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5 February 2018

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL held on Monday 5 February 2018 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors B.Fitzsimon (Deputy Mayor)

T.Bailey, J.Beckerman, H.Beckett, D.Bell, D.Bennett, M.Birleson, S.Boulton, H.Bower, J.Broach, H.Bromley, N.Chapman, A.Chesterman, L.Chesterman, M.Cook, M.Cowan, J.Cragg, I.Dean, J.Dean, S.Elam, C.Gillett, S.Glick, G.Hayes, M.Holloway, T.Kingsbury, M.Larkins, T.Lyons, P.Mabbott, S.Markiewicz, G.Michaelides, T.Mitchinson, N.Pace, M.Perkins, H.Quenet, S.Roberts, B.Sarson, P.Shah, N.Taylor, F.Thomson, K.Thorpe, R.Trigg, J.Weston, P.Zukowskyj

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Chief Executive (R.Bridge)
Executive Director (Housing and Communities) (S.Russell)
Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) (K.Ng)
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)
Governance Services Manager (G.R.Seal)
Governance Services Officer (M.Lowe)
Senior Communications Officer (L.Bertram)

43. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from the Mayor, Councillor L.Sparks and Councillors J.Boulton, L.Brandon, J.Fitzpatrick and K.Holman.

The Deputy Mayor reported that the Mayor, Councillor L.Sparks was currently in hospital and welcomed back Councillor G.Hayes following his absence after his accident and Councillor A.Chesterman following his recent stay in hospital.

44. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillors L.Chesterman and P.Zukowskyj declared non-pecuniary interests in items on the Agenda as appropriate as Members of Hertfordshire County Council.

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46. ANNOUNCEMENTS

46.1. Mill Green Museum

The Mayor was pleased to report that the Museum Service based at Mill Green in Hatfield was successful in winning the 'Hidden Gem Award' at the County's first annual tourist awards in November and to present the certificate to the Museum Service Manager, Linda Dobbs and Councillor Tony Kingsbury (Executive Member, Policy and Culture).

These awards were organised by Visit Herts, the official tourism service for Hertfordshire. In overcoming strong competition from two other well-known leisure destinations in the County by means of an online vote, it demonstrated how well-liked and respected the Mill Green site was in the community. The Council wished to record its appreciation to Linda, and her team of staff and volunteers for delivering such a diverse programme of activities and events every year which had contributed to this award. The Museum had since been successful in a further award of funding from the Tesco carrier bag scheme which was decided by a public vote in their local stores. This money would enable many schoolchildren in the Borough to travel and visit Mill Green for free during British science week in March, a celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths which was supported by many local partners.

46.2. Public Finance Innovation Awards 2018

These awards celebrated excellence and achievements in public finance and governance and the Chief Executive was pleased to announce that the Council had been shortlisted for the "Alternative Service Delivery Model of the Year" award for the Council's housing partnership with Mears and Stradia.

47. QUESTION BY MEMBER

Notice of the following question by a Member had been received:-

47.1. Question to the Leader from Councillor Malcolm Cowan

"Are you content with the current level of service of the enforcement team in dealing with illegal advertisements, which appear to be at epidemic levels or do they require additional resources?"

Answer

The question was answered by Councillor M.Perkins (Deputy Leader of the Council):-

"The Council's Planning Enforcement team investigates all alleged Planning and Estate Management breaches that are brought to its attention. However, due to the volume of complaints that are received, each new case is investigated in accordance with the priority list set out in the 2015 Planning Enforcement Plan.

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This identifies that unauthorised advertisements are given the lowest level of priority due to them being unlikely to result in irrevocable harm should swifter action not be taken. This can mean that investigation and resolution of complaints associated with advertisements often take longer than other more serious allegations. Given finite resources it is inevitable that such a risk based approach must be used.”

Councillor Cowan asked that advertisements which were illegal and had been up for a long time be revisited.

Councillor Perkins said that there were times when posters were removed where there was a highway risk, such as on the B1000/ Bessemer Road roundabout. There was a Corporate Enforcement Plan within which activities had to be prioritised. There were currently three enforcement officers and support staff. The plan was being updated and Members would be able to consider what breaches were the most important.

48. BUDGET 2018/19

Report of the Executive Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) setting out the proposals for approval of the 2018/19 budgets for revenue (General Fund and Housing Revenue Account) and capital and also asking the Council to approve the Borough element of the Council Tax for 2018/19 with final approval being sought at the special Council meeting on 21 February 2018.

It was moved by Councillor D.Bell and seconded by Councillor J.Dean that the recommendations in the report of the Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) be approved.

Amendment One

An amendment to the recommendations was moved by Councillor J.Broach and seconded by Councillor K.Thorpe:-

“This Council is aware of chronic parking problems in Welwyn Hatfield. This Council accepts that the Parking Services team does not have the resources to address these problems in a timely manner and that some of the most severe areas affected are years away from being looked at.

This Council therefore agrees to allocate a further £100,000 from the £8M unallocated general reserves, to enable two additional staff members on a fixed term contract to bolster the Parking Services team and address serious parking issues in Welwyn Hatfield.”

On being put to the meeting there voted:-

FOR the amendment – 42
ABSTENTION – 1

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and the amendment was declared CARRIED.

Amendment Two

An amendment to the recommendations, as amended, was moved by Councillor S.Roberts and seconded by Councillor H.Beckett:-

“In the event of an underspend on the Splashlands development that underspend will be ring fenced to be used to improve the infrastructure in our parks and playgrounds. The King George V playing fields which has suffered from a serious lack of investment, should be given priority.”

On being put to the meeting there voted:-

FOR the amendment – 19
AGAINST the amendment – 24

and the amendment was declared LOST.

Amendment Three

An amendment to the recommendations, as amended, was moved by Councillor M.Cowan and seconded by Councillor P.Zukowskyj:-

“This Council, being concerned about the standards of litter picking, recycling bin emptying, verge and tree maintenance and dealing with rats, resolves to bring forward proposals within the next four months to improve performance in these areas, setting up and using an earmarked reserve created from General Fund reserves, and to form an all-party group to agree objectives and oversee this process.”

On being put to the meeting there voted:-

FOR the amendment – 19
AGAINST the amendment – 24

and the amendment was declared LOST.

Amendment Four

An amendment to the recommendations, as amended, was moved by Councillor M.Cowan and seconded by Councillor P.Zukowskyj:-

“This Council resolves to pursue a more aggressive policy towards disposal of non-operational land and property in order to support the capital programme in 2018/19 and beyond.”

On being put to the meeting there voted:-

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FOR the amendment – 5
AGAINST the amendment – 38

and the amendment was declared LOST.

The recommendations, as amended, were then put to the meeting and it was

RESOLVED:
(24 voting for, 19 against)

Voting FOR: J.Beckerman, D.Bell, D.Bennett, S.Boulton, H.Bower, H.Bromley, N.Chapman, J.Cragg, I.Dean, J.Dean, B.Fitzsimon, C.Gillett, S.Glick, T.Kingsbury, P.Mabbott, S.Markiewicz, G.Michaelides, T.Mitchinson, N.Pace, M.Perkins, B.Sarson, N.Taylor, F.Thomson, R.Trigg

Voting AGAINST: T.Bailey, H.Beckett, M.Birleson, J.Broach, A.Chesterman, L.Chesterman, M.Cook, M.Cowan, S.Elam, G.Hayes, M.Holloway, M.Larkins, T.Lyons, H.Quenet, S.Roberts, P.Shah, K.Thorpe, J.Weston, P.Zukowskyj

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Council notes the recommendations from the Cabinet and the Statement of the Chief Financial Officer on the robustness of budgets and adequacy of reserves (Appendix N).
- (2) That the Council also notes the following amounts for the year 2018/19 have been set in accordance with regulations made under Sections 31A and 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and agreed by the Cabinet on 9 January 2018.
 - (1) That the 2018/19 taxbase is 41,363.2, which has incorporated an overall collection rate of 99.40% (the in-year target remained at 97.7%).
 - (2) That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by the Borough Council as its taxbase for the year 2018/19 shall be 41,363.2 and its constituent elements shall be:

	<u>100%</u> <u>TAXBASE</u>	<u>99.40%</u> <u>TAXBASE</u>
Welwyn Garden City	16,901.5	16,800.1
Hatfield	11,507.7	11,438.7
Welwyn	4,622.8	4,595.1
Ayot St Lawrence	70.8	70.4
Ayot St Peter	115.1	114.4
North Mymms	4,367.1	4,340.9

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Essendon	433.2	430.6
Northaw & Cuffley	3,059.7	3,041.3
Woolmer Green	534.9	531.7
Total	41,612.8	41,363.2

(3) That the Council approves the following budget proposals:

(1) General Fund

- (1.1) The General Fund Budget as summarised in Appendix A and detailed in Appendix B.
- (1.2) The savings and growth proposals as detailed in Appendices C and D.
- (1.3) The 2018/19 fees and charges which have been incorporated into the budget proposals, as set out in Appendix E.
- (1.4) The increase in the Council's Band D Tax of £5.00 (2.48%), taking the average Band D Tax to £206.61 for 2018/19.
- (1.5) The Special Expenses Scheme as set out in section 3.6 of the report to continue into 2018/19, and the Special Expenses detailed in Appendix O be approved for inclusion in setting the Council Tax for 2018/19.
- (1.6) The allocation of a further £100,000 from the £8M unallocated general reserves, to enable two additional staff members on a fixed term contract to bolster the Parking Services team and address serious parking issues in Welwyn Hatfield.

(2) Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- (2.1) That dwelling rents are reduced by 1% in accordance with Government legislation, resulting in an average rent of £104.42 per week (based on a 52 week year).
- (2.2) The continuation of the policy charge formula rent minus 1% when vacant properties are re-let.
- (2.3) The HRA budget for 2018/19 as shown in Appendix F.
- (2.4) The 2018/19 fees and charges which have been incorporated into the budget proposals, as set out in Appendix H.

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(2.5) The change to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to maintain HRA working balances of between 5% and 10% of income.

(3) Capital Programme

(3.1) The Capital Programme for 2018/19 to 2022/23 as set out in Appendix I.

(3.2) The capital financing for the Capital Programme for 2018/19 to 2022/23 as set out in Appendix J.

(4) Medium Term Financial Strategy

(4.1) The Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2018/19 – 2020/21 as set out in Appendix L.

(5) Treasury Management Strategy

(5.1) The approval of the Treasury Management Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2018/19 as set out in Appendix M.

49. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2018/19

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) submitting the Pay Policy Statement 2018/19 prepared in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the requirement for the Council to publish information relating to pay for its senior managers.

RESOLVED:

That the Pay Policy Statement for the period 2018 /19 be adopted.

50. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES

Report of the Monitoring Officer proposing a change to the call-in procedure.

The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution provided that those Cabinet decisions which met the criteria were subject to pre-implementation review through a call-in procedure.

The current call-in procedure for pre-implementation of Cabinet decisions had been reviewed and a change was proposed to make call-in more effective.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Council approves the changes to the call-in procedure for pre-implementation of Cabinet decisions in the Overview and

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Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution so that a called-in item was considered by the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee instead of a Scrutiny Sub-Committee being set up to deal with the item, as indicated in the Appendix to the report.

- (2) That the Council authorises the Head of Law and Administration as Monitoring Officer to amend the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution to make these changes.

51. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

Councillor S.Elam was nominated to be a Member of the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor T.Bailey and the Development Management Committee in place of former Councillor R.Basch.

The Deputy Mayor welcomed new Councillor S.Elam to her first Council meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor S.Elam be appointed as a Member of the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Development Management Committee.

52. NOTICE OF MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 50

To consider the following notice of motion submitted under Procedure Rule 50:-

52.1. The following motion was submitted by Councillor M.Cowan and seconded by Councillor H.Quenet

“As part of the streetscene/waste and recycling procurement process, this Council should investigate using a provider to an adjacent authority, in order to help bring about the savings found elsewhere in Herts from such an approach.”

On being put to the meeting the motion was carried UNANIMOUSLY.

Meeting ended 9.30pm
GS