

ACTION

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
ON TUESDAY 4 APRIL 2006 AT
7.30 PM

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors W Ashley, P R Ballam, H G S Banks,
J Demonti, R Gilbert, Mrs M H Goldspink,
L O Haysey, M P A McMullen, N C Poulton.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Philip Thomas	- Interim Executive Director
Gerald Balabanoff	- Interim Director of Organisational Development
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Corporate Governance
Neal Hodgson	- Director of Regulatory Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Lorraine Kirk	- Senior Communications Officer
Will O'Neill	- Head of Housing and Community Planning
Mary Orton	- Director of Policy and Performance
Adrian Prest	- Head of Building Control

ALSO PRESENT:

Anne Fisher

ACTION736 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor N Burdett.

737 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader stated that he had agreed to accept two items of urgent business onto the agenda, in order to facilitate the efficient conduct of business and to avoid undue delays. These items related to Ware Market Fees and Smart Card Payment Facilities for Car Parks.

The Leader advised that the item relating to the Rhodes Centre had been withdrawn from the agenda. He referred to ongoing discussions involving the Trustees and Vertical Horizons (Snap Theatre). The Leader stated that the Council was keen to ensure that any possible further investment in the Rhodes Centre should be safeguarded as far as possible. He anticipated that a report on this matter would be submitted to the next Executive meeting.

Finally, the Leader welcomed Anne Fisher, the newly-appointed Chief Executive, to the meeting. Anne would be taking up her new duties in June 2006.

738 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors M R Alexander, P R Ballam and T Milner declared personal interests in the matter referred to at Minute 757 – CCTV, in that they were all Ware Town Council Members.

739 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 Minutes 744 and 757 below on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information

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as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS**740 2006/07 ESTIMATES AND TARGETS**

The Leader of the Council submitted a report setting out the performance indicators the Council was required to monitor and publish annually in its performance plan. He advised the Executive of estimated performance for 2005/06 and proposed targets for the next three years. In addition, he advised Members of amendments to the local performance indicators for 2006/07.

In respect of the 88 performance indicators in 2005/06, he advised that 59 (67%) were on or above target, 9 (10%) were 1-5% off target and 20 (23%) were 6% or more off target. Of the 75 indicators for which there was an outturn in 2004/05, 36 (48%) had improved, 17 (23%) had stayed the same and 22 (29%) had worsened.

The Executive recalled that the 2006/07 and 2007/08 targets had been approved at its meeting on 29 March 2005. However, officers had been given an opportunity to revise these in light of estimated performance. The Leader detailed the reason for any revision of targets.

In respect of local performance indicators, Heads of Service had proposed that a number of these, as detailed in the report now submitted, become 'internal' service performance indicators from 2006/07. This meant that they would no longer be monitored at the corporate level, although they would still be retained on Covalent, the Council's performance management system.

The Leader suggested that the revised corporate performance indicators, as now detailed, were a more appropriate basket of indicators and should be

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approved.

The Leader referred to the consultation undertaken, which had included consideration by the Performance Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 28 February 2006. The Committee made a number of comments, specifically in relation to LPI 2.7 (Listed Buildings at risk of decay) and LPI 7.12a and 7.12b (Performance in PDRs). The Executive supported the Committee's recommendations.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink expressed her disappointment with the revision of some targets downwards. The Leader responded by referring to the need to set more realistic and challenging targets.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the estimates for 2005/06 be noted;

(B) the targets for 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09 for all indicators listed in Appendix 'A6' be approved;

DPP

(C) the amendments to the local performance indicators, in terms of 'internal' and 'external' status be approved; and

DPP

(D) the corporate performance indicators for 2006/07 be noted.

741 ADJUSTMENTS TO CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2006/07 FOR PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANTS

The Executive Member for Community submitted a report on the budgets for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

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He reminded the Executive of what these grants were for and the referral system. He advised that the demand for DFGs had increased substantially. 43 mandatory DFGs had been approved in the first six months of the current financial year, compared with 56 in the whole of 2004/5, which itself had been the highest number of grants for several years. Discretionary grant activity had been more constant with 23 Decent Home Grants approved in the first six months of this year, compared with 47 in the whole of 2004/5.

The Executive Member also highlighted the increase in DFG referrals for tenants of Registered Social Landlords. Since the transfer of the housing stock, a number of referrals had been made for DFG for tenants of Stort Valley, now Circle Anglia Housing Association. This had been due to the fact that its adaptations budget, agreed as part of the stock transfer process, was insufficient to meet demand and additional provision had not been made. In addition, the Housing Corporation, who had in the past provided RSLs with funding for the adaptation of their stock, were now diverting funding to the provision of more affordable housing.

The Executive noted that the Government had commissioned a review of the national DFG programme. Although a number of issues, particularly around funding had yet to be resolved, the statutory means test had been abolished. This was estimated to impact on budgets by a 6.7% increase. The Executive Member also referred to further budgetary pressures as a result of revised arrangements for stairlifts. As a result of all these factors, the Executive Member recommended the budgetary proposals as now detailed in the report submitted.

The Executive Member raised concerns over the level of Government subsidy for grants and referred to similar concerns raised by officers throughout Hertfordshire. He suggested that representation be

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made to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Leader referred to the need for officers to retain as much flexibility as possible in responding to demand for mandatory and discretionary grants. Therefore, he proposed an amendment, whereby the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant and the Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant budgets for 2006/07 be merged into a single Disabled Facilities Grant budget of £650,000. This would require recommendation (B) being altered as well, so that the merged Disabled Facilities Grant budget for future years be profiled at £630,000.

In response to a Member's query, it was confirmed that landlords were keeping registers of adapted properties up to date.

The Executive supported the amended recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant and the Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant budgets for 2006/07 be merged into a single Disabled Facilities Grant budget of £650,000, and that £295,000 remains in the Decent Home Grants budget, and £20,000 for Energy Grants;

DRS/DR

(B) the merged Disabled Facilities Grant budget for future years be profiled at £630,000; and

DRS/DR

(C) representation be made to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister concerning the level of government funding for adaptations.

DRS

742 REVIEW OF BUILDING CONTROL ESTABLISHMENT AND BUILDING CONTROL FEES

The Executive Member for Environmental Management submitted a report advising on increased workloads

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and income in Building Control.

He stated that the service had coped with a 25% increase in applications since 2002/03 when the workload of the section had been assessed during a best value exercise. The increase in applications represented an actual increase in workload of 13% which equated to two full time equivalent building control surveyors.

In anticipation of increased application and partnering opportunities with companies to increase profitable income, the estimate for incoming fees for 2005/06 had been increased by £77,000 to £605,800. Actual income levels for this year were anticipated to be just below profile.

The Executive recalled that, at its meeting held in September 2005, it had agreed a supplementary vote of £30,000 to employ agency staff within the section until March 2006. This had enabled two agency staff to be employed, which had resulted in a dramatic improvement in performance indicators and service delivery. It was anticipated that in 2006/7, there would be an increase in income within the building control trading account of a further £100,000. This was based on income forecasts due to an increased number of applications and additional workload from national partnering, as measured in the nationally agreed fees and charges.

The Executive Member suggested that the use of agency staff since January 2006 had already had a noticeable impact on performance indicators. A loss of such a resource would inevitably have a negative impact on the work of the section and limit the ability to engage with potential partners for profitable work through the partner authority scheme. Members recalled the problems in recruiting suitably qualified staff for Building Control activities, therefore it was suggested that officers be allowed some flexibility in

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recruiting for part time or temporary surveyors. It was proposed that the anticipated additional income of £100,000 in 2006/07 be used to fund the employment of up to two FTE Building Control surveyors and/or agency staff.

The Executive Member also referred to Building Regulation charges, which had increased by 5% on the fixed fee schedules 1 and 2. Schedule 3 charges had just changed as they related to building cost estimates submitted with applications and therefore, increased in line with building cost inflation, which was forecast to be around 5% for 2006/07. These fees had been agreed by other Hertfordshire Authorities to ensure consistency across the county. The proposed fees for 2006/07 were set out in Appendix 'A11' of the report now submitted.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the building control establishment be increased by either the recruitment of a maximum of two building control surveyors or suitably qualified agency staff; and

DRS

(B) the fees and charges for Building Control activities from 1 April 2006, as detailed at Appendix 'A11' of the report now submitted, be approved.

DRS

743 **SMART CARD FACILITIES FOR CAR PARKS**

The Executive Member for Environmental Management submitted a report seeking approval for the introduction of "smart card" payment facilities in the Council's car parks.

The Executive Member referred to the Council's recent decisions on car parking charges, which had included a proposal to discontinue season tickets for long stay car

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parks. The Council's proposals had been subject to public consultation following the advertisement of the Parking Places Order (see Minute 749 below).

The Executive Member stated that the proposal to discontinue season tickets for business car park users had been widely discussed in the local communities, and a range of views had been expressed. It had been particularly notable that the single most common view expressed by business people concerned difficulties in having correct change available daily in order to purchase a car park ticket. In response to this genuine concern from service users, it was recommended that the Council should introduce the facility for car parking ticket purchases to be cash free, through the introduction of a smart card system.

The Executive noted that car park ticket machines were all capable of being upgraded to take either smart card or credit card readers. However, it was not proposed to install facilities for credit card transactions at this stage, because of concern that the risks and liabilities involved in handling credit card transactions through this type of machine were not fully clear, in the light of the introduction of chip and pin technology into credit cards. Current advice was to defer any commitment to these types of electronic transaction methods until industry standards concerning online validation and authorisation were agreed and the technology met strict compliance criteria.

The Executive Member proposed that a smart card system be introduced, whereby car park users would be able to purchase a pre-paid parking card at the Council's cash offices. These cards could then be fed into the car park ticket machine and the value of parking purchased could be deducted. The Executive Member detailed two options for a disposable card or a rechargeable card, in the report now submitted.

Both card types allowed use in long or short stay car parks throughout the District. The individual car park

ACTION

parcs throughout the District. The individual car park tariff structure was recognised by card and the appropriate payment deduction made, allowing a more flexible, customer focused service. The customer would still need to display a pay and display ticket and would still be liable for a Parking Control Notice, should the paid time period be exceeded.

The Executive detailed the benefits and implementation costs of both options. The disposable card option would cost £11,880 and the rechargeable card option would cost £15,400. Either option would take three months to introduce. Therefore, it was anticipated that the system would be able to be introduced by mid July 2006.

It was proposed that, in the first instance, smart cards be available for sale only in Council cash offices. However, It might be possible to extend the number and location of local sales points to include local retailers in the future. This would require more detailed investigation. Also, It was recommended that the cost of the plastic card be absorbed within car parking revenue budgets and not passed on to the customer. This cost would be offset through the funds received by pre-payments for parking and through the reduced risk of cash losses through having less cash in the car park system.

The Executive supported option two of the two possible schemes, that was a scheme based on rechargeable cards, as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the provision of “Smart Card” payment facilities in all East Herts Council car parks, be approved,

DDCS

(B) option 2 of the two Smart card scheme options as described in the report now submitted, be implemented;

DDCS

ACTION

(C) a capital sum of £15,400 be approved for the introduction of the system, and

DDCS/DR

(D) this project be the first call on existing capital contingency resources for 2006/07.

DDCS/DR

744 LAND AT PARK ROAD, WARE

The Leader of the Council submitted a report seeking authorisation to dispose of the freehold interest in land at Park Road, Ware.

This area of land was a one acre (0.4 Ha) landlocked site at the rear of houses at Park Road, Ware, which had been leased since 1969 to Rank Cintel as car parking for the adjoining four acre (1.6 Ha) employment site. Cintel had been in receivership and the Receiver had sold the site to Endeavour (UK) Ltd, who intended to redevelop the site for a mixture of residential and employment uses, subject to planning permission.

The Leader detailed the terms on which the proposed disposal would take place. He suggested that the price that had been offered represented the best possible deal for the Council. The Executive also noted that the proposals would enable a future housing development involving a number of affordable units to proceed, subject to planning approval. This could provide an opportunity to secure nomination rights.

The Executive supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the freehold interest in land at Park Road, Ware be sold to Endeavour (UK) Ltd for the sum of £187,300.

DR

ACTIONRESOLVED ITEMS745 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 8 March 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

746 BISHOP'S STORTFORD TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Regions and Partnerships submitted a report seeking approval for the findings of the Bishop's Stortford Transport Study to be published for the purposes of public consultation.

The Executive recalled that the Bishop's Stortford Transport Study had been commissioned as a result of the Bishop's Stortford Masterplanning Study, which had been undertaken in 2004 by the Council, to investigate the issues affecting potential development on the Areas of Special Restraint (ASR) to the north of the town. This study had identified significant traffic and transport problems, not only in relation to the proposition of development on the ASRs, but also in respect of the way in which the town functioned at present. The Study had been commissioned in March 2005 and consultants Steer, Davies Gleave had been appointed to undertake the project. The Executive Member presented the findings of this Study.

In order to progress the work of the study into approved policy, it was now necessary to undertake detailed public consultation on the findings of the Study. It was proposed that a formal six-week public consultation period be held from 24 April to 2 June 2006. This would be a joint consultation process undertaken by the District and County Council in partnership. A key event would be the Community Voice meeting on 4 May 2006.

It was noted that the proposed final strategy would then be presented to both the District Council and the County

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Council for formal approval. It was anticipated that this report would be submitted to the Executive in September 2006. The adopted strategy would form part of the County Council's Eastern Herts Transport Plan and would also become a material consideration for development control purposes.

Councillors R Gilbert and Mrs M H Goldspink queried the consultation arrangements. It was confirmed that resources did not allow for a delivery of the summary leaflet to every household in Bishop's Stortford. However, the consultation process would include all stakeholder and resident groups who had been involved to date, as well as neighbouring parish councils. The Leader invited Members to suggest any group who should be included in the process.

The Executive approved the recommendation as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that the publication of the draft Bishop's Stortford Transport Strategy for a period of six weeks' public consultation, from Monday 24 April to Friday 2 June 2006, be approved.

DPP

747 HOUSING ASSESSMENT GROUP – DRAFT HOUSING SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Executive Member for Community Development submitted a report seeking comments on the Council's draft Housing Self Assessment and Action Plan.

The Executive recalled that the Housing inspection had been highlighted in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Improvement Plan. In preparation for this Inspection, it had been suggested that an internal service review of 'Housing' be undertaken, in particular to identify the areas that the Inspection team would highlight and make provision to rectify any areas for improvement.

The Executive Member detailed the Project Team that had been set up in November 2005, to prepare a draft Housing

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Self Assessment and Action Plan. This would be finalised and submitted to the Audit Commission by 19 April 2006, in preparation for their inspection of Housing Services commencing on 12 June 2006. The Audit Commission required all inspected authorities to provide a self assessment evidencing how well they were performing and prospects for improvement prior to the inspection. The Executive Member detailed the agreement reached with the Audi Commission on what areas would be covered.

Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink welcomed the report but expressed disappointment with the failure to achieve the annual target for 200 affordable housing units. In response, the Executive Member announced that the Authority had just been informed that it would receive an allocation of £14m from the Government for the provision of 471 affordable housing units in existing site allocations. This would help ensure that the Council met its target over a five year period of 1000 units.

The Leader added that securing these additional funds was a vindication of the Council's strategy of working in partnership with registered social landlords.

The Executive approved the recommendation as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that comments on the draft Housing Self Assessment as set out at Appendix 'A9' and Housing Strategy Action Plan as detailed at Appendix 'B9' of the report now submitted, be made so that this feedback could be used to inform the final version to be submitted to the Audit Commission.

DPP

748 TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY OF CRITICAL ORDINARY WATERCOURSES

The Executive Member for Environmental Management submitted a report setting out new arrangements for the

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management of Critical Ordinary Watercourses (COWs).

The Executive Member advised that, under current Land Drainage legislation, the Environment Agency (EA) was the designated Land Drainage Authority for main rivers and the Local Authority was the designated Land Drainage Authority for ordinary watercourses, within its boundaries. However, following the serious flooding in autumn 2000, the Government reviewed how flood risk was managed in England and Wales and decided that all watercourses posing the greatest risk of flooding should be under the control of one body - the Environment Agency.

The Executive Member stated that all COWs in England and Wales were being re-classified as main rivers and powers to deal with them were being transferred to the EA as part of a Government initiative to improve watercourse maintenance and thereby reduce flood risk.

He set out the proposed new arrangements for dealing with the maintenance of enmainned (ie those watercourses designated as main rivers) COWs within the District, which were due to be transferred to the Environment Agency with effect from April 2006. The Environment Agency wished to contract back additional work and new works, for a period of two years from April 2006, which had been previously undertaken by this Council under the Land Drainage Act 1991.

The Executive noted that enmainment of COWs would result in significantly greater expenditure on pro-active watercourse maintenance, which should result in substantially reduced flood risks. If the Council accepted the contracting-back agreement, it would be in a strong position to influence where and how the extra money was spent on land drainage during the two year term of the agreement.

The Executive Member detailed the lengths of watercourses that would be transferred in the report now submitted. He also set out the Memorandum of Understanding which

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detailed the contracting back arrangements for the first two years. At the end of this period, this work would be subject to open competition in order to comply with European procurement legislation.

The Executive approved the recommendations.

RESOLVED - that (A) approval be given for East Herts Council to carry out maintenance work on Critical Ordinary Watercourses within the District on behalf of the Environment Agency, subject to the negotiation of suitable terms of reimbursement from the Environment Agency; and

DDCS

(B) the Memorandum of Understanding with the Environment Agency be approved and signed for East Herts Council to undertake maintenance work on main river, i.e. newly enmained Critical Ordinary Water Courses within the District, for a period of two years, from April 2006 to March 2008.

DDCS

749 EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL (OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES) (CONSOLIDATION) ORDER NO.1 2006

The Executive Member for Environmental Management submitted a report detailing the responses received following the advertisement of the East Hertfordshire District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) (Consolidation) Order No 1 2006.

The Executive recalled that, Council, at its meeting held on 22 February 2006, considered a recommendation of the Executive on fees and charges and agreed to increase car park charges and discontinue long stay season tickets. At the same meeting, the Executive was given delegated authority to consider objections to the Order and to decide whether to confirm the Order.

The Executive Member advised that 23 responses had been received and detailed these on a schedule attached

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as an Appendix to the report now submitted. This schedule also set out the Council's response to the submissions made.

The Executive Member also referred to 27 objections he had received personally. The main concern of these focussed on the inconvenience of carrying excessive loose change. He believed that this would be addressed via proposals for the provision of "smart cards" (see Minute 743 above).

The Executive Member proposed that the Order be confirmed as an opposed Order.

The Executive approved the recommendation as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that the East Hertfordshire District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) (Consolidation) Order No 1 2006 be confirmed as an opposed Order.

DCG

750 STRATEGIC RISK MONITORING

The Executive received a report of the Leader of the Council, which had been considered by the Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 28 February 2006, detailing actions taken to mitigate and control risks tracked by strategic risk registers during the period 1 October – 31 December 2005.

An analysis of the mitigating actions showed that the planned action had been achieved for 18 risk registers, partially achieved for 2 risk registers, 2 had revised completion dates, 1 action was on target and 1 action had not been undertaken, as it was not necessary. The Leader detailed these and the proposed changes to the following registers:

- SRB9 – Health and Safety

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- SRB11e – E - procurement
- SRB11h – Leisure Contract
- SRB13 – Competency Framework
- SRB17 – East of England Plan
- SRB18 – Procurement Toolkit

The Leader highlighted SRB11h – Leisure Contract and referred to ongoing discussions with Aspire Leisure. He assured Members that officers were monitoring this constantly.

The Executive agreed the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED - That (A) the progress in taking action to mitigate and control risks tracked by strategic risk registers during the period 1 October to 31 December 2005 be noted; and

(B) the proposed changes set out in paragraphs 5.4 – 5.9 of the report now submitted, in relation to SRB9 – Health and Safety, SRB11e – E-Procurement, SRB11h – Leisure Contract, SRB13 – Competency Framework, SRB17 – East of England Plan and SRB18 –Procurement Toolkit, be approved.

DCG

751 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ADVISERS

The Leader of the Council submitted a report seeking approval for the renewal of the contract with Sector, the Council's financial consultants.

The Executive noted that for a number of years, the Council had managed external funds with the assistance of external advisors. The current contract with Sector expired at the

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end of March 2006.

The Leader stated that Sector provided services to approximately two thirds of the local authority market. There was only one other substantial player in this market, which did not appear to have the extensive range of technical expertise that was associated with the wider range of accounting issues around treasury management, eg, leasing, capital accounting and pooling of capital receipts.

Therefore, with continuity in mind, it was suggested that Sector's contract be renewed for a further three years, subject to the Council's ability to give six months notice of termination if circumstances required. Further to negotiation, Sector's fee would be maintained at the current level with an inflation only uplift in year three only. Sector's fee was a small amount compared to the additional income generated through fund management.

The Executive approved the recommendation as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the contract with financial consultants, Sector, be extended for a further three years.

DR

752 FORWARD PLAN: MAY – AUGUST 2006

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

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

RESOLVED - that the Forward Plan for May – August 2006, as set out at Appendix 'A' to these Minutes be approved for publication.

DCG

ACTION753 WRITE-OFF OF HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENT

The Leader of the Council submitted a report seeking approval for the write-off of irrecoverable overpayments of Housing Benefit.

A claimant, as detailed in the report now submitted, had been invoiced in October 2005 for overpaid Housing Benefit of £3,898.95. The overpayment had arisen as a result of the identification of previously undisclosed occupational pension. The claimant's executor had been approached to attempt recovery from the claimant's estate, but it was confirmed that no estate existed.

The Executive approved the recommendation as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the write-off of an overpayment of Housing Benefit of £3,898.95, which was no longer recoverable due to the death of the claimant, be authorised.

DR

754 HIGHWAYS JOINT MEMBER PANEL - NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2006

RESOLVED – that the Notes of the Highways Joint Member Panel meeting held on 31 January 2006, be received.

755 IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT (IEG) 6 SUBMISSION

The Executive Member for Public Engagement submitted a report on the final e-Government submission to the Government.

The Executive recalled that, since 2001/2, the Council had produced and submitted IEG statements each year, with

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three reports being submitted over the last 12 months.

The Executive Member referred to IEG 5.5, which had been submitted in December 2005. For IEG 6 there was little change with the main additional development being the implementation of the Customer Relationship Management system and new telephony. This had been highlighted within the Priority Outcomes section of the return.

Councillor P R Ballam referred to various complaints she had received in respect of the new telephone system and, in particular, the use of recorded messages which appeared to cause annoyance. The Executive Member responded by stating that more calls were now being handled as callers were not receiving an engaged tone and then hanging up. He reminded Members that this was a new initiative and that the recorded message would be reviewed in good time.

In response to a question from Councillor R Gilbert, the Executive Member confirmed that a new updated telephone directory would be issued shortly.

In response to a question from the Executive Member for Regions and Partnerships, the Executive Member for Public Engagement stated that he was confident that those amber actions that were dependent on County Council actions would be completed.

The Executive approved the recommendation as now submitted.

RESOLVED - that the IEG 6 submission, as now detailed, be approved for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

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756 WARE MARKET FEES

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on the progress of initiatives to regenerate Ware Market.

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The Executive recalled that, at its meeting in December 2005, it had agreed a number of measures with regard to fees and charges for Ware market as follows:

- A 50% reduction in stallholder rents until March 2006.
- Traders to spread their pitches without additional cost at the discretion of the Market Beadle.
- A period of two weeks free trading for new traders joining the market in 2005/6.

These measures had been introduced to complement a special project led by the Tourism Development Officer intended to address the problems facing the declining market. This project had included a traders' survey, a customer survey and the analysis of a mystery shopper audit. This information had been used to help develop an action plan to help regenerate the market. The range of actions included signage, newsletters, development of new traders, development of a traders' forum, exploration of cashless rent collection and the potential relocation of the market to another part of the town.

One of the key recommendations was that the 50% rent reduction should continue for a little longer and that a return to a full rent at this stage could mean that traders would drift away to other markets and that Ware market would therefore cease. The Executive was requested to extend the rent reduction for a further two months to the end of May 2006, pending a full report to the Executive meeting in May 2006.

The Leader wished to place on record his appreciation of the efforts of Tilly Andrews, the Tourism Development Officer.

The Leader referred to ongoing discussions with Hertfordshire Highways over the possibility of meeting the

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Hertfordshire Highways over the possibility of meeting the traders' request to move the location of the market to Amwell End.

The Executive approved the recommendation as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that the 50% fee reduction for Ware Market, approved at the Executive meeting on 6 December 2005, be extended for an additional two months to the end of May 2006, to allow for the completion of agreed actions.

DPP

757 CCTV

The Executive Member for Community Safety submitted a report seeking the necessary approvals to enable the Council's CCTV project to proceed. In her absence, the Leader outlined the proposals.

The Executive recalled that, at its meeting held on 6 December 2005, it had approved the provision of CCTV cameras in Bishop's Stortford, Ware and Hertford, subject to approval of an appropriate agreement with the Stevenage and North Herts CCTV Trust and to a successful tendering process for the supply and installation and associated works. The Executive Member advised that an appropriate agreement had now been reached with the Stevenage and North Herts Trust for the monitoring of the cameras. A tendering process for the supply and installation of the cameras had been undertaken and negotiations had been concluded with the suppliers of transmission services.

Details of these agreements and the tenders were set out in the report now submitted. The Executive noted that it was the intention to start the works in mid April 2006 with a practical completion date scheduled for the end of June and formal handover of an operational system at the end of July 2006.

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The Leader advised that the Member representation on the CCTV Executive Board would be determined later.

In response to Members' questions, the Director of Policy and Performance confirmed that the proposed reorganisation of the police service should not impact on the proposed transmission agreement as the basic command unit would remain at Stevenage.

The Executive approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the Council enters into an agreement with Stevenage and North Herts CCTV Trust for the monitoring of the Council's CCTV cameras and associated works, as detailed at Appendix 'A22' of the report now submitted,

DPP

(B) the acceptance of Siemens' tender for the installation of twenty two cameras and associated works, as agreed with the Council's consultant following evaluation, as detailed at Appendix 'C22' of the report now submitted; and

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(C) a seven year contract with NTL for a transmission service to the Stevenage control centre, be approved.

DPP

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

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Chairman
Date