

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MINUTES

Committee: Cabinet **Date:** 18 December 2006

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 9.00 pm

Members Present: Mrs D Collins (Chairman), C Whitbread (Vice-Chairman), A Green, Mrs A Grigg, J Knapman, S Metcalfe, Mrs M Sartin, D Stallan and Ms S Stavrou

Other

Councillors: Councillors K Angold-Stephens, P McMillan, R Morgan, S Murray, Mrs C Pond, Mrs J H Whitehouse and J M Whitehouse

Apologies: Councillors

Officers Present: P Haywood (Joint Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Head of Environmental Services), A Hall (Head of Housing Services), D Macnab (Head of Leisure Services), R Palmer (Head of Finance), A Scott (Head of Information, Communications and Technology), T Tidey (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management), I Willett (Head of Research and Democratic Services), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer), M Shorten (Principal Valuer/Surveyor), S Stranders (Environmental Services), J Boreham (Assistant Public Relations and Information Officer), J Dixon (Learning & Development Advisor), G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer), Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant), M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant) and A Akhrif (Trainee Performance Improvement Officer)

Also in attendance C Crudginton (Consultant) and L Witham (Parking Associates)

97. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

98. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the following meetings be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record:

- (a) 9 October 2006; and
- (b) 13 November 2006.

99. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that there was no other urgent business for consideration by the Sub-Committee.

100. REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**(a) Housing**

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that at the previous meeting it had been agreed to provide London & Quadrant Housing Trust with £710,000 of Social Housing Grant in order to convert 18 of their 24 properties at the Quarter, Chipping Ongar from market rents to affordable rents, with a further £290,000 of Social Housing Grant to be provided to convert the remaining 6 properties when additional provision was made available within the Capital Programme. However, following further discussions, London & Quadrant Housing Trust had agreed to convert the remaining 6 properties to market rents, funding the shortfall themselves until the additional £290,000 had been received from the Council. As a safeguard, London & Quadrant Housing Trust had reserved the right to charge market rents again after two years for the first six properties that became vacant if the Council had not provided the additional £290,000 by that time. This arrangement would be incorporated in the legal agreement currently being drafted.

101. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed the Cabinet that a call-in request had been received in respect of the decision at the previous meeting to provide free parking in some of the Council's car parks on Saturdays. As this issue had budgetary implications, it had been decided to hold a special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 January 2007 in order to resolve the issue.

102. NEW PARKING ENFORCEMENT CONTRACT

The Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder presented a report about the new parking enforcement contract. The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that the Town Centre and Car Parks Task and Finish Panel had been tasked with reviewing the operation of parking enforcement before a new contract was due to come into force in October 2007; specialist consultants, Parking Associates, had also been appointed to assist in the process. The current contract was of the traditional 'adversarial' type, but changes introduced as part of the Traffic Act 2004 required a more flexible arrangement with a closer contractual arrangement. It was recommended that the British Parking Association Model Contract be used as the basis for the Council's new contract, as it was less adversarial and closely aligned payment with performance. It was also essential that the new contract placed a greater emphasis on quality and to this end it was proposed that the tender assessment should be undertaken on the basis of 40% price and 60% quality. Following the return of the Highways function to Essex County Council, difficulties had been experienced in organising simple maintenance jobs such as repainting yellow lines and replacing signs. It would be preferable if the Council were able to commission minor works of this nature, subject to the use of a County approved contractor, and it was felt negotiations should be opened on this matter with Essex County Council.

The Portfolio Holder reported that as part of the Panel's consideration, a consultation exercise had been undertaken with all members, town and parish councils, and town centre partnerships. Four key issues were raised as a result and it was felt that these should be included in the new contract specification. The National Parking Adjudication Service had also recommended that a 'Parking Shop' be established. The current Parking Office comprised portacabins and garages in Burton Road, Loughton, which was not particularly welcoming or accessible. Consequently, it was felt that the provision of a new Parking Shop should also be included within the

contract specification. Finally, the Cabinet were informed that the Traffic Management Act 2004 made the Council responsible for the initial appeal process, rather than the parking enforcement contractor. The Council had been advised by its consultants that an additional full-time post would be required to fulfil this extra function, but that the transfer of this responsibility should also generate a reduction in the cost of the contract.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed the Cabinet that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had supported the recommendations of the report. A consultant from Parking Associates informed the Cabinet that the tender process would conform to EU rules; the contract would be advertised, the specification prepared and it was planned to make an appointment in September 2007. It was added that there was currently fierce competition for such contracts, and many contractors offered considerable added value.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the British Parking Association contract be used as the basis for the new contract;
- (2) That the contract assessment be undertaken on the basis of 40% price and 60% quality;
- (3) That Essex County Council be approached with a view to the Council being able to commission remedial works on yellow lines and associated signage;
- (4) That the outcome of the consultation exercise be noted and the specification be drawn so as to include reference to the key findings;
- (5) That a requirement for the provision of a 'Parking Shop' be included in the contract specification; and
- (6) That, in accordance with the Traffic Management Act 2004, the process for dealing with initial challenges to penalty charge notices be undertaken by the Council and that the establishment be increased by one full time equivalent post to resource this change.

Reasons for Decision:

The enactment of the Traffic Act 2004 necessitated a shift in the contractual arrangement between the Council and its parking enforcement contractor; the British Parking association model contract would facilitate this change in emphasis, as would better access for customers to the service and enhanced use of new technology. The ability to directly commission remedial works with the County Council's contractor would assist motorists through clearer signage and lining in restricted areas.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To let the new contract under the existing arrangements, however this would conflict with the Council's obligations under the Traffic Act 2004 and its associated guidance.

103. CIVIC CEREMONIAL REVIEW

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented a report regarding the review of the Civic Ceremonial function by a Subgroup of the Constitutional Affairs Scrutiny Panel. The Subgroup's deliberations had manifested itself into a number of recommendations, of which two had resource implications. An increase of £2,500 per annum in the CSB budget provision for hiring of civic transport for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council had been recommended, as it was felt that the current budget provision was not adequate and had dropped below a level that allowed the Chairman to use a car for events for which transport was considered essential. An additional £5,000 of CSB per annum to provide a further day of officer support per week to the Chairman of the Council had also been recommended, as it was felt that the staff support for the Chairman included a substantial element of overtime, mostly paid at plain time, without which the Civic Events calendar could not be supported at the current levels.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee added that the Subgroup also felt that a portion of the Chairman's allowance should be retained and transferred to the Civic Hospitality Budget in order to pay directly for event catering. Proposals had also been put forward regarding the safe custody of the Civic Regalia, which if agreed would be issued each year to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council and their spouses/partners. The policy for awards to Councillors had also been revised, based upon their length of service with the Council, which would mean that Councillors who had held 'office' would no longer be automatically eligible for an award.

RESOLVED:

That the following recommendations of the Civic Ceremonial Review Subgroup of the Constitutional Affairs Standing Scrutiny Panel be adopted:

- (a) That the following revenue CSB growth bids for 2007/08 be made subject to consideration of the Council's budgets later in the municipal year:
 - (i) An increase of £2,500 per annum in the budget provision for hiring of civic transport (Vehicle Leasing budget) for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council; and
 - (ii) An additional sum of £5,000 (including on-costs) to provide one further day of officer support per week to the Chairman of Council;
- (b) That, with effect from the 2007/08 municipal year, £2,500 be retained by the Council out of the Chairman's Allowance and transferred to the Council's existing budget for Civic Hospitality;
- (c) That the new Safe Custody Guidelines for the Civic Regalia be adopted and issued each year to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council and their spouses/partners;
- (d) That the current policy for awards based upon length of service or positions held by Councillors be discontinued and replaced by the following revised awards policy:
 - (i) Those serving as a Councillor for ten years or more – a presentation gift to the value of £50;

(ii) Those serving as a Councillor for fifteen years or more – a presentation gift to the value of £75; and

(iii) Those serving as a Councillor for twenty years or more – a presentation gift to the value of £100; and

(e) That a range of gifts be selected by the Head of Research and Democratic Services from time to time in consultation with the Chairman of the Council.

Reasons for Decision:

The Cabinet were satisfied that the Civic Ceremonial Subgroup of the Constitutional Affairs Scrutiny Panel had fully addressed all the relevant issues in relation to the recommendations and that these should be endorsed.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

The Cabinet were satisfied that the Civic Ceremonial Subgroup of the Constitutional Affairs Scrutiny Panel had considered all the relevant options in formulating their recommendations. The Cabinet did not consider that there were any other options.

104. XPRESS ELECTIONS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM - POSTAL VOTE PERSONAL IDENTIFIERS

The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding an upgrade to the Xpress Electoral Register and Election Management ICT System to process Postal Vote Personal Identifiers. The Portfolio Holder reported that the Electoral Administration Act 2006 required all postal voters at elections to provide their signature and date of birth on a postal vote statement and return this with their postal ballot paper. The ballot paper would not be valid without the accompanying statement, and the statement had to also be checked against the identifier on the postal vote application form. The verification process could be performed electronically if the Council's Xpress Elections System was upgraded. This would generate forms in the statutory format, store data and compare electronically the scanned data. Two new electronic scanners would also be required, in order to provide a back up, and enable a scanner to be set up at an election count to process the postal votes that had arrived during polling day.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the capital costs could be funded from the ICT capital budget, however there would be an on-going CSB cost of £2,500 per annum but a proportion of these costs would be met by other authorities when other elections were held concurrently with District Council elections. Contract Standing Orders required two quotes to be obtained for a contract of this size, however as Xpress was the council's current supplier, there would be no genuine competition and hence approval was sought to waive Contract Standing Order C4(2).

RESOLVED:

(1) That approval be given to the purchase of the Postal Vote Personal Identifiers upgrade to the Xpress Electoral Register and Election Management IT system;

(2) That approval be given under Contract Standing Order C1(4) to the waiving of Contract Standing Order C4(2) which requires two quotations to be obtained for a contract of this value on the grounds that Xpress is the

currently contracted supplier of the elections software and there would be no genuine competition;

(3) That the capital cost of the software upgrade (£11,400) and provision of two scanners (£4,000) be funded from the General Information Technology Fund allocation for software upgrades for the current financial year; and

(4) That the revenue costs of the software upgrade and the two scanners (£2,500 per annum) be funded by means of a CSB growth bid for 2007/8.

Reasons for Decision:

Personal Identifier comparisons had become a statutory requirement and arrangements had to be in place by the elections in May 2007. The upgrade to the Xpress system would accomplish this.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To perform manual Personal Identifier Comparisons, but this would be labour intensive and, with up to 5,000 postal votes possible, could not be achieved without additional temporary staffing and associated costs.

105. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder presented a report concerning the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan. The Portfolio Holder stated that since its original development following the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment in February 2004, an Improvement Team had regularly monitored the Improvement Plan. With the recent expiry of most of the target dates, the Plan had been reviewed by Management Board and Heads of Service, which had demonstrated that the majority of the targets had been fully or substantially achieved, and consequently the Improvement Plan had largely become redundant. Therefore, it was proposed that the actions within the Plan that had been completed be formally signed off, and that any outstanding actions ought to be transferred to the Best Value Performance Plan, the relevant Business Plan or identified for action by the Portfolio Holder for completion. There still remained a need for scrutiny of the outstanding actions, and it was proposed that progress against the outstanding actions should be monitored quarterly by the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel.

RESOLVED:

(1) That those actions contained within the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Improvement Plan that have been achieved, be formally signed-off as having been completed;

(2) That those outstanding service related actions within the CPA Improvement Plan be transferred to the Best Value Performance Plan, the relevant Business Plan, or identified for action by the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s) for completion; and

(3) That, with effect from January 2007, progress towards the achievement of those outstanding corporate actions within the CPA Improvement Plan be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel.

Reasons for Decision:

The Council had to monitor the progress of improvements in those areas identified by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

None, as the Council had previously agreed arrangements for monitoring progress against actions and targets within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan.

106. CODE OF CONDUCT - LEGAL EXPENSES COVER FOR COUNCILLORS

The Leader of the Council presented a report about possible legal expenses cover for Councillors in respect of the Code of Conduct. The Leader stated that this issue had arisen due to the difficulty of the Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer and other Legal or Democratic Services staff being able to advise Councillors during complaints procedures if those staff had been involved in advising Councillors prior to the receipt of a complaint. Details had been obtained of the group legal protection policy for Councillors offered by the Council's insurers, Zurich Municipal. The cost of this cover would be £29.50 per member (plus IPT at 5%), but would only be available to all 58 Councillors, as it did not allow individual members to opt out. The policy provided for the Councillor to be represented by Zurich throughout an investigation conducted by an Ethical Standards Officer or the Council's Monitoring Officer, but there were a considerable number of clauses to the policy. The most important of these were that the policy would not cover Councillors for incidents that had occurred prior to the implementation of the policy, and that if a Councillor was found to have been in breach of the Code of Conduct then they would be liable for any legal costs incurred.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reported that the Constitutional Affairs Panel had considered this issue and felt that the proposed insurance cover had value but that further information should be sought on a number of aspects of the policy. In particular, the Panel felt that the following points should be clarified prior to the Council taking out the policy:

- the date on which the timescale for claims would commence;
- how and when costs would be recovered and from whom;
- whether the insurers were prepared to grant additional cover to avoid the recovery of costs; and
- clarification of the exclusion from the policy of any questions relating to written or verbal remarks against the Councillor concerned.

The Cabinet felt that the scheme might only provide minimal cover for Councillors, as there appeared to be a significant number of clauses within the policy. It was agreed that this issue required further deliberation, pending clarification of the points that had been raised by the Constitutional Affairs Scrutiny Panel. As a consequence, there was no discussion as to how the scheme should be funded.

RESOLVED:

That the provision of legal expenses cover for Councillors who are the subject of complaints regarding alleged breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct provided by Zurich Municipal be deferred pending a further report clarifying:

- (a) the date on which the timescale for claims commences;

- (b) how and when costs might be recovered and from whom;
- (c) whether the insurers are prepared to grant additional cover to avoid the recovery of costs; and
- (d) the exclusion from the policy of any questions relating to written or verbal remarks against the Councillors concerned.

Reasons for Decision:

A need had previously been identified for Councillors to be supported, guided and represented during the complaints process if officers could not intervene. The policy from Zurich Municipal provided a means by which Councillors could have access to proper advice during the process, but did not indemnify Councillors for any costs incurred if they were subsequently found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct. Following consideration of the policy by the Constitutional Affairs Scrutiny Panel, the Cabinet had been advised that there were a number of issues that required further clarification prior to the Council's agreement to the policy.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

It would be difficult to negotiate reciprocal arrangements on a voluntary basis with Monitoring Officers from other Councils due to workload issues. The hire of external consultants to provide advice would be an expensive option and ultimately unsustainable. Designating other officers from within the Council would be possible but as those individuals would most likely be from Legal Services or Democratic Services, other workload responsibilities would make this option less realistic.

107. REVIEW OF THE HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report concerning the review of the Housing Allocations Scheme. The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that the Council was legally required to have a Housing Allocations Scheme, detailing the procedures for allocating its housing accommodation and making nominations to Registered Social Landlords. In September 2004, the Council introduced a banding system to form the basis for the prioritisation of housing applications, which had worked well with no major problems. The Portfolio Holder reported that a number of minor amendments had been proposed to the Scheme's General Information to take effect from 1 April 2007, whilst it was also proposed to merge the current Scheme's Bands Two and Three in order to reduce the number of bandings within the scheme from seven to six.

The Housing Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that the Council had decided to introduce a Choice Based Lettings Scheme through an agreement with a Choice Based Lettings Agency and in partnership with the local authorities within the Herts and Essex Housing Options Consortium. As a result of this, further changes had been proposed to the Scheme's General Information and Band One in order to meet the requirements of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme following its implementation in 2007. The Portfolio Holder requested an amendment to the recommendations whereby occupants of the Women's Refuge and Brook Haven would be given three months rather than six months to participate in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. The Portfolio Holder reported that, in addition to the comments of the consultees set out in the report, Waltham Abbey Town Council had responded to the consultation exercise following the publication of the agenda, but had no comment to make. At the request of the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder agreed that the Cabinet

should review the Choice Based Lettings Scheme once it had been in operation for six months.

RESOLVED:

That, following detailed consideration by the Housing Scrutiny Panel, and consultations with the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, Parish and Town Councils and Registered Social Landlord Partners, the proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme be agreed as follows:

- (a) The changes to the general information on the Allocations Scheme, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, to take effect from 1 April 2007;
- (b) The changes to the Allocations Scheme, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, in respect of the priority bandings to take effect from 1 April 2007;
- (c) The changes to the general information on the Allocations Scheme, which are needed to meet the requirements of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report, to take effect from its implementation;
- (d) The changes to the Allocations Scheme in respect of the priority bandings, which are needed to meet the requirements of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, as set out in Appendix 4 of the report, to take effect from the implementation date of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, subject to the following amendment:
 - (i) that occupants of the Women's Refuge and Brook Haven be given three months rather than six months to participate in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme; and
- (e) That, six months after its implementation, the Choice Based Lettings Scheme be reviewed by the Cabinet.

Reasons for Decision:

The proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme would meet Government targets and ensure that all applicants on the Housing Register would be treated in a fair and equitable manner. Further changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme were required in order to enable the Council to meet the requirements of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme upon implementation.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not agree the changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme, but this would jeopardise the implementation of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, as previously agreed by the Cabinet.

108. PLANNED BUILDING MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME - NON HRA OPERATIONAL BUILDINGS

The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding the planned building maintenance programme for non-HRA operational buildings. The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that the planned maintenance programme provided a structured method of ensuring that the Council's property assets were properly maintained and improved in order to

meet health and safety requirements, contractual obligations, customer demands and the long-term protection of the authority's assets. The Council also had a contractual obligation to undertake all necessary external and structural maintenance works to the four leisure centres managed by Sports Leisure Management Limited, and contractual commitments also applied to other commercial premises where the Council had external and structural responsibilities.

The Portfolio Holder reported some amendments to the recommendations following the publication of the agenda. It was now proposed to increase the budget by £4,000, in line with inflation, from £114,000 to £118,000 not £191,150, due to the continuing uncertainty over the final cost of the waste management contract. The Portfolio Holder also stipulated that any further expenditure on maintaining non-HRA operational buildings would have to be funded by Heads of Services making CSB savings elsewhere within their budgets. The requested DDF growth bids for the years 2008/09 to 2011/12 were also withdrawn but the Portfolio Holder stated that the Council still intended to implement a five-year planned maintenance programme.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, with an estimated cost of £118,000, the 2007/2008 programme of works be approved, representing year 1 of the 2007/12 five-year Planned Maintenance Programme for the Council's non-Housing Revenue Account operational and commercial/industrial property assets; and
- (2) That, a CSB growth bid in the sum of £4,000 be made for 2007/08 with any further expenditure subject to savings identified in negotiations with Heads of Service.

Reasons for Decision:

A planned programme of building maintenance was essential to protect and improve the condition of the Council's assets, ensure continued operational use of the buildings and meet the Council's contractual obligations. The budget had only been increased in line with inflation due to continuing uncertainty over the future cost of the waste management contract.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not implement a planned maintenance programme, but this would result in the possible failure of the building fabric and services, leading to potential health and safety risks to staff and the public, loss of service and income, increased future management liability, reduced property asset value, as well as a breach of the Council's legal obligations contained within commercial leases and the Leisure Management Contract.

109. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report concerning the Private Sector Housing Strategy. The Housing Portfolio Holder reported that the Housing Act 2004 had granted the Council additional powers as the Government intended for the Private Sector to make a bigger contribution towards meeting the housing needs of local residents. This in turn had required the Council to review its Private Sector Housing Strategy. The revised strategy would lead to substantial changes in the enforcement of private sector housing standards and the provision of financial assistance for the repair and improvement of sub-standard private sector housing. Given the current difficulties surrounding the waste management contract, it had

been proposed to seek the minimum additional resources required and to re-prioritise the private sector housing workload within the existing resources in order to provide the critical elements of the strategy and to maximise the existing capital funds plus the additional funding received from Government Office for the East of England (GO-East).

The Housing Portfolio Holder detailed the proposals for the Cabinet's consideration. These included the appointment of a specialist consultant to prepare a revised Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy, which would facilitate a move away from grant-aided assistance towards a system of loans or equity management for the repair or improvement of private sector dwellings. It was also intended to replace the current Renovation Grant with Decent Homes Assistance, replace the existing Homes Repair Assistance with Small Works Assistance, and implement Thermal Comfort Grants. These measures would enable the Council to utilise the additional GO-East funding available to bring sub-standard private sector dwellings up to the Decent Homes standard. It was felt that the capital allocation for the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants should remain at £500,000 per annum, but that an additional £5,000 should be allocated to fund the empty homes 'Finders Fee Scheme', whereby one-off payments would be made to landlords whose properties were let to tenants from the Housing Register. Finally, in order to implement the measures outlined, it was proposed to recruit an additional member of staff to the post of Environmental Health Practitioner.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Private Sector Housing and the Empty Property Strategies be adopted but their full implementation be delayed pending:
 - (a) a review of available resources; and
 - (b) the views of the Housing Scrutiny Panel on the detailed Housing Assistance policy;
- (2) That to facilitate a move away from grant aided assistance towards a system of loans or equity management for the repair and improvement of private sector dwellings, a DDF growth bid in the sum of £10,000 be made for 2007/08 for the appointment of a specialist consultant to prepare a revised private sector housing assistance policy;
- (3) That in order to utilise the additional GO-East funding for Decent Homes the following forms of financial assistance, as set out in the Private Sector Housing Strategy, be implemented:
 - (a) Decent Homes Assistance to replace the existing Renovation Grant;
 - (b) Small Works Assistance to replace the existing Homes Repair Assistance; and
 - (c) Thermal Comfort Grants;
- (4) That the capital allocation for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants be retained at £500,000 per annum;
- (5) That a CSB growth bid in the sum of £5,000 be made for 2007/08 to fund the empty homes 'Finders Fee Scheme'; and

(6) That, in order to implement the interim grants regime and the Empty Property Strategy, the establishment be increased by 1 FTE Environmental Health Practitioner at a cost of £41,314 per annum and that a CSB growth bid for 2007/8 be made.

Reasons for Decision:

The changes to the legislation in respect of private sector housing demonstrated the Government's desire to see a greater contribution from the private sector in meeting local housing needs. However, these changes placed additional statutory burdens upon the Council, for which the additional resources made available by GO-East could not be used to support the costs of additional staff.

The adoption of the revised Private Sector Housing Strategy was essential to demonstrate that the Council had embraced the Government's revised approach and to make the best use of the additional resources provided by GO-East. Having reviewed existing competing priorities and statutory duties, additional resources were still necessary to undertake the key additional duties.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To implement the Private Sector Housing Strategy in its entirety and seek the full resources required to do so, however the Council's current budgetary situation precludes this.

To not adopt the revised Strategy, even in part, but the Council would then fail to meet its statutory duties.

110. EVALUATION OF RECRUITMENT & RETENTION AND MANAGING ABSENCE STRATEGIES

The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding the evaluation of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy and Managing Absence Strategy. The Portfolio Holder reported that many of the Council's recruitment and retention initiatives introduced in 2004 had been relatively successful, although staff turnover had remained high and some services had struggled to recruit and retain staff in certain key areas. It had not been necessary to utilise all of the Recruitment and Retention budget, and it was envisaged that this would generate a saving of approximately £50,000. Despite the success of the establishment of a number of trainee positions throughout the Council, such posts did require a significant amount of support from existing members of staff and it was felt that the savings should not be used to establish further such positions. Staff turnover within the Council, around 12%, had been comparable to other organisations in the London area, and reflected the buoyant labour market in the southeast of England. In 2005/06, the Council had spent £206,000 on advertising 190 positions for recruitment, although the development of shared initiatives with other authorities within Essex had produced savings for the Council.

The Portfolio Holder stated that following evaluation of the Council's current position and the recruitment and retention initiatives agreed by the Cabinet in July 2004, it was felt that no new initiatives should be introduced at this time but that those initiatives which had been relatively successful, such as health checks, childcare vouchers and trainee positions should be continued and in some cases extended. It was recommended that resources within Human Resources should now be focused on increasing employee productivity and well being through evaluating the success of the Managing Absence Strategy and developing further ways of improving

attendance. Consequently, it was proposed to use a proportion of the unspent recruitment and retention budget to support this, including the recruitment of an additional Human Resources Officer on a fixed-term one-year contract, specifically to manage individual absence cases as well as to develop further initiatives to improve the Council's current record of an average of over ten days per employee per year of absence through sickness.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the progress made with the implementation of the Council's Recruitment and Retention Strategy and Managing Absence Strategy be noted;
- (2) That, in terms of future Human Resources activity and focus, the current recruitment and retention initiatives be continued but that attention be refocused on the Council's increasing sickness absence levels;
- (3) That, in the light of the success of the scheme and the age discrimination legislation now in force, the provision of health checks to staff at or over the age of 40 be extended to all staff at a cost of approximately £5,000 per year from the Recruitment and Retention Budget;
- (4) That, as a means of improving sickness levels across the Council and supporting employees with ill health, £35,000 be allocated from the Recruitment and Retention Budget for the employment of an Human Resources Officer on a one year fixed-term contract to work with managers on the management of individual absence cases;
- (5) That the estimated £50,000 DDF/CSB savings from the Recruitment and Retention Budget for 2006/07 be noted; and
- (6) That, subject to a future report, a proportion of the unspent Recruitment and Retention Budget be diverted to the further development of the Council's Managing Absence Strategy including initiatives such as employee health and well-being.

Reasons for Decision:

The Council had had some success in developing recruitment and retention initiatives, but these had had a limited effect upon staff turnover. The recent rise in sickness absence had given some cause for concern, and it was considered prudent to redirect resources to improve employee attendance.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not implement the proposals designed to combat the growing absenteeism through sickness, however the Human Resources Unit did not have sufficient resources to undertake the necessary measures and it was likely that sickness absence across the Council would continue to worsen.

111. CONCESSIONARY FARES

The Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding the Essex Countywide and Transport for London Concessionary Fares schemes. The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that the Transport Act 2000 stipulated that elderly and disabled people were to be offered a minimum of a half-fare reduction for travel on

buses within the District. The Chancellor in his budget speech of 2005 further extended this to free travel, with effect from April 2006. The Council had worked in partnership with Essex County Council to provide an enhanced version of the statutory scheme, whereby the bus passes issued provided free travel for elderly and disabled people within Essex. The Council also had a Concessionary Fare scheme running in conjunction with Transport for London, which provided free travel on buses in the North East of London, although a small charge was levied by the Council for the issue of these passes.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the increase in passes issued for the Essex Countywide Scheme had been 25%, which had been less than anticipated and would currently result in a CSB saving of £100,000 and a DDF saving of £100,000. There had been a reduction of 51% in the number of passes issued under the Transport for London Scheme, as the Essex Countywide bus pass could now be used for free travel on a number of London buses. This reduction had been anticipated and therefore had not generated any budgetary savings. A number of bus companies had challenged the re-imburement process under the Transport Act 2000. As a result, the Council had been advised by the consultants who co-ordinated the scheme in Essex, that the detailed scheme documents should be specially approved or authority delegated to an officer to do this. As a result, it had been recommended that the Council remain a member of both schemes for 2007/08, and that authority be delegated to the Head of Finance to agree the detailed scheme documents for both schemes.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Council's continued participation in both the Essex Countywide and the Transport for London schemes in 2007/08 be agreed;
- (2) That the Head of Finance be given delegated authority to agree the final scheme documents, and the Constitution be amended accordingly; and
- (3) That, in view of the latest projections for 2006/07, a revenue DDF saving in the sum of £100,000 and a revenue CSB saving in the sum of £100,000 be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

Residents were familiar with the existing schemes and the Council was able to continue to participate in both schemes whilst also benefiting from a reduction in the budgeted expenditure.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not participate in the Essex Countywide scheme, however the Council would not then be able to meet its obligations under the Transport Act 2000.

To not participate in the Transport for London scheme, which would generate a one-off saving of approximately £80,000.

112. ENERGY COSTS AND ENERGY REDUCTION PROPOSAL

The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder presented a report about energy costs and further proposals for energy reduction initiatives. The Portfolio Holder reported that all the major energy companies had increased their tariffs twice during the course of the year. For large

sites owned by the Council, this would necessitate the existing energy budgets to be increased by 37% for the period between 1 November 2006 and 31 March 2007, and to be increased by a further 67% for the period between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2008. The smaller sites would need their energy budgets to be increased by 4% for the period until 31 March 2007, another 4% for the period 1 April 2007 to 31 October 2007, and an additional 26% for the period 1 November 2007 to 31 March 2008. Historically, the energy budgets had been increased in line with inflation, however due to the predicted rise in energy costs, it was considered prudent to propose a revenue CSB growth bid of £59,000 for the General Fund and a revenue CSB growth bid of £139,000 for the Housing Revenue Account for 2007/08. In addition, it was felt that the Council should be requested to approve revenue CSB supplementary estimates for the current financial year of £12,000 for the General Fund and £67,000 for the Housing Revenue Account.

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that it had been agreed in April 2005 that 5% of the Council's total spend on energy should be allocated to energy reduction measures. The proposal for the current financial year was to install a Solar Water Heating System within the Civic Offices complex at a cost of £42,000. It was anticipated that this system would provide hot water for the new building throughout the whole of the summer and for 50% of the time for the rest of the year, whilst also achieving a significant reduction in carbon emissions. However, the payback period for this investment had been estimated to be between five and fifteen years, which the Cabinet felt was too long and thus the expenditure could not be justified.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the anticipated increase in energy costs be noted;
- (2) That, in order to meet the anticipated increase in energy costs, a revenue CSB growth bid in the sum of £59,000 and Housing Revenue Account CSB growth bid in the sum of £139,000 be made for 2007/08;
- (3) That, in order to meet the anticipated increase in energy costs for the current financial year, a revenue CSB supplementary estimate in the sum of £12,000 and a Housing Revenue Account CSB supplementary estimate in the sum of £67,000 be recommended to the Council for approval.

Reasons for Decision:

The anticipated rises in energy costs had been estimated in order for adequate budgetary provision to be made for 2007/08.

The Cabinet considered that a payback period of up to fifteen years for an investment of £42,000 could not be justified, in respect of the proposed Solar Water Heating System.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not agree the CSB growth bids for 2007/08, however if energy prices rose as predicted then this would necessitate further requests for supplementary estimates when the allocated budget had been exhausted.

To install the Solar Water Heating System and accept a payback period of up to fifteen years on a £42,000 investment.

113. LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

The Leisure and Young People Portfolio Holder presented a report concerning the Leisure Management Contract. The Portfolio Holder informed the Cabinet that the District Auditor had undertaken a review of the Council's Leisure Management Contract Tender and had highlighted two points for consideration. Firstly, that a Contract Award Notice had yet to be published in the Official Journal of the European Union, as required by European Law. The notification of the award of the contract to Sports and Leisure Management Limited had now been placed in the Official Journal of the European Journal, and a copy of the notice had been forwarded to the District Auditor. Secondly, that Contract Standing Order C19(a) prohibited the amendment of tenders after they had been formally submitted; this was waived during the tender process as all the tenders contained errors and were in need of revision, but had not been formally agreed by the Council. The District Auditor had requested that a retrospective minute be sought to resolve this issue.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, in compliance with European Union regulations, the action taken to advertise the Award of the Council's Leisure Management Contract in the European Journal be noted; and
- (2) That, in accordance with the District Auditors recommendations, Contract Standing Order C19(a) be waived with respect to the Leisure Management Contract.

Reasons for Decision:

European Union Regulations required that the award of the Leisure Management Contract to Sports and Leisure Management Limited be formally advertised in the European Journal. The District Auditor had highlighted that Contract Standing Order C19(a) had not been formally waived during the tender process and had requested that a formal minute be approved to this effect.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

Based upon the advice of the District Auditor, no other options were considered and rejected.

114. CORPORATE PHOTOCOPIER CONTRACT

The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding the award of the corporate photocopier contract. The Portfolio Holder stated that eight companies had been invited to quote for the corporate photocopier contract, which had been negotiated through the Essex County Council Central Buying Consortium and the Office of Central Government Contracts. The current provider, NRG Gestetner, had submitted the lowest tender in the sum of £53,628 for a three-year contract commencing on 1 March 2007 and it was proposed to award the contract accordingly. As the fixed costs of the contract had been estimated to be below £50,000, invitations to quote had been invited in accordance with Contract Standing Order C5. However, the aggregated value of the quotations had all been in excess of £50,000 for which formal tenders would normally have to be sought in line with Contract Standing Order C1(4). However, it was felt that this would not produce any discernible result in comparison with the process that had already been undertaken, and thus it was proposed to waive Contract Standing Order C1(4) in respect of this contract.

RESOLVED:

(1) That, in accordance with Contract Standing Order C1(4), approval be given to waive contract standing orders in relation to the normal procedure for inviting tenders for a contract with a value exceeding £50,000.

(2) That, following a competitive quotation process, a contract be awarded to NRG Gestetner Ltd in the estimated sum of £53,628 for the provision of a corporate photocopier contract for a three year period from 1 March 2007, representing a CSB saving of £5,243.

Reasons for Decision:

The award of the new contract would achieve savings with respect to the current contract.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To re-issue the specification as a formal invitation to tender, however this would delay the introduction of the new contract without any discernable improvement over the results of the quotation process already carried out.

115. ACCEPTANCE OF TENDER - 48-49 JUBILEE COURT, WALTHAM ABBEY

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report concerning the results of the tender exercise undertaken to convert two former Scheme Managers' three-bedroom houses into four self-contained one-bedroom sheltered flats at Jubilee Court, Waltham Abbey. The Portfolio Holder stated that the lowest tender submitted was in the sum of £118,476 by Titan Refurbishments Limited, however this was almost £40,000 in excess of the budget allocated within the Capital programme. Following a tender evaluation exercise, it was felt that a cheaper price could be obtained, and a second tender exercise was undertaken.

The Portfolio Holder reported that it was intended to invite Titan Refurbishments Limited to tender again, along with four new companies that were listed on Constructionline. However, the Council was advised that Titan Refurbishments Limited were not listed on Constructionline, and thus tenders were invited from five new contractors who were. The lowest tender submitted for the second tender exercise was in the sum of £129,850 by Trinity Construction Services Limited; £11,000 higher than that tendered by Titan during the first tender exercise. In the interim, it had been discovered that the Council had been wrongly advised and that Titan were listed on Constructionline. Following discussions, Titan advised the Council that they were prepared to stand by their original tender offer, and thus it was recommended that they be awarded the contract, with the additional £40,000 being met from the Miscellaneous Structures budget within the Housing Revenue Account, as this would not require a virement.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to tender analysis and being the lowest tender received, Titan Refurbishments Limited be awarded the contract for the conversion of the two former 3-bedroom Scheme Managers' houses into 4 self contained one bedroom sheltered flats at Jubilee Court in Waltham Abbey in the sum of £118,476.

Reasons for Decision:

Titan Refurbishments Limited had submitted the lowest received tender.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not undertake the work and let the two three-bedroom houses as general needs housing, however due to the specialist nature of the accommodation at Jubilee Court, being within a larger complex for older residents, this was not considered appropriate.

To re-tender the contract a third time, however this was unlikely to result in a lower tender sum.

116. WASTE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT - APPOINTMENT OF INDECON

The Customer Services, Media, Communications and ICT Portfolio Holder presented a report concerning the appointment of Indecon Limited to assist the Council with contract modelling and the production of the specification for the tender of the waste management contract. The Portfolio Holder stated that it was essential to undertake complex modelling in order to fully assess the various contract options open to the Council. This modelling required experience, which could best be provided by specialist consultants, and the Council currently had limited resources with which to draw up the contract specification. Indecon Limited had worked with the Council in the past and was currently providing similar services to other Councils within Essex. The estimated costs from Indecon Limited were just under £20,000, and whilst Contract Standing Orders permitted a Head of Service to procure a contract up to this value, three quotations had also to be sought. Given the delay that a tender process would entail for the procurement process, it was proposed to set aside Contract Standing Order C4(2) and appoint Indecon Limited as the Council's waste management procurement consultants.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, in order to assist the Council with contract modelling and the production of the contract specification, Indecon Limited be appointed as specialist contractors; and
- (2) That, in order to appoint Indecon Limited, the requirement of Contract Standing Order C4(2) to seek a minimum of three quotations be waived.

Reasons for Decision:

Indecon Limited would provide professional consultancy support to the Council in modelling contract options, determining option appraisals and cost estimates, as well as preparing the specification.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not engage any consultancy support, however this could jeopardise the tender process if there was insufficient resources available to meet the workload and deadlines were not adhered to.

To tender the appointment competitively, however Indecon had previously provided such support and had knowledge of the Council's waste service, plus the tender process itself would cause a significant delay to the procurement programme.

117. BUDGET PROVISION 2007/08 - EPPING FOREST CARELINE

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report concerning the budget provision in 2007/08 for the Epping Forest Careline. The Portfolio Holder reported that Epping Forest Careline offered a 24-hour, 365 days a year emergency alarm service to older and disabled people living within the District, as well as other vulnerable groups identified in conjunction with the Police. A total of 2,600 properties, representing approximately 3,000 people were linked into the service. Approximately 1,000 of the connections were from private sector dwellings, for which the user paid the Council an annual rental of £144 for the service. Dispersed alarms were purchased at a cost of £120 each, with an expected lifespan of ten years. There were 400 alarms that needed replacing in 2007/08 at a total cost of £48,000. Additionally, the calls recording facility at the Careline Centre was over fifteen years old and also needed replacement in 2007/08. This facility provided essential evidence regarding action taken by Careline staff whenever they received a call, and would cost around £8,000 to replace.

The Portfolio Holder added that the existing budget for 2006/07 was £21,000, which would be insufficient to fund the required renewals. Consequently, it had been proposed that an one-off sum of £56,000 be included in the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2007/08 in order to fund the necessary replacements. It was also recommended that an additional expenditure item of £14,000 per annum be included in the budget from 2008/09 in order to fund future replacements. The Council's sole supplier had been Tunstall Telecom Limited, and it was requested to set aside Contract Standing Order C6 so that negotiations could take place in accordance with Contract Standing Order C10. The Portfolio Holder reassured the Cabinet that as part of these negotiations, costs would be compared with other alarm system suppliers to ensure that the Council obtained value for money.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That a one-off sum of £56,000 be included in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2007/2008 for the replacement of:
 - (a) dispersed alarm equipment; and
 - (b) the calls recording facility within the Careline Control Centre;
- (2) That, in order to fund purchases of replacement dispersed alarm systems in the future, an additional provision of £14,000 per annum be included in the budget from 2008/2009; and
- (3) That, in order for the Council to continue to receive the benefits of having a sole supplier for the Careline equipment:
 - (a) Contract Standing Order C6 be waived; and
 - (b) negotiations take place in accordance with Contract Standing Order C10.

Reasons for Decision:

The replacement of the dispersed alarm systems and the call recording equipment was essential to ensure the continued reliability of the Careline service currently offered to vulnerable people.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not replace either the 400 Careline dispersed alarm units, or the Careline call recording facility.

118. BROADWAY TOWN CENTRE ENHANCEMENT

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding the Broadway Town Centre Enhancement. The Portfolio Holder reported that as phase II of the scheme had progressed, some unforeseen additional works had been necessary with an estimated cost of £756,300. The key elements of this were: additional works to the Burton Road car park required by Essex County Council, including drainage work, with an estimated cost of £345,000; and replacement of paving outside the central area with granite slabs, costing £208,000. However, some compensatory savings had been identified totalling £467,650, but this had still left a budget shortfall of approximately £290,000. The Portfolio Holder stated that the options available were to utilise the capital contingency to meet the budgetary shortfall; delay other capital projects in the Capital Programme and vire resources to the scheme; or remove further key features from the scheme, of which four had been identified:

- Additional granite paving - £208,000;
- Central wind vane feature - £20,000;
- Lighting for the market - £17,500; and
- Removal of intended trees - £23,500.

The Portfolio Holder recommended that the scope of the scheme be reduced, with any remaining capital shortfall funded by the capital contingency sum, but that the intended trees should remain as part of the scheme due to the critical response of local residents when trees had been removed as part of phase I. The Head of Environmental Services reported that the existing paving outside the central feature was generally in a good condition and could be left in place, thus removing the need to lay additional granite paving, but added that the market traders would appreciate the retention of the lighting for the market. The Cabinet concurred with this, agreeing to use the capital contingency fund for the estimated £61,500 shortfall, and that a report should be made to the Council accordingly.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the projected estimated overspend on the Broadway Town Centre Enhancement Scheme be noted;
- (2) That in order to save an estimated £228,500, the scope of the scheme be reduced by the removal of the following options:
 - (a) the additional granite paving; and
 - (b) the central wind vane feature;
- (3) That the Capital Contingency Fund be utilised to fund the remaining capital shortfall of £61,500; and
- (4) That a report be made to the Council accordingly.

Reasons for Decision:

Much had been done to keep the scheme within budget but the unforeseen works for drainage improvements and highway infrastructure repairs had resulted in the scheme exceeding the agreed budget. Whilst the preferred option would be to retain all elements of the scheme and provide additional capital funding, the items identified for removal from the scheme would not result in the scheme being significantly compromised.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To defer phase II of the scheme until the Council's capital resourcing was clearer, however this might have contractual implications and would ultimately result in additional costs once the scheme was recommenced.

To not undertake Phase II of the scheme at all, but this would also have contractual implications and would not meet the Council's commitment to undertake the scheme as set out in the Council Plan and Best Value Performance Plan.

119. CORPORATE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2007-2009

The Customer Services, Media, Communications and ICT Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding the Corporate Procurement Strategy for 2007-09. The Portfolio Holder informed the Cabinet that effective procurement aided the Council in delivering high quality services that met the needs of local people and provided value for money. The Council's key strategic procurement objectives were closely aligned to those of the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government and utilised the nationally recognised 'gateway approach'. The strategy had also recommended that the Council should sign up to the national Procurement Concordat for small and medium enterprises, which set out what small firms and others supplying local government could expect when tendering for local authority contracts, and also the standards that public sector buyers could expect from their suppliers. Finally, the strategy had set out an approach to procurement that had strived to reduce the impact upon the environment, whether in production, delivery, use or disposal. Implementation of the strategy would necessitate some changes to Contract Standing Orders. These would be identified during the annual review in 2007 and implemented in April 2008.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Procurement Strategy for the period 2007-09 be agreed.

Reasons for Decision:

The strategy would enable the Council to achieve the 'procurement milestones' set out in the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government. The Audit Commission had also regarded a Procurement Strategy as an essential tool for the efficient use of resources and sustaining best value. Some significant procurement cost reductions had been achieved through the Council's membership of both the Procurement Agency for Essex and the Essex Procurement Hub, and the strategy would enable proper coordination of these initiatives, as well as achieving best value and effective procurement practice.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not implement the Corporate Procurement Strategy, however this would not enable the Council to take advantage of the procurement opportunities that were currently being presented to it.

120. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CABINET COMMITTEE**(120.1) Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2006**

The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder presented the minutes of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee held on 20 November 2006. The items highlighted for consideration included: the Internal Audit Monitoring Report for June/September 2006 and Work Programme for October/December 2006; the proposal and draft constitution for the Audit and Governance Committee; and the Fees and Charges for 2007/08.

In respect of Fees and Charges for 2007/08, the Cabinet Committee had agreed that car parking fees and charges should be increased to recover the £75,000 of lost income from offering free Saturday car parking across the District, as well as a general increase in fees of 3.5%, which would necessitate an extra £120,000 in revenue per annum. The Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder presented proposals for increased car parking fees that would generate an additional £90,000 in revenue, with the remaining £30,000 generated through further savings elsewhere within the budget.

(a) Internal Audit – Monitoring Report June/September 2006 and Work Programme October/December 2006

- (1) That the reports issued and significant findings between July and September 2006 be noted;
- (2) That the audit follow-up status report be noted;
- (3) That the Work Plan for October to December 2006 be noted; and
- (4) That the 2006/07 Audit Plan status report be noted;

(b) Audit and Governance Committee – Proposal and Draft Constitution

- (5) That a report be submitted to the Council proposing the establishment of an Audit and Governance Committee based upon the model described in the report and appendix, subject to members of the new Committee not also being members of the Cabinet, any Cabinet Committee or any Panel appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with responsibility for reviewing the Council's finances or financial procedures; and

(c) Fees and Charges – 2007/08

- (6) That a general 3.5% increase in fees and charges for 2007/08 be agreed;
- (7) That, in order to generate an additional £90,000 in revenue, the following car parking charges be agreed:
 - (a) for short-stay, combined and on-street car parks:
 - (i) the fee for up to 30 minutes remain at 10p;
 - (ii) the fee for up to one hour be increased from 60p to 65p; and
 - (iii) the fee for up to two hours be increased from £1.20 to £1.30;

- (b) in addition for short-stay car parks:
 - (i) the fee for up to three hours be increased from £2.50 to £2.60; and
 - (ii) the fee for over three hours be increased from £8.00 to £9.00;
- (c) in addition for combined and long-stay car parks:
 - (i) the fee for up to two hours be increased from £1.20 to £1.30; and
 - (ii) the fee for over two hours be increased from £2.50 to £2.60; and
- (8) That the increased car parking charges be applied from 1 April 2007.

(120.2) Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2006

The Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder presented the minutes of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee held on 11 December 2006. The item highlighted for consideration was the draft General Fund Budget Summary, including the CSB and DDF lists.

(a) Draft General Fund Budget Summary (including CSB and DDF lists)

- (9) That the following previously agreed budget guidelines be confirmed:
 - (a) the ceiling for CSB net expenditure be no more than £17million, including net growth;
 - (b) balances continue to be aligned to the Council's net budget requirement and be allowed to fall no lower than 25% of the net budget requirement;
 - (c) the District Council Tax be increased by no more than the rate of increase in the Retail Price Index, currently 3.5%;
- (10) That the following be agreed in relation to CSB growth items for 2007/08:
 - (a) Customer Services Transformation Programme - £99,000 – deleted;
 - (b) Emergency Planning Officer - £19,000 – deleted;
 - (c) Elections – additional costs of new arrangements - £14,000 – delete as being met from existing capital provision;
 - (d) Elections – running costs for new signature comparison software - £3,000 – included in the draft list of CSB growth items;
 - (e) Electoral registration - £6,000 – supplementary estimate to be sought for 2006/07 and carried forward;
 - (f) Routine Building Maintenance Programme - £4,000 – included in the draft list of CSB growth items;
 - (g) Audit and Governance Committee – £4,000 – running costs, included in the draft list of CSB growth items, but increased costs to be absorbed within existing budgets;

- (h) Councillors legal expenses cover - £2,000 – deleted;
- (i) Environmental Health Practitioner - £41,000 – included in the draft list of CSB growth items;
- (j) Elections management software - £3,000 – deleted, duplication of (d) above;
and
- (k) Finders Fee Scheme - £5,000 – included in draft list of CSB growth items;
- (11) That the following be agreed in relation to DDF growth items for 2007/08:
 - (a) Customer Services Transformation Programme - £442,000 – deleted;
 - (b) Comfort Cooling - £100,000 – deleted;
 - (c) Civic Offices Maintenance - £23,000 – included in draft list of DDF growth items;
 - (d) Upgrade to Estates Management System - £8,000 – to receive further consideration;
 - (e) Audit and Governance Committee member training - £2,000 – to receive further consideration; and
 - (f) Consultancy Private Sector Assistance Policy - £10,000 – included in draft list of DDF growth items;
- (12) That the following be agreed in relation to Capital growth items for 2007/08:
 - (a) Civic Offices Maintenance - £56,000 – included in draft list of Capital growth items;
 - (b) Printing Plate Maker - £35,000 – deleted; and
 - (c) Solar Water Heating - £42,000 – deleted; and
- (13) That, as part of the budget setting process, meetings be held between the Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder, the Leader of the Council and Heads of Service to review further the amended list of CSB growth items and existing CSB expenditure in order to secure a reduction in the total CSB net expenditure for 2007/08 to no more than £17million and further review the list of DDF items.

Reasons for Decision:

The Cabinet were satisfied that the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee had fully addressed all the relevant issues in relation to the recommendations and that these should be endorsed.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

The Cabinet were satisfied that the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee had considered all the relevant options in formulating their recommendations. The Cabinet did not consider that there were any other options.

CHAIRMAN