

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE ONLINE MEETING
- LIVESTREAMED ON FRIDAY 19 FEBRUARY
2021, AT 2.00 PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors R Bolton, M Brady, B Crystall,
M Goldspink, M McMullen, M Pope,
J Ranger, C Redfern, P Ruffles, A Ward-
Booth and T Page.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Cassidy	- Chief Executive
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Laura Guy	- Principal Planning Officer
Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Katie Mogan	- Democratic

Mekhola Ray	Services Manager - Community Projects Team Manager
Sara Saunders	- Head of Planning and Building Control
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive
Su Tarran	- Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

372 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

373 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader reminded everyone that the meeting was being livestreamed via YouTube and that it was a formal meeting of the Council. The Leader asked that the “chat” function not be used and said that if anyone wished to speak, they should raise their hand. She asked Members to stay on mute and to leave their cameras on so that the public could see that everyone was an active participant.

For the benefit of those watching via YouTube, the Leader asked all Members of the Executive to introduce themselves and the remit their Portfolios covered.

374 MINUTES

Councillor Haysey proposed, and Councillor McAndrew seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2021 be approved as a correct record and be 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 5 January 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

375 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

376 CULTURAL STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Wellbeing submitted a report on the East Herts Draft Cultural Strategy 2021-2025 and provided context to the strategy and how it fits within the council's overall approach to health and wellbeing and community development. The strategy does not list or prescribe what culture should be but is a broad statement of ambition to be delivered through partners, volunteers and the whole community.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing explained that engagement would grow and the strategy will evolve over time. It is important that the strategy is not seen to be standalone but all linked as part of an holistic approach, for example, the successful 'Forever Active' programme, social prescribing, Dementia Friends and the major capital investment in leisure provision and arts centres are all components of the delivery of the council's health and wellbeing strategy.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing highlighted one of the consultation comments received which mentioned having a clear information hub and relevant communications and coordinating this will be important. The strategy has incorporated comments made in the consultation and it was discussed in depth by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Leader thanked officers for their hard work on the strategy.

There being no comments, Councillor Buckmaster proposed and Councillor Haysey seconded a motion supporting the recommendations in the report and an additional recommendation (C), the wording as follows: That the multi-agency strategic and delivery group to which the report refers be formed and the drafting of the detailed action plan be prioritised to ensure swift commencement of the vital work of the Cultural Strategy.

On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED -

- (a) The draft Cultural Strategy, incorporating the feedback from the public engagement exercise and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be considered and recommended to Council for adoption
- (b) The Head of Housing and Health incorporates any amendments to the Strategy suggested by the Executive, acting in consultation with the Lead Member for Wellbeing, prior to presentation to Council for adoption.

(c) That the multi-agency strategic and delivery group to which the report refers be formed and the drafting of the detailed action plan be prioritised to ensure swift commencement of the vital work of the Cultural Strategy.

377 SUSTAINABILITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT
- FINAL FOR ADOPTION

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth submitted a report outlining the results of the public consultation on the draft Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) ready for adoption which has been prepared to provide guidance on the implementation of adopted District Plan policies in relation to climate change and sustainable design and construction. Once adopted, it will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and it will replace the Air Quality Planning Guidance 2016.

The Executive Member said that the Sustainability SPD was considered by the Executive last year prior to public consultation and the final document has been amended to reflect issues raised through the consultation process. There were 182 responses from 38 consultees and most were supportive of the scope and purpose of the SPD. Whilst the District Plan does not set specific energy targets, the focus of the SPD is to ensure policy requirements are implemented and encourages good practice and compliance with stronger energy targets. This SPD lays a strong marker down that the council expects high environment sustainability in new developments.

Councillor McAndrew thanked officers for their efforts with pulling together a difficult document. He said this was a good document in preparation for the District Plan review in two years and developers have a role to play in exceeding minimum expectations.

Councillor Goodeve proposed and Councillor McAndrew seconded a motion supporting the recommendations in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To Recommend to Council

- (a) That the responses to the consultation be noted and the officer responses and proposed changes to the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be supported;
- (b) That the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), as detailed at Appendix A to this report, be agreed for adoption; and
- (c) That in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 it has been determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is not required as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects beyond the District Plan policies.

378 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT PLAN – REVIEW AND UPDATE

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth submitted

a report on the updated Planning Enforcement Plan 2021. The report sets out the high level of complaints, staff resources and the high level of cases submitted to the team. The Executive Member explained the current process in the Enforcement Team where every reported case requires a site visit. The new plan proposes a desktop assessment to identify those cases where there has been no breach of planning conditions or minor breaches. A record of decisions will still be kept and the cases where there has been a breach will be categorised into three priorities.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said the report had been well received by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee but concern was expressed about staff resources. The Committee suggested a review of the plan in a year's time which has been added into the report.

The Executive Member said whilst there has been no formal consultation, some parish councils have provided some comments which have been noted by the team and officers will provide them with a response.

Councillor Page highlighted concerns about the health and wellbeing of the Enforcement Team and felt the report and its recommendations didn't go far enough to address this. Councillor Goodeve understood the pressures within the team and the new triage process should improve the situation alongside the plan review in a year's time.

The Head of Planning added that the new approach will need to be tested to understand the perfect match between level of cases and level of resources in the team. The health and wellbeing of staff will be kept under

constant review.

Councillor Curtis asked what amendments had been made, if any, following the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Goodeve said the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have led to the addition of a review next year.

Councillor Goodeve proposed and Councillor Cutting seconded a motion supporting the recommendation in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council
That the Planning Enforcement Plan 2021, as detailed at Appendix 1 to this report, be adopted.

379 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2021/22

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability submitted a report on the Council's recommended Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy for 2021/22.

The Executive Member explained that the council is required to produce three treasury management reports for each financial year and this is the first report. It covers capital plans, prudential indicators, minimum revenue provision policy and treasury management and investment strategies. The treasury function ensures the council has the money available for its day to day operation costs and have the longer term funding available for the planned

capital projects. Good treasury management is vital to effective functioning of the council and its activities. The strategy was considered by the Audit and Governance Committee with no amendments proposed.

There being no comments, Councillor Williamson proposed and Councillor Rutland-Barsby seconded a motion supporting the recommendations in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that:

- (a) The Treasury Management and Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22 at Appendix A to this report is approved;
- (b) The Prudential Indicators at Appendix B are approved.

380 BUDGET 2021/22 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021-24

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability submitted a report setting out the Budget for 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2021-24.

The Executive Member detailed the challenges in producing this budget and the council knew last year that £1 million of savings needed to be found this year, another £1 million in 2022/23 and a further £3 million in 2023/24. The preferred options for savings are detailed in Appendix A of the report and charging for green waste collections was approved at Council in January. The savings identified are phased over the

next three years but if any of these savings cannot be realised for any reason, an equivalent saving will need to be found elsewhere. Adverse events in the last year have made balancing the budget more difficult, including the changes to the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) lending facility that the government would now withhold lending from any local authority that seeks to borrow for investment in “assets primarily for yield”. In addition to this, the covid pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have had an impact on the council’s finances and losses are only partly covered by government grants.

The Executive Member also addressed the changes to the New Homes Bonus. The 25% previously distributed to Town and Parish Councils will now be held in reserves for the councils to bid for. The report recommends the maximum increase to Council Tax without holding a referendum which is equivalent to a £5 increase on a Band D property.

The Executive Member detailed plans for budget gaps in future years and the council will start a Transformation Programme to identify efficiency savings. Despite the difficulties in producing this budget, the council have managed to do so without any real cuts to front line services.

The Leader thanked officers for their work on producing a balanced budget whilst maintaining services and commented that it will not get easier in future years and government funding is uncertain.

Councillor Curtis said he raised a question at the Joint

Meeting of Scrutiny Committees regarding the assumptions underpinning the budget on parking. He was keen to know what was considered when residents' habits may change post covid and did not want the council to be out of pocket.

Councillor Williamson said a written answer was circulated after the meeting. He asked for this to be recirculated after the meeting and attached to the minutes (see Appendix A).

Councillor McAndrew confirmed that the council are looking at what fees to charge where in the car parks and an exercise is currently being carried out to understand parking behaviours but this will not be completed until there is a return to some sort of normality as the dynamics of parking changed considerably.

Councillor Williamson proposed and Councillor Haysey seconded a motion supporting the recommendations in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED –

a) To recommend to Council that:

- I. The East Herts share of the Council Tax for a Band D property in 2021/22 be set at £179.09, an increase of £5, the maximum permitted within the Council Tax Referendum principles;
- II. The Budget 2021/22 and the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021 – 2024 is approved;
- III. The savings plans summarised in Appendix A are approved for implementation and that Council require that compensating savings,

delivered to the same timescales, have to be put in place and reported to the next Council meeting should the Executive decide that any savings proposals should not proceed, or are reduced by 10% or more;

IV. The capital programme set out in Appendix E is approved; and

V. The schedule of charges for 2021/22 set out in Appendix F, with an average increase of 2.5%, is approved.

b) Welcome the positive results of the consultation on how the public value services that are provided by the council.

c) Endorse the aims of the Transformation Programme and note that further savings will result from this work.

381 CAPITAL STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY 2021/22

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability submitted a report on the Council's Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for 2021/22 onwards.

The Executive Member explained that the need for the council to produce an annual capital strategy was introduced by strengthening of the guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The Capital Strategy is useful as a high level document for members and stakeholders as it pulls together and considers a range of both internal and

external factors and how these inter-relate with policy and decision-making in respect of capital investment. It helps demonstrate a golden thread linking the council's activities to make sure they are coordinated and consistent. The strategy was considered by the Audit and Governance Committee but no amendments suggested.

There being no comments, Councillor Williamson proposed and Councillor Goodeve seconded a motion supporting the recommendations in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council:

- (a) To approve the Capital Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision policy 2021/22 onwards (Appendix A to this report).

382 NOTING THE DECISION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE TO APPROVE A SCHEME FOR THE LOCAL AUTHORITY DISCRETIONARY GRANT FUND, TAKEN UNDER THE URGENCY PROVISIONS CONTAINED WITHIN THE CONSTITUTION

There being no comments, Councillor Williamson proposed and Councillor Rutland-Barsby seconded a motion supporting the recommendations in the report. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the decision to approve the scheme taken by the Chief Executive is noted.
- b) That delegated authority is granted to the Head of Revenues & Benefit service in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability to revise the scheme where appropriate.

383 UPDATE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There was no update.

384 UPDATE FROM AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor Pope, the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee, referred to the last meeting on the committee on 10th February. He said the committee reviewed the audit reports and the capital strategy. The external auditor attended the meeting to provide a summary of their work and the committee noted a 23% increase on their proposed fee. At the Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees, the budget proposals were discussed at length and it was recognised that difficult decisions need to be made. The Committee recognised the hard work of officers and members in producing a balanced budget.

385 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

386 APPENDIX A - RESPONSE TO PARKING QUESTION

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm

Chairman

Date

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Minute Item 386

Appendix A – written response to Cllr Curtis' question provided by Steven Linnett

Q: Has the parking income budget been adjusted for the impacts of COVID19?

A: The parking income budgets have been reduced by the £0.2 million increase that was included in the 2020/21 budget to reflect tariff increases. The pay and display budgets have therefore been reduced and frozen at the 2019/20 level. This is mainly as a protection should there be a further national lockdown beyond Q1 2021/22 as the Government base the income compensation scheme on budgeted income and it was felt better to leave the income budget at 2019/20 levels. In terms of actual car park usage going forward, we do not have enough data at this point to know whether the mix of long term to short term parking will change and what demand levels will be like during the course of the day. As a mitigation the balance of long term to short term spaces within car parks can be changed in the Traffic Regulation Orders we expect to start consultation on in 2021/22 in preparation for the parking changes to be introduced as part of the MTFP savings plan.

Within the budget there are 2.5% increases for Season Tickets and Residents Parking Permits. For Residents Parking Permits the 2020/21 forecast outturn is £10k under budget but this is entirely as a result of the payment holiday during the first national lockdown. Therefore incrementing this budget by 2.5%, to match the anticipated increase in the enforcement contract costs is appropriate and likely to be met next financial year. There are a small number of business season tickets sold to tenants in Charringtons House and season tickets for residents in 3 of our car parks where there they have no available parking. These budgets are forecast to be on track this financial year, therefore the budget for next year seems

appropriate and again the increase is to reflect enforcement contract cost increases. The increase in the budget papers for parking therefore reflects only these increases and, to reiterate, no increases in pay and display fee income.

I am therefore satisfied that the estimate for car parking income for 2021/22 is reasonable and fairly reflects: the uncertainties about changing working patterns affecting usage; that suitable mitigations exist in order to rebalance the long stay v short stay spaces should we need to make changes; and that the budget also balances the need to protect levels should a new income compensation scheme be introduced next financial year.