed by the final settlement, probably issued at the end of January 2005. The importance of the settlement was that it contained vital figures on the Government's view of each Council's need to spend and the central grant, which was to be paid to each Council. There were further changes to the Grant system last year and it was anticipated that the system now had some stability, and an increase of 2.5% had been included.**

**The Executive Member added that 2005/06 was the second year that the Council's Performance Management System had been in operation. The Council now had detailed Strategic and Service Plans that gave greater detail as to how the Council's objectives were to be delivered. The Service Plans had been fully costed and incorporated into the four year model. As would be expected, the details and thus service costs, became less detailed into the future.**

**The Executive Member referred to the financial model as attached at Appendix 'A9' of the report now submitted. This showed the likely level of Council Tax if the Service Plans were fully implemented. The model included a £315,000 reduction in costs for future superannuation payments as a result of the agreement to make a contribution of £5m to the scheme in 2003/04. However, an actuarial review of the Superannuation Fund was carried out at the end of March 2004, and the outcome was unlikely to be known until the end of the calendar year. No**

assumptions had been made in the financial model for any further revenue contributions or reductions as a result of the actuarial review.

The Executive Member detailed the various assumptions built into the Model. He stated the importance of recognising that a number of areas were extremely sensitive to minor changes, which could have quite significant effects on the overall budget, e.g. a 0.25% change in interest rates could have a £200,000 effect or £3.50 on/off the Council Tax. With the Service Plans as currently identified, a Council Tax of £135.75 (7.43%) at Band D was predicted for 2005/06. The Executive advised that a preferred increased level of Council Tax be in the range of 4 – 7%.

The Executive Member detailed the timetable for the budget process and invited all Members to participate fully in that process. Technical briefings could also be made available for non-Executive Members if required. He also detailed the proposed arrangements for consultation on the Council's budget proposals.

In respect of Parish/Town Councils, the Executive agreed that the Assistant Director (Financial Services) should advise them of the Council's budget intentions for 2005/06. Furthermore, the Assistant Director was requested to advise Parish/Town Councils of the impact on the budgetary process on precept levels.

**RECOMMENDED** – that (A) the General Fund Revenue Budget Process be approved as follows:

AFS

- (1) appropriate inflationary indices be included in the base for 2005/06,
- (2) suggestions for fees and charges that reflect an overall minimum increase of 2.5% (in line with assumptions in the financial model) and higher levels where

deemed appropriate (in line with the cost of service), be reported to the Executive on 15 February 2005, or earlier, when the operational implementation requires a longer lead in time,

- (3) as included in the Council's Strategic Plans, Council Portfolio Holders/officers identify minimum efficiency savings of 2.5% of their budgets (as proposed in the Gershon Report),
- (4) a report be presented to the Executive on 15 February 2005, indicating in priority order, items in the Service Plans to be funded in 2005/06,
- (5) the likely preferred increased level of Council Tax be in the range of 4 – 7%, and

(B) the Assistant Director (Financial Services) be requested to write to all Parish/Town Councils to advise of the District's Budget intentions for 2005/06, and to advise generally, of the impact of the budgetary process on precept levels.

AFS

#### **245 PAYMENT BY CREDIT CARDS**

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report seeking approval for introducing charges for use of credit cards on Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) payments.

Under the Council's e-Government agenda, the Council wished to make as many methods of payment possible. As more services came on-line the public would need increased methods by which payment could be made. The Authority collected Council Tax on behalf of itself, the Town and Parish Council and the County Council and Police Authority. NNDR payments were collected on behalf of Central

**Government and re-distributed as part of the grant settlement.**

**As the cost of collections was borne by the Council, it was recommended that a 2% charge (ie the cost of collections the Council incurred), be levied on all payments received of Council Tax and NNDR, this being the current level to cover costs. If take up increased, the % charge might reduce. The Council would only wish to charge the exact cost incurred.**

**The Executive Member confirmed that under the Consumer Credit Act 1974, this charge was permissible, as a range of payment methods were offered.**

**In response to a question from Councillor M Wood, the Executive Member undertook to arrange for a written response to be provided, on the issue of credit card payments for Council services generally.** ACO

**The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.**

**RECOMMENDED - that Council charges be set in line with the charges levied by the credit card companies on all credit card payments in relation to Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR).** AFS

### RESOLVED ITEMS

#### 246 MINUTES

**RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 17 August 2004 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

#### 247 DRAFT DEVELOPMENT BRIEF – BURY GREEN FARM

The Executive considered a report on the site of Bury Green Farm, which was identified in the draft second



review of the East Herts Local Plan 2000 as a major developed site. It comprised a large number of modern buildings previously owned and used by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) for animal breeding purposes, but which were currently vacant. The Council's officers had been cooperating with the new owners of the site in preparing a framework for future planning decisions about the site.

The Executive considered a proposed draft development brief, which, in accordance with the procedures for Supplementary Planning Guidance, should be subject to public consultation for a 6 week period, with local parishes, statutory agencies, key consultees and local residents. The brief would guide future development decisions regarding the site.

The Executive noted that, as the site was located within the rural area of the district, and some of the opportunities presented might constitute a departure from local plan policies, it was deemed beneficial and appropriate for the whole development brief to be the subject of wider consultation and public involvement.

Details of the site were set out in the report now submitted. The Executive noted that the objectives of the brief were to:

- ensure that any re-use and/or redevelopment proposals for the existing buildings were consistent with the aims, objectives and criteria of Major Developed Site (MDS) policy;
- enable the parameters for re-use and/or redevelopment of existing buildings to be discussed and agreed with key stakeholders including East Herts Council, the Parish Council and existing residents; and
- provide a robust planning framework for the determination of associated planning applications.

The draft brief outlined the site characteristics, a schedule of existing buildings, relevant historical background, national and local planning policy considerations and identified parameters for the re-use and redevelopment of the site. Affordable housing targets would be met as a part of a new development and a suitable site had been identified at The Grove.

Councillor M J Tindale queried the inclusion of paragraph 6.2 of the brief, which stated that the preferred use for the operational buildings within the MDS site was animal breeding and experimental facilities. The Deputy Leader responded by stating that such comments were best raised as part of the formal consultation, so that they could be considered alongside any other comments made.

Members also queried the residential element of the draft brief and whether specific numbers of units should be referred to.

The Executive approved the recommendations as now submitted.

RESOLVED - that (A) the draft development brief for Bury Green Farm (former GlaxoSmithKline site) with accompanying plans be approved for the purposes of public consultation, and ADC

(B) the responses to the consultation and any appropriate revisions to the brief be reported to the Development Control Committee, prior to final endorsement of the brief by Council, to guide development control decisions on the future use and development of the Bury Green Farm site. ADC

248 HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2003/04 –  
REVIEW AND SERVICE PLAN 2004/05

The Executive Member for Corporate Facilities submitted a report reviewing the Council's Health and Safety Service Plan for 2003/2004 and detailing the Health and Safety Service activities undertaken by Environmental Health

Services. He also submitted the proposed Health and Safety Service Plan for 2004/5, which included variations identified during the 2003/04 review.

The Executive recalled that, under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, each local authority was required to submit its Health and Safety Service Plan to the relevant member forum for approval to ensure local transparency and accountability.

Environmental Health Officers within East Herts were employed generically, providing all aspects of the Environmental Health Service e.g. Housing, Health & Safety, Environmental Protection, Licensing and Registration, Food Safety and Animal Welfare within a specified part of the district. Despite continued high levels of reactive work (complaint and requests for service, accident notifications, licensing etc.), the various actions specified within the Health and Safety Service Plan for 2003/4 had been achieved. This included achieving 77% health and safety premises inspections, the Local Performance Indicator target was 75% premises inspections where the authority had health and safety responsibility.

The Executive Member stated that the Health and Safety Service had been well managed during 2003/4, ensuring that resources were directed towards areas of most risk and which afforded maximum public protection. Therefore, no action plan was required. The proposed Health and Safety Service Plan for 2004/5 detailed all the relevant activities planned for that period.

The Executive Member stated that this report had been submitted to Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 September 2004, which had thanked Officers for their hard work and commitment to the work of the service.

The Executive supported the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the Review and Service Plan for 2004/5, be approved, and

(B) the current targets for inspection of 75% for the inspection of premises under the Health and Safety at Work etc, Act 1974, be retained.

ARS

249 FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2003/04 – REVIEW AND SERVICE PLAN FOR 2004/05

The Executive Member for Corporate Facilities submitted a report reviewing the Council's Food Safety Service Plan for 2003/2004 and detailing the Food Service activities undertaken by Environmental Health Services. He also submitted the proposed Food Safety Service Plan for 2004/5, which included variations identified during the 2003/04 review.

The Executive recalled that the Food Standards Agency required the Food Safety Service Plan to be submitted to the relevant member forum for approval to ensure local transparency and accountability.

Environmental Health Officers within East Herts were employed generically, providing all aspects of the Environmental Health Service e.g. Housing, Health and Safety, Environmental Protection, Licensing and Registration, Food Safety and Animal Welfare within a specified part of the district. Despite continued high levels of reactive work (complaint and requests for service, accident notifications, licensing etc.), the various actions specified within the Food Safety Service Plan for 2003/4 had been achieved. This included achieving 96% of high risk food premises inspections, the Local Performance Indicator target for high risk premises inspections was 95%, and 87% for other lower risk food premises inspections, the Local Performance Indicator target for other risk food premises inspections was 84%.

The Executive Member stated that the Food Safety Service had been well managed during 2003/4, ensuring that resources were directed towards areas of most risk and which afforded maximum public protection. Therefore, no action plan was required. The proposed Food Safety Service Plan 2004/5 detailed all relevant activities planned

for 2004/5. The Executive noted that the Council was seeking recognition for the quality of the many food related activities, and had applied for a FoodLink award, the results of which were due during October 2004.

The Executive Member stated that this report had been submitted to Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 September 2004. It had asked the Executive to consider changes to Appendix A8 on page 8.43 – the first paragraph of the Conclusion to read:

“The estimate and resources required for the Food Safety Service are the worst case scenario. If this is realised, a number of low risk activities will not be undertaken, such as low risk food premises inspectors and some promotional/liaison activities such as the Business Customer Consultation Panel.”

If Members wish Officers to guarantee all these activities to be achieved, then a further half post will be required.”

The Executive supported the suggested change and the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the review and Service Plan for 2004/5, as now amended, be approved, and

(B) the current targets for inspection of 95% for high risk premises and 84% for other lower risk premises be retained.

ARS

## 250 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2003/04 REVIEW

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report, which provided an annual review of the Council's 2003/04 Treasury Management arrangements in line with the requirements of the code of practice on Treasury Management.

The Executive noted that the annual review covered the Council's current treasury position, the borrowing strategy and outturn for 2003/04, the investment strategy and outturn for 2003/04 and debt rescheduling.

The Executive agreed that the report be received.

RESOLVED - that the report be received.

251 TABLE OF FARES FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGES

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report on the results of the consultation exercise on proposals to increase the fares tariff for hackney carriages. He sought approval to increase the Hackney Carriage tariff from 15 October 2004.

The Executive recalled that, at its meeting held on 22 June 2004, it had considered proposed changes to the Table of Fares for Hackney Carriages. This had followed extensive consultation with the trade by both officers and Members, and consideration by the Licensing Committee on 19 May 2004.

The Executive Member stated that one comment had been received in response to the public notice advertising the proposed changes. The Executive noted this comment.

The Executive Member referred to meetings held with the Hackney Carriage industry. The industry was in favour of the proposed increases to the Table of Fares as detailed at Appendix 'A12' of the report now submitted.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that the Table of Fares as detailed in Appendix 'A12' of the report now submitted, be implemented from 15 October 2004.

ARS

252 FORWARD PLAN – NOVEMBER 2004

The Executive Member for Corporate Facilities submitted a report seeking approval for the publication of the Forward Plan for the period November 2004 - February 2005.

The Executive agreed that the Forward Plan, as now detailed, should be approved.

RESOLVED - that the Forward Plan for November 2004 - February 2005, as set out at Appendix 'A' to these Minutes, be approved for publication.

ALC

The meeting closed at 5.15 pm.

Nps\Executive\14 September 2004\Minutes 14 September 2004

Chairman	.....
Date	.....