

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 11 JANUARY 2010 AT 7.30 PM IN THE ROBIN
ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD

PRESENT: Councillor Miss C J Geall, in the Chair

Councillors, Mrs A Emsley, J C Hedley, M McCormick, Mrs S Newton,
Dr L E Radford, P A Ruffles and Miss J C S Sartin.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs N L Villa, Town Clerk
Mr S Davies, Responsible Finance Officer
Ms T Carpenter, Civic Administration Manager (minutes)

209 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Mrs B M Wrangles.

210 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Miss C J Geall, Miss J Sartin and P A Ruffles declared a personal interest on Agenda item 9(c) Budget, as Patron and Trustees of the Museum respectively, grant aid for which was included within the Budget proposals.

211 THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Minutes of the Finance, Policy & Administration Committee meeting held on Monday 19 October 2010 be approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

212 ACTION SHEET

It was noted that progress towards Investors in People was continuing and a meeting with an IIP advisor was scheduled to take place at the end of January 2010.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The action sheet be received and noted.

213 QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

214 **CASTLE REDECORATION/BUILDING MAINTENANCE**

The Committee had received a report regarding items of expenditure relating to Town Council buildings.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee approves the proposals to complete the final stage of the Castle redecoration programme and replace the heater in the Town Clerk's office.
- (b) The Committee approves expenditure incurred by the Town Clerk under delegated powers in Financial Standing Order 3.4.

215 **HERTFORD TOWN COUNCIL 'AIMS AND OBJECTIVES'
PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee had received a report which provided an update of progress towards achieving the Council's stated aims and objectives for 2009/10.

The Committee considered the summary in detail and requested an amendment to the sections on recreation and heritage section in order to note that the two new events held in 2009 were one off, grant funded events, not trials. A further amendment was requested to the item regarding the Planning Sub Committee to reflect that the Committee considered all planning applications but did not necessarily comment on every application.

The Committee was pleased to note the overall summary and whilst recognising there were still areas which required action, particularly with regard to consultation with the Youth Council, it was considered that the summary provided a fair reflection of the time and effort spent by officers and the Committee wished to formally record its thanks to officers in respect of the very positive summary.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the progress towards achieving the Council's stated Aims and Objectives for 2009/10

216 **EAST HERTS BUDGET ISSUES**

The Committee had received a report which provided information regarding the budgetary issues faced by East Herts Council and the measures which are being considered by that Council to ensure that its' Medium Term Financial Plan remained accurate.

The Committee raised concern regarding several items within in the Plan, including those relating to the implementation of on-street parking charges, the loss of glass and plastic banks on the grounds that not all residents were in receipt of the kerbside recycling service, and the

reduction in leaf clearance which was considered to be false economy given the effect it could have in blocking drains etc. A question was also raised regarding whether it was intended to increase the fees of Penalty Charge Notices. The Committee further noted the proposals regarding the maintenance of the Castle Grounds and gates.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Committee notes the report.
- (b) The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, be instructed to write to both the Executive and the Chief Executive Officer of East Herts Council setting out the concerns raised by the Town Council

217 **FINANCE**

(a) Bank Reconciliations

The Committee had received bank reconciliation summaries for October and November 2009.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the bank reconciliation summaries for October and November 2010

(b) Income and Expenditure

The Committee had received a report detailing income and expenditure and budget variances to 31st December 2009. It was noted that all budget variances had been agreed throughout the year and included additional items of expenditure which had not been budgeted but which were considered necessary, i.e the rebuilding of the wall at All Saints.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee notes the schedule of income and expenditure.

(c) Budget 2010/11

The Committee had received a copy of the proposed budget for 2010/11. The following optional projects had been recommended by the respective Committees for inclusion within the budget for 2010/11 and were discussed by the Committee:

- a) Community Services - Provision of water tanks at the Ware Road end of Cromwell Road Allotments - Estimated Cost £2000.

This was identified by the Committee as a priority due to the increased number of plot holders on this site.

- b) Clearance and fencing of the newly acquired land at Sele Road - Estimated Cost £5000.

The Committee noted that the sale of the land was not yet complete and therefore this project could be reasonably delayed until 2011. Councillors were keen stress that the reason for purchase was allotment use and also to ensure that the actual cost of conversion to allotment use did not exceed £5000.

- c) Clearance of soil heaps and brambles from disused plots at the Hertingfordbury allotment site - Estimated Cost £2000

Councillors felt that the cost for this was unreasonably high and instructed officers to seek alternative quotations. This budget was therefore reduced to £1,000.

- d) Purchase of a replacement Cemetery van - Estimated Cost £15,000

The Committee felt that although the van was nearing the end of its serviceable life, this project could be deferred until 2011/12.

- e) Preparation of Block J in the Cemetery as a new Garden of Rest - Estimated Cost £10,000.

This was considered a priority as the available burial space for ashes would run out within the next 2 -3 years. However, the costs for planning of the new block could reasonably be spread over two years thus reducing this budget to £5,000.

- f) Cemetery Memorial Repairs – Suggested provision £10,000.

This was seen as a priority contingency for repairs to major memorials. However, the suggested provision was considered too high and was reduced to £5,000.

- g) Development & Leisure - Partnership working with EHC on economic development within the town etc, suggested provision £10,000.

The Chairman of the Development and Leisure Committee informed Members that there was considerable scope for partnership working with other authorities to support the town centre and therefore recommended that this item be included in the budget.

The Committee remained mindful of the current economic climate and reiterated the desire for a 0% increase of the precept for 2010/11 but at the same time wished to ensure there would be no reduction in the level of service provided to the residents of Hertford. The Committee therefore prioritised the optional projects with the agreement that the remainder would be carried over into 2011/12:

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The following optional projects be included in the 2010/11 budget:

Community Services - Provision of water tanks at the Ware Road end of Cromwell Road Allotments - Estimated Cost £2000

Clearance of soil heaps and brambles from disused plots at the Hertingfordbury allotment site - Estimated Cost £1000

Preparation of Block J in the Cemetery as a new Garden of Rest - Estimated Cost £5,000.

Cemetery Memorial Repairs – Suggested provision £8,400.

Development & Leisure - Partnership working with EHC on economic development within the town etc - £10,000

- (b) The Committee **recommends** a precept of £1,036,064 representing a 0% increase on a Band D property for consideration by Full Town Council on 25 January 2010.