

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING

held in the Council Chamber

17th January 2011

commencing at 6.30p.m.

Present:

Councillor Rook (Leader) in the Chair

Councillors: Mrs. Ackerley, Charlish, Dann,
Everett and Spendlove-Mason.

Officers: B. Jolly, K. Mehta, S. Mortimer, B. Murgatroyd, P. Rowbotham and S. Smith.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dr. Bremner and Golding.

449 PORTFOLIO HOLDER ACTIVITY REPORTS

a)Local Business and Enterprise

Councillor Everett reported that:

- (i) on 10th January 2011 he attended an all-day conference organised by the Rural Services Network regarding rural broadband. As a result this an item on rural broadband has been added to his portfolio plan.
- (ii) on 14th January 2011 he attended the 'topping out' ceremony for the Harborough Innovation Centre. It is hoped that, despite the recent bad weather, the opening of this centre will still occur as planned in June 2011.

b)Environmental Services Delivery

Councillor Charlish reported that:

- (i) since the introduction of the food waste recycling scheme 1,103 tonnes of food waste has been recycled.
- (ii) further to a question put by Councillor Johnson (the question was: what are we doing about the Carbon Footprint of the Community?), discussions and consultations are going on with insulation companies to ensure that the best deal possible can be recommended to residents.

450 INFORMATION EXCHANGE

No items were noted.

451 TOPICAL ISSUES

No items were noted.

452 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Executive Meeting held on 20th December 2010 be approved and signed by the Leader as a true record.

453 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None were noted.

454 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2009/10

The Annual Audit Letter for 2009/10 was presented by Neil Bellamy and Yola Geen from the Audit Commission. Members were asked to note that an 'unqualified opinion' had been issued on 22nd October 2010.

RESOLVED that: the 2009/10 Annual Audit Letter from the District Auditor be received and noted.

455 BAD DEBT WRITE-OFF REPORT

K. Mehta, Deputy Chief Executive, presented this report. The purpose of the report was to request approval to write-off debts in respect of National Non-Domestic Rates, Council Tax, Housing Benefit overpayments and Sundry Debts.

The Executive noted that future write-off reports will show collection rates for information.

RESOLVED that: bad debts be written of as set out in the report.

Reasons

- (i) The Council's Constitution and supporting Financial Regulations delegates the responsibility for writing-off individual debts up to and including £1k to the Head of Financial Services under the Scheme of Delegation. Above this threshold debts (greater than £1k) are written off by the Executive.
- (ii) The Council only writes off debt where it is irrecoverable, for example where a customer has died and there are no assets, or a business is bankrupt and has no assets. The only exception to this is where a debt is not cost-effective to recover.
- (iii) The Council is prudent in managing debt and makes provision for this in its annual statement of accounts. This ensures that the writing-off of bad debt has no detrimental affect on service provision or the Council Tax payer. In the case of National Non-Domestic Rates the Government meets the cost of writing-off bad debt through the 'Pool Arrangements'.

456 CCTV STRATEGY 2011 to 2014

The Executive was asked to agree the Council's CCTV strategy for 2011 to 2014. The strategy had been devised in order to ensure that it offers best value.

The Executive noted that savings and efficiencies had been made by way of renegotiating the CCTV maintenance contract.

RESOLVED that: the CCTV Strategy for 2011 to 2014 be agreed as set out in the report.

Reasons

- (i) The Council has invested considerably in its CCTV system and needs a strategy for this service.
- (ii) In the current financial climate the strategy addresses the need to reduce the financial burden on the Council. The action plan outlines where cost savings can be made whilst maintaining operational effectiveness.

457 INTEGRATED WASTE CONTRACT TASK PANEL

The Executive considered whether the Council should establish an Integrated Waste Task Panel. S. Smith, Chief Executive, presented the draft Terms of Reference for the Task Panel.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) an Integrated Contract Task Panel be established.
- (ii) the Terms of Reference for the Integrated Contract Task Panel be agreed as set out below.

Terms of Reference

Objective

To examine and investigate future opportunities for HDC in respect of the Integrated Contract with a particular focus on:

- Improving recycling rates, including the collection of materials not currently included in the Council's recycling scheme.
- Improving take up of the current recycling schemes offered.
- Exploration of ways in which the Council can maximise income.
- Investigating costs and aiming to improve value for money.

Membership of the Task Panel

The Task Panel will be politically balanced.

The Task Panel will comprise of 5 elected members (3 Conservative and 2 Liberal Democrat). The Political Group Whips will notify the Chief Executive of the names of the elected members.

Meetings of the Task Panel

The Special Task Panel will meet in private however it will be open to any elected and co-opted member of the council to attend as observers.

Administration

The Panel will be supported by the Head of Community Services.

Timetable

The Panel will convene following the formal approval of the Task Panel's Terms of Reference.

The Task Panel will report to the Executive on a frequent basis, with progress reports being submitted at intervals of on greater than 6 months.

458 MARKET HARBOROUGH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

The Executive was asked to consider delegating the responsibility for voting in the Business Improvement District (BID) ballot to the Portfolio Holder for Local Business and Enterprise. The Executive also considered whether it would like to vote in support of the BID.

The Executive noted that BID enjoys support from Market Harborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce who feel it will generate opportunities for businesses that could not be realised otherwise.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The Executive delegates responsibility for voting in the BID ballot to the Portfolio Holder of Local Business and Enterprise.
- (ii) The Executive voted in support of the BID in Market Harborough.
- (iii) In the event that the BID is approved, to allow the BID company to use the Market Hall Office for a period of 12 months.

Reasons

- (i) The Market Harborough BID would attract an additional levy of approximately £6,000 per annum payable by the Council. The total investment in Market Harborough, raised through the levy, would be £150,000 per annum (£750,000 over the lifespan of the BID). This investment is unlikely to be realised from any other source.
- (ii) the Council has an interest in ensuring that Market Harborough remains a vibrant town for business. Businesses in the town provide locally-accessible services and employment to citizens.
- (iii) the Market Harborough BID has strong support from the Market Harborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Discussions with businesses in the BID area have indicated the 71% of them are in support of the BID, with 21% unsure and 7% not supportive.
- (iv) increased visitor numbers to Market Harborough would improve the revenue generated through Council-owned car parks.
- (v) the Council should consider the use of the Market Hall Office by the BID company for a period of 12 months (April 2011 to April 2012) as in-kind support. This would assist the organisation in getting established in the town. This will also lead to the earlier delivery of some of the projects. Further occupancy of the premises should be by negotiation.

The Executive noted that during consultation with businesses 112 responses were received and asked for further information on what percentage of businesses in Harborough District this equates to. It was agreed that a written response be prepared and communicated to Members.

459 BUSINESS RESILIENCE

The Executive received this report which is one of a series that have been reporting on the Economic Downturn since December 2008. This report was presented by S. Smith, Chief Executive.

The Executive noted that a Business Networking Event would take place on Thursday 20th January 2011.

RESOLVED that: the report be noted.

460 FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Executive noted the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period February 2011 – May 2011.

RESOLVED that: the draft Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period February 2011 – May 2011 be approved for publication.

Reasons

- (i) The Council is required by the Local Government Act 2000 and its own Constitution to publish regular Forward Plans of Key Decisions.
- (ii) At its meeting on 29 August 2001, the Executive agreed that it should review each draft Forward Plan of Key Decisions, (minute 249(v)/2001 refers). It also was agreed that each Plan should cover a four-month period, with a monthly roll-forward of the Plan being effective on the first working day of each month.

461 SEEKING PUBLIC OPINION ON BUDGETS

This report was presented by B. Jolly, Head of Change Services. The Executive was asked to note the contents of the report regarding the responses received from the public opinion exercise carried out during December 2010.

Members were asked to note the ratings that the public gave to service areas on both a short survey and a full survey, this also included information from consultation with both young persons and disabilities groups.

RESOLVED that: the report is noted.

462 PORTFOLIO PLANS

This report was presented by B. Jolly, Head of Change Services. The purpose of the report was to agree draft Portfolio Development Plans for consideration by Scrutiny Panels. Feedback from the Scrutiny Panels will be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 14th February 2011.

It was noted in the report that members of Management Board had undertaken reviews of their service areas and had found areas where savings could be made. Areas of joint working with other local authorities are also being looked at, along with discussions with FOCSA and SERCO to identify any potential efficiencies within the contracts.

RESOLVED that: the Portfolio Development Plans, as set out in the report be approved for consideration by Scrutiny Panel Places on 27th January 2011, Resources on 3rd February 2011 and Scrutiny Panel People on 10th February 2011, with alterations to be made as noted.

Reasons

- (i) The portfolio plans have been compiled by members of Management Board working with the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- (ii) Portfolio Development Plans set out the aims of each Executive Portfolio and the plans for 2011/12 based on the available resources identified through the business planning process. These need to be considered and agreed by members. The next stage is for these draft plans to be considered by the relevant Scrutiny Panels. Comments from the Scrutiny Panels will be fed back to the Executive on the 14th February 2011 and recommendations will then go forward to Council on 24th February 2011.
- (iii) The portfolio plans also identify planned portfolio actions for 2011-12 as well as performance measures, risks, equality impact assessments and planned consultation.

463 COUNCIL TAX BASE 2011/12

The Executive considered this report and was asked to fix the Council Tax Base for 2011/12.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the calculation of the Council Tax base for the year 2011/2012 be approved.**
- (ii) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as amended, the amount calculated by Harborough District Council as its Council Tax base for the year 2011/2012 shall be 32,887.3.**
- (iii) the Council Tax base for individual Parishes for 2011/2012 be calculated in accordance with the same principles as the Council's overall Council Tax Base.**

Reasons

- (i) The Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended, requires the Council to fix the Council Tax base for 2011/2012 between 1st December 2010 and 31st January 2011.#
- (ii) The Council Tax base is the total number of "Band D equivalent" dwellings in the District after allowing for exemptions, discounts and a provision for irrecoverables. The calculation for 2011/2012 in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as amended, is set out below. This figure is

based on the Banding list at 1st December 2010 with an allowance for new properties taking into account discounts etc and part year occupation.

Band	Dwellings in Banding List	Disabled Persons Adjustments No. of cases	Less Exemptions Properties Affected	Less Discounts	Adjusted Amount for Council Tax Band	Applied Ratio to Band D Equivalent	Band D Equivalent (to one decimal place)	
AR		6		(0.50)	5.5	5/9	3.1	
A	4161	39	(256)	(583.50)	3,360.5	6/9	2,240.3	
B	7655	19	(209)	(764.25)	6,700.75	7/9	5,211.7	
C	7258	(13)	(165)	(564.75)	6,515.25	8/9	5,791.3	
D	5599	(7)	(92)	(331.75)	5,168.25	9/9	5,168.3	
E	5409	(19)	(79)	(230.25)	5,080.75	11/9	6,209.8	
F	3190	(6)	(41)	(116.75)	3,026.25	13/9	4,371.3	
G	2326	(6)	(37)	(72.50)	2,210.5	15/9	3,684.2	
H	222	(13)	(5)	(8.75)	195.25	18/9	390.5	
				(2673)	32,263		33,070.5	
			Add allowance for new properties					149.0
			Less 1% allowance for irrecoverables					33,219.5
								(332.2)
			COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2011/2012					32,887.3

- (iii) The tax base figures for 2010/2011 are based on the number of dwellings within each band to be notified by the Listing Officer by 1st December 2010, hence the earliest date the Council can fix the tax base is 1st December 2010. District Councils must notify the tax base for their districts to the County Council, the Police Authority and the Fire Authority by 31st January 2011. A tax base must be produced, not only for the District as a whole, but also for each parish and the unparished area of Market Harborough. Parishes will be informed of their Council Tax base in accordance with Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Supply of Information) Regulations 1992.

464 PROVISIONAL GENERAL FUND BUDGET ESTIMATES BASE 2011/12

It was reported that during the current financial year to date savings had been identified and implemented through a proactive approach by the Management Board in consultation with the Portfolio Holders. However, there were also a number of areas where costs were higher than had been expected. Work on the revised Budget Estimates for the current financial year has not yet been fully completed. The revised estimates will be submitted to the Executive in February 2011.

It was noted that the revenue costs of capital expenditure up to and including the current financial year 2010/11 had been included in the provisional Base Budget 2011/12. The Capital Programme for 2011/12 had not yet been finalised, however in the light of the current financial constraint it was not anticipated that the proposed programme for 2011/12 would include any new significant revenue implications. The final proposed programme and its financing would also be presented to the Executive in February.

Consideration was given to the provisional Revenue Support Grant Settlement for 2011/12 and 2012/13 as set out in the table below.

2010/11 Actual	2010/11 Adjusted	2011/12 Provisional	% change	2012/13 Provisional	% change
£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
5,450	4,920	4,093	-16.80%	3,514	-14.15%

The Formula Grant Distribution system had seen changes to it. In addition to changes in the formula, a significant change to the grant was for the transfer of the Concessionary Travel function from Shire District Councils' to County Councils in two tier areas.

The Government will announce the final settlement in early February 2011 and therefore the final budget proposals to be considered by the Executive on 14th February 2011 will be updated with the final settlement for 2010/11.

The Executive noted that the Fees and Charges for 2011/12 would be based on the following guidelines:

- *Fees and charges to be increased by the rate of inflation, 3.5%, as a minimum, with the exception of car parking fees..*
- *There should be a direct link between the proposed scale of charges for 2011/12, and the expected level of service provision.*
- *Budget managers have been instructed to consider increasing fees and charges by more than 3.5% to increase revenue as much as possible.*

The provisional Base Budget 2011/12 included income estimates which took account of statutory fees and charges and statutory limitations on fees and charges and the sensitivity to price changes of the demand for services.

The Council has adopted a process when making strategic choices. This has involved identifying the activities and costs in delivering its services and constructing the draft budget for 2011/12. The provisional General Fund Summary Base Budget for 2011/12 is shown at Appendix 1. The total amount thus identified represents the 'need to spend' i.e. the draft budget. The list of proposed savings from activities and the corporate and democratic costs are shown in Appendix 2. A breakdown of corporate and democratic costs is shown in Appendix 3. Additional savings were identified at the meeting and these are attached at Appendix 4.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) The report be referred to the Scrutiny Panel - Resource Development on for its comments and views on the General Fund Budget proposals for 2011/12.
- (ii) The Executive notes that the provisional General Fund Budget: Base 2010/11 includes the revenue implications of the recommended capital projects.
- (iii) a further and final report be brought back to the Executive on 14th February 2011 for consideration of the Executive's Final budget proposals for recommendation to Council on 24th February 2011, and which includes:
 - (a) the final Revenue Support Grant Settlement for 2011/12; and
 - (b) the view and comments of the Scrutiny Panel - Resources Development on the draft proposals.

Reasons

- (i) The report set out the Executive's provisional General Fund Base Budget proposals for 2011/12 to refer to the Scrutiny Panel - Resource Development for its comments.
- (ii) The final Revenue Support Grant Settlement for 2011/12 will not be announced until late January/early in February and therefore the provisional grant figures published by the Government in December 2010 are used in determining the amount to be raised from Council Tax.
- (iii) The Council must statutorily set a budget to discharge its duties and responsibilities. The duty to recommend a budget to Council rests with the Executive.

Meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.