

MINUTES OF JOINT SCRUTINY
 COMMITTEES MEETING HELD IN THE
 COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
 HERTFORD ON TUESDAY,
19 JANUARY 2010 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Andrews (Chairman).
 Councillors P R Ballam, A L Burlton, S A Bull
 (substitute for Councillor C B Woodward),
 Mrs R F Cheswright, D Clark, N P Clark,
 K Darby, R N Copping, A D Dodd, R Gilbert,
 P Grethe, Mrs M H Goldspink, J Hedley,
 Mrs D L E Hollebon, G E Lawrence, G McAndrew,
 J Mayes, D A A Peek, N C Poulton, J O Ranger,
 V Shaw, J J Taylor, J P Warren, M Wood.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor A P Jackson, P A Ruffles and
 M J Tindale.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Lorna Georgiou	- Performance and Improvement Co- ordinator
Philip Hamberger	- Programme Director of Change
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

491 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of
 Councillors W Ashley, J J Taylor, R I Taylor and C
 Woodward. It was noted that Councillor S A Bull was in

attendance as a substitute for Councillor C Woodward.

492 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman asked Members to make sure recommendations were constructive and as specific as possible but strategic in nature. He reminded Members that they should focus on 2010/11, but in the context of the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2013/14. He asked Members to apportion more time to substantial areas of spending and not to repeat discussions.

493 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of personal interest were made in relation to Minute 500 – Consolidated budget report – by Councillor N C Poulton and P A Ruffles by virtue of being trustees of Hertford Museum and by Councillor P R Ballam by virtue of being a trustee of Ware Museum. Councillor M J Tindale declared a personal interest in MXXX – Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2010/11 by virtue of his main business having Scottish Widows as a client.

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

494 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon and seconded by Councillor N C Poulton that Councillor D Andrews be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED - that Councillor D Andrews be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

495 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Committees held on 1 December 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the deletion of

“Councillor R N Copping” from the penultimate paragraph of page 3.7 and the insertion of “Councillor N C Poulton”.

496 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/10 (REVISED) TO 2012/13

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report setting out proposals for the Council’s capital programme for the period 2009/10 (Revised) to 2012/13. The capital programme had been amended for items of slippage and rephrasing. Other amendments had included funding for the Council’s Changing the Way We Work project and leisure facilities. A new programme was proposed for 2009/10 to 2012/13. The programme included a number of new schemes which were shown in bold in the Essential Reference Paper to the report now submitted.

The Director of Internal Services gave an update on the latest prospects for the economy and reductions in public spending in relation to the report and other items on the agenda.

Members asked questions about shared use swimming pools, the development at Vantorts in Sawbridgeworth and the bridge over the River Stort. The Director undertook to give a written response on developments at Grange Paddocks.

A number of Members expressed concern at the lack of opportunity for effective scrutiny of capital projects. It was explained that the Executive would be recommending to Council the approval of the Capital Programme for 2009/10 and a rolling programme for future years.

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

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Committee considers the Capital Programme 2009/10 should be approved and the forward rolling

programme be noted.

497 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT
2010/11 AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY
STATEMENT

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support reported on the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy together with the setting of Prudential Indicators.

The use of capital receipts and the lower rate of return on investments were highlighted. The Director of Internal Services explained some new accounting practices relating to property holdings. He said the Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee were meeting fund managers regularly to give greater Member involvement.

Councillor D Clark queried whether arrangements were prudent enough in the light of uncertainty about the economy. The Director explained that changes in the brief for fund managers were being discussed to increase investment income. Councillor N C Clark expressed concern that this would lead to more investment in less secure areas. The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support assured Members that these changes would be carefully considered with the fund managers.

The Committee decided to inform the Executive of the Members' comments detailed above.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed of the comments of the Committee as detailed above.

498 FEES AND CHARGES 2010/11

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report detailing additional income to the Council that could be generated by increasing discretionary fees and

charges in 2010/11 in relation to a variety of services.

Concerns were raised over charges including the following:

- Taxi licensing increases in view of this providing employment in the current economic climate;
- Sex establishment licensing which it was felt could be increased;
- Pre-application advice fees for planning applications as it was thought such advice could be beneficial to the planning process;
- Details shown for Castle Hall which seemed to be incomplete e.g. not showing hourly charge in all cases or charges for Bank Holidays
- Charging for replacement waste bins;
- Increasing charges for removal of bulky items; and
- Charges for removal of wasps nests.

The Committee decided to inform the Executive of the above concerns and that other fees and charges should be approved.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that the Committee considers the fees and charges should be approved subject to the comments detailed above.

499

SERVICE ESTIMATES – REVENUE BUDGET PROBABLE
2009/10 – ESTIMATES 2010/11

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report on the estimates of all General Fund Services. The probable estimate showed an adverse variance.

Members asked questions about the figures for loss of rent of the Causeway car park, staff pension costs and multiple occupation properties. The Director of Internal Services undertook to provide a written response on the costs of pensions for each year and details of the windfall sum of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

The Committee decided to inform the Executive of the questions it raised on these estimates.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed of the questions raised by the Committee on the service estimates.

500 CONSOLIDATED BUDGET – PROBABLE OUTTURN
2009/10 – REVENUE BUDGET 2009/10 AND MEDIUM
TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2010/11 TO 2013/14

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report on the Council's consolidated budget. The budget had been prepared with regard to current economic problems and prospects for recovery.

Councillor M Wood asked that the following items be not included in savings:

- Animal Warden service
- Youth development post
- Building control reduction in posts
- HCC Museum Funding
- Arts funding
- PCSO reduction in support
- Young homeless – ceasing support

- Parking permits reduction
 - Second swathe grass cutting
- (2010/11)
- Leaf clearance
 - Weed spraying programme
 - Papworth energy scheme reduction

(2011/12)

- Can banks discontinuance

(2012/13)

Councillor R Cheswright expressed concern at cuts in emptying of dog bins.

In response to a question from a Member the Director of Internal Services undertook to check the period of the freeze on Members' Allowances.

Councillor N C Clark expressed concern at the lack of flexibility in the budget.

The Committee decided to inform the Executive that the budget should be approved subject to comments at the meeting.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Committee considers that the budget should be approved subject to consideration of the items mentioned above being removed from savings.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm

Chairman
Date