

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
ON TUESDAY, 25 AUGUST 2009 AT
7.30 PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors M G Carver, D Clark, N P Clark,
Mrs M H Goldspink, P A Ruffles, R Taylor,
M J Tindale.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Lorna Georgiou	- Performance and Improvement Co- ordinator
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services
Marian Langlely	- Scrutiny Officer
Graham Mully	- Insurance Officer
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Peter Searle	- Head of Business Support Services

180 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of
Councillor J Hedley.

RESOLVED ITEMSACTION181 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 July 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

182 IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK (C3W) PROGRAMME (INFRASTRUCTURE AND FINANCE)

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report which outlined the financial implications of delivering the Changing the Way We Work (C3W) Programme and the opportunity to combine building works to Wallfields arising from the C3W programme with those needed to prolong the life of the building. Indicative costs for the property and ICT infrastructure issues associated with locating back office functions to a single site were presented.

The Council had decided to develop Wallfields, Hertford as the Council's main office base. Bishop's Stortford would have a face to face customer service area, a civic and democratic meeting suite and facilities and working space for Members and Officers in the town centre.

Introduction of new working practices and information systems such as home working and electronic document and record management (EDRM) would significantly reduce the need for many staff to come into the office daily.

Wallfields had been partly refurbished but additional funds were needed to complete refurbishment and address environmental and access issues.

The delivery of the C3W programme would generate financial benefits from improved efficiency.

Details of capital and revenue costs were given and some

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amendments proposed by the ITC/C3W Member Group were presented to the Committee.

A Member of the Committee queried the high cost of IT equipment and broadband connection given in the report. Members agreed it should be reviewed by the Central Procurement Section. The Programme Director of Change said the cost of business level broadband connections would be the subject of negotiations and the procurement process would set out to achieve the best unit cost per item for the equipment.

Another Member queried the rate of professional fees for building works and it was confirmed that these would also be the subject of negotiations.

Members queried the additional expenditure and the Executive Member assured them this would lead to a better service and efficiency savings in the future. The Programme Director of Change gave examples of other Authorities where such improvements and savings had already been achieved. He said training would be provided for staff to make full use of the new systems as part of the Council's regular training plan.

Members discussed the proposals for the offices at Wallfields and asked that further investigations be undertaken on work on the greenhouse roof, cooling system and lighting/energy system controls. They asked for consideration to be given to providing an additional lift to improve disabled access. They recognised the urgent need for more interview rooms in the reception area.

A Member asked how Wallfields would be able to accommodate so many more staff and how parking provision would be made. The Programme Director explained that a mixture of desks, shared work stations and team tables would be provided. Car parking provision was under discussion.

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Councillor D Clark asked the Executive Member if the Executive had any other plans in the event the additional expenditure was not approved.

Councillor N Clark asked how the disturbance allowance for staff moved from Bishop's Stortford to Wallfields would be financed. The Programme Director said this would be met by increased efficiencies. A Member of the Committee asked for the need for this to be included in the Committee's comments to the Executive.

The Committee decided to make the comments now detailed to the Executive.

RESOLVED - that the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee informs the Executive that the indicative costings for the Changing the Way We Work (C3W) programme now as amended at the meeting should be commended and as a consequence that::

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- (A) the capital programme should be amended and the property items appearing in the current capital programme and as shown in paragraph 4.10 of the report now submitted totalling £358,800 should be vired to a new project entitled Wallfields Refurbishment;
- (B) capital of £15,000 (inclusive of professional fees) should be allocated to complete the programme of refurbishment of the Wallfields offices that commenced in 2003;
- (C) capital of £442,750 (inclusive of professional fees) should be allocated for the works to Wallfields that are additionally required for the delivery of the C3W Programme;
- (D) further capital of £100,000 should be allocated for the desirable works to Wallfields reception;

ACTION

- (E) other works to Wallfields that are deemed desirable eg greenhouse roof replacement, Brille Soleil cooling system and lighting/energy controls (£325,000) should be reviewed together with a further consideration of providing an additional lift for the disabled;
- (F) the items shown in recommendation (2), (3), (4) and (5) totalling £947,000 (£622,000 agreed and £325,000 under review) should be allocated to the new item entitled Wallfields Refurbishment proposed in recommendation (A);
- (G) additional capital of £18,000 should be allocated to complete the ICT platform required for the C3W Programme (in accordance with the amendments discussed at the meeting) and Officers should be directed to work with the central procurement section to negotiate the best unit cost deals;
- (H) the Committee agrees that in respect of revenue costs, Officers be required to identify savings which will cover both one-off and on-going costs;
- (I) the Committee agrees that one-off costs be funded by a draw down from general reserve to a maximum of £140,000 to meet the cost of scanning existing documents and ICT support costs through the transitional phase of C3W and these funds be replaced as savings are made as above; and
- (J) the additional £59,500 identified for staff disturbance identified in paragraph 4.16 of the report now submitted be offset/supported by staff efficiencies and savings in each of the three years that the allowance is payable.

ACTION183 PARTNERSHIP PROTOCOL

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report on the Partnership Protocol designed to assist Officers and Members working with Partners. The Protocol outlined the process to follow when establishing or joining new partnerships and a process to regularly review existing partnerships.

It was explained that the document was a draft, presented at an early stage for comments and contributions from the Committee.

The Committee commented on the need to add a number of elements to the document including defining the partnerships covered by the Protocol (which might be for services, strategy development or information sharing), improving filter questions to help identify relevant partnerships, developing a risk register and debriefing systems and improving review of partnerships. It asked for these to be incorporated in the document and for the document to be used to 'spring clean' existing partnerships.

RESOLVED - that the draft Partnership Protocol be amended in accordance with the Committee's comments in particular on the addition of filter questions in order to identify relevant partnerships and the proforma register as amended then be used to 'spring clean' all existing partnerships.

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184 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES IN INTERNAL SERVICES

The Director of Internal Services submitted a report reviewing fees and charges for Internal Services for 2009/10.

The relevant fees were for land charge searches and legal charges. In view of the current housing market and economic situation it was suggested land charge searches

ACTION

fees should not be increased at the moment. The Committee was advised not to make representation for an increase in fees because of ongoing changes in legislation.

The Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services said he would welcome provision to recover all costs where external legal services were brought in.

The Committee decided to comment to the Executive as detailed below.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that fees and charges for Internal Services have been reviewed in line with the Council's fees and charges strategy and the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee considers that:

- (A) there should be no adjustment to the structure or levels of fees for searches of the land registry;
- (B) no representations should be made on increasing fees for registration of local land charges in the light of changes to legislation; and
- (C) provision be made for the recovery at a rate sufficient to recover all costs where external legal services are bought in as set out in paragraph 4.6 of the report before the Committee.

185 REVIEW OF DATA SHARING PROTOCOL

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on a revised Data Sharing Protocol. A copy showing the tracked changes was circulated at the meeting.

It was reported that amendments had been suggested by the Council's external auditors and these had been included in the revised document. The main change

ACTION

concerned a reference to the Council's data quality document.

In response to a question from a Member of the Committee, it was explained that work was in hand to ensure all authorities followed similar data sharing guidelines. The Committee decided the Data Sharing Protocol should be shared with partners and partners' views on it should be sought.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the revised Data Sharing Protocol should be approved and shared with partners and partners' views on the Protocol should be sought.

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186 EAST HERTS ANNUAL REPORT

The Leader of the Council submitted the Council's Annual Report for 2008/09 for scrutiny and comments from the Committee.

The Annual Report detailed the Council's achievements and included performance indicators and financial information. The report was intended for the general public but the Council's auditors required certain information to be included.

Members suggested a number of drafting amendments and commented on the need to write the report in a style acceptable and accessible to the general public.

The Committee decided to comment on the Annual Report to the Executive as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Annual Report 2008/09 should be revised as discussed at the meeting of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 25 August 2009 and in particular that Officers be asked to consider the intended public audience when choosing the writing style for the report.

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ACTION187 CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK - APRIL TO JUNE 2009

The Director of Internal Services submitted an exception report on the performance of key indicators relating to the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for April to June 2009.

Members discussed the report and decided the issues detailed below should be brought to the attention of the Executive.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed of the Committee's comments on the Corporate Healthcheck - April 2009 to June 2009 as follows:

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- (A) the Committee is concerned at the large sum shown in the projected adverse position as at 31 March 2010 indicated on page 10.5 of the report now submitted under section (2) Fit for Purpose; and
- (B) the Committee suggests the figure indicated for total 2009/10 revised estimated capital expenditure on page 10.16 of the report now submitted is unrealistic and should be reviewed in the light of expenditure patterns over previous years.

188 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee submitted a report inviting the Committee to review its Work Programme.

The Committee noted the report and amended it as detailed below.

ACTION

RESOLVED - that the Residents' Survey be added to the Work Programme on 17 November 2009 and the Place Survey report be moved to 6 October 2009.

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The meeting closed at 10.10 pm.

Chairman
Date