

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 7 MARCH 2012, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor S Rutland-Barsby (Chairman)
Councillors D Abbott, M Alexander,
D Andrews, W Ashley, P Ballam, S Basra,
E Bedford, R Beeching, E Buckmaster,
S Bull, A Burlton, M Carver,
Mrs R Cheswright, K Crofton, J Demonti,
P Gray, L Haysey, T Herbert,
Mrs D Hollebon, A Jackson, G Jones,
G Lawrence, J Mayes, G McAndrew,
M McMullen, P Moore, W Mortimer,
M Newman, T Page, M Pope, N Poulton,
R Radford, J Ranger, C Rowley, P Ruffles,
M Tindale, A Warman, G Williamson,
N Wilson, J Wing, M Wood, C Woodward,
B Wrangles and J Wyllie.

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	- Director of Customer and Community Services

674 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the press and public to the meeting.

She referred to the forthcoming Civic Dinner and advised that it was nearly sold out and that if any Member still wished to attend, they should contact her office.

The Chairman reminded Members that an additional Council meeting would be held on 4 April 2012 to deal with Local Development Framework matters.

675 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 22 February 2012, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

676 LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY OVERVIEW

Derrick Ashley, Chairman, and Shaun Dawson, Chief Executive, gave a presentation on the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. Mr Ashley outlined the history, structure and governance arrangements of the Authority. Mr Dawson detailed the facilities, activities and funding arrangements. He also referred to the Olympics and the commercial and development opportunities for the Authority based on its agreed vision and mission. Mr Dawson outlined the White Water Centre, the Velo Park and Eton Manor and explained the legacy benefits. He also detailed the visitor numbers from East Herts and the various schools who had visited the Park.

677 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Question 1

Councillor D Andrews asked the Leader of the Council if he would join him in acknowledging the service done to local government by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in having the foresight and the political courage to incorporate the abolition of the Standards Board

for England in the Localism Act. A flawed Board that had been set up in the 1990s by new Labour and had proved to be ineffective, in fact, many thought a costly disaster and, far from the lofty aims of policing local government. It had instead, become a byword for witch hunts and ridiculous complaints to embarrass opponents, at no little cost to the Exchequer and at great cost to local democracy.

In reply, the Leader agreed and believed that this view was held throughout local government nationally. He commented that the regime had been abused by a variety of people and that its abolition was appropriate.

Councillor D Andrews referred to a recent local report in which 20% of the current Council had been referred to the Standards Committee by a lone member of the public at a cost of several thousand pounds. He asked the Leader if he agreed that hard working Councillors would be relieved that they could get on with their work in making often difficult decisions for the greater good, without fear of being reported to the Standards Board by people who disagreed with them and local democracy.

The Leader agreed but reminded Members of the requirement for a process to be put in place where Members who transgressed could be held to account in a proportionate and relevant manner. He referred to proposals that would be considered by the Standards Committee on 14 March 2012. Whilst he did not wish to pre-judge this consideration, he hoped that proposals that would come forward to Council for determination would be simple and proportionate.

678 COUNCIL TAX 2012/13

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report proposing Council Tax levels in 2012/13. He referred to the precepts set by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), Hertfordshire Police Authority (HPA) and Parish and Town Councils.

Council noted that the precepts levied by HCC and HPA, had

been frozen at 2011/12 levels. In respect of local Town/Parish Councils, the Executive Member congratulated those where reductions had been levied. He also referred to those areas where increases had been levied and suggested that residents might want to ask questions of their local representatives.

Council approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Council Tax resolution, as detailed at Essential Reference Paper ‘A’ to these Minutes, be approved;

(B) the local precepts as set out at Essential Reference Paper ‘C’ of the report submitted, be noted; and

(C) Hertfordshire County Council’s and Hertfordshire Police Authority’s precepts, as now submitted, be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.49 pm

Chairman
Date