

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MINUTES

Committee: Cabinet **Date:** 30 January 2012

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.05 - 9.45 pm

Members Present: Mrs L Wagland (Chairman), J Philip (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Gadsby, J Knapman, Mrs M McEwen, G Mohindra, Mrs P Smith and J Wyatt

Other Councillors: K Angold-Stephens, K Avey, R Barrett, R Bassett, W Breare-Hall, K Chana, Mrs D Collins, Ms J Hart, Mrs C Pond, Mrs M Sartin, D Stallan, C Whitbread, Mrs J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley

Apologies: -

Officers Present: D Macnab (Acting Chief Executive), I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), A Hall (Director of Housing), C O'Boyle (Director of Corporate Support Services), R Palmer (Director of Finance and ICT), K Durrani (Assistant Director (Technical)), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), B Moldon (Principal Accountant), C Pasterfield (Principal Valuer/Surveyor), P Seager (Chairman's Secretary) and G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)

111. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman 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.

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

113. MINUTES

Resolved:

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2011 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.

114. REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

(a) Planning & Technology

It was reported that a supplier to provide broadband services throughout the District had been identified. More information would be available at the Council meeting in two weeks time.

(b) Environment

The Cabinet was advised that the extension of the waste management contract had been signed with Sita, which would provide the Council with the savings quoted in

the budget report.

115. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

116. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee reported that the following items of business had been considered at its meeting held on 24 January 2012:

(a) a presentation on the Local Strategic Partnership, and its current major project – ‘One Shop Local’;

(b) the Council’s budgets for 2012/13, including a short report from the Chairman of the Finance & Performance Management Scrutiny Panel;

(c) the Council’s draft Key Objectives for 2012/13; and

(d) the final report from the Task & Finish Panel looking at senior recruitment, which was approved for submission to the Council on 14 February.

The Chairman had also attended a meeting of the Essex Chairs of Overview & Scrutiny on 13 January 2012. The main areas of concern were the implementation of the Localism Act 2011 and how to scrutinise the new Parking Partnership.

The Cabinet’s agenda was reviewed but there were no specific issues identified on any of the items being considered.

The Safer Cleaner Greener Portfolio Holder added that scrutiny of the North Essex Parking Partnership rested with the County Council, rather than the District Councils.

With respect to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), the Council contributed £10,000 per annum to the running of the LSP, and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had been satisfied with the joint working being forged by the Partnership. The Partnership was focused on outcomes, not just discussions, and offered value for money. The One Shop Local initiative had only cost £3,000 and Members were urged to encourage more local shops to sign up to the scheme. The Partnership was also examining how the new Health & Wellbeing Boards would impact upon the District. The Cabinet felt that the achievements of the Partnership should be given greater prominence within the District.

117. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CABINET COMMITTEE - 19 DECEMBER 2012

The Leader of the Council presented the minutes of the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee held on 3 October 2011. The Cabinet Committee had made recommendations to the Cabinet regarding a revised project plan for the generation of the Local Plan. The Cabinet Committee had also considered the Rye Meads Water Cycle Strategy and Annual Monitoring Report for 2010/11.

Decision:

Local Plan – Revised Project Plan

(1) That the continued budgetary provision available for the preparation of the

Local Plan and the estimated additional expenditure required for further studies to be undertaken for the Evidence Base be approved.

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.

118. FINANCE & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CABINET COMMITTEE - 16 JANUARY 2012

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented the minutes from the recent meeting of the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee held on 21 November 2011.

The Cabinet Committee had made recommendations to the Cabinet regarding the: Detailed Directorate Budgets 2012/13; and Council Budgets 2012/13. Other issues considered by the Cabinet Committee had included the: Review of Electoral Register Costs; and Key Performance Indicators 2011/12. It was highlighted that the Council's Budgets for 2012/13 would be considered later in the meeting.

Decision:

Detailed Directorate Budgets 2012/13

- (1) That the detailed Directorate budget for the Office of the Chief Executive be approved;
- (2) That the detailed Directorate budget for Corporate Support Services be approved;
- (3) That the detailed Directorate budget for the Office of the Deputy Chief Executive be approved;
- (4) That the detailed Directorate budget for Environment & Street Scene be approved;
- (5) That the detailed Directorate budget for Finance & ICT be approved;
- (6) That the detailed Directorate budget for the Housing General Fund be approved;
- (7) That the detailed Directorate budget for Planning & Economic Development be approved; and
- (8) That the detailed Directorate budget for the Housing Revenue Account be approved.

Council Budgets 2012/13

(9) That the recommendations of the Cabinet Committee be noted for consideration during the discussion on the Council Budgets for 2012/13 later in the meeting.

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.

119. CAPITAL STRATEGY 2012 - 16

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented a report regarding the Council's Capital Strategy for the period 2012-16.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Capital Strategy was a key "high level" strategic document that was linked to all 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 focused on the current capital schemes and investment plans to 2015/16. Although there was no requirement for the Council to submit the Capital Strategy to the Government Office for re-assessment, it had always been deemed important to review it annually and thereby maintain a high level of control over the Council's capital resources and fixed assets.

Each year the Council's strategic aims and priorities were used to reassess the Key Capital Priorities and the ranking of each Key Priority was considered as part of the Capital Strategy. The order of importance would subsequently influence future decisions regarding individual capital projects. The Capital Strategy also identified partnership arrangements with other councils and organisations, which aimed to enhance the capital programme, and set out the funding approved to date, having regard to forecast income generation.

The Cabinet was appraised of the need to safeguard front-line services as well as keeping the District Council Tax low. It was highlighted that phases 3 and 4 of the Loughton Town Centre Enhancement Scheme had not been completed, but this was the responsibility of the County Council. It was also noted that some of the capital projects provided revenue to the Council, which helped to keep the District Council Tax at a low level. The Portfolio Holder added that the Council was planning to spend further money in respect of the development of the Langston Road Depot, and expenditure for the Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool had been reviewed as part of the process.

Decision:

(1) That the ranking of the Council's Key Capital Priorities be agreed, as listed on page 6 of the draft Capital Strategy 2012-16; and

(2) That the draft Capital Strategy 2012-16 be recommended to the Council for approval, subject to the addition of any capital expenditure subsequently agreed at the meeting for a replacement Property Management system.

Reasons for Decision:

The draft Capital Strategy was based on the Council's currently approved capital programme and took 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 to 2015/16.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To amend the Capital Strategy or the ranking of the key capital priorities and recommend a revised draft to the Council.

120. DRAFT KEY OBJECTIVES 2012/13

The Leader of the Council presented a report on the draft Key Objectives for the Council in 2012/13.

The Leader reported that the annual identification 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 over the coming year. The Key Objectives were intended to provide a clear statement of the Council's overall intentions for each year, containing specific actions and desired outcomes. The Key Objectives were not intended to reflect everything that the Council did, but were intended to focus on national priorities set by the Government and local challenges arising from the social, economic and environmental context of the District. The Key Objectives represented the Council's high-level initiatives and over-arching goals for each year.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning & Technology reported that advice had been received from Counsel that the Council should schedule three public consultations not two during the Local Plan generation process. This would have the effect of revising the date for the submission of the draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate from 28 February 2013 to 28 August 2013. The Cabinet noted the importance of producing a Local Plan for the District. National Planning Policy included a presumption to develop and the Local Plan would assist the Council in protecting parts of the District from over-development. The estimated cost of producing the Local Plan for the Council, approximately £1.5million, was in line with the cost being incurred by other Councils.

The Cabinet was also advised that the Local Plan had to be generated before any Neighbourhood Plans. The Council might have to support any Town or Parish Councils who wanted to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, given the cost involved, but the production of a Neighbourhood Plan was not compulsory. The Leader stated that the Council would like as many local people as possible to participate in the planned public consultations to influence the composition of the final draft of the Local Plan.

In relation to Key Objective 5, it was proposed that the wording should be revised to read "Maximising the provision of..." as it was felt that "Maximisation" was not a legitimate English word.

Decision:

(1) That the draft Key Objectives for 2012/13 be recommended to the Council for approval, subject to the following amendments:

(a) the target date in Key Objective 1 for the submission of the draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate be revised from 28 February 2013 to 28 August 2013; and

(b) the wording for Key Objective 5 be revised to read "Maximising the provision of affordable housing within the District".

Reasons for Decision:

The identification of the Council's service delivery priorities over the four-year period of the new Corporate Plan, and the annual adoption of Key Objectives for each year of the Plan, provided an opportunity for the Council to focus specific attention on how areas for improvement would be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered. It was important that relevant performance management processes were in place to review and monitor performance against the Council's Key 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:

The Council could decide not to adopt Key Objectives for 2012/13, although, this could mean that opportunities for improvement were lost. Failure to monitor and review performance against Key Objectives and outcomes, and to take corrective action where necessary, could have negative implications for the reputation of the Council and for judgements made about the authority.

121. OFF-STREET PARKING OPERATIONS ACROSS THE DISTRICT

The Portfolio Holder for Safer, Greener and Highways presented a report on off street parking operations across the District.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) had formally agreed to manage the off street parking operation within the District from 1 October 2012, at the end of the Council's contract with the current provider Vinci Parks Limited. This was in addition to the on street enforcement responsibility that NEPP would undertake on behalf of the County Council. The current Car Parking Team consisted of four officers. Under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) all four officers were transferrable to NEPP from 1 October 2012. However the Council needed to consider the staffing levels required to manage and monitor the arrangement with NEPP, manage its own car parking assets and carry out the remaining highways general fund functions.

The Cabinet was advised that the off street car parking operation generated an income of over £1.1 million a year and the Council needed to ensure there were adequate staffing resources to safeguard this income after October 2012. It was proposed that two new posts be added to the Council's establishment, these being a Parking and Street Furniture Manager, and a Parking and Street Furniture Support Officer. It was estimated that these staffing changes would result in increased revenue savings in the sum of £34,000 in both 2012/13 and 2013/14, which was £1,500 better than previously reported.

Concern was expressed about loss making Councils also having membership of the NEPP. It was highlighted that the potential deficits were for on-street parking, not off-street operations, however there were no losses currently predicted for when the County Council support ended in three years time, and if it did appear likely then a further report would be submitted to the Cabinet. It was also emphasised that the Partnership was not a fixed term contract, and that it would run continuously until such time as the Council decided to leave the arrangement. The current terms of the Partnership allowed the Council to leave it at any time after a notice period of one year. The proposed additional Officers would monitor and manage the Council's membership of the Partnership.

The Director of Environment & Street Scene added that the Partnership would manage any appeals against parking tickets issued, but that the Parking Adjudication Service was the ultimate arbiter. It was also envisioned that the Partnership would deal with Traffic Regulation Orders in the future as well. The annual income of £1.1million from off street parking related to pay-and-display charges and penalty charge notices from car parks only. Tendring District Council had chosen to retain their own in-house arrangements for off street parking and had not joined the partnership.

It was agreed that the Council's membership of the Partnership's off street parking enforcement element should be reviewed annually, and the Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Panel was requested to undertake this role.

Decision:

- (1) That the revised yearly cost of £260,000 for membership of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) for the management of the Council's off street car parking enforcement operations be noted;
- (2) That the four existing posts in the Car Parking Team be deleted from the Council's establishment;
- (3) That, following the transfer of the off street car parking enforcement operations to the NEPP in October 2012, the following two posts be added to the Council's establishment:
 - (a) Parking and Street Furniture Manager, and
 - (b) Parking and Street Furniture Support Officer;
- (4) That the revenue salary savings in the sums of £34,000 in 2012/13 and a further £34,000 in 2013/14 resulting from these changes be noted; and
- (5) That the Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Panel be requested to review the Council's contractual relationship with the NEPP for the management of its off street parking enforcement operations on an annual basis.

Reasons for Decision:

It was necessary to maintain an adequate level of resource to manage the agreement with NEPP and to deal with the highway general fund functions that were the Council's responsibility. Therefore, it was recommended that two officers should be employed to manage these responsibilities for the Council.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not have an adequate officer resource to manage the agreement with NEPP, look after the Council's car parking assets and carry out the remaining highways general fund functions like maintenance of street furniture. However, the Council needed to safeguard the income from the off street operations and maintain the car parks and street furniture across the District in a good state of repair.

To not transfer the existing posts to NEPP via TUPE and retain them in house to manage the contract with NEPP and other highway general fund functions. However, this would leave the Council responsible for potential future redundancy costs.

122. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT & INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2012-15

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented a report on the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2012-15.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council was required to approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators and a statement on the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) before the start of each financial year. The strategies, as amended if necessary, would be scrutinised by the Audit and Governance Committee on 9 February 2012 prior to consideration by Council on 14 February 2012.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Council was required to approve its Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) each year. In previous years when the Council had been debt free, the MRP did not have to be provided, but the Council was shortly to borrow approximately £186million for Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Self-Financing and this would normally require a local authority to charge MRP to the General Fund. However, the Government had produced draft regulations whereby any borrowing in support of HRA Self-Financing could be ignored, the Council could still be classified as debt-free and therefore did not need to make provision for MRP.

The Portfolio Holder stated that new regulations required the Council to agree the interest rate applicable to any inter-fund borrowing before the start of the financial year. The Council had undertaken inter-fund borrowing for a number of years, using the average interest earned on investments for the year as the rate for any inter-fund borrowing, and it was proposed to continue this arrangement.

The Cabinet was informed that the Council currently had an investment portfolio of approximately £55million, which was all denominated in sterling. There was no exposure to Euro debt, although the Council did have one sterling investment with a French bank. The Council was still awaiting confirmation from the Government of the final debt settlement in respect of HRA Self-Financing; this was expected within a few days.

The Director of Finance & ICT added that the Council was not undertaking any new investments with European banks at the current time. The solitary investment with a French bank matured in April and Officers were confident that the Council would receive its money at the end of the term. All deposits with Irish banks were in sterling and with institutions that were AAA (or equivalent) rated,

Decision:

- (1) That the following documents be recommended to the Council for approval:

- (a) the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2012/13 to 2014/15;
 - (b) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) strategy;
 - (c) the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators for 2012/13 to 2014/15; and
 - (d) the Treasury Management Policy Statement; and
- (2) That the use of the average interest earned for the year on the Council's investments as the rate of interest to be applied to any inter-fund borrowing between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account be recommended to the Council for approval.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure that the Council complied with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

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

123. ROUNDHILLS, WALTHAM ABBEY - FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding the affordable housing development on land to the rear and side of the Roundhills shops in Waltham Abbey.

The Cabinet had previously agreed, on 7 March 2011, that the Council-owned land to the rear/side of the Roundhills shops in Waltham Abbey should be developed for affordable rented housing by a housing association (minute 129 refers). However, in light of the Cabinet's more recent decision on 5 December 2011 to undertake its own Housebuilding Programme of Council-owned sites (minute 82 refers), it was now proposed that the site should be developed by the Council itself. A successful bid by the Council to the London–Stansted–Harlow Programme of Development Partnership Board had resulted in grant funding of £90,000 towards the cost of works for the proposed development, for which the Council had to enter into a Funding Agreement with Harlow District Council.

Decision:

- (1) That the Cabinet's previous decision (7 March 2011, Minute 129 refers) to develop the land to the rear and side of the Roundhills Shops in Waltham Abbey (shown delineated in black on the map attached to the report at Appendix 1) for affordable rented housing in partnership with one of the Council's Preferred Housing Association Partners be rescinded;
- (2) That the land now be developed for affordable rented housing by the Council itself, as part of its new Housebuilding Programme;
- (3) That, once appointed, the Council's Development Agent and its Development Team recommend to the Housing Portfolio Holder the most appropriate form and mix of residential development for the site, and planning permission be sought accordingly;

(4) That, subject to the receipt of planning permission, the Development Appraisal be approved by the Cabinet, in accordance with the previously agreed arrangements for the Housebuilding Programme;

(5) That the Director of Housing be authorised to enter into a Deed of Variation with UK Power Networks to vary the position of the Right of Way across the Council's land, granted to the former Eastern Electricity Board by the Urban District Council of Waltham Holy Cross in 1969; and

(6) That the Director of Housing be authorised to enter into a Funding Agreement with Harlow District Council (on behalf of the London–Stansted–Harlow Programme of Development Partnership Board) to receive £90,000 grant funding towards the cost of development, on terms agreed by the Director of Housing in consultation with the Director of Corporate Support Services.

Reasons for Decision:

The Council would retain the land asset and develop the properties as additional Council assets. The Council would also receive the rental income from the properties.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To continue with the previous decision to lease the land to a housing association to undertake the development.

To not enter into a Funding Agreement with Harlow District Council. However, this would result in the Council not receiving the £90,000 grant funding on offer.

124. ESTATES & VALUATION SECTION - PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development introduced a report concerning the replacement of the Property Management system used by the Council's Estates and Valuation Section.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the current GVA Grimley property management system required replacing with a new system that would provide a more flexible and efficient tool for managing the commercial property portfolio. Capital funding was being sought for 2012/13 to enable a procurement process to be undertaken for a replacement system. Estimates had been obtained ranging from £25,000 to £45,000, and approval was being sought for budgetary provision in the sum of £35,000 to be made for 2012/13. This sum would include not just the purchase and implementation of the software and necessary licences, but also the development of a link into the Council's financial management system and the training costs for staff in the Estates and Valuation section. There would also be an annual charge for software support, but this would be met from within existing budgets.

Decision:

(1) That an estimated capital expenditure in the sum of £35,000 be approved for 2012/13 to procure a replacement property management system for the Council's portfolio of commercial properties.

Reasons for Decision:

To ensure that the Council's property management system provided all the required functionality for the efficient management of the commercial portfolio; benefits from software upgrades as they occurred at no extra cost; was capable of future enhancement as required; and had a maintenance support package that was cost effective.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To do nothing and continue with the present system which had not been upgraded since 2003, was running on a version of the Oracle database that was no longer supported and for which system support costs were high compared with current systems which offered more functionality for less annual cost.

125. COUNCIL PROPERTY ASSET STRATEGY OPTIONS

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development introduced a report on an assessment of potential strategy options relating to Council property assets and associated costs.

The Portfolio Holder requested that funds be made available in next year's budget to engage consultants to carry out design, valuation and costing of potential development for a number of different sites. The information obtained would then, in turn, allow for strategic decisions to be made regarding the future use, sale and development of each site, including the submission of any planning applications as necessary. By obtaining this data the Council would be able to better assess the risks associated with the proposals for each site.

The Portfolio Holder added that a total of £205,000 was being requested for eight different sites within the District, plus consideration of the provision of public toilet facilities within the District. The estimated Gross Development Values of these sites ranged from £750,000 to £38million. The requested monies would be funded from the District Development Fund.

In response to queries from the Members present regarding the listed sites, the Portfolio Holder stated that North Weald Airfield was not the Council's preferred location for the new Waste Management contract Depot. The development of Langston Road Depot offered a potential increase in Business Rates for the Council, and it was felt to be unwise to delay the development because of the recession. In any case, further reports would be submitted to Cabinet to agree the next stage of the development. An approach had made to the Council about taking back the Winston Churchill public house for redevelopment, which might or might not include the continued provision of a public house at the site.

Decision:

(1) That, in order to cover the consultant feasibility cost for the nine projects listed in the report, a bid for additional District Development Fund expenditure in the sum of £205,000 be approved for inclusion in the Council's draft budget for 2012/13.

Reasons for Decision:

To achieve best value and most efficient use of Council property assets.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not progress sites. However, this could mean that the Council did not obtain information on cost, value, and risk from professional consultants on which to make decisions regarding whether the properties should be sold, held, or developed by the Council, or developed in partnership.

126. EXECUTIVE APPROVAL - BUDGET 2012/13

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented a report upon the Council's budget for 2012/13 seeking executive approval and recommending it to the Council for approval.

The Portfolio Holder presented the detailed recommendations for the Council's budget for 2012/13. This budget would add £19,000 to the reserves and the Council's policy on the level of reserves, that they remain at a minimum level of 25% of the net budget requirement, could be maintained throughout the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Over the course of the Strategy, the use of reserves to support spending would peak at £475,000 in 2014/15 and reduce to £164,000 in 2015/16. Spending from the Continuing Services Budget for 2012/13 was forecast to fall to £14.81million, whilst the budget for the District Development Fund would rise to £851,000. The budget was based on the assumption that Council Tax would remain at current levels and that average Housing Revenue Account rents would increase by 6% in 2012/13. Included also within the budget report was the Chief Financial Officer's report on the robustness of the estimates for the purposes of the Council's 2012/13 budgets and the adequacy of the reserves. It stated that the Council's reserves were adequate to cope with the financial risks facing the Council in 2012/13, but that further savings would be required in future years to bring the budget back into balance in the medium term.

In response to questions from the Members present, it was stated that the £5,000 of District Development Funding allocated for the Waltham Abbey Information Centre in 2011/12 had been additional financial support allocated for that year. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the income for the MoT Centre had reduced by £40,000 due to the loss of a particular customer, but a new customer had been identified which had the potential to make up the shortfall. The purchase of a new lift had been previously agreed which would increase the Centre's capacity to generate further income, but this would not be installed until the proposed move to new premises. It was intended to advertise the centre in the next edition of The Forester to attract new business from the public.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council would wait until the Furniture Exchange Scheme had secured new premises before its grant for 2012/13 would be confirmed, and the Handyperson Scheme would continue, but on a smaller scale, as the County Council had cut its funding for the scheme. The Portfolio Holder added that there would be further updates required to the budget report in respect of the other changes already agreed at the meeting before the Council meeting next week.

Decision:

(1) That, subject to the addition of the further changes agreed at the meeting, the following guidelines in respect of the Council's General Fund Budgets for 2012/13 be adopted and recommended to the Council for approval:

(a) the revised revenue estimates for 2011/12, with an anticipated increase in the General Fund balance by £63,000;

- (b) a reduction in the target for the 2012/13 Continuing Services Budget (CSB) from £14.88million to £14.81million (including growth items);
 - (c) an increase in the target for the 2012/13 District Development Fund (DDF) net spend from £763,000 to £851,000;
 - (d) no change in the District Council Tax for a Band 'D' property to retain the charge at £148.77;
 - (e) the estimated increase in General Fund balances in 2012/13 of £19,000;
 - (f) the four year capital programme 2012/13 – 2015/16;
 - (g) the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2012/13 – 2015/16; 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 2011/12, the 2012/13 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget be agreed and recommended to the Council for approval;
- (3) That the rent increases and decreases proposed for 2012/13, resulting in an average overall increase of 6%, be recommended to the Council for approval; and
- (4) That the Chief Financial Officer's report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates for the purposes of the Council's 2012/13 budgets and the adequacy of the reserves be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

To determine the budget that would be placed before Council on 14 February 2012 and recommended for approval.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

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

127. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that there was no other urgent business for consideration by the Cabinet.

128. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved:

- (1) That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

**Agenda
Item No**

Subject

**Exempt Information
Paragraph Number**

20	Licence Fees Payable by Hughmark Continental Ltd – North Weald Airfield Market Operator	3
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129. LICENCE FEES PAYABLE BY HUGHMARK CONTINENTAL LTD - NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD MARKET OPERATOR

The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Economic Development presented a restricted report on the Licence Fees payable by Hughmark Continental Limited, the market operator at North Weald Airfield.

The Cabinet was informed that a new licence to operate the market at North Weald Airfield had been granted to Hughmark Continental Limited in September 2010, which would expire in 2017. The Operator had requested that the Licence Fee and Infrastructure Charge be varied, on terms reported by the Portfolio Holder at the meeting, and this was agreed by the Cabinet.

The proper Officer had determined that the report contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person or organisation, which should not be published.

Decision:

- (1) That the Licence Fee and Infrastructure Charge levied to Hughmark Continental Ltd, as the operator of North Weald Airfield Market, be varied on the terms reported and agreed at the meeting; and
- (2) That a minute relating to the financial position taken by the Council be published separately as a restricted minute

Reasons for Decision:

The Cabinet was satisfied that all the relevant issues had been fully addressed in relation to the recommendations and that these should be endorsed.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

The Cabinet was satisfied that all the relevant options had been considered in formulating the recommendations, and that there were no further options.

CHAIRMAN