

56/08 (8) **Legal and Democratic Services:** The Cabinet Member (Finance and Resources) was invited to present the budget. The Cabinet Member outlined the approach taken to the budget and advised that there were no growth items. He stated that one of the main variations for 2009/10 was a reduction of land charges income of £200,000 due to the complications caused by the introduction of Home Improvement Packs, the poor outlook for the housing market and the activities of private sector search agents. He reported that savings of £32,892 had been identified which included the deletion of a part-time post in Member Services and reduced costs arising from new photocopying equipment. In relation to fees and charges, room hire charges had been increased by, on average, 4.5%. The main risks to the budget were the reduction in Land Charges income, the level of spend on Counsel's fees, which was mainly linked to planning related work and there was also uncertainty relating to the impact of the Council's position with regard to Single Status and Equal Pay Act outcomes.

Questions were then invited and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services responded to queries over the nature of and the budget for Counsel's fees and emphasised that this was a budget that he had limited control over since the demand for these services was dependent on the extent of demand for these services across the Council. He confirmed that the reserve for this budget would be reviewed at the end of the year.

In response to a question the Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that costs for European Elections could be claimed back but the rules regarding those items to be funded were becoming increasingly tight.

RESOLVED:

That Members noted the budget.

(Six Members voted for the motion and there were four abstentions)

(6.55 pm - 7.05 pm)