

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2015, AT 7.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor P Phillips (Chairman).
Councillors M Allen, R Brunton, S Bull,
J Cartwright, R Henson and M Pope.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors P Ruffles and G Williamson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chris Gibson	- Head of Governance and Risk Management
Philip Gregory	- Head of Strategic Finance
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Henry Lewis	- Head of Business and Technology Services
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Ceri Pettit	- Corporate Planning and Performance Manager
Adele Taylor	- Director of Finance and Support Services
Liz Watts	- Chief Executive
Ben Wood	- Head of Business Development

417 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors M Stevenson and J Wyllie.

418 MINUTES – 25 AUGUST 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 August 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

419 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the Committee's future work programme for the remaining meetings in 2015/16 and the first half of 2016/17.

The Chairman advised Members that in respect of the Council Tax Support Scheme, Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee had reviewed the current scheme in July 2015 and as no changes had been proposed, there was nothing further to scrutinise in this meeting. Therefore, the matter would proceed to the Executive meeting on 1 December 2015.

The Chairman stated that, at his request, the report on the Corporate Strategic Plan 2016/17 – 2019/20 had also been dropped from the agenda of this meeting as the document was not yet ready for scrutiny.

The Scrutiny Officer invited Members to give a view on the invitation of Executive Members to future meetings of Scrutiny. Following a comment from Councillor M Pope, the Scrutiny Officer undertook to check whether the Executive would be present at the January and February 2016 joint meetings of Scrutiny Committees. The Committee approved the work programme, as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the work programme, as now detailed, be approved.

420 PARTNERSHIP REGISTER – RISK MONITORING

The Director of Finance and Support Services submitted a report that reviewed the current partnership protocol for East Herts Council and provided an update to the Committee.

The Head of Business Development advised that in 2010, following the work of a Scrutiny Task and Finish group, this Committee had approved a “Partnership Protocol”, which set out expectations and requirements for managing risks associated with partnership working.

Members were advised that the Protocol had been produced when the Authority was engaged in multiple arrangements with different levels of associated risk and had been designed to act as a guide to help Officers understand and manage risk.

The Head of Business Development stated that there was now less informal partnership activity and more formal collaborative working arrangements in place. He concluded that the Protocol had to be updated to clear up a number of grey areas regarding informal partnership working and he was seeking authority to review the protocol and bring a further report to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Business Development responded to a number of minor queries from the Committee. Members received the report and supported the recommendations now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Partnership Protocol be reviewed to focus on only those partnerships where formal assurance processes were not in place; and

(B) the register of partnerships be replaced by the “map” of shared services.

421 2015/16 SERVICE PLAN MONITORING – SIX MONTHLY REPORT

The Director of Finance and Support Services submitted a report providing a mid-year summary of the Council's achievements against its priorities for 2015/16 and key projects. The report also monitored the outstanding service plan actions from 2014/15, 2013/14 and 2012/13.

The Corporate Planning and Performance Manager referred to the six service plans that were relevant to the remit of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee. She detailed the performance of the 32 actions included with the service plans referred to in paragraph 1.6 of the report.

Members were advised that there were 33 corporate projects of which seven were included within the service plans detailed in paragraph 1.6 and were relevant to Corporate Business Scrutiny. The Manager summarised the outstanding actions as detailed on pages 38 – 41 of the report.

Councillor R Brunton queried whether the action entitled 14-CRP02 – Production of a corporate land inspection policy would be reported to the Executive or come via Scrutiny first. The Head of Governance and Risk Management referred to the matter being reported to the Operational Risk Management Group in late December 2015 or early January 2016.

The Director undertook to confirm to Members where this matter would be reported. Members received the report and supported the recommendation now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that Corporate Business Scrutiny supports the approval of the reported performance for the period April to September 2015.

422 HEALTHCHECK THROUGH TO SEPTEMBER 2015

The Director of Finance and Support Services submitted a report updating Members on finance, performance and strategic risk monitoring for East Herts Council for 2015/16 as at September 2015.

The Head of Strategic Finance provided a detailed explanation of some of the revenue and budget figures referred to in the report. He confirmed to Councillor M Pope that the expected yield of 5.02% on the property purchase of Old River Lane was a gross figure.

Councillor R Brunton commented on whether there was any further opportunity for Members to scrutinise the collective agreement reached with Unison regarding the proposed changes to the employee expenses policy. The Director advised that the matter would be reported to Local Joint Panel in December 2015 and to Human Resources (HR) Committee in January 2016. Members were reminded of the financial implications detailed in the report should HR Committee approve the collective agreement.

The Head of Strategic Finance and the Director responded to a number of other minor queries from Members. The Corporate Planning and Performance Manager provided a detailed update in respect of the indicators that were relevant to the remit of Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee. Members received the report and supported the recommendations now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received; and

(B) the Executive be advised that Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee has no comments to make in respect of the following:

- (1) the revenue budget forecast underspend of £556k (paragraph 2.1);

- (2) the use of the General Reserve to fund the settlement of the collective action bought against the Council in respect of Land Charges for £78k (paragraph 2.6.3);
- (3) the use of the transformation reserve to fund the compensation payments in respect of changes to the employee expenses policy of £198k (paragraph 2.9);
- (4) proposed slippage on the following capital schemes:
 - Hartham Common, preliminary works, £25k (paragraph 3.3);
 - Castle Weir, Micro Hydro Scheme, £201k (paragraph 3.4);
 - Historic Building Grants, £36.7k (paragraph 3.5);
 - Fanshawe Swimming pool, air conditioning, £15k (paragraph 3.6);
- (5) the indicators that could be at risk of decline in the future as set out in paragraph 7.2 be noted; and
- (6) the amendment to the indicator set out in paragraph 7.4 be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.52 pm

Chairman
Date