

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
ON TUESDAY 1 JULY 2008 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A P Jackson (Chairman/Leader).  
Councillors M R Alexander, L O Haysey, T Milner,  
R L Parker and M J Tindale.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, W Ashley, N Clark,  
J Demonti, R Gilbert, M P A McMullen,  
N C Poulton, J O Ranger, W Quince, J P Warren.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Claire Bennett	- Housing Strategy and Policy Manager
Chris Clowes	- Licensing Enforcement Manager
Mike Collier	- Chief Finance Officer
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Tony Hall	- Interim Deputy Chief Finance Officer
Philip Hamberger	- Director of Internal Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Lois Prior	- Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Communications Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Jan Spong	- Head of Community Safety and Licensing
Tracy Strange	- Head of Health and Housing
Sheila Winterburn	- Environmental Health Manager (Residential)

99 APOLOGY

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

100 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Leader welcomed Mike Collier, the newly appointed Section 151 Officer, to his first meeting.

**RECOMMENDED ITEMS****ACTION**101 **EAST HERTS HOMELESS AND HOMELESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2008-13**

**The Executive Member for Housing and Health submitted a report seeking approval for a Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy 2008-13.**

**The Homeless Act 2002 had placed stronger duties on local authorities to assist homeless and potentially homeless people. One of the key aims of the Act was to ensure that housing authorities took a comprehensive and strategic approach to managing and preventing all forms of homelessness in their District.**

**The Council's first Homeless Strategy had been published in July 2003. A number of significant changes had taken place since then, particularly the bringing back in-house of the Council's housing advice, homelessness and housing register services in April 2005. These services were now provided by the new Housing Options Service based at both Bishop's Stortford and Hertford offices with the focus on the prevention of homelessness.**

**The Executive Member detailed the new Strategy in the report now submitted, which built on the themes of the**

**original strategy but had a greater emphasis on the proactive prevention of homelessness wherever possible. The aims and objectives of the Strategy would be delivered with partner agencies, through the Action Plan which had been grouped around the following six strategic objectives:**

- Prevent Homelessness through early intervention and targeted Housing Advice.**
- Develop and Improve Services to Young people.**
- Improve the type and use of temporary accommodation for homeless households.**
- Improve services to homeless households and households in housing need.**
- Develop and improve partnership working to maximise benefits to homeless households.**
- Increase the supply of appropriate, good quality affordable housing.**

**The five year Strategy would be reviewed annually with progress against the action plan being submitted to the Community Scrutiny Committee. In addition, progress would be monitored quarterly by the East Herts Homeless Strategy Group, which included partner agencies such as the CAB, Hertfordshire Probation Service, YMCA, Riversmead and South Anglia Housing Associations, Vale House, and Shelter.**

**The Community Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 22 April 2008, welcomed and supported the Strategy.**

**In response to a question from Councillor R Gilbert, the Executive Member confirmed that Officers were**

looking at the option of increasing funding support for the services provided by the YMCA.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

**RECOMMENDED** - that (A) that the East Herts Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy 2008-13 and the accompanying action plan be adopted; and

(B) an annual report to monitor progress against the action plan be submitted to Community Scrutiny Committee.

DNS

**102 CHANGES TO DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS LEGISLATION AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS, AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY**

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The Executive Member for Housing and Health submitted a report setting out recent changes in legislation governing mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), the implications for East Herts Council's grant programme and proposals for policy changes to manage those implications, together with some minor policy updates.

The Executive Member detailed the key changes to mandatory DFG. Currently, local authorities received a Specified Capital Grant (SCG) towards 60% of expenditure on DFG, with the local authority funding the remaining 40%, with many, including East Herts, contributing beyond the SCG level in order to meet local need. From 2008/9, the 60:40 split would no longer apply and local authorities would simply receive a DFG allocation.

The maximum mandatory grant limit had increased from £25,000 to £30,000. A decision was required as to whether to continue to offer up to £10,000 of

**Discretionary DFG for large schemes costing in excess of the statutory maximum, bringing the total potential grant expenditure to £40,000, or to maintain the current total available limit of £35,000. The expenditure on mandatory and discretionary DFG in 2007/8 was £635,841 and the combined budget for 2008/9 was £660,220. It was proposed that the discretionary DFG budget could continue to be used, if necessary, to meet these additional costs of mandatory grant and that the maximum amount of discretionary DFG for such top ups be reduced from £10,000 to £5,000. This would enable the same overall level of assistance of £35,000 being available, to avoid the risk of being able to offer larger grants but to fewer people.**

**The Executive Member detailed the key changes to means testing, which were that DFG applicants claiming Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit and Tax Credits would no longer be required to provide any further financial information in addition to these benefits. People in receipt of Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit would no longer have these payments counted as income in the DFG means test.**

**Whilst the DFG could already be used to fund access to gardens, it was not specified as a specific purpose. The new legislation now made access to gardens a specific criterion for grant, where this was necessary, reasonable and practicable. To avoid fettering the council's discretion, it was proposed that the extent of works continued to be judged according to the particular circumstances of each case.**

**It was noted that a general consent would enable local authorities to place limited charges on adapted properties of owner occupiers, where the cost of the DFG exceeded £5,000, limited to a maximum charge of £10,000. The placement of charges was at the discretion of each local authority, and should be determined on a case by case basis reflecting the individual circumstances of each applicant. It was**

proposed that a charge be routinely placed as a local land charge for all DFG of £5,100 or more, to owner occupiers, for the maximum sum permissible, and that a similar approach be adopted to that which was followed for the Council's Decent Home Grants, namely that recovery is the norm and that any exception must be approved by the Head of Health and Housing.

The Executive Member referred to the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy and advised that, for completeness and clarity, some amendments were proposed in the light of the legislative changes. In so doing, the opportunity had been taken to include some minor updates to wording that reflected the current position.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

**RECOMMENDED** - that (A) in the light of the increase in the grant limit for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, the maximum amount of Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant for schemes costing in excess of the statutory maximum, be reduced from £10,000 to £5,000, and paragraph 8.2.a of East Herts Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy be amended to read:

DNS

“Increasing the grant paid for mandatory disabled facilities grant work *by up to £5000* when the reasonable cost of the required work exceeds the set maximum limit.”;

(B) the following amendment also be made to the Council's Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy:

DNS

To insert at paragraph 8.1:

“In 2008, legislation clarified that access to gardens is eligible for mandatory Disabled

**Facilities Grants. The Council will consider the particular circumstances and any relevant statutory guidance when determining such grants. Where the Occupational Therapist recommends works to provide access to the garden, the Council will generally seek to provide such grant as is sufficient for reasonable access to the garden, yard and outhouses if necessary, but this may not necessarily include works to enable access to the whole garden, or to every outhouse where it is clear that the disabled person does not need such access.”;**

**(C) a charge be routinely placed as a local land charge for all Disabled Facilities Grants of £5100 or more, to owner occupied households, for the maximum sum permissible, as allowed by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008, and, as is consistent with paragraph 10.29 of the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy, any exception to the requirement to repay in the event of sale, etc, shall be at the discretion of the Head of Health and Housing, having regard to the considerations required by the consent;**

DNS

**(D) the text in italics be inserted into paragraph 10.29 of the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy as follows:**

DNS

**‘In the case of any *discretionary* grant, for which part or complete payment has been made, where the applicant disposes of the property, or ceases to make it available for letting as the case may be, before the conclusion of a 10 year period following the date of final payment then she/he shall repay to the Council on demand the amount of assistance that has been paid or such**

part thereof as detailed:

**0 – less than 4 years after final payment - 100%**

**4 –less than 6 years after final payment - 75%**

**6 – less than 10 years after final payment - 50%**

**Where, for discretionary grants, a nil contribution was required by the applicant towards the cost of eligible works, the first £5000 of specified energy efficiency works and agency fees, or grants of less than £5000 will not be recovered on sale.**

**Subject to any relevant legislation and statutory consent or guidance, a property charge will be placed for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants of £5,100 or more, for the maximum sum permissible, for owner occupied properties. The maximum charge is £10,000, and full recovery of the charge will be sought if the adapted property is sold within ten years of completion of the grant.’;**

**(E) the following minor revisions be made to the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy:**

**DNS**

- (i) ‘Head of Health and Housing’ be substituted for any reference to ‘Head of Environmental Health’, and ‘Director of Neighbourhood Services’ be substituted for ‘Executive Director – Operations’.**
- (ii) The first sentence of section 13 be changed to ‘The Enforcement Policy with regard to private sector housing supports the principles of the Environmental Health Enforcement Policy and was adopted in February 2007.’**



- (iii) To reflect the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, at section 10.12 'free from significant hazards' be substituted for 'in a statutorily fit condition', and similar substitutions be made where there is reference to the old fitness standard.
- (iv) At the definition of the Decent Homes Standard at 8.3.2 'free from category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System' be substituted for 'fit to live in'.
- (v) At 8.3.2(a) rather than specify the vulnerable age group, vulnerable person be defined as 'in receipt of a qualifying benefit as defined for the Decent Home Standard, and *vulnerable in relation to HHSRS guidance for the relevant hazard*'.
- (vi) At Appendix 3 to the policy, extracts from selected previous legislative definitions, the sentence 'In any other case the authority will require the consent of the Secretary of State not to demand a repayment and it is expected that consent will only be given sparingly' be deleted, as this is not relevant to discretionary grants and could mislead.
- (vii) To reflect the energy policy changes agreed by the Executive on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2007 section 8.4 be changed to:

**'Discretionary Energy Grants**

Home owners and private sector tenants not eligible for a Decent Home Grant, may apply for an Energy Grant, for £50 per measure or 50% of the cost of the work

which ever is the least, up to a maximum grant of £150. These grants are subject to the Council's terms and conditions. Eligible works are energy efficiency works, such as loft, tank, pipe and cavity wall insulation, and improved heating systems and controls, but not replacement boilers.'

### **103 REVIEW OF THE DISPERSED COMMUNITY ALARM SERVICE**

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The Executive Member for Housing and Health submitted a report on the Council's dispersed community alarm service, which proposed that it be included in the review of community alarms proposed by Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Service, with a view to tendering and awarding a single contract for all the dispersed community alarm services in the East Herts Council area.

It was noted that a dispersed community alarm was a device installed to protect and/or maintain vulnerable people living in their own homes, by enabling them to raise an alarm call from anywhere in the home. A dispersed community alarm was different to alarm systems that were hard wired into the fabric of a building, such as found in sheltered accommodation. Hard wired alarms remained the responsibility of the housing provider, such as a Housing Association.

The number of East Herts users recorded on the Broxbourne Control database, with effect from 1 April 2008, for the period 2008/09, was 780. The service was delivered by a number of stakeholders, as detailed in the report now submitted. It was noted that the scheme was out of step with a number of similar schemes operated by other neighbouring local authorities, namely:

- **alarm units were only offered on a rental option;**
- **the majority of other schemes facilitated access to Supporting People funding to those qualifying under the Supporting People programme; and**
- **residents not qualifying for Supporting People funding could still access the service, but at full cost.**

**The Executive Member detailed the charges to service users in the report now submitted. Enquiries with other local authorities and organisations providing a dispersed community alarm service had identified that, generally, they had moved away from offering a purchase facility and only offered the facility to rent the alarm units.**

**He also detailed the Supporting People funding arrangements and the impact of changes arising from British Telecom's 21CN project. This involved a new digital network that would render some of the older alarms to be either inoperable or unreliable. He proposed that all users with a non-compatible alarm unit have the equipment, and if necessary the telephone, replaced free by the Council, at an estimated cost of £7,500. It was anticipated that this could be met from within the existing budget.**

**The Executive Member detailed the Supporting People Commissioning Body proposal, its benefits and the proposals that Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services would develop a single tender for the whole county. A project group had been established to develop the proposals.**

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

- RECOMMENDED** - that (A) the Council's dispersed community alarm service is included in the proposed Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services review, with a view to tendering all East Herts dispersed community alarm services; DNS
- (B) the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to carry out any preparatory work to enable Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services to contract the East Herts Council dispersed community alarm service and to make payments to those users who do not qualify for Supporting People or other Fair Access to Care funding who would have otherwise been eligible to benefit from the council grant aiding scheme; DNS
- (C) the sale of alarms units to residents cease with immediate effect and only rented units be provided, at an inclusive rate for the use of the unit, connection to the control centre and maintenance; DNS
- (D) any future Council grant aided or 'free' alarms are issued on the basis that financial assistance will only be guaranteed up to 31 March 2009; DNS
- (E) the Council replace all non-compatible alarm units already issued free of charge; and DNS
- (F) all East Herts service users are written to informing them of the possible changes in the service and provider, once the detail and timetable have been clarified, with an explanation of the effect of any changes and providing the option for them to transfer to another service provider if they wish. DNS

## **104 DATA PROTECTION POLICY - EXTERNAL CUSTOMERS**

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The Leader of the Council submitted a report seeking approval for a Data Protection Policy for External Customers.

A review of Data Protection had been undertaken in response to:

- recent losses of personal data by government agencies reported in the national press;
- Member interest at Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee following the adoption of the Data Sharing Protocol; and
- a request from the Chief Executive to review the Council's Policies relating to Data Protection following the above.

The Leader detailed the draft Data Protection Policy for External Customers at Appendix 'A19' of the report now submitted. This draft had been based on the HR Policy and Procedure on Data Protection and research across other Local Authorities. The policy sought to provide guidance to external customers on the Council's commitment to good Data Protection Practice.

The Executive supported the Policy as now detailed.

**RECOMMENDED** - that the Data Protection Policy (External Customers) as now submitted, be approved.

## RESOLVED ITEMS

### 105 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 27 May 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

### 106 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY

The Executive received a report detailing those issues referred to the Executive by the Scrutiny Committees. Issues relating to specific reports for the Executive were considered and detailed at the relevant report of the Executive Member.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

### 107 THE FUTURE OF HOSTEL PROVISION

The Executive Member for Housing and Health submitted a report reviewing the future of hostel provision in East Herts.

Currently, the Council provided hostel accommodation at Thele House and Hillcrest/Birch House. It provided other solutions to homelessness through other services such as private sector properties managed by the Frays Charitable Housing Association, part of the Paradigm Group. Government policy required the Council to reduce the number of temporary accommodation units to 33 by 2010. It was also considered poor practice to accommodate people in shared amenity hostel accommodation. The Executive Member set out proposals to both reduce the number of units used as temporary accommodation and to provide accommodation in the future to a higher standard, whilst controlling costs.

The hostels were currently managed for the Council by a housing association, Paradigm Housing Group. The contract ran until 24 November 2014. It was proposed that

this contract be terminated, leases of the hostels surrendered with the hostels being managed directly by the Council from 1 October 2008. The ending of the contract and surrender of the leases would be achieved by mutual agreement at no cost to the Council.

It was proposed that Hillcrest be converted to 10 self-contained units and Birch House to 2 self contained units, at an estimated cost of £450,000 with a construction period of 6 months. During this period, all hostel residents would occupy Thele House, after which Thele House would be decommissioned and disposed of.

The Executive Member detailed the timetable in the report now submitted.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

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|---|-----|
| <u>RESOLVED</u> – that (A) negotiations be undertaken with Paradigm Housing Group with a view to terminating the contract with Paradigm Housing Group for the management of its hostels and the surrender of the leases of Thele House and Hillcrest/Birch House be approved; | DNS |
| (B) the hostels be managed through the Housing Options Team;  | DNS |
| (C) proposals to convert Hillcrest and Birch House to 12 self-contained units be developed;   | DNS |
| (D) a planning application in respect of Birch House be submitted;  | DNS |
| (E) proposals to decommission Thele House on the completion of the conversion of Hillcrest be developed;  | DNS |
| (F) a report be submitted to a future meeting on the possible disposal of Thele House following   | DNS |

decommissioning, and

(G) housing related support services be provided with Supporting People. DNS

108 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture submitted a report updating Members on the progress of projects identified in the action plan for the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme. She also referred to the Green Flag Awards.

The Executive recalled that Southern Country Park in Bishop's Stortford had been submitted as the first of East Herts Council's parks and open spaces to be put forward for a Green Flag Award. The outcome of the recent visit by the panel of judges was still awaited.

The Executive Member also detailed potential bids for 2008/09 for The Ridgeway or Hartham Common for submission for the Green Flag Award. She proposed that, in order to deliver the best possible improvements to the parks in the given timeframe, The Ridgeway open space be submitted for Green Flag for 2008/09 and that, preparations on Hartham Common for submission in 2009/0 be continued.

The Environment Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 10 June 2008, endorsed the recommendations set out in the report now submitted.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress of the projects detailed within the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme Report be noted;

(B) the progress of the Southern Country Park



Green Flag Award bid be noted; and

(C) the selection of The Ridgeway Open Space, Hertford as the next Green Flag Bid in 2008/09 be confirmed.

DCCS

109 UPDATE ON THE PROCUREMENT OF A SUITABLE COMPOSTING PLANT AND IMPACT ON ALTERNATE BIN COLLECTION SCHEME

The Executive Member for Environment and Conservation submitted an update on progress with the procurement of a composting plant and the impact on the alternate bin collection scheme.

The Executive recalled that in January 2008, the Council had agreed to maximise its recycling and composting services by adopting an Alternate Bin Collection scheme, once the infrastructure was in place to allow this. This included a requirement to collect food waste and cardboard in the brown bin, which could not be implemented until new 'in-vessel' composting (IVC) plants, meeting Animal By-Products Regulations (ABPR), were in place. These would be delivered by Hertfordshire County Council, as part of a County wide procurement exercise.

The Executive Member updated Members on the tendering process. It was noted that a composting plant would not be operational by the time of the planned commencement of the alternate bin collection scheme. Therefore, he proposed that the alternate bin collection scheme implementation be delayed until winter 2009/10. A further report would be submitted to the Executive in Spring 2009, by which time, the results of the planning applications for the composting sites should be known, allowing a final decision on implementation plans to be made.

The Environment Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 10 June 2008, had noted the update.

Councillor J O Ranger referred to different types of composting and whether consideration had been given to a recent East of England report that had been published. He also referred to the food waste generated by restaurants and shops.

In reply, the Executive Member cast doubt on the findings of this report and reminded Members that the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership had approved the IVC route. He commented on the prohibitive costs of weekly food collections.

Councillor N Clark asked if the recycling task and finish group should be reconvened, in order that the implications of such issues, as well as the East of England report, could be examined in more detail. He also commented on the issue of whether food waste going to landfill would be made illegal.

The Executive Member commented that the Waste Partnership would continue to look at food waste issues. He reminded Members that scrutiny committees were responsible for setting up task and finish groups and that the Climate Change group might be the appropriate forum to consider some of the issues raised.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the roll out of the next phase of the Council's waste collection and recycling strategy be delayed until Autumn 2009, subject to:

DCCS

- (A) a suitable in-vessel composting facility becoming available; and
- (B) a further report coming forward in Spring 2009 confirming timescales and detailing a final implementation plan.

110 CAR PARK PAY ON FOOT/PAY ON EXIT  
FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Executive Member for Planning Policy and Transport submitted a report seeking approval to the cessation of detailed investigations into the possible installation of a pay on foot system of parking in Council's Bircherley Green multi storey car park in Hertford.

The Executive recalled that, Officers had been asked to prepare a detailed proposal for the introduction of a pay on foot system in the Bircherley Green multi storey car park in Hertford. However, in recent months, the environment had changed and the appropriateness of proceeding with a pay on foot system in this car park had been reappraised. In view of potential retail developments in Hertford, it was now proposed that this option be deferred at this stage.

The Executive approved the proposal as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the cessation of any further work towards the possible installation of a pay on foot system in Bircherley Green multi storey car park be approved, until a wider ranging review of parking arrangements in Hertford has concluded and the medium to long term future of this car park has been agreed.

DCCS

111 TABLE OF FARES FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGES IN  
EAST HERTS DISTRICT 2008

The Executive Member for Community Safety and Protection submitted a report reviewing the table of fares for hackney carriages in East Herts.

He advised that Officers met regularly with trade representatives to discuss alterations to hackney carriage and private hire conditions and also any increases to hackney carriage tariffs. The fundamental issue that arose was the dramatic increase in fuel prices since tariff changes

were made in 2007. He detailed figures obtained from the AA Public Affairs Fuel Report, which showed that diesel prices had risen by 30% since June 2007.

The Executive Member detailed proposed tariff increases in the report now submitted, which represented an average increase of 8.5%. A further proposal had been made by trade representatives to increase the current waiting times charged. The Executive Member detailed options for increasing these in the report now submitted. He proposed the option of £18 (Rate 1) and £24 (Rates 2 – 4).

Finally, the Executive Member recommended that a review of the tariffs be carried out at intervals of 6 months, during this volatile period of fuel price increases. He also proposed that following public consultation, a further report be submitted, should there be any objections to the proposals. If there were no objections, authority be given to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to confirm the Order. The proposed increases would take effect from 1 September 2008.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that effective from 1 September 2008, (A) the recommended changes to the Table of Fares as detailed in Appendix ‘A13’ of the report now submitted, be approved, subject to consultation; DNS

(B) in respect of waiting times, the option of £18 (Rate 1) and £24 (Rates 2 - 4) be approved, subject to consultation; and DNS

(C) a six month review of the tariffs jointly with the taxi trade representatives, be approved. DNS

## 112 REVIEW OF WORKING ARRANGEMENTS – FINANCIAL AND PROPERTY OPTIONS

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report concluding the review phase of the

working arrangements project. This included property options setting out a high level financial appraisal of the property costs and benefits of locating office functions on a single site.

The Executive Member detailed the criteria on which the search for an office base had been undertaken, in the report now submitted. None of the options were considered to provide a better option for the Council's main office base than Wallfields. He also included a financial appraisal, which provided a comparison over a 15 year period, based on premises costs only, between:

- remaining at the present two sites;
- basing the offices at Wallfields, whilst retaining use of parts of The Causeway for customer contact, some workspace and civic functions; and
- for illustrative purposes, the estimated costs of moving to a new site away from Wallfields, whilst retaining use of parts of The Causeway for customer contact, some workspace and civic functions .

The financial appraisals demonstrated how basing the Council at Wallfields would provide a lower annual cost base after a period of investment. The simple payback period for capital investment in this option was around 3.3 years.

The Executive Member stated that a further report on the staffing and infrastructure issues would be submitted to a later meeting.

Councillor N Clark referred to the Council's policy that capital projects of over £0.5m should be subject to independent option appraisal and asked when the proposed £2.67m capital investment in the Wallfields option would be carried out.

In response, the Director of Internal Services commented that, if needed, such an appraisal would be carried as part of the further report to be submitted to the Executive.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) no suitable alternative site for the Council’s administration centre is currently available within the District and that Officers stop the search for alternatives; DIS

(B) the ongoing provision of face to face customer service area, a civic and democratic meeting suite, facilities and working space for Members and Officers in Bishop’s Stortford town centre be approved;

(C) the principle of investing in Wallfields as the Council’s main office base be approved;

(D) an appraisal of the detailed financial and property issues that arise from the agreement of recommendations (B) and (C) be submitted to the Executive; and DIS

(E) details of the people and infrastructure issues that are outside of the scope of this report and arise from the previous recommendations be submitted to the Executive. DIS

### 113 GENERAL FUND REVENUE OUTTURN 2007/08

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report on the General Fund Revenue Outturn for 2007/08, providing explanations for significant variances against the approved Estimates and reporting the level of balances held by the Council at 31 March 2008. He also sought approval regarding appropriate levels of Reserves together with “carry over” of certain underspends in line with Council priorities.

The final outturn for the year (which was still subject to audit) had resulted in net expenditure of nearly £13.841m (before Government Grant), representing a favourable position of some £2.714m. Details of the variances were set out in the report now submitted. The Executive Member drew attention to the main items as Investment Income and the LABGI grant, which were both outside of the Council's direct control.

In respect of Reserves, the Executive Member proposed that the purpose of the Insurance Reserve (currently to fund Risk Management Initiatives) be expanded to include the funding of small claims arising due to uninsured losses. He proposed that authority for settling such claims be delegated to the Council's Director of Neighbourhood Services (Monitoring Officer) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Internal Support.

He also detailed the use of other Reserves and proposed that £561k of Balances be utilised to fund various "carry over" items, in order to enable a number of service improvements to be pursued. These were detailed in the report now submitted.

Councillor R Gilbert referred to the adverse variance in respect of Development Control income and asked if the fees structure had been set too high. In response, the Executive Member commented that this type of issue could be looked at as part of the Fees and Charges Strategy to be submitted later in the year.

In respect of the proposed delegation to the Director of Neighbourhood Services on small claims due to uninsured losses, the Executive Member undertook to respond in writing to Councillor R Gilbert, clarifying the ceiling that would operate.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the General Fund Revenue

Outturn for 2007/08, be approved;

(B) Fund Balances, as set out within the report, be established at 31 March 2008 and the Director of Neighbourhood Services (Monitoring Officer), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Internal Support, be authorised to settle uninsured Loss Claims from the Insurance Reserve; and

DNS

(C) Budget "Carry Forward" be approved as set out within paragraph 6.0 of the report submitted and the Director of Customer and Community Services, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Planning Policy and Transport, be delegated authority to determine application of the LABGI funds.

DCCS

#### 114 CAPITAL PAYMENTS AND FINANCING 2007/08

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report on the actual capital expenditure in 2007/08, comparing this with the approved estimates, bearing in mind that the Capital Programme was a three year funded programme. He also advised Members of the financing arrangements that had been determined and the items of slippage which should be carried forward into the 2008/09 programme.

The Executive Member stated that the overall outturn for the year (including creditors) of some £6.080m represented spend of 78% of the Original Estimate (£7.769m) and 87% of the Probable Estimate (£7.021m). He reminded the Executive that the performance target for 2007/08 had been set at 85%.

He commented that the overall performance had been affected by large projects which although had been delivered, had not been paid for until 2008/09, such as Rhodes, Stort Bridge and Sanville Gardens.



Councillor N Clark referred to the Stort Bridge project and the commuted sum payable to Hertfordshire County Council to secure the adoption of the bridge and whether this had been resolved yet and had been reflected anywhere in the papers.

In response, the Director of Internal Services advised that this had not been identified yet as a decision on this matter was not anticipated for another 12 months.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the actual Capital expenditure in 2007/08 be noted,

(B) the method of financing the Capital Programme 2007/08 be noted, and

(C) the items of “slippage” identified in the appendix to the report, which have been proposed by the Project Control Officers, be agreed.

DIS

115 CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK – QUARTERLY MONITORING (JANUARY – MARCH 2008)

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on the finance, performance and risk monitoring for the fourth quarter period of 2007/08.

Councillor J O Ranger referred to BV12 – Working days lost due to sickness absence and the comments of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee that long term sickness should be separated, in order that a more accurate picture could be drawn.

The Executive approved the proposal as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the Corporate Healthcheck for the quarter period relating to January to March 2008 be approved and Corporate Business Scrutiny

Committee's recommendations and comments be noted.

116 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK (APRIL 2008)

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on the finance, performance and risk monitoring for the month of April 2008.

The Leader advised that in order to have the latest information available for Members' consideration, it might be necessary for future reports to be circulated at short notice.

The Executive approved the proposal as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that the Corporate Healthcheck for the April 2008 period be approved and the Corporate Management Team recommendations and comments be noted.

117 CONTINUATION OF WORKS ON CRITICAL ORDINARY WATERCOURSES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Executive Member for Planning Policy and Transport submitted a report on the Environment Agency's wishes to put in place, by October 2008, several contracts through the tender process, to carry out routine maintenance and remedial work on recently enmained critical ordinary watercourses (COWs) in the Thames area.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) approval is given for East Herts Council to enter into a contract with the Environment Agency, through the tender process, to continue routine maintenance and remedial works on Critical Ordinary Watercourses within the District; and

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(B) approval is given to engage a nominated subcontractor, approved by the Environment Agency, to continue to carry out the routine works, in accordance with the tender documentation.

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The meeting closed at 8.55 pm

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