

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 3 MARCH 2015, AT 7.00 PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, R Beeching,
E Buckmaster, S Bull, G Jones,
G McAndrew, M McMullen, P Moore, T Page,
P Ruffles and N Symonds.

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

558 **EAST HERTS CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY (2015-2020)**

The Executive Member for Community Partnership and Liaison submitted a report proposing the Customer Service Strategy 2015 – 2020. She detailed the context in

which the proposed Strategy had been developed and referred to the systematic analysis undertaken by Officers to gather knowledge on the Council's customer base, understanding their broad preferences and how they accessed services. This evidence supporting the Strategy was detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted.

The proposed Strategy, as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report submitted, set out how the Council intended to drive a further step change, as opposed to incremental change in providing services and access to them.

The joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees, held on 10 February 2015, had supported the Strategy and also recommended that Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee be asked to accept a report on the Customer Service Project Plan onto its work programme for the meeting due to be held on 26 May 2015.

The Executive supported the recommendations now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the Council's Customer Service Strategy be approved as detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'B'; and

(B) Officers be authorised to progress an outline project plan for its delivery, with any resource requests needed to deliver the Customer Service Strategy being reported to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 26 May 2015 and the Executive on 2 June 2015.

559

AFFORDABLE HOUSING - AMENDMENT TO POLICY

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport submitted a report that detailed the recent changes in national planning policy relating to the provision of affordable housing and the implications for

the Council's current Affordable Housing policy. He also proposed an amendment to the Council's Affordable Housing policy.

The Executive was advised that the Government, via a Ministerial Statement, had published new national planning policy on the use of Section 106 planning obligation agreements, with the key change being that, except in 'designated rural areas', affordable housing and tariff style contributions should not be sought from development of 10-units or fewer and which had a combined gross floor space of no more than 1000 square metres. The Ministerial Statement had immediate effect, thus necessitating an amendment to the Council's current affordable housing policy, to ensure that it conformed with the new national planning policy.

Various Members commented and made reference to the Government's recent announcement on "starter homes". The Leader explained that its impact on affordable homes policies would not be known until further details of the policy pledge emerged. If necessary, a further review might be required.

The Executive supported the proposed amendment as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the changes in national planning policy announced through the Ministerial Statement be noted;

(B) the Council implements a threshold of 5 units or less in Category 1 and 2 Villages, below which affordable housing contributions will not be sought; and

(C) the Council's policy requirement for the provision of affordable housing in Category 1 and 2 Villages be amended and the revised wording for policy HSG3 (II), (III) and (IV) as set out in paragraph 2.18 of the report submitted, be

approved.

As a result, the threshold and requirement for provision of affordable housing would be as follows:

**(a) Main Settlements:
Threshold: Sites over 15 units or 0.5ha
Provision: Up to 40%**

**(b) Category 1 and 2 Villages:
Threshold: Sites of up to 5 units or 0.17ha
Provision: None**

**Threshold: Sites of 6-10 units or 0.18 – 0.32ha and a combined gross internal floorspace of less than 1000sqm
Provision: Financial contribution**

**Threshold: Sites of 11-14 units or 0.33 – 0.49ha or combined gross internal floorspace of more than 1000sqm
Provision: Up to 25%**

**Threshold: Sites over 15 units or 0.5ha
Provision: Up to 40%**

560 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader acknowledged that this was the last scheduled Executive meeting of the current Council's term. He thanked his Executive colleagues for their support and hard work over the previous four years. He also expressed his appreciation to all other Members who had attended Executive meetings and had engaged on important issues affecting residents. Finally, he also thanked Officers for their support and hard work and on behalf of the Executive, expressed best wishes to George A Robertson, who was retiring in May 2015.

561 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 3 February 2015, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

562 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY

The Executive received a report detailing those issues referred to it by the Scrutiny Committees, which were noted. Issues relating to specific reports for the Executive were considered and detailed at the relevant report of the Executive Member.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

563 SERVICE PLANS 2015/16

The Leader of the Council submitted a report setting out planned service activity for 2015/16. He referred to the comments submitted by the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees held on 10 February 2015, which were supportive of the planned activity. The joint meeting had also requested that the Executive approve an additional service plan action in respect of developing a business case for leisure development in East Herts.

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support referred to the ongoing work being undertaken across East Herts. She believed there were two overall strands to this. Firstly, sports facilities across the whole District including private provision. She referred to previous strategies and assessments that had been carried out and reiterated her previous statement that some schools could do more to open up their facilities to the wider community. Also, the Planning Policy team were carrying out an audit of open spaces in East Herts as part of their work on the emerging District Plan. She reminded Members that the funding obtained in respect of the Bishop's Stortford North development would be overseen by a working party.

Secondly, there was the Council's direct provision of services and she accepted the suggestion of the joint meeting of scrutiny committees that an additional action be included in the service plans. She proposed an addition to the Environmental Services Action Plan "to develop a strategy for the Council's Leisure Services" with a target that a "strategy developed which recognises future trends, changing demands for Council leisure services and continuing financial pressures". The proposed outcome would be that a "draft strategy produced which aims to improve provision and financial sustainability of the Council's leisure services; supports health and wellbeing objectives and informs the design of the next leisure contract from 2018".

The Executive approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that the service plan activity for 2015/16, as now submitted, be agreed, subject to the addition of an action in the Environmental Services Action Plan relating to the development of a strategy for the Council's Leisure Services, as now detailed.

564 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 2014/15 ESTIMATES AND FUTURE TARGETS

The Leader of the Council submitted a report setting out the performance indicators the Council was required to publish in its Annual Report. He advised the Executive of estimated performance for 2014/15 and the proposed targets for the next three years. He suggested that it might be timely next year to review which performance indicators added value and were still relevant.

The Executive also noted the comments of the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees held on 10 February 2015, which were supportive of the proposed targets. In respect of EHPI 2.1d – Planning Enforcement: Initial Site Inspections, the joint meeting asked that Environment Scrutiny Committee review the matter and consider the raising of the 2015/16 target from 75% mid-year to a higher figure, which the Executive noted.

The Executive approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the 2014/15 estimated outturns be noted and the future targets for 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 be agreed; and

(B) the performance indicators listed for deletion and the new performance indicators proposed for 2015/16 be agreed.

565 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK - JANUARY 2015

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on finance and performance monitoring for January 2015.

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support referred to underspends in the Disabled Facilities Grants and advised that a report on this would be submitted to Community Scrutiny Committee in June 2015.

Councillor G Jones referred to the slippage in the capital programme and suggested that the Council needed to be a bit sharper to ensure greater spend on the budget. The Director of Finance and Support Services shared these concerns and advised that the new Head of Strategic Finance would be reviewing internal processes. The Executive Member for Finance also reminded Members that the nature of the report was about exceptions and so slippage would be highlighted. He suggested that the capital underspend could be reduced if the Council chose to have a less ambitious programme, which he believed would be undesirable.

The Executive approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the budgetary variances set out in paragraph 2.0 and the forecast outturn position in paragraph 2.4 of the report submitted be noted; and

(B) the Contingency Budget is used to fund tree inspections to be carried out on East Herts land, as detailed at paragraph 3.5 of the report submitted.

The meeting closed at 8.08 pm

Chairman
Date