

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2016, AT 7.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor P Moore (Chairman).
Councillors D Abbott, A Alder, M Allen,
D Andrews, P Ballam, R Brunton, K Brush,
E Buckmaster, S Bull, M Casey,
Mrs R Cheswright, S Cousins, K Crofton,
G Cutting, B Deering, H Drake, M Freeman,
L Haysey, R Henson, Mrs D Hollebbon,
A Jackson, G Jones, J Kaye, G McAndrew,
M McMullen, W Mortimer, D Oldridge,
T Page, M Pope, P Ruffles, S Rutland-
Barsby, C Snowdon, S Stainsby, R Standley,
N Symonds, G Williamson, C Woodward and
J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Anthony Roche	- Acting Monitoring Officer
Adele Taylor	- Director of Finance and Support Services
Liz Watts	- Chief Executive

576 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Members, Honorary Aldermen and guests to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast. She also welcomed Anthony Roche, Deputy Monitoring Officer, to his first meeting.

The Chairman expressed her delight that three special residents of East Herts, who were honoured by the Queen in

the New Year's Honours list for 2016, were in attendance. She introduced Michael Baker QC, Anne Forbes and Marion Little.

Michael Baker QC, a Standon resident, had been awarded a CBE for services to the administration of justice and to the community in Hertfordshire. He had been the resident judge at St Albans Crown Court for 10 years and oversaw the 2002 inquest into the Potters Bar train crash. For the last nine years, he had led the Choices and Consequences scheme, working alongside the police and parole service, giving prolific drug offenders a chance to turn their lives around by staying out of prison and conquering their addiction.

Ann Forbes, who lived in Bishop's Stortford, had received an MBE for services to education in the United Kingdom and Uganda. As the inspirational assistant head teacher at the Herts and Essex High School, and previously its head of science, she had benefitted her students with her dynamic teaching and her constant questioning of her subject. Twelve years ago, she had established a partnership with Eden High School in Uganda, which had since grown in a strong and flourishing friendship benefitting the pupils and teachers of both schools.

Marion Little, a resident of Ware, had been awarded an OBE for political service. She was a long-serving Conservative party organiser, based at head office, and had developed a reputation as a campaign specialist. Since joining Conservative Party HQ in 1984 as an agent for the Hertfordshire area, she had taken on increasing responsibilities with her peers describing her as a fantastic colleague who was absolutely dedicated to her job.

The Chairman invited each award recipient to come forward and receive a certificate in recognition of their achievements.

Finally, the Chairman updated Members on her recent engagements. She looked forward to the semi-final stage of the "East Herts Got Talent" event that was taking place the next weekend. She also advised that she would be taking part in a Fire and Ice fundraising event in aid of Isabel

Hospice in July 2016. The Chairman concluded by reminding Members of the Civic Dinner on 19 March 2016.

577 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 January 2016, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

578 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Question 1

Councillor N Symonds asked the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing if he could provide reassurance that registered social landlords were giving priority to turning round their voids in the shortest possible times, as it was the most vulnerable residents who were suffering.

In reply, the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing shared these concerns and referred to the anxieties caused specifically to those residents awaiting a property, as well as generally, with the perception that a property might remain empty for longer than necessary.

The Executive Member commented on the need to challenge the housing associations on their repairs performance to ensure this did not adversely affect void turnaround times. He understood that responses to tenants and Members' queries were not always satisfactory and believed that there should be a clear process for dealing with these to ensure a resolution in a reasonable timeframe.

The Executive Member referred to the partnership arrangements between the Council and the housing associations at various levels and also spoke of the need to challenge them on repairs and voids at all times to improve their services.

579 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 2 FEBRUARY 2016

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive

meeting held on 2 February 2016 be received.

(see also Minutes 580 – 582)

580 BUDGET REPORT AND MTFP 2016/17 – 2019/20

The Executive Member for Finance and Support Services presented the Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) proposals for 2106/17 – 2019/20. He referred to the national situation and the difficulties in planning for future years, given the backdrop of reduced funding for local government, phased withdrawal of Revenue Support Grant and uncertainties over the New Homes Bonus and Business Rates retention.

The Executive Member reminded Council of the new approach to producing integrated strategic and financial planning to ensure that resources were best targeted at the Council's priorities. He spoke of the need for the Council to explore commercial opportunities that could open up new sources of income as well as increase investment income. He reminded Members of the purchase of the Old River Lane site and the returns this had already achieved.

The Executive Member highlighted some of the achievements of the past year and looked forward to funding projects that would help deliver the Council's priorities in the next year. These included using New Homes Bonus funds to support public health projects, subsidising free car parking in Buntingford and Sawbridgeworth and supporting towns and parishes in local projects.

The Executive Member detailed the use of Reserves and the Capital Programme to support a range of projects across a number of priorities. He drew attention to the Council Tax and the proposal that this would be frozen, which would be the sixth year in which it had been either frozen or reduced. However, this would not be sustainable in the long term and the MTFP included a modest 1% increase from 2017/18 onwards. The Executive Member cautioned Members of the continuing challenges ahead and the need to identify further efficiencies.

Since the Executive meeting of 2 February, the Government had issued the final settlement and an additional briefing on this had been detailed in the supplementary agenda papers. The Executive Member commented that this had resulted in transitional funding of £120k in each of the next two years. As a result, he proposed an additional recommendation that a Transition Funding Reserve be established for using these funds in 2018/19.

Finally, the Executive Member concluded by stating that the Council would yet again be proposing a balanced budget that would deliver improved services to all who lived and worked in East Herts. He thanked Officers across all services for their continued hard work and support.

In accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken on the budget proposals now detailed, the result being:

FOR

Councillors D Abbott, A Alder, M Allen, D Andrews, P Ballam, R Brunton, K Brush, E Buckmaster, S Bull, M Casey, R Cheswright, S Cousins, K Crofton, G Cutting, B Deering, H Drake, M Freeman, L Haysey, R Henson, D Hollebon, A Jackson, G Jones, J Kaye, G McAndrew, M McMullen, P Moore, W Mortimer, D Oldridge, T Page, M Pope, P Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby, C Snowdon, S Stainsby, R Standley, N Symonds, G Williamson, C Woodward, J Wyllie.

AGAINST

None

ABSTENTIONS:

None

For: 39

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

Council approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the comments of the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees be received;

(B) the 2015/16 Forecast Outturn as set out in Section 4 of the report submitted, including the proposed contributions to and from Reserves, be approved;

(C) the forecast 2015/16 revenue underspend transfer to the Transformation Reserve, as now detailed at paragraph 4.11 of the report submitted, be approved;

(D) the 2016/17 Revenue Budget, including:

- Budget Growth set out in Section 6, paragraph 6.2 of the report submitted;
- Budget Savings set out in Section 6, paragraph 6.3 of the report submitted;
- Contingency budget set in Section 8, paragraph 8.3 of the report submitted;
- use of Earmarked Reserves, as set out in section 9 of the report submitted;
- consideration of the advice from the Director of Finance & Support Services on the levels of reserves and robustness of the forecasts in setting the budget as required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 (section 15);

be approved;

(E) the proposed 2016/17 Schedule of Charges, as detailed at section 7 of the report submitted, be approved;

(F) the East Herts Council element of the Council Tax Demand, as now detailed in paragraph 11.3 of the report submitted, be approved;

(G) the Capital Programme for the period 2015/16 (Revised) to 2019/20, the funding of the programme

and the consequential revenue budget implications as set out in section 12 of the report submitted, be approved;

(H) the Medium Term Financial Plan covering 2015/16 (Revised) to 2019/20 as set out in section 13 of the report submitted, be approved;

(I) the Reserves Policy as set out in Section 14 of the report submitted, be approved; and

(J) an additional MTFP Transition Funding Reserve is created and the Transition Grant funding received in 2016/17 and 2017/18 is held in this reserve to be used in 2018/19 to reduce the amount of one-off savings required.

(see also Minute 579)

581 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2016/17

RESOLVED – that (A) the comments of the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees and the Audit Committee be received;

(B) the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy, as now submitted, be approved;

(C) the Prudential Indicators, as now submitted, be approved; and

(D) the counterparty and approved countries listing , as now submitted, be approved.

(see also Minute 579)

582 GREAT AMWELL CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

RESOLVED – that (A) the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and

proposed changes to the Great Amwell Conservation Area Appraisal be supported;

(B) authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Development Management and Council Support, to make any further minor and consequential changes to the Appraisal which may be necessary; and

(C) the Great Amwell Conservation Area Appraisal be adopted.

(see also Minute 579)

583 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 3 FEBRUARY 2016

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Management Committee meeting held on 3 February 2016, be received.

584 JOINT MEETING OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES: MINUTES - 9 FEBRUARY 2016

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees held on 9 February 2016, be received.

(see also Minute 585)

585 CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN 2016/17 - 2019/20

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received; and

(B) the draft 2016/17 – 2019/20 Corporate Strategic Plan, as now submitted, be approved.

(see also Minute 584)

586 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME - REPORT OF THE
INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Council considered a report containing the recommendations of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) following its review of Members Allowances.

The IRP had proposed retaining the allowance levels at existing levels, except for the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee being increased from 0.5 to 0.75. In response to a Member's question, the Chief Executive confirmed that the IRP had proposed that this be backdated to 21 May 2015.

Council also noted that there were now three vacancies on the Panel and agreed that Officers should now progress filling all three vacancies in time for the commencement of the next review in Autumn 2016.

Council approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the allowance levels within the 2015/16 scheme be retained for 2016/17 (1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017) save that:

- (1) the multiplier to obtain the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee be increased from 0.5 to 0.75 and that the revised multiplier be applied from the day after the Annual Council meeting in 2015 (i.e. 21 May), and
- (2) the subsistence rates be as follows:

Breakfast	Before 7am	7.21
Lunch	Between noon and 2.30 pm	9.95
Tea	Between 2.30 pm and 7pm	3.94
Evening Meal*	After 7pm	12.33

*Note: Evening meal allowance cannot be claimed with tea allowance.

(B) Officers be authorised to recruit and appoint three people to fill the vacancies on the Authority’s Independent Remuneration Panel before the commencement of its work to review and make recommendations on Members’ Allowances for 2017/18.

587 MOTION OF CENSURE

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report advising that the Standards Sub-Committee, at its hearing meeting held on 28 January 2016, had considered a report by the Investigating Officer which had concluded that Councillor J Cartwright had breached the Authority’s Code of Conduct in relation to the matters identified. The Standards Sub-Committee had decided that the Member had failed to comply with the Code and decided that formal censure by motion was appropriate.

Councillor C Woodward moved, and Councillor B Deering seconded, the motion of censure.

Council approved the censure motion as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that Councillor James Cartwright be censured for his conduct in respect of the matter detailed by the Investigating Officer in his report to the Standards Sub-Committee meeting of 28 January 2016.

The meeting closed at 7.53 pm

Chairman
Date