

**RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES SAFFRON  
WALDEN at 7.30pm on 3 FEBRUARY 2005**

Present: - Councillor M A Gayler - Chairman,  
Councillors R P Chambers, A Dean, R T Harris, V J Lelliott, A  
R Row, S C Jones, M J Savage and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance: - A Bovaird, V Borges, C Hughes, P O'Dell and M  
Perry.

**RE72 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A J Ketteridge.

Councillor R P Chambers declared an interest as the Chairman of the  
Police Authority.

**RE73 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2005 were received,  
confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to  
the inclusion of the words "Chief Executive and" before "the Leader of  
the Council" under minute RE71.

**RE74 FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND SERVICE PLANNING PROCESS**

The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) introduced the  
report, which summarised the draft General Fund Revenue Budget for  
2005/06. It included all budget related recommendations from the  
current cycle of committee meetings and reflected the final technical  
adjustments and the recommended Council Tax increase of 4.5%.

He added that there had been some small changes, one was the  
recalculation of the Council Tax base which had seen the Council  
move from a surplus to a deficit. He explained that there had been  
some uncertainty about the Council Tax base used in the budget  
calculations. He then clarified that the tax base had to be agreed by 31  
January for the following budget year and would not take variations or  
fluctuations into account. He informed the Committee that the Council  
Tax increase of 4.5% for 2005/06 would now be based on a District  
Council Requirement of £7,368,410 instead of £7,395,623 as originally  
anticipated.

The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) then focused on  
the amendments to appendices, one and five, which provided the  
Committee with updates caused by additional information received  
since the original papers were distributed. He explained the changes to

appendix five with the deferment, reduction and deletion of a number of one-off spending pressures.

Councillor Gayler was concerned with the one off spending pressures that had been identified in the original appendices and believed that money should not be continually pulled out of reserves. However, he informed the Committee that the amendments to appendices one and five now showed that this problem would be resolved.

Councillor R P Chambers commended the Finance Section for an understandable and clear report. However, he expressed concerns regarding the long-term viability of the Council's finances and expressed the view that future financial settlements are likely to be more difficult than this years, which would put increased pressure on the current low level of Council tax in Uttlesford. Councillor A Dean agreed and added that there was a need to stay aware and manage ourselves the best way possible. He then referred to the public consultation and raised a concern that it was last minute and suggested that the Council would need to improve upon the execution of public consultation exercises thus improving the dialogue between the Council and the public.

Unanimously RESOLVED that:

1. Final approval be given to the contributions to and use of earmarked reserves in 2004/5 and 2005/6 identified in appendix four of the report.
2. A policy be adopted whereby the Financial Management Reserve falls to a level no lower than £50,000 at any time.
3. Final approval be given to the Corporate Contingency budgets contained in appendix 6.
4. Final approval be given to the General Fund Revenue revised estimates 2004/5 and the General Fund revenue estimates 2005/6 as detailed in the amended appendix 1.
5. Final approval be given to a Council Tax increase of 4.5% for 2005/6 based on a District Council Requirement of £7,368,410.

RE75

## **CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Capital Programme for 2004/05 Revised and 2005/06. The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) informed the Committee that the figures would need to be updated following the previous resolution on funding premises reinstatement from capital resources and also a reduced figure for CCTV upgrades from that contained in the report. He expressed his

concern regarding the current relatively short-term approach to the Capital Programme and believed that the Council would need to address and debate capital spending further.

Councillor A Dean added that the Council should take into account the new funding opportunities arising from Government housing initiatives.

RESOLVED that the Capital Programme be recommended to the Council for formal approval, subject to the changes announced at the meeting.

**RE76 HOUSING BENEFIT ANTI-FRAUD POLICY**

The Committee considered the detailed report presented by the Executive Manager (Corporate Governance), which outlined the current anti-fraud policy for housing benefit and council tax benefit and the proposed amendments to the policy to take account of the management restructuring which occurred in June 2004 and a change in the Council's policy.

He informed the Committee that under the amended Sanctions Policy on page 36 of the agenda the overpayment figure previously stood at £400, which was based on Government guidance. However this had recently been abolished and a more appropriate figure of £800 would now stand.

RESOLVED that Members adopt Appendix B as the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Anti-fraud Policy for the Council.

**RE77 MATCHED VOLUNTEERING**

The Executive Manager (Human Resources) introduced the report, which advised Members of a matched volunteering agreement for employees. She explained that the agreement would be offered to employees who volunteer in their own time and would run on an hour-by-hour basis of up to 7.5 hours per annual leave year. She informed the Committee that all voluntary/community organisations would have to be registered with the Uttlesford Volunteer Bureau.

Members were also made aware of the intangible benefits of the agreement not only for the Council but also for the District as a whole.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Wilcock the Executive Manager (Human Resources) informed the Committee that this agreement would be added to an existing policy.

Councillor Savage asked if figures on the amount of staff that currently volunteer in their own time could be made available.

Councillor Harris added that the Council should recognise the staff who volunteer their spare time to help the district.

RESOLVED that:

1. The introduction of a matched volunteering agreement for employees, on an hour-by-hour basis up to 7.5 hours per annual leave year is offered to employees who volunteer in their own time.
2. The Executive Manager (Human Resources) introduces and hosts an open day with UCVS to encourage volunteering amongst UDC employees.

#### RE78 **MEDICAL RETIREMENTS**

Members considered the report, which advised Members that two employees had retired on the grounds of ill health.

RESOLVED that Members noted the report.

#### RE79 **REVIEW OF THE COURIER SERVICE**

The Executive Manager (Human Resources) presented the report to inform Members of the progress and costs associated with the pilot courier service, which was introduced on a twice-weekly basis.

In response to a question from Councillor A Dean the Chief Executive informed the Committee that there was no evidence to prove that there had been an improvement in the Royal Mail's performance.

Councillor Chambers informed the Committee that he had received mail from the Courier and through Royal Mail. The Chief Executive explained that Members should only be receiving their mail from the courier and that officers had to request permission from him for items to be posted to Members. Members had been asked to bring to the Chief Executive's attention any mail that arrived by post from the District Council.

Councillor Row added that the old pigeon hole system enabled Members to collect their mail and worked well. In response the Chief Executive informed the Committee that he was looking into bringing this system back.

RESOLVED that the Courier Service be discontinued and the use of the Royal Mail be re-instated.

The meeting ended at 8:30pm.