

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 12 DECEMBER 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, S Bull,
Mrs R Cheswright, K Crofton, A Dearman,
J Demonti, L Haysey, T Herbert, A Jackson,
G Lawrence, G McAndrew, M McMullen,
P Moore, W Mortimer, M Newman, T Page,
P Phillips, M Pope, J Ranger, P Ruffles,
S Rutland-Barsby, N Symonds, M Tindale,
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
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services
Adele Taylor	- Director of Finance and Support Services

492 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the press and public to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast. She also welcomed Adele Taylor, the Director of Finance and Support Services, to her first Council meeting.

The Chairman welcomed back Councillors G Lawrence and B Wrangles following their recent period of ill health. She also updated Members on Councillors M Carver and N Poulton and believed she spoke for all Members in wishing them a speedy recovery.

The Chairman outlined her events since the previous meeting and highlighted Haileybury School's 150th anniversary celebrations, the recognition of the achievements of Hertfordshire olympians and paralympians at Hatfield House and the Mercury and Observer Community Awards at Hanbury Manor.

The Chairman invited Members to support her in showing appreciation to the staff with Christmas refreshments at Charringtons House, Bishop's Stortford and Wallfields on 13 and 14 December 2012, respectively. Finally, the Chairman invited Members and Officers to join her for seasonal refreshments at the end of the meeting.

493 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2012, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

494 PUBLIC QUESTION

Mr J Horrax, a Bishop's Stortford resident, had submitted a question to the Executive Member for Economic Development, as follows:

"Would Councillor Phillips like to take the opportunity to consider whether, given the lack of parking available in

the Chantry permit scheme for residents of Rye Street to park close to their homes (defined as Lindsey Road, Rye Street and Stane Close) and the results of the community consultation which reported back at the end of September showing a severe negative impact on the residents of Rye Street, they might be allowed to re-use Grange Paddocks car park for no additional pay-and-display charges, as per the arrangements pre-pay-and-display, provided they have a valid parking permit?"

As Mr Horrax had been unable to attend, the Executive Member undertook to provide a written response.

495 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Question 1

Councillor J Wing asked the Executive Member for Finance to which Council Committee were proposed write-offs of uncollected Council Tax reported, and if they were not, why not.

In reply, the Executive Member for Finance outlined the process for write-offs, which was governed by the Council's Financial Regulations. He detailed the levels of delegation to Officers and the circumstances when a report to the Executive would be necessary.

He advised that a total of £193k had been written off in this year, relating to 532 individual transactions against an annual bill of £87m. The Executive Member commented that a bad debt provision was included within the collection rate as 100% of council tax could never be collected.

Councillor J Wing referred to previous practice in reporting debts to committee, where Members could assist in identifying debtors and asked if this had been abandoned because it was found to be unproductive.

In reply, the Executive Member stated that he was unfamiliar

with previous practice. He commented that reporting individual debts would be undesirable as they were not strategic matters and would increase the time taken to make decisions and the burden on Officers. He wondered whether Members could be made aware of a proposed write-off in their ward.

Question 2

Councillor J Wing asked the Leader of the Council how many copies of the glossy version of the Council's Annual Report were produced, to whom it was sent and how much it cost to publish.

In reply, the Leader stated that 250 copies at a cost of £345 had been produced. This had been sent to all Members, the senior management team, Local Strategic Partnership colleagues and town and parish councils. The Leader referred to some errors in the most recent publication, which had resulted in some reprinting, the cost of which would not have been a huge amount, given the total cost of the production.

Question 3

Councillor J Wing asked the Leader of the Council if, in view of continuing efforts by Ministers in the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to see an end to alternate weeks refuse collection, the Leader of the Council would write to the Secretary of State pointing out the success of the Council's ARC scheme, its popularity with the electorate, and its very positive impact on recycling rates and consequent reduction in landfill locally.

In reply, the Leader expressed his pleasure at the Authority's recycling achievements, as recognised by the recent Peer Challenge. He was reluctant to change back, but stated that he would not be writing such a letter, as the DCLG had not told the Authority to make any changes. If a directive had been issued, then he would write such a letter. He believed the DCLG were concerned with weekly food waste collections

and that funds had been provided for those Authorities that did not have a weekly collection. He understood that only two Authorities would revert back to weekly collections.

496 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 6 NOVEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 6 November 2012, be received.

497 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 4 DECEMBER 2012

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

(see also Minutes 498 – 507)

498 FINAL TASK AND FINISH REPORT ON REVIEW OF GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT (PARKS OPEN SPACES AND HIGHWAYS)

The Executive Member for Community Safety and Environment referred to the original report considered by Environment Scrutiny Committee and the Executive and advised of some errors relating to the contract period dates. He advised that contrary to the report, the current contract period was January 2008 – December 2014 and not January 2007 – December 2013. Therefore, the proposed extension period would commence in January 2015. He corrected all of the erroneous dates in the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the comments of the Environment Scrutiny Committee as detailed in the report submitted, be received; and

(B) taking into account the risks of a longer period against the greater financial benefits, and in the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan objectives, the current grounds maintenance contract be extended for a period of 5 years.

499 COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND PREMIUM

RESOLVED – that the following discounts in respect of council tax be approved with effect from 1 April 2013:

(A) a discount of 50% for any period of up to six months in respect of dwellings which become empty and unfurnished;

(B) a discount of 50% where a dwelling is empty undergoing major repair for such minimum period as prescribed by regulation; and

(C) a discount of nil in respect of second homes.

500 AFFORDABLE HOUSING: PLANNING POLICY REQUIREMENTS

RESOLVED - that the Council's policy requirement for the provision of affordable housing in category 1 and 2 Villages be amended and the revised wording for policy HSG3(II) and (III) as set out in paragraph 4.1 of this report submitted, be agreed, resulting in the threshold and requirement for provision of affordable housing as follows:

a) Main Settlements:

Threshold: Sites over 15 units or 0.5ha

Provision: Up to 40%

b) Category 1 and 2 Villages

Threshold: Sites of up to 3 units or 0.12ha

Provision: none

Threshold: Sites of 4-14 units or 0.12 – 0.5ha

Provision: Up to 25%

Threshold: Sites over 15 units or 0.5ha

Provision: Up to 40%

The time period for the commencement of development

of any planning permissions that come forward as result of this policy change shall be one year.

501 SUB-DISTRICT POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD FORECASTS - PARISH GROUPINGS AND TOWNS: PHASES 1 AND 2 (OCTOBER 2012)

RESOLVED - that the Sub-District 'Population and Household Forecasts - Parish Groupings and Towns: Phases 1 and 2' (October 2012) technical study at Essential Reference Paper 'B' to the report submitted, be supported as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan.

502 STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SLAA) - ROUND 2 FINAL REPORT AND WINDFALL ANALYSIS (OCTOBER 2012)

RESOLVED – that (A) the Officer responses to the feedback received from stakeholders as part of Round 2: Stakeholder Engagement of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA), be supported;

(B) the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) Technical Study: Initial Report - Rounds 1 and 2 (October 2012), be supported as technical work to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan and for housing supply purposes;

(C) the district-wide SLAA Round 2 capacity of 2,350 dwellings be supported for informing ongoing work in developing the District Plan: Part 1; and

(D) the 'windfall' allowance of 1,700 dwellings be supported for informing ongoing work in developing the District Plan: Part 1.

503 EMPLOYMENT FORECASTS AND STRATEGIC
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVICE (OCTOBER 2012)

RESOLVED – that the Employment Forecasts and Strategic Economic Development Advice (October 2012) be supported and published as technical advice, forming part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan.

504 DISTRICT PLAN: EVIDENCE BASE - TECHNICAL STUDIES
2011/12 AND 2012/13

RESOLVED – that (A) it be noted, or as appropriate supported, that the technical studies listed in Essential Reference Paper 'B' to this report, which are due for completion, already underway or proposed to be undertaken during 2012/13, contribute to the District Plan Evidence Base; and

(B) the technical studies referred in (A) above be completed or undertaken by means of:

(i) seeking competitive quotes or tenders, as appropriate, to engage consultants, with the costs being met from the 2012/13 or 2013/14 Planning Policy related budgets for such purposes; and/or

(ii) partnership working where appropriate, with neighbouring authorities and other relevant partners; and

(C) the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, be given authority to approve funding, within the limits of the 2012/13 and 2013/14 Planning Policy budgets, for such other relevant planning policy studies, as may be deemed appropriate.

505 THE DUTY TO CO-OPERATE AND EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN

RESOLVED – that (A) an approach to the Duty to Co-Operate based on a clearly defined plan-making process, objective assessment, positive preparation, and serious consideration of cross-boundary strategic matters, be supported as the basis for continued work on the District Plan; and

(B) the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, or other nominated Executive Member, be authorised to attend meetings with Members from local planning authorities, Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils, and other relevant bodies as necessary, to demonstrate compliance with the Duty and further progress the District Plan.

506 DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 - STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT: MEMBER COMMENTS

RESOLVED – that (A) the responses made by Members in respect of agenda items 6 to 10 of the District Planning Executive Panel on 26 July 2012 be noted; and

(B) the Officer responses to the comments made and any consequent amendments to the District Plan: Part 1 - Strategy Supporting Document be supported.

507 DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 - STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT: UPDATE REPORT

RESOLVED – that (A) the proposed approach to the remainder of the strategy selection process for the District Plan, as illustrated in Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted, be supported; and

(B) Essential Reference Paper 'D' of the report submitted, including the first three sections of Chapter 5: Options Refinement, be supported, subject to a

period of Member comment in respect of factual content until 21 December 2012.

508 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 25 SEPTEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Control Committee meeting held on 25 September 2012, be received.

509 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 10 OCTOBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Control Committee meeting held on 10 October 2012, be received.

510 HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 17 OCTOBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 17 October 2012, be received.

511 LICENSING COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 1 NOVEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 1 November 2012, be received.

(see also Minute 512)

512 GAMBLING ACT 2005: STATEMENT OF LICENSING PRINCIPLES: RESPONSE TO PUBLIC CONSULTATION

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received; and
(B) the Statement of Licensing Principles 2013 – 2016, as now submitted, be approved.

513 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 7
NOVEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Control Committee meeting held on 7 November 2012, be received.

514 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 13
NOVEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 November 2012, be received.

515 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 20
NOVEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 November 2012, be received.

516 AUDIT COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 21 NOVEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 21 November 2012, be received.

517 CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
MINUTES - 27 NOVEMBER 2012

In respect of Minute 444 – Local Scheme for Council Tax Support, Councillor T Page disputed the accuracy of the sixth paragraph and was advised that this was a matter for the next Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee meeting.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 27 November 2012, be received.

518 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 5
DECEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Control Committee meeting held on 5 December 2012, be received.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm

Chairman
Date