

Public Document Pack



Chairman and Members of the Council

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Date: 18 December 2023

cc. All other recipients of the Council agenda

Dear Councillor,

COUNCIL - 13 DECEMBER 2023

Please find attached the responses to the Public and Members' Questions which were submitted to the agenda for the above meeting:

7. Public Questions (Pages 3 - 14)

To receive any public questions.

8. Members' Questions (Pages 15 - 26)

To receive any Members' questions.

Agenda Item 7

COUNCIL – 13 DECEMBER 2023

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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| Question 1 | Colin Woodward to ask Cllr Ben Crystall, the Leader of the Council |
| <p>In September 2022 EHDC formally recognised the Water Lane Hall to be an Asset of Community Value, yet the perception in Bishop’s Stortford is that the Council is still intent on proceeding with the proposal to dispose of the Hall along with its other assets on the Old River Lane site by transferring them to Cityheart for development of the site for a paltry sum or, possibly at nil cost in the case of the Hall, compared with the cost to the Council of their purchase. In the meantime there has twice been an extension of the lease of the hall to the URC church, demonstrating its ongoing utility and value to the community, though without any reasoned reply to alternative bids such as that of 17 March 2023 submitted by Community Initiative (BS) and Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation setting out several ownership and operating scenarios to preserve this asset.</p> <p>Given that the Water Lane Hall was designated by EHC an Asset of Community Value, what process is EHDC now following to allow the community the option to retain the building for community use, noting its (EHCs) own policies including CFLR8, before it takes an irrevocable decision to hand it over to Cityheart, potentially for demolition?</p> | |
| Response by Cllr Ben Crystall | |
| I want to thank Mr Woodward for his question, and for reminding us about Water Lane Hall’s ongoing value for the community. | |

As we know, the United Reform Church leases the building and is responsible for the hiring of the hall and management of bookings. We hope that groups that currently use the hall will be able to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

East Herts Council's medium term financial plan and budget proposals are due to go to Executive at a meeting on the 21st December. In these papers, to be published imminently, a sum of around £170,000 has been earmarked for maintenance works of Water Lane Hall. As the budget proposals will explain in more detail, we intend to keep the Hall operational for continued community use until timescales for building the arts centre are clear.

Question 2

Jill Goldsmith to ask Cllr Carl Brittain, Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

It is now 4 months since my last question on EHDC's accounts and hence the audited values of assets on the ORL site. As of 5/12/23 the Council website still is not disclosing the accounts from 2020-21 which were completed months ago and the inspection period has not commenced for the 2021-22 unaudited accounts. The 2022-23 accounts have also missed the statutory deadline.

It is my understanding that as yet, no contract exists with Cityheart, but that the terms of the potential contract (Development Management Agreement) could go back to values set when Cityheart was selected as preferred development partner. That is nearly 5 years ago now, so the values then may or may not reflect best value now. The answer to me in July 2023 was that *"The Council would not enter in an agreement with a developer whereby we are not getting best value"*. The FAQs on the Council's website say that *"An*

updated Section 123 report, with independent valuations, will be produced and agreed before the development agreement is signed”.

This is such an important scheme for the town and for the Council's finances that residents need to be able to see how the Council is justifying the transfer of our assets before the Development Agreement is signed.

Has the Council now obtained independent valuations for the ORL site; and will it make this information and related 123 explanations transparent, before the Development Management Agreement is signed?

Response by Cllr Carl Brittain

The Council's accounts for 2020/21 received an audit opinion on 16 March 2023. There has been a widespread failure of local public audit since the abolition of the Audit Commission. In England 100% of audits are performed by private sector auditors and there are huge audit backlogs. In Scotland and Wales 70% of audits are conducted by public sector auditors and there are no delays. The council is not in any way to blame for these delays – our appointed auditors are simply unable to find staff to undertake the audits.

The 2021/22 accounts audit has been underway and, despite a promise the audit would be completed in November, it remains incomplete and we have no date for when it is likely to be finished.

For the 2022/23 audit we have been told by our auditors that, depending on the course of action the government takes, they will either do no work on the 2022/23 audit and it will remain

unaudited or they will do enough work to disclaim an opinion. As it stands there is a very real chance our 2022/23 accounts may never be audited. I stress again that this is not the fault of the council. If you were hoping to see Old River Lane showing as a line in the fixed assets disclosures, with a value attached then I have to disappoint you and say that it does not appear as a line on its own.

An updated section 123 report has not yet been produced. In any case, this will not be published before the Development Agreement is signed as it is likely to prejudice our commercial interests and thus be exempt under section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act. The section 151 officer is charged with the proper administration of the council's financial affairs and he will commission the section 123 report as he has to certify that the disposal was for best value under the General Disposal Consents issued by the Secretary of State. Given the risks to the financial sustainability of all local authorities I doubt very much that any officer would allow the sale of an asset for less than best value.

We have experienced some IT issues updating the web pages with the accounts but copies of the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 accounts can be emailed to you.

There was no supplementary question.

Question 3

Charlotte Lipscomb to ask Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth

In the Council meeting held on the 18th October I asked the Executive Member responsible for licensing a question regarding the chaos created by the AMAFest Festival held in Bury Green on 2nd September. In her reply she confirmed that an investigation was launched immediately after the event. The Executive Member also stated, and I quote "Please be assured, however, that East Herts Council is ready to take action against any event organiser that commits offences under the Licensing Act 2003 which may include not complying with the terms of a licence. Regarding AMA Fest, we have gathered information and data from various sources, all of which has now been reviewed".

It is now well over three months since the event and two months since she made that statement, and residents like me are still expecting answers. Can the Executive Member please confirm when the results of the investigation, and the action that may be taken against the event organisers, will be made public?

Response by Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward

The council's investigation into possible breaches of the premises licence for AMAFest has nearly reached a conclusion. Officers have kept me up to date on progress and this week officers have fed back preliminary results to the Chair of the Licencing Committee and myself

We expect to conclude the matter by Friday 22nd December 2023 at which point the licence holder will be informed of the outcome. I anticipate writing to Little Hadham Parish Council to provide an overview of the outcome but we are unable to share all detail due to confidentiality. We have also offered to attend a Parish Council with our Licencing Service Manager to discuss the outcome. We would anticipate that once we have confirmed the outcome we will be able to share a broad brush confirmation of our actions but I

would like to notify the parish council, as elected representatives first.

Question 4

Karen Burton to ask Cllr Tim Hoskin, the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

On October 18th, this council rejected a request from the Bishop's Stortford BID to allocate 100 spaces for town centre workers at a discounted rate in Northgate End car park to help with recruitment and retention issues and activate an unpopular car park with an average occupancy of 20%. During the meeting, Cllr Crystal expressed concerns about setting a "dangerous precedent" and emphasized that Bishop's Stortford should not receive special treatment. He stated, " it is far better to take a slower, more rational approach and make it the best it can be" and that car parking across East Herts needs to be dealt with as a whole".

Surprisingly, just eight weeks later, a new proposal is being presented to the council, targeting three Bishop's Stortford car parks for increased charges in long-stay tariffs and one car park is proposed to undergo a smaller percentage decrease in the 4, 5, and long-stay tariffs, with no other car parks across East Herts having the same treatment.

As a listening council where and how have you found the evidence in such a short space of time to support such a significant shift that could profoundly affect Bishop's Stortford town centre businesses' ability to recruit and retain staff, as well as impact residents and visitors. How can this be the slower, more rational approach be achieved in such a short time and is the council prepared to stop and think again and if not, why not?

Response by Cllr Tim Hoskin

My thanks to Karen Burton for her question. At the heart of the question is "How has the proposed car parking changes have been

arrived at?”. There were many voices and opinions that fed into the mix.

The Non-Key Decision published in July was based on the original proposal drafted between the previous administration and the Bishops Stortford BID generated several opposing thoughts - and that is exactly how a Non-Key Decision is meant to work. It is circulated for comments and those comments are then considered and a decision taken as to whether to proceed as published or reconsider in the light of those comments. I chose the latter.

- One of the points raised was why the town centre workers were being singled out for such a benefit? Other comments drew attention to the problems with traffic congestion and in particular cars circling around Apton Road and Basbow Lane car parks in hunting for spaces.
- The BID, including Karen as its chair, provided a huge amount of information and commentary about how the car parks work and how their usage could be positively affected by changes to the pricing of Northgate End in particular.
- The team of officers at East Herts have been living and breathing car parks and all their features for years and out of all of us probably best understand the interlinkages between the various car parks and the public’s car parking behaviour.
- Also, there was input brought from other members of the Leadership Team who had experienced how other councils had used pricing to affect changes within car parking behaviours.

These differing voices and opinions didn’t necessarily align around one design, but the intention is that an amalgamation of several of these themes has been considered in the paper to be presented later this evening.

The differential pricing proposed in Bishop's Stortford car parks, should this be approved tonight, will be closely monitored to assess its effectiveness in encouraging modal shift and in making more effective use of the underused Northgate End multi storey car park.

This process has been ongoing since mid-August since the Non Key Decision was withdrawn so a considerably longer period than that outlined within the question.

Question 5

Philip Wylie to ask Cllr Sarah Hopewell, the Executive Member for Wellbeing

When and what were the serious Health & Safety issues raised by Everyone Active, which led to the decision to close the pool. Has a full and independent evaluation been undertaken of ways to address these serious Health & Safety issues?

Response by Cllr Sarah Hopewell

Thank you for your question.

There have been concerns about Ward Freman pool for quite some time now, and an independent survey was commissioned earlier in the year which identified a range of urgent issues. These included:

- Damaged pipework in the filtration system, which has resulted in a low flow rate and poor circulation.
- Severe cracks in scum channels
- Pool plant is non-compliant and requires replacement.

The report was shared to officers in May 23 and following discussions, increased testing of the water and visual inspections were introduced.

In September 2023 an email from Everyone Active's Director highlighted further concerns. As a leisure provider, there are strict operating criteria, and no company would wish to risk either health or prosecution. Due to heightened concerns, Everyone Active

requested assurance from the East Herts Council that the necessary improvements would be carried out within 3 months at the latest. Due to the on-going financial pressures and an inability to reach agreement with the freeholders, Hertfordshire County Council officers were unable to give any assurance. As a result of continuing dialogue with the contractor weighing up the potential health and safety risks, the decision was taken to close the pool so further investigations can be undertaken safely and without any risk to the public. Officers have agreed to further explore all options and report back to Executive members by end of March 2024.

Supplementary question from Philip Wylie

Mr Wylie asked if the report on the swimming pool could be made public.

Response from Cllr Hopewell

Councillor Hopewell said that in its current format, some information was commercially sensitive that would need to be redacted before publishing. She hoped that the report could be published soon.

Question 6

Ian Ballantyne to ask Cllr Carl Brittain, the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

£1,100,000 (£1.1m) was list as being Approved by the Council for spending on Ward Freeman Joint Use Facilities, in the 2022/23 budget, out of a total capital expenditure budget of £25,561,000 (£25.56m) – see <https://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/documents/s57368/Budget%202022-23%20and%20Medium%20Term%20Financial%20Plan%20-%20Appendix%20C.pdf?j=22>.

How, when, why and who decided to remove this from the budget or not include it for 2023/24?

Response by Cllr Carl Brittain

Due to budgetary pressures, the decision to remove the £1.1m spend on Ward Freman, previously in the approved budget 2023/24, was taken by Council in March 2023.

Question 7

Christopher Davalle to ask Cllr Sarah Hopewell, the Executive Member for Wellbeing

Over each of the last 10 years, what have the net annual running been for the Ward Freman Pool and how much of this is routine maintenance? Has any analysis been done on the impact of low expenditure on maintenance – the pool cover and air circulation systems are not working and boiler system is very old and inefficient.

Response by Cllr Sarah Hopewell

Thank you for your question. From the information I currently have available, Ward Freman pool costs approximately £24,000 per month to run, including staff costs, energy costs and maintenance. As I understand it, £10,000 of this is funded via the Department for Education, and approximately £3,000 is from income. The remaining £10,000 per month is subsidised by East Herts council.

I appreciate that your question is somewhat detailed, and having just received it on Friday afternoon, I have not been able to gather an analyse the breakdown of costs from the past ten years. I am aware however, that several pieces of equipment are old, including the boiler. As a joint-use County-council owned facility, investing in the pool required both Hertfordshire County Council and East Herts Council to be in agreement, and unfortunately this has not happened. In terms of the figures you've requested, I will do my

best to get this information to you as soon as I am able to, and I can ask for it to be made available to supplement this answer.

Question 8

Kirti Wylie to ask Cllr Sarah Hopewell, the Executive Member for Wellbeing

Are the Council Authorities prepared to continue funding the running costs of Ward Freman Pool if a solution to the "urgent" Health & Safety issues could be found?

Response by Cllr Sarah Hopewell

Thank you for your question. At present, Ward Freman pool is costing East Herts Council £10,000 per month to subsidise, and £10,000 is funded via the Department for Education funding. The Department for Education funding has always been at risk, and should it stop, which is reasonably likely as government funding more broadly reduces, it would represent a potential £20,000 monthly cost for East Herts Council to cover, should everything else remain the same. It would be very difficult to justify this expense when we are required to save £6m over four years, and we are already having to make challenging decisions as to where to find this saving from. Unfortunately, there are no easy decisions, and with the low-hanging fruit already taken, all options available represent a loss or reduction of services or staff somewhere in the district. With that said, while the pool is making this loss at present, steps could certainly be taken to reduce this loss. For example, installing improved energy efficiencies, upgrading the equipment, upgrading the shower and changing facilities to provide a more attractive offer to customers, and adding opportunities to increase revenue, such as, for example, a small gym area. It is also the case that the timetable could be redesigned and different activities brought in to again help generate revenue. So in that sense, it

definitely isn't inevitable that it will remain loss-making, and there are many examples where failing pools have been brought into the community and are faring far better as a result.

Unfortunately, the key issue we face is that on our own, East Herts Council simply doesn't have the funding to pay for the upgrades that would be needed to reduce the monthly costs. The repairs to the filtration system are one aspect, but we are also very aware that the boiler needs replacing, and several other issues need addressing to properly bring the pool to a good standard that attracts customers and boosts revenue. Collectively these costs are much higher than the filtration system alone. The main routes available to source this money are through grants such as the Community Ownership Fund, or other charity pots, and local authorities are not eligible to apply for these. As such, the pool would need to become a charity or community run facility in order to be eligible for these pots. We are keen to provide as much support as possible though, and the community in Buntingford have made it absolutely clear just how important this asset is, and what its loss would represent. I am currently working with Cllr Britain and other councillors and officers to find out what we could achieve by way of financial assistance and support both to help bring the pool back into usage and to assist such a project going forward once repairs and upgrades have taken place.

Agenda Item 8

COUNCIL – 13 DECEMBER 2023

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

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| Question 1 | Cllr Ian Devonshire to ask Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth |
| <p>Please could you let us know why there have been so few Development Management Committees since the election in May of this year. Up to the end of November 2023, there has only been two DMC meetings in seven months.</p> <p>It was reported last year that this Authority was the ninth busiest planning authority in the country. Therefore, it is worrying that we are having so few DMC meetings.</p> <p>The Development Management Committee is, obviously, very important to demonstrate transparency in the planning process, so please could the Executive Member explain why applications are not coming to DMC.</p> | |
| Response by Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward | |
| <p>Thank you for your question Cllr Devonshire. As you have mentioned the Council has a very busy planning department and we receive around 2,500 planning applications a year. The majority of these applications are minor, householder related applications and are determined under delegated authority by officers. We receive around 50 major planning applications a year although this can vary. Not all of these applications are considered by DMC but we do currently have a number of important planning applications in the system such as Birchall Garden Suburb, Ware 2, Hert 3 and Hert 4 which will be considered by DMC at the appropriate time.</p> | |

Major planning applications are generally more complex, with us receiving a huge number of comments on them alongside needing to resolve several technical planning matters. This all takes time and, in most cases, they can't be determined within the statutory timeframes. To manage this, we have Planning Performance Agreements (known as PPAs) in place with the applicants to guide them through the process and more realistic timeframes.

Officers will only present applications to DMC for consideration when they consider that the planning issues have been resolved and can recommend a robust planning decision.

This means that on some occasions, applications won't quite be ready to be considered by DMC and meetings will have to be cancelled. Having looked back at DMC agendas since May 2019, I can see that this approach is not uncommon, with between 4 – 6 meetings per year having been cancelled during this period

Whilst there have been some DMC meetings have had to be cancelled this year because there is no business for the reasons I have outlined, there are a number of applications that will need to be considered by DMC in 2024.

The officer team have an indicative 3 monthly forward plan that they work towards but as I have highlighted previously this can change for reasons outside of our control and it is important to ensure that we encourage quality applications to be presented and considered by DMC.

Supplementary question by Cllr Ian Devonshire

Councillor Devonshire said that in the same time period, North Herts Council had eight Development Management Committees compared to two at East Herts Council. He asked if it was possible

that applicants would be going to the inspector and approved due to non-determination.

Response by Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward

Councillor Glover-Ward responded and said that in 2022/23, there were six DMC meetings and in 2020/21, there were five meetings. She said the first DMC meeting was ten days after the election which was understandably cancelled and other meetings have not gone ahead because applications had not been ready.

Question 2

Cllr Eric Buckmaster to ask Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Following the disappointing news that this Council is closing Ward Freman Swimming Pool, concerns have been raised yet again by a number of residents about the current condition and future status of the two other joint-use pools in the District, including Leventhorpe Leisure Centre in Sawbridgeworth, which is in desperate need of refurbishment.

In August, an unnamed spokesperson for this Council was quoted in the Bishop's Stortford Independent stating that 50% of the allocated £122,760 of Section 106 money from the SAWB2 and SAWB3 housing developments - which was ring-fenced in the S106 agreement for 'Grange Paddocks and/or Leventhorpe Leisure Centre' - remains unassigned.

As Grange Paddocks is now complete, open and operational, could the Executive Member for Planning and Growth confirm that this unassigned £60,000 will be spent on refurbishing Leventhorpe Leisure Centre, which will help to attract additional users and

therefore ensure its continued operation for the benefit of all residents in Sawbridgeworth?

Response by Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward

Councillors will be aware that papers are to be published imminently on proposals for the budget and medium term financial plan ahead of Executive next week. Proposals for the joint use pools, including use of Section 106 contributions, will be considered as part of this process

Members will be aware that the Section 106 funding can only be allocated in accordance with the identified contribution wording and the Council has ten years in which to allocate and use the received funds. Therefore the identified Indoor Sport & Recreation contributions from the SAWB2 development, which is for either Grange Paddocks and/or Leventhorpe, are required to be allocated and used by 2034, so we have time to ensure the best use of this funding for the benefit of the Council, the residents and the pool users.

Supplementary question by Cllr Eric Buckmaster

Councillor Buckmaster said that the residents on Sawbridgeworth wanted something done and said the service was viable with the gym and pool and use was higher than pre-pandemic, he asked if the administration would confirm their support to encourage use of the pool and gym to maintain the health and wellbeing of residents.

Response by Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward

Councillor Glover-Ward said that she understood the question but felt it should be directed to the Executive Member for Wellbeing. She said she could not comment on the leisure strategy but would seek a written answer from Councillor Hopewell on that point.

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| Question 3 | Cllr Joseph Dumont to ask Cllr Sarah Hopewell, the Executive Member for Wellbeing |
| <p>Local Councils, including this one, have responsibility for licensing dog breeders and ensuring puppies are bred in safe and healthy conditions.</p> <p>Illegal puppy farms – in which large numbers of litters are bred in poor conditions without proper monitoring – continue to be used throughout the UK. It is estimated that 400,000 farmed puppies are purchased each year.</p> <p>Does the Executive Member have any intelligence on the scale of this issue in East Herts and what steps is the Council taking to make sure the public is aware of the importance of acquiring puppies from licensed breeders?</p> | |
| Response by Cllr Sarah Hopewell | |
| <p>I would like to thank Cllr Dumont for his question as I understand and agree that animal welfare is something that many of our residents are very concerned about.</p> <p>Promoting the welfare of animals, including ensuring dog breeders are licensed, is the responsibility of the council’s Environmental Health team. Over the last four years, the team have been contacted twice by members of public concerned that a puppy farm was operating in their area. On both occasions, the allegation was investigated by an Environmental Health Officer.</p> <p>In the first instance, there was no breeding found to be taking place. The officer provided general animal welfare advice and no further complaints were received.</p> <p>The second case was of more concern and so the Environmental Health team brought in the RSPCA and Hertfordshire County</p> | |

Council's Trading Standards team to work with them. During the investigation, the owner of the establishment unfortunately died. This resulted in the all the dogs being rehomed by the RSPCA and dog breeding ceasing. Officers are keeping in contact with the establishment with the aim of ensuring no illegal activity takes place in the future.

The animal welfare page on the council's website includes detailed advice and information about dog breeding both for those considering breeding dogs and prospective purchasers of puppies. The webpage includes a link to the government's extensive information about the topic as well a form for contacting the Environmental Health team with any concerns about illegal or unsafe activity.

I believe that although the problem is thankfully small in East Herts, the council is doing its best to inform breeders and the public alike about safe puppy breeding. I would urge members hearing of any possible illegal activity contact to our Environmental Health team as a matter of urgency.

Question 4

Cllr John Wyllie to ask Cllr Tim Hoskin, the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

Some Bishop's Stortford high street businesses struggle with staff recruitment and retention due to the proximity of Stansted Airport, where many employees get free parking. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability published a scheme in July, which would allow some Bishop's Stortford Town Centre workers to benefit from reduced parking charges. This scheme was supported by the Bishop's Stortford BID, the Executive Member then promptly withdrew his own scheme.

At the Full Council meeting on the 18th October the Leader of the Council said that the scheme was withdrawn so that an alternative scheme could be introduced.

Can the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability tell me what the proposed new scheme is and when it will be launched?

Response by Cllr Tim Hoskin

Councillor Hoskin said the parking scheme in Bishop's Stortford was on the agenda for tonight's meeting and Council would be able to debate it later.

Supplementary question by Cllr John Wyllie

Councillor Wyllie said he thanked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability for his initial proposal and asked if the Executive Member regretted that the decision was paused.

Response by Cllr Tim Hoskin

Councillor Hoskin said that he felt he had come up with a fairer proposal and hoped Councillor Wyllie would be able to contribute to the debate later in the meeting.

Question 5

Cllr Nahum Clements to ask Cllr Sarah Hopewell, the Executive Member for Wellbeing

With the first phase of the Hertford Theatre opening next Spring, could the Executive Member for Wellbeing please provide an update on what the total expected cost of the Theatre is, and are any specific alterations being undertaken or any aspects that remain to be funded as a result of cost increases?

Response by Cllr Sarah Hopewell

Thank you for your question. Regarding the expected cost of the theatre, the papers detailing these in full will be published next week.

In terms of alterations to lower the price, a number of have been considered. For the most part, we explored the savings impact of either not completing one of the cinemas, or not completing the studio. The business case indicated that the cinema screens represented most potential to provide return on investment. With Hertford Theatre always intended as an invest-to-save project, to risk the loss of income through not having a cinema screen, and especially if this risked the theatre's ability to show 'first release' films, would have undermined any savings potential from not completing these areas.

There was a period of time when not completing the studio was considered the best approach to reduce the costs of the theatre. We also explored the option of a partial fit, so that the space could still be used for something, even if not its intended purpose. However, we wanted to make sure that we had considered all angles. Part of the business plan, and the theatre being able to pay for itself, involved not just the spaces being used as is, but also sales of food and drink. Not having the studio would mean losing both on ticket sales and sales of refreshments. Deeper analysis indicated that, by investing in the studio in its entirety, assuming the business plan is roughly correct, the theatre should start providing a return on investment between years 3 and 5. Failure to invest, while initially saving money, would over time reduce profit margins to the point that the pay-back period would increase, and possibly the project would ultimately end up costing more in the longer run due to delays on interest repayments.

Having made these considerations, it became clear that whilst a larger initial outlay, the theatre stands the best chance of recouping the investment by fitting out the cinemas and the

studio. The full paper will be brought to full council for consideration in due course.

Question 6

Cllr Carolyn Redfern to ask Cllr Sarah Hopewell, the Executive Member for Wellbeing

How many extra car journeys into the centre of Hertford are expected as a result of the theatre opening and what plans are in place to:-

- a. promote the use of public transport, and active travel
- b. ensure adequate parking is in place to support the remaining car journeys

Response by Cllr Sarah Hopewell

Thank you for your question Cllr Redfern. I know that we both feel strongly about promoting public transport and active travel, and there are many benefits to doing so, including reducing congestion, improving air quality, reducing road noise, and reducing negative impact on the environment.

As part of the work of developing Hertford Theatre, a travel management plan was commissioned, which included analysis of travel patterns, existing patterns to the theatre (prior to closure), available parking and public transport routes, and existing cycle and walking options. Many suggestions were put forward, including improving information on the website about bus and active travel routes, and having up-to-date details about the train timetables clearly available to customers. Along with the website, it was advised that this also be provided with the booking confirmation email to reinforce public transport options. Another option currently under consideration is to have a discounted system where customers can claim back a percentage of their

ticket price if they can provide evidence of having travelled either by public transport or active travel.

In terms of remaining parking, an analysis of all applicable car parks was undertaken. Customers will be informed of the most appropriate car parks, and the walking distances from these sites. It is proposed that a parking survey take place a year post-opening once use patterns have been established, and if it transpires that more spaces are needed, greater use of Wallfields parking can be considered.

While this question doesn't address specific numbers, hopefully it gives a flavour of the options, and I have provided you with the full report which has far more detail and recommendations. I will try and obtain specific numbers around anticipated car use, and will share this update as well.

Question 7

Cllr David Jacobs to ask Cllr Carl Brittain, the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Can the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability confirm how much funding this council has received from the following central Government development funds (the figure in brackets being the total value of the funds across England and Wales)?

Future High Streets Fund (£1bn)

Towns Fund (£3.6bn)

Levelling Up Fund (£3.8bn)

Levelling Up Partnership (£400m)

Long Terms Plan Towns Fund (£1.1bn)

Response by Cllr Carl Brittain

The amount East Herts received from each of the funding sources is:

Future High Streets Fund £NIL

Applications for this fund had to be made by April 2019 and East Herts could only make one application. An application for Old River Lane in Bishop's Stortford was made but was unsuccessful.

Towns Fund £NIL

The government chose the towns that qualified for the Towns Fund, based on deprivation indices and no town in East Herts qualified. There was no application process.

Levelling Up Fund £NIL

Funding goes to those with Priority 1 or Priority 2 status. East Herts is Priority 3 and would be unlikely to have any bid approved therefore no bids have been submitted in the first 2 rounds.

Levelling Up Partnership £NIL

The Government chose the 20 places that qualified for funding using deprivation indices and no town in East Herts qualified. There was no application process.

Long Terms Plan Towns Fund £NIL

The government chose the towns that qualified for the Long Terms Plan Towns Fund, based on deprivation indices and no town in East Herts qualified. There was no application process.

In terms of other Levelling Up funding, we have received a proportion of the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** to cover the years 2022/23 - 2024/25.

This is **£1,773,136** in total.

This is distributed via a formula that ensures that all areas receive some funding.

This has been topped up with an additional amount from the **Rural Prosperity Fund** covering 2023/24 and 2024/25.

This is **£472,841** in total.

Again, this is distributed via a formula.