

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2023, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Haysey (Chairman/Leader)
Councillors P Boylan, E Buckmaster,
G Cutting, J Goodeve, J Kaye, G McAndrew
and G Williamson.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors B Crystall, C Redfern and
P Ruffles.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive
Carol Bulloch	- Systems and Support Manager
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager
Su Tarran	- Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

339 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

340 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader reminded Members that the meeting was being webcast on the council's Youtube page.

341 MINUTES - 10 JANUARY 2023

Councillor Haysey proposed, and Councillor Boylan seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Leader. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

342 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

343 DISCRETIONARY COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT TOP UP 2023

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Discretionary Council Tax Support Top Up 2023 report. The government announced in December that they would be providing further funding to local authorities to provide further support

to households in receipt of Council Tax support. He said that the scheme was in two parts, the mandatory scheme was that all households on local Council Tax support would receive a £25 reduction on bills. If there was any funding left over once the £25 had been distributed, then the council could provide the same level of support to additional households until the funding was exhausted. Councillor Williamson said that the report was proposing that this funding be used for those under the Council Tax Hardship Scheme.

Councillor Haysey thanked the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service for their hard work.

Councillor Williamson proposed, and Councillor Goodeve seconded a motion supporting the recommendations in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that (A) the discretionary ‘Council Tax Support Top Up 2023’ Scheme as detailed at paragraph 2.7 or the report be approved; and

(B) the Head of Revenues and Benefits Share Service, in conjunction with the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, amend the scheme criteria if funds would otherwise not be allocated in full.

344 QUARTERLY CORPORATE BUDGET MONITOR 2022/23 –
QUARTER 2 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Quarterly Corporate Budget Monitor for Quarter 2. He said that Quarter 2 was predicting a £192k overspend which represented 1.7% of the council's net revenue budget.

Councillor Williamson said that the significant variances and their reasonings were given in Appendix B. He said that given the inflationary pressures in contract, utilities, and salary costs, he said it had been a considerable feat to contain the budget and thanked Officers for their hard work.

Councillor Buckmaster said that a £192k overspend on a £11.5 million revenue budget was not a bad result. He said that he was often asked by colleagues and residents why there was slippage on capital projects and he said that the last four years had been challenging with the pandemic and now the impact of the invasion of Ukraine had had on inflation. He said the council had taken a step back and looked at costs and he was proud of what the council had achieved at Grange Paddocks, Castle Park, Hartham Leisure Centre and Hertford Theatre.

Councillor Haysey agreed and said that there were not many districts who had the ability to deliver the capital projects that East Herts had. She said this was down to the hard work and dedication of the council's Officers.

Councillor Williamson proposed, and Councillor Goodeve seconded a motion supporting the recommendations in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared

CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (a) the forecast net revenue budget forecast overspend of £192k be welcomed and that measures to contain the inflationary pressures in year have been successful be noted; and

b) the capital programme forecast outturn of £21.057m and the reasons for the scheme slippages be noted.

345 BUDGET 2023/24 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24 - 2027/28

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Budget 2023/24 and the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 – 2027/28 report. Councillor Williamson ran through the key highlights which included the increase in Council Tax by 2.99% in line with the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement which would provide the council with an extra £33,000 in revenue. He said that the council could deliver a balanced budget for 2023/24 despite the challenging background of high inflation and interest rates. He reminded Members that £6.7 million needed to be saved in 2024 – 2028 so further savings would need to be found.

Councillor Williamson said it was clear that further work was required to balance future budgets. He said the Leadership Team would be preparing a Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources exercise for after the District elections in May 2023. He said that lower

priority capital spending had been moved into the approved but not committed category so that the council did not need to allow for financing of these items and they could be brought back into committed spending if funding was found for them.

Councillor Williamson proposed an amendment to Recommendation C to “That Executive Members consider the results of the full cost recovery calculations for their portfolio and approve the fees and charges to be recommended to Council.”

Councillor Buckmaster said that the Council Tax increase equated to approximately £189 across the year for a Band D property. He said that considering the number and level of services the council provides, he felt this was good value for money.

Councillor Haysey said that although the District council collected the tax, most of it goes to the County Council and the Police.

Councillor McAndrew echoed Councillor Williamson’s words about future budgets. He said that recommendation D referred to further efficiencies and every council across the country faced the same challenges and the next year would be difficult for councils across the country.

Councillor Williamson proposed, and Councillor McAndrew seconded a motion supporting the recommendations in the report and the amendment to recommendation C. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council (A) The approval of the budget and Medium Term Financial Plan at Appendix A with a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, which will result in a Band D Equivalent Council Tax annual increase of £5.50;

(B) The approval of the Capital Programme at Appendix B;

(C) That Executive Members consider the results of the full cost recovery calculations for their portfolio and approve the fees and charges to be recommended to Council; and

(D) To note that the level of budget reductions required to balance the budget in the medium term is beyond further efficiency measures alone and that Leadership Team are preparing a Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources exercise that the new Council, elected in May 2023, will need to undertake alongside the development of the new Corporate Plan, to balance the budget over the medium term.

346 CAPITAL STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy. He said that the Audit and Governance Committee had endorsed the policy.

Councillor Kaye said it had been a tough time with high

inflation and said that this was a sensible and pragmatic document.

Councillor Williamson proposed, and Councillor Kaye seconded a motion supporting the recommendation in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council the approval of the Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision policy 2023/24 onwards.

347 ANNUAL TREASURY STRATEGY 2023/24

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Annual Treasury Strategy 2023/24. He said the strategy guided the council on delivering programmes and provided a basis on which to manage funds. There were three treasury reports each year and this was the first report.

Councillor Williamson proposed, and Councillor Cutting seconded a motion supporting the recommendation in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council the approval of the Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy 2023/24 at Appendix A and approve the Prudential Indicators at Appendix B.

348 ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023 - 2028

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Asset Management Plan 2023-2028 which had been previously been presented to the Executive in December 2022.

Councillor Williamson proposed, and Councillor Boylan seconded a motion supporting the recommendation in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council the approval of the Strategic Asset Management Plan 2023-2028.

349 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm

Chairman
Date