

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 23 AUGUST 2011, AT 7.00 PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors S Bull, P Ruffles and M Tindale.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Lorna Georgiou	- Performance and Improvement Co-ordinator
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services

242 APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors M Pope and J Wing. It was noted that Councillor J Mayes was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor M Pope.

243 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

244 CORPORATE ANNUAL REPORT

The Leader of the Council submitted a report which provided an initial draft of the Council's Annual Report 2010/11.

The Committee suggested a number of drafting amendments which Officers undertook to incorporate in the next version of the Annual Report.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee approves the initial draft of the Council's Annual Report 2010/11 subject to the drafting amendments discussed at the meeting.

245 CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN 2012/13 - 2015/16

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on the Council's four year Corporate Strategic Plan which outlined the Authority's priorities for the next four years and the key outcomes it wished to achieve.

The Committee suggested a number of drafting amendments, particularly relating to the wording of the Council's revised priorities, which Officers undertook to incorporate in the next version of the Corporate Strategic Plan.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee commends the Corporate Strategic Plan 2012/13 – 2015/16 subject to drafting amendments discussed at the meeting.

246 FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2011: MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN TO 2015/16 AND APPLICATION OF NEW HOMES BONUS

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report reviewing the Council's Financial Strategy and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) including the assumptions used to update the plan since its approval. The review took into account recommendations on the New Homes Bonus and the Government's announcements in respect of localisation of business rates and Council Tax benefits.

Members commented that a £1 million ceiling on capital

schemes could be too restrictive.

On criteria for the New Homes Bonus, the Committee did not agree with being too prescriptive, e.g. giving a score of 1 to 5 for each criteria suggested. Members also discussed the need for the New Homes Bonus to be handled differently in town and rural areas.

The Committee agreed with the proposed uses and apportionment of the Bonus and thought a key Council priority should receive funding from this but did not specify which one.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed that the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee (A) supports the recommendations to Council as set out in the report now submitted; and

- (B) advises that:
- (1) the three proposed uses of the New Homes Bonus are appropriate and a fair balance is struck in the proposed apportionment;
 - (2) a key Council priority should receive funding from this source with spending proposals to be developed in this budget round;
 - (3) the suggestion for point scoring of criteria for grants is too prescriptive and should be deleted;
 - (4) a light touch should be adopted to the administration and audit of the spend on grants and the lower cost of this is welcomed; and
 - (5) Decisions on spending would normally be expected to be made through Town Councils in towns and at Ward level in rural areas.

247 CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK - JUNE 2011

The Leader of the Council submitted an exception report on finance and performance monitoring for April to June/Quarter1

2011.

Members noted the loss of income from hackney carriage/private hire licence fees because of the economic downturn and the higher levels of penalty charge notices being issued and challenged. A particular concern was the predicted overspend on salaries which the Committee decided to bring to the attention of the Executive.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be informed of the comments of Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee concerning the need to achieve planned savings on salaries.

248 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman submitted a report supporting the Committee in reviewing and planning its work programme for 2011/12.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the report on the Data Sharing Protocol had been delayed until the October meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED – that the work programme now submitted be approved.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm

Chairman
Date