

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 8 MARCH 2011, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A P Jackson (Chairman/Leader)
Councillors M G Carver, L O Haysey,
R L Parker and M J Tindale

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, W Ashley,
K A Barnes, J Demonti, A D Dodd, R Gilbert,
M P A McMullen, J O Ranger, P A Ruffles,
C Woodward

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
Lois Prior	- Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Communications Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Helen Manuef	- Hertfordshire County Council Internal Audit Service
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580 APOLOGIES

An apology was submitted on behalf of Councillor M Alexander.

581 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed the Executive that sadly Councillor D A Peek had died earlier that day. He paid tribute to Councillor Peek and referred to the invaluable support he had given him when he first became a Councillor and then the Leader of the Council. He said he was sure all present would join him in sending their condolences to his family.

The Chairman welcomed the press representative and Helen Maneuf of Hertfordshire County Council Internal Audit Service to the meeting.

582 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Executive Member for Community Safety and Protection submitted a report seeking to amend the existing Environmental Health Enforcement Policy to ensure that it was in accordance with current legislative requirements and guidance.

The Council's Enforcement Policy had been approved in 2004, in line with Government guidelines. The revised Environmental Health policy was supplementary to this policy. The revision was in response to new legislation and guidelines arising from the Hampton report into regulatory functions and the burdens created by regulation.

In response to a question, the Director of Neighbourhood Services said that the core Enforcement Policy would be reviewed in due course.

The Executive recommended the Environmental Health Enforcement Policy be approved.

RECOMMENDED – that the Environmental Health Enforcement Policy as set out in Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report now submitted, be approved.

583 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

584 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY

The Executive received a report detailing those issues referred to it by the Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED - that the report be received.

585 A SHARED INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report seeking confirmation of the Council's participation in the Herts Shared Internal Audit Service.

The sharing of internal audit services had been considered as part of Herts Pathfinder and recent developments had allowed more rapid progress. The partnership would offer resilience, ready access to a wider range of skills and lower risk delivery of cost savings built into the MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan). There was a need to become more efficient and reduce costs while remaining abreast of current best audit practice.

The proposed scheme, which was called SIAS (Shared Internal Audit Service), would be hosted by Hertfordshire County Council. It would be a collaborative arrangement overseen by participating Councils' Section 151 Officers. Each Council's Audit Committee would have unchanged responsibilities and reporting arrangements.

Some existing staff would transfer to Hertfordshire County Council. Consultation had begun with staff and Unison and the aim was to start the service from 1 July 2011.

Helen Maneuf of Hertfordshire County Council said the shared service would combine the benefits of an in-house service and efficiencies of a larger organisation.

The Chairman of the Audit Committee said it would be important to have a shared vision and expectations, the new venture should address concerns over the past performance of the County Council audit service and a link officer would be needed to promote a good relationship with the District.

The Executive decided to give authority for the agreement to be finalised.

RESOLVED – that the Director of Internal Service, in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources and Internal Services, be authorised to conclude agreement with other participating District Councils and Hertfordshire County Council to set up a shared internal audit service.

586 LOCALISM BILL - EAST HERTS COUNCIL LEADING THE WAY

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on key proposals in the Localism Bill and how the Council was responding to the proposed changes.

It was reported that the Bill was still being debated and had not passed into legislation. The Bill proposed to devolve a range of powers and freedoms to local government and communities. It proposed to overhaul the planning system and underpin the creation of the “Big Society”.

Details of the key proposals were given together with the six essential actions needed for decentralisation. The Council had taken a number of steps in respect of these issues and the Leader outlined some of these at the meeting.

Firstly, following abolition of the National Performance Indicator set, the Council had reviewed its performance indicators. This was to deliver priorities and account to residents for its performance. Hot Performance indicators appeared on the website linked to residents' concerns and interests.

In addition, the Community and Public Engagement Task and Finish Group had been set up to review giving local people and communities a bigger say in services.

Flexible housing options and a house swap scheme were already offered in East Herts.

The Local Development Framework would continue. As regards, planning enforcement, a proposed non-key decision would devolve powers on fly posting to Town Councils.

Finally, webcasting at Council and Development Control Committee had been introduced to increase transparency of government and could be expanded after the elections in May. New ways of communicating and consulting with the public were being investigated e.g. Twitter, MySpace.

Members commented that the final legislation might contain some changes from the current proposals. They thought that the management of public expectations arising from the legislation would be a challenge.

The Executive decided to note the report and ask Scrutiny to look at appropriate issues arising from the Bill in the future.

RESOLVED – that (A) the progress to date against some of the proposals contained in the Localism Bill, be noted; and

(B) the Scrutiny Committees be invited to consider including aspects of the Bill in their work programmes as it progresses through Parliament.

587 2011/12 SERVICE PLANS

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on the planned service activity for 2011/12.

The Executive noted that service plans were produced every year and set out the key actions that needed to be undertaken to deliver corporate priorities and objectives, in line with the budget. Activity would be monitored and reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

The Joint Scrutiny Committees on 15 February 2010, had made a number of detailed comments and these were set out in the “Issues Arising from Scrutiny” report.

The Executive approved the service plans for 2011/12.

RESOLVED – that (A) the comments of the Joint Scrutiny Committees be received; and

(B) the service plan activity for 2011/12, as now submitted, be agreed.

588 2010/11 ESTIMATES AND FUTURE TARGETS

The Leader of the Council submitted a report setting out the performance indicators that the Council was required to monitor and publish annually. He advised the Executive of the estimated performance for 2010/11 and the proposed targets for the next three years.

The Joint Scrutiny Committees on 15 February 2010, had made a number of comments as detailed in the “Issues Arising from Scrutiny” report.

Members raised the question of whether the target for employing people with disabilities and from black and ethnic minorities reflected the population of East Herts. They were assured that this was the case.

The use of empty homes in the District rather than new builds

and the resource needed for that was raised by Members.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the estimates for 2010/11 be noted;

(B) the refined list of performance indicators to be retained and deleted, as set out at paragraph 1.7 of the report submitted, be approved;

(C) in respect of targets detailed at paragraphs 3.3, 3.4 and 4.2 of the report submitted, no further resources should be invested to improve the potential 2010/11 outturn position in order to meet current targets;

(D) the targets set out in paragraph 5.1 – 5.3 to either improve, reduce or retain performance, be approved;

(E) the adoption of the new local measures set out in paragraph 6.1 of the report, be approved;

(F) the data quality spot checks that are currently being undertaken in paragraph 7.3 of the report be noted;

(G) unit cost indicators are not included in the list of PI estimates and targets as detailed at paragraph 8.1 of the report; and

(H) the changes to the 2009/10 performance outturns for the leisure performance indicators, as detailed at paragraphs 9.1 to 9.3 of the report be noted.

589 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK - JANUARY 2011

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on finance and performance monitoring for January 2011.

The Executive decided that the report be noted as detailed

below.

RESOLVED – that (A) the budgetary variances set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report be noted;

(B) monthly outturn data only being reported for the crime performance indicators as comparative data is no longer available, be noted;

(C) £18,000 of the River and Watercourses capital budget be re-profiled from 2010/11 into 2011/12;

(D) £18,300 of the Wheeled Bin and Recycling capital budget be re-profiled from 2011/12 into 2010/11; and

(E) the Strategic Risks in Essential Reference Paper ‘G’, be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm

Chairman
Date