

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 1 MARCH 2023, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor I Devonshire (Chairman).
Councillors A Alder, T Beckett, S Bell,
R Buckmaster, R Bolton, M Brady,
E Buckmaster, K Crofton, B Crystall,
G Cutting, B Deering, H Drake, J Dumont,
R Fernando, M Goldspink, J Goodeve,
L Haysey, J Jones, J Kaye, I Kemp, S Newton,
T Page, M Pope, J Ranger, C Redfern,
S Reed, P Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby,
D Snowdon, 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
Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive

368 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said that this was the last Council meeting for the Leader of the Council who was stepping down at the election. He said that Councillor Haysey had been a councillor for nearly 20 years and Leader for the last eight years.

Councillors Rutland-Barsby, Symonds, Williamson, Goldspink, Crystall and Redfern paid tribute to Councillor Haysey and her work and service to the council. The Chairman presented the Leader with flowers.

The Chairman also paid tribute to Councillor Ruffles and Councillor McMullen who had served 47 and 24 years respectively and would not be standing at the District Elections in May 2023.

369 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council thanked the council for their kind words. She said she had overseen many big projects in her time as Leader that she was proud of such as Hertford Theatre and the District Plan which had taken a lot of work with residents.

Councillor Haysey asked her Executive Member colleagues to provide updates in their remits.

Councillor E Buckmaster said that in spite of difficult economic circumstances, the council had completed and opened Grange Paddocks which now saw membership above pre-pandemic levels and the 3G

pitch. The council's leisure centres had exceeded the 1.1 million visits targeted in the original business plan. He said that Hartham Leisure Centre was due to open late in the summer. He said that progress was being made with the Castle Park project in partnership with Bishop's Stortford Town Council and earlier issues with the skate park had been overcome.

Councillor Goodeve updated the Council on projects in her remit. She said since the adoption of the District Plan, 2,635 dwellings had been delivered, 792 of these were affordable homes. She said that the Council had continued its trend of annual improvements on the Housing Delivery Test, last year (2022) being able to demonstrate a 130% delivery rate meaning that the Council is not only meeting its housing need, but was also addressing the undersupply of previous years as well. The council had also seen increased contributions for vital infrastructure spending, with over £3million of S106 monies given to 27 projects in 2021/22.

She said that the Council has continued to provide support to communities undertaking work on a Neighbourhood Plan and 12 Neighbourhood Plans had been adopted across the district, with an award for plan-making going to the Gilston Area Neighbourhood Plan.

In relation to Economic Development, the council had launched town centre co-working space to accommodate the needs of freelancers, entrepreneurs and small businesses in Bishop's Stortford and Ware and had established a Business Improvement District to support Bishop's Stortford and its business

community to thrive. She said that East Herts Council had helped 35 local businesses expand or set up shop through a new premises grant scheme and had submitted the East Herts UKSPF and Rural Prosperity Fund investment plans – over £2m to be spent from this year until 25/26.

Councillor Goodeve said that the council was the first in the country to put in place a rigorous process for assessing taxi drivers' English competency which utilises online testing supported by artificial intelligence. This removes any risk of subjectivity. Also, she said that the council had the strictest emissions standards for taxis in Hertfordshire.

Councillor Kaye updated the council in relation to grant funding. He said the council launched the East Herts Lottery to help charities and local organisations to raise funds which to date, had generated more than £160k. He said that 28 grants had been given to community organisations to continue to operate during the pandemic. Councillor Kaye said that the council had given out hundreds of thousands of pounds in grants over the last four years.

370 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrews, Boylan, Bull, Burmicz, Curtis, Frecknall, Hollebon, Huggins, McAndrew, McMullen, Stevenson and Townsend.

371 MINUTES - 18 JANUARY 2023

Councillor Haysey proposed, and Councillor Fernando seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

372 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Snowdon declared an interest in Item 14 – Pay Policy Statement. He said that he worked for the parent company named in the report and would take no part in the discussion or voting of the item.

Councillor Goldspink declared an interest in Item 16 – Protocol for the Appointment of Honorary Alderman. She said she had been previously awarded the title of Honorary Alderman and would take no part in the discussion or voting of the item.

Councillor Williamson declared an interest in Item 18 – Motions on Notice. He said that he would be leaving the room during the discussion of the item.

373 PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

374 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**Alastair Cook to ask Cllr Graham McAndrew, the Executive Member for Environmental Services**

Have the cumulative effects of the traffic and therefore pollution being generated by 4000 plus houses, a new Aldi on the Gates site and two proposed logistics centres (St James, Wren) been assessed with regards to impact on the already unacceptable pollution levels at the Hockerill junction?

Response

May I first thank Alastair Cook for his question.

My portfolio covers Environmental Sustainability, while my colleague, Cllr Jan Goodeve, covers planning, however, I am happy to answer this question. When developing the council's District Plan in 2018, the cumulative impact of development on the allocated sites was investigated. This predicted no undue air quality pressures as a result of the Plan, once factors such as anticipated traffic patterns, improving vehicle emission standards and the likely uptake of alternatives to car use were taken into account.

That said, applications for major development across the district, and *all* development in the Air Quality Management Areas in Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth and Hertford, must submit an air quality assessment as planning policy expects the applicant to demonstrate how the proposal would

have at least a neutral, if not a positive, impact on local air quality. Redesigns and mitigations can be insisted upon as a condition of planning consent in line with both national guidance and the more stringent air quality guidance found in the council's Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document.

I am very pleased that in the context of new development and although there remain traffic pressures at the four-way Hockerill junction, smart traffic light phasing installed by Hertfordshire County Council, regular East Herts Council anti-idling campaigns and lower emissions from more modern vehicles have together resulted in emissions dropping at the junction from 63 micrograms per cubic metre in 2017 to 48 in 2021.

We will, of course, continue to monitor pollution at the junction and work the Highways team at Hertfordshire County Council to identify any works, especially as pollution is still above the nationally set level of 40 micrograms per cubic metre. We are keen to ensure air quality gains during the pandemic are not reversed and I am hopeful, given the year-on-year reductions over the last decade, that pollution levels will continue to drop.

Finally, I think two important developments should hasten the reduction in air pollution at Hockerill and indeed elsewhere in the district. First, from 1st April, East Herts will have the most stringent taxi emission standards in the county and second, in February our bid for Defra funding for active travel planning was approved. This will see £126,000 spent on working with

schools, local businesses and the town councils in the three AQMAs to support people make local journeys without their cars. The grant will also fund the installation of real-time air quality monitors in each AQMA to enable residents to take informed choices about whether to add to local pollution, or not, by varying their journeys and means of transport.

There was no supplementary question.

375 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Rishi Fernando to ask Cllr George Cutting, the Executive Member for Corporate Services

With the introduction of Voter ID being required in elections for the first time this May, I would like to ask the Executive Member for Corporate Services what steps East Herts has and is taking to make all residents and especially those groups most affected i.e. young people, older people and people with disabilities aware of this new requirement and would the Executive Member be able to give me specifics on how many applications there have been so far locally for the new Voter Authority Certificate.

Response

East Herts Council will be running a comprehensive local communications campaign to promote awareness of the Voter ID requirements prior to the

May Elections. This will make use of a variety of channels including online and social media, Network, local press, parish newsletters and posters in community venues; and will complement the Electoral Commission's national television, poster and press campaign.

In this regard the Electoral Services Team are working closely with Communications colleagues to identify the priority groups for East Herts and how best to engage with each of these, and with the Council's Healthy Lifestyles Programme Officer to make contact with community groups that the Council is already aware of.

All electors who are registered to vote at a polling station will receive full information regarding the Voter ID requirements on their poll cards. However, in addition to this the Council is sending in the next week a colour postcard to all 64,000 residential addresses in the district highlighting the change, publicising the availability of the free Voter Authority Certificate for any elector who does not have any of the accepted forms of Photo ID, and providing a web link and telephone helpline number for further information.

The Voter Authority Certificate application portal launched on Monday 16 January 2023. As at today's date, 1 March, East Herts Council had received 48 applications for these certificates.

Recruitment of staff to work in the polling stations on 4 May 2023 is now almost complete, with only a few poll clerk positions still to be filled. Additional staff have

been allocated to some polling stations to ensure that the new ID procedures can be carried out efficiently and all polling station staff will receive full training, including on the new Voter ID requirements.

There was no supplementary question.

Councillor Ben Crystall to ask Cllr George Cutting, the Executive Member for Corporate Services

What work is EHC doing with the groups most affected by the introduction of photo voter ID (young people, older people and people with disabilities), to raise awareness of this new requirement and how many applications so far have there been locally for the new Voter Authority Certificate (for people who don't have an approved Photo ID)?

Response

As Question 1 and 2 were on the same topic, the Chairman grouped the questions together and Councillor Cutting provided one response. Please see response under Question 1.

There was no supplementary question.

Councillor Ben Crystall to ask Cllr Jan Goodeve, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Please can Councillors be updated on alterations made to the plans for Hertford Leisure Centre and Hertford Theatre since DMC approval? In particular can you provide information on any that will impact the public realm, sustainability and services which the buildings

provide to the public?

Response

In respect to Hartham Leisure Centre various applications to discharge conditions attached to the permission have been made. Application reference X/21/0477/CND approved details of materials. Full details of materials can be seen on Council's online planning database but the palette in summary was a steel standing seam roof and some areas of living roof, with glazing and cement reinforced cladding to the side elevations.

Application X/23/0068/CND has recently been submitted (24/02/2023) and proposes to change the cladding material due to material availability. This change is under consideration by officers.

In respect to Hertford Theatre various applications to discharge conditions attached to the permission have since been made. Application reference X/22/0363/CND approved details of some materials but a further submission is required in relation to other materials. Full details of materials can be seen on Council's online planning database.

Application 3/22/1291/NMA was submitted to make non-material amendments to vehicular access and landscaping which would have increased planting, removed proposed trees, reduced on-street parking on the pavement and altered cycle parking. This was refused as the changes proposed were considered to be too extensive to be acceptable as a "non-material" amendment. This decision does not give judgement as

to their acceptability but rather that a different type of application needed to be submitted.

There was no supplementary question.

Councillor Chris Wilson to ask Cllr Jan Goodeve, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth

As part of a recent major planning application, a traffic report was submitted with reference to Bishop's Stortford. Essentially, it argued that the development would not have a severe impact on the levels of traffic in the town as by the time the development was built, the traffic would be at such a high level that any additional congestion would make no significant difference. Would you agree that such a report needs to be looked at very seriously, and that if it is correct it puts into doubt whether the District Plan is now fit for purpose? Do you also agree that the District Plan intended for there to be mitigation in place to stop air pollution in Hockerill increasing further as a result of nearby major developments, and that it is now clear that this mitigation has not and is not working? Do you therefore agree that we must seriously consider placing a hold on all developments in Bishop's Stortford until we can be sure that they are not damaging the town centre's viability as a place for business, and residents' ability to travel in the town as well as threatening their health and wellbeing due to the unacceptable levels of air pollution in Hockerill and beyond?

Response

You would have already heard Councillor McAndrew's response to Alastair Cooke and my response today covers similar points.

The impact of new development on local air quality is an important planning consideration. When developing the Council's District Plan in 2018 the cumulative impact of building on the sites allocated for development in Bishop's Stortford and elsewhere were fully investigated. This work found that the scale of new development envisaged was not deemed to put undue air quality pressures on the town having taken account of factors including predicted travel patterns, improving emission standards of vehicles and likely uptake of alternatives to car use. The District Plan continues to provide a strong framework for air pollution in the planning application process. Policy EQ4 expects developments to minimise air pollution and incorporate measures in the design, construction and operation of all developments to address any negative impact on air quality.

Councillor McAndrew has already said that redesigns and mitigations can be insisted upon in conditions for planning consent in line with both national guidance and the air quality guidance found in the Council's Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document. An important objective of adopting the SPD in 2021 was to provide further technical guidance to developers on how to implement District Plan requirements. To incorporate appropriate air quality design and mitigation measures, major developments across the District and all development in the AQMA must submit an air quality assessment as part of the planning

application process to demonstrate how new developments will have a neutral or positive impact on local air quality. Therefore, the District Plan and its supporting documents do remain fit for purpose. Whilst there remains traffic pressures at the four way Hockerill junction, and as set out by Councillor McAndrew, smart traffic light phasing installed by HCC, regular East Herts anti-idling campaigns, and lower emissions from more modern vehicles have together resulted in emissions dropping at Hockerill Junction from 63 micrograms per cubic metre in 2017 to 48 in 2021.

Given the policy framework I have outlined and the progress that is already being made towards reducing emission at Hockerill Junction, there is no justification to put on hold all developments in Bishop's Stortford.

Councillor Wilson asked a supplementary question. He said he accepted that when the District Plan was prepared there was mitigation that was supposed to happen and studies at that point but my question is whether that study is still valid and what date that was. Do you have any data on change of travel habits of people in Bishop's Stortford?

Councillor Goodeve said she had not seen any more recent travel data but said that the District Plan will have a five-year review at the end of the year which will provide an opportunity for everything to be looked at in a holistic way.

The Leader of the Council presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the Executive at its meeting on 14 February 2023.

377 DISCRETIONARY COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT TOP UP 2023

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the recommendations in the Executive report of 14 February 2023, regarding the Discretionary Council Tax Support Top Up. He said that the mandatory scheme would give all households on Council Tax Support a £25 reduction on their Council Tax.

Councillor Williamson proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. Councillor Symonds seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink said 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, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - That (A) the discretionary 'Council Tax Support Top Up 2023' Scheme be approved; and

(B) the Head of Revenues and Benefits Share Service, in conjunction with the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, amend the scheme criteria if funds would otherwise not be allocated in full.

378 ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2023 - 2028

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the recommendation in the Executive report of 14 February 2023, regarding the Asset Management Plan 2023-2028.

Councillor Williamson proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. Councillor Drake seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink said the Liberal Democrat group were happy to support the recommendation. She referred to a comment about car parks on page 70 and the opportunity to free up car parking sites for redevelopment. She said she was concerned about that statement but was happy to support the recommendation.

Councillor Crystall referred to the Assets Member Reference Group and asked if there would be an opportunity for members from all parties to sit on the group.

Councillor Williamson said that it had not been discussed yet.

Councillor Crystall asked if the Property Service Team had sufficient resources to carry out the asset surveys.

Councillor Williamson said the work could be carried out within existing resources.

Councillor Crystall asked how the Corporate Assets Group and the Assets Member Reference Group would work together.

Councillor Williamson said that the Corporate Assets Group would review the disposal list and it would be reviewed by the Member group before a final recommendation was taken.

Councillor Crystall asked how long the Wallfields car park had been available for business parking at the weekends.

Councillor Goodeve said that market stall holders were encouraged to park there to save space at Gascoyne Way car park.

Councillor Snowdon thanked the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability and Officers for the report and for ensuring that the community assets were well maintained. He asked for some assurance that some assets that might be best held or operated by another tier of government would be considered.

Councillor Williamson said that the overall interest of the council would be considered.

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

RESOLVED – That the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan 2023-2028 be approved.

379 BUDGET 2023/24 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN
2023/24 - 2027/28

The Chairman reminded Members that a revised Appendix C – Fees and Charges had been published in the supplementary agenda and these were the figures that needed to be included in the recommendations.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Budget 2023/24 and the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 – 2027/28. He said that he was proud of the administration’s record on producing budgets which showed sound financial management and protected frontline services which had been achieved over the last few years despite adverse circumstances such as the pandemic, the economic impact from the war in Ukraine and the employers pay offer and the higher than expected inflationary contract increase of £840k. He said that the budget had been prepared against an increasingly challenging background and uncertainties over future funding.

Councillor Williamson said one way for a council to increase revenue was council tax. Central government had made it clear that local authorities must do all that was necessary to raise funds and the Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement in 2022 that local authorities would have more flexibility to increase council tax; the higher of £5 or 3% rounded. He said that 3% rounded was the higher for East Herts so council tax would be increased by £5.50 or 11p a week. He said that increasing council tax was never an easy decision but the increase would bring in an extra

£350,000 each year for the delivery of services.

Councillor Williamson said that the Council Tax increase and the Fees and Charges policy was not enough to close the budget gap. He reported that sufficient operational savings had been found in the Transformation Programme without any impact on frontline services. However, he said that substantial savings of £6.7 million would need to be found in future years of the MTFP and this was after the temporary use of reserves to remove some of the pressure. The Leadership Team had embarked on a Reconciling Resources and Performance exercise to ensure the council's resources were aligned with its corporate priorities.

Councillor Williamson referred to the council's capital programme. He said the total capital investment across the district would reach £18.4 million of which the council's major projects contribute £14.9 million. He said the council now had to allow for interest payments and minimum revenue provision of capital borrowing in the MTFP. He said that by pausing some of the lower priority capital projects and moved them into approved but not committed category, the council did not need to allow for financing of these items in the MTFP.

Councillor Williamson said the council had been successful in receiving £2.2 million in funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to invest into the district over the next two years.

Councillor Williamson thanked the Leadership Team

and Officers across the council for having robust and solid plans moving forward and said that the administration had acted prudently with finances and was in a much better place than other authorities across the country.

Councillor Williamson proposed the recommendations in the report and were seconded by Councillor Buckmaster who reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Goldspink said that the Liberal Democrat group knew that council finances were stretched but said that there were several ways of reducing costs and one was to pause any non-essential spends. She said the Liberal Democrats believed that it was unwise to proceed with proposals for the Old River Lane development when there were serious flaws in the plans and did not have the support of residents in Bishop's Stortford. She felt it was foolish to commit the council and taxpayers to 30 years of repayments on a loan for a scheme that no one wanted. She suggested that the scheme be paused for a short while to do a thorough and full consultation with residents and save revenue expenditure.

Therefore, Councillor Goldspink proposed an amendment to the budget as follows:

"This Council decides to pause the proposed capital expenditure on the Development of the Old River Lane site in Bishop's Stortford, by moving this item to the "Approved but not yet Committed" category. This would reduce the Council's revenue expenditure for the Medium Term Financial Plan period and would

allow time for full consultation with residents and all interested parties. It would not mean cancelling the project.

That the budget be amended as follows:

- Appendix A Medium Term Financial Plan being replaced with the attached new Appendix A with amended figures shown highlighted in yellow; and
- Appendix B Capital Programme being replaced with the attached new Appendix B with amended figures shown highlighted in yellow.”

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Wilson.

Councillor Wilson said that the meeting had heard earlier from Councillor Buckmaster about the success of Grange Paddocks. He said that could have been predicted as the residents of Bishop’s Stortford were in support of the proposal before it happened. He said the strength of feeling in Bishop’s Stortford over the Old River Lane development has been bigger than any other issue. He said the council needed to pause the development and revisit with the full co-operation of the residents before going ahead.

Councillor Redfern said she wholeheartedly supported the amendment. She said that the residents of Bishop’s Stortford did not feel that they had been consulted, not been listened too and that the development has been imposed on them.

Councillor Williamson said that the budget process had

begun last September and the proposals had been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee twice and to the Executive three times. He said he could not see any difference to the figures for 2023/24 in what was proposed in the amendment.

A recorded vote was held on the amendment proposed by Councillor Goldspink. The result was as follows:

FOR

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

AGAINST

Councillors Alder, Bolton, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Crofton, Cutting, Deering, Drake, Fernando, Goodeve, Haysey, Jones, Kaye, Kemp, Newton, Page, Pope, Ranger, Reed, Ruffles, Rutland-Barsby, Snowdon, Stowe, Symonds, Ward-Booth, Williamson, Wyllie

ABSTAIN

Councillor Devonshire

For: 8

Against: 27

Abstain: 1

The motion to amend the recommendation was LOST.

The debate returned to the original recommendations

in the report.

Councillor Redfern referred to page 110 of the report which referred to a member decision about increased access to external grants to replace EHC's funds through a 'payments per results' agreement with CVS. She asked if the council was going to decide on that or make a decision on the whole budget.

Councillor Williamson said that the item Councillor Redfern was referring to formed part of the whole budget package that had been presented.

Councillor Deering said he thought this was an excellent budget and praised the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability for his work.

Councillor Crofton said that the budget had been scrutinised by the Audit and Governance Committee. He said it was galling to hear the opposition members challenge the budget proposals when they had not been present at any of the Audit and Governance Committees when the budget was being debated. He said that Councillor Bell had only attended three meetings and no substitute was ever offered in her place.

Councillor Bell clarified that she had only missed one meeting due to having Covid.

Councillor E Buckmaster said that Councillor Williamson had presented the budget well and said the administration had a lot to be proud of. He said that the council provided many services for just 9% of the

share of Council Tax collected and reminded people what the authority delivered such as collecting council tax, parks, leisure, theatre, environmental health, planning, parking, licensing, housing, community engagement, business support and much more.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to a recorded vote and the result was as follows:

FOR

Councillors Alder, Bolton, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Crofton, Cutting, Deering, Drake, Fernando, Goodeve, Haysey, Jones, Kaye, Kemp, Newton, Page, Pope, Ranger, Reed, Ruffles, Rutland-Barsby, Snowdon, Stowe, Symonds, Ward-Booth, Williamson, Wyllie

AGAINST

Councillors Beckett, Bell, Dumont, Goldspink, Wilson

ABSTAIN

Councillors Brady, Crystall, Devonshire, Redfern

For: 27

Against: 5

Abstained: 4

RESOLVED – That (A) To approve the budget and Medium Term Financial Plan at Appendix A be approved with a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, which

will result in a Band D Equivalent Council Tax annual increase of £5.50;

(B) the Capital Programme at Appendix B be approved;

(C) the Fees and Charges at Appendix C of the supplementary agenda be approved noting that charges have been calculated on a full cost recovery basis in line with the Fees and Charges Policy.

(D) the level of budget reductions required to balance the budget in the medium term is beyond further efficiency measures alone and that Leadership Team are preparing a Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources exercise that the new Council, elected in May 2023, will need to undertake alongside the development of the new Corporate Plan, to balance the budget over the medium term be noted.

380 COUNCIL TAX SETTING REPORT 2023/24

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Council Tax Setting Report for 2023/24. He said the paper was a technical calculation and described how charges were brought together with other preceptors.

Councillor Williamson proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Kaye seconded the proposal.

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

The motion to support the recommendation having

been proposed and seconded was put to a recorded vote and the result was as follows:

FOR

Councillors Alder, Beckett, Bell, Bolton, Brady, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Crofton, Crystall, Cutting, Deering, Drake, Dumont, Fernando, Goldspink, Goodeve, Haysey, Jones, Kaye, Kemp, Newton, Page, Pope, Ranger, Redfern, Reed, Ruffles, Rutland-Barsby, Snowdon, Stowe, Symonds, Ward-Booth, Williamson, Wilson, Wyllie

AGAINST

None.

ABSTAIN

Councillor Devonshire

For: 35

Against: 0

Abstain: 1

RESOLVED – That (A) the Council Tax resolution, as now submitted at Appendix A, be approved;

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

(C) the Hertfordshire County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire precepts be noted.

381 CAPITAL STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy. He said the council was required to produce a strategy following strengthening of financial guidance.

Councillor Williamson proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Deering seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink said the Liberal Democrat group were happy to support the recommendation. She said she had a comment about the page regarding the scoring of different projects. She questioned whether the Old River Lane development really met the corporate priorities of 'Sustainability at the heart of everything we do' and 'Enabling communities' due to the demolition of three houses and the absence of a full consultation.

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

RESOLVED - That the Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2023/24 onward be approved.

382 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT

STRATEGY 2023/24

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy 2023/24 report. He said that the strategy guided the council on the delivery of programmes and the basis on which to manage its funds.

Councillor Williamson proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported.
Councillor Kaye seconded the proposal.

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

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

RESOLVED – That the Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy 2023/24 at Appendix A and the Prudential Indicators at Appendix B be approved.

383 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/2024

The Executive Member for Corporate Services presented the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24. He said that it was a statutory requirement that all councils produce and publish a Pay Policy and the 2023/24 Statement included the pay negotiation concluded in 2022 which added £1,925 to each spinal column. This meant the lowest pay point had a pay increase of 9.99% and the highest pay point had

a 3.98% increase.

Councillor Cutting proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. Councillor Alder seconded the proposal.

Councillor Redfern asked if the pay policy included an uplift for the current year that had not been agreed yet.

Councillor Cutting said the current negotiations had not been agreed yet.

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

RESOLVED – That the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 be agreed.

384 REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Chairman of the Member Constitution Review Group presented the Review of the Constitution report. He said most of the changes were minor and the change to Questions by Members' in the Council Procedure Rules aligned them to the rules for Public Questions. Councillor Williamson proposed a slight amendment to the paragraph 4.26.5(b) and requested the wording as follows:

“The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability has been given delegated authority to authorise the sale of any single asset held by the Council up to the value of £500k as advised and recommended by officers as

being in the interest of the Council and where expediency is required and the matter cannot wait until the next ordinary meeting of the Executive. Any such authorisation by the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability is subject to the Council's Member call-in procedure as described in Section 5, paragraph 5.31 of this constitution."

Councillor Williamson proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Deering seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink said she was not happy with the proposed change in wording to paragraph 4.26.5(b). She felt that Councillor Williamson should discuss the proposed sale of assets with other Members of the Executive and not make the decision alone.

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

RESOLVED - That the updates and amendments to the Constitution identified in Appendix A-F be approved.

385 PROTOCOL FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMAN

The Chairman of the Member Constitution Review Group presented the Protocol for the Appointment of Honorary Alderman. He said the opinion of the Review Group was that the current five term qualifying term for consideration of the title was too long and the

Group have suggested reducing the term limit to two.

Councillor Williamson proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported.

Councillor Deering seconded the proposal.

Councillor Jones said he was not comfortable that a two term period was sufficient to warrant Alderman status although he felt that the current five terms was too long. He proposed that the term limit be increased to three full terms.

Councillor Wyllie seconded the amendment.

Councillor Snowdon said that long service by itself was not a necessary condition. He said that when the term limit was originally set, Members terms were three years not four.

Councillor Crofton and Redfern felt three terms was more appropriate.

Councillor Haysey sought clarification about whether the three terms would be consecutive. She recognised that the length of time did not equate to quality of service but that issues in rural wards did not compare to issues in urban wards.

Councillor Kemp thought that the bar for Honorary Alderman status should be set high and length of service was not necessarily equal to quality of service. He thought that a Member could do something exceptional in two terms which should be recognised. He said that Members were democratically elected and

the electorate could choose not to re-elect a councillor.

Councillor Fernando echoed comments made by his colleagues. He thought that three terms would make more sense but also highlighted that the Honorary Alderman title needed a two-third majority of the council to be appointed.

Councillor Kaye felt the criteria should be qualitative not quantitative.

Councillor Jones clarified that he was only proposing an amendment to criteria (C) under paragraph 3 of the protocol. He said criteria (C) should read "Has rendered a minimum of twelve years' service/three consecutive full terms of office as a Member of East Hertfordshire District Council".

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

RESOLVED - That the qualifying term limit for nomination to be an Honorary Alderman be three consecutive terms.

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

RESOLVED - That the Protocol for the Appointment of Honorary Alderman be approved.

386 EXTENSION OF THE 2022/23 MEMBER ALLOWANCE SCHEME

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the Extension of the 2022/23 Member Allowance Scheme report. He said that under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003, the Independent Remuneration Panel should produce a report to make recommendations to the Members' Allowance Scheme. The last report which was agreed by Council in May 2022 ran for one year and it was felt that the current scheme should be extended to allow the Panel to meet with the council after the elections in May 2022.

Councillor Haysey proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Kemp seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink said the Liberal Democrat Group were happy to support the recommendation.

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

RESOLVED – That the extension of the 2022/23 Scheme of Members' Allowances until the Council meeting held on 26 October 2023 be approved.

387 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY TO COUNCIL - A FULLY FUNDED, PROPER PAY RISE FOR COUNCIL WORKERS

Councillor Redfern proposed the following motion on notice:

“This council notes:

Local government has endured central government funding cuts of more than 50% since 2010. Between 2010 and 2020, councils lost 60p out of every £1 they have received from central government. Councils across England are now facing a collective funding gap of £2.4bn for the financial year 2023/24 and a cumulative funding gap of £4.08bn for 2024/25 according to UNISON research.

Councils led the way in efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a huge range of services and support for our communities. Local government has shown more than ever how indispensable it is. But Covid has led to a massive increase in expenditure and loss of income, and as we emerge from the pandemic, local authorities need far more support from Westminster.

Council workers kept our communities safe through the pandemic, often putting themselves at considerable risk as they work to protect public health, provide quality housing, and look after older and vulnerable people.

Since 2010, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing at least 25 per cent of their value since 2009/10. Staff are now facing the worst cost of living

crisis in a generation, with inflation hitting 10% and many having to make impossible choices between food, heating and other essentials. This is a terrible situation for anyone to find themselves in.

At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity. Across the UK, 900,000 jobs have been lost in local government since June 2010 – a reduction of more than 30 per cent. Local government has arguably been hit by more severe job losses than any other part of the public sector.

There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three-quarters of the local government workforce.

Recent research shows that if the Government were to fully fund the unions' 2023 pay claim, around half of the money would be recouped thanks to increased tax revenue, reduced expenditure on benefits and tax credits, and increased consumer spending in the local economy.

This council believes:

Our workers are public service super-heroes. They keep our communities clean and safe, look after those in need and keep our towns and cities running.

Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services our residents rely on would not be deliverable.

Local government workers deserve a proper real-terms pay increase. The Government needs to take responsibility and fully fund this increase; it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding has been cut to the bone and who were not offered adequate support through the Covid-19 pandemic.

This council resolves to:

Support the pay claim submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council workers, for an increase of RPI + 2%

Call on the Local Government Association to make urgent representations to central government to fund the NJC pay claim

Write to the Chancellor and Secretary of State to call for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government

Meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the council can support the campaign

Encourage all local government workers to join a union."

Councillor Brady seconded the motion.

Councillor Cutting reaffirmed that the council appreciated the efforts of all employees regardless of their role and responsibilities. He said that all pay negotiations went through a national framework and

all councils were invited to offer their views through consultations. He said the negotiation for the 2023/24 pay award was underway with two national bodies. Councillor Cutting said that the current pay offer contributed to an overall increase of 22% since April 2021.

Councillor Goldspink said she supported the motion and said that if employees were not happy with what was being offered and the council thought the settlement was not fair, that more should be done. She said that if the government funded the pay increase they would be able to recoup more money through increased income tax payments and a reduced dependency on benefits and other support. Councillor Goldspink said that if staff were not happy with their pay, they would soon look for jobs elsewhere and then the council will be reliant on agency workers who were more expensive.

Councillor Wilson said he supported the motion and echoed Councillor Goldspink's comments about staff leaving for the private sector. He said that public sector workers need to feel valued to keep them in their roles.

Councillor Dumont said that he was confused by Councillor Cutting's comments and the channels to negotiate pay when the motion set out a resolution not what the council did or did not agree with.

Councillor Kemp said that it was the place of national negotiators for employers and employees to come to a solution and it wasn't for the council to guess the

outcome of the negotiations.

Councillor Redfern said that words did not pay rent and words of thanks did not buy food. She said the motion was about a fair pay increase for real people and she said she felt very passionate about it.

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

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Chairman
Date