

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF EAST
HERTS COUNCIL HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS,
HERTFORD ON THURSDAY 1 MARCH
2007 AT 7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor P A Ruffles (Vice-Chairman in the
Chair).
Councillors M R Alexander, W Ashley,
P R Ballam, H G S Banks, N Burdett, M G Carver,
D Clark, R N Copping, J Demonti, A D Dodd,
R Gilbert, Mrs M H Goldspink, L O Haysey,
J Hedley, Mrs D M Hone, A P Jackson,
G McAndrew, M P A McMullen, J Mayes,
T Milner, Mrs S Newton, D A A Peek, L R Pinnell,
N C Poulton, J O Ranger, D Richards,
S Rutland-Barsby, G D Scrivener, A L Warman,
J P Warren, N Wilson, M Wood.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Mary Orton	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Bryan Thomsett	- Head of Planning Policy
Dave Tweedie	- Director of Resources

ACTION626 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 February 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the addition of a second reason for Councillor P R Ballam's interest recorded at Minute 604, in that she was also a trustee of Ware Museum.

627 VICE-CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Vice-Chairman referred to the shocking news that Tina Nash, Head of People and Organisation had passed away. Members stood and observed a minute's silence.

The Chairman also referred to the departures of Neal Hodgson, Director of Regulatory Services and Dave Tweedie, Director of Resources. He spoke of their loyalty and help they had given to Members over many years and thanked them for their service to the Council.

628 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillors D Clark declared a personal interest in the matter referred to at Minute 633 – Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Of England (RSS 14) Response to the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes - December 2006, in that her husband was the Secretary of the Stop Harlow North Campaign.

629 MEMBERS' QUESTION

Councillor Mrs S Newton asked the Executive Member for Community Safety if she could outline the progress she had made in her talks with various parties, including some town centre dwellers in her ward, especially towards developing a properly cohesive and consistent sustainable approach to diminish the effects of anti-social behaviour by supporters of Hertford's night-time economy.

ACTION

In response, the Executive Member for Community Safety referred to the working relationships developed with the police and the activities of the night-time economy working group over the previous two or three years. There had been many achievements including:

- a reduction in crime and disorder in Hertford town centre;
- the provision of additional CCTV coverage, training for door supervisors and the taxi marshalling scheme;
- the establishment of the Pubwatch scheme;
- the deployment of the Community Policing team, Police and Community Support Officers and special constables to tackle “hot spots”
- the use of Council enforcement patrols and joint police and trading standards operations to tackle licensing breaches;
- the issuing of fixed penalty notices to deal with new powers under the Clean Neighbourhoods Act; and
- the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Licensing Exclusion Orders.

In response to a supplementary question on the Government’s recent consultation on licensing, the Executive Member stated that she was as confident as she could be with any Government consultation.

Councillor J O Ranger asked the Leader of the Council if he agreed that this Council should support the Sustainable Communities Bill which would have its third reading in Parliament at the end of March and if he would ask the Leaders of the minority parties to support the following

ACTION

Council Resolution:

That this Council:

1. Supports the Sustainable Communities Bill which will devolve more power from Whitehall to Councils and communities by

- giving Councils more power over money spent by national agencies on local matters in their areas; and
- giving Councils and their communities the power to drive government policy to assist them in promoting sustainable communities

and thereby help Councils to protect the wellbeing of their communities and citizens;

2. Notes that the Bill is promoted in Parliament by a cross-party group of MPs led by Nick Hurd MP, David Drew MP and Julia Goldsworthy MP and is supported by 363 MPs, well over half the House of Commons; and

3. Therefore resolves to write to the Secretary for State for Communities and Local Government urging her to support the Bill and to inform the leading and local MPs of this decision.

In response, the Leader of the Council expressed his complete support for the Bill, which he believed was designed to assist local authorities in protecting and reviving the local economy, protecting the local environment, tackling social exclusion and increasing participation in civic activities.

He referred to the valuable function of parish and town councils and commented that the Bill would strengthen their role. He undertook to write to the Secretary of State and expressed the hope that the minority group leaders would support him. Councillors M Wood and J P Warren both

ACTION

expressed their support.

Councillor D A A Peek asked the Executive Member for Regions and Partnerships if he would confirm his understanding that this Council supported Uttlesford Council's refusal of planning permission being granted for the full use of the existing runway at Stansted, until such a time as the proper infrastructure was in place to cope with the increased usage and the environmental issues that would arise had been addressed.

In response, the Executive Member expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to reaffirm this Council's opposition to the granting of planning permission. The Council had responded to Uttlesford Council's consultation in September 2006, since which it had become clear that BAA had no intention of addressing the environmental impact and the infrastructure requirements of full use of the existing runway.

The Executive Member also referred to the issue of a second runway and confirmed that the Council would continue its opposition and work with the other three authorities.

In response to a supplementary question, the Executive Member undertook to arrange for a press release to be issued confirming the Council's position.

630 COUNCIL TAX – COUNTY COUNCIL AND POLICE
AUTHORITY ELEMENTS 2007/08

The Leader of the Council submitted a report advising that Hertfordshire County Council's and Hertfordshire Police Authority's precepts for 2007/08, as they affected East Hertfordshire District Council taxpayers, would total £66,507,330.89. This was made up of £59,071,739.32 for the County Council and £7,435,591.57 for the Police Authority, giving Band D equivalents of £1034.13 and £130.17 respectively.

ACTION

Council noted the report.

RESOLVED - that the Hertfordshire County Council's and Hertfordshire Police Authority's precepts for 2007/08, as now detailed, be noted.

631 COUNCIL TAX – PARISHES 2007/08

Council considered a report of the Leader of the Council setting out Parish Council precepts for 2007/08 in the District. Council noted that there was a statutory requirement on a precepting authority to notify the District Council by 1 March of each year of its precept for the ensuing financial year. Further, Council noted that the total Parish spending in 2007/08 would be £3,267,788 compared to £2,919,289 in 2006/07.

Council noted the report.

RESOLVED - that the Parish Council precepts for 2007/08 as set out in the schedule now submitted, be noted.

632 COUNCIL TAX 2007/08 – FORMAL RESOLUTION

The Leader of the Council submitted a report setting out the formal Resolution necessary to set the Council Tax for 2007/08 (Appendix 'A' to these Minutes). This was based on the precepts from Parish Councils, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Police Authority, as well as the District Council budgets set at the Council meeting held on 21 February 2007 (Minute 607 refers).

Council approved the Council Tax Resolution as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the Council Tax Resolution, as set out at Appendix 'A' to these Minutes, be approved.

DR

ACTION633 REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND (RSS 14) RESPONSE TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S PROPOSED CHANGES - DECEMBER 2006

The Executive Member for Regions and Partnerships submitted a report proposing the Council's response to the Government's Proposed Changes to the Draft Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England and the Government's Statement of Reasons for those Proposed Changes. The Council's response would be submitted to Go-East, the Government Office for the East of England, prior to the end of the consultation period on 9 March 2007.

Council recalled that the East of England Plan aimed to provide a regional spatial strategy (RSS) to guide land-use development and infrastructure provision for the East of England Region for the 20 year period 2001 – 2021. On 19 December 2006, the Department of Communities and Local Government had published Proposed Changes to the draft East of England Plan for consultation. The Proposed Changes document consisted of a schedule of the Secretary of State's Decisions on the Recommendations by the Panel who conducted the Examination in Public (EiP) and the modified text of RSS incorporating the Proposed Changes. The Proposed Changes were accompanied by a report of the Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating the Environmental Report, of the Proposed Changes, and a report of the Habitats Directive Assessment.

The Executive Member detailed the proposed response as set out at Appendix 'E10' of the report submitted. He expressed his gratitude to the Head of Planning Policy and his team for their efforts. Finally, he drew Members' attention to a request to delegate authority to Officers, in conjunction with himself, to make further amendments which supported the Council's response, as a result of further joint work with other authorities. This would include taking account of the two most recent studies, which had only just been published. He undertook to update Members by e-mail if any substantial changes to the proposed response were

ACTION

needed.

Councillor D Richards, speaking as the Executive Member's Advisory Panel Coordinator, informed Council that an Advisory Panel meeting had been arranged for 29 March 2007, at 2.30 pm, in the Waytemore Room, Bishop's Stortford and that all Members were encouraged to attend. The Executive Member commented that this meeting would consider the Core Strategy processes and urged as many Members as possible to attend.

Council approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that in respect of the Proposed Changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England – December 2006, by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government:

(A) the Secretary of State be advised that East Herts District Council re-iterates its total opposition to development north of Harlow, in East Hertfordshire District, and objects to the Government's Proposed Changes to the Regional Plan, which identify Harlow North as a major area for development;

DNS

(B) the Secretary of State be advised that East Herts District Council endorses the stance taken by the Eastern England Regional Assembly, at its meeting on 2 February 2007, in respect of the Government's Proposed Changes, and more particularly:

DNS

(i) considers the East of England Plan as proposed by the Secretary of State to be neither deliverable nor sustainable. There is a lack of a clear investment strategy based on a thorough analysis of the social, economic and environmental infrastructure needs of each sub region and a lack of commitment by Government to fund adequately this essential infrastructure to deliver truly sustainable

ACTION

communities. In particular the issue of transportation infrastructure remains unresolved and there are real concerns about water supply, waste water treatment capacity and health service provision;

- (ii) expresses its extreme disappointment that there are still no guarantees about the increased levels of investment required for the supporting infrastructure to make the Plan deliverable (which concern previously led the Assembly to suspend its endorsement of the draft Plan shortly after its submission to Government in December 2004);
- (iii) supports the restatement by the Assembly of its suspension of support for the East of England Plan until the issues set out in its and these Resolutions and previous Assembly policy statements have been satisfactorily addressed by the Secretary of State;
- (iv) deplores the Government's decision not to allow the RSS process to reconsider the principle of a second runway at Stansted Airport, in view of the major impacts of such a development and its incompatibility with the objectives of the Plan and the principles of sustainable development;
- (v) calls on Government to support the proposed process for preparation of the Regional Investment Strategy and work with the Assembly in order to secure the delivery of the appropriate resources and measures it requires in order to deliver the East of England Plan, when finalised;
- (vi) objects to:

ACTION

- (a) the proposed increase in overall dwelling numbers to at least 508,000. It is believed that a figure closer to the 478,000 houses in the original draft Plan, including the additional allocations offered by some local authorities, should be the maximum limit which can be delivered in the Plan period;
- (b) the expression of regional and local dwelling targets as minima as these would introduce significant uncertainty into the plan led system with serious consequences both for infrastructure planning and assessing sustainability of proposals, possibly also leading to speculative unsustainable development;
- (c) the requirement for the first round of Local Development Documents to make provision for development beyond 2021 i.e. the current end date for this version of the Plan;
- (d) the proposed increase in the regional employment target to 452,000. It is considered that the difficulties associated with the achievement of higher employment targets to complement the projected higher housing target could lead to local misalignment between jobs and housing. A jobs target of around 421,000 is still the most appropriate target to aim for;
- (e) the omission of a policy explicitly linking housing, employment and infrastructure provision at regional, sub-regional and local levels. It is believed that the Plan can only be delivered sustainably if there are robust mechanisms in place to phase the delivery of development supported by strong policies in the Plan, but supports the Assembly's confirmation of its continued willingness to

ACTION

work with the Government, local authorities and other delivery agencies to develop a Regional Investment Strategy as part of an Implementation Framework which addresses infrastructure requirements;

(f) the removal from the Plan of some of the defined sub-regions and local detail in policies as this may cause problems in developing LDDs, and therefore delays, especially where there are cross-border issues arising from a greater future emphasis on housing market areas;

(g) the removal of an overall affordable housing target as this would cause considerable difficulties for certain local authorities seeking to defend affordable housing targets in LDDs and would undermine the objectives of the Regional Housing Strategy. It is believed that the final Plan should recognise the diversity of housing stress across the region. A regional affordable housing target of 35% should be set, with local authorities to test through Local Development Documents an appropriate local target. This should take into account the strategic housing market assessment, evidence of affordability pressures and the current balance of affordable/market housing stock;

(h) the unacceptable impact of the proposed level of development on the transport network of the region and the removal from the Plan of references to specific transport measures over and above those currently committed or in the Regional Funding Allocations submission. This will reduce the focus of the transport policies and make it more difficult to secure funding for the infrastructure essential to support development

ACTION

at all scales and in all locations. It is believed that all of the schemes listed in the draft Plan should be reinstated, with the exception of the Harlow Outer Northern Bypass and new junction on M11;

- (i) the proposals for additional and relocated growth not included and tested in the public consultation on the original Plan as these appear to have been proposed without adequately robust consideration of the impact such proposals would have on local communities, infrastructure capacity and the environment;
- (j) the localised adverse impacts on the functions of Green Belts, and particularly their role in the avoidance of coalescence; and
- (vii) expresses concerns over the adequacy of the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environment Assessment as highlighted in the report prepared for the Assembly by LUC/Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants and urges the Government to address these issues before finalising the Plan;
- (viii) expresses extreme concern in respect of the results of the assessments undertaken of impacts of the levels of growth recommended by the EiP Panel on the strategic road and rail network. The Government is urged to undertake further assessment of the impact of the growth as now proposed using updated models particularly to examine the extent of demand management and other measures necessary to secure acceptable conditions on the road and rail network throughout the Plan period. This work should be conducted as a matter of urgency and lead to a debate on the acceptability of measures necessary before

ACTION

publication of the final East of England Plan;

- (ix) expresses extreme concern in respect of the results of the East of England Foul Water Capacity Study and urges the Government to consider the changes necessary to the regulatory system for bringing forward waste water infrastructure to enable such development to serve new development at an appropriate time without impacting on existing consumers in the East of England or reducing environmental protection standards;

(C) in addition to the above resolutions, the Council submits the content of Appendix 'E10' to this report, as its detailed response;

DNS

(D) the Director of Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Regions and Partnerships, be given delegated authority to make further amendments, which support the Council's response which may be deemed appropriate and/or arise from further joint work with other Authorities, prior to the end of the consultation period; and

DNS

(E) the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Head of Legal Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Regions and Partnerships, give consideration to the merit of commissioning joint legal advice with Hertfordshire County Council and other Hertfordshire District and Borough Councils, in respect to Proposed Changes and Regional Plan process generally, if felt appropriate to the East Herts Council position. The cost of such legal advice to be met from the existing Council Regional Plan budget.

DNS/
DCG

ACTION634 PURCHASE OF SWIMMING POOL SIGNAGE AND INFLATABLES

Council considered a report concerning the purchase of swimming pool signage and inflatables. The Chairman had agreed to accept this item onto the agenda as an urgent matter, in order that expenditure in this financial year could be approved.

The Leader of the Council referred to a recent meeting with Stevenage Leisure Limited which had identified the requirement to replace external and internal signage at all leisure facilities, as well as replacing the existing ageing inflatables. This would improve both the appearance of the facilities and also maintain both the popularity and market share of pool parties and fun sessions.

Council approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that £25,000 be used from capital underspends identified within existing Property Capital Project budgets relating to Leisure, to fund the purchase of new swimming pool signs and inflatables.

DCCS

635 HARTHAM CHANGING VILLAGE IMPROVEMENT WORKS AND CASTLE HALL RIVER ROOM IMPROVEMENTS

Council considered a report proposing improvement works to the Hartham Changing Village and the Castle Hall River Room. The Chairman had agreed to accept this item onto the agenda as an urgent matter, in order that expenditure in this financial year could be approved.

The Leader of the Council detailed various leisure capital projects, in which expenditure had not been fully utilised totalling £42,150. It was proposed to utilise these funds in order that improvements elsewhere could be funded. It was proposed that up to £40,000 of these underspends be

ACTION

diverted to fund new cubicles and associated changing room facilities at Hartham pool as well as purchasing new furnishings in the River Room at Castle Hall.

The Leader referred to the quotes received for the Hartham improvements, as detailed at paragraph 2.2 of the report now submitted and updated Council on the third quote that had been received, which was £26,822.

Council approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that up to £40,000 underspends be diverted from the original 2006/07 capital budget programme of £102,000 identified for swimming pool improvement works at Hartham and Grange Paddocks, broadband installation, and purchase of the new leisure facilities IT system, to fund new cubicles and associated changing room improvements at Hartham Pool and the purchase of new furnishings in the River Room at Castle Hall in 2007/08.

DCCS

The meeting closed at 8.26 pm

Chairman
Date