

**To: All Members of the County Council
All Chief Officers**

**From: COUNTY SECRETARY'S
DEPARTMENT**

Ask for: Sally-Ann Cole

Ext: 5228

My Ref:

Your Ref:

**RESOURCES, PROSPERITY, PARTNERSHIP AND CONSULTATION SELECT
COMMITTEE**

THURSDAY 25 JANUARY 2001 AT 10.00 AM

MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

N Brook, Frank Clayton, P V Goggins, B N W Hammond, I H Laidlaw-Dickson,
D E Lloyd (Chairman), J T Metcalf, R H Smith, R A G Thomas

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

D Beatty (Resources), M H T Janes (Prosperity, the Region and Europe) J M Pitman
(Community Information & Development)

Other Members in Attendance

D Billing, R Ellis, K Emsall, A Kilkerr, M Green, R Mays, B A York

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Resources, Prosperity, Partnership and
Consultation Select Committee meeting on 25 January 2001 as circulated, copy annexed,
action was taken or decisions were reached on individual items as recorded below.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Membership Changes

Richard Smith had replaced **Frank Escott**
Frank Clayton had replaced **Rashid Choudhrey**

PUBLIC PETITIONS

None

QUESTIONS

None

PART I ('OPEN') BUSINESS**1. CORPORATE SERVICES BUDGET 2001/02 – 2004/05**

[Officer contact: Lindsey McLeod 01992 555387]

1.1 The select committee discussed the Cabinet proposals a and b set out in section 2.4 of the report.

1.2 Comments and questions during the discussion included:

1.3 • The distribution of the £50,000 was queried.

Bill Ogle confirmed that all the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the select committees would meet at the beginning of the year to agree a programme of work and proposals on how to spend the £50,000. It is hoped to reach a consensus view, if not the views of the majority will be taken forward. At the end of the year the members will meet again to review the process.

1.4 • Concern was raised over the fact that travel expenses for categories C and F would no longer apply as it was felt that this would discourage members from attending outside events, such as, members seminars and training courses. It was hoped that this was not the intention of the panel.

David Beatty explained that the categories C and F were unique to Shire Counties in having this type of claim and the increase in the basic allowance should compensate for this.

1.5 • Disappointment was expressed by some members that additional allowance had been given to Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Select Committees and not to the Group Spokesmen as they had suggested.

1.6 • Members agreed in principle that appraisals for councillors were a good idea, but that the practical issues would need a great deal of careful thought.

1.7 • The importance of the support services for members was stressed.

1.8 The rest of the budget proposals set out in the report were then discussed. Comments and questions during the discussion included:

1.9 • It was questioned whether there was any scope for getting money out of the Learning Skills Council (LSC) to replace TEC funding.

Chris Sweeney confirmed that this had been researched and was not possible as the LSC are not eligible to apply for funding from the DfEE for Economic Development. We will continue to look for other sources for funding.

- 1.10 • Savings on Members' conferences were queried.

David Beatty said that the savings reflect current budget underspends.

- 1.11 • The select committee unanimously supported the proposals of the Independent Panel on Members' Allowances and the creation of provision for select committee support as included in the report and asked that the Cabinet reflect this in the resources budget 2001/02 – 2004/05.

1.12 Response to Cabinet

Consensus could not be reached on the rest of the cabinet proposals. A vote was taken and carried with the majority 6:4 that the following comment be put forward to Cabinet:

“That the select committee accepts and endorses the Conservative Group budget proposals as detailed in the report.”

2a RESOURCE BUDGET 2001/02 TO 2004/05

[Officer contact: Chris Sweeney 01992 555304]

- 2a.1 Chris Sweeney introduced this item and tabled a further explanation of the budget 2001/02. He informed the meeting that we are still waiting for the final SSA to be announced by the Government.

- 2a.2 The select committee discussed the tabled paper and Cabinet proposals set out in the report. Comments and questions raised during the discussion included:

- 2a.3 • Richard Smith identified that the growth in external capital funding was grants and credit approval and asked for information concerning the additional revenue cost of debt.

Chris Sweeney confirmed that the budget included borrowing and it was agreed that he would provide the information about repayments after the meeting.

- 2a.4 • Concern was expressed about the comments on the budget from the other select committees. It was felt that the comments submitted did not reflect the full discussions that took place at the meetings and that there was inconsistency in the style of the comments. The process of the select committees assessing the budget was discussed and it was agreed that this process needed to be reviewed.

- 2a.5 The Select Committee agreed to set up a 5 (3:2) member panel to look at Budget Review Process.

The names of members (and two substitutes) to be appointed by the County Secretary following notification by Group Spokesmen.

D Roberts
L McLeod

C Sweeney

S A Cole

2a.6 Cabinet Proposal

Consensus could not be reached over the Cabinet proposal, therefore, it was agreed that the following comments be submitted to Cabinet:

2a.7 Conservatives agreed that:

(a) That the resources budget proposals detailed in the report, including the use of reserves, be approved.

(b) That the Chief Financial Officer be authorised to borrow on behalf of the County Council for the year ending 31 March 2002 such amounts as are required to meet approved capital expenditure within the limits of the basic and supplementary credit approvals received; the amounts to be borrowed for periods which will not result in the overall borrowing limit of £150 million being exceeded, and of which no more than £70 million shall be short term and 30% with variable interest rate terms.

(c) That vehicles and equipment up to a value of £3.5 million be purchased by the County Council in the year ending 31 March 2002, the total cost of which to be financed by entering into operating lease agreements as defined by Regulation 20 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance) Regulations 1997, with the County Council acting as lessee.

2a.8 Labour and Liberal Democrats members did not wish to comment further and would wait until the Full Council.

2b BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2000/01 and 2001/02

[Officer contact: Anne Fisher 01992 588690]

2b.1 The Select Committee scrutiny of the BVPP took place in the form of a workshop, with the members dividing into three groups.

2b.2 **Members were asked to consider the following for each promise:**

- Have we done what we said we would do last year?
- What are the main areas in which we have succeeded and/or failed?
- How can we improve on those areas?
- Does the Plan give enough detail/information on all of the sub promises?

2b.3 To Improve Education To Give Children A Better Future

This group concentrated on looking at detail on the sub promises.

The Key Points the group raised:

- Be one of the top five County Education Authorities in the Country.

D Roberts
L Allen

It was felt that we should not only focus on exam but overall improvement of the schools and pupils in all areas. Improved life chances and life quality are equally important. However, the group recognised the difficulty of finding reliable comparative indicators in these areas.

- Improve pupil achievement in Hertfordshire schools

In detail the group hoped this promise would include:

- To improve current performance beyond Key Stage 1 and build on A' Level improvements
- This promise should relate to all children, not just those regarded as problematic
- Raise the educational achievement and educational participation of 16 to 19 year olds.

The group hoped this would extend to

- Review of our whole approach to extending learning
- collaboration (between schools and with colleges)
- LSC approach (including Connexions)
- Assist schools with the lowest current levels of pupil attainment to make accelerated progress
 - Early identification and intervention
 - "Hit the ground running"
- Help people to continue learning throughout their lives

The group supported this promise but felt it should be "whole life" strategy

2b.4 To Help The People To Help Themselves And Involve And Serve The Public.

This group raised a number of questions about the whole process of the BVPP

How do we do?

- Herts vs. national targets?
 - needs clarification
 - are our target setting methods the right ones?
 - do our targets cover all cases?

2001/2 Promises

- Are our targets/ indicators SMART?

- Are the undertakings (text of the Promises) reflected in work programmes?

Does HCC need to “own” targets/ PIs for Select Committees to actively pursue?

2b.5 To Make Hertfordshire A Better Place To Live And Prosperous Place To Work.

This Group also questioned the process of the BVPP an suggested the following:

Reporting Process

- Identify national and local targets
- Report each section separately
- Summary report by exception
- Review timing and Members involvement including outcomes and possible new promises
- Emphasis use of quarterly information and use of profiles/ projections

2b.6 Response to Cabinet

That the draft Best Value Performance Plan be endorsed whilst noting the views and comments from the workshop.

D Roberts
A Fisher

3 BEST VALUE REVIEW PROGRAMME 2001-02

[Officer contact: Clare Kaye 01992 555300]

3.1 Cabinet Proposal

“That the timetable for Best Value Reviews 2001/02 be agreed and that progress in on implementation of reviews be reported quarterly to the Cabinet”

3.2 During discussion the following queries and concerns were raised:

- 3.3 • It was queried why the AMEY Property review had moved to year five.

Clare Kaye, Assistant Chief Executive Best Value, confirmed that is was the review of the whole of Property Services that had moved to year five and that the AMEY contract is currently up for renewal and, therefore, is being reviewed now.

- 3.4 • It was proposed and agreed that “Local Education Authority (LEA)” be changed to “County Council Services to Schools”

- 3.5 • It was asked how much reviews cost in terms of County Council Expenditure.

<p>It was agreed that indicative cost of each review in terms of county expenditure would be provided in writing.</p>	C Kaye
<p>3.6 <u>Response to Cabinet</u></p> <p>That the Best Value Reviews Programme 2001/02 be supported noting that “Local Education Authority (LEA)” be changed to read “County Council Services to Schools”</p>	D Roberts
<p>4 ESTABLISHMENT OF MEMBER BEST VALUE REVIEW GROUPS</p> <p>[Officer contact: Clare Kaye 01992 555300]</p> <p>4.1 It was noted that the word “Panels” should be changed to read “Groups” throughout the report.</p> <p>4.2 After discussion on the number of members in the groups and a vote, the select committee established Best Value Review Groups of 5 members (3:2) for the reviews of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Safety 2. Employment of people & personnel 3. Economic Development 4. Voluntary Sector Grants. 5. Reographics and Communications 	
<p>4.3 The names of members (and two substitutes) to be appointed by the County Secretary following notification by spokesmen.</p>	S A Cole
<p>5 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING PROCESS</p> <p>[Officer contact: Jill Laycock 01992 555388]</p> <p>5.1 It was noted that the title of the report should be “Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Process” and not “Revenue and Capital Budget Process”</p> <p>5.2 Also that “Chief Financial Officer” should be changed to read “Finance Director” throughout the report.</p> <p>5.3 The Select Committee welcomed the frequency of the process, which will help members keep a better track on what is happening.</p> <p>5.4 There was concern over how members would receive the information.</p>	
<p>5.5 It was agreed that Select Committee members would receive the relevant report for their service areas and request other reports if they want them. It was also suggested that they should be put on Connex.</p>	J Laycock
<p>6 REVIEW OF TREASURY MANAGEMENT</p>	

[Officer contact: Nicola Shackleton 01992 555394
Stella Saunders 01992 555334]

6.1 Cabinet Proposal

The Select Committee agreed the proposed Treasury Management Strategy 2001/02 as set out in the report.

D Roberts
N Shackleton
S Saunders

7 **A COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR HERTFORDSHIRE**

[Officer contact: Anne Fisher 01992 588690]

7.1 Jane Pitman introduced this item and gave a brief update on the community strategy, as since the last Cabinet report was written a lot of work has taken place. There are five pilots up and running, which are individual to their area and consequently all at different stages. Lessons learnt from these pilots will form the basis for the proposals for member and officer support for district and smaller area based community strategies.

7.2 It was noted that “November 200” should read “November 2000” and the word “and” should replace “or” 2.4 line 6 in the report.

7.3 During discussion the following issues and concerns were raised:

- 7.4
- There was a similar strategy four or five years ago, which started off successfully but not all the members from the district level got involved and gradually the scheme dissolved.

Jane Pitman responded that the main difference is that it is now a legal requirement for all local authorities. We will do our best to keep the momentum going and keep all members informed and involved.

- 7.5
- There are already community schemes up and running around the Hatfield area would these count as one of the pilots?

Anne Fisher stated that the pilots were agreed in consultation with the HLGA. There are officers working on each area and on-going schemes can be incorporated into the local strategies.

- 7.6
- It was requested that a report on the pilots is given to the 21 June Select Committee meeting to inform members of how the partnerships are working and the pilots are running.

A Fisher

7.7 Cabinet Proposal

The Select committee recommended that the HCC approach to community planning involve the establishment of the following activities:

- A new Hertfordshire Community Forum, constituted as an outside body chaired by the Executive Member with community development portfolio, to operate at a member level and represent all sectors and

D Roberts
A Fisher

partnerships. This group will develop the Hertfordshire Community Strategy, supported by an officer group representing the same breadth of interests and organisations and recommend it to the County Council for adoption. In addition to HCC, the forum will include key partners from appropriate statutory and voluntary agencies and representatives of the local community.

- 5 community planning pilots to operate from November 2000 to March 2001. In some of these local area plans HCC will lead, and in others it will actively contribute where work is already underway. The objectives are to develop a mode of 2 and 3 tier community planning working and define the process and framework for rolling out community planning throughout the county from April 2001. The pilots will be Watford, South Oxhey, Buntingford, Hitchin and Royston.
- New structures for partnerships, which will aim to rationalise the existing structures into more logical forms. This will be possible once the key themes for the countywide strategy have been agreed.

8 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF KEY WORKERS

[Officer contact: Alan Warner 01992 556650]

- 8.1 The Select Committee requested that a full report be submitted for the next meeting in order that this matter maybe scrutinised.

A Warner

9 SCRUTINY OF SERVICE PROPERTY STRATEGIES

[Officer contact: Roger Fairholm 01992 555229]

- 9.1 After discussion the Select Committee established a short life Service Property Strategy Panel of 5 members (3:2) to scrutinise Offices, Corporately Managed Property, County Supplies and Contract Services and report back to the relevant chief officer.

R Fairholm to note

- 9.2 The names of members (and two substitutes) to be appointed by the County Secretary following notification by spokesmen.

SA Cole

10 SCRUTINY OF EQUALITIES ISSUES INCLUDING COMMISSION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY STANDARD

[Officer contact: Gillian Hibberd 01992 556653]

- 10.1 During discussion the following issues were raised:

- 10.2
- Disappointment was expressed at the levels that the major service providers had reached and concern was raised over the different progression rates of departments

Bill Ogley explained that the departments had started at different positions

and some services have a lot more to do to achieve the higher levels than others.

- 10.3 • The Select Committee requested a update report be submitted to the June meeting to check that we are on track to meet the target of level 3 by December 2001

G Hibberd

Andrew Laycock
County Secretary

