

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee **Date:** Monday, 11 December 2006

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 6.05 - 7.40 pm

Members Present: J Knapman (Chairman), Mrs D Collins, Mrs A Grigg and C Whitbread

Other Councillors: A Green, D Jacobs

Apologies: S Metcalfe

Officers Present: J Gilbert (Head of Environmental Services), P Haywood (Joint Chief Executive), G Lunnun (Democratic Services Manager), 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) and I Willett (Head of Research and Democratic Services) B Moldon (Senior Finance Officer)

39. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 November 2006 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct.

41. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Time of meetings

RESOLVED:

That in future, meetings of this Committee commence at 6.30 p.m.

42. RISK MANAGEMENT - UPDATED CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

Members were advised that they had agreed to receive updates to the Action Plans and the Corporate Risk Register twice yearly. On 3 October 2006, the Risk Management Group had reviewed the existing Action Plans and where necessary had developed or amended Action Plans in view of new ratings. The new Action Plans were required for risks that had moved from below the tolerance line to above the line following the updated ratings.

Attention was drawn to the Action Plans for each risk.

The Committee was advised that there would be a comprehensive review of the Register early in 2007 which would include a Members' Seminar.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the updated Corporate Risk Register be adopted; and
- (2) That the Register be reviewed at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 26 March 2007.

43. DRAFT GENERAL FUND BUDGET SUMMARY (INCLUDING CSB AND DDF LISTS)

The Committee considered a report providing the first oversight of the draft General Fund Budget for 2007/08. Members noted that the individual portfolio budgets would be considered in detail at the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel meeting on 15 January 2007 following which the budget setting process would be concluded at meetings of this Cabinet Committee on 29 January 2007, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 February 2007, the Cabinet on 5 February 2007 and the full Council on 20 February 2007.

The Head of Finance reported that the latest version of the Statement of Recommended Practice that local authorities were required to follow in producing their budgets and accounts had removed requirements in relation to Capital Charges and the Asset Management Revenue Account. Whilst this change had been welcomed it had created a considerable amount of additional work in producing the draft budgets.

The Head of Finance also advised that the confirmed figures from the Department for Communities and Local Government reflected the draft Local Government Finance Settlement agreed last year. This Council's grant for 2007/08 was due to increase by 6.2%.

The Committee considered a draft General Fund Estimate Summary, CSB growth/savings and DDF lists including items not yet approved by the Cabinet. In considering these matters, members took account of the previously agreed budget guidelines regarding CSB net expenditure, the use of balances and the amount of the District Council Tax.

Members noted that the current CSB for 2007/08 including approved growth bids amounted to £17.072m and therefore exceeded the previously agreed guideline by £72,000. In addition, other items not yet approved by the Cabinet, some of which were in respect of statutory responsibilities amounted to £252,000.

The Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder advised that he would be preparing alternative proposals for off-street car parking increased income focusing on the medium and long-term tariffs rather than the short-term tariffs. The Committee noted that whatever option was finally agreed it was unlikely to achieve a 3.5% increase plus recovery of the full estimated £75,000 lost income from free Saturday car parking agreed at the last meeting of this Committee. The Joint Chief Executive questioned the lead-in time for introducing new fees and pointed out that if the increases took effect after the beginning of the new financial year on 1 April 2007 there would be a further loss as the estimated income had been calculated on the

basis of a full financial year. Members agreed that car parking charges for 2007/08 needed to be agreed by the Cabinet on 18 December 2006 in order to ensure that increased charges took effect on 1 April 2007.

RECOMMENDED:

- (1) That the following previously agreed budget guidelines be confirmed:
 - (a) the ceiling for CSB net expenditure be no more than £17m including net growth;
 - (b) balances continue to be aligned to the Council's net budget requirement and balances 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;
- (2) That the following be agreed in relation to CSB growth, DDF and Capital items for 2007/08 not yet approved by the Cabinet:

CSB

- (a) Customer Services Transformation Programme - £99,000 - delete;
- (b) Emergency Planning Officer - £19,000 - delete;
- (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 - include 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 - £62,000 (net) - to be considered by the Cabinet on 18 December 2006;
- (g) Audit and Governance Committee - running costs – £4,000 to be considered by the Cabinet on 18 December 2006 but increased costs to be absorbed within existing budgets;
- (h) Councillors legal expenses cover - £2,000 - to be considered by the Cabinet on 18 December 2006 but increased costs to be absorbed within existing budgets;
- (i) Environmental Health Practitioner - £41,000 - include in the draft list of CSB growth items;
- (j) On-going costs - elections management software - £3,000 - delete, subject to confirmation that this is a duplication of (d) above;
- (k) Finders Fee Scheme - £5,000 – include in draft list of CSB growth items;

DDF

- (l) Customer Services Transformation Programme - £442,000 - delete;
- (m) Comfort Cooling - £100,000 - delete;
- (n) Civic Offices Maintenance - £23,000 - to be considered by the Cabinet on 18 December 2006;
- (o) Upgrade to Estates Management System - £8,000 - to receive further consideration;
- (p) Audit and Governance Committee - Member Training - £2,000 - to receive further consideration;
- (q) Consultancy Private Sector Assistance Policy - £10,000 - include in the draft DDF list;

Capital

- (r) Civic Offices Maintenance - £56,000 - to receive further consideration;
 - (s) Printing Plate Maker - £35,000 - delete (replacement to be sought when existing machine fails); and
 - (t) Solar Water Heating - £42,000 - delete;
- (3) 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 in order to review further the amended 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 £17m and to review further the list of DDF items; and
- (4) That the Cabinet resolve car parking charges for 2007/08 at its meeting on 18 December 2006.

CHAIRMAN