

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN ROOM 27,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
31 MAY 2016, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Allen (Chairman).
Councillors R Brunton, M Casey, K Brush,
B Deering, P Phillips, M Pope, M Stevenson
and J Wyllie.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Alder, D Andrews, L Haysey,
G Jones and G Williamson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Philip Gregory	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Ceri Pettit	- Corporate Planning and Performance Manager
Liz Watts	- Chief Executive

43 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor R Brunton and seconded by Councillor J Wyllie that Councillor J Kaye be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for the 2016/17 civic year.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, Councillor J Kaye was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for the 2016/17 civic year.

RESOLVED – that Councillor J Kaye be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for the 2016/17 civic year.

44 APOLOGY

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

45 MINUTES – 22 MARCH 2016

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

46 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman stated that the work of the Committee included looking at how things could be done better or more efficiently. He welcomed ideas and suggestions from the Committee.

47 MEMBER BRIEFING – CHANGES TO COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR 2016/17

The Executive Member for Finance and Support Services advised that a recent performance hack had identified areas for improvement in respect of performance management.

The Corporate Planning and Performance Manager gave a presentation in respect of the changes regarding the Council's Performance Management Framework for 2016/17. She advised that an overview of performance would be reported to Corporate Business Scrutiny so that the remaining Scrutiny Committees could focus on relevant issues in more depth.

The Executive Member for Finance and Support Services

thanked the Corporate Planning and Performance Manager for her presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

48 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK – MARCH 2016/QUARTER 4 2016

The Head of Communication, Strategy and Policy submitted a report updating Members on performance monitoring for East Herts Council for 2015/16 as at March 2016/Quarter 4. The Corporate Planning and Performance Manager advised this was the last report in the current format and all indicators would be monitored on a monthly basis going forward.

Members were advised that where a target had been exceeded or where there was a long term upward trend it might prove challenging to maintain this performance. The Corporate Planning and Performance Manager stated that some issues were beyond the Council's control such as the numbers using leisure facilities.

Members were referred to a number of other national trends and they were advised that they might need to be aware of a number of changes to performance indicators that were linked to those trends.

Councillor J Wyllie commented on whether a rethink was needed as regards the markets. He referred to new initiatives that had been tried for Hertford market and whether these would work elsewhere in the District. Members were advised that the regular markets were struggling, whereas the more specialist farmers markets were fairing rather better.

Councillor R Brunton was assured by the Scrutiny Officer that a report covering the penalties in the refuse contract would be submitted to Environment Scrutiny Committee and he could seek more detail from the Head of Service if required. She undertook to get a reply from the Head of

Service to a query from Councillor B Deering.

The Chief Executive confirmed to Councillor M Pope that the onset of larger fly tips was linked to changes when household waste recycling sites were open. Members were advised that it was hard to influence the behaviour of the public regarding household waste. The Scrutiny Officer commented that Environment Scrutiny would soon be receiving a report that covered fly tipping.

Councillor D Andrews commented that the containers on household waste sites were often full and the sites could not be open whilst the containers were emptied. He emphasised that this was a particular problem at the smaller more constrained sites.

Members received the report.

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 current explanation for long term trends detailed in paragraph 2.3 of the report submitted and the impact it is estimated to have on the final outturn for:

- EHPI 153 – Number of applicants that presented to the council as homeless;
- EHPI 3a – Usage: number of swims (under 16);
- EHPI 3b – Usage: number of swims (16 – under 60 year olds);
- EHPI 3c – Usage: number of swims (60 + years old);
- EHPI 4a – Usage: Gym (16 – under 60 year olds).

49 NET COST OF SERVICES – REVENUE AND CAPITAL
OUTTURN 2015/16

The Executive Member for Finance and Support Services submitted a report advising Members on the financing arrangements for the 2015/16 Capital Outturn and the planned financing of the updated 2016/17 capital budget allowing for the approved slippage from 2015/16.

The Head of Strategic Finance and Property Services advised that the figure regarding the Council's net expenditure outturn position of £14,449,000 had been stated incorrectly in paragraph 2.2 of the report submitted. He stated that the 2015/16 outturn figures were correct in table 1. He also referred to the collective agreement with Unison regarding the removal of the essential lump payment of £1,239 per annum and reducing the mileage rate from 65p per mile to the HMRC rate of 45p per mile.

Members were advised of the policy regarding general reserves and the dual purpose of having reserves to manage and mitigate risks. A full and detailed list of reserves would be submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee within the Statement of Accounts.

Councillor J Wyllie commented on the community right to challenge in respect of the management fee to Bishop's Stortford Town Council exceeding the approved budget. He was advised that this matter had been resolved slightly to the benefit of the Town Council and East Hertfordshire District Council and lessons had been learned.

Councillor M Pope referred to an increase in housing benefits overpayments and in bad debts. The Chief Executive advised that the Authority was often not advised of changes in the circumstances of claimants and the Authority was subsequently unable to accurately calculate claims.

Councillor M Casey commented on the funding of the £1m pension fund from reserves. The Chief Executive advised Members of the recent changes to the pension fund scheme whereby employees contributed more than they used to. Members were advised that the Authority had very little discretion or choice in this matter.

The Chief Executive responded to a further query from Councillor Casey regarding redundancy payments and how many had been and the average payment. Members had a short general debate in respect of the pension fund and Councillor M Casey referred to expenditure and was given advice by the Head of Strategic Finance and Property Services regarding specific items in the revenue budget.

Members debated the redundancy payment multipliers and the fact that they were within the control of the Council subject to negotiation with the union. Members recommended that the Executive be advised that Human Resources Officers should review the redundancy payment multiplier. Members received the report and approved 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:

- the Net Cost of Services Revenue Outturn as set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report submitted for 2015/16;
- the transfer of the underspend in Contingency budget for 2015/16 to the Transformation Reserve as set out in paragraph 2.6 of the report submitted;
- the transfer of funds to reserves as detailed in paragraph 2.4 of the report submitted;

- the level of General Reserve Balances at 31 March 2016 as set out within the report;
- the carry forward requests from 2015/16 to 2016/17 budgets as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report submitted;
- the Capital outturn for 2015/16 as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report submitted;
- Capital slippage as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report submitted;
- the Capital Programme for 2016/17 to 2019/20 as set out in paragraph 4.5 of the report submitted;

(C) the Executive be advised that Human Resources Officers should review the redundancy payment multiplier.

50 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the Committee's future work programme for 2016/17. The Scrutiny Officer advised that the work programme was similar to the one that had been in place at the end of the 2015/16 civic year and the programme was subject to confirmation by the new Committee.

Members were advised that a report in respect of the Management of Section 106 funding would be submitted to the meeting on 12 July 2016. The Chief Executive advised that this would focus in particular on the Bishop's Stortford North development and the needs of the town. Members were reminded that it was appropriate for Scrutiny to input into how the funding was allocated.

The Chairman reminded Members of the new style of performance health check reports that would come before

the Committee in future. The Committee approved the 2016/17 work programme, as now amended.

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

51 RESIDENTS SURVEY 2015

The Leader of the Council submitted a report that introduced the results of the Residents Survey undertaken in 2015. This was undertaken every other year in order to seek the views of residents as part of a countywide survey. The full results of the survey would be used as part of the financial and business planning process and were presented as Essential Reference Paper 'B'.

Members were provided with a detailed summary of the survey results and were advised that the report provided a useful companion to the results of previous surveys. Councillor D Andrews commented on whether the survey represented value for money as the results were not fed into decision making processes.

Councillor P Phillips queried whether a shift to online media would give the Authority earlier access to real time data that could be acted upon more quickly and efficiently. There was general agreement from Members that more could be done with the existing results and future surveys would be better conducted in an online forum or utilising multiple media formats.

The Chief Executive stated that the survey was of its time and it did take a long time to get the results. She advised that once the public could access more Council services online then it would be easier to get feedback in this manner from customers.

Members received the report and agreed that Officers should explore a channel shift to facilitate a rethink in terms of engagement and consultation to encourage the

gathering of more meaningful survey responses. Officers were also asked to report back to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee once they had considered a number of more appropriate methods of communication for future resident surveys.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received;

(B) Officers explore a channel shift to facilitate a rethink in terms of engagement and consultation to encourage the gathering of more meaningful survey responses; and

(C) Officers report back to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee once they had considered a number of more appropriate methods of communication for future resident surveys.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm

Chairman
Date