

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD,
ON TUESDAY 28 JULY 2009 AT 7.00 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,
N Clark, R N Copping, J Demonti, A D Dodd,
J Mayes, P Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby and
J P Warren.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Caroline Goss	- Communications Officer
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

139 CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN 2010/11 – 2013/14

The Leader of the Council submitted a report outlining the Council's four year Strategic Plan. This was intended to act as an aspiration document, capturing the essence of what the Authority expected to deliver over the four years and beyond.

The Leader proposed a few amendments to Part 4 of the Plan detailed at Appendix 'A7' of the report now submitted. In the section, "Promoting prosperity..." (page 7.11 of the report now submitted), he suggested inserting the word "own" before "leisure" in the first bullet point, in order to clarify that this related to Council-owned leisure facilities.

In the section, "Fit for purpose..." (page 7.12 of the report now submitted) , he suggested deleting the final bullet point relating to efficiency savings and Council Tax levels, in order to provide more flexibility. He commented that with the challenges facing local government funding, it would be presumptuous to refer to specific figures. Therefore, he suggested inserting the words, "thereby limiting the pressures on Council Tax", after the words "of working" in the fourth and seventh bullet points. He further suggested inserting the words "high quality" before "customer focused" in the opening line of this section.

The Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 14 July 2009, had considered the Plan and had commented that the needs of rural communities should be articulated. The Leader commented that the "Pride in East Herts" section in Part 4 of the Plan already conveyed this message.

The Executive supported the Corporate Strategic Plan, as now amended.

RESOLVED - that the Corporate Strategic Plan for 2010/11 – 2013/14, as now amended, be approved.

**140 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY
2010/11 – 2013/14**

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report setting out the context for the budget round and rolling forward the medium term

financial plan.

The Executive Member commented that a clear statement of the Council's financial strategy informed the financial planning and budgeting process as a point of reference for future decisions. He proposed a statement to highlight the priorities attached to financial planning, in particular, the sustainability, affordability and consistency expected in decision making. This was set out in Appendix 'A8' of the report now submitted. Outcomes from the budget round must respond to the immediate impact of the recession on the Council's budget and position the Council to manage the increased uncertainty about the Government's spending proposals. He detailed the outcomes proposed for the coming budget round.

The Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 14 July 2009, had considered the Strategy and commented that in respect of the assumptions, the Executive should consider including a figure for total remuneration in 2011/12, rather than just pay. The Executive, in noting this comment, reaffirmed the assumptions stated in the report now submitted, as being realistic and prudent.

The Executive supported the Financial Strategy as now submitted.

RESOLVED - that the Financial Strategy set out at Appendix 'A8' of the report submitted, be adopted to underpin the Medium Term Financial Plan and that the 2010/11 budget round focus on the outcomes set out at paragraph 4.2 of the report submitted.

RESOLVED ITEMS

141 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 23 June 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

142 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.

143 FINAL REPORT OF THE REPORT WRITING AND PLAIN ENGLISH TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Executive received the final report of the Report Writing and Plain English task and finish group. The group's recommendations had been considered by the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee, at its meetings held on 14 April and 14 July 2009. The Committee had supported the recommendations as now submitted.

Councillor J Mayes, the Chairman of the task and finish group, was invited to address the Executive. She commended the findings and thanked Officers for their support to the group.

The Executive welcomed and approved the task and finish group's recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – (A) the revised report template, as appended to the report submitted as Appendix 'A6', be adopted;

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| (B) the East Herts 'Clear and concise report writing' guide for Officers, appended to the report submitted as Appendix 'B6' be approved; | DIS |
| (C) the East Herts 'How to write a good report – the practical guide' intranet/web pages for Officers, appended to the report submitted as Appendix 'C6', be approved; | DIS |
| (D) the documents referred to above be used in future Officer report writing training/ development events; and | DIS |
| (E) the Report Writing course piloted on 28 April 2009 be made available on the corporate training programme (with the course content amended to make reference to the revised report template). | DIS |

144 CAPITAL PAYMENTS AND FINANCING 2008/09

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report informing the Executive of actual expenditure on the capital programme in 2008/09 and the financing arrangements that had been determined.

The Executive Member summarised the outturn on individual schemes, as detailed at Appendix 'A9' of the report submitted. The overall outturn of £4.087m represented a spend of 59% of the original estimate and 68% of the probable estimate.

The Executive Member highlighted the major contributing items to the variance and commented that some of these had occurred because of deliberate decisions taken by Members, e.g. Alternate Refuse Collections and Presdales. He assured Members that the capital programme was reviewed constantly.

The Executive noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the capital expenditure in 2008/09 together with the method of financing be noted.

145 GENERAL FUND REVENUE OUTTURN 2008/09

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report advising of the General Fund Revenue Outturn for 2008/09 and explaining the more significant variances.

The Executive Member advised that, overall, there had been net expenditure of £15,120m, representing a favourable position of £1.736m. He detailed the main variances in the report now submitted.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the General Fund Revenue Outturn for 2008/09, be approved; DIS

(B) the level of Fund Balances at 31 March 2009, as set out within the report, be noted; and

(C) Budget “carry forward” be reviewed in the light of the June 2009 healthcheck report. DIS

146 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK – MAY 2009

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

The Leader commented on the projected overspend referred to in the report and stated that although it was still early in the year, it would be necessary for the Authority to recognise the challenging times that lay ahead.

In response to a Member’s question on Development Control income, the Executive Member referred to the

impact of the recession and the sharp decrease in the number of major applications being received.

The Executive noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the budgetary variances set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report now submitted, be noted.

147 OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC RISK MONITORING (JANUARY – MARCH 2009)

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on actions taken to mitigate and control risks during the period January – March 2009. The Executive was advised that this would be the last such report in this format as future monitoring would be included on a quarterly basis in the corporate healthcheck report.

The Executive noted the report.

RESOLVED – that the progress in taking action to mitigate and control risks tracked by operational and strategic risk registers during the period 1 January – 31 March 2009, be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.31 pm

Chairman
Date