

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 31 JULY 2012, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A Jackson (Leader)
Councillors M Alexander, M Carver,
L Haysey, P Phillips and M Tindale.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, W Ashley,
Mrs R Cheswright, G Jones, M McMullen,
P Moore, M Newman, M Pope, N Poulton,
J Ranger, P Ruffles, G Williamson, M Wood
and C Woodward.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services
Claire Sime	- Planning Policy Team Leader
Bryan Thomsett	- Planning Policy Manager

215 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the press and public to the meeting.

216 **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS) VERSION 4
(AUGUST 2012)**

The Executive considered and supported the recommendations of the District Planning Executive Panel made at its meeting held on 26 July 2012 in respect of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) Version 4.

RECOMMENDED - that the Local Development Scheme (LDS) Version 4 – August 2012, attached at Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ of the report submitted, be supported to take effect from 8 August 2012.

(see also Minute 223 below)

217 **SUB-DISTRICT POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD
FORECASTS – PARISH GROUPINGS AND TOWNS:
PHASE 1 (MAY 2012)**

The Executive considered the recommendations of the District Planning Executive Panel made at its meeting held on 26 July 2012 in respect of the Sub-District ‘Population and Household Forecasts - Parish Groupings and Towns: Phase 1’ (May 2012) technical study.

Councillor G Jones referred to his comments made at the Panel meeting, which he believed had not been sufficiently reflected in the Minutes. He reiterated his concern at the methodology used to extrapolate demographic projections based on historic trends which he believed could be self-fulfilling, in that some forecasts were “supply-led”. He questioned whether the methodology used could expose the Authority to challenge.

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport responded by emphasising the robustness of the process. This document represented only one part of the wider evidence base and that other issues, such as employment, sustainability, etc, were factors also. He

stated that the methodology used was well recognised within the planning profession and that this would be recognised in the Examination in Public.

The Executive supported the technical study as now submitted.

RECOMMENDED - that the Sub-District 'Population and Household Forecasts - Parish Groupings and Towns: Phase 1' (May 2012) technical study as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted, be supported as part of the evidence base for the preparation of the East Herts District Plan.

(see also Minute 223 below)

218 **STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT –
STAGE 2 – UPDATE REPORT**

The Executive considered the recommendations of the District Planning Executive Panel made at its meeting held on 26 July 2012 in respect of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) Stage 2 Update.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs R Cheswright, the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport reiterated the importance of providing an audit trail and that all sites, however unsuitable they might be, are included in the evidence base.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the feedback received from stakeholders as part of Round 2: Stakeholder Engagement of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) be considered and amendments made as appropriate, before a final SLAA Round 2 report is published; and

(B) the use of the District-wide interim SLAA Round 2 capacity of 2,173 dwellings to inform ongoing work in developing the District Plan: Part 1 - Preferred Strategy, be supported.

(see also Minute 223 below)

219 **DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 – STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT – UPDATE REPORT**

The Executive considered and supported the recommendations of the District Planning Executive Panel made at its meeting held on 26 July 2012 in respect of the Strategy Supporting Document Update.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ of the report submitted, containing the latest version of the 1-page summary of the Stepped Approach to strategy selection for the District Plan, be supported; and

(B) the approach to the Audit Trail, be supported, subject to a period for Member comment on the proposed Appendix B: Documents and Feedback, until 31 August 2012.

(see also Minute 223 below)

220 **DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 – STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT – MATERIAL CHANGES TO DRAFT TOPIC ASSESSMENTS**

The Executive considered the recommendations of the District Planning Executive Panel made at its meeting held on 26 July 2012 in respect of the Material Changes to Draft Topic Assessments.

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport urged all Members to use the consultation period until the end of August 2012, to check and challenge any of the traffic light assessments for their

areas.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the Material Changes to the Draft Topic Assessments attached at Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ of the report submitted, be supported as replacements to those reported to the Local Development Framework Executive Panel on 29 March 2012, subject to a period for Member comment until 31 August 2012; and

(B) their use be supported as an element of the emerging Supporting Document to the draft District Plan: Part 1 – Strategy.

(se also Minute 223 below)

221

DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 – STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT – CHAPTER 4: PLACES AND NEXT STEPS

The Executive considered the recommendations of the District Planning Executive Panel made at its meeting held on 26 July 2012 in respect of Chapter 4: Places and Next Steps.

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport commented that the draft document represented the outcome of Officers balancing planning assessments and challenging each other’s professional judgement. The draft Chapter 4 was still a work in progress and would be subject to further sieving in the process.

Councillor C Woodward welcomed the opportunity to assist Officers with this work in progress and referred to the latest position in respect of Cannons Mill Crossing. He also expressed concern about specific planning applications in Bishop’s Stortford that might be submitted before the District Plan was adopted and asked

how these would be dealt with.

In reply, the Executive Member commented that any planning applications would be dealt with in accordance with existing Local Plan policies. He could not comment on the Cannons Mill Crossing position as this was a development control matter.

Councillor M Newman referred to the description of the sieving process in the draft Chapter and asked the Executive Member if he was happy with this.

In reply, the Executive Member commented that he was as he would not risk promoting a Plan that was not robust and did not provide a suitable evidence base. He believed that the methodology used in each assessment stage was more robust than that used by other local authorities. He reminded Members that further assessments would still be undertaken in the next stage of the process. In the meantime, Members were invited to comment on questions of fact by the end of August 2012.

In response to a question from Councillor M Wood relating to Uttlesford District Council's planning proposals, the Executive Member referred to East Herts Council's response as detailed in his proposed non-key decision that was due to be taken on 3 August 2012. He also advised that under the National Planning Policy Framework, the Council was obliged to co-operate, though not necessarily agree, with all neighbouring Authorities.

The Executive supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED - that (A) the Draft of Chapter 4: Places contained in Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report submitted, and consisting of Sieve 1 and Sieve 2 in the strategy selection process, be supported;

(B) the scenarios presented in the report and explained in more detail in Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted, be supported for further assessment in Chapters 5 and 6; and

(C) Essential Reference Papers 'B' and 'C' of the report submitted, be supported, subject to a period of Member comment in respect of factual content, until 31 August 2012.

(see also Minute 223 below)

222 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 10 July 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

223 DISTRICT PLANNING PANEL: MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the District Planning Executive Panel meeting held on 26 July 2012, be received.

(see also Minutes 216 - 221 above)

224 URGENT BUSINESS

The Leader advised that he had agreed to accept onto the agenda an item of urgent business relating to the Council Tax Support Scheme, in order that early consultation could be facilitated (see Minute 225 below).

225 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report seeing approval to consult on a draft Council Tax Support Scheme.

The Executive noted that the current nationally prescribed scheme of council tax benefits would be replaced by locally determined schemes of council tax support on 1 April 2013.

The Council was required to determine its local scheme by 31 January 2013 following consultation. The Government would provide grant funding at 90% of the projected cost of support as if the existing benefits scheme had continued. Therefore, a 10% saving would need to be achieved in the cost of support or otherwise the Council would have to meet the difference. Any new scheme could not reduce support for pensioners and must have regard to other vulnerable groups.

The Executive Member set out a draft scheme based on a set of guiding principles, as detailed in the report submitted. He proposed that savings on the cost of support for working age claimants should be achieved by making the first 10% of council tax liability payable by all other than protected pensioners.

Various Members commented on the likely impact on some of the more vulnerable groups of people, the possibility of lobbying the Government and the discussions held with neighbouring Authorities.

The Executive Member accepted that some people would have difficulties, but that a balanced approach was needed. He did not believe the Government would change its mind and reminded Members that this was a one year scheme as the new Universal Credit system would start in 2014. Finally, he advised that although Authorities in Hertfordshire had not been able to agree a completely unified approach, this proposal was broadly in line with others.

The Executive approved the scheme, as now submitted, for the purposes of consultation.

RESOLVED - that the Council puts out for consultation a draft council tax support scheme as detailed in the report submitted.

The meeting closed at 7.59 pm

Chairman
Date