

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY
PANEL
HELD ON MONDAY, 16 JANUARY 2006
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 9.11 PM**

Members Present: J M Whitehouse (Chairman), A Green (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, R Chidley, Mrs D Collins, Mrs R Gadsby and Mrs J H Whitehouse

Other members present: R Glozier, M Heavens, D Jacobs, J Knapman, S Metcalfe, Mrs C Pond and C Whitbread

Apologies for Absence: S Barnes (Deputy Leader), K Faulkner and R Goold

Officers Present J Bissell (Principal Accountant), J Gilbert (Head of Environmental Services), A Hall (Head of Housing Services), D Macnab (Head of Leisure Services), P Maddock (Assistant Head of Finance), R Palmer (Head of Finance), J Preston (Head of Planning and Economic Development), A Scott (Head of Information, Communications and Technology), R Sharp (Principal Accountant) and S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: (none)

34. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

Noted that Councillor Angold – Stephens was substituting for Councillor Faulkner and Councillor J H Whitehouse was substituting for Councillor Goold.

35. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of Interest were made at the meeting.

36. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Notes of the meeting held on 8 November 2005 agreed as a correct record.

37. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

Position on work programme noted.

38. BUDGET - REVISED FOUR YEAR FORECAST

The Head of Finance reported that the Finance Committee had asked for a revised four year forecast to be prepared taking account of the provisional Local Government settlements for 2006/07 and 2007/08 which had provided the Council with substantial increases in formula grant.

The Panel considered a report seeking Scrutiny views on a revised four year forecast and the proposed level of Council Tax increase for 2006/07 and subsequent years.

The Panel noted that the provisional settlement for the next two financial years was a very favourable one. The Council was already in a strong financial position and this had now been enhanced. The Head of Finance advised that with careful management and spending targeted on priority areas it should be possible to achieve improvements in key service areas. He cautioned, however, that it was important that spending was kept under control and that an impression was not created that all growth bids would be accepted regardless of their merit.

The Panel endorsed this view and need to be cautious in the approach to growth.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

- (1) That the revised four year forecast be agreed and that District Council Tax be increased in the next four financial years in line with inflation;
- (2) That the potential for growth in future budgets be considered in due course having regard to the Council Plan for 2006-2010.

39. DRAFT DETAILED PORTFOLIO BUDGETS

The Panel considered the detailed Portfolio Holder budgets.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

- (1) That the draft Portfolio Holder budgets be endorsed and the Cabinet be informed accordingly;
- (2) That the Portfolio Holder for Community Wellbeing be asked to consider increased support to the Grant Aid Budget in light of the provisional settlement;
- (3) That the Portfolio Holder for ICT and Corporate Support Services be asked to report to the Panel on the impact of personal searches on the Local Land Charges budget;
- (4) That following the success of the Paternoster Street Cleaning Team, consideration be given by the Portfolio Holder to extending the use of such teams into other areas;
- (5) That the Cabinets attention be drawn to the need to consider the future income from North Weald Airfield given the high levels of subsidy and reliance on a single source of income; and
- (6) That Capital Budgets also be reported to the Panel next year.

40. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Four year forecast and Budget review.

41. FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted that the next meeting would be held on 30 January 2006 at 7.00 p.m.