

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
ON TUESDAY, 26 AUGUST 2008 AT  
7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J O Ranger (Chairman).  
Councillors D Andrews, R N Copping, R Gilbert,  
G Lawrence, J Warren, M Wood.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors N Clark, P Ruffles, M J Tindale,  
N Wilson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Karl Chui	- Performance Officer
Mike Collier	- Acting Director of Internal Services and Section 151 Officer
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer

226 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of  
Councillor R Beeching.

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

227 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting of the  
Committee held on 15 July 2008 be confirmed as a  
correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ACTION228 CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK - QUARTERLY MONITORING (APRIL - JUNE 2008)

The Leader of the Council submitted a report which set out, on an exception basis, issues relating to finance, performance and risk monitoring for the Council for the first quarter period April to June 2008. The report contained a breakdown of revenue and service information for each Directorate. Members considered the report in detail and noted the new format for illustrating this which was explained to them.

The Chairman highlighted the need for the Committee to consider which exceptions should be considered by Members and which by Officers only and this would be reported by the PI Task and Finish Group.

The Committee raised concerns over the lack of enforcement of parking restrictions beyond town centres, and decided the Executive should be asked to look at this.

The Committee also queried why the revised budget showed a substantial increase on "Promoting Prosperity" and the Programme Director of Change agreed to give Members a written answer on this.

The Committee also agreed with a suggestion that leaflets giving dates for recycling collections should be headed with the same colour as the relevant recycling bin and decided to ask Officers to look into this.

RESOLVED - that (A) the Executive be informed that the Committee considers the Executive should examine the performance of parking enforcement beyond town centres as Members were concerned about this;

ACTION

(B) the Programme Director of Change prepare a written reply for Members on the reason for the revised estimate on “Promoting Prosperity” showing a substantial increase; and

(C) Officers consider providing colour coded leaflets giving dates for recycling collections aligned with the colour of the recycling bins.

DCCS

229 FEES AND CHARGES STRATEGY

A report was submitted by the Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support outlining a strategic approach to setting discretionary fees and charges.

It was reported that the Local Government Act 2000 and the “wellbeing” powers granted under the Act sought to encourage local authorities to exercise greater powers for tracking and charging for services to generate income for investment in local services.

Some charges were set or influenced by Central Government and in some cases, Councils were restricted to recovering no more than the costs of service provision. These controls affected some services more than others. The extent of charging and income generated in different service areas varied enormously.

In East Herts fees and charges had tended to be reviewed by the Council as part of the budget setting process or Medium Term Financial Plan. The process had generally involved the application of a percentage increase that was applied to all charges that the Council had free discretion over. The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support said that increases would be more targeted in future.

Members were given details of services the Council could set charges for and a method of reviewing these fees and charges was given.

ACTION

Members noted that some services were being subsidised and decided these should be examined further as part of the budget process. In particular, they raised concern over the subsidy for hackney carriage licences. In addition, charges for certain residential parking places had increased disproportionately recently and Members asked that Officers avoid this in future.

RESOLVED - that (A) the Executive be asked to recommend the Council:-

- (1) to approve the principles for setting discretionary fees and charges, as listed below:
  - any subsidy from Council taxpayers to the service users should be a deliberate choice;
  - discretionary fees and charges should generate income to help deliver service improvements in priority services;
  - discretionary fees and charges should support the medium term financial strategy;
  - there should be a measure of consistency in the setting of charges for similar services;
  - fees and charges should be set at a level to avoid unnecessary subsidies from the Council taxpayer to commercial operations;

ACTION

- if the impact of the fees and charges policy is going to be high, consideration should be given to changes being phased in.
- (2) to adopt the fees and charges strategy as the basis for conducting structured reviews for consideration as part of the medium term financial planning process; and
- (3) to require Heads of Service to identify any services where charges can be made, but are not and to make recommendations on appropriate levels of charge that could be introduced for 2009/10; and
- (B) Officers be asked to ensure residential parking permit charges are not increased disproportionately and take steps to reduce the level of hackney carriage licence subsidies as part of the budget process.

DCCS/  
DNS

## 230 SCOPING TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR SHARED SERVICES

The Chairman explained that authorities had been encouraged to share services for a number of years. More recently Pathfinder had been set up by Hertfordshire County Council to promote this within Hertfordshire. The aim of sharing services was to provide better services and cut costs.

Members and Officers were divided into groups and forms were circulated to help each group scope a task and finish group to look at shared services. The groups were also provided with a provisional list of services which were already shared with other authorities. Some were provided by East Herts Council for other authorities and some authorities provided services for East Herts Council. The Chairman asked the groups not to include outsourced

ACTION

services or housing services in their discussions.

The Members regrouped to feedback their ideas and an initial draft scoping document, was agreed.

Members were in agreement that the underlying principle of a review would be to ensure that all current and future ventures on shared services resulted in cost savings, increased efficiency and/or improved services for residents of East Herts.

RESOLVED - that the Leader of the Council be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to give an update on Pathfinder and the expected way forward for shared services.

231 WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

The Chief Executive submitted a report inviting the Committee to review its work programme.

The Chairman explained Jackson Square enhancements capital investment item would now be considered by the Environment Scrutiny Committee. Clear report writing and use of plain English would be considered as a task and finish exercise at the next meeting. In the light of discussions on shared services the Leader of the Council would be invited to the October 2008 meeting as agreed.

RESOLVED - that the following item be added to the work programme for 2008/09 as attached at Appendix A8 to the report before the Committee for the meeting in October:

CE

Pathfinder - Leader of the Council to give an update on 'Pathfinder' and an outline of the expected way forward on shared services.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.