

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
ON TUESDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2007 AT
7.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A P Jackson (Chairman/Leader).
Councillors M R Alexander, M G Carver,
L O Haysey, T Milner, R L Parker and
M J Tindale.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, W Ashley, R Beeching,
D Clark, N Clark, J Demonti, R Gilbert,
M P A McMullen, N C Poulton, J O Ranger,
S A Rutland-Barsby, W Quince, R Taylor and
J P Warren.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Simon Barfoot	- Environmental Health Promotion Officer
Claire Bennett	- Housing Strategy and Policy Mmanager
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Simon Chancellor	- Head of Financial Support Services
Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Lorraine Kirk	- Senior Communications Officer
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community and Cultural Services
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Tracy Strange	- Head of Health and Housing

211 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader asked Members to note that an additional paper containing revised recommendations in respect of Minute 226 – Rhodes Arts Complex, had been tabled. He also referred to copies of the revised version of Appendix 'A7' of the Cultural Strategy (Minute 213 refers) being available.

The Leader also advised that, as further information had not been forthcoming, the item relating to Town Centre Enhancements had been withdrawn and would be submitted to a later meeting.

Finally, the Leader stated that in order to assist some Officers, agenda items 10, 15 and 19 would be dealt with first.

212 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors A P Jackson and M P A McMullen declared personal and prejudicial interests in the matter referred to at Minute 230 – Delivering Quality Health Care for Hertfordshire – NHS Public Consultation, in that their wives were employed by the NHS. They left the chamber whilst this matter was considered. In the absence of the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Community Safety and Protection chaired the meeting for this item.

Councillors J Demonti and R Gilbert declared personal and prejudicial interests in the matter referred to at Minute 226 – Rhodes Arts Complex, in that they were trustees at the Rhodes Arts Complex. They left the chamber whilst this matter was considered.

Councillor R Taylor declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the matter referred to at Minute 226 – Rhodes Arts Complex, in that he was a trustee at the Rhodes Arts Complex and a member of the management committee. He left the chamber whilst this matter was considered.

Councillor T Milner declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the matter referred to at Minute 234 – Public Housing – Stock Transfer Undertakings, in that he was a board member of Riversmead Housing Association. He left the chamber whilst this matter was considered.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS

213 CULTURAL STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture submitted a report seeking approval for the Cultural Strategy 2007 – 2012.

The Executive recalled that the last East Herts Cultural Strategy had expired at the end of 2005. By that time, most of the actions had been achieved and the themes within the strategy had been subsumed within the Community Strategy. In acknowledgement of the growing importance of cultural activity in the area, consultation on a new Cultural Strategy for the period 2007/12 began in September 2006. The consultation process had been extensive and the Council's Policy Development Scrutiny Committee had also reviewed the Strategy in its draft forms.

The Executive Member referred to the proposed new Cultural Strategy as detailed at Appendix 'A7' of the report now submitted. The latest updated version had been circulated by e-mail and hard copies had been made available at the meeting. She stated that this was presented as essentially a medium term enabling framework for cultural development in the area. Incorporated within the Strategy was a celebration of a range of examples of recent cultural achievement together with a programme of initiatives for 2007/08.

The Policy Development Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 21 August 2007, had supported the Strategy as a framework document for 2007 - 08,

subject to various amendments. The Committee had expressed support for the description of what had been done, which had been well documented. However, the Strategy's intentions did not go beyond a year and Members felt that actions beyond that were absent. In terms of presentation, the need for plain English in the document was referred to. It was also suggested that the organisation of the Strategy document should be reviewed as it appeared that certain topics, eg sport, were difficult to follow.

The Executive Member responded to these comments by stating that this was a framework document and that the actions over the next twelve months could be carried forward. She commented that the outline forward plan had been based on the five outcomes of "Every Child Matters". She accepted a suggestion from Councillor J O Ranger that the Introduction should emphasise that the action plan would be updated during the lifetime of the Strategy.

Councillor N Clark suggested that the document did not contain a strategy for the swimming pools. He referred to Executive decisions in September 2006, authorising a detailed marketing strategy for the pools and a feasibility study into the new schools site. As these issues had not been addressed, the proposed Strategy contained a gap.

The Leader responded to these comments by referring to the increased demand for a wider range of cultural provision, in which the swimming pools were only one aspect. He believed the Strategy allowed for the development of broader cultural provision, which addressed these demands.

In respect of the previous Executive decisions referred to by Councillor N Clark, the Leader reminded Members that these were taken just before the collapse of Aspire, the previous leisure contractor. The situation had since changed considerably and that

Stevenage Leisure Limited was now providing information to the Council that had not been provided by Aspire.

Councillor N Clark suggested that these previous Executive decisions should be annulled formally.

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Services commented on the disproportionate element of the budget allocated to swimming pools.

Councillor R Taylor referred to the overall attractiveness of the swimming pools compared to modern facilities in other Districts and suggested that this impacted on attendances. In response, the Leader commented that East Herts faced many challenges and that other Districts did not manage five swimming pools.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that the Cultural Strategy 2007/12, as now submitted and amended, be endorsed.

DCCS

214 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY 2007 AND STATUS REPORT ON CURRENT PROJECTS

The Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture submitted a report seeking approval for the Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2007 and a High Level Action Plan. She also updated Members on various projects currently being undertaken as part of the open spaces development programme.

It was noted that the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy would form the policy framework under which Parks Management Plans for individual sites would be developed and consulted upon. The Strategy detailed

the vision and objectives for the parks and open spaces of East Herts within the framework of the Cultural Strategy and reflected the Council's corporate objectives, the 'East Herts Together' Community Strategy and the policies of the Local Plan Second Review (April 2007). Also, the Strategy aimed to encourage the provision of good quality public parks and green spaces that were managed in a responsible, environmentally sustainable and effective way.

The Executive Member detailed the consultation that had been undertaken on the draft Strategy. She also referred to a High Level Action Plan had been developed citing key milestones in the implementation of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. It set out the current status of projects being undertaken and identified a timeline for future proposed projects for the development of the parks and open spaces of East Herts.

Finally, the Executive noted that the Council owned and maintained approximately 120 public open spaces of all kinds, including 40 main parks and 46 play sites. These had seen significant development over the last few years on a site by site basis as part of the ongoing parks and open spaces improvement programme. An update on some of these projects was also included in the Executive Member's report.

The Policy Development Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 21 August 2007, had supported the Strategy and the Action Plan. The Committee also noted that there was insufficient mention of Pishiobury Park in the Action Plan, which was an area which could be developed in line with the Council's Children's Play Strategy, eg there could be an adventure play area there and other appropriate activities if car parking provision were expanded.

Councillor R Beeching commented on the potential conflict between the purpose of the park, particularly

in providing a grazing area for cattle and certain organised activities. The Leader acknowledged the need for discussions with Countryside Management Service on this aspect.

It was confirmed that this was a five year Strategy with an action plan covering the next two years.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the amended Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy as detailed at Appendix 'A8' of the report now submitted, be approved; DCCS

(B) the High Level Action Plan, as detailed at Appendix 'B8' of the report now submitted, be approved; and DCCS

(C) the status report of current projects for parks and open spaces development be received.

215 HERTFORDSHIRE WASTE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Environment and Conservation submitted a report seeking endorsement of the Draft Strategy agreed by the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership on 16 July 2007.

The Executive recalled that the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, comprising the 10 District councils and the County Council, was a formal body which set the strategy for waste management on behalf of its members. The Partnership had been developing a new strategy over the last 18 month which reflected the changing circumstances affecting waste management over the coming years. The key issues were detailed in a report submitted to the Executive on 3 April 2007

(Minute 700 refers).

Following a major publicity campaign and consultation exercise between January and April 2007, where over 11,000 responses had been received from the public and other bodies, the Executive had considered the initial Draft Strategy on 3 April 2007 and its comments had been passed to the Partnership and incorporated into the Final Draft.

The Draft Strategy had now been revised in the light of responses from the public and partners and had been agreed by the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership on 16 July 2007. Each Partner Authority had now been asked to formally endorse the Strategy for final approval by the Partnership on 30 October 2007. The Draft Core Strategy and Partnership Action Plan were detailed at Appendices 'B9' and 'C9' respectively of the report now submitted.

In response to a comment from Councillor J O Ranger relating to energy from waste, the Executive Member referred to core policies 13 and 14 within the Strategy.

The Executive supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that the Hertfordshire Municipal Waste Management Strategy as now submitted, be endorsed.

DCCS

**216 HERTFORDSHIRE SUPPORTING PEOPLE
STRATEGY 2007 – 2012**

The Executive Members for Housing and Health and Community Development, Leisure and Culture submitted a joint report seeking support for the Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy 2007-2012 as endorsed by the Hertfordshire Supporting People Commissioning Body.

The Executive noted that Hertfordshire County Council's Supporting People Service, as the administering authority for Supporting People, funded housing related support services to a wide range of vulnerable people across Hertfordshire. Housing related support services sat alongside existing care services and helped people maintain or improve their ability to live independently. Housing related support could also prevent problems that might lead to homelessness, moving into a care home or hospitalisation. It could also help people moving into independent living after leaving a care home.

The Executive Members referred to an Executive Summary of the Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy 2007-2012 at Appendix 'A10' of the report now submitted. The document had been written by the County Council's Supporting People team under the guidance of the Supporting People Commissioning Body, which was currently chaired by East Herts Council. The document had been subject to wide consultation, including all the ten District and Borough Councils, Primary Care Trusts, Probation Service, other providers who delivered housing related support, service users and carers. It was noted that the document was a high level Strategy that set out clear direction for the County Council's Supporting People Programme for the next five years.

The Executive Member for Housing and Health, whilst supporting the proposed Strategy, expressed concerns in respect of the prioritisation of people with learning difficulties and gypsies and travellers in the fourth and fifth years. He referred to the work of the Consortium on gypsies and travellers and believed that prioritising this group earlier in the process, would tie in with the work being undertaken. He requested that these comments be submitted as part of the Council's response. This was supported by the Executive.

Councillor R Gilbert referred to proposals by West Essex Health Authority in respect of mental health provision in the Bishop's Stortford area. The Leader commented that this issue had been raised with the Health Authority and would continue to be highlighted.

The Executive supported the recommendation as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that the County Council's Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy 2007-2012 be endorsed, subject to concerns that people with disabilities and gypsies and travellers would not be prioritised until the fourth and fifth years.

DNS

**217 COUNCIL'S MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY
2008/09 – 2011/12**

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report informing the Executive of the process to be followed in setting the 2008/09 budget, by aligning service demand with the Council's priorities.

The Executive Member referred to the Council's overarching Strategy which aimed to deliver improved services, in line with the Council's corporate priorities, at a cost which was both affordable and sustainable. The current financial objective was to achieve a break-even budget that did not require the need for support from balances/reserves in the medium term. Having regard to current Council Tax capping arrangements it was also expected that annual increases would not exceed 5%. Members were reminded that in the current year, an increase of just under 4.6% had been agreed, which had included an anticipated use of balances of nearly £320,000.

Currently, the Council's medium term financial plan

allowed for a phased reduction in the use of balances which would require the Council to review both its current base budget position (level of service) and proposed future service plans. The Executive Member commented that in order for the Council's financial processes to remain robust, it would be necessary to amend budgetary processes in the way set out in the report now submitted.

The Executive Member stated that, in order to decide on the right level of service delivery, a variety of options would need to be considered. Officers had been exploring the impact of running different levels of service delivery and these were shown on the graph in the report now submitted.

It was noted that the Council used an integrated service planning and financial management framework, to ensure that all services delivered the District Community Strategy and the corporate priorities. It worked by linking the service actions, contained in the Service Plans, to deliver the corporate priorities, which in turn, determined the service budget allocation.

Councillor D Clark highlighted paragraph 6.6 of the report, which indicated that savings of £700,000 would need to be identified in order to set a sustainable budget. She referred to the Backward Efficiency Statement that had recently been reported to the Performance Scrutiny Committee, in which the Authority had not achieved projected savings. She also quoted an extract from the External Auditor's report to the Audit Committee on 5 September 2007, which she believed demonstrated a lack of control over the Council's budgets. She suggested that the External Auditor had raised concerns in respect of budgetary processes.

She questioned whether the proposed timetable, as detailed in the report now submitted, would afford

backbench Members the opportunity to make choices from a set of options on expenditure.

In response, the Executive Member commented that the Council had been prudent in managing its budgets and that Members would have the opportunity to consider options.

The Leader added that in setting this year's budget, a number of challenges had been faced and that he had advised Members of the tough decisions that would be required this year.

Councillor J O Ranger stated that he had been assured by the Director of Internal Services that options would be included for Members to consider at Scrutiny meetings.

In response to a question from Councillor N Clark in respect of the capital programme, it was confirmed that Members would have the opportunity to consider the three year rolling programme at the same time as revenue budgets.

Councillor R Gilbert referred to acceptable levels of council tax increases compared to various indices of inflation. He also referred to the impact of pension costs on council tax and advocated lobbying the Local Government Association to seek to increase employees' pension contributions.

In response to a comment from Councillor N C Poulton, the Executive Member undertook to ensure that the letter to parish and town councils advising of the District's budget intentions for 2008/09 would be in a form that was easy to understand.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the General Fund Revenue Budget process that aligns service demand in line with the Council's priorities be approved, as follows:

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- (1) appropriate indices shown in Appendix 'A11' be included in the base for 2008/09;
- (2) as included in the Council's Strategic Plan, Council Portfolio Holders/Officers develop service level options that generate 3% efficiency savings across the Council;
- (3) a report be presented to the Executive on 5 February 2008 indicating the levels of funding agreed for the provision of service within each service plan for 2008/09;
- (4) a Council Tax be set for 2008/09 with an increase of no greater than 5% over 2007/08;
- (5) the Executive be requested to approve the proposed consultation programme for the 2008/09 budget; and

(B) the Director of Internal Services be requested to write to all Parish/Town Councils to advise of the District's Budget intentions for 2008/09.

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218 **MANAGEMENT OF LEISURE FACILITIES**

The Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture submitted a report seeking to secure best value arrangements for the management of the Council's leisure facilities and playschemes and to confirm the Council's position in relation to the

three joint-use school pools.

The Executive Member referred to the Council's positioning within the wider Cultural Strategy (Minute 213 refers) of considering all delivery options with emphasis on being an enabler rather than the more traditional position of direct provider. The Strategy emphasised the need to find a balance between the wider needs of residents, the needs of the council taxpayer and, for example, the casual swimmer, in the context of modern leisure trends and the operational reality of approximately a £1.5m annual revenue subsidy incurred through the current arrangements for leisure/cultural facility and playscheme management. The arrangements for the short and medium term future of the Council's direct, commissioned and contracted leisure services, as set out in the report now submitted, were addressed in this context.

The Executive Member detailed the current arrangements for leisure provision, the management of Castle Hall and the playschemes programme. Leisure management consultant, Max Associates (MA) had been instructed by the Council to manage the process of securing new management arrangements for the Council's two leisure centres. The tender offer would be extended to invite additional options, on a menu basis, to include Castle Hall, the playschemes programme and the three joint-use facilities. The tender would also be developed to permit inclusion/extension of possible partners at a future date, should that be beneficial to the Council. The intention was that all or any menu elements might be included in the final agreement, depending on the outcome of subsequent negotiations and/or developments.

Further to the Executive decision of 12 June 2007 (Minute 69 refers), initial discussions had commenced with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to explore the current state of, and future options, for the joint

use agreements established in the mid 1970s. The Executive's endorsement was sought to develop this process into a clear strategy for the three HCC/school joint-use pools which reduced or removed the financial liability on East Herts Council taxpayers. The intention was to negotiate new arrangements by the beginning of the autumn school term 2008, to coincide as closely as possible with the commencement of the new contract for the management of the two East Herts Council owned sites at Grange Paddocks and Hartham. An outline timetable for the tendering process was detailed in the report now submitted.

MA had advised that the tender should be a two stage negotiated process with a significant percentage of quality criteria in relation to price (% to be determined). The specification would be designed to be outcome focused with a built-in flexibility to enable the contractor to maximise the facilities' and services' potential.

It was noted that the proposed contract period in relation to Hartham, Castle Hall and the playschemes was 10 years. In order to take into account the possibility of a new pool and leisure site on the new Herts and Essex and Boys High schools site with an estimated completion date of 2011, the Grange Paddocks contract would be offered for a period that was compatible with that project. It might be that this contract would be for an initial three years with an option to extend for a further seven years should the new schools site project not proceed. The Executive noted that should the opportunity to provide a new leisure facility on the new schools site in Bishop's Stortford be forthcoming, then it was likely that capital investment would be required if the community was to have full or substantial access to the new facility. These matters would be the subject of subsequent reports to the Executive.

As part of the tender package, MA had advised that an

indicative investment in the facilities by the Council, of between £3 to £5 million capital, during the first few years of the contract period, might serve to substantially reduce the revenue costs to the Council during the period of the contract. Proposals would be worked up with MA through the Capital Strategy Group and the Asset Management Group with a view to achieving the most beneficial balance between capital and revenue costs.

The Executive Member advised Members of an amendment to recommendation (C), whereby the word “programme” would be replaced with the word “options”. She also advised of an additional recommendation as follows:

“(D) the overriding focus of any investment would be to ensure the maintenance or enhancement of leisure provision within the District.”

Councillor N Clark criticised the proposals on the basis that they had not been subject to scrutiny, had been added to the September Forward Plan at the last moment and did not form part of a coherent strategy. He suggested that this report was concerned with the tendering process only and did not refer to any strategy. He believed that the Cultural Strategy agreed earlier (Minute 213 refers) posed a question but did not provide a rationale for the proposals here.

In respect of the three joint-use pools, he questioned whether it was intended to withdraw financial support completely, or if not, what level of support would be acceptable. He asked if the Council was committed to providing public swimming in Sawbridgeworth.

The Leader commented that this would depend on the outcome of the review. He refuted the suggestion that the Cultural Strategy did not provide a rationale for these proposals. He reminded Members of the need

for wider leisure provision and other areas of priority that had been identified. He suggested that there had been an imbalance of leisure provision and referred to the findings of PPS17. He believed that these proposals would start the process of addressing this imbalance.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) further to the authorisation delegated by the Executive of 12 June 2007 (Minute 69 refers), authority to develop this process into a clear strategy for the three HCC/school joint-use pools which reduces the financial burden on East Herts Council tax payers be approved. The Director of Customer and Community Services be requested to report back to the Executive with recommendations on options, in accordance with the milestones established in the report now submitted;

DCCS

(B) further to the authorisation granted by Council of 20 September 2006 (Minute 252 refers), authority for Officers to proceed with tendering arrangements for the management of the Council's leisure facilities in accordance with the process and timetable as set out in the report now submitted, be approved. The tender offer shall include Grange Paddocks and Hartham and, on a menu basis, options to include Castle Hall, the playschemes programme and the three joint-use facilities. The tender to be developed to permit inclusion / extension of possible partners at a future date, should that be beneficial to the Council. Inclusion of all or any menu elements in the final agreement will depend on the outcome of negotiations and further Scrutiny appraisal and Executive approval;

DCCS

(C) within the arrangements referred to in (B) above, Officers be asked to work up capital investment options designed to improve the attractiveness of the facilities to customers and to increase potential income and/or reduce running costs of the facilities in order to reduce net revenue costs to the Council; the programme will model the potential benefit for each element proposed; and

DCCS

(D) the overriding focus of any investment would be to ensure the maintenance or enhancement of leisure provision within the District.

219 REVIEW OF WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support submitted a report seeking approval for commissioning external professional advisors in order to assess the Council's current working arrangements. The advisors would determine the office space required if different working arrangements were introduced and analyse the cost and benefits of any change.

The Executive noted the position in respect of the Council's current office accommodation at Wallfields, Hertford and the Causeway, Bishop's Stortford. It was further noted that a recent review of customer needs had shown a preference for a presence in the two main towns, where customers could conduct face to face transactions.

The Executive Member commented that the introduction of new ways of working such as remote working, home working, electronic document management (EDM) and customer relationship management had been limited. Full implementation of these systems could enable the introduction of

working practices, such as hot-desking and the use of touch-down points, thereby significantly reducing the amount of office space needed. The introduction of flexible working would enable the Council to reduce the amount of accommodation, whilst at the same time influencing cultural change through new flexible working arrangements.

It was proposed that professional advisors be employed to carry out an audit of the two main offices, design layouts, prepare budgets and compile a complete analysis of proposed solutions. The benefits of flexible working to the Council and employees were detailed in the report submitted. The advisors would be required to provide a detailed report with costs and a cost benefit analysis. Procurement of the advisors would be carried out in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and three quotations would be sought.

The Executive Member proposed that a project group be set up to oversee the project and the suggested membership was detailed in the report now submitted.

Councillor N Clark sought clarification on the outcomes and what was expected to be delivered. He expressed disappointment that the proposals had not been subject to scrutiny. He referred to the outcomes of previous work that had been undertaken and sought clarification on the revenue impact if the project was aborted.

The Executive Member responded by commenting that he could not predict the outcome of the project, but that Members would have ample opportunity to look at it.

The Head of Financial Support Services confirmed that the proposed costs could be capitalised, but that in the event of the project being aborted and no capital asset accruing, the costs would have to be charged to

revenue budgets.

Councillor R Taylor referred to the desire to retain a presence in Bishop's Stortford and emphasised the importance of this in respect of the democratic need and the ability to have meetings. The Executive Member responded by confirming his commitment to the needs of Bishop's Stortford.

In response to a suggestion from Councillor J O Ranger, the Executive Member undertook to ask Officers to check if any government grants would be available for the project.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) a business case for revising the Council's working arrangements and reducing the amount of office space needed be received; DIS

(B) up to £50,000 be approved for inclusion within the capital programme to commission professional advisors to examine current working arrangements and to recommend how office needs can be minimised; and DIS

(C) the Director of Internal Services be authorised to establish a project group to manage the procurement of the advisors and to manage the project. DIS

**220 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT –
SUBMISSION VERSION CONSULTATION: MARCH -
APRIL 2007**

The Executive considered and supported the recommendations of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Executive Panel, made at its meeting held on 26 July 2007, in respect of the Council's

response to the representations received during the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Submission Stage.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the Council's responses to representations received during the Statement of Community Involvement Submission Stage consultation, as detailed at Appendix 'B' of the report now submitted, be agreed; and

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(B) the Council's responses referred to in (A) above be submitted to the Secretary of State in accordance with Regulation 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations.

DNS

221 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISALS: INDICATORS AND TARGETS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Executive considered and supported the recommendations of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Executive Panel, made at its meeting held on 26 July 2007, in respect of the Sustainability Appraisals: Indicators and Targets Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to the Local Plan Second Review 2007.

RECOMMENDED - that the Sustainability Appraisals: Indicators and Targets Supplementary Planning Document as detailed in Appendix 'C' to the report now submitted, be agreed for adoption in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004.

DNS

**222 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

The Executive considered and supported the recommendations of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Executive Panel, made at its meeting held on 26 July 2007, in respect of the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to the Local Plan Second Review 2007.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the representations submitted in respect of the draft Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document, as detailed in the Statement of Issues at Appendix 'D' to the report now submitted, be received and considered; **DNS**

(B) the Officer comments made in response to the representations referred to in (A) above, as detailed in the Statement of Issues at Appendix 'D' to the report now submitted, be agreed in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004; **DNS**

(C) the amended Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document be agreed for adoption in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004; and **DNS**

(D) the amended Sustainability Appraisal as detailed in Appendix 'G' to the report now submitted, be agreed for adoption. **DNS**

**223 HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

The Executive considered and supported the recommendations of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Executive Panel, made at its meeting held on 26 July 2007, in respect of the Historic Parks and Gardens Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to the Local Plan Second Review 2007.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the representations submitted in respect of the draft Historic Parks and Gardens Supplementary Planning Document, as detailed in the Statement of Issues at Appendix 'H' to the report now submitted, be received and considered; **DNS**

(B) the Officer comments made in response to the representations referred to in (A) above, as detailed in the Statement of Issues at Appendix 'H' to the report now submitted, be agreed in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004; **DNS**

(C) the amended Historic Parks and Gardens Supplementary Planning Document as detailed in Appendix 'I' to the report now submitted, be agreed for adoption in accordance with Regulation 19 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004; and **DNS**

(D) the amended Sustainability Appraisal as detailed in Appendix 'J' to the report now submitted, be agreed for adoption. **DNS**

224 STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT – PRELIMINARY REPORT

The Executive considered and supported the recommendations of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Executive Panel, made at its meeting held on 26 July 2007, in respect of the requirement to produce a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for East Herts District that would form part of the evidence base for the East Herts Local Development Framework (LDF).

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the report be received; and **DNS**

(B) the Head of Planning Policy, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning Policy and Transport, be authorised to: **DNS**

(1) commission a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, to inform the preparation of the East Herts Local Development Framework, by means of the use of in-house staff and/or the engagement of consultants; the cost of any consultants for such a study to be met from existing Planning Policy Budgets for LDF Upkeep / Studies / Consultancy purposes; and

(2) investigate the opportunities for a joint Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, by means of partnership working with adjoining authorities, and if considered appropriate, to prepare such an Assessment by such means.

225 HOUSING CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

The Executive considered and supported the recommendations of the Local Development

Framework (LDF) Executive Panel, made at its meeting held on 26 July 2007, in respect of the main findings of the Housing Capacity Assessment (HCA) undertaken by Entec UK Limited (Entec).

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the presentation by Entec, the Council's consultants preparing the Housing Capacity Assessment, and the Non-Technical Summary attached at Appendix 'A' to the report now submitted, be received; and

(B) following completion of the technical work supporting the Housing Capacity Assessment, interested parties and stakeholders be advised that the study was available for inspection at the Council's Offices at Hertford and Bishop's Stortford, on the Council's website, and that comments may be made on it, for a six week period during late Summer / early Autumn 2007.

DNS

226 RHODES ARTS COMPLEX

The Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture submitted a report concerning a capital bid by the Rhodes Arts Trust, Bishop's Stortford for health and safety DDA compliant equipment, raked seating and lighting/sound equipment.

Since re-opening in autumn 2005, the Rhodes Arts Trust had been in negotiations with East Herts Council with regards to funding a range of capital equipment to enable the Complex to offer a wide and commercially viable programme. These proved unsuccessful as the Trust had been unable to provide a robust business case to support how the new items would add extra value to the Complex. As a result, "The Way Forward Group", comprising representatives of the Council and the Rhodes Arts Complex, had been formed to look at

a number of issues, but in particular:

- developing a revised capital bid by prioritising key areas backed up by a robust business case;
- the artistic policy and programming;
- organisational issues relating to Rhodes Arts Trust; and
- developing a new Business Plan.

The Executive Member detailed the new capital bid of £246,477, which was well below the previous bid submitted of over £370,000. He referred to consideration of this matter by the Capital Strategy Group which had resulted in a set of revised recommendations being tabled. He stated that the purpose of these revised recommendations was to be less prescriptive and to provide assurances regarding the Council's investment.

Councillor N C Poulton referred to previous grant allocations by the Council and sought assurances that revenue support would not be provided.

In response, the Leader confirmed that there would be no revenue implications for the Council. He referred to the partnership work that had been undertaken via "The Way Forward Group" and the action plan which would determine how each tranche of funding would be released.

Councillor J O Ranger, in expressing support for the proposals, raised a concern in respect of the security of the portable equipment.

Councillor D Clark expressed her disappointment that the proposals had not been subject to scrutiny.

Councillor W Quince commented on the need to ensure that the Council's investment was reflected by appropriate badging of events and facilities.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) £246,477 be allocated to the Rhodes Arts Trust for health and safety/DDA equipment, raked seating and lighting and sound equipment, as set out in the report now submitted; DIS

(B) the allocation of grant monies be subject to the Rhodes Arts Trustees' agreement to the conditions of offer, the details of which be delegated to the Director of Customer and Community Services; DCCS

(C) a supplementary capital estimate of £87,400 be approved; DIS

(D) should the actual expenditure prove to be less than the grant sum allocated, then any surplus grant be returned to East Herts Council; and

(E) authorisation be granted for the contingency fund relating to the recent major capital refurbishment project to be extended to cover the additional works identified at (A) above, if required.

RESOLVED ITEMS

227 MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 17 July 2007 be confirmed as a

correct record and signed by the Chairman.

228 ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY

The Executive received a report detailing those issues referred to the Executive by the Scrutiny Committees. Issues relating to specific reports for the Executive were considered and detailed at the relevant report of the Executive Member.

(A) Backward Efficiency Statement 2006/07

The Executive noted that the Performance Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 14 August 2007, received the Backward Efficiency Statement for 2006/07 as reported to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

(B) Health Scrutiny

The Executive was advised that the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 21 August 2007, supported the establishment of a Health Engagement Panel for scrutinising local health issues requested that this be considered within any review of the scrutiny function.

The Executive agreed that Hertfordshire County Council be asked to assist in the establishment of a Health Engagement Panel for scrutinising local health issues within the impending review of the scrutiny function.

RESOLVED – that Hertfordshire County Council be asked to assist in the establishment of a Health Engagement Panel for scrutinising local health issues within the impending review of the scrutiny function.

CE/DIS

229 EAST HERTS YOUTH COUNCIL'S YOUTH STRATEGY 2007 – 2012

The Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture submitted a report on the Youth Strategy for 2007 – 2012 as proposed by East Herts Youth Council.

The new Strategy provided a framework for how the Youth Council will work with its partners and other young people across the District to deliver what children and young people had stated was important to them and also to contribute to the delivery of a range of local partners' strategies and plans relating to children and young people, particularly the East Herts Children and Young People's Plan.

As well as the Youth Strategy, East Herts had a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), which was a strategic, overarching plan for the delivery of District-wide and multi-agency services to children and young people in the District aged under 19 and young people aged 19-25 with learning difficulties. It was noted that Youth Councillors had used their new Strategy to identify ways in which they felt they could contribute to the implementation of the CYPP.

The Performance Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 14 August 2007, supported the Strategy and made a number of comments as follows:

- greater efforts should be made to recruit Youth Councillors from all parts of the District;
- a summary of the Strategy should be produced in a format attractive to young people to publicise it;
- consideration should be given to arranging a joint event to bring together different Youth Councils in the District; and

- Members should be encouraged to visit meetings of the Youth Council as observers.

The Executive Member advised Members that she would be meeting the Youth Council Chairman to discuss the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations. She advised the Executive to accept all of these recommendations.

It was suggested that the membership of the Youth Council could be broadened by encouraging more volunteers in rural areas. The Executive Member referred to the Rural Conference on 11 October 2007 and suggested that this would be an opportunity to promote the Youth Council.

In response to a question from Councillor R Gilbert, the Executive Member advised that a future programme of Youth Council meetings would be agreed at its next meeting and details would be circulated to all Members.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Youth Strategy for 2007 – 2012 proposed by East Herts Youth Council be noted;

(B) greater efforts be made to recruit Youth Councillors from all parts of the District; DCCS

(C) a summary of the Strategy be produced in a format attractive to young people, in order to publicise it; DCCS/
CE

(D) consideration be given to arranging a joint event to bring together different Youth Councils in the District; and DCCS

(E) Members be encouraged to visit Youth Council meetings as observers.

230 DELIVERING QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR
HERTFORDSHIRE – NHS PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Executive Member for Housing and Health submitted a report seeking the Executive's views on the NHS consultation document, "Delivering Quality Health Care for Hertfordshire" and approval for a response to the NHS East and North Herts and West Herts PCTs.

The Executive Member detailed the consultation on the proposals put forward by the four NHS Hertfordshire based organisations. He also summarised the comments submitted by Members as part of the consultation and the suggested responses to the various questions.

The Executive Member advised that the next Bishop's Stortford Community Voice would be considering health issues. Therefore, he requested that the Director of Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with himself, be authorised to add any additional comments arising from the Community Voice to the agreed response.

The Executive considered the options available and approved the response as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) in respect of East and North Hertfordshire:

DNS

- (1) to express a preference for centralisation of acute services at QEII hospital in Welwyn Garden City;
- (2) the following types of services be provided at local general hospitals:
 - Common disease ailments
 - Some aspects of mental health
 - Walk in NHS facilities
 - Well person clinics
 - Maternity services

- Convalescent
- Rehabilitation

(3) to express a preference for the 7th urgent care centre being located at Hertford County Hospital;

(B) in respect of West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust: DNS

(1) the Council does not agree to the preference for centralisation of children's emergency services and children's day surgery services at Watford, but would express a preference for children's services at Bishop's Stortford;

(2) the long-term location of an NHS surgicentre be at St Albans City Hospital;

(C) the Director of Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Health, be authorised to add additional comments arising from those made at Bishop's Stortford Community Voice. DNS

231 COUNCIL PRIORITIES AND STRAPLINES

The Leader of the Council submitted a report proposing the adoption of "straplines" to support the Council's six priorities.

Following the most recent staff survey, the understanding of corporate objectives was shown to be lower than in many of the other organisations that Ipsos MORI, which carried out the survey, had worked with. This had suggested that there were some difficulties in communicating organisational aims to staff. As a result of these findings, it was proposed that shorter, more memorable straplines be created to aid Officers' recall. Suggestions were set out in the report now submitted.

The Leader emphasised that the proposals did not affect the Council's priorities as these were not being amended.

The Policy Development Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 21 August 2007, had considered the proposed straplines and expressed support for the concept. However, the Committee requested that further thought be given to tweaking the proposals.

The Leader, taking into account the Scrutiny Committee's comments, suggested amending two of the proposed straplines. The Executive supported the amended straplines as follows:

- Promoting prosperity and well-being; providing access and opportunities
- Fit for purpose; services fit for you
- Pride in East Herts
- Caring about what's built and where
- Shaping now, shaping the future
- Leading the way; working together

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the straplines to support the priorities, as now detailed, be approved.

CE

232 CAR PARK PAY ON FOOT / PAY ON EXIT
FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Executive Member for Planning Policy and Transport submitted a report comparing the relative merits of different methods of paying for parking and assessed the suitability of a 'pay on foot/exit' approach, using three car parks as a

model.

The Executive Member advised that in 2006, the Council had commissioned a feasibility study into the introduction of pay on foot/exit in its car parks. Because of their long association with East Herts Council and familiarity with the issues, Arup was appointed to undertake this study. Three car parks had been chosen as models for the study - Kibes Lane surface car park, Ware and Gascoyne Way and Bircherley Green multi-storey car parks in Hertford. The report from Arup was detailed in the report now submitted.

The Executive noted that in general, the report by Arup suggested that the majority of car parks in East Herts might not be easily suited to the introduction of a pay on foot/exit method of parking for a number of reasons, which were highlighted in paragraph 4.16 of the report now submitted. Details of the prohibitive financial implications of "back-fitting" a pay on foot method were set out in the report now submitted.

In respect of Bircherley Green, it was noted that Savills, the managing agent, had indicated that they would be prepared to discuss the possibility of them contributing to the costs of installation of a pay on foot system, structural conversion and operational costs.

The Policy Development Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 3 July 2007, had supported the recommendation that, without setting a precedent, Bircherley Green multi-storey car park be identified for a potential pay on foot charging scheme, possibly in partnership with the associated shopping centre.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) the report now submitted, which compared the merits of pay and display and pay on foot/exit parking and addressed the implications of implementing a pay on foot/exit payment system in car parks in East Herts be

noted;

(B) without setting a precedent, Bircherley Green multi-storey car park be identified for a potential pay on foot charging scheme, possibly in partnership with the associated shopping centre; and DCCS

(C) Officers be requested to prepare a detailed analysis of the costs associated with such a charging scheme referred to in (B) above (together with any associated implications for car parking charges) and report thereon to a future meeting. DCCS

233 CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK QUARTERLY MONITORING (APRIL – JUNE 2007)

The Leader of the Council submitted a report on the finance, performance and risk monitoring for East Herts Council for the first quarter period of 2007/08.

The Performance Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 14 August 2007, received the report subject to a report on the review of IT being brought to the next meeting of the Committee and the Director of Neighbourhood Services attending that meeting to update Members on performance in the Building Control Section. This was noted by the Executive.

In response to a question from Councillor N Clark, the Head of Financial Support Services confirmed that early retirement costs were spread over three years and that the estimate shown in Appendix B18' of the report now submitted, included the costs of early retirement cases from within the previous two years

The Executive noted the report.

RESOLVED - that the Corporate Healthcheck for the quarter period relating to April to June 2007, including the Performance Scrutiny Committee's recommendations and comments, as detailed in the

report submitted, be noted.

234 PUBLIC HOUSING – STOCK TRANSFER
UNDERTAKINGS

The Executive Member for Housing and Health submitted a report on the progress made by the two large scale voluntary transfer housing associations to improve the stock sold to them in March 2002. He also advised on those transfer undertakings that had been completed by the housing associations and those that the Council would need to continue monitoring.

The Executive recalled that in March 2002, the Council had sold its stock of some 6,500 dwellings to Riversmead and Stort Valley (now South Anglia) housing associations in return for a capital receipt, 75% nomination rights and a five year programme of improvements to the stock, which had been termed the 'Delivery of Promises'. The undertakings were of two types. The majority concerned improvements to the housing stock transferred and had targets for either minimum spend or number of improvements. Additionally, there were other conditions attached to the sale of the stock which had a much longer timeframe, for example, nomination rights to their vacant properties.

The Executive Member referred to Appendix 'A19' of the report now submitted, which set out the promises made to improve the stock, reviewed achievement on those undertakings that had come to an end and progress to date on those undertakings that continued. These promises had been closely monitored by the housing service and both South Anglia and Riversmead housing associations had met the majority, and in most circumstances, had exceeded these promises.

The Performance Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting held on 10 July 2007, had considered the report and had recommended that the housing associations be requested to submit an annual report each year. Councillor N Clark

requested that all Members be given an opportunity to consider these reports.

Some Members expressed concerns over the poor response to complaints and queries from South Anglia Housing Association. The Executive Member asked Members to inform him of any difficulties so that he could raise them at his regular liaison meetings.

The Leader commented on the general importance of holding partners to account and referred to the role of the Local Strategic Partnership and the scrutiny function.

The Executive approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (A) progress on the action plan be noted;

(B) the recommendations on those actions not achieved be approved; and

(C) the housing associations be requested to present their Annual Reports to the Council each year.

DNS

235 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (LDF)
EXECUTIVE PANEL – MINUTES OF THE MEETING
HELD ON 26 JULY 2007

The Executive agreed to receive the Minutes of the Local Development Framework Executive Panel meeting held on 26 July 2007.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Local Development Framework Executive Panel meeting held on 26 July 2007, be received.

(see also Minutes 220 - 225 above)

236 OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC RISK MONITORING
(JANUARY – MARCH 2007)

The Leader of the Council submitted a report relating to action taken to mitigate and control risks tracked by operational and strategic risk registers during the period 1 January to 31 March 2007.

Councillor D Clark suggested that there was a need for such reporting to be carried out earlier.

The Executive noted the report.

RESOLVED - that the progress in taking action to mitigate and control risks tracked by operational and strategic risk registers during the period 1 January to 31 March 2007 be noted.

The meeting closed at 10.15 pm

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Chairman
Date