

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
ON TUESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2005 AT  
7.30 PM

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PRESENT: Councillor M G Carver (Chairman/Leader).  
Councillors M R Alexander, N Burdett, D Clark,  
A P Jackson, T Milner and R L Parker.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors H G S Banks, A L Burlton, J Demonti,  
R Gilbert, Mrs M H Goldspink, N C Poulton,  
P A Ruffles and S Rutland-Barsby.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Philip Thomas	- Interim Executive Director
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Corporate Governance
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Mary Orton	- Director of Policy and Performance
Lois Prior	- Head of Communications
Bryan Thomsett	- Head of Planning Policy
Dave Tweedie	- Director of Resources
Nick White	- Communications Officer

405 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor N C Poulton declared a personal interest in the matters referred to at Minutes 410 and 416 – Community Meals Service, as he was a member of the WRVS.

406 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Executive passed a resolution pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public during consideration of the business referred to in Minute 416 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

RECOMMENDED ITEM

ACTION

407 LOCAL PLAN UPKEEP BUDGET 2005/06

**The Executive Member for Regional Development submitted a report seeking approval for the allocation of additional funds to the Local Plan Upkeep Budget.**

**The Executive recalled that the Council's financial reserves included a specific reserve fund of £409,000 for the costs associated with the production of the Local Plan. This was held principally for the significant costs of holding a public inquiry into the Local Plan. The usual Local Plan Upkeep Budget of £75,000 was used for ongoing Local Plan work of document publication and public consultation, and the engagement of specialist consultants.**

**The East Herts Local Plan Inquiry commenced on 4 October 2005 and was currently programmed to end on 15 March 2006. An updated cost estimate for the Inquiry had been received from the Planning Inspectorate. This was based on the now known extent and length of the Local Plan Inquiry. The total estimated cost of £370,000, would be split over two financial years as follows:**

**2005/06 – Inspector's Inquiry Costs - £108,000**

**2006/07 – Inspector's Report Costs - £262,000**

ACTION

The total outstanding costs of the Local Plan Inquiry for this financial year were estimated to be up to £275,000. This included the Inspector's Inquiry Costs of £108,000, the Inquiry Programme Officer, the Council's External Advocate together with consultancy and general additional support for the duration of the Inquiry preparation and the Inquiry itself. Therefore, the total additional funding requested was up to £275,000.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink sought and received clarification on the costs involved.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

**RECOMMENDED** - that an additional sum up to £275,000, from the Local Plan Reserve, be allocated to this year's Local Plan Upkeep Budget, to fund the costs of the Local Plan Inquiry in 2005/06.

DPP

RESOLVED ITEMS408 MINUTES

**RESOLVED** - that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 11 October 2005, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

409 DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISALS: INDICATORS AND TARGETS

The Executive Member for Regional Development submitted a report seeking approval for a Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Sustainability Appraisals: Indicators and Targets for the purposes of public consultation. The intention was to agree the sustainability indicators for planning policy and development control purposes, and formally adopt them as

ACTION

a SPD, when the Local Plan Second Review was adopted, currently anticipated in March 2007.

The Executive Member detailed the background to the use of the methodology for the process of Sustainability Appraisals and the purpose for its adoption as a SPD. This would provide guidance on the framework for sustainability appraisal in East Herts and the ways in which the Council would apply the principles of sustainable development to the planning process in the District.

It was proposed that the Draft SPD be subject to six weeks public consultation. Following this, consideration would be given to all the representations and comments received. The intention was to adopt the SPD, once the Local Plan Second Review was adopted in 2007. In the interim, following consultation and any changes, it was proposed that the Draft SPD be used as a material consideration for planning policy and development control purposes.

The Executive Member invited Members to submit comments as part of the consultation process and suggested possible amendments herself in respect of the measure of water resources.

Councillor R Gilbert requested more consistency in respect of references to the number of market towns within the District. The Executive Member accepted this as fair comment.

Councillor R Gilbert also referred to the safety and design of road surfaces and suggested that there should be more emphasis within the SPD, which could put more pressure on the County Council on these issues. In response, the Leader commented that this would not be appropriate for this document as such issues should be raised via the Highways Joint Member Panel or with County Council Members.

The Executive approved the proposals as now submitted.

ACTION

RESOLVED – that (A) the Draft Supplementary Planning Document – Sustainability Appraisals: Indicators and Targets, as detailed at Appendix ‘A5’ of the report now submitted, be agreed for public consultation for a six week period; and

DPP

(B) the responses received to the public consultation, along with any proposed changes to the Draft Supplementary Planning Document, be the subject of a further report to the Executive.

DPP

410 COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE

The Executive Member for Community Development submitted a report seeking approval for the nomination of a preferred supplier for the Council’s redesigned Community Meals service.

The Executive recalled that one of the main findings of the Best Value Review of Health and Living Support during 2004 – 2005 was the need to re-organise the Council’s Meals on Wheels service, which was fragmented among a large number of different voluntary sector providers, some of whom were increasingly struggling to maintain the provision of the service. The review had concluded that the Council should test the market for the provision of a District-wide service, to offer hot meals to elderly and vulnerable residents on a 5-days-a-week basis. The proposed tender specification for this service had been approved in July 2005.

The Executive Member informed Members that eight expressions of interest had been received, of which five companies had submitted formal tenders. These tenders had been evaluated using a price / quality assessment as follows:

Cost per meal	70%
Quality of food provided	20%

ACTION

Customer care

10%

The Executive Member stated that as the tender submission from the WRVS had scored the highest, he was recommending the WRVS as the preferred suppliers for the new service, to commence on 1 April 2006. However, he referred to the likely budgetary implications and commented that there were no guarantees that the Council could proceed with every aspect tendered for. There remained a number of detailed contractual and service design matters to be explored with the prospective service provider, prior to the start of the new service. Detailed negotiations would take place with the preferred supplier, and the outcome of these would be presented to a future meeting for approval.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink on the possibilities of providing a 7 day a week service, the Director of Policy and Performance reported that discussions with the County Council had been held.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that the WRVS be nominated as preferred suppliers for the provision of a Community Meals delivery service for East Herts, subject to agreement by the Council on the detailed terms and conditions under which the service will operate.

DPP

(see also Minute 416 below)

411 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Leader of the Council submitted a report seeking approval for the revised Risk Management Strategy.

The Executive recalled that, the Local Code of Corporate Governance had been approved by the Council in December 2004. Dimension 4 of the Local Code related specifically to risk management and internal control and required the Authority to establish and maintain a

ACTION

systematic strategy, framework and process for managing risk. The principles of risk management were also embedded within the Authority's Financial Regulations and Financial Procedures, which required the Executive to approve the Authority's Risk Management Strategy and made the Executive responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of risk management. The requirement for robust and embedded risk management arrangements was also a key element of the CPA Use of Resources judgement. The existing Risk Management Strategy had been approved by the Executive on 15 December 2004. Since then, the Authority had implemented a number of practices to embed risk management into its governance arrangements thus requiring the Risk Management Strategy to be updated.

The Leader commented that there was a need for further training for Members. The Director of Corporate Governance confirmed that this would be the next stage of the process.

In response to a question from Councillor R Gilbert, the Leader confirmed that the External Auditors had been involved in scrutinising the Strategy.

The Executive Member for Regional Development expressed concern that the mechanism for reporting risks as detailed at Part 3.4(a) of the Strategy was not sufficiently robust for the relevant portfolio holder to be advised of a new or emerging strategic risk immediately. The Director of Corporate Governance referred to the Covalent performance management system as a tool for updating risk registers. He undertook to consider the issue raised by the Executive Member for Regional Development.

The Executive approved the revised Risk Management Strategy as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that in accordance with Financial Regulation C.3, the Authority's Risk Management

DCG

ACTION

Strategy be approved.

412 IMPLEMENTING THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Leader of the Council submitted a report setting out the background to the development of the East Herts Community Strategy through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which updated the Executive on the progress to date in implementing the Community Action Plan.

The Leader detailed the operation of the LSP. He reminded the Executive that the Council had approved a three year Action Plan in mid 2004, which was subject to scrutiny by the Performance Scrutiny Committee at six monthly intervals. He also detailed the funding contributions made by the Council and partner organisations to support the specific projects identified within the Action Plan.

The Leader commented that the feedback he had received was that the LSP was one of the most effective partnerships within Hertfordshire. This had been achieved because of the match funding arrangements that had been put in place to support the LSP's work.

The Leader referred to the membership arrangements and accepted that there were gaps in the areas of rural and environmental representatives. However, these areas were covered at officer level.

In response to a question from Councillor N C Poulton, the Executive Member for Public Engagement reported that he would be submitting a report on the Primary Care Trusts to the next Executive meeting.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance referred to the £50,000 budget contribution made by the Council and suggested that the usual budgetary challenges would need to be applied towards the LSP as with other items. The Leader stated that the Director of Policy and Performance would be bringing forward a pragmatic



ACTION

programme of what was affordable.

In respect of the recommendation relating to the submission of the LSP Minutes to the Executive, the Executive Member for Community Development questioned whether it would be more appropriate for these to be submitted to Scrutiny instead. The Leader responded by commenting that as he was the Council's lead Member on the LSP, it would be more transparent for the Minutes to be reported to the Executive. Following a suggestion by the Executive Member for Regional Development, the Executive agreed that a briefing report, rather than the Minutes, should be submitted to the Executive.

In respect of the presentation given by Julia Wortley, Hertfordshire Constabulary, on community policing, the Executive Member for Environmental Management asked if this could be circulated to Members. The Director of Policy and Performance undertook to arrange this.

DPP

In response to a query from Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink on the location of the environmentally friendly demonstration house, the Director of Policy and Performance stated that this was still the subject of negotiations. She undertook to inform Members when details were known.

DPP

RESOLVED - that (A) the progress made through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in implementing the Community Strategy Action Plan be noted;

(B) a briefing report from all future LSP Board meetings be submitted to the Executive;

DPP

(C) Officers take steps to promote the work that the Council undertakes through the LSP, by including regular articles in Link magazine, and by establishing an LSP page on the Council's website;

DPP

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(D) the Executive investigate options to improve the structure and membership of the LSP Board to ensure that rural and environmental interests are more adequately represented; and

DPP

(E) a Members Information Session be organised to enable Councillors to find out more about the Local Strategic Partnership, and meet representatives from partner organisations.

DPP

413 THE FRAMEWORK FOR COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF DISTRICT COUNCILS FOR 2006

The Leader of the Council submitted a report summarising a consultation document issued by the Audit Commission on the framework for Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of District Councils in 2006, which proposed a draft response at Appendix 'A10' of the report now submitted.

The Consultation document proposed five options for a future CPA framework for District Councils and considered how elements of CPA – corporate assessment, use of resources, service assessments and direction of travel – could be brought together to shape the next phase of CPA. The key objective was to build on the previous phase of CPA of District Councils but to reduce the costs of assessment and the burden of inspection on Councils. The Leader detailed these options and referred to a series of questions that the Audit Commission had asked. Appendix 'A10' of the report now submitted, detailed a suggested response.

The Director of Policy and Performance apologised to Members in proposing amendments to some of the suggested responses. It was proposed that in relation to the guiding principles, it was unclear as to whether comparisons across the tiers of local government were beneficial. The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for

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Finance suggested that there was a need to emphasise more strongly the desire to move away from a 'one size fits all' approach towards assessment and to provide more scope for local priorities to be used. Furthermore, he suggested that concern should be expressed over whether the data used for the baseline was current.

The Executive approved the suggested response, as now amended.

RESOLVED - that (A) the Audit Commission proposals for the framework for the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of District Councils for 2006 be noted; and

(B) the response contained in Appendix 'A10' of the report now submitted, as amended, be submitted to the Audit Commission.

DPP

414 FORWARD PLAN: DECEMBER 2005 - MARCH 2006

The Executive Member for Public Engagement submitted a report seeking approval for the publication of the Forward Plan for the period December 2005 - March 2006.

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

RESOLVED - that the Forward Plan for December 2005 - March 2006, as set out at Appendix 'A' to these Minutes be approved for publication.

DCG

415 HIGHWAYS JOINT MEMBER PANEL - NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JULY 2005

RESOLVED - that the Notes of the Highways Joint Member Panel meeting held on 18 July 2005 be received.

416 COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE TENDER EVALUATION

ACTION

The Executive Member for Community Development submitted a report detailing the tenders received for the Community Meals service.

The Executive noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

(Also see Minute 410 above)

The meeting closed at 8.52 pm

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