

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 8 JANUARY 2013, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A Jackson (Chairman/Leader)
Councillors M Alexander, L Haysey,
P Phillips and M Tindale.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors E Buckmaster,
Mrs R Cheswright, G McAndrew,
M McMullen, P Moore, T Page, M Pope,
J Ranger, C Rowley, P Ruffles, J Wing and
C Woodward.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services
Adele Taylor	- Director of Finance and Support Services

519 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor
M Carver.

520 **HOUSING STRATEGIC TENANCY STRATEGY 2012 - 15**

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support submitted a report setting out a proposed Tenancy Strategy, as now required by the Localism Act. She detailed the new duties placed on local authorities and advised that although registered housing providers would have their own tenancy strategies, they were required to “have regard” to the Council’s.

The Executive Member also detailed the stakeholder consultation that had been undertaken and reported that no adverse comments had been received. The Community Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 20 November 2012, had supported the proposed Strategy.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the comments of the Community Scrutiny Committee be received: and

(B) the Tenancy Strategy as now submitted, be adopted.

521 **LOCAL AUTHORITY MORTGAGE SCHEME**

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report seeking approval to amend the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS) by raising the maximum loan amount per property from £160k to £190k.

The Executive recalled that, the Council had been an early adopter, when the scheme had been approved in February 2012. A wider scheme across the Hertfordshire had been launched in November 2012, with a maximum loan amount set at £190k. Initial indications were that take up had been limited by the £160k cap. In order to bring the scheme into line with neighbouring authorities and to stimulate greater access to the scheme, an

increase in the maximum loan size to £190k was proposed.

The Executive Member also proposed an additional amendment relating to indemnifying the Monitoring Officer in giving an Opinion Letter as now detailed.

In response to various comments, the Executive Member undertook to discuss with Officers how best to publicise the scheme further.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the Council's Local Authority Mortgage Scheme, approved at its meeting held on 22 February 2012, be amended as follows:

The maximum loan amount that can be awarded per property be increased from £160,000 to £190,000.

(B) the Monitoring Officer be further indemnified in giving an Opinion Letter in respect of the amendment in (A) above confirming that the Council is able to enter into the Deed of Amendment and is bound by it.

522 **COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report proposing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for East Herts from April 2013.

The Executive recalled that, at its meeting held on 31 July 2012, it had authorised consultation on a draft scheme following the replacement of the current nationally prescribed scheme of council tax benefits by locally determined schemes of council tax support on 1 April 2013. Details of the consultation responses were set out in the report submitted. The Council was required to

determine its local scheme by 31 January 2013 following this consultation period.

The Executive Member advised that the Government had initially stated that it would provide grant funding at 90% of the projected cost of support as if the existing benefits scheme had continued. However, additional support had since been announced at 91.5%. Therefore, an 8.5% saving would need to be achieved in the cost of support or otherwise the Council would have to meet the difference. He also advised that compensation for parish and town councils to cover any shortfall would be provided for the first year. Officers had written to parish and town councils advising them of the implications of the new arrangements.

Various Members made comments and asked a number of questions relating to:

- the impact on parish and town council finances;
- the anticipated impact on staff workloads arising from an increase in public enquiries;
- the likelihood of a reduced collection rate and the need for additional provision for write-offs;
- the varying approaches being taken by neighbouring authorities following the failure to achieve a unified approach; and
- the complexities of the new scheme and the need to provide public information in plain English.

The Executive supported the new scheme as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the forecasted financial implications arising from the recommended scheme for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTS), with effect from 1 April 2013 and the risks and assumptions attached to these, be approved; and

(B) the CTS Scheme as now detailed in the

report submitted, be approved.

523 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 4 December 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

524 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK - NOVEMBER 2012

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on the finance and performance monitoring for November 2012. He also provided verbal updates in respect of waste and recycling performance data that was unavailable at the time the report had been issued.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the budgetary variances set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report submitted, be noted; and

(B) £50,900 of the Community Grants capital budget be re-profiled from 2012/13 into 2013/14 as outlined in paragraph 2.16 of the report submitted.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

Chairman
Date