(Minutes published on 31 January 2005)

(Before taking any action on any of these minutes, officers must satisfy themselves that they are not subject to the call-in procedure)

CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of a special meeting of the EXECUTIVE
held on 27 January 2005
at The Guildhall, Westgate, Canterbury

Present: Councillor Perkins (Leader of the Council)
Councillors Ashmore-Fish, Halfpenny, MacCaul, Matthews, Pepper and Seath.
Councillors Mrs Attwood, Austin, Cragg, Dixey, Gilbey, Kay-Bradley, Nee, Norris, Northey, Patterson and Mrs Reuby also attended the meeting as non-Executive Members.

E174 HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

All Members, officers and others present at this meeting stood in silence for a short period as a mark of respect for Holocaust Memorial Day.

E175 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Eden-Green.

E176 MEMBERS’ QUESTIONS

In the light of the news that the council was the ninth best in the country, fourth in the south east and first in Kent for the achievements on recycling, Councillor Seath asked the Leader of the Council whether he was pleased that the council had only been beaten by those authorities that were already implementing recycling.

The Leader of the Council advised that the findings were based on figures provided by DEFRA and that the councils in the south east with higher positions than the city council were Daventry, Lichfield and East Hants.

He was pleased that there were cross party attempts to improve recycling for the benefit of the environment and that he hoped the public would accept that it was in the best interest to recycle waste. He hoped that all the community would join in the recycling to make the scheme a success.

Councillor Cragg requested the Leader to comment on the exhibition of paintings by children of Vladimir that had been brought to Canterbury in order to raise funds for the children in Russia.

The Leader of the Council advised that there had been very positive reports from those people who had attended the exhibitions and that he was very delighted that many of the children’s paintings had already been sold. A significant cheque would be handed over to the organisers of the exhibition. The Leader hoped that as the exhibition moved around the district it would become more successful.
Attention was drawn to the assessment of the council's performance that had achieved the fifth highest score and the Leader paid tribute to the work of officers on this achievement. The Leader advised that he was delighted with the findings and that it would be a challenge for the council to remain an excellent council. He then referred to the need to improve further the access to the council's services and that this would be helped by the opening of the contact centre. He looked forward to a report in due course that showed how the response times had been improved.

Councillor Nee asked the Leader of the Council why there was up to a two minute waiting time for the lights to change at pedestrian crossings.

The Leader advised that for technical reasons the waiting time for each set of lights was set at different times depending upon the frequency of traffic in the road. He mentioned that there was a very long delay before the lights at Wincheap changed but for others the waiting time was much shorter. He advised that it was essential to minimise the risk to pedestrians and he urged Councillors to write to the Director of Community and Environment Services where there were concerns regarding particular pedestrian crossings.

**E177 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations at this meeting.

**E178 PARISH COUNCIL CONCURRENT FUNCTION APPLICATIONS 2005-06**

The Executive considered a joint report by the Director of Community and Environment Services and the Head of Housing and Community Development that set out the requests made by the parish councils for concurrent function revenue funding for the year 2005-06.

The applications this year had, for the first time, been made under the provisions of the revised grant scheme as drawn up by the scrutiny review process and the applications excluded the cost of street lighting and bus shelters, the responsibility for which was being transferred to the city council.

Twenty-four parish councils had sought grant funding for the eligible functions at a total cost of £193,389. The draft budget for 2005-06 allocated £143,190 for distribution amongst parish councils in 2005-06 but the funding in full of all the applications would require an additional £50,200.

The report to this meeting set out three options. These had been considered at the meeting of the Rural Area Member Panels on 24 January 2005. The Panels had also considered a supplementary paper by the Director of Community and Environment Services that looked at two alternative options. The consensus of opinion of the Panels was that having gone through the scrutiny review process and in view of the fact that all applications had been closely scrutinised this year, the total claim of £193,389 represented a true baseline figure for the parish council concurrent function expenditure and any amount less than full funding would result in double taxation. The Panels had recommended to the *Executive* that an additional £50,200 be added to the draft budget to enable the applications to be funded in full. They had also recommended that in future years grants to parish councils for bus shelter maintenance be limited to £130 per shelter.

Mr Hill (Bridge Parish Council), Mr Topley (Sturry Parish Council), Mr Giles (Littlebourne Parish Council), Councillor Mrs Attwood (Ward Councillor) and
Councillor Patterson (Chairman of the Rural Area Member Panels meeting on 24 January 2005) attended the meeting and, with the approval of the Leader, spoke to this item.

The Director of Corporate Services circulated a supplementary report that advised that, in some cases, there was still a need for clarity on some schemes and there were substantial increases in bids for recreation ground maintenance, such as fencing and equipment and for village halls maintenance. If the Executive wished to support full funding for the bids the report recommended that some of the bids be met from the capital budget provision following further discussion with the parish councils.

RECOMMENDED (to full council) –

(a) That the bids in Appendix 1 of the supplementary report now submitted by the Director of Corporate Services, be funded from the Parish Council Capital Projects budget.

(b) That the capital budget be increased by £30,000 to accommodate the recommendation above.

(c) That the Community Development Team obtain further information from the parishes on the content of their bids and discuss with parishes whether other projects for which capital bids have been made have greater priority.

(d) That a further report be made to the Executive on the proposed allocations following an assessment by the Technical and Community Development Officers of those bids.

(e) That the scheme be refined in the light of experience.

(f) That in future years grants to parish councils for bus shelter maintenance be limited to £130 per shelter.

E179 DRAFT HOUSING AND REVENUE CAPITAL BUDGET

The Executive considered the joint report of the Head of Housing and Community Development and the Head of Finance that set out proposals for the Housing Revenue and Capital Budgets (Housing Revenue Account and General Fund). The report also provided details of the changes in subsidy arrangements, rent setting formula and forecast of resources under the capital financing regime. The draft estimates supported:

- a programme of works that helped reach the Decent Home Standard in the council’s housing stock;

- renewal of homes in the private sector and helped to meet the council’s Housing Strategy.

Rona Winder, on behalf of the Tenant Consultative Group attended the meeting and, with the approval of the Leader, spoke to this item. She was pleased with the increase in the budget for improvements to the housing stock and sought clarification on what budget would be used for the Tenant Consultative Group participation. The Head of Housing and Community Development advised that the accounts followed the standard format recommended by CIPFA (The Chartered Institute of Public
Finance and Accountancy) and that a detailed breakdown was not shown in the accounts. However, she confirmed that the budget for the Tenant Consultative Group participation was included in the item for general management which formed part of the Housing Revenue Account.

The Director of Corporate Services reported that he considered that there was a good budget for the proposals now reported.

RECOMMENDED (to full council) –

(a) That the assumptions on resources set out in Appendix A and paragraph 2c of the report, now submitted, be approved.

(b) That the draft and revised revenue and capital budgets as set out in Appendices B-G of the report be approved.

E180 GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET

The Executive considered the joint report of the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Finance that covered various matters in order to determine the city council’s budget requirements for 2005/06 and its financial plans for the years to 2007/08. The report dealt only with the General Fund and not with any other accounts. It covered revenue spending and income and built upon the budget strategy approved for planning and consultation purposes in December 2004. The report dealt with the main changes which had arisen since December. The projections were based on a “broad brush” approach with a general uplift for inflation and with the concept of cash limited budgets the detailed estimates had been prepared on a similar basis apart from some minor adjustments which the report drew out.

The report discussed the implications of the provisional revenue support settlement and accompanying Ministerial announcements. The Director of Corporate Services advised that the Government had announced today that the revenue support settlement for the city council had been reduced by £24,970.

In setting the budget the council fulfilled two requirements; firstly, it fixed the level of council tax for the year (the details of which will be the subject of a further report) and secondly, it approved the financial resources necessary to achieve its plans for the provision of services.

The Chief Executive thanked the Director of Corporate Services and other finance staff, in particular Ian Cooke, for their substantial efforts in developing the budget now reported.

RECOMMENDED (to full council) –

(a) That the council approves the net revenue budget amounting to £18,130,700 and a council tax for Band D of £149.22.

(b) That the Council approves the projections for 2006/07 to 2007/08 as the basis for the budget in each of those years.

(c) That the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader be delegated authority to report to Council an amended figure
for the withdrawal from balances so as to take account of the final grant settlement, if different to the interim settlement and to retain council tax at the level approved by the Executive.

(d) That the Director of Corporate Services be authorised to amend the report, now submitted, to reflect decisions made at this meeting prior to submitting the report to Council.

E181 GENERAL FUND CAPITAL BUDGET

The Executive considered the joint report of the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Finance that covered the various matters in order to determine the General Fund Capital Programme for 2005/06 to post 2008/09. The report drew out the key issues and the resources available to fund the programme.

RECOMMENDED (to full council) –

(a) That the Capital Programme now presented be approved.

(b) That authority be given to officers by Section 2.6 of the Financial Regulations (previously Minute No 871(a)(iv) 1997/98) to incur expenditure on schemes in the first two years of the programme.

(c) That major capital projects or stages of them only proceed when funding is in place.