

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY
MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 29 MARCH 2017, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor K Crofton (Chairman).
Councillors D Abbott, A Alder, M Allen,
D Andrews, P Ballam, R Brunton,
E Buckmaster, S Bull, M Casey,
Mrs R Cheswright, S Cousins, G Cutting,
B Deering, I Devonshire, H Drake,
M Freeman, L Haysey, Mrs D Hollebon,
G Jones, J Jones, J Kaye, G McAndrew,
M McMullen, P Moore, W Mortimer, T Page,
M Pope, Radford, S Reed, P Ruffles,
C Snowdon, R Standley, M Stevenson,
N Symonds, K Warnell, G Williamson,
C Woodward and J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Victoria Clothier	- Legal Services Manager
Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Helen Standen	- Director
Adele Taylor	- Director
Kevin Williams	- Governance Consultant

652 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

The Chairman referred to the outcome of the recent Hertford Castle by-election at which Linda Radford had been elected. He welcomed her to her first Council meeting.

The Chairman also referred to the outcome of the recent

Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Planning Referendum which had seen a resounding “Yes” vote. He invited the Vice-Chairman to say a few words.

The Vice-Chairman expressed his gratitude to everyone who had contributed to the success of the Referendum. In particular, he thanked the members of the neighbourhood forum, the Town Council, Planning Officers for their support and advice and Electoral Services for the conduct of the Referendum.

The Chairman updated Council on recent events he had attended and highlighted the East Herts Got Talent evening, which had been an outstanding success.

653 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 1 March 2017, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

654 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Question 1

Councillor N Symonds asked the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing what the Council could do to make sure that affordable rent for social housing was affordable rent for all, particularly for some of the most vulnerable residents, especially as one housing association, Hightown, was putting their rent above the local housing allowance.

In reply, the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing shared these concerns and referred to the national problem of local housing allowances being set above a level that was affordable for the most vulnerable residents. In respect of Hightown, the Council had challenged several of their nominations and refusals and had succeeded in overturning some of them. Their rent levels were typically £20 - £40 above the local housing allowance rates and the Executive Member explained how these were set according to a needs

assessment involving property size, local area circumstances and benefit entitlement. Given the benefit cap up to the local housing rate due to be implemented in 2019, many properties would become unaffordable to residents relying on benefits.

Hightown's policy was to charge 80% of market rents and although this was similar to other providers, they did not cap the rent at the local housing allowance level. Some housing associations imposed a cap in order to make their properties affordable. The Executive Member advised that he written to the Chief Executive of Hightown and would copy the response received to all Members.

As for what East Herts could do, its Members and Officers could continue to fight for its residents in meetings and forums with housing associations. The Council could also seek to achieve more explicit section 106 agreements that would provide a better deal for residents. In respect of Hightown, the Council had offered them the use of an office in Hertford so that local residents would not have to travel to their offices in Hemel Hempstead. However, this had been declined on the basis of staffing difficulties.

He concluded by stating that he would continue to monitor the situation.

Question 2

Councillor I Devonshire stated that under Clause 4.7 of the Regulation 22 Consultation Statement, it stated that "in terms of the tests of soundness, legal compliance and Duty to Co-operate requirements 3,500 (90%) of responses state that the Plan is considered to be unsound." He asked the Leader of the Council if she considered this very high percentage to be worrying and if so, how would the Executive and Officers address respondents' concerns. Furthermore, he asked if the Inspector was likely to be concerned and if so, whether this would require wholesale changes to large sections of the Plan.

In reply, the Leader stated that this related to the Regulation

22 Consultation Statement, an item for Council's consideration later at this meeting (Minute 656 refers). This report had summarised the process undertaken by the Council from 2014 until March 2017. She reminded Members of the process that had been followed culminating in the Draft District Plan being agreed in September 2016. This had been followed by the formal duty of the Regulation 22 consultation that had resulted in the 3,500 comments referred to. The Draft Plan, alongside all the comments submitted under the Regulation 22 Consultation would be considered by the independent Planning Inspector.

The Leader referred to the number of meetings and discussions at which District Plan matters had been considered over many years involving detailed consideration and robust challenge by many Members.

The Leader commented that 3880 comments had been submitted by 2472 respondents, of which 1796 lived in the District and the remaining 676 were from organisations and individuals who lived outside the District. This represented just under 2% of local residents who had commented. The Leader acknowledged that the majority of comments had objected on the grounds either of unsoundness, legal compliance or the duty to cooperate.

The Leader reminded Members of the complexities and sensitivities around planning issues and accepted that some people would have concerns around the increase in housing numbers and infrastructure issues. She had met with every parish and town council affected to understand local issues of concern.

Finally, the Leader stated that all relevant documentation would be submitted to the Planning Inspector. The date for the Examination in Public had yet to be decided, but would be advertised as soon as it was known.

In response to a supplementary question on the impact on the Princess Alexandra Hospital, the Leader accepted this was a pertinent question, given the issues faced in dealing with the

existing population. She advised that consultations had been engaged by the Trust to look at the strategic case for building a whole new hospital. The Council was engaged with various stakeholders in this process and looked forward to the Trust's assessment in the coming months.

655 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 21 MARCH 2017

The Leader referred to Tony Jackson's resignation as a Councillor and paid tribute to his outstanding service to the residents of East Herts. Having been elected in 1999, he had served on the Executive since its inception in 2001. From 2006 – 2015, he had served as Leader, overseeing a time of tremendous change in local government. He had shown a great interest in the wellbeing of residents and was a respected figure nationally. The Leader commented that Tony had been a great teacher and she owed him an enormous debt. She wished him well in his retirement.

Councillor E Buckmaster added his own unique perspective experienced from both sides of the chamber, in which he believed Tony had made his mark and had secured a better deal for East Herts residents.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 21 March 2017, be received.

(see also Minutes 656 – 662)

656 EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN - REGULATION 22 CONSULTATION STATEMENT, MARCH 2017

RESOLVED - that the Regulation 22 Consultation Statement, March 2017, as detailed at Essential Reference 'B' to the report submitted and now amended, be agreed as a companion document to the East Herts District Plan, for submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

(see also Minute 655)

657 EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN - DUTY TO CO-OPERATE COMPLIANCE STATEMENT, MARCH 2017

RESOLVED – that (A) the Duty to Co-operate Compliance Statement be agreed in support of the Pre-Submission District Plan; and

(B) the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to agree any further amendments to the Duty to Co-operate Compliance Statement as required.

(see also Minute 655)

658 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN, MARCH 2017

RESOLVED – that the Equality Impact Assessment, March 2017, as detailed at Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ of the report submitted, be agreed.

(see also Minute 655)

659 EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN - PROPOSED MINOR CHANGES, SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION

RESOLVED – that (A) the schedule of Proposed Minor Changes, as detailed at Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ of the report submitted, be agreed, with any further additions authorised by the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Leader of the Council;

(B) the submission of the District Plan and supporting documents to the Planning Inspectorate on 31 March 2017, be agreed;

(C) the process following submission of the District Plan be noted; and

(D) the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to agree any further information required for the Examination.

(see also Minute 655)

660 EAST HERTS INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN,
FEBRUARY 2017

RESOLVED – that (A) the East Herts Infrastructure Delivery Plan, February 2017, as detailed at Essential Reference 'B' of the report submitted, be supported as part of the evidence base to support the East Herts District Plan; and

(B) the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to update the Infrastructure Delivery Plan as required for the Examination.

(see also Minute 655)

661 TRANSPORT MODELLING - COMET AND VISSIM
TECHNICAL PAPERS

RESOLVED – that (A) the COMET Technical Paper, January 2017, be agreed as part of the evidence base to support the East Herts District Plan;

(B) the outputs of VISSIM modelling be noted;

(C) the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to agree the VISSIM Technical Paper prior to the submission of the District Plan to the Planning Inspectorate; and

(D) further transport modelling be undertaken prior to the District Plan Examination Hearing Sessions.

(see also Minute 655)

662 APPROACH TO MASTER PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF STRATEGIC SITES

RESOLVED – that the approach to Masterplanning set out in the report submitted, be agreed to support the delivery of sites allocated for development in the emerging District Plan.

(see also Minute 655)

663 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 8 FEBRUARY 2017

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Management Committee meeting held on 8 February 2017, be received.

664 MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME

Council considered a report of the Monitoring Officer on the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2017/18.

It was noted that the Council's Constitution required the Members' Allowance Scheme to be reviewed by an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) by 31 March of each year. Members were advised of the circumstances requiring the recruitment of three new IRP members and their need for training before they could meet. Council also noted the ongoing review of the Constitution and that the Monitoring Officer would report on this at the next meeting.

Given the circumstances, Council was asked to extend the current Members' Allowance Scheme for consideration at the Annual Council meeting in May 2017.

Council approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the appointment of three new Independent Remuneration Panel Members be noted;

and

(B) the deadline for consideration of the Members' Allowance Scheme be extended until Annual Council in May 2017.

The meeting closed at 7.29 pm

Chairman
Date