

**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL
OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 25 SEPTEMBER 2008**

Present:- Councillor R P Chambers – Chairman.
Councillors:- J E N Davey, K L Eden, D M Jones, R M Lemon, H
S Rolfe, R D Sherer and A D Walters.

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:- Councillors J F Cheetham, A
Dean and D J Morson.

Officers in attendance:- D Bradley (Interim Head of Finance), S Martin
(Head of Corporate Support and Revenue Services), J Mitchell
(Chief Executive), C Roberts (Democratic Services Officer) and
A Webb (Interim Director of Central Services).

FA10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Clover and M L
Foley.

FA11 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2008 were received, confirmed
and signed as a correct record. There were no items of business arising.

FA12 CHAIRMAN'S VERBAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Committee made a brief statement to the effect that the
Council was now on track to achieve a balanced budget. He congratulated
Adrian Webb, the Interim Director of Central Services for having carried out an
excellent job.

FA13 LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT

Members received the report of the Interim Director of Central Services
informing them of the recent appointment of a new Chief Finance Officer,
courses booked for training of Members, and a review of the car leasing
scheme. He added that the review might point towards a much bigger
scheme to achieve economies of scale.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

FA14 REVENUE COLLECTION

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Corporate Support and
Revenue Services on the rate of collection which, during 2007/8, had been the
highest in Essex and was now the target for the current year. The Head of
Corporate Support and Revenue Services commented, however, that the

effect of the prevailing economic climate was evident in the number of new Housing and Council Tax Benefit applications.

A Member said that the Council should be congratulated for the collection rate, but added that many members of the community would be in financial difficulty this year.

The Head of Corporate Support and Revenue Services answered Members' questions about bad debt provision and the cost of issuing liability orders.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

FA15

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the overall financial position including advice on uncertainties which would affect future budgets and options for budget consultation with interested stakeholders.

The Interim Director of Central Services gave a substantial and detailed update on issues which would impact upon the Council's MTFs and General Fund Budget from 2008/9 onwards, mentioning that he had hopes of savings to be obtained from the document storage handling and use review. He answered Members' questions and undertook to provide Councillors Knight and Walters with information regarding the Council's insurance renewals once the process was completed. He reminded the meeting that a comprehensive report on Fees and Charges would be brought to the November cycle of committees.

Members took on board the list of suggested public budget consultation processes and agreed these for the purposes of the officers producing a draft consultation programme.

RESOLVED that the pressures and uncertainties be noted, and the methods of consultation with stakeholders be approved.

FA16

MID YEAR REVIEW OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report of the Principal Accountant (Capital and Technical) updating them on the capital programmes for the Committee and for the Council as a whole.

The appendices to the report, showing the capital programmes, were explained in detail by Mr D Bradley the Interim Head of Finance. In answer to questions from Councillors Rolfe and Wilcock he set out the review processes which would take place including the procedural review of the Housing Revenue Account.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

FA17

ANNUAL REPORT ON TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2007/08

The Committee considered a substantial annual treasury report, pursuant to the Council's reporting procedures, covering the treasury activity in great detail and the actual Prudential indicators for 2007/8.

The Interim Head of Finance explained the details of the report, drawing attention to a reduction in capital receipts.

Members asked questions about effects of the credit crisis and the Leader of the Council thanked the officers for the complex and informative report which he found most interesting.

The Chairman of the Committee congratulated the Finance Team on the quality of all the reports before the Committee.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

FA18

BUDGET MONITORING 2008/09

The Committee considered the report of the Interim Head of Finance.

Councillor P Wilcock expressed a wish for simplified figures and the Interim Chief Financial Officer explained that a report would be submitted to the Committee meeting in November to examine how well the budget process had progressed; this would include Members' suggestions for improvement.

The Interim Director of Central Services drew attention to the shortfall in land charges income, and it was noted that savings were still being budgeted for from staff turnover which did not exist.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.

