

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD,
ON TUESDAY 17 MARCH 2009, AT 7.30
PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, K A Barnes, R Beeching,
S A Bull, D Clark, N Clark, R N Copping,
J Demonti, R Gilbert, P Grethe, J Mayes,
D A A Peek, S Rutland-Barsby, J Taylor,
R Taylor, J P Warren, M Wood, C Woodward.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
Lois Prior	- Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Communications Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Martin Shrosbree	- Asset and Estates Manager

644 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Leader welcomed the press to the meeting.

645 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor N Clark declared a personal interest in the matter referred to at Minute 647 – Corporate Strategic Plan 2009-12, in that any discussion in respect of the Local Development Framework might include reference to the Stop Harlow North Campaign, of which he was the Secretary.

646 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 at Minute 655 below on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

ACTION

647 **CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-12**

The Leader of the Council submitted a report outlining the Council's three-year Corporate Strategic Plan.

The Executive noted that the Council was required to produce details of what it planned to do. In the past, this had been produced on a year-by-year basis. However, as the Medium Term Financial Plan was now part of the Integrated Service Framework, this meant that the Council's outcomes for the next three years could now be articulated. The detail of how it would get there was not included, as this information would be incorporated within the individual service plans each year.

The Strategic Plan would be updated each year, to include new service developments planned for the third year of each plan and to remove outcomes once they

were completed. These completed outcomes would then be incorporated into the Annual Report.

The Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee had also scrutinised the plan at its meeting held on 24 February 2009. A number of suggestions to improve the content of the plan, which were detailed at paragraph 5 of the report now submitted, had been addressed. The Leader also referred to the Committee's three specific recommendations for the Executive to consider.

He acknowledged the comments relating to the Local Development Framework and the suggested text that could be inserted into the Plan, as detailed at paragraph 5.3 of the report submitted. The Executive supported this amendment.

In respect of the suggestion that the target for Council Tax increases should be "under 4%" instead of "under 5%", the Leader commented that the intention of the original text was to reference existing capping levels as articulated by the Government. Therefore, he did not recommend acceptance of this suggestion. The Executive did not support this amendment.

The Committee's third recommendation related to the "Shaping now, Shaping the future" priority and suggested the inclusion of an example of unwanted development, such as a second runway at Stansted Airport. The Leader commented that the absence of a specific example provided the Council with the necessary flexibility for an area that was changing constantly. Therefore, he did not recommend acceptance of this suggestion. The Executive did not support this amendment.

In response to a question by Councillor R Gilbert, the Leader stated that some of the objectives were more specific than others as they related to activities that were further advanced.

The Executive supported the Corporate Strategic Plan as now submitted and amended.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the recommendations made by Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 24 February 2009, be received;

(B) the draft Corporate Strategic Plan, attached at Appendix 'A6' of the report now submitted, be approved, subject to the addition of the proposed text relating to the Local Development Framework, as suggested by the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee; and CE

(C) authority to make final non-material changes, be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council. CE

648 **SERVICE PLANS 2009-10**

The Leader of the Council submitted a report setting out the proposed Service Plans for 2009/10.

The Executive noted that the Service Plans were produced every year by Heads of Service and set out what key actions needed to be undertaken to deliver the corporate priorities and key objectives, in line with the approved budget. These actions were linked to key performance indicators, so that achievement could be measured and tracked.

The Leader detailed the monitoring arrangements that would be undertaken by scrutiny committees.

The Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee had scrutinised the 2009/10 Service Plans at its meeting held on 24 February 2009. It had raised a number of questions at the meeting seeking further details on some of the planned activity, but overall had supported

the plans.

Councillor M Wood commented on 09-PBC15 relating to schools provision in Bishop's Stortford and suggested that this offered tacit encouragement to further development applications. In response, the Leader refuted this suggested and commented that this reflected the Council's role in engaging with its partners.

The Executive supported the Service Plans as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the service plan activity for 2009/10, as detailed at Appendix 'A7' of the report now submitted, be approved.

CE

649 IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK PROGRAMME (OPTIONS FOR THE CAUSEWAY OFFICES SITE) (1)

The Leader referred to the exempt elements of this matter, which were detailed in a separate report (see Minute 655 below). He cautioned Members to take care in their deliberations, in order that exempt information was not compromised. He advised that, if necessary, the Executive would pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting.

The Leader also commented on the history and background to this matter. He emphasised that the Council's front line presence in Bishop's Stortford would be enhanced.

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report on the terms negotiated with the Landlord to facilitate the surrender of the Council's lease of The Causeway offices. He detailed the whole life costs of alternative courses of action and the implications on the Council's accommodation

strategy and future actions.

The Executive Member outlined the history and background to the Council's land ownership and leasing arrangements on the site of The Causeway Offices and in its vicinity. He also reminded Members of previous decisions relating to the Council's working arrangements and its strategic approach to its accommodation needs.

The Executive Member detailed various options for the future of the site. He also set out the Council's different objectives and risks against which each option had been assessed. The recommended course of action had been appraised by Lambert Smith Hampton, the Council's property advisers, as well Grant Thornton, the Council's External Auditors. It was noted that commercially sensitive elements of this advice had been included in a separate exempt report on the agenda (see Minute 655 below).

The Executive Member reiterated the comments of the Leader in respect of the enhanced front line service in Bishop's Stortford that would ensue if his recommendations were adopted. He reminded Members of the prohibitive costs of retaining The Causeway and the future needs of services.

The Executive Member also referred to the latest advice on accounting implications received from Grant Thornton, which had been tabled at the meeting as Appendix 'F8'. Members noted that this advice replaced the version that had been included as Appendix 'B14' of the exempt report set out elsewhere on the agenda.

Some Members expressed concern over the impact of future development on the site for car parking provision in the town centre. The Leader commented that this was a planning issue and would need to be a consideration for the Planning Authority at such time

as any application came forward.

Councillor M Wood suggested that despite the proposals for front line service provision, this would be seen by the public in Bishop's Stortford as another example of the Council expressing preference for Hertford, despite Bishop's Stortford being the largest town in the District.

He also questioned the need for further shops and homes in any proposed development in Bishop's Stortford, especially given the current climate and whether the timing was appropriate. The Executive Member responded by reiterating that front-line services in Bishop's Stortford would be enhanced and that the proposals would help deliver the C3W programme.

Councillor M Wood commented on a number of issues relating to the wider C3W programme, such as staffing, staff car parking and public consultation and was advised by the Leader that these were not relevant to this report.

Councillor N Clark asked whether an assessment of employees' expenditure in Bishop's Stortford had been carried out and was advised by the Leader that this was not relevant to this report.

Councillor D A A Peek commented that The Causeway offices were not fit for purpose and from an environmental point of view, were inefficient. He suggested that as far as the timing was concerned, the opportunity had arisen now and should be pursued.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the in principle decision taken on 1 July 2008 to invest in Wallfields as the Council’s main office base be approved;

(B) the Director of Internal Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support be authorised to:

DIS

- (1) complete negotiations with the Council’s Landlord of The Causeway offices in Bishop’s Stortford, to enable the Council to effect the surrender of the Council’s lease of The Causeway;**
- (2) effect the surrender of the Council’s lease of The Causeway as soon as practicable subject to satisfactory advice being received on the accounting treatment of the transactions involved;**
- (3) secure alternative premises in Charrington House, Bishop’s Stortford for the ongoing provision of a face to face customer service area, a civic and democratic meeting suite and facilities and working space for Members and Officers; and**

(C) the estimated revenue impact of the proposals of an initial net saving to the Council of £2,000 per year and a potential net cost of £88,000 per year once development takes place, be noted; and that Officers be requested to consider steps to mitigate this potential shortfall in future financial planning.

CE

RESOLVED ITEMS

650 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 10 February 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

651 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.

652 COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INITIATIVES AND ALLOCATION OF THE COUNCIL'S BUS SUBSIDIES BUDGET FROM APRIL 2009

The Executive Member for Planning Policy and Transport submitted a report updating the Executive on the outcome of Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Passenger Transport Unit (PTU) countywide review of subsidised bus routes. He also recommended the use of East Herts Council's allocation of subsidy in 2009/10 (and subsequent years) in the context of reduced budgetary provision.

The Executive Member provided an analysis as to which routes should be funded at East Herts Council's discretion, at Appendix 'B9' of the report now submitted.

The Community Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 27 January 2009, had considered the proposals and its comments were detailed at Appendix 'C9' of the report now submitted. The Executive Member accepted and agreed with the comments made.

The Executive endorsed the allocation of the bus subsidy budget as now submitted.

RESOLVED – (A) the views of the Community Scrutiny 27 January 2009, as set out at Appendix ‘C9’, be received, and;

(B) the allocation of the Council’s bus subsidy budget of £86,650 in 2009/10 as detailed at Appendix ‘A9’ of the report now submitted, be endorsed.

DCCS

653 FEEES FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE AND DRIVERS; PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE AND DRIVERS AND PRIVATE HIRE OPERATOR’S LICENCES AND ANCILLARY CHARGES 2009/2010

The Executive Member for Community Safety and Protection submitted a report proposing increases to the fees charged to recover the costs of issuing and administering licences relating to hackney carriage and private hire vehicles.

The Executive recalled that, at its meeting held on 6 January 2009, it had recommended that the proposed increases in fees and charges for 2009/10, be approved subject to consultation (Minute 482 refers). A number of objections had been made and the Executive Member detailed these. He also outlined a response to the comments made.

The Executive Member commented that the majority of the proposed increases affected applications by new drivers and not renewals.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the objections received be noted; and

(B) the increase in fees for the period 1 April 2009 - 31 March 2010, as set out in the Appendix to the report submitted, be approved.

DNS

654 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK – JANUARY 2009

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on the finance, performance and risk monitoring for the month of January 2009.

RESOLVED – that the budgetary variances set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report submitted, be noted.

655 IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK PROGRAMME (OPTIONS FOR THE CAUSEWAY OFFICES SITE) (2)

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report detailing the exempt information relating to Implications of the Changing The Way We Work Programme (Options for the Causeway Offices Site).

The Executive agreed that the report be received.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

(also see Minute 649 above)

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm

Chairman
Date