

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COUNCIL – 20 FEBRUARY 2008

REPORT BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

DISTRICT ESTIMATED NET REVENUE EXPENDITURE 2008/09

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

'D' RECOMMENDATION - that (A) representations received under Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 be considered formally; and

(B) the estimated net revenue expenditure for 2008/09, amounting to £8,710,272, be formally approved.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 Full Council must explicitly agree the above recommendations prior to East Herts, as the billing authority for the District, calculating the Council Tax for 2008/09.

1.2 The Council is scheduled to make the statutory Council Tax resolutions at its meeting of 4 March 2008.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/Objectives

2.1 **Fit for purpose, services fit for you**

Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.

2.2 Funding of the proposed net revenue expenditure for 2008/09 is vital if the Council is to deliver its Corporate Priorities and Objectives.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Elsewhere on the agenda the Council will receive the minutes of the Executive Meeting of 5 February 2008 and its recommended revenue budget for the financial year 2008/09.
- 3.2 By approving the 2008/09 budget the Council implicitly agrees the proposed net revenue expenditure for that year.
- 3.3 Prior to determining the net revenue expenditure the Council must consider representations from non domestic ratepayers, i.e., local businesses in the District.

4.0 Report

- 4.1 The Council must determine the Council Tax for 2008/09 by the 11 March 2008 and proposes to determine the Council Tax at its meeting on 4 March 2008.
- 4.2 The proposed revenue spend for 2008/09, net of formula Government Grant and contribution from the National Non Domestic Rates Pool has been determined as £8,710,272, an increase of £494,972 or 6.03% compared with 2007/08.
- 4.3 For 2007/08 the net revenue expenditure was determined as £8,215,300.

5.0 Consultation with local businesses

- 5.1 The budget consultation with local business for 2007/8 took place in conjunction with an update on the Council's Economic Development Action Plan. The consultations took place at local venues across East Herts and were attended by representatives from Town Partnerships, local Chambers of Commerce, the Federation for Small Business as well as individual businesses.

The meetings explored how the Council could help deliver action and provide services that would create the most suitable environment in which to do business. Businesses were encouraged by the good progress made in achieving outcomes from the economic development action plan. Businesses were made aware of the key policy issues that would be considered in setting the 2008/9 budget.

The following themes and concerns were among those emerging from the meetings:

- The lack of employment land and business premises available to encourage new business into the district and support the development of existing business. There was a perception and some evidence to suggest that East Herts was losing business to neighbouring areas, particularly in the east of the district. The Council will commission a new Employment Land Study in the final quarter of 2007/8 to begin to tackle this issue.
- The changing town centre retail environment was of concern especially threats to the survival of small independent retailers in the light of supermarket development. The Council will commission a town centres retail study within the same timescale of the Land Study to help inform future work.
- There was enthusiasm for town based environmental enhancement projects with local input into identifying the priority projects and the possible development of town plans through consultation with local stakeholders.
- Car parking issues were also of concern particularly proposed increases in charges.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires that billing authorities consult as to a financial year before it makes calculations under section 32 of the Act.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 The Council must make the above resolutions to enable it to fund its 2008/09 budget.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 None

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 None

Background Papers

Results of Business Consultation
Medium Term Financial Plan Working Papers
Service Estimates Working Papers
Fees and Charges Working Papers

Contact Member: Councillor Tony Jackson – Leader of the Council

Contact Officer: Tony Hall – Interim Head of Business Support
Services and Deputy Section 151 Officer, Ext 2070