

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY
MEETING OF EAST HERTS COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 28 JUNE 2006 AT
6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A L Burlton (Chairman).
Councillors M R Alexander, W Ashley, D R Atkins,
H G S Banks, K A Barnes, N Burdett, D Clark,
R Conway, R N Copping, A F Dearman,
J Demonti, R Gilbert, Mrs M H Goldspink,
J Hedley, Mrs D M Hone, A P Jackson,
G McAndrew, M P A McMullen, Mrs J Mayes,
T Milner, R L Parker, D A A Peek, N C Poulton,
D Richards, P A Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby,
B W J Sapsford, G D Scrivener, J J Taylor,
J P Warren, N Wilson, M Wood.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Fisher	- Chief Executive
Simon Chancellor	- Head of Accountancy Services
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Corporate Governance
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Ceri Pettit	- Head of Performance
Nick White	- Communications Officer

72 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Mrs J Mayes to her first Council meeting and congratulated her on her recent by-election victory.

ACTION73 REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Leader of the Council reported on the work of the Executive and presented the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 30 May 2006.

The Leader also congratulated Councillor Mrs J Mayes on her resounding election victory.

The Leader referred to the report of the independent panel who had conducted the recent Examination in Public into the East of England Plan. Its conclusions had validated the approach taken by the Council in making its submission based on a reasoned argument rather than an emotional one. He expressed his gratitude to Councillors M G Carver and D Clark, the Local Plans team and all Members for what had been a cross party campaign. He also thanked Jed Griffiths, the Council's consultant and other local groups for their contributions. The Leader concluded by stating that despite the independent panel's findings, the pressure for development in East Herts remained.

Councillor M Wood, on behalf of the Liberal Democrat group, also welcomed Councillor Mrs J Mayes to the Council. In respect of the Leader's comments regarding the independent panel's findings, Councillor M Wood echoed his thanks to the various people involved in formulating the Council's response. He commented that although the Harlow North proposals had been rejected, the pressure on Bishop's Stortford would increase. He expressed his fear for the rest of Hertfordshire.

Councillor K A Barnes, on behalf of the Independent group, referred to the unity shown by the Council in responding to the East of England Plan and the need to work together in dealing with future such challenges.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 30 May 2006, be received, and the recommendations contained therein, be adopted.

ACTION74 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Human Resources Committee submitted a report seeking approval of the terms of reference of the Human Resources Committee. Also, he outlined proposed meeting dates for the Committee in 2006/07.

At the Annual Council meeting held on 17 May 2006, it had been requested that full terms of reference for this Committee be prepared and presented to this meeting for approval. The proposed terms of reference were set out at Appendix 'A4' of the report now submitted.

The Chairman also proposed that meetings be held as follows:

- 31 August 2006
- 19 October 2006
- 14 December 2006
- 25 January 2006
- 22 March 2006

Council supported the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the terms of reference for the Human Resources Committee, as now submitted, be approved; and

(B) the meeting dates for the Human Resources Committee, as now detailed, be approved.

ACTION75 2005/06 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The Leader of the Council submitted a report presenting the 2005/06 Statement of Internal Control.

The Statement of Internal Control was a statutory document that was produced alongside the Statement of Accounts (see Minute 76). Council noted that guidance issued by CIPFA, stated that internal control was being interpreted in its broadest sense covering both financial and managerial controls that ensured that the implementation of East Herts Council's vision and priorities was being properly managed. Therefore, systems of internal control would cover controls such as:

- the setting and review of the Council's priorities,
- service plans,
- performance management systems,
- risk management,
- financial and management controls,
- compliance with laws and regulations,
- accuracy and reliability of financial statements and other published information,
- human, financial and other resources being managed effectively and efficiently, and
- high quality services being delivered efficiently and effectively.

The compilation of the Statement required East Herts Council to review the adequacy of its governance arrangements, develop an action plan to improve its arrangements and to communicate to stakeholders how better governance led to better quality public services.

Officers had reviewed the Statement, which had involved an evaluation of assurances and the development of an action plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of internal control. As part of this process, Chief Officers had certified individual assurance statements

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which underlined their responsibility for maintaining an adequate and effective system of internal control and identifying areas of concern and proposed measures to correct significant internal control issues. The 2005/06 Statement was detailed at Appendix 'A5' of the report now submitted.

As part of the preparation of the 2005/06 Statement, the assurance framework for risk management and internal control had been mapped out and was detailed at Appendix 'B5' of the report now submitted. Controls listed within the Statement had been subject to independent scrutiny by Internal Audit, External Audit, inspection, benchmarking etc which had validated their operation.

The Audit Committee, at its meeting held on 27 June 2006, had also considered the Statement and had supported it.

Council noted that throughout 2006/07, the Corporate Management Team would continue to monitor progress made towards implementing the action plan contained in the 2005/06 Statement. Following advice from the External Auditor, RSM Robson Rhodes LLP, Corporate Management Team would also receive quarterly updated Chief Officers' assurance statements so as to provide evidence of ongoing commitment towards maintaining an adequate and effective system of internal control and to alert senior management to emerging significant concerns surrounding internal control. By providing quarterly assurances a live "in year process" rather than a year end exercise would be demonstrated. Also, progress would be reported to the Audit Committee on a six monthly basis.

Council approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the process in place for the production of the authority's 2005/06 Statement of Internal Control be approved and the Statement be adopted;

DCG

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(B) on behalf of the Members and Chief Officers of East Herts Council, the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive sign the 2005/06 Statement of Internal Control as being a true statement; and

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(C) the Audit Committee receive six monthly reports on progress made against implementing the action plan contained in the 2005/06 Statement of Internal Control and updates arising from Chief Officer assurance statements.

DCG

76 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2005/06

The Leader of the Council submitted a report seeking approval for the Statement of Accounts 2005/06. He commented on the efficiency shown by the Accountancy team in completing the work necessary before the earlier June deadline imposed by the new regulations.

Council noted that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 required the Authority's Statement of Accounts to be approved by the end of June 2006. The Accounts were detailed at Appendix 'A6' of the report now submitted and included supporting comments for each of the main statements.

The Audit Committee, at its meeting held on 27 June 2006, had also considered the Statement of Accounts. It had suggested additional disclosure notes, which were tabled for consideration by Council and were detailed by the Leader.

Council approved the Statement of Accounts 2005/06 as now submitted and amended.

RESOLVED - that (A) the comments of the Audit Committee of 27 June 2006 regarding the Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2006 be received, and

(B) the Statement of Accounts as now amended, for the financial year 2005/06 be approved and

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for the financial year 2005/06 be approved and signed by the Chairman at the conclusion of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 6.17 pm

Chairman
Date

Nps\Council\Minutes 28 June 2006