

Public Document Pack



Chairman and Members of the Council

Your contact: Katie Mogan
Date: 16 March 2021

cc. All other recipients of the Council agenda

Dear Councillor

COUNCIL - 18 MARCH 2021

Please find attached the following reports which were marked "to follow" on the agenda for the above meeting:

3. Minutes - 2 March 2021 (Pages 3 - 54)

To approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 2 March 2021.

6. Public Questions (Pages 55 - 60)

To receive any public questions.

7. Members' questions (Pages 61 - 62)

To receive any Members' questions.

Please bring these papers with you to the meeting next Thursday

Yours faithfully

Katie Mogan
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MEETING : COUNCIL
VENUE : ONLINE MEETING - LIVESTREAMED
DATE : THURSDAY 18 MARCH 2021
TIME : 4.00 PM

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE ONLINE MEETING -
LIVESTREAMED ON TUESDAY 2 MARCH
2021, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor J Kaye (Chairman).
Councillors A Alder, D Andrews, T Beckett,
S Bell, R Buckmaster, R Bolton, P Boylan,
M Brady, E Buckmaster, S Bull, J Burmicz,
L Corpe, K Crofton, B Crystall, A Curtis,
G Cutting, B Deering, I Devonshire,
H Drake, J Dumont, R Fernando, J Frecknall,
M Goldspink, J Goodeve, A Hall, L Haysey,
D Hollebbon, A Huggins, J Jones, I Kemp,
M McMullen, S Newton, T Page, M Pope,
C Redfern, S Reed, C Rowley, P Ruffles,
S Rutland-Barsby, D Snowdon,
M Stevenson, T Stowe, N Symonds,
A Ward-Booth, G Williamson, C Wilson and
J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Cassidy	- Chief Executive
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Katie Mogan	- Democratic

Helen Standen	Services Manager - Deputy Chief Executive
William Troop	- Democratic Services Officer

387 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Members to the Council meeting being held as a virtual meeting on Zoom. He also welcomed those that there were watching the meeting live on the East Herts District YouTube channel.

The Chairman advised that the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on Saturday 4 April 2020 to enable councils to hold remote committee meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic period. This was to ensure local authorities could conduct business during this current public health emergency. This Council meeting was being held remotely under these regulations, via the Zoom application and was being recorded and live streamed on YouTube.

The Chairman asked that Members use the raised blue hand function to indicate if they wished to speak. Due to a Zoom update, the raise hand function would now be used to vote on items. The Chairman said he would call out 'for', 'against' and 'abstain' and members would need to raise their virtual hand at the appropriate

moment and the result be declared at the end.

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Harvey Moore OBE to Members. The Chairman said that Mr Moore had been awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List for his role in leading the resilience response to Covid-19 at the Ministry of Defence.

Harvey Moore OBE addressed the Council meeting and gave Members an outline of his role which had involved planning for resilience and response during Covid-19, and then setting up for the recovery phase. He had engaged with medics, HR, the defence industry and military commanders. He said it had been a huge challenge, but one that was rewarding and it had given him a good insight in dealing with people.

The Chairman thanked Members for donating over £350 for his chosen charity at the last Council meeting where members wore Christmas Jumpers.

388 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor McAndrew. Upon taking a roll call of Members, it was established that Councillor Ranger was absent.

389 MINUTES - 13 JANUARY 2021

Councillor Fernando proposed, and Councillor Alder seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2021 be confirmed as a correct

record and signed by the Chairman.

The motion to approve the Minutes being put to the meeting, and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

390 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Snowden declared an interest in the Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy item (at minute 404). He did not vote on the item.

391 PETITIONS

There were no petitions to consider.

392 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chairman invited Jill Goldsmith to ask her question.

Jill Goldsmith asked the Executive Member for Wellbeing the following question:

“I note the proposed Cultural Strategy references on page 67 a number of partners involved in the development of the strategy and that more are being signed up all the time. Could the Councillor responsible for this Strategy confirm:

- a) Whether and when the team developing the strategy had contact with arts organisations in Bishop's Stortford to seek their engagement;
- b) What responses the Strategy group got from Bishop's Stortford arts organisations to feed into the strategy;
- c) Which Bishop's Stortford arts organisations the Strategy team are now in contact with"

Councillor E Buckmaster responded as follows:

"Thank you for the question Jill. I need to address the points more broadly than how they are asked in order to explain our approach. For the first part of your question 2020 was the designated Year of Culture (YOC). We sent 200 invitations to organisations across the District for the launch and around 35 attended. Like everything else YOC was impacted by Covid. We then set up a year of culture support group which had representatives from around the District and including Bishop's Stortford Town Council and BS Library, Clarion Housing and an artist and a sculptor from Bishop's Stortford, along with some East Herts members. I can forward the list of attendees from other parts of the District over that period. Over many months I worked with our officers towards achieving the basic framework of the draft cultural strategy which was always intended to be inclusive, open to all regardless of setting, location or ability. To reach those for whom it may be difficult to participate or engage."

"The survey was therefore aimed at the whole of East Herts, it is a strategy to inspire, connect and - above all

- create great cultural experiences for all, and was an early sense check of the basic principles”

“The survey was published on our website, went out through our communications team to social media channels and I asked every member of the council to share the link to the survey with their local networks. The point is that organisations that are not specifically involved in the arts are still able to deliver art and culture and we wanted as broad a view as possible along with those already operating. You can see from the list of partners so far on page 67 there are many community based organisations.”

“For the second part of your question we received a total of 51 responses. There were three named organisations from Bishop’s Stortford:

- Parsonage Resident Association
- Mondo Comico
- Bishop’s Stortford Library
- There were 16 anonymous responses and 8 named individuals with no contact details. It is not clear whom they represented and where they are from.
- 3 Village Hall & Community Buildings
- Bishop’s Stortford Town Council – we also requested them to forward it to their local contacts/groups
- 8 via the Community Grants Alert group
- 6 Arts and Cultural organisations
- 15 organisations through a Health and Wellbeing group list - Quite a few of these organisations cover Bishop’s Stortford in terms of their outreach and client contact
- there were 7 or 8 Organisations that have an office or

are directly based in Bishop's Stortford."

"In answer to the third part of your question we are partnering with organisations that can give us links to further groups, so again, Bishop's Stortford Town Council, The Dementia Friendly Action Group, South Mill Arts Centre, and Bishop's Stortford Library are examples."

"As I said in my introduction to the Cultural Strategy document this is just the beginning. With members agreement this evening we'll now be setting up the actual mechanisms needed to engage further and deliver the strategy."

"We'll work through the list of organisations we have on our database to update them, engage with new partners and seek opportunities to enhance the arts and cultural offering across the District. Our door will remain open to all who wish to enter from wherever they hail, whether already working in the arts or intending to in the future. We encourage Bishop's Stortford organisations to work with us as we do others across East Herts. It is going to be an exciting journey"

Ms Goldsmith asked as a supplemental question; "It is an interesting time in Bishop's Stortford with the South Mill Arts Centre, the potential closure of the United Reform Church to arts groups and questioning whether the Old River Lane project is worth having as a cinema. I urge the Executive Member to engage with a wide variety of organisations in Bishop's Stortford and if there is a need to have a collective view outside of

the town council, that you could work with people within the town.”

Councillor Buckmaster responded as follows:

“I agree and I would be happy for anyone to contact the team. We will be setting up a Strategy Group and a Delivery Group and anyone is welcome to join in if there are interested or involved in the arts. I urge Jill Goldsmith to stay in touch and the Cultural Strategy is the start of a very exciting period.”

The Chairman invited Chris Dunham to ask his question.

Chris Dunham asked the Executive Member for Planning and Growth the following question:

“The government’s official advisory body on climate matters, the Committee on Climate Change, reported in 2019 that it costs between £16,000 and £25,000 to retrofit a new semi-detached house to be compatible with net zero carbon, whereas it costs between £3,000-£5000 to build in compatibility at the point of construction.

The government recently announced, in its consultation decision on the Future Homes Standard, that it does not after all intend to prevent local authorities from setting higher environmental/energy standards through planning policy than are required by national Building Regulations.

In light of this, can EHDC confirm that, if this is

reinforced by a similar decision in relation to the Planning White Paper, that it will immediately move to implement a revision to the district plan to require new buildings to achieve net zero carbon in operation - and in doing so end the perverse situation where in order to allow developers to avoid £4,000 of cost we impose £20,000 of cost on society?"

Councillor Goodeve responded as follows:

"This is a really important question and I welcome the fact that the government has now set out its plans and timeframe for its new Future Homes Standard which aims to radically improve the energy performance of new homes, making them 'zero carbon ready' by 2025."

"In terms of the specific question raised the government has indicated that it has - for now - backed down on its proposal to prevent local authorities from setting tougher energy efficiency standards for new homes in their area. The government has said that its planning reforms will 'clarify the longer-term role of local planning authorities in determining local energy efficiency standards'."

"I would welcome the ability for this Council to be able to set and justify higher standards of energy efficiency. As colleagues are aware, the Council has agreed a climate change motion, and in order to reach a position of net zero carbon by 2030 it needs the tools to be able to achieve this."

"I therefore agree that climate change needs a strong

response at a local level and as such this Council will be fully committed, once the government's position has been clarified through its planning reforms, to reviewing its District Plan in a timely manner, including updating its evidence base to be able to justify higher standards of energy efficiency."

Mr Dunham asked as a supplemental question; "I welcome the response from Councillor Goodeve but wonder what 'timely manner' means in practice. New homes are being built all the time and are the council ready to move quickly to limit any damage that is currently being allowed by not imposing strict standards?"

Councillor Goodeve responded as follows:

"I agree and it is in our own interests and our children's and the Council will move as fast as we are able to."

393 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Frecknall asked the Executive Member for Wellbeing the following question

"In a recent publication by The Lancet, 1 in 6 young people reported mental health problems - an increase from 1 in 10 in 2017. This figure, based on results from England's Mental Health of Children and Young People Survey (MHCYP), brings into stark reality the often unseen impact of the pandemic on the youngest members of our society. Children with probable mental health problems are more than twice as likely to live in households newly falling behind with their

bills, rent, or mortgage payments and that one in ten children and young people reported that during the pandemic their family did not have enough to eat or have had an increased reliance on foodbanks when compared with before the pandemic. While much of the responsibility of Child Mental Health commissioning rests with HCC, what help or support networks are available from East Hertfordshire District Council to help protect the mental health of our future generations?"

Councillor E Buckmaster responded as follows:

"Thank you to Councillor Frecknall for the question. I am going to take that as networks open to East Herts residents since the District Council does not directly commission mental health services, and Children's services come under County. I'll try to give some background and pointers about what may be available generally and then some interactions with East Herts. 90% of the funding for mental health comes from the NHS and there is an emotional and mental health wellbeing board which is cross agency and monitors that delivery and funding.

My main message is that it is important for members to subscribe to bulletins or notifications so that we are aware of initiatives and programmes promoted by various organisations and agencies. Very often these are promoted via communications bulletins or on social media and which we can onward share among our communities."

"The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in

Hertfordshire and Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust, CAMHS and HPFT cover services that support the emotional and mental health of children and young people like school counselling, play therapy and more specialist teams like the eating disorder service and they have strong links with Children's Social Care and Education Services with teams made up of a wide variety of professionals and specialist nurses."

"Ahead of the return to school last autumn a really useful document was issued by Hertfordshire to support transition back to school following the Covid-19 outbreak and contains some useful links to support Information and Advice Helplines. This document is designed for school leaders to support the emotional wellbeing of staff and students in returning to school following Covid-19 lockdown arrangements. It's designed to help schools put in place steps to support the wellbeing needs of all staff and pupils and plan more targeted support for vulnerable students. The main concerns of school staff and parents include social aspects of school, reluctance to return to school, academic progress, and the mental health of children and young people"

"On the Gov.uk website there is a link to PHE's advice for parents and carers on looking after the mental health and wellbeing of children or young people during the coronavirus outbreak and has been [updated to include a section for students](#). There is also an easy read version available."

"From County Council Specifically on Covid there is a new helpline for school staff and pupils. Training for

schools has been delivered through the Department of Education – Wellbeing for Education Return’ programme – linked to this

“Hertfordshire is funding supervision for 100 school professionals with resilience programmes for 1,500 parents and an emotional regulation pilot in schools across Herts.”

“There are examples of other initiatives and agencies that can support young people. Youth Connections Hertfordshire-have emotional wellbeing projects and diversionary programmes”

“Just Talk is a multi-agency campaign, steered by young people.

Professionals from various agencies in Hertfordshire came to the conclusion that mental health services, projects and campaigns were better meeting the needs of girls than boys.

It was an outcome of extensive research and consultation that took place with teenage boys across Hertfordshire.”

“Another initiative is Healthy Young Minds in Herts. This is an accreditation process and supporting documents have been created to help schools navigate through 11 areas which will support a whole school approach and positive steps which schools can consider taking to help students, parents, carers and school staff maintain good mental health throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“Being fit and active is an important part of mental wellbeing. Herts Sports Partnership (HSP) and Herts Community Foundation (HCF) were selected as HCC partners to coordinate a programme of Holiday activities and food programme which will cover the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays in 2021. The focus of the programme is the provision of free holiday provision - including healthy food and enriching activities - for all children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals (FSM)”

“The Herts Sports Partnership is also running a course on Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Physical Activity for coaches.

One of our Healthy Hub partners, Mind in Mid Herts, can also interact with schools and provides support for the over 16s.”

“Closer to Home Hertford Theatre has been awarded a small grant by the Royal Opera House Bridge organisation to engage in a planning and consultation exercise with primary and secondary schools in East Herts with regards to their wellbeing needs and how best the Theatre can serve them. This would lead to a year long process of creative engagement responding to their key learning and well-being priorities. And of course this evening we have on our agenda the new East Herts Cultural strategy which we aim to be of benefit to those of all ages and circumstances. Another direct way we can aid mental health and wellbeing for future generations and residents is via the planning process and masterplanning to ensure we create healthy communities, and a number of supplementary planning documents support that.”

“Our Grant funding has also been key in supporting many local organisations to help young people keep physically and mentally active. I’ll provide a fuller response for the website in which I’ll list as a few examples”

“I’d like to mention that since the pandemic hit, we have funded a considerable number of local groups and activities with the express aim of helping people retain their mental health and remain as active as possible. Our monitoring shows that over the last year, schemes funded with community grants have directly supported 338 young people and carers with the knock-on effect likely to be much larger. Just a few such schemes include:

- Grove Cottage Mencap in Bishop’s Stortford who are running of weekly social clubs for adults and children, a Saturday club and holiday clubs for children
- Courtyard Arts who are delivering an Art Reach programme linked to Hertford Foodbank. This uses art to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness, increase feelings of self-worth and improve mental health and wellbeing
- Children’s Integrated Play Schemes in each market town.”

“Sport and keeping active are key ways to promote and maintain mental health and so I’m pleased to say that with our Leisure Services have been promoting sport options for young people to boost their health and wellbeing, including learn-to-swim schemes, teen gym sessions, works with various sporting partners for

football coaching we aim to use sport and activity as a positive vehicle for engaging young people.”

“In addition, we fund a group called Active in the Community to run sports development activity in the district. They have provided online classes throughout the pandemic and lockdowns. In the first lockdown, 140 online classes were available per week. By the third lockdown 216 classes per week were on offer. The majority of classes are open to all ages, although many are particularly popular with younger people include physical exercise classes and dance classes. These classes have been attended by over 2,000 different people from East Herts.”

“We are very keen to build on this level of engagement as we come out of lockdown because we realise that some young people will need help with maintaining or regaining their mental health at this challenging time. For example, post-pandemic, our Leisure Services are looking at options for things like Street Games and Football Fives. Also, a focus of the coming year’s community grants will be on Covid recovering, including promoting mental wellbeing.”

“I think my final message to members is to ensure any queries received from residents are quickly referred on to the appropriate officers at East Herts or County or they can be directed to the Herts Help web page or help line.”

“I hope that in some way addresses the question.”

Councillor Frecknall asked as a supplemental question;

"I hope, if possible, that some of these links could be posted on the website under the Health and Wellbeing section. There is a lot of information about male mental health, which is great but there needs to be information and resources for female mental health, children's mental health etc."

Councillor Buckmaster responded as follows:

"These are all good points raised and we are thinking about how to improve the use of the Healthy Hub and also linking social prescribing and mental wellbeing into the Cultural Strategy. Thank you for the question as it has challenged and focussed my thinking into how to address it."

Councillor Crystall asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability the following question:

"According to figures in the latest East Herts Council analysis: "2020 Air Quality Annual Status Report for East Herts", in 2019 nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels breached the annual UK legal limit at numerous locations in and near to current AQMAs, namely: Hockerill Junction, Northgate End, Station Road and London Road in Bishop's Stortford; at Bell Street and London Road in Sawbridgeworth; and at Ware Road, Old Cross, North Road and West Street in Hertford. Some sites in Bishop's Stortford were more than 50% above the UK limit and at about half of the locations tested, the year-on-year trend in NO₂ concentrations is rising.

Although the 2020 figures are likely to be lower due to

COVID, the latest DfT data shows that during September 2020, UK traffic levels reached pre-lockdown levels, so it is likely that we will return to usual traffic levels by summer. In addition our towns are seeing large numbers of new developments, bringing more gas boilers and more combustion engines.

Given these facts, what evidence do we have that council actions to reduce NO₂ air pollution within AQMAs are effective? And is it time for the council to investigate innovative ideas to help reduce air pollution at targeted sites?"

Councillor Cutting responded to the question on behalf of Councillor McAndrew as follows:

"I welcome Cllr Crystall's analysis of the statistics and share his concern that levels of NO₂ have not yet fallen below the 40 microgrammes per cubic metre target at all monitoring sites within each of the AQMAs."

"I believe the statistics do, however, point to some degree of success in tackling air pollution. Notably NO₂ levels at four of the six monitoring locations within the Hertford AQMA are below the target with the other two only just above the target. That said however, the picture is more mixed in the Sawbridgeworth and Hockerill junction AQMAs."

"In the face of these challenges, I would contend that the council is taking innovative steps to mobilise all those with a role to play in reducing air pollution, while recognising sometimes conflicting views which the

council in its local leadership role must seek to address.”

“I would like to point out that the council is one of only a minority of authorities which operate an e-car club and that at Hockerill junction, we have worked with Hertfordshire County Council to see the installation of smart traffic light management to reduce the time vehicles spend idling. To some degree, this is likely to have directly contributed to improvements in air quality at the junction despite no discernible decrease in the amount of traffic.”

“Finally, I would like to draw members’ attention to the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document on this evening’s agenda with a recommendation for adoption. This SPD has been based on best practice and a considerable amount of research and consultation. The document is unequivocal in its requirement that new development must not lead to the designation of a new Air Quality Management Area or worsen pollutant levels within an existing one. In addition, it clearly lays out the council’s expectations regarding the installation of low emission heating systems. The SPD will require applicants to provide a detailed account of how they will mitigate any potential air quality degradation and this information will feed into the planning decision-making process.”

“Through the examples I have highlighted, I hope I have demonstrated the council’s innovative and concerted efforts to tackle air pollution. That said, I and colleagues are happy to consider further ideas on how as a district council we can directly or through our influence work with residents and partners to continue

to drive up local air quality.”

Councillor Dumont asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability the following question:

“There are three air quality management areas in East Herts, in Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth and Hertford respectively. The last available pollution readings are from 2019. Given that there has recently been a great deal of congestion in one of those areas due to a new development being built, it is imperative that we get real-time data or at the very least more regular updates regarding levels of air pollutants in these pollution hotspots. Increasing public awareness of this issue can also help change behaviour but we need more up to date data to do this effectively. Can I therefore ask if the council has any plans to improve air quality monitoring in the three AQMA areas and in the District as a whole, and if not, why not?”

Councillor Goodeve responded to the question on behalf of Councillor McAndrew as follows:

“As Cllr Dumont has noted, there are three AQMAs in East Herts within which air quality is monitored. The latest findings are based on 2019 results. There is an unavoidable time delay in producing our report because the council must first submit the data to Defra for analysis and verification.”

“With regard to real-time monitoring, this is carried out in the Hertford AQMA with information readily available at www.airqualityengland.co.uk While we

have publicised the website before, I feel it would be help to do this again.”

“The principal aim of air quality monitoring, of course, is to better understand the local situation so as to put in place remedial measures where necessary. In response to Cllr Crystall’s question, I have already made reference to the detailed statistics the council holds on air quality in the AQMAs.

Cllr Dumont raises the crucial importance of behaviour change with which I concur. To this end, the council has over the last two year installed a dozen e-vehicle chargers in the district and is working to install more; we have promoted pedestrian journeys into Hertford town centre by upgrading the pedestrian underpasses and we are currently working with Hertfordshire County Council to promote anti-idling messages and signage.”

“We are reliant upon a third party contractor to provide us with our ratified continuous monitor data which will be ready by about April, once we have this we fill out a special spreadsheet with our corresponding co located diffusion tubes on with the result for each of the ‘periods’ in 2020, this then gets sent back to the third party contractor, which then calculates a bias adjustment factor which we can apply to all of the tubes which then gives us accurate tube results. Once we have all of these results we can then write our ASR, which DEFRA require us to submit by the end of June (as they appreciate all of the steps involved with the data are out of our control and take a while). We don’t release the report until it’s been sent to DEFRA”

“To conclude, I would argue that given the council’s limited resources, rather than invest in additional real-time monitoring to simply add to our existing body of data, it is better to continue to focus our attention on making interventions to foster behaviour change.”

Councillor Wilson asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability the following question:

“In October 2019, I proposed a motion that, once amended, was passed unanimously regarding the provision of an On Demand or Demand Responsive Transport service for East Herts. I understand that there has been some progress towards achieving this aim and would be grateful if Cllr McAndrew could provide an update with regards to its progress and his opinion on why the District would benefit from it.”

Councillor E Buckmaster responded to the question on behalf of Councillor McAndrew as follows:

“I’d like to thank Councillor Wilson for advance warning of the question and giving me the opportunity to update the council on progress.”

“Early last year Hertfordshire County Council put a number of bids to the DfT for funding from the Rural Mobility Fund (Demand Responsive Travel). After 75 applications across the country it was announced that the rural North East of Herts DRT bid has progressed to phase 2. There are 17 successful Local Authorities to be accepted at this stage. The County Council have been working on the second phase of this funding and have submitted that to the Department for Transport

for review.”

“The proposed scheme would serve North and East Herts, focusing primarily on Buntingford and surrounding areas. Travel would be allowed anywhere within this zone, however, passengers would also be able to travel to key points (such as hospitals and high streets) within the six main towns surrounding the area: Royston, Letchworth, Hitchin, Stevenage, Bishop’s Stortford and Baldock.”

“The objective of the DRT is to improve transport in North and East Herts and to improve connections between rural areas and town centres, as well as expand access to employment, education, healthcare, and shopping. The DRT service will help to reduce social isolation and improve accessibility for transport-disadvantaged people in the focus area, particularly people who have access to neither private cars nor public transport.”

“The Department for Transport are looking to make an announcement on the successful bids early March. Accompanying this response when published on the website there will be an attached map which shows the operational zone and the six key hubs.”

Councillor Devonshire asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability the following question:

“Please can you give this council an update on the number of households that have signed up for the garden waste bin collections? Does this give any early indication on the total number of households that will

subscribe by April and is this in line with the initial expectations?"

A written response was provided by Councillor McAndrew as follows:

"I would like to thank Councillor Devonshire for his question in advance giving me an opportunity to update the council. The latest figure for the current sign up is 9,558 households equating to 9,883 bins. 85% of sign ups have been by direct debit and bin subscriptions are currently at 16% against our target of 45%."

"We are pleased with sign up numbers to date. As you will appreciate sign up numbers are difficult to predict, however signup was launched roughly 6 weeks in advance of the start-up of the service and we have about 1/3 of the expected number of households signed up in the first two weeks."

"We know from experience at other councils that sign up numbers will increase sharply towards the end of the early bird offer and we can expect anywhere between 5 -10% of sign-ups to occur after the start of the service with residents having forgotten to sign up sooner."

"We would encourage all members to be sharing posts published by the Council, about sign up, on their social media and sharing information when talking to community groups and residents."

Councillor Bell asked the Executive Member for

Neighbourhoods the following question:

“What is the council doing to ensure that housing associations continue to respond to the needs of their residents during the pandemic?”

A written response was provided by Councillor Boylan as follows:

“The council has worked closely with housing associations throughout the pandemic and continues to do so today. Regular one-to-one virtual meetings have continued between senior housing officers and housing associations, with supporting residents being a consistent topic for discussion.”

“There is much work being undertaken by housing association partners. The council has a role to promote this work and help overcome any blockages to service delivery. The council led Housing Forums provide an opportunity for sharing best practice. The most recent Forum was held on 27th January. It was attended by senior officers from eight housing associations, both large and small. Support provided to residents was amongst the issues discussed.”

“We ask our housing association partners to keep us informed of what they are doing to support their residents and have been particularly keen to suggest and promote welfare calls and checks on the most vulnerable.”

“On 19th November 2020, I arranged for all elected members of this council to be invited to a presentation

by Clarion Futures, at which the housing association outlined their emergency response funding and practical help offered with applying for Universal Credit and much more. The feedback I received from members following that presentation was extremely positive.”

“Network Homes send us regular updates and officers remain in regular contact. They are also in regular contact with their vulnerable residents through telephone calls and where necessary home visits. A few examples of how they have responded to the needs of their residents during this pandemic are as follows:

1. They have donated 200 tablet devices to older residents to enable them to connect with the families and other services during lockdown.
2. They have made donations to local foodbanks and have provided some residents with one off vouchers to spend at local supermarkets and to purchase essential items to set up their home, such as white goods, beds and bedding.”

“The council and housing associations continue to work closely to provide support particularly to more vulnerable residents.

1. The council ensures that housing association tenants found to be victims of domestic abuse are assisted by the Survivors Against Domestic Abuse service which we fund
2. The council has successfully encouraged housing associations to maintain a supply of properties for homeless people or those needing to move in

an emergency

3. The council and housing associations have worked jointly to tackle anti-social behaviour. The emphasis has been on supporting residents to take up services such as mental health support, while focusing on injunctions and location bans where anti-social behaviour is most persistent.”

“The track record of joint working between the council and housing associations will continue as we emerge from the pandemic. All partners understand there will be much to do to support people during the recovery phase of this pandemic.”

“There is always more we can do both individually and collectively and I am always willing to hear of further innovative solutions to improve the lives of our residents.”

394 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 24 NOVEMBER 2020

The Leader presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the Executive at its meeting on 24 November 2020. Minute 258 in the Executive minutes referred to the item on which recommendations were made.

395 GILSTON AREA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Leader presented the recommendation, which was referred to in the Executive report of 24 November 2020, regarding the Gilston Area Community Engagement Strategy. The Leader said that this was an important document and she was proud to present it

to Council.

Councillor Goldspink said that the Liberal Democrat group were always in favour of community engagements and the group was happy to support the recommendations.

Councillor Haysey proposed that the recommendations in the Executive report (at minute 258) be supported. Councillor Devonshire seconded the proposal. The motion to support the recommendation having been put to the meeting, and a vote taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - that (A) the Gilston Area Community Engagement Strategy be approved as a material consideration in the production of planning policy/guidance documents and the processing of planning applications associated with the Gilston Area; and

(B) the Gilston Area Community Engagement Strategy be published alongside the other planning guidance documents that support implementation of the District Plan.

396 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 19 FEBRUARY 2021

The Leader presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the

Executive at its meeting on 19 February 2021. The Executive Minutes 376, 377 and 378 referred to the three items on which recommendations were made.

397 CULTURAL STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Wellbeing proposed the recommendations made by the Executive, as referred to in the Executive report of 19 February 2021, regarding the adoption of the Cultural Strategy. Councillor Buckmaster said that the report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and he had proposed an additional recommendation (B) to put the mechanics in place to move the strategy forward. He thanked staff in the Wellbeing team for putting the strategy together. Councillor Stevenson seconded the recommendations.

Councillor Goldspink said that the Liberal Democrat group were happy to support the recommendations.

Councillor Wilson said that the strategy was an excellent piece of work and gave credit to the officers who had worked on it. He raised an issue regarding the LGBTQ community mentioned on page 69 and 100 where it stated that it was a high priority to engage with those individuals. He asked for an amendment to page 70 to include the LGBTQ community alongside residents of all religious and cultural backgrounds.

Councillor E Buckmaster said that an amendment was not necessary as the LGBTQ community were referred to heavily in the document. He said that the strategy will be inclusive for everyone.

The motion to support the recommendations, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the draft Cultural Strategy, incorporating the feedback from the public engagement exercise and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be considered and adopted; and

(B) the multi-agency strategic and delivery group to which the report refers be formed and the drafting of the detailed action plan be prioritised to ensure swift commencement of the vital work of the Cultural Strategy.

398 SUSTAINABILITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT
– FINAL FOR ADOPTION

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed the recommendations made by the Executive, as referred to in the Executive report of 19 February 2021, to adopt the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Councillor Goodeve said that this had been a comprehensive piece of work and had received a huge number of responses from interested parties. The SPD would be carried forward for strategic sites and it would make an important impact moving forward. Councillor Wyllie seconded the recommendations.

Councillor Goldspink confirmed that the Liberal

Democrat group was happy to support the recommendations. She complimented the idea of having a checklist for all applicants and developers so they would be able to see what the council's agenda was and the improvements it would be looking for.

Councillors Beckett and Crystall congratulated the officers involved in producing the SPD.

The motion to support the recommendations, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the responses to the consultation be noted and the officer responses and proposed changes to the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be supported;

(B) That the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), as detailed at Appendix A to this report, be agreed for adoption; and

(C) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 it has been determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is not required as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects beyond the District Plan policies.

399

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT PLAN – REVIEW AND UPDATE

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed the recommendation made by the Executive,

as referred to in the Executive report of 19 February 2021, to adopt the Planning Enforcement Plan. Councillor Goodeve confirmed that the report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a review would be conducted into the plan after one year. Councillor Page seconded the recommendation.

Councillor Goldspink thanked officers for their work on the report and confirmed that the Liberal Democrat group were happy to support the recommendations.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Planning Enforcement Plan 2021, be adopted.

400 MILLSTREAM BUSINESS PLAN 2021/22 AND COUNCIL CASHFLOWS

Councillor Williamson, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, submitted a report in respect of the Millstream Business Plan 2021/22 and Council Cashflows. He reminded members that the property investment company was formally established in February 2018 to generate revenue for the council and was in its third year of trading. The company was looking ahead at further growth by investing in more property. However, the plans had been put on hold as the government changed the rules on public borrowing in

November 2020 which had prohibited borrowing with the primary aim of generating yield.

Councillor Williamson said that the company was required to update its business plan annually and the council, as a shareholder, must approve it.

Jonathan Geall, Director of Millstream, gave an update to the council. He thanked members of the shareholder group and the Head of Strategic Finance and Property for their guidance in developing the business plan. He confirmed that the council had asked Millstream to pause any proposed acquisitions in 2021/22 pending further counsel advice on the government changes. The business plan proposed to continue to manage the properties it currently holds with no acquisitions proposed for 2021/22 and assured members, on behalf of the company, that the business plan would deliver income to the council as assumed in the 2021/22 budget.

Councillor Williamson proposed and Councillor Deering seconded, a motion that the recommendations be supported. A motion to support to the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Millstream Property Investment Ltd’s 2021/22 30 Year Business Plan be approved.

401 BUDGET 2021/22 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

2021-24

Councillor Williamson, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, submitted a report on the Budget 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2021-2024. The budget proposals contained revenue budgeting, funding through council tax, review of fees and charges, use of reserves and the capital programme. The report also contained plans for how the council intended to prepare for future financial challenges. He referred back to 2020, where it was identified that £4 million of savings needed to be found over the next three years and the Leadership Team were asked to present ideas for savings within their services to meet the saving targets and the set of preferred options were listed in Appendix A. He confirmed that the proposal to charge for green waste collections had been approved by Council in January 2021 and sign ups to the scheme were progressing well and meeting the expectation contained in the Medium Term Financial Plan. At the time of speaking, 9,550 households had already signed up which represented a third of all households. The savings would be introduced in stages over the next three years, with the savings proposals published filling the budget gap in 2021/22 but leaving £200k in 2022/23 and £1 million in 2023/24 to find.

Councillor Williamson referred to the New Homes Bonus which had been scaled back over the last three years and explained that its future looked doubtful with the government having launched a consultation on proposals to replace it. A proportion of this bonus used to be distributed to Town and Parish Councils on

a discretionary basis. This budget proposed that they would be able to request funding up to the level which they would have previously received for community projects.

Councillor Williamson outlined that the council had, in previous successive years, frozen or had limited increases in council tax. Three years ago, the government made clear that they expected local authorities to become financially self-sufficient and accepted need to increase Council Tax to the maximum allowed without a referendum. He explained this position had not changed and Council Tax would be increased each year in the life of the Medium Term Financial Plan which was equivalent of £5 a year on a Band D property and this would generate critical additional revenue every year. Councillor Williamson outlined the fees and charges, another key source of council income which had been reviewed annually and a 2.5% increase in line with inflation was built into the budget.

Councillor Williamson said the financial challenges were not new and the council had endeavoured to become more entrepreneurial and less dependent on central government funding. Good management of reserves were vital and would be reviewed regularly.

Councillor Williamson said that the Hartham Leisure Centre and Hertford Theatre projects as part of the capital programme had been progressing well and their business cases had been refreshed last year. The final business case for the Old River Lane project would be presented to Council on 18 March 2021.

Councillor Williamson looked ahead to the future and explained the council would undertake a transformation programme to find further efficiencies in ways of working, resources, procurement and operational needs.

To sum up, Councillor Williamson thanked the Leadership Team, finance officers and other services who played a role in formulating the plan for this year and beyond. The council's aim was to deliver on priorities and invest in services and its communities. The proposed budget for 2021/22 was extremely challenging but one that has succeeded in protecting front line services.

Councillor Goldspink said that the Liberal Democrat group had studied the budget proposals carefully and they acknowledged that the council was facing serious financial pressures and accepted that the budget proposed was the best that could be achieved in difficult circumstances. She commented that the consequences of Brexit could have been foreseen but appreciated that neither Covid-19 nor the government change in policy on borrowing could not have been. She raised concerns about the huge capital programme that was being undertaken with four large projects at one time and regretted the need to increase Council Tax which might cause financial problems for those who are disadvantaged. She concluded that the Liberal Democrat group were not happy with the budget but they did recognise it was the best that could have achieved in difficult circumstances.

Councillor Devonshire thanked the Executive and all officers who he felt had done a fantastic job in producing a balanced budget. He said that it should be applauded that front line service had not been affected.

Councillor E Buckmaster responded to Councillor Goldspink's comments on the capital programme and said that these projects had been developed over a long period of time and were based on returns of current subsidies of aging assets. The council have invested capital to have a positive impact on revenue and would enhance residents' wellbeing. He highlighted that the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability had mentioned that the business cases for the projects had been reviewed and were shown to still be viable.

Councillor Haysey said that it was important to realise that the council had been almost fully supported by government grants and this would not continue in the future and there would be a lot of change in the next two to three years. She said that some residents believed that as the economy improves, the council would be able to do more but this would not be the case and the council needs a prudent budget. She welcomed Councillor Goldspink's comments that the budget was the best that could be achieved. Front line services have not been cut and the conservative approach provides good quality services to residents.

Councillor Redfern commented that she was not pleased about the budget but also recognised it was

the best that could be done in exceptional circumstances. She raised concerns for future years and was alarmed at the figures on risk moving forward. She queried whether in the future, savings could be found without cutting services.

Councillor Curtis said that the opposition members continue to refer to not being pleased about the budget but did not mention any specifics.

Councillor Deering said the council's investment into the larger town centres in the district should be applauded and that residents and traders were pleased that the council is taking the initiative to increase footfall. He agreed with Councillor Redfern's comments that the future would be challenging but said this would be where competent administrations would excel. The Conservative administration had kept the council's finances under control over several years and would continue to do so into the future.

Councillor Wilson referred back to the four large capital projects. He said that the council could not be hundred percent sure that it would gain the revenue has had been predicted. He felt that residents in Bishop's Stortford are not confident that the Old River Lane project would make a profit.

Councillor Williamson thanked all members for their comments and said they had been noted. Councillor Williamson proposed and Councillor Pope seconded the recommendations.

A recorded vote was taken, the result being:

FOR

Councillors Alder, Andrews, Bolton, Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Bull, Burmicz, Crofton, Curtis, Cutting, Deering, Devonshire, Drake, Fernando, Frecknall, Goodeve, Hall, Haysey, Hollebon, Jones, Kemp, McMullen, Newton, Page, Pope, Reed, Rowley, Ruffles, Rutland-Barsby, Snowdon, Stevenson, Stowe, Symonds, Ward-Booth, Williamson and Wyllie.

ABSTAIN

Councillors Beckett, Bell, Brady, Corpe, Dumont, Goldspink, Kaye, Redfern and Wilson

For: 38

Against: 0

Abstain: 9

RESOLVED - that (A) the East Herts share of the Council Tax for a Band D property in 2021/22 be set at £179.09, an increase of £5, the maximum permitted within the Council Tax Referendum principles;

(B) The Budget 2021/22 and the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021 – 2024 is approved;

(C) The savings plans summarised in Appendix A are approved for implementation and that Council require that compensating savings, delivered to the same timescales, have to be put in place and reported to the next Council

meeting should the Executive decide that any savings proposals should not proceed, or are reduced by 10% or more;

(D) The capital programme set out in Appendix E is approved; and

(E) The schedule of charges for 2021/22 set out in Appendix F, with an average increase of 2.5%, is approved.

402 COUNCIL TAX 2021/22 - TAX SETTING FORMAL RESOLUTION

Councillor Williamson, Deputy Leader and the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, submitted a report on proposals to set Council Tax for 2021/22. He proposed a motion to support the recommendations, which required a recorded vote. This was seconded by Councillor Snowdon.

A recorded vote was taken, the result being:

FOR

Councillors Alder, Andrews, Bolton, Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Bull, Burmicz, Crofton, Crystall, Curtis, Cutting, Deering, Devonshire, Drake, Fernando, Frecknall, Goodeve, Hall, Haysey, Hollebon, Jones, Kemp, McMullen, Newton, Page, Pope, Reed, Rowley, Ruffles, Rutland-Barsby, Snowdon, Stowe, Symonds, Ward-Booth, Williamson and Wyllie.

ABSTAIN

Councillors Beckett, Bell, Brady, Corpe, Dumont, Goldspink, Kemp, Redfern and Wilson.

For: 37

Against: 0

Abstain: 9

RESOLVED – that

(A) the Council Tax resolution, as now submitted, be approved;

(B) the local precepts as set out at Appendix 'A' be noted; and

(C) the Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Police Authority precepts be noted.

403 CAPITAL STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY 2021/22

Councillor Williamson, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, submitted the Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy report. He said that the council was required to produce the report following strengthening of guidance from Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). He said that the Capital Strategy was helpful as a high

level document and it pulled together and considered a range of both internal and external factors and how these inter-relate with policy and decision-making in respect of capital investment.

Councillor Crystall commented on Priority 3 'encouraging economic growth' in the Corporate Strategic Plan on page 722. He was delighted to see a focus on a green agenda for investment purchases. He said he appreciated this was due to a shift in government policy but he thought this change in course was welcome and overdue. He said he fully supported it and highlighted it as a good example of where things are moving in the right direction.

Councillor Wilson referred to page 732 and said it implied that the council did not have a strategy at the moment and again questioned why the council had embarked on four capital projects at once without a long term capital strategy.

Councillor Williamson explained that the requirement to produce this document was only introduced in the last few years.

Councillor Williamson proposed and Councillor Kemp seconded, a motion that the proposals be supported. A motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - that the Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2021/22 onwards be approved.

404 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2021/22

Councillor Snowdon declared a prejudicial interest as he worked for Fitch Group who were the parent company of Fitch Ratings. He did not vote on this item.

Councillor Williamson, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, submitted the Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy report to Council. He said that the council was required to provide three treasury reports each financial year and this was the first report. It covered the council's capital plans including the prudential indicators, the minimum revenue provision policy and treasury management and investment strategies. A good treasury function ensures the council has the money to cover its daily operating costs and have longer term funding available to finance the capital projects.

Councillor Williamson proposed and Councillor Curtis seconded, a motion that the proposals be supported. A motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) The Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22 at Appendix A is approved; and

(B) The Prudential Indicators at Appendix B are

approved.

405 HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 16 FEBRUARY 2021

Councillor Cutting, the Executive Member for Corporate Services, submitted a report from the Human Resources Committee who had considered and supported the approval of the Pay Policy Statement 2021-22.

Councillor Cutting proposed and Councillor Bolton seconded, a motion that the proposals be supported. A motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 be approved

406 COMMUNITY GRANTS PRIORITIES 2021/22

Councillor Rutland-Barsby presented the report to Council. She said that the Council reviewed its grants policy every year and checked that the priorities were aligned correctly to its corporate principles. There was little change in the report that was unanimously adopted by Council in December 2019. However, the key points that needed approval in the report were the continuation of the two pilot schemes that were introduced in 2020/2021 for the duration of one year.

Councillor Rutland-Barsby said she did not need to elaborate on the effect of COVID over the last 12

months. The one good thing that this terrible situation had made very clear, was the enormously enthusiastic community spirit and tremendously helpful volunteering that had assisted the official bodies to cope with the challenges thrown at them.

The financial challenges caused by Covid had shown that small local initiatives need to be encouraged and nurtured and with this in mind she asked Members to endorse the continuation of the Small Grants pilot to assist with these activities, building more self-reliant and strong communities

The other pilot the council wished to extend was the Crowd Funding Match Scheme with the HCC platform – Crowdfunding Hertfordshire. This would allow initiatives to become less reliant on the tradition grant programmes of local authorities, which in the future may have to be reduced to cope with the continuing financial pressures.

The participation of all Members was the key to the success of the schemes. The endorsement and mentoring with Members' local knowledge was an invaluable part of the process when officers come to consider and evaluate applications. Councillor Rutland-Barsby said that it was also important that members promote participation by local groups in the East Herts Lottery, as an ongoing source of income for their efforts. Crowdfunding as already said, can be an important of help to specific projects. She added that if any members had any queries or need assistance, Claire Pullen, the Grants Officer would be happy to assist.

Councillor Goldspink confirmed that the Liberal Democrat group were happy to support the recommendations and highlighted that supporting small community groups is important as they had been valued highly during the pandemic.

Councillors Frecknall and Redfern echoed these comments.

Councillor Rutland-Barsby proposed and Councillor Symonds seconded a motion that the proposals be supported. A motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the revised Community Grants Policy and priorities for 2021/22 be approved.

407 MOTIONS ON NOTICE - REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS IN EXISTING HOUSING STOCK AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

Councillor Beckett proposed a motion on notice on reducing carbon emissions in existing housing stock and commercial buildings. He spoke to the motion he had submitted, referring to research he had conducted with different councils in the country around sustainability. His motion sought a commitment from the council to look at setting up an energy company to reduce bills of residents. He acknowledged that other councils had set up energy companies but had failed due to bad management and gave Nottingham Council

as an example of this.

Councillor Goldspink seconded the motion.

Councillor Williamson responded to the motion on behalf of Councillor McAndrew. He responded to Point A in the motion and said that the Energy Sustainability pages on the website already included a section on sustainable energy advice and fuel tariffs switching and the wording would be amended to give further emphasis on the importance of switching to genuinely 100% green energy tariff. Promotion and focus was currently on fuel poverty and cost although many 100% green energy tariffs can have competitive prices. The council would not intend on advocating a single tariff from an energy provider but instead would encourage further improvements to the energy mix of the UK grid. In relation to publicity, the council continued to develop its social media presence in relation to carbon reduction and would focus around appropriate national theme weeks. Additionally, Councillor Williamson said that East Herts were an active member of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) who were looking to develop a significant county wide behavioural change promotion focussing on sustainability and climate change issues. In relation to Point B of the motion, Councillor Williamson said it was an interesting idea but would be difficult to achieve due to the competitive energy supplier market where profit margins are tight. More broadly, the partnership have discussed the possible idea to investigate bulk buying schemes in relation to green energy. Councillor Williamson referred to Point C of the motion and said

that the establishment of a sustainable energy supplier could be risky and expensive for local authorities and it is something that had been previously explored in Hertfordshire and the consensus was that individual district authorities such as East Herts were too small to carry it out efficiently. He said there are some advantages to running a white label operation, mainly that tariffs could be set and priority given to fuel poor customers through specific tariffs. An EE energy scheme was also being looked at in the Eastern region.

He summed up and said he believed that the action contained in the motion proposed has already been done or had been considered by the council.

Councillor Ward-Booth referred to the Robin Hood energy company mentioned by Councillor Beckett in his introduction. Councillor Beckett said this was an example of bad management by which Councillor Ward-Booth agreed with but he said it was bad management by the council and Grant Thornton had said it was an example of "institutional blindness" and it went on to lose £30m of local tax payers money. A Bristol energy company had recently collapsed with £14 million of losses having never made a profit and other white label companies in Portsmouth and Tower Hamlets all ended up as expensive failures. He added that the wider energy market had become increasingly competitive with tight profit margins and was expensive to operate within. Councillor Ward-Booth said he would be voting against the motion as he did not believe East Herts had the expertise or time to enter into an energy enterprise and with the significant budget pressures it was irresponsible to consider such

a venture with a high degree of risk.

Councillor Kemp said that the council supported the aim of sustainability, demonstrated in the previous approval of the SPD earlier in the agenda. He felt the motion was unduly prescriptive and members had received briefings from officers as to which green energy tariffs are genuinely effective and said he was cautious of the council making recommendations to the general public.

Regarding the point which Councillors Ward-Booth and Kemp had raised, Councillor Curtis added that it was interesting that the Liberal Democrat group had expressed concern that the council had taken on risk in its capital projects but was happy to take on more risk in the form of the proposed venture under paragraph three of the motion. He felt some good points had been raised but it was incredibly risky and would not be in the best interests of residents. He said he was voting against the motion.

Councillor Goldspink felt there had been some misunderstanding and the motion did not propose that the council set this company up but that it should investigate the possibility. Members had mentioned the councils that had been unsuccessful but she highlighted that Essex County Council had shown it could be successful and had passed on a saving of £230 per annum to its residents. The council are already trying to encourage residents to switch to 100% green energy suppliers but the bargaining power increases for a better deal when more customers join together. She asked for the council's support on the

motion and it could bring great benefits to residents, the environment and the council. Councillor Goldspink requested a recorded vote on the motion.

Councillor Beckett agreed with Councillor Goldspink's comments and said the motion listed potential options that were out there that other councils were currently doing. He said the motion was asking the council to investigate these options, not implementing them. He added that he did not think having a page on the website as active promotion of green energy and wanted to see more being done.

After being requested by at least five members, a recorded vote was taken, the result being:

FOR

Councillors Beckett, Bell, Brady, Corpe, Crystall, Dumont, Frecknall, Goldspink, Redfern, Wilson

AGAINST

Councillors Alder, Andrews, Bolton, Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Bull, Burmicz, Crofton, Curtis, Cutting, Deering, Devonshire, Drake, Fernando, Goodeve, Hall, Haysey, Jones, Kemp, McMullen, Page, Pope, Reed, Rowley, Ruffles, Rutland-Barsby, Snowdon, Stowe, Symonds, Ward-Booth, Williamson

ABSTAINED

Councillors Kaye, Stevenson

For: 10
Against: 32
Abstained: 2

The motion was declared LOST.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Chairman
Date

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COUNCIL – 18 MARCH 2021

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question 1	Simon Baker
<p>If the various companies and individuals that represent the arts in Bishop’s Stortford are saying that the spaces you are creating in the new cinema/arts space are too small for us to use, and therefore as experienced arts professionals we don’t believe it would be viable to use them, how does that change your mind on the design or indeed the concept of your proposal?</p>	
Question 2	Jill Goldsmith
<p>The report to Council on the Business Case for the ORL stipulates the deliverables the Council is committing to in the regeneration project but no detail on the contracts the Council has already entered into (with CityHeart, appointed in 2019, Glenn Howells architect, Theatreplan and Barker Langham) or on future contracting to inform the public on how it will achieve these deliverables.</p> <p>The Council’s Contracts Register discloses none of the existing ORL related contracts, in contravention of the Local Government Transparency Code, which requires local authorities to publish details of any contract, commissioned activity, purchase order, framework agreement and any other legally enforceable agreement with a value that exceeds £5,000. At paragraph 20 of the Code it specifically states that “Local authorities should expect to publish details of contracts newly entered into – commercial confidentiality should not, in itself, be a reason for local authorities to not follow the provisions of this Code.”</p> <p>Paragraph 8 in the report to Council mentions the risk of delay from the SPD process, but the effect of such impact is not spelled out. It says nothing about other contractual or financial risks, such as the risk of developer non-delivery after it has bought the land from the Council from operating the site after its development. It does not set</p>	

out any safeguards the Council may have.

Can you detail the impacts and specific financial risks there would be for the Council if the project gets delayed or set back and what mitigations the Council has put in place?

Question 3

Stuart Purton

As there has been widely publicised criticism of the rushed rework of the scheme, what efforts have or can be made to include members of the local creative community in the process? The voices of commercial interests will be amplified by their money how will you ensure those without financial clout are given equal credence?

Question 4

Simon Gilliver (Bishop's Stortford Sinfonia)

Almost uniquely for a town of its size, Bishop's Stortford has no venues of any description large enough to hold large scale concerts or events. The previous plans for ORL addressed this need, whereas the proposal now merely duplicates facilities that already exist in the town. In responding to the reduced available funds, why has the council not sought to find a solution that still delivers on the needs of the town on a reduced budget?

Question 5

Paddy Lennox, on behalf of Laughing Bishops Comedy Club

In a report on the future of cinema, which we understand underpins the Council's business case for the proposed 5 screen cinema, Tamara Jarvis concluded that the key success of smaller locally run venues lies in a flexible offering to "local interest & population groups", responding to their demands by combining cinema spaces with other spaces to engage "live performance".

That sounds great but, given that none of the local performing arts groups, not the local theatre, not the Symphonia, not the Comedy Club and not the local live music bands, say the proposed new design ORL will be of use to them, who exactly are these "local interest & population groups?"

Please name them.

Question 6

Bethan Jones

The business plan states that the scheme *'will design out crime and*

make residents and visitors feel safe'... (point 9). As a young woman living directly adjacent to the ORL site, the site has already changed the landscape of where I live into one where I already feel less safe. With regard to recent news stories about female safety, what specific measures will be implemented to address these concerns over the **whole** ORL site areas to combat increased risks posed by the entire area - including car parks and side streets?

Question 7	Gailie Pollock, Contexture Theatre
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If the footprint of the ORL arts centre is the same as the original plan, why can't we build the cinema spaces but leave the space for the larger auditorium (which would benefit the town's arts organisations that can't use the proposed small flexible performance spaces), to be built at a later date, at a time when it might be easier to apply for funding?

Question 8	Paul Dean, on behalf of Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation
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Section 8 of the Business Plan Report for the ORL Development says *"the Master-planning and SPD process is a key risk ... [where] it is expected that there will be some turbulence around public opinion"*. Much of this arises from the Council's perceived failure to separate its role as a landowner/developer from its role as the Local Planning Authority and consult with the public. The same paragraph of the Report illustrates the problem by suggesting the risk to the SPD process *"will be mitigated through close working and good communication between Cityheart and EHDC's project team and planning officers"*. District Plan Policy BISH8(I) makes it clear that an SPD will be prepared by EHDC's planning officers and *"used to inform the master-planning of the site"* - **not** that the SPD will be informed by the developer's masterplan and EHDC's project team's Business Case. In view of this will the Council confirm that in mitigating the public opinion risks on the SPD and master-planning processes for ORL it will:

1. Comply with Regulation 12 of the Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 to carry out public participation on the preparation and recommendations of the SPD before it is

adopted and used to inform master-planning?)

2. Follow the NPPF's SPD requirements for planning officers to provide further guidance for development on specific sites and, in this particular case, (para 23) "*provide a clear strategy ... (and) ... address objectively assessed needs*" for the facilities to be provided in accordance with Policy BISH III (a)?
3. During the Pre-application Engagement process, comply with District Plan Policy DES1(II) that: "*The Masterplan will be collaboratively prepared with all stakeholders, including the public?*"
4. Include transport, environmental conservation area and social impact assessments within the scope of the SPD?

Finally, will the Council's Chief Legal Officer recommend that all DMC members and their substitutes be excluded from today's meeting so they can take an unbiased decision when the resulting planning application comes before them for determination.

Question 9

Ruth Bravo

I would like to ask if the project could have one side of the building to be a living wall with plants to absorb co2 to improve air quality and have dance studios inside to cater for a wide range of workshops to improve residents' wellbeing?

Question 10

Daniel Badcock

On the substantially reduced arts centre plan, is there any option delay the start of building of the new arts facility and to "save" the planned subsidy for some time to allow a scheme closer to the original proposal to be built? In my opinion to build a new facility without adding a larger stage to the town facilities is a huge missed opportunity and additional cinema screens are not an exciting alternative proposition.

Question 11

Simon Anderson

Please tell me the reasons why the decision on the amended ORL development cannot be postponed

Question 12

Jill Jones

The business plan does not show any financial comparisons between the proposed cinema and any other alternatives. Will EHDC provide any comparisons to show residents of Bishops Stortford how the cinema proposal outweighs other concepts in terms of cost-benefit and social impact? In particular, comparison with an educational establishment such as a Digital skills training centre in terms of potential economic boost and long term sustainable income - as education is counter-cyclic, and BS is ideally placed between Cambridge and London to be such an educational 'hub'.

Question 13	Carl Warnell
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I would like to see more details of the 5 screen cinema as there is a cinema at the other end of the town. I personally think normal cinema is dead with the availability of Netflix (other streaming services are available) at 4K TVs. Plus with social distancing, traditional cinemas will need to run at occupancy levels of 25-50%. I think that Bishop's Stortford should try to use the new Arts Centre/cinema to become a genuine destination for the surrounding towns and villages by offering a different, disruptive and compelling option. Therefore I think an independent cinema offering is the right sort of start, but I would like to see something more. Would the council consider options such as:

- 1) Some sort of luxury arrangement that was previously available at The Lounge at Whiteleys, with limited seating, business airline style seating and table service?
- 2) Something with individual tables where attendees can enjoy a meal whilst watching a film, similar to the Rex in Berkhamsted and the Odyssey in St Albans

Question 14	Annette Burns
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I believe that the residents need a multi-purpose theatre, studio, gallery, music, drama and café space for everyone to use. Why are the council planning another cinema in addition to the six screen Empire cinema and the facility at The Southmill Arts Complex whilst in the midst of a pandemic? I ask the council to reconsider and not rush into something that is not wanted or needed.

Question 15	John Jones
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The business plan states that ..*through the iterative design and cost*

process we have increased the financial viability of the Arts Centre by:Re - designing the Arts Centre space over a larger footprint which meant a lower, wider, more cost effective design (reducing the height has reduced the cost and complexity of the build)'.... Has EHDC considered applying this approach across the entire site including the carpark at Northgate End by reducing the height to ensure a good fit with new government guidelines on beauty and 'building back better' , and using any funds released by not building six levels of car park to improve the ORL? With anticipated reduced commuting the town will still have 3 MSCPS more than any almost any other town its size in the entire country!

Question 16	Rosalind Rowe, on behalf of Bishop's Stortford Choral Society
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The Choral Society is so disappointed about the Council's plan for a cinema in place of an arts centre. We seek to work with local orchestras and other choirs to share our enjoyment of live music. We could never use the proposed performance spaces which are too small for any of our concerts. Therefore I respectfully ask my question in three parts in relation to hiring and income of the performance space: a) To what extent does the business case rely on booking of the performance space? b) What assumptions have been made about income delivered by the cinema and the hire by performers? And c) What would be the rate per hour and/or the number of hours booked to achieve net subsidy levels?

Question 17	Michael Boyton
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With the cut in funding and the council having spent the grant money originally meant for the theatre on the multi-storey car park, has the council costed/considered a refurbishment of URCH into a performing auditorium and leaving enough space for a theatre to be built in the future? If not, why not?

COUNCIL – 18 MARCH 2021

MEMBER QUESTIONS

Question 1	Cllr Mione Goldspink, to ask Cllr Linda Haysey, Leader of the Council
<p>Would the leader of the Council please clarify some points about the proposals for the Old River Lane development –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) What are the plans for the United Reformed Church hall (now owned by the Council)?2) Has the size of the proposed Arts Centre been reduced from the original proposals?3) What is the justification for adding a Care Home block of 90 units/beds?	

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