

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MINUTES

Committee: Cabinet **Date:** 31 January 2011

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 9.55 pm

Members Present: Mrs D Collins (Chairman), C Whitbread (Vice-Chairman), R Bassett, B Rolfe, Mrs M Sartin, Mrs P Smith, D Stellan, Ms S Stavrou and Mrs L Wagland

Other Councillors: K Angold-Stephens, R Barrett, W Breare-Hall, Mrs T Cochrane, Mrs R Gadsby, Mrs A Grigg, Ms J Hart, D Jacobs, D C Johnson, B Judd, R Morgan, J Philip, Mrs C Pond, Mrs J H Whitehouse and J M Whitehouse

Apologies:

Officers Present: D Macnab (Acting Chief Executive), I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), R Palmer (Director of Finance and ICT), D Newton (Assistant Director (ICT)), K Polyzoides (Assistant Director (Policy & Conservation)), M Tipping (Assistant Director (Facilities Management & Emergency Planning)), R Wilson (Assistant Director (Operations)), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), B Moldon (Principal Accountant), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)

99. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Leader of the Council made a short address to remind all present that the meeting would be broadcast on the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

100. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Ms S A Stavrou declared a personal interest in agenda item 19, Council Budgets 2011/12, by virtue of having been involved in the establishment of the Furniture Exchange Scheme. The Councillor had determined that her interest was not prejudicial and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the issue.

(b) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse declared a personal interest in agenda item 19, Council Budgets 2011/12, by virtue of having being a member of the Steering Committee for the Furniture Exchange Scheme. The Councillor had determined that her interest was not prejudicial and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the issue.

(c) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Mrs M Sartin declared a personal interest in agenda item 19, Council Budgets 2011/12, by virtue of being Chairman of the Steering Committee for the Furniture Exchange Scheme. The Councillor had determined that her interest was not prejudicial and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the issue.

101. MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2010 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

102. REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

There were no verbal reports presented by the Portfolio Holders present.

103. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There had been no questions received from members of the public for the Cabinet to consider.

104. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented a report of its meeting held on 24 January 2011, when the following items of business were considered:

(i) following the receipt of a call-in, the Cabinet decision to reduce the Community Arts budget was upheld;

(ii) a report from the Finance & Performance Management Scrutiny Panel upon the proposed refurbishment of the finance reception area, from which option 3 costing £302,000 was supported and would be recommended to the Cabinet;

(iii) a report upon the meeting of the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee held on 17 January 2011, at which all members of the Finance & Performance Management Scrutiny Panel were invited to attend to consider the Council's budget for 2011/12;

(iv) a report on the proposed response to the consultation on core strategies and options for the Harlow area; and

(v) a report from the Constitution & Member Services Scrutiny Panel regarding electronic invoicing and requested amendments to the procedures for Cabinet meetings, both of which would be considered at the next meeting of the Council.

The Cabinet's agenda was reviewed but the Committee had no comments to make.

105. FINANCE & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CABINET COMMITTEE - 17 JANUARY 2011

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented the minutes from the meeting of the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee held on 17 January 2011. The Cabinet Committee had made recommendations on the following issues: Detailed Directorate Budgets 2011/12; Council Budgets 2011/12; the Corporate Risk Register and Risk Management Documents; and the Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Policy. Other issues considered by the Cabinet Committee had included: the Corporate Plan 2011-15 and Key Objectives 2011/12; a review of the Key Performance Indicators for 2010/11; and the introduction of Credit Card payments.

Decision:Detailed Directorate Budgets 2011/12

- (1) That the detailed Directorate budget for the Office of the Chief Executive be recommended to the Cabinet for approval;
- (2) That the detailed Directorate budget for Corporate Support Services be recommended to the Cabinet for approval;
- (3) That the detailed Directorate budget for the Office of the Deputy Chief Executive be recommended to the Cabinet for approval;
- (4) That the detailed Directorate budget for Environment & Street Scene be recommended to the Cabinet for approval;
- (5) That the detailed Directorate budget for Finance & ICT be recommended to the Cabinet for approval, subject to the addition of a paragraph to the final budget report highlighting the total savings made during 2010/11 from the use of the Essex Procurement Hub;
- (6) That the detailed Directorate budget for the Housing General Fund be recommended to the Cabinet for approval;
- (7) That the detailed Directorate budget for Planning & Economic Development be recommended to the Cabinet for approval;
- (8) That the detailed Directorate budget for the Housing Revenue Account be recommended to the Cabinet for approval;
- (9) That the following areas of the Council's budget be further reviewed during the 2012/13 budget setting process:
 - (a) Electoral Registration within the Office of the Chief Executive, to be benchmarked with other Councils of a similar size;
 - (b) Grants to Voluntary Organisations within the Office of the Chief Executive;
 - (c) Reprographics within the Corporate Support Services Directorate; and
 - (d) Telephones within the Finance & ICT Directorate;
- (10) That a report be submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet Committee scheduled for 21 March 2011 detailing the total savings made by the Council through its membership of the Essex Procurement Hub; and
- (11) That the Support Service cost of each Cost Centre be further analysed in future budgets to show the proportion of Officer salaries included within it;

Council Budgets 2011/12

- (12) That, in respect of the Council's General Fund Budgets for 2011/12, the following guidelines be adopted:
 - (a) the revised revenue estimates for 2010/11, and the anticipated reduction in the General Fund balance of £307,000;

- (b) a reduction in the target for the 2011/12 CSB budget from £17.1million to £16million (including growth items);
 - (c) an increase in the target for the 2010/11 DDF net spend from £900,000 to £1.1million;
 - (d) no change in the District Council Tax for a Band 'D' property to retain the charge at £148.77;
 - (e) the estimated reduction in General Fund balances in 2011/12 of £248,000;
 - (f) the four year capital programme 2011/12 – 2014/15;
 - (g) the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/12 – 2014/15; and
 - (h) the Council's policy on General Fund Revenue Balances to remain that they be allowed to fall no lower than 25% of the Net Budget Requirement;
- (13) That, including the revised revenue estimates for 2010/11, the 2011/12 HRA budget be agreed;
- (14) That the application of the rent increases and decreases proposed for 2011/12, in accordance with the Government's rent reforms and the Council's approved rent strategy, be an average overall increase of 7.2% be noted; and
- (15) That the established policy of capitalising deficiency payments to the pension fund be maintained, in accordance with the partial Capitalisation Direction obtained from the Department for Communities and Local Government;

Risk Management – Corporate Risk Register & Risk Management Documents

- (16) That Risk 22, Fraud, be further investigated by the Corporate Governance Group for examination of the different approaches to the prevention of fraud and reported back to the Cabinet Committee on 21 March 2011;
- (17) That the current tolerance line on the risk matrix be considered satisfactory and not be amended;
- (18) That the Corporate Risk Register be recommended to the Cabinet for approval;
- (19) That the updated Risk Management Strategy be adopted; and
- (20) That the updated Risk Management Policy Statement be adopted; and

Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Policy

- (21) That Overpayment Officers be delegated authority to negotiate with debtors to clear their Housing Benefit Overpayment debt to the Council in the following circumstances:
- (a) the debt had been outstanding for two or more years;
 - (b) all recovery options had been attempted and the only other option was to write the debt off;

(c) any negotiated sum with the debtor to be a minimum of 60% of the outstanding debt; and

(c) any offer of a negotiated sum to be paid at the time of the agreement by the debtor or the debt would revert to the full amount; and

(22) That a progress report upon the results of the implementation of the policy above be presented to the Cabinet Committee at its meeting in March 2012.

Reasons for Decision:

The Cabinet was satisfied that the 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 was satisfied that the Cabinet Committee had considered all the relevant options in formulating their recommendations. The Cabinet did not consider that there were any further options.

106. COUNCIL KEY OBJECTIVES 2011/12

The Portfolio Holder for Performance Management presented a revised version of the Council's draft Key Objectives for 2011/12 following their consideration at the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee on 17 January 2011.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the current draft Objectives had evolved from the Key Objectives agreed for 2010/11 and addressed the key issues facing the District at the current time. The draft Objectives had been reviewed in detail in recent weeks and, since the Cabinet Committee meeting a fortnight previously, the number had been reduced from twelve to eight.

Concern was expressed about the local community's willingness to embrace the Government's 'Big Society' initiative and the potential impact this would have upon the Council's second draft Objective. The Portfolio Holder responded that the Objective would be reviewed throughout the year as more information became available about the 'Big Society' programme. The Acting Chief Executive added that the Big Society Action Plan was scheduled to be published on 1 September 2011.

Comment was also passed about the Council's medium term aim to have the lowest District Council Tax in Essex and the possible negative impact this could have on the Council's overall performance. The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development responded that setting a low level of Council Tax mattered to residents of the District, was an important aim and therefore should be a priority. It was right for the Council to aim to have a low Council Tax well into the future, however it was acknowledged that the Council's performance could suffer a little due to a lack of resources.

Decision:

(1) That the Council's draft Key Objectives for 2011/12, revised following the meeting of the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee on 17 January 2011, be approved.

Reasons for Decision:

The identification of the Council's service delivery priorities through the annual adoption of Key Objectives provided an opportunity for the Council to focus specific attention on how areas for improvement would be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered for local people.

It was important that relevant performance management processes were in place to review and monitor performance against the Council's objectives, to ensure their continued achievability and relevance, and to identify proposals for appropriate corrective action in areas of under performance.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

None, as failure to set Key Objectives could have negative implications for the Council's reputation and for judgements made about the authority in corporate assessment processes.

107. PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2011-15 - OPERATIONAL BUILDINGS & COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

The Portfolio Holder for Performance Management presented a revised report upon the Planned Maintenance Programmes for the Council's Operational Buildings and Commercial Property during the period 2011/12 to 2014/15.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Planned Maintenance Programme ensured the Council's property assets were properly maintained and improved to meet Health and Safety requirements, statutory regulations, contractual obligations, customer demands and the long term protection of the Council's assets. The Council also had contractual obligations to undertake all the necessary external and structural maintenance works to the four leisure centres managed by Sports Leisure Management Limited, as set out in the terms of the leisure management contract. Contractual commitments also applied to commercial premises, i.e. industrial estates, shops and other commercial lettings, where the Council had external and structural responsibilities.

The Portfolio Holder apologised for the tabling of a revised report at the meeting. The Programme had been constantly reviewed since the start of the year and would be kept under constant review in the future to ensure that the budgets were not exceeded. A progress report on all the planned maintenance items previously approved for 2010/11 was provided. The Cabinet noted that the energy efficiency of the Civic Offices had improved from a 'G' rating to an 'E' rating; and this was expected to improve further next year to a 'D' rating following the installation of new windows in the Condor building.

For the period 2011/12 to 2014/15, the Portfolio Holder reported that each proposed project had been analysed and assigned to one of seven different categories. Capital expenditure of £208,000 during 2011/12 had previously been approved to install solar panels on the roof of the Civic Offices. However, this project was not now considered a maintenance issue and had been removed from the programme. It would now appear as a individual item within the Capital Programme and would be the subject of a separate report at a future meeting. A new five-year condition survey of the Council's Operational Buildings and Commercial Properties would be undertaken by Officers from Building Control in 2011/12, and the results of this survey would inform the Programme for future years.

The Portfolio Holder advised the Cabinet that the proposed Programme for 2011/12 would involve capital expenditure of £285,000, Continuing Services Budget expenditure of £108,600 and Housing Revenue Account expenditure of £2,500. The proposed Programme also currently estimated additional District Development Fund expenditure of £26,000 in 2012/13, £12,000 in 2013/14, and £10,000 in 2014/15, over and above the amounts that had previously been approved. Finally, the Cabinet was requested to note the Programme's Capital and Revenue spending profiles for the five-year period 2010/11 to 2014/15.

Decision:

(1) That the progress with the works approved for 2010/11, both capital and revenue funded, be noted;

(2) That the following levels of expenditure for essential and planned maintenance at the Civic Offices, other Operational buildings and Commercial Property be implemented for 2011/12:

- (a) Capital expenditure in the sum of £285,000;
- (b) no additional District Development Fund (DDF) expenditure;
- (c) Continuing Services Budget (CSB) expenditure in the sum of £108,600; and
- (d) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) expenditure in the sum of £2,500;

(3) That a bid for Capital funding in the sum of £11,000 for 2014/15 be made for essential and planned maintenance works at the Civic Offices, other Operational Buildings and Commercial property;

(4) That the following bids for District Development Fund expenditure be made for essential and planned maintenance works at the Civic Offices, other Operational Buildings and Commercial Property:

- (a) in the sum of £26,000 for 2012/13;
- (b) in the sum of £12,000 for 2013/14; and
- (c) in the sum of £10,000 for 2014/15;

(5) That the Capital and Revenue spending profiles for essential and planned maintenance works at the Civic Offices, other Operational Buildings and Commercial Property for the five-year period 2010/11 to 2014/15 be noted; and

(6) That the previously approved Capital expenditure in the sum of £208,000 in 2011/12 for the provision of Solar Energy panels at the Civic Offices:

- (a) be removed from the Planned Maintenance Programme;
- (b) be included as a separate item within the Capital Programme; and
- (c) be reviewed and reported back to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

Reasons for Decision:

A proactive approach to facilities management for all operational buildings and

commercial property would ensure that:

- the buildings and their infrastructure would be maintained to an appropriate level, meeting health and safety, statutory regulations and contractual obligations;
- the buildings and their infrastructure would be brought to a standard to comply with EU statutory regulations;
- the risk of unreliability and failure of critical systems, services and building fabric would be reduced;
- good financial management through forecasting would be maintained; and
- performance standards and indicators would be maintained or improved upon.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To do nothing; however this would lead to a deterioration of building fabric and systems which could result in a risk to the health and safety of staff and public. There was also a risk that the Council would be in breach of its legal obligations for commercial properties, and that the operational buildings and infrastructure might not meet the future needs of the Council.

To defer action until the fabric, systems or equipment failed, however this would cause varying degrees of disruption depending on the extent of failure and/or system involved and the time scale for procurement and rectification of the defect. This would also lead to requests for supplementary finance and the performance of the Council's operations and functions could be compromised.

108. COUNCIL ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The Safer & Greener Portfolio Holder presented a report concerning measures to improve the Council's energy efficiency.

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that the Council was committed to recording a baseline of its energy use and establishing annual targets for reduction in accordance with the Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations 2007, the Climate Change Act 2008, the Nottingham Declaration, the 10:10 Initiative and the Corporate Climate Change Strategy. The Council had received an Area Based Grant in the sum of £67,500 intended for the implementation of the actions detailed within the Corporate Climate Change Strategy, but this had remained unallocated in the District Development Fund.

The Portfolio Holder stated that, to improve performance in this area, the Facilities Management team had highlighted the installation of Smart Meters and additional roof insulation as a priority for the Civic Offices and Conder Building; the estimated cost of these measures was £15,000. These measures would allow the Council to quickly identify areas where energy and cost savings could be made, as well as to reduce the heat energy that was lost through the roof of the Council Offices.

The Cabinet was informed that other options considered by the Corporate Green Working Party for the remaining funding had included joining the Feed In Tariff scheme, which presently offered a significant pay back over an extended period of time. However, this scheme would involve the installation of solar panels at a capital cost of £208,000 before any returns could be achieved by the Council. A further option would be to contribute £40,000 towards the Facilities Management budget as the majority of their projects had an emphasis upon reducing the Council's energy consumption. The remaining £12,500 could then be allocated to energy efficiency measures within the proposed replacement Museum Store and Countrycare building.

The Assistant Director for Facilities Management & Emergency Planning added that all of the Council's buildings would be analysed for energy efficiency in due course, but the greatest savings existed initially within the Civic Offices. There would be further reports regarding other buildings for the Cabinet to consider in the future.

The Portfolio Holder For Performance Management, responsible for the maintenance of the Council's buildings, informed the Cabinet that the installation of solar panels had not been excluded but there were structural considerations with the roof. Consequently, it was felt this item should not be included within the Maintenance Programme but would be reviewed in the future. The Council wanted to be an energy conscious authority, and the different forms of renewable energy, as well as the grants available, would be considered.

Decision:

- (1) That the Area Based Grant intended for climate change related expenditure within the DDF reserve in the sum of £67,500 be noted;
- (2) That £15,000 of the Area Based Grant be allocated to monitor and improve the efficiency of energy management systems within the Civic Offices and Conder Building by installing Smart Metering and increasing roof insulation over both buildings to 300mm;
- (3) That £40,000 of the Area Based Grant be allocated to the Facilities Management budget for use on energy efficiency projects; and
- (4) That £12,500 of the Area Based Grant be allocated to energy efficiency measures at the replacement Museum Store and Countrycare building.

Reasons for Decision:

The Council had not achieved its commitment to reduce energy use by 10% in 2010, instead making a total reduction of 4.1%. In addition, the Council had to comply with the Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations 2007, which required that a Display Energy Certificate was displayed in a prominent and public place, showing the energy performance of the Council Offices. At present, the Civic Offices and Conder Building failed to meet the government baseline of energy efficiency set by the Regulations. Further work had to be carried out if the Council was to meet regulations and targets, or achieve energy and cost savings in the coming years.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not use the Area Based Grant to fulfil objectives related to climate change. However, this would be counterproductive to the Council's commitment under the Nottingham Declaration and also be contrary to the Council's aims to reduce emissions and increase efficiency of its systems as set out in the Climate Change Strategy, the Council's commitment to the 10:10 initiative and the Council's Corporate Plan.

109. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2010-15

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented a report upon the Council's Capital Strategy for the period 2010 to 2015, based upon the review of the Capital Programme by the Cabinet on 25 October 2010.

The Cabinet was reminded that the Capital Strategy was a key strategic document that was linked to other key corporate and strategic documents produced by the Council and its partners; including the Corporate Plan, the Sustainable Community Strategy, and the Asset Management Plan. It was deemed important to update the Capital Strategy annually and thereby maintain a high level of control over the Council's capital resources and fixed assets. In addition, the Council's strategic aims and priorities were used to reassess the Key Capital Priorities each year and the Cabinet was requested to agree the ranking of each Key Priority, as the order of importance would subsequently influence future decisions regarding individual capital projects.

The Portfolio Holder reported that, following the publication of the report, the Capital Strategy had been further reviewed and a number of changes were offered for consideration. It was now proposed to remove:

- (i) the Customer Services Transformation Programme, as its allocation of £1.327million over five years was now unlikely to be spent;
- (ii) the Private Sector Housing Capital Contingency Fund, currently allocated £530,000; and
- (iii) the General ICT allocation for the years 2012/13 to 2014/15, which totalled £900,000 but had not been allocated to any particular projects in 2011/12.

In addition, it was proposed to review the £2.44million allocation for the construction of Off-Street Parking Schemes on Housing Estates and report back to the Cabinet at its next scheduled meeting. The Portfolio Holder concluded that the Council had to maximise the value of its assets, but that was unlikely to be realised through selling in the next two years.

The Housing Portfolio Holder was happy for the capital programme allocation for the Off-Street Parking Schemes on Housing Estates to be reviewed, as the proposed schemes were already being re-evaluated, but felt that a report would not be ready for the next scheduled meeting of the Cabinet in March 2011. The Portfolio Holder for Legal & Estates also agreed to review and report back on the progress of the compulsory purchase of 8/8A Sun Street in Waltham Abbey, which was currently allocated £378,000 within the Capital Programme. The Director of Finance & ICT reminded the Cabinet that the £20,000 for the feasibility study regarding the redesign of the Finance Reception had already been paid for from the Customer Services Transformation Programme capital allocation.

Decision:

- (1) That the ranking of the Council's Key Capital Priorities be agreed; and
- (2) That the draft Capital Strategy 2010-2015 be revised and recommended to the Council for approval, subject to the following amendments:
 - (a) the approval of the Planned Maintenance Programme 2011/12 to 2014/15;
 - (b) the removal of the Customer Services Transformation Programme, currently allocated £1.307million;
 - (c) the removal of the Private Sector Capital Contingency, currently allocated £530,000; and

(d) the removal of the General ICT allocation for the years 2012/13 to 2014/15, currently allocated £900,000 in total, with bids to be made for funding from this time onwards;

(3) That progress on the compulsory purchase of 8/8A Sun Street in Waltham Abbey, currently allocated £378,000 in 2011/12, be reviewed and reported back to the Cabinet; and

(4) That progress on the construction of Off-Street Parking Schemes on Housing Estates, currently allocated £2.44million over five years, be reviewed and reported back to the Cabinet.

Reasons for Decision:

The proposed Capital Strategy for the period 2010-15 was based on the Council's currently approved capital programme and had taken account of the latest guidance on capital accounting arrangements for local government. The financing arrangements, approved to date, were intended to make the best use of the capital resources currently available and forecast to become available for capital schemes up to 2014/15.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To amend the Capital Strategy and recommend a revised draft to the Council.

110. TOWN CENTRES OFFICER POST AND THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF TOWN CENTRES

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented a report concerning the possible continuation of the Town Centres Officer post and the future management of town centres within the District.

The Portfolio Holder advised the Cabinet that this issue had been reviewed since the publication of the agenda, and it was now being recommended that the proposed extension of the Town Centre Officer from July 2011 to April 2012 should not be agreed. It was acknowledged that the Planning Services Scrutiny Panel had recommended the continuation of the post, as per the report, but that the new proposed recommendation would generate a further revenue saving for the Council of £25,410. It was felt that the option of creating a Social Enterprise for the future operation of the six town centres within the District should still be investigated, as this could replace the work currently undertaken by the Town Centre Officer and Town Centre Partnerships and would link with the Government's proposed Big Society initiative. This investigation should form part of a wider review of Town Centre management within the District, and how the Council related to the local businesses within the Town Centres.

Decision:

(1) That the Town Centre Officer (TCO) post not be continued for a further temporary period until April 2012;

(2) That an existing District Development Fund underspend within the Planning & Economic Development Directorate in the sum of £25,410 be offered as a revenue saving in 2011/12; and

(3) That the option of creating a Social Enterprise for the future operation of the six Town Centres within the District be investigated as part of a review of Town Centre Management.

Reasons for Decision:

To generate a revenue saving of £25,410 for the Council, and report back on whether the creation of Social Enterprises would be a better method for the future management of the District's town centres.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To make the post permanent as an addition to the establishment; at an annual cost of £39,260; or

To extend the post until April 2012 at a cost of £25,410.

111. PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT FUND CARRY FORWARD TO 2011/12

The Safer & Greener Portfolio Holder presented a report upon a District Development Fund carry forward into 2011/12 within the Planning & Economic Development Directorate budget.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the current Technical Support Officer (Conservation) had been in post since July 2005, funded from the District Development Fund. This post had assisted in the development and delivery of Conservation Area Management Plans and Character Appraisals, as well as statutory work such as Conservation Area planning advice to Development Control Officers. The Cabinet was requested to permit £10,000 to be carried forward to 2011/12, along with the £7,000 already allocated, to extend the term of the post until November 2011. Further District Development Funding of £10,390 previously approved for the Planning & Economic Development Directorate was being offered as a revenue saving for 2011/12.

The Assistant Director (Policy & Conservation) confirmed that the currently approved District Development Funding would continue the post until July 2011. A report could be submitted in the summer for the Cabinet to consider other options for delivering the service in the future, however the County Council was also currently investigating whether the provision of Conservation related services could be shared with all the District Councils in Essex and this was due to report in early 2012.

The Cabinet acknowledged that there was a potential cost implication for the Council if it was unable to provide the necessary advice to Development Control, and approved the necessary funding to continue the post until November 2011. However, it was still felt that other options should be reviewed for the delivery of the service in the future, including sharing the post with another Council, and that this should be reported back to the Cabinet.

Decision:

(1) That the carry forward of District Development Funding in the sum of £10,000 to 2011/12 for the continuation of the Technical Support Officer (Conservation) post until November 2011 be approved;

(2) That further District Development Funding previously approved in the sum of £10,390 be offered as a revenue saving for 2011/12; and

(3) That other options for service delivery, such as sharing the post with another authority, be reviewed and reported back to the Cabinet.

Reasons for Decision:

The retention of the Technical Support Officer post (Conservation) until November 2011 would enable key statutory work to be continued.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To find alternative sources of funding. However, a request for Continuing Services Budget funding would put additional demand on existing budgets and external sources of funding were unlikely to be available.

To not extend the Technical Support Officer post for a further period when the existing District Development Fund allocation ran out.

112. JOINTLY FUNDED POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICER POSTS

The Safer & Greener Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding the Police Community Support Officer posts jointly funded by the Council and Essex Police.

The Portfolio Holder informed the Cabinet that the Council had been jointly funding six Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) with Essex Police since 2005. This had enabled the provision of additional PCSOs over and above those directly funded for the District by Essex Police, with the Council meeting half of the costs. This had led to more PCSOs being available and, additionally as part of the agreement, Officers within the Council's Safer Communities Team were able to task all PCSOs, not just those which were jointly funded. In view of the financial constraints affecting the Council and Essex Police, the funding of PCSOs needed to be reviewed to ensure that the Council was obtaining value for its annual investment, and a number of options had been presented for the Cabinet to review. These ranged from retaining all six current PCSOs at an extra cost to the Council of £2,530 to ceasing the funding of all six PCSOs and realising a saving of £91,600.

The Portfolio Holder added that comments had been received from Commander Ray of Essex Police in support of the role performed by PCSOs, and urged the Cabinet not to cease funding altogether as there was value for the Council from working in partnership with Essex Police.

The Director of Environment & Street Scene stated that there were 26 PCSOs within the District, of which six were jointly funded by the Council. The numbers of Police Officers in the report only referred to Community Officers, and not Officers in the CID for example. The current economic climate would lead to a reduction in the number of Officers within Essex Police and civilian staff as well; figures could be provided for Members if required. It was intended to train and authorise the jointly funded PCSOs to issue Penalty Charge Notices as per the Council's Environmental Neighbourhood Officers.

There was some support for the option to retain all six jointly funded PCSOs, as it was felt that they were especially valuable in rural areas and the additional £2,500 in expenditure would represent very good value for residents. The ability to issue Penalty Charge Notices in the future was welcomed, however the proposal that was

agreed was to reduce the number of jointly funded PCSOs from six to four. This would generate a revenue saving of £28,848 for the Council, and still provide coverage across the District. It was highlighted that the Council now had its own Crime and Disorder Officers in situ, and that this option would be better than ceasing funding altogether as per a number of other District Councils within Essex. The Cabinet was reminded that Essex Police had been invited to attend an Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting later in the year to outline their plans for the future within the District. It was also agreed that the future joint funding of PCSOs within the District should be considered again as part of the budget setting process for 2012/13.

Decision:

- (1) That the number of Police Community Support Officers jointly funded by the Council with Essex Police be reduced from six to four for 2011/12, generating a revenue saving in the sum of £28,848; and
- (2) That the future joint funding of Police Community Support Officers by the Council be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2012/13.

Reasons for Decision:

To generate a revenue saving of £28,848 for the Council whilst also retaining the value of working in partnership with Essex Police.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To reduce further the joint funding of PCSOs within the District, generating a further saving of £15,688 per PCSO, however this would be detrimental to residents within the District and could damage the Council's working relationship with Essex Police.

113. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION SERVICE - FUTURE FUNDING

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding future funding for the Council's Homelessness Prevention Service.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Homelessness Prevention Service had been introduced in January 2003. It had brought about a large reduction in the level of homelessness acceptances and had also led to a high number of people being able to remain in their own homes. The service had also brought significant savings to the General Fund as only a very small number of single homeless applicants had had to be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation as a result (currently only 4 people). In addition, less people were being placed in the Council's Homeless Persons' Hostel and only 2 homeless applicants were living temporarily in the Council's housing stock (for management reasons), which was not the case prior to the Homelessness Prevention Service being introduced. The Council currently employed 1 full time Senior Homelessness Prevention Officer and 2 full time Homelessness Prevention Officers employed on temporary contracts, jointly funded by the General Fund and a Government grant.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Government had previously provided a "Preventing Homelessness Grant" of £60,000 per annum, with the Council meeting the remaining cost of £30,000 per annum. As part of this year's Local Government Grant settlement, the Council had been awarded an increased amount of £113,000 per annum over the next two years for this purpose. The grant had not been specifically "ring-fenced" for homelessness prevention so the Council could allocate part or all of the additional funding for non-homelessness measures. However, if the

Council did not allocate the Grant to maintain the current service then it was felt that the costs of placing people in Bed & Breakfast accommodation would exceed the current cost of the service. There would also be a risk to the Council of the additional funding being withdrawn by the Government if its performance in this area declined.

The Cabinet was therefore asked to agree that, in addition to the General Fund's current contribution of £30,000 per annum, £60,000 of the grant was used both in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 to fund the continuation of the staffing for the Homelessness Prevention Service, and the remaining £53,000 was used each year in 2011/12 & 2012/13, in equal amounts, to further fund the Rental Loan Scheme and the Epping Forest Housing Aid (EFHAS) Rent Guarantee Scheme to further prevent homelessness.

In response to questions from the Members present, the Portfolio Holder highlighted the result of the Value for Money audit recently performed by the Chief Internal Auditor, which had concluded that the Service was providing excellent value for money. The Portfolio Holder also undertook to provide further statistical information on the Homelessness Prevention Service in the Council Bulletin, particularly on those cases that failed to make any further contact with the Council after initially presenting themselves as homeless.

Decision:

(1) That, in addition to the Council's current expenditure of £30,000 per annum, £60,000 per annum of the £113,000 grant received as part of the Council's Local Government Grant settlement specifically for homeless prevention measures for the next 2 years, be used to continue to fund the full cost of staffing the existing Homelessness Prevention Service in 2011/12 & 2012/13;

(2) That, to help prevent further homelessness, the remaining £53,000 per annum be used in 2011/12 and 2012/13 to further fund in equal amounts the Rental Loan Scheme and the Epping Forest Housing Aid (EFHAS) Rent Guarantee Scheme;

(3) That the concerns of both the Housing and Finance & Performance Management Scrutiny Panels be noted; and

(4) That a progress report on the Homelessness Prevention Service be considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel at its first meeting in 2012/13.

Reasons for Decision:

If the service continued at its current level and additional funding was made available for the Rental Loan Scheme and EFHAS then the prevention of homelessness would continue. If the Preventing Homelessness Grant was not used for its purpose, and the service was reduced or discontinued, then it would result in higher costs in providing increasing numbers of bed and breakfast and Hostel placements, and the possibility of the need to accommodate applicants in existing Council properties.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To use part of the Preventing Homelessness Grant for homelessness prevention measures, however the Government could consider this as an inappropriate use of additional funding to prevent homelessness and withdraw it.

To use part of the Preventing Homelessness Grant only for the Homelessness Prevention Service, however the Government could again withdraw the additional funding.

To discontinue the Homelessness Prevention Service, however this would increase the number of people placed in Bed & Breakfast accommodation and likely to be more costly to the Council.

114. TREASURY MANAGEMENT - STRATEGY STATEMENT & INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2011/12 - 2013/14

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented a report upon the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy for the period 2011/12 to 2013/14. The Strategy had been prepared with advice from the Council's Treasury Management consultants, Arlingclose.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council was required to approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators, as well as a statement on the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) before the start of each financial year. Within the new Strategy, the two previous limits of £5million and £10million had been replaced with one limit of £10million per counterparty, and the minimum credit scores for long and short term ratings had also been amended to reflect the change of limits. This had resulted in the removal of a number of counterparties from the Council's approved list. The maximum investment in a non-UK country had been increased from 10% of the portfolio to £10million per country, and a new investment activity – the purchase of Bonds issued by multilateral development banks – had also been added to the Strategy. There had been no changes proposed to the Prudential Indicators.

The Portfolio Holder added that security was the prime consideration for any investment made by the Council, and that the Strategy would now be considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on 14 February 2011 and the Council on 22 February 2011.

Decision:

- (1) That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2011/12 and Annual Investment Strategy for the period 2011/12 to 2013/14 be approved;
- (2) That the Council's Statement on the Minimum Revenue Provision contained within the Strategy be approved; and
- (3) That the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for the period 2011/12 to 2013/14 be adopted.

Reasons for Decision:

To comply with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accounting (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To request additional information about the Treasury Management Strategy, or decide that alternative indicators were required.

115. BENEFITS DIVISION - STRUCTURE & BENEFIT CLAIM PROCESSING PERFORMANCE

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented a report upon the structure of the Benefits Division and an update on Benefit Claim processing performance, as previously requested by the Cabinet in July 2009.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the establishment approved in July 2009 had been successful and had led to improved performance for the processing of benefit claims and a reduction in the backlog of outstanding work. The current performance was expected to meet the targets set for the Division's Performance Indicators. The Audit Commission had inspected the Division in January 2010 and reported that the service was poor. An Action Plan was devised and processes were reviewed to shorten processing times. There had been a significant improvement in processing times and the Department of Work & Pensions had indicated their satisfaction. The processing of new claims had improved from an average of 33.7 days in the first quarter of 2009/10 to 19.6 days in the third quarter of 2010/11. In addition, the processing of change events had also improved from an average of 11.4 days in the first quarter of 2009/10 to 7.8 days in the third quarter of 2010/11.

The Portfolio Holder added that the introduction of the Universal Credit in 2013 would impact upon the Division's performance but further details were awaited from the Government. There were no identified problems with the current establishment and the current level of performance was good. However, when further details of the Universal Credit were released or if staff turnover increased the number of long-term vacancies within the Division, then a further review might be required. The Portfolio Holder repeated his belief that the Audit Commission report following the Benefits Division inspection had always been unfair to the Council.

Decision:

(1) That the current position with regard to the establishment and the performance of the Benefits Division be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

To update the Cabinet upon performance improvement measures within the Benefits Division.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

None, as the report was submitted at the request of the Cabinet on 13 July 2009.

116. GOVERNMENT CONNECT SECURE EXTRANET (GCSX)

The Portfolio Holder for Legal & Estates presented a report concerning the Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSx).

The Portfolio Holder stated that the GCSx provided an accredited, managed network to connect all English and Welsh local authorities, central government, the NHS and the criminal justice communities into a trusted secure community. It provided a secure email service and enabled secure data sharing. Some Government organisations would now only communicate data using this network, for example the Department of Work & Pensions and the Council's Benefits Division. It would therefore be impossible for the Council to function effectively without being connected to the GCSx.

The Portfolio Holder added that the initial connection to the GCSx was free but from April 2011 the Government was intending to charge either £7,000 for a shared connection or £16,000 per annum for an individual connection. The Council was also currently a member of the Essex On-Line Partnership, at a cost of £16,000 per annum, however this was no longer providing any financial benefit following the Council's decision to adopt server virtualisation and thin client desktops. Therefore, it was proposed to cease membership of the Essex On-Line Partnership and utilise the £16,000 per annum saving to maintain the Council's connection to the GCSx.

Decision:

- (1) That the Council's membership of the Essex Online Partnership (EOLP) not be renewed; and
- (2) That the budget allocation in the sum of £16,000 for the Council's subscription to the EOLP be used to pay for the Council's continued connection to the Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSx), at a cost of £16,000 in 2011/12.

Reasons for Decision:

Membership of the Essex On-Line Partnership was no longer of financial benefit to the Council and reallocating the membership fee would allow continued connection to GCSx at no additional cost to the Council.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To allocate an additional £7,000 per annum of Continuing Services Budget growth for the GCSx connection and retain the Council's membership of the Essex On-Line Membership.

117. COUNCIL BUDGETS 2011/12

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented a report detailing the proposed Council Budget for 2011/12, which would enable the Council's policy on the level of reserves to be maintained throughout the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, despite the proposed use of £250,000 from the reserves. The budget was based upon the assumptions that the Council Tax would not increase for two years and housing rents would increase by 7.2% in 2011/12.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had assumed a 9% decrease in Government funding for 2011/12 with further decreases of 8% in 2012/13 and 2013/14. The actual reductions announced by the Government had been 15.7% in 2011/12 and 11.4% in 2012/13. In addition, the Council would be eligible for a grant equivalent to a 2.5% increase in the Council Tax if the actual Council Tax was not increased, and a New Homes Bonus if further residential development took place within the District during the year. As no details regarding the New Homes Bonus had been issued by the Government, this potential income had not been included within the Budget. The transfer of Concessionary Fares to the County Council had only resulted in a £20,000 loss of income for the Council.

It was proposed to reduce the target for the Continuing Services Budget (CSB) in 2011/12 to £16million, from an initial £17.1million, following the confirmation of arrangements for the transfer of Concessionary Fares. The largest growth item was an additional £63,000 for the increase in national non-domestic rates on the Council's

buildings. A number of CSB income streams had been adversely affected by the downturn in the Housing Market, including Local Land Charges, Building Control and Development Control. However, other income streams had exceeded expectations, including MOT income from Fleet Operations, and Licensing income. The Council's investment income had also been reduced by £350,000 due to the continuing low level of interest rates.

The Portfolio Holder advised that, following the decision to transfer commercial property from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to the General Fund, the estimated £1.4million loss to the HRA would be offset by an interest payment of £300,000; this would result in a net benefit of £1.1million to the General Fund.

The use of capital receipts on non-revenue generating assets had been highlighted in the Council's Risk Register. The Capital Programme currently anticipated the balance of capital receipts reducing from £21.1million to £6.5million over the next four years, although this would now be adjusted as a consequence of the decisions made earlier at the meeting when the Capital Strategy was considered.

The triennial valuation of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in March 2010 had resulted in a small reduction for the Council's ongoing contributions, from 13.1% to 13%. Applications for the capitalisation of pension deficit payments in the sums of £1.187million for the General Fund and £557,000 for the HRA had been submitted to the Department of Communities & Local Government for 2010/11; the Secretary of State had limited directions to 38% of the amounts applied for and it was intended to charge £176,000 to the DDF for the General Fund and £82,000 to the HRA to make up for the deficits.

In respect of the District Development Fund (DDF), the Portfolio Holder reported that the largest items of expenditure were £395,000 for the generation of the Local Development Framework, £363,000 for reduced investment income and £152,000 for the Planned Building Maintenance Programme. The current DDF programme of £1.143million exceeded the guideline by £243,000. However, as the DDF was perennially underspent, this was not considered significant.

The Cabinet was advised that the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy had assumed no increase in the Council Tax for the next two years. Current projections indicated that the Council's reserves would be £5.763million by 2014/15; 25% of net budget requirement would £3.678million and thus it was not envisaged that this particular budget guideline would be breached.

For the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Portfolio Holder explained that the balance was expected to be £5.5million at 31 March 2012, following an anticipated deficit of £83,000 in 2010/11. The average rent increase for Council dwellings in 2011/12 was proposed at 7.2%, which would further narrow the gap between Council and Housing Association rent levels. The Council's Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy 2011/12 had been the subject of a separate report, however the only significant change had been the appointment of Arlingclose to replace Butlers as the Council's Treasury Management consultants.

Finally, the attention of the Cabinet was drawn to the Chief Financial Officer's report regarding the robustness of the estimates for the 2011/12 budget and the adequacy of the reserves. This was a report required under section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 and had concluded that:

- (i) the estimates as presented were sufficiently robust for the purposes of the Council's overall budget for 2011/12; and

(ii) the reserves of the Council were adequate to cope with the financial risks that the Council faced in 2011/12 but further savings would be required in subsequent years to balance the budget in the medium term.

The Portfolio Holder concluded the budget for 2011/12 had been difficult to prepare but had met the Council's aim of being a low Council Tax authority, especially with 0% increases planned for the next two years. The required savings for 2011/12 had been met primarily through the transfer of commercial properties to the General Fund and a thorough examination of unspent budget allocations from previous years. The Cabinet was warned that further savings of approximately £1.3million would need to be found for the 2012/13 budget.

In respect of the Furniture Exchange Scheme, it was queried as to why the Council's funding for the scheme was ceasing at the end of 2010/11. The Portfolio Holder explained that no bid for funding had been forthcoming during the budget setting process, and the matter had not been discussed at either the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee or Scrutiny Panel. Consequently, the Council's funding for the scheme would cease in 2011/12.

The Director of Finance & ICT added that Local Government finance was to be thoroughly reviewed by the Government, hence there were no confirmed figures for the Council's likely level of Revenue Support Grant after 2012/13. The figures within the Capital Programme and Budget for 2011/12 would be updated following the decisions made by the Cabinet and the Medium Term Financial Strategy would be revised accordingly and re-issued for the Council meeting on 22 February 2011.

Decision:

(1) That, in respect of the Council's General Fund Budgets for 2011/12, the following guidelines be adopted:

(a) the revised revenue estimates for 2010/11, and the anticipated reduction in the General Fund balance of £307,000;

(b) a reduction in the target for the 2011/12 Continuing Services Budget (CSB) budget from £17.1million to £16million (including growth items);

(c) an increase in the target for the 2010/11 District Development fund (DDF) net spend from £900,000 to £1.1million;

(d) no change in the District Council Tax for a Band 'D' property to retain the charge at £148.77;

(e) the estimated reduction in General Fund balances in 2011/12 of £248,000;

(f) the four year capital programme 2011/12 – 2014/15;

(g) the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/12 – 2014/15; and

(h) the Council's policy on General Fund Revenue Balances to remain that they be allowed to fall no lower than 25% of the Net Budget Requirement;

(2) That, including the revised revenue estimates for 2010/11, the 2011/12 HRA budget be agreed;

(3) That the application of the rent increases and decreases proposed for 2011/12, in accordance with the Government's rent reforms and the Council's approved rent strategy, of an average overall increase of 7.2% be noted;

(4) That the established policy of capitalising deficiency payments to the pension fund be maintained, in accordance with the partial Capitalisation Direction obtained from the Department for Communities and Local Government; and

(5) That the Chief Financial Officer's report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates for the purposes of the Council's 2011/12 budgets and the adequacy of the reserves be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

To determine the budget for approval at the Council meeting on 22 February 2011.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not approve the recommended figures and instead specify which growth items were to be removed from the lists, or request that further items be added.

118. EXTERNAL RECRUITMENT FREEZE

The Leader of the Council presented a report about the proposed external recruitment freeze.

The Leader stated that the Council was facing an extremely challenging Medium Term Financial Forecast, which required significant levels of savings to be achieved over the next four years. Employee costs were a large area of controllable expenditure, and the Council had a skilled and committed workforce, in which it had invested heavily in terms of training and development. Consequently, it was felt that a freeze on external recruitment should be implemented to control costs, mitigate the risk of redundancies and retain flexibility in the delivery of future services. It was acknowledged that this policy would place additional pressure upon staff, but it could also provide development opportunities such as secondments to other Directorates. Temporary posts would also be subject to the new arrangements when the current contracts expired. A number of exceptions had been identified - when the post was essential to health & safety, generated significant surplus income to the Council or was externally funded - but external recruitment to these posts would be permitted only following the failure to recruit internally.

The Leader added that the Council was not looking to make any other exceptions to the policy other than those already listed, and that agency staff would not be recruited to fill any ensuing vacancies as the Council could not afford it. The policy, if agreed, would be rigorously enforced. The Acting Chief Executive acknowledged that the Council was under a statutory obligation to provide a number of services but Directors should still look to fill vacancies in such areas internally rather than externally. The Council was reducing the use of agency staff to an absolute minimum, although the Benefits Division did receive a large external Administration Grant.

Decision:

(1) That, subject to the exceptions set out below, a freeze on external staff recruitment be implemented for all vacant posts,;

- (2) That all posts be advertised internally in the first instance, with all permanent and temporary staff being eligible to apply but with agency staff excluded;
- (3) That, in the event internal recruitment to a vacant post was unsuccessful, a procedure be introduced whereby Directors might seek authority to recruit externally to posts which meet one or more of the following exception criteria:
 - (a) when not to appoint would expose the authority to a quantifiable risk with respect to Health and Safety requirements;
 - (b) where it could be demonstrated that the post was necessary for the generation of significant or surplus income to the Council; or
 - (c) where the post was wholly or largely externally funded; and
- (4) That the Acting Chief Executive, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Leader of the Council, be authorised under the procedure set out above to determine the vacant posts meeting the exception criteria for external recruitment.

Reasons for Decision:

An external recruitment freeze would assist in controlling costs, retain flexibility and help protect existing employees.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To continue to recruit externally to posts, however this would not be sustainable in the current financial circumstances.

To implement a freeze upon all external recruitment, however this would be counter productive in terms of risk, income generation and service delivery.

119. PROPOSED CALENDAR OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2011/12

The Leader of the Council presented a report upon the draft Calendar of Council Meetings for 2011/12.

The Leader reminded the Cabinet that it considered the calendar of meetings each year prior to final approval by the Council. The calendar had developed over time to meet the changing needs of the authority and, where possible, meetings of a particular committee had been standardised on a particular night of the week. Within the current Democratic Services Business Plan, item 13 of the Action Plan was to review the Calendar of Council Meetings, and in particular the frequency of meetings.

The Leader added that a small change had been proposed to the schedule this year for the Area Planning Sub-Committees, whereby each Sub-Committee would meet every four weeks rather than the current three weekly cycle. This measure would produce a small identifiable annual saving of approximately £3,500 per year.

Decision:

- (1) That, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report, the draft Calendar of Council Meetings for the period May 2011 to May 2012 be recommended to the Council for adoption.

Reasons for Decision:

Item for action within the Democratic Services Business Plan for 2010/11 & 2011/12.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

Individual frequencies of meetings could be varied. In practice additional meetings were added as and when issues dictated. Similarly meetings could be cancelled if there was a lack of business.

120. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was no other urgent business for consideration by the Cabinet.

121. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

There were no items for consideration that required the public and press to be excluded from the meeting.

CHAIRMAN