

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING
 OF EAST HERTS COUNCIL HELD IN
 THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
 WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
 WEDNESDAY 16 MAY 2007 AT
 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A L Burlton (Chairman).
 Councillors M R Alexander, D Andrews,
 W Ashley, P R Ballam, K A Barnes, R Beeching,
 S A Bull, M G Carver, R Cheswright, D Clark,
 N Clark, R N Copping, K Darby, A D Dodd,
 R Gilbert, Mrs M H Goldspink, A M Graham,
 P Grethe, L O Haysey, J Hedley,
 Mrs D L E Hollebon, Mrs D M Hone, A P Jackson,
 G Lawrence, G McAndrew, M P A McMullen,
 J Mayes, T Milner, R L Parker, D A A Peek,
 M Pope, N C Poulton, W Quince, R Radford,
 J O Ranger, P A Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby,
 G D Scrivener, J J Taylor, R I Taylor, M J Tindale,
 A L Warman, J P Warren, N Wilson, M Wood,
 C B Woodward, B M Wrangles.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Simon Chancellor	- Head of Accountancy Services
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Philip Hamberger	- Director of Internal Services
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Lorraine Kirk	- Senior Communications Officer
Mary Orton	- Director of Customer and Community Services

ACTION1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

Following the resignation of the Chairman, Councillor A L Burlton, the Vice-Chairman, Councillor P A Ruffles presided for this item and invited nominations for the election of Chairman.

It was moved by Councillor A L Warman and seconded by Councillor R N Copping that Councillor A L Burlton be elected Chairman of the Council to hold office for the Civic Year 2007/08.

It was moved by Councillor A M Graham and seconded by Councillor Mrs M H Goldspink that Councillor M Wood be elected Chairman of the Council to hold office for the Civic Year 2007/08.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, Councillor A L Burlton was elected Chairman of the Council for the Civic Year 2007/08.

RESOLVED - that Councillor A L Burlton be elected Chairman of the Council and hold office for the Civic Year 2007/08.

The Chairman made the statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office, and took the Chair.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

It was moved by Councillor J J Taylor and seconded by Councillor B M Wrangles that Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council to hold office for the Civic Year 2007/08.

RESOLVED - that Councillor Mrs D L E Hollebon be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council and hold office for the Civic Year 2007/08.

ACTION

The Vice-Chairman made the statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 April 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked Members for their support and for electing him as Chairman. In particular, he expressed his gratitude to Councillors R N Copping and P A Ruffles for their support as Vice-Chairman throughout the year. He also welcomed all newly-elected Members and thanked all Officers for their help and support to him.

The Vice-Chairman thanked Members for their support and appointing her as Vice-Chairman. She undertook to represent all residents of East Hertfordshire in the coming year.

The Chairman advised Members that he would be hosting a garden party at the Rhodes Arts Complex, Bishop's Stortford, on 1 July 2007. Invitations would be sent out shortly to all Members as well as representatives of parish councils and the County Council from across the District.

The Chairman stated that this was Mary Orton's last Council meeting before she departed for pastures new as Managing Director at Waverley Council. He thanked her for her work and offered his best wishes for the future.

Councillors K A Barnes, A P Jackson and M Wood, on behalf of their Groups, each expressed their gratitude for her hard work and enthusiasm in tackling many difficult and challenging issues. They also expressed their best wishes to her for the future.

ACTION

The Chairman referred to the outstanding performance of East Herts' representatives at the recent Hertfordshire Youth Games. East Herts had won the overall and the Girls trophies and had finished third in the Boys section. A number of other achievements were detailed by the Chairman. He offered his congratulations to everyone who had participated.

The Chairman reminded all Members that they were required to complete their Notice of Registrable Interests form within 28 days of their election and return them to Jeff Hughes as soon as possible. Members were also reminded to return their completed "All About You" forms as soon as possible.

Finally, the Chairman invited all Members and Officers to join him for light refreshments after the meeting.

5 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Councillor D Clark asked the Leader of the Council, for the record, what were the current balances on the major revenue and usable capital reserves and what were those balances anticipated to be in 3 years time (in April 2010), according to the Council's own medium-term financial model.

In reply, the Leader referred Members to his report submitted to the Executive on 6 February 2007, which set out the Council's revenue budget for 2007/08 and capital programme for the next 3 years. This showed that the current planned use of reserves was considered to be both affordable and sustainable in the medium term. However, this also acknowledged that tough decisions would need to be made in the years ahead. Currently, in the second month of the new financial year, the figures detailed then, were not significantly different, other than a marginal favourable variance.

As a supplementary question, Councillor D Clark referred to the Council's dwindling reserves and, given that the financial

ACTION

the Council's dwindling reserves and, given that the financial model was predicting council tax rises of 15.85% next year with another 10% the year after, asked what the current predictions were.

In reply, the Leader stated that these projections were unchanged as the same financial model currently applied. He reminded Members that such large increases were usually shown at this stage of the financial year as a number of factors had yet to come into play. He commented that the challenge in the coming months would be to manage budgets in such a way as to ensure that council tax increases were minimised as far as possible. He anticipated that such increases would be at a similar level to this year. Finally, he referred to the need for the Council to take a more sophisticated approach to the management of the medium-term strategy and, to this end, had initiated discussions with Officers.

Councillor N Clark referred to statements in the press, which had been published in the week of the election, that the Council had no plans to move to fortnightly refuse collections. He asked the Leader of the Council to clarify whether or not the current Administration was committed to maintaining weekly black bin collections for the full four year term of this Council.

In reply, Councillor M R Alexander referred to the progress made in increasing recycling rates and the need to reduce levels of waste going to landfill. He also referred to forthcoming service expansion plans and the start of a doorstepping campaign throughout the District to promote recycling. He reminded Members of the need to achieve a 50% recycling rate by 2012.

The Executive Member stated that there were no current plans to introduce alternate weekly collections, but that the Council was obliged to consider all options for the future of the service. He referred to the scrutiny task and finish group that had been charged with examining all available options. This group would be reporting to the Policy Development

ACTION

Scrutiny Committee later this year.

As a supplementary question, Councillor N Clark asked if the Executive Member would commit to a full and transparent debate on this matter at Council before any changes were made so that all the arguments could be heard.

In reply, the Executive Member confirmed that Council would have the opportunity to debate any recommendation of the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee.

6 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CHAIRMEN

Councillor J O Ranger presented the Annual report of the Scrutiny Chairmen.

Councillor D Clark referred to the absence of any reference to the Empty Homes Strategy and asked if this had been included in this year's work programme.

Councillor J O Ranger commented that the work programme would be considered at the joint meeting of the Scrutiny Committees on 22 May 2007 and that this matter would likely be included.

RESOLVED – that the Annual report of the Scrutiny Chairmen be received.

7 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

(A) PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
24 APRIL 2007

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 24 April 2007, be received.

ACTION(B) DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE –
25 APRIL 2007

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Control Committee meeting held on 25 April 2007, be received.

8 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S DECISION-MAKING
STRUCTURE

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report reviewing the Council's decision-making structure.

He advised that notification had been received of the formation of three political groups – Conservative (42 Members), Liberal Democrat (4 Members) and Independent (3 Members). Therefore, one Member was not aligned to any group. As a consequence, Council was invited to adopt the model for the allocation of seats on main committees, as detailed at Model 'B' of Appendix 'B' of the report now submitted.

Council noted the nominations of each political group to the seats on main committees as detailed in the papers tabled at the meeting and advised at the meeting.

RESOLVED - that (A) the following Scrutiny Committees, Regulatory Committees and Joint Member Panel be appointed, with the number of voting Members stated:

Policy Development Scrutiny	12
Performance Scrutiny	12
Development Control	16
Licensing	15

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Human Resources	7
Audit	7
Highways Joint Member Panel (6 from Hertfordshire County Council 6 from East Herts Council)	12

(B) the allocation of seats on the Committees and Panel in (A) above, be as follows:

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>Cons</u>	<u>Lib Dems</u>	<u>Ind (1)</u>	<u>Ind (2)</u>	<u>Total</u>
Policy Development Scrutiny	12	10	1	1	0	12
Performance Scrutiny	12	10	1	1	0	12
Development Control	16	13	1	1	1	16
Licensing	15	13	1	1	0	15
Human Resources	7	6	1	0	0	7
Audit	7	6	1	0	0	7
Total	69	58	6	4	1	69

(C) the allocation of seats on the Highways Joint Member Panel (6) to political groups be as follows:

Cons 5

Lib Dem 1

(D) the membership of Scrutiny Committees, Regulatory Committees and the Highways Joint

ACTION

Member Panel be as set out in the papers tabled at the meeting, with Members being appointed in accordance with the wishes of the political groups to whom the seats on these bodies have been allocated,

(E) Councillors A P Jackson and M R Alexander be appointed as Leader and Deputy Leader respectively for the life of the Council;

(F) the number of Executive Members to be appointed to the Executive be 5, plus the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council,

(G) the Council's Standards Committee be appointed for the ensuing civic year consisting of two independent members, three District Councillors (of whom one should be from each political party with four or more Members), one Town Council Member, one Parish Council Member and the following individuals be appointed:

District Council

Councillors N C Poulton, J P Warren and M Wood

Town/Parish

To be advised

Independents

Mr J Morphew and Mr A Walker (both appointed for a two year term in May 2006)

(H) the programme of Council meetings, as detailed at paragraph 9.1 of the report submitted, be approved,

(I) the Director of Internal Services be authorised to make changes in the standing membership of committees and panels in (A) above, in accordance with the wishes of the political groups to whom seats

ACTION

on these bodies have been allocated, and

(J) the action to be taken by the Director of Internal Services, in consultation with the Leader, under delegated authority, concerning the appointment of representatives to outside bodies, be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm

Chairman
Date