

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2011, AT 7.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Andrews (Chairman)
Councillors E Bedford, G Jones, W Mortimer,
T Page, P Phillips, M Pope, J Ranger,
G Williamson and J Wing

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors S Bull, L Haysey, A Jackson and
N Poulton

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Lorna Georgiou	- Performance and Improvement Co-ordinator
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community and Cultural Services
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
Mekhola Ray	- Community Projects Team Manager

451 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members that they were invited to an Open Day in the Planning section.

The Chairman announced that Linda Bevan, Committee Secretary would be leaving the Authority soon and this would

be the last Committee meeting she would attend. The Committee joined him in thanking her for her work for the Council.

452 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor N Poulton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute 459 - Review of Discretionary Rate Relief by virtue of being Chairman of the Trustees of Hertford Museum. He had left the meeting before this item was discussed.

Councillor J Wing declared a personal interest in Minute 459 - Review of Discretionary Rate Relief by virtue of being a trustee of a number of charities.

453 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

454 PARTNERSHIP REGISTERS - ANNUAL REVIEW

The Director of Community and Customer Services submitted a report on the annual review of Partnership Registers.

The Committee noted the partners included in the register and decided to receive the report.

RESOLVED - that the report be received.

455 COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Chairman of the Community and Public Engagement task and finish group submitted a report updating the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on progress on and amendments to work arising from recommendations of the task and finish group.

The Committee discussed the actions taken so far and commented on funding for Ward members initiating community engagement on local issues, the need to keep

Parish Councils, as well as Town Councils, informed of Council press releases and the readability of Link magazine in A5 format.

The Committee decided to note the report subject to the comments detailed below.

RESOLVED - that (A) progress be noted;

(B) Ward Members be supported to initiate public engagement on issues of local concern and a light touch procedure for requests for funding for this be put in place; and

(C) the task and finish group be reconvened in one year's time to review public response and wider feedback on the new A5 format for Link magazine and to look at the Council's social media activities, including its use by Hertford Theatre.

456 UPDATE ON REVENUES AND BENEFITS SHARED SERVICES

The Director of Internal Services submitted a report on progress on the shared service for Revenues and Benefits. He said that IT problems were causing a delay in fully integrating the two systems. In response to questions, he explained that the IT supplier would provide free support days rather than cash as compensation for this delay. He also reassured Members that the public would not feel any impact of the technical delay as Officers would continue to operate the two separate systems in parallel. Processing of claims would not be held up.

The Director undertook to provide Councillor Jones with details of the savings for the MTFP achieved by sharing these services.

The Committee decided to note the progress on the Shared Services.

RESOLVED – that progress to date be noted.

457 2011/12 SERVICE PLANS - SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND EXCEPTIONS REPORT

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on progress against 2011/12 Service Plan actions relevant to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee and details of those that required a revised completion date.

The Committee decided to note the satisfactory progress as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the satisfactory progress against 2011/12 Service Plan actions and actions requiring revised completion dates be noted.

458 CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK TO SEPTEMBER 2011

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on the finance and performance monitoring for East Herts Council for September/Quarter 2 2011.

A minor correction to EHPI 3a and 3b relating to number of people swimming was given to Members.

The Committee noted that there had been some delay in implementing savings in the MTFP because a restructure of senior management had been undertaken, which had delayed implementation of staff changes below this level. Savings were being made elsewhere to compensate for this.

Members were pleased to see that the time taken to process Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims had reduced significantly, particularly at a time when the service was going through a period of change. They asked for a message of thanks to be passed to the team for their hard work on this.

The Committee decided to note the budget variances and performance.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

459 REVIEW OF DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

The Director of Internal Services submitted a report on some potential options to reduce the current budget for Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR) from 1 April 2012 as proposed in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Committee considered organisations which might receive reduced discretionary rate relief and decided to make the comments detailed below to the Executive. They noted comments on the adverse effect this could have on some groups.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the following organisations could be considered for a reduction in the discretionary element of their rate relief:

- Pubs
- Petrol filling stations
- Sports clubs with and without bars
- Village Halls (reduce by 5%)
- Charities – where their funding comes from national/central sources

460 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

The Chairman submitted a report supporting the Committee in reviewing and planning its work programme.

The Scrutiny Officer said the programme for 2012/13 would be added to once Members had held their topic planning meeting in April 2012.

The Committee decided to make a number of changes to the work programme as detailed below.

RESOLVED - that the work programme now submitted be approved, subject to the progress report from the task and finish group on community and public engagement being moved to 2 October 2012 and the inclusion of the Closure report on C3W and Evaluation

of the Scrutiny of C3W being added to the agenda for
20 March 2012.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm

Chairman

Date