

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2012, AT
7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Taylor (Chairman)
Councillors D Abbott, M Alexander,
D Andrews, W Ashley, P Ballam, E Bedford,
R Beeching, E Buckmaster, M Carver,
Mrs R Cheswright, K Crofton, A Dearman,
L Haysey, T Herbert, Mrs D Hollebbon,
Mrs D Hone, A Jackson, G Jones, J Mayes,
G McAndrew, M McMullen, P Moore,
M Newman, P Phillips, M Pope, R Radford,
J Ranger, C Rowley, P Ruffles, S Rutland-
Barsby, N Symonds, M Tindale, A Warman,
G Williamson, N Wilson, J Wing, M Wood
and C Woodward.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services

329 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Members and the public to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast.

The Chairman updated Members on the latest position regarding Councillors G Lawrence and N Poulton's state of health. She was sure she spoke for all Members in wishing them both a speedy recovery.

The Chairman outlined her duties since the previous meeting and highlighted her attendance at the 125th anniversary celebrations of Haileybury College. She also referred to the positive feedback she had received regarding the Civic Service and thanked those who had attended. The Chairman reminded those Members who had yet to respond to her invitation to the Civic Dinner to do so as a matter of urgency and requested donations of raffle prizes.

Finally, the Chairman advised of the arrangements for this year's staff "thank yous" at each of the Council's offices on 11 – 13 December 2012, and invited Members to join her.

330 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

331 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In respect of Minute 335 – Action Plan to Support the East Herts Housing Strategy, Councillors M Alexander and P Moore disclosed pecuniary interests, in that they were both board members of Riversmead Housing Association.

In respect of Minute 335 – Action Plan to Support the East Herts Housing Strategy, Councillor D Andrews disclosed a pecuniary interest in that he was a board member of South Anglia Housing Association.

All three Members left the chamber whilst this matter was determined.

332 MEMBERS' QUESTION

Question 1

Councillor P Ruffles referred to East Herts Council's partnership with two other District Councils and Hertfordshire County Council in seeking to develop local good practice in connection with the 'Ageing Well' agenda. He had been pleased that some key initiatives had been taking place at the heart of the community he represented as a County Councillor at Horns Mill Hertford. Given that successful Local Authority 'Ageing-Well' initiatives benefited not only individuals, but society as a whole, and also in the longer term, would be able to ease otherwise inevitable pressures on the public purse, he asked the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support, what further 'place' initiatives she had. Also, he asked whether she had plans to develop 'Ageing-Well' in the countryside as well as in towns and for those in the community with a different ethnic and cultural background.

In reply, the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support reminded Members that the 'Ageing Well' agenda related to anyone aged 50 or over, which represented 34% of the East Herts population. She referred to the Council's duties and its vision as expressed in the Corporate Strategic Plan. In terms of activities, a small working party of Members was looking at a number of issues. Letters had been sent to parish and town councils and the working party was talking to a number of older residents. The Executive Member highlighted the relationship with the CVS and detailed the important role that ward councillors could play.

In respect of the Council's own policies and strategies, the Executive Member advised that Officers were required to ensure that they were 'age-proofing' any proposals coming forward. In this regard, she commented that scrutiny committees would have a very important role to play when

considering service plans. The Community Scrutiny Committee would be considering such a report at its meeting on 20 November 2012.

Finally, the Executive Member referred to the ongoing work with other partners through the Local Strategic Partnership and highlighted an example of an intergenerational project where older residents were being taught IT skills by younger people.

333 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 4 SEPTEMBER 2012

The Leader referred to the long awaited decision of the Secretary of State regarding the Bishop's Stortford schools appeals. In view of the significant delay in receiving the decision, it had been necessary to revise the District Plan timetable again, resulting in the public consultation being put back from January 2013 until April 2013. The consultation period would still run for 12 weeks. He urged all Members to attend the next District Plan Panel meeting on 28 November 2012, at which training would be provided.

The Leader also referred to various Government announcements and the need for the Council to consider economic development initiatives. To this end, Officers were looking at the issue of how to unblock various approved housing developments.

Finally, the Leader commented that this was the last meeting that Alan Madin would be attending before his retirement at the end of the month. He paid tribute to his financial stewardship, which had placed the Council in a better position than most, and spoke of his sense of humour. He wished him well in his retirement.

The Chairman and Councillors E Buckmaster and J Wing all added their own best wishes. Councillor J Wing referred to Mr Madin's even-handed advice and Councillor E Buckmaster spoke of the help he had given to newer Members.

The Leader also welcomed Adele Taylor, the new Director of

Finance and Support Services, who would be joining the Authority on 19 November 2012.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 4 September 2012, be received.

(see also Minutes 334 - 337 below)

334 4 YEAR CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN (2013/14 TO 2016/17)

RESOLVED – that (A) the comments of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee be received; and

(B) the 2013/14 – 2016/17 Corporate Strategic Plan be approved, as now submitted.

(see also Minute 333 above)

335 ACTION PLAN TO SUPPORT THE EAST HERTS HOUSING STRATEGY

Councillor M Newman referred to the map within the Strategy and asked the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support whether she acknowledged his concern that it inferred major housing development in the area north of Harlow. In reply, the Executive Member undertook to clarify this with Officers.

The Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support referred to the Leader's earlier comments regarding the need to look at potential economic development initiatives and to this end, proposed an additional recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor A Jackson, as follows:

“Officers be asked to submit a report to the Executive meeting on 6 November 2012, giving options which facilitate growth in house building, whilst being mindful of the Council's priority to provide affordable housing and the importance of stimulating economic growth.”

After being put to the meeting, this additional recommendation was agreed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the comments of the Community Scrutiny Committee be received;

(B) the Housing Strategy 2012 - 15 be adopted;

(C) an annual report to monitor progress of the action plan be submitted to Community Scrutiny Committee; and

(D) Officers be asked to submit a report to the Executive meeting on 6 November 2012, giving options which facilitate growth in house building, whilst being mindful of the Council's priority to provide affordable housing and the importance of stimulating economic growth.

(see also Minute 333 above)

336 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2013/14 TO 2016/17)

RESOLVED – that (A) the comments of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee be received;

(B) the proposed Financial Strategy, as now submitted, be adopted; and

(C) the planning assumptions, as now submitted, be adopted as the basis for framing the 2013/14 budget and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2016/17.

(see also Minute 333 above)

337 MONTHLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK - JUNE AND JULY 2012

RESOLVED – that (A) the budgetary variances set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report submitted be noted;

(B) Investment Income in excess of the budgeted sum, to the extent that it is not needed to offset adverse budget variances during 2012/13, be transferred to the Interest Equalisation Reserve at 31 March 2013, as detailed at paragraph 2.2 of the report submitted;

(C) a Supplementary Revenue Estimate of £120,000 in respect of increased workloads in the Revenues and Benefits Service, as outlined in paragraph 2.4 of the report submitted, be approved; and

(D) spend of £358,000 for the provision of rent accommodation from the monies held by Uttlesford Council who act as banker for these funds, be approved, as detailed at paragraph 2.6 of the report.

(see also Minute 333 above)

338 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 15 AUGUST 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Control Committee meeting held on 15 August 2012, be received.

339 CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 21 AUGUST 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 August 2012, be received.

340 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 28 AUGUST 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 28 August 2012, be received.

341 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 11
SEPTEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 September 2012, be received.

342 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 12
SEPTEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Control Committee meeting held on 12 September 2012, be received.

343 AUDIT COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 19 SEPTEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 19 September 2012, be received.

344 APPOINTMENT OF SECTION 151 OFFICER

Council noted its requirement to appoint formally the statutory position of the Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Alan Madin, the current appointee was retiring at the end of September 2012. Council noted that Adele Taylor, the new Director of Finance and Support Services, would commence her appointment on 19 November 2012. Therefore, Council agreed interim and future arrangements to meet the Council's statutory requirements.

RESOLVED – that (A) Simon Chancellor be appointed as the Council's Section 151 Officer with immediate effect until the Director of Finance and Support Services takes up her post; and

(B) Adele Taylor be appointed as the Council's Section 151 Officer from 19 November 2012.

345 IMPLICATIONS OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES
(EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS) (MEETINGS AND
ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS
2012

Council considered a report outlining the new provisions introduced by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, governing Executive meetings. The Monitoring Officer summarised the changes from the previous Regulations and explained their impact on East Herts in the report now submitted. The necessary changes to the Constitution were also set out in the Essential Reference Papers to the report now submitted.

Council approved the proposed amendments as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the implications of the new Regulations be noted; and

(B) the proposed amendments to current practice be approved and the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make appropriate changes to the Constitution.

346 APPOINTMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT PERSON

Council considered a report seeking appointments to be made for the roles of Independent Person and reserve Independent Persons for the new Standards regime under the Localism Act 2011. Council recalled that, at its meeting held on 16 May 2012, Officers were authorised to seek an arrangement with other Authorities for a pool of Independent Persons to be established. The Monitoring Officer advised that this had not proved possible and so applications for the position of Independent Person were advertised. He detailed the recruitment process undertaken in the report now submitted.

In response to a question from Councillor J Wing, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that the proposed appointees were resident in East Herts.

Council approved the appointments now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) Philip Copland be appointed as Independent Person; and

(B) Katherine Dumovic and Hazel Howitt be appointed as reserve Independent Persons.

The meeting closed at 7.39 pm

Chairman
Date