

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE VIRTUAL MEETING
- VIRTUAL MEETING ON TUESDAY 1
SEPTEMBER 2020, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor (Chairman/Leader)
Councillors L Haysey, G Williamson,
P Boylan, E Buckmaster, G Cutting,
G McAndrew and S Rutland-Barsby.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors B Crystall, T Stowe,
M Goldspink, D Hollebon, A Huggins,
J Jones, M McMullen, M Pope, C Redfern,
P Ruffles and S Newton.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Cassidy	- Chief Executive
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive
Rebecca Dobson	- Democratic Services Manager
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Bob Palmer	- Interim Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Sara Saunders	- Head of Planning and Building Control

William Troop	- Democratic Services Officer
Claire Sime	- Service Manager (Policy and Implementation)

142 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader welcomed all those attending the online meeting and viewing the meeting on the internet. She advised the Executive and other Members who were in attendance of the virtual meeting protocols to be followed. She said that in the interests of maximum transparency, she would state at the conclusion of each vote whether it was unanimous, so that the public were aware of the outcome, and any Member would have the opportunity to comment.

Councillor Haysey referred to the fact that times were still strange, in light of the pandemic. However, she was pleased to say there was a small measure of good news in that the council had succeeded in awarding £1.6m of government grants to a total of 166 businesses, greatly ahead of the government timetable for doing so. She thanked the Officers responsible.

143 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Goodeve.

144 MINUTES – 7 JULY 2020

The Leader proposed and Councillor McAndrew seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader. The motion, on being put to the meeting and a vote taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2020, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

145 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

146 UPDATE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Leader said the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had confirmed in correspondence that no report had been submitted, as the Committee had not met since the previous meeting of the Executive.

147 UPDATE FROM AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor Pope, as Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee, said the Committee had last met on 28 July 2020. The full agenda had included a useful presentation on cyber security from the Assistant Director – Digital and Transformation from Stevenage Borough Council. The Committee had considered the draft Statement of Accounts for 2019/20. The final version would be submitted to the Committee at its next meeting.

The Leader thanked Councillor Pope for his verbal report.

148 SUSTAINABILITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT
- DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

The Leader submitted a report seeking approval of publication of a draft Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for consultation. She said this SPD represented one of a suite of many actions the Council was taking to provide guidance for developers and to add detail to the policies in the District Plan. In addition, a new body had been set up recently, the Hertfordshire Climate Change Sustainability Policy Group. This group was being chaired by this authority's Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability, Councillor McAndrew. In response to the Leader's invitation to speak, Councillor McAndrew said he would reserve his comments until after the debate on this item.

Councillor Crystall said the SPD emphasised a holistic approach regarding matters such as landscaping. However, from his experience at meetings of the Development Management Committee, there could sometimes be a disconnect in the process. He asked whether the SPD was an opportunity to review the process Officers used in assessing applications.

At the invitation of the Leader, the Head of Planning and Building Control said the starting point was the District Plan. This document provided more information for applicants to use, and set out a checklist of expectations. A great deal depended on

what type of application was being considered by the Development Management Committee. This document set out the expectation as to the work which would have been done in relation to each application. The SPD should ensure applicants were considering these matters in their proposals.

The Planning Policy Service Manager agreed that it depended on the nature and type of application, but the key point was that the SPD focused the minds of applicants, Officers and Members on the checklist of expectations.

The Executive Member for Communities congratulated Officers on the production of this excellent document.

Councillor Stowe asked whether the new SPD would reinforce the Council's ability to require design features, not only for new builds, but in respect of applications generally.

The Head of Planning and Building Control said it was still necessary to rely on the District Plan. The SPD was intended to encourage compliance with policy requirements.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability expressed his thanks to the Principal Planning Officer for her excellent work on the SPD. The document brought clarity to Officers and Members of the Development Management Committee regarding environmentally sustainable aspects of design. The document would evolve over time when the District Plan was reviewed, and was a good starting point.

Councillor Haysey proposed and Councillor McAndrew seconded, a motion to support the recommendations in the report. The motion, on being put to the meeting, and a vote taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - to agree that (A) the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be agreed and published for a four-week period of public consultation; and

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

149 DRAFT UPDATED EAST HERTS COUNCIL SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods submitted a report on an updated version of the council's Safeguarding Policy. He invited the Executive to consider the draft policy, propose any amendments for including prior to consideration by Council, and to recommend the policy to Council for adoption.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing welcomed the report and updated policy.

There being no comments, Councillor Boylan proposed

and Councillor Buckmaster seconded, a motion to support the recommendations in the report. The motion, on being put to the meeting, and a vote taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the draft updated Safeguarding Policy be recommended to Council for adoption; and

(B) the Head of Housing and Health incorporate any amendments to the Safeguarding Policy suggested by the Executive, acting in consultation with the Lead Member for Neighbourhoods, prior to presentation to Council for adoption.

150 FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability submitted a report providing an update on developments to the council's financial position since the previous meeting of the Executive.

Councillor Williamson highlighted the main points set out in the report, relating to the impacts of Covid-19, using best available information to provide indicative figures, on the 2020/21 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan. The report also addressed the need for updated business cases for major projects within the Capital Programme.

Councillor Williamson said during the three months since the previous report there had been some significant developments. It was therefore important

that the financial information was regularly updated.

In relation to the budget, the update points included the fact that additional grant funding of £200,000 had been received, taking the total unbudgeted grant received to £1,702,811; information was awaited on a compensation scheme for lost fees and charges income, but certain features of the scheme had been announced, as detailed in the report. The council's total budgeted income for the year was at the end of April £12.3 million, but adjusting this figure for items likely to be excluded from the scheme reduced the annual budgeted figure to £7 million. The calculated monthly compensation due was approximately £400,000.

Councillor Williamson then took Members through the projection for the additional use of reserves which had been adjusted to give a range of four to six months loss of income, rather than between three and five months. The additional grant and compensation for losses on fees and charges was deducted to arrive at the new predicted range of outcomes. The range of additional use of reserves in 2020/21 ranged from an optimistic forecast of £400,000 to a less optimistic one of £1,200,000. Due to the off-sets of the compensation scheme, the level of concern for the financial position for the current year had reduced from what had previously been predicted.

Councillor Williamson then referred to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). He said when setting the budget for 2020/21 savings proposals and additional income generation plans had been identified, which

had closed the budget gap for the current year. However, the budget gap which had previously been identified had now increased from £420,000 to £1,102,000 in the year 2021/22; from £551,000 to £901,000 in the year 2022/23 and from £610,000 to £1,960,000 in the year 2023/24. The three key areas for income generation were from investments from the Financial Sustainability Committee, from Millstream and from car parking. No adjustments had been made to the first two income generation streams, but it was reasonable to remove the additional income target of £200,000 from parking income. Additional costs were also required for the waste service, in respect of adding new properties to the district, and there would need to be a new separate food waste collection in the final year of the MTFP. Other costs to be included in the MTFP related to support for the Harlow Gilston Garden Town work, and for an additional resource on information governance.

Finally, it was clear that the capital programme major projects required re-evaluation of the business cases for these schemes. It was important that decisions around continuing with the existing programme were based on up to date information. Councillor Williamson said his report recommended that a review take place of the business case for major projects as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process.

The Leader thanked Councillor Williamson and Officers for this report. She said the council was in a better financial position than some authorities, but it was important not to be complacent.

Councillor Pope agreed with the points made regarding the capital programme, and asked when the evaluations of the major projects would take place.

The Interim Head of Strategic Finance and Property said the instruction had been issued to project managers to re-evaluate the business cases and conduct scenario planning. A range of figures would be provided to Members by the end of September.

Councillor Williamson proposed, and Councillor Cutting seconded, a motion to support the recommendations in the report. The motion, on being put to the meeting, and a vote taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED that (A) the potential impacts of Covid-19 on the budget for 2020/21 and the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted; and

(B) a review of the Capital Programme and the updating of business cases for major projects be undertaken as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process.

The meeting closed at 7.27 pm

Chairman
Date

