

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 3 MARCH 2020, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Kaye (Chairman).
Councillors A Alder, D Andrews, T Beckett,
S Bell, R Bolton, P Boylan, M Brady,
E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, S Bull,
L Corpe, K Crofton, B Crystall, G Cutting,
B Deering, I Devonshire, H Drake,
J Dumont, R Fernando, J Frecknall,
M Goldspink, J Goodeve, A Hall,
D Hollebbon, J Jones, I Kemp, G McAndrew,
M McMullen, S Newton, T Page, M Pope,
C Redfern, S Reed, P Ruffles, S Rutland-
Barsby, D Snowdon, T Stowe, N Symonds,
A Ward-Booth, G Williamson, C Wilson and
J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Cassidy	- Chief Executive
Rebecca Dobson	- Democratic Services Manager
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Bob Palmer	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief

Simon O'Hear

Executive
- Head of Human
Resources and
Organisational
Development

365 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed all those who were present, and reminded all that the meeting was being webcast.

He outlined the civic events he had recently attended, which had included a conference hosted by the Inter Faith Network at Welwyn Garden City earlier that day. The event had included presentations from a number of speakers, including the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire, who had spoken of "unity, not uniformity".

366 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Burmicz, Curtis, Haysey, Huggins and Ranger.

367 MINUTES - 18 DECEMBER 2019 AND 29 JANUARY 2020

The Chairman proposed a motion to amend the Minutes of 18 December 2019, to delete the sixth paragraph of Minute 271, page 374. The text indicated he had spoken in support of the proposals, but he did not recall making the comment.

Councillor Williamson proposed an amendment to the

Minutes of 29 January 2020, as one of the items in the fees and charges approved at that meeting was incorrect. The Minutes before Members this evening included the appendix setting out the fees and charges. At page 78 of the agenda pack, in the Commercial Waste section, the fourth line was the fee for a 660 litre bin. This had been shown as reducing from the current charge of £862 to a new charge of £664. The figure should be £884. He asked that Members agree to a correction of this charge.

Councillors Boylan and Devonshire proposed amendments to the attendance of the Minutes of 29 January 2020, as they were shown as having been present but had given apologies.

Councillor Beckett seconded the proposals to amend the Minutes.

The motion to approve the Minutes being put to the meeting, and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that subject to the above amendments, the Minutes of the meetings held on 18 December 2019 and 29 January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

368 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

369 PETITIONS

The Chairman invited the lead petitioner of a petition relating to the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Parking Task and Finish Group) to present the petition.

Sharon Griffin, on behalf of the 43 signatories to the petition, addressed Members. She said the petition asked that the findings of the Parking Task and Finish Group be implemented with regard to the Resident Parking Scheme (RPZ). Residents of the affected areas, that is, Woodlands and The Copse in Bishop's Stortford, suffered a significant problem with parking by users of Stansted Airport. Most houses in those streets had a drive and therefore the Residents' Parking Zone policy did not currently provide residents with a remedy. At any given time there were 10 to 15 non-residents' cars parked in their roads. Residents did not want yellow lines. She implored Members to help address this problem.

Councillor McAndrew thanked Mrs Griffin and the 43 residents of Woodlands and The Copse, Bishop's Stortford for their petition.

He said the Parking Task and Finish Group had considered the operational issues for residents, businesses and visitors of the district's towns in terms of parking. The findings of the Task and Finish Group had been considered by the Executive on 11 February 2020.

There were a number of improvements to consider in the context of budgets, officer resources and the corporate plan including the aim to move towards a more sustainable district.

Delivery of the recommendations of the Task and Finish group in relation to RPZs would require funding and officer resources. The Executive had asked the Head of Operations, acting in discussion with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Chairman of the parking task and finish group and himself as the portfolio holder for environmental sustainability, to assess the full viability of the recommendations to inform a future decision. The outcome of this assessment would be brought to the next meeting of the Executive on 21 April 2020.

Mrs Griffin thanked Councillor McAndrew and presented the petition to him.

370 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

In the absence of a representative of the Bishop's Stortford Climate Group, which had submitted a question, the Chairman read out the question on the Group's behalf. The question was directed to the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability, as follows.

"In the light of:

- a. the transport options identified for Bishop's Stortford in the Aecom report of April 2018;
- b. the Council's vision and priorities to "put sustainability at the heart of everything it does" and "to reduce reliance on cars to get around the district" and "provide good quality housing with a sustainable travel infrastructure";
- c. the Parking Task and Finish Group recommendations considered by the Executive at their meeting on 11 February 2020, which included for Bishop's Stortford

the need for modal shift, and the expectation that shifting long stay parking out of town would increase revenues; and

- d. Shaping Stortford's application for the town to be a Sustainable Travel Town, submitted in February 2020,

What staffing and resources plans, dedicated budgets and delivery timelines has the Council set in place for working up and delivering proposals for infrastructure improvements and communications to start securing modal shift in Bishop's Stortford?"

Councillor McAndrew said the Head of Operations would report to the Executive on 21 April the result of her assessment on future parking policies, principles and procedures in the context of the new corporate plan, budgets and the recommendations from parking task and finish group. This work would include a strategic review of the relevant strategies and parking studies, which included Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), which focused on sustainable travel.

Councillor McAndrew said options the Council was considering included using tariff charges to change behaviour, reviewing the designation of long and short stay car parks and how technology might play a part in reducing congestion in and around towns and car parks.

The district council had an influencing role in terms of infrastructure, so was exploring a new supplementary planning document on environmental sustainability. A thematic action group for sustainability had been established as part of the Council's new corporate plan, which will address communications aspects.

371 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chairman explained that the time allowed for consideration of Members' Questions was 15 minutes. If any questions could not be responded to due to lack of time, the written responses would be published as soon as practical after the meeting.

Councillor Crystall put the following question to the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability.

Councillor Crystall said that according to the final report from the Climate Change Task and Finish Group, received by Council on 5 March 2019, it was recommended that existing capital grants for loft and cavity wall insulation be extended to provide greater assistance grants to cover solid wall insulation and secondary glazing in energy efficiency priority areas of the district. He said it was also suggested that this could be achieved from within the existing capital budget, as current loft and cavity wall grants were under-utilised by residents. He asked whether this extension to the grant offer had been provided, and if so, whether Councillor McAndrew could provide specific figures for the total amount allocated to solid wall insulation and to secondary glazing, and indicate how much of this allocation had been actively granted to residents for this purpose.

Councillor McAndrew said the council was keen to maximise domestic energy efficiency across homes in the district. In line with the recommendation of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group, approved by Council, £12,000 of unspent resources had been brought forward

into 2019/20 to 'top up' grants available to East Hertfordshire households through the national Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme. This scheme aimed to assist the most vulnerable and fuel poor households. Such support enabled residents to benefit from an ECO grant without having to self-fund the top up while at the same time 'stretching' the benefits of council resources.

ECO grants aimed to maximise the reduction of carbon produced in heating a domestic dwelling. The council was guided by the recommendations of the ECO surveyors. To date, although the council would be very happy to fund solid wall insulation and/or secondary glazing installation if specified by the surveyor, the interventions identified through the ECO programme had called for loft insulation and new boilers.

Councillor McAndrew said the most recent Queen's Speech included the government's intention to invest £2.5bn over the coming five years providing "Home Upgrade Grants" for fuel poor homes in order to significantly improve domestic energy efficiency. The council would wish to support this new grant regime, especially if it provided opportunities for the installation of solid wall insulation.

Councillor Crystall put his second question to Councillor McAndrew. He said the Council, as a trusted local information source, should continue to promote information on energy reduction to local residents. The Grantham Institute at Imperial College had published a list of 10 straightforward actions that individuals could take to reduce their own carbon emissions. He asked whether the Council would commit to placing this list in a prominent place on its website and publishing it in the Council's

publications such as Link and Network.

Councillor McAndrew said he agreed that the council should be a trusted local source of information on environmental sustainability. He had been encouraged to learn that participants in the Council's inaugural Environmental and Climate Forum held in Ware in January had said they saw the council as an organisation which could be trusted to give clear advice.

Councillor McAndrew said the Grantham Institute was highly regarded in the field of environmental sustainability. The Institute's list included a number of useful and practical steps that could be taken to tackle climate change. Many other bodies had also provided guidance. However, by endorsing one particular list of actions, the council's valued 'honest broker' position could be compromised, as it could be queried why the council was promoting the Grantham Institute's list in preference to other information.

Councillor McAndrew concluded that whilst he fully supported Councillor Crystall's call for the council to provide clear advice, he preferred that the council draw on the actions advocated and not be restricted to them. Such actions would be considered along with others' advice and the ideas emerging from the Environmental and Climate Forum to form detailed guidance.

Councillor Bolton asked the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods what steps the Council was taking to tackle anti-social behaviour within the District.

Councillor Boylan said anti-social behaviour could have a

significant impact on the lives of those it directly affected. The council took a robust, joined up approach to tackling anti-social behaviour in the district. At strategic level, Members and officers actively participated in the East Herts Community Safety Partnership Board alongside colleagues from Police, Fire & Rescue, Housing Associations, the county council, town councils, probation service and other partners. Recently, the Board had considered the impact of fireworks-related anti-social behaviour. The council had also joined a local working group and the Leader had written to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to seek his support in tackling what was a serious emerging form of anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Boylan said operationally, the council's work was co-ordinated on a day-to-day basis by its Community Safety and ASB Manager who, among other duties, chaired the East Herts Anti-Social Behaviour Action Group which considered the most complex individual cases and agreed multi-agency responses. The council's work also included providing advice and guidance on anti-social behaviour on the council's website and funding diversionary activities for young people during school holidays.

The council's joined up approach to tackling anti-social behaviour had been recognised by Hertfordshire Constabulary in 2018 when they were awarded the Mick Fogarty Problem Solving Award for the effective way the council and local police had worked together to remedy a particularly difficult episode of crime and anti-social behaviour in a block of flats in Bishop's Stortford.

The council prided itself on the pivotal role it played

alongside partners in tackling anti-social behaviour while at the same time supporting victims.

Councillor Jones asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability whether he could assure him that the council was committed to supporting Community Transport projects in the district. He said these services relied heavily on the financial support given by the Council, until they become self-sustaining. He asked whether the Executive Member could assure him that there were no plans to reduce this financial commitment.

Councillor McAndrew said the Council understood the value community transport held in enabling the district's communities to live independently and lead fulfilled lives. There were many benefits to be gained from good community transport including reducing social isolation and encouraging more environmentally sustainable transport choices.

Councillor McAndrew said there were no plans to reduce the council's overall level of financial support allocated to community transport as he understood the role of council subsidy in helping schemes get established. The council's Community Transport Strategy 2018-21, approved by Council in December 2018, made clear the intention to provide financial support to assist schemes to develop viable business models to maximise the longevity of the scheme. The strategy also made clear the council's desire to help community transport providers move towards greater levels of self-sufficiency so as to enable it to redirect resources to support the start-up of new community schemes in the district.

Therefore, in 2020/21, the council would be willing to provide existing community transport schemes with the same level of funding as in 2019/20 where this was part of a plan, year-on-year, to reduce East Herts' contribution, as the council's aspiration was to use a greater share of the community transport budget to support the growth of new schemes in areas not currently served.

Councillor Jones asked, as a supplementary question, whether the council would consider re-establishing twice-yearly Community Transport Conferences.

Councillor McAndrew said he had already met the Chief Executive of the Citizens Advice Bureau for Broxbourne, in order to re-establish the conferences.

Councillor Devonshire asked the Executive Member for Planning and Growth how the council was seeking to protect employment land within the district.

Councillor Goodeve said the council was very concerned about the loss of employment space in the last 5-10 years and its main priorities were to ensure it retained the viable employment land it had, and ensured that the 20Ha of new land allocated within the district plan were built.

Councillor Goodeve said officers were negotiating with landowners and developers to ensure all employment allocations were built on new developments and were appropriate in terms of size and mix to complement the local economy. Land at Gilston, Bishop's Stortford and Ware was currently under discussion.

She said the council had 33 existing designated

employment sites in the district. However, she was concerned that a number of them could be under threat from exercise of permitted development rights which allowed owners to convert certain types of office and industrial units to residential use without planning permission. Unfortunately when this right was exercised, often the homes provided were not of the quality the council would like to see, resulting in a poor quality public realm. Whilst this option had been a key part of the government's approach to accelerating housing delivery by making residential use of unused premises, in Hertfordshire it had led to the forced displacement of viable businesses in the district alongside poor public realm, no section 106 contributions and no affordable housing.

Councillor Goodeve said the council had recently consulted on the introduction of Article 4 Directions, which meant owners would have to apply for the usual planning permission if they wished to convert to residential use. The response to the consultation had been overwhelmingly positive, with only two objections to which the council would be responding shortly. The council had also explained to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government that in East Herts, employment land lost to residential was essentially irreplaceable due to the Green Belt, and that protection of this land was vital to the commercial sustainability of the district's towns. The Direction was due to come into force at the start of next year. Members might have seen the council's video on LinkedIn about this which had had over 1000 views. This was a key, pro-active measure to ensure employment land was protected from uncontrolled development.

Councillor Wilson asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability the following question. He said that on 23 October 2019 the Council had unanimously agreed a motion proposing that the Environmental and Climate Change Forum would investigate working with Hertfordshire County Council to research the possibility of setting up an "On-Demand" Transport service in East Herts. As planned developments were continuing to progress within the district, it was vital that the council set up more viable alternatives to private car use as soon as possible. He asked Councillor McAndrew to update the Council on any progress, and if no progress had been made, to indicate when updates would be given about the possibility of putting an On Demand Transport system in place.

Councillor McAndrew said he agreed that a wider range of alternatives to car use in the district would assist in meeting the challenges of climate change. To that end, transport was a key theme being addressed by the Environmental and Climate Forum and indeed the next planned Forum meeting would focus on transport issues.

Public transport policy, including demand responsive transport solutions, and financial subsidy was overseen by Hertfordshire County Council. The county council gathered views and input from all partners, including East Herts Council, through the Intalink Enhanced Partnership which they facilitated.

Recently, the government had announced its 'Better Deal for Bus Users' programme. This included the allocation of £20 million for a Rural Mobility Fund to trial demand responsive transport solutions. Hertfordshire County Council was co-ordinating bids on behalf of Intalink. The

council was currently assessing the case for submitting an expression of interest, possibly in partnership with others. The deadline for expressions of interest was 30 April. He would keep Members informed of progress.

The Chairman said the allotted time for questions had expired and the remaining question from Councillor Goldspink would be answered in writing following the meeting.

372 COUNCIL TAX 2020/21 - TAX SETTING FORMAL RESOLUTION

Members considered a report on proposals to set Council Tax for 2020/21.

Councillor Williamson said the report included the Council Tax resolution, which referred to the calculations prescribed by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended, and the Localism Act 2011. The Council had no discretion in undertaking these calculations beyond determining any special expenses, and had not made any such determinations. He proposed a motion to support the recommendations, which required a recorded vote.

Councillor E Buckmaster seconded the motion.

A recorded vote was taken, the result being:

FOR

Councillors Alder, Andrews, Beckett, Bell, Bolton, Boylan, Brady, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Bull,

Corpe, Crystall, Crofton, Cutting, Deering, Devonshire, Drake, Dumont, Fernando, Frecknall, Goldspink, Goodeve, Hall, Hollebon, Jones, Kaye, Kemp, McAndrew, McMullen, Newton, Page, Pope, Redfern, Reed, Ruffles, Rutland-Barsby, Snowdon, Stowe, Symonds, Ward-Booth, Williamson, Wilson and Wyllie.

For: 43

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

RESOLVED – (a) that the Council Tax resolution, as now submitted, be approved;

(b) that the local precepts as set out at Appendix 'A' be noted; and

that the Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Police Authority precepts be noted.

373 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020-21

Members considered a report submitted by the Executive Member for Corporate Services recommending the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 for approval.

Councillor Cutting said the pay policy had been updated and approved for submission to the Council, by the Human Resources Committee on 12 February 2020. The Pay Policy set out the remuneration for all officers, including basic salary, pensions and all allowances arising from employment. It was a

requirement for this policy to be published annually, and he therefore proposed a motion to support the recommendation in the report to approve the policy.

Councillor Boylan seconded the motion.

Councillor Redfern expressed concern that the lowest level of pay of £19,370 per annum was £10K below the average wage in 2019. She said most of the lowest paid workers were likely to be women, and in view of International Women's Day this week, she wished to raise awareness of this low level of pay. She was disappointed that the pay policy statement simply stated that the council would not pay less than the amount applicable to the bottom point of the national pay scales.

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

RESOLVED – to approve the pay policy statement 2020/21.

374 HEALTH AND SAFETY CORE POLICY, STATEMENT OF INTENT, AND ORGANISATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Members considered a report on the Health and Safety Core Policy, Statement of Intent and Organisation and Responsibilities, submitted by the Executive Member for Corporate Services.

Councillor Cutting said the statement was a requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. It was an overarching policy, and set out how the Council would comply with this legislation to

protect all its people and stakeholders from risks of occupational injury or ill health. The policy had been reviewed and updated to reflect organisational changes and to the separate quarterly Health and Safety report now being produced for the Human Resources Committee. The policy demonstrated the Council's commitment to Health and Safety. He proposed a motion supporting the recommendation to approve the policy.

Councillor R Buckmaster seconded the motion.

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

RESOLVED – that the Health and Safety Core Policy Statement of Intent and the Health and Safety Core Policy Organisation and Responsibilities section be approved and adopted.

375 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Councillor Dumont proposed a motion on notice relating to European Union settled status for EU citizens living in the East Hertfordshire district following Brexit.

Councillor Dumont referred to the preamble to his motion on notice, as set out in the supplementary agenda papers. He said settled status meant people did not lose their status and entitlements in the UK. He was concerned that some EU citizens might be unaware of the need to apply for settled status or have difficulty in doing so. He referred to the House of

Commons briefing paper regarding Citizens' rights provisions in the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill 2019 – 20 which had been issued on 3 January 2020, and which indicated that about 30% of EU citizens might struggle with the EUSS application process. The motion he had proposed aimed to help those who might struggle. Whilst he acknowledged the commendable work the council had undertaken so far, including information on its website, the deadline for applications was approaching. The council now had the opportunity to ensure that EU citizens knew they remained welcome in the district and to improve information for residents. He proposed the motion on notice as follows:

In relation to Part 3 of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill and the requirement for EU citizens to apply for EU Settled Status this Council:

1. declares that EU citizens are welcome in the District of East Hertfordshire; and
2. will undertake an urgent review of the information it provides on its website and elsewhere to ensure that all EU citizens, including vulnerable groups and those with impairments have easy access to information regarding how to apply for EU Settled Status.

Councillor Bell seconded the motion.

Councillor Andrews said he had been heartened by the concession that the Council had already undertaken good work in making EU citizens feel welcome, but he wished this sentiment had appeared earlier. The council had been

formed in 1972 and had joined the European Union shortly afterwards. EU citizens had always been welcomed in East Hertfordshire.

Councillor Williamson said he was pleased that Councillor Dumont had acknowledged some of the work already carried out to support EU residents in the district in applying for settled status. A campaign had been launched last year to help residents and the council had publicised this information. In line with the recommendations of the Brexit Task and Finish Group, the council had commissioned the Citizens Advice Bureau in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford to offer a face to face service. This was the only district to have done so, and the council had been contacted by other local authorities for advice. He proposed an amendment to the motion, to delete the word "are" in the first line of paragraph 1, and to add the wording "always have been" after the word "citizens" in that line, and then to add "and will continue to do so" at the end of that paragraph; and to add a further paragraph 3 "will ensure that information on applying for settled status continues to be promoted until the deadline for applications is reached".

Councillor Boylan seconded the amendment.

Councillor Goldspink said she supported the amendment, and indeed supported the motion in its entirety. The many European Union nationals in East Hertfordshire had contributed enormously to the district, including within the health system. The council should show them it supported them in being able to stay in the UK.

Councillor Andrews said his experience of the application

process had shown it to be straightforward, although for those without the ability to use a smartphone it could be challenging.

Councillor Dumont said in proposing the motion he had not intended any implication that the council had not been supportive of EU residents remaining in the district. He thanked Councillor Andrews for his comments, and said he supported the amendment Councillor Williamson had proposed.

The amendment was put to the meeting as follows:

“This Council

1. declares that EU citizens have always been welcome in the District of East Herts and will continue to be so.
2. will undertake an urgent review of the information it provides on its website and elsewhere to ensure that all EU citizens, including vulnerable groups and those with impairments have easy access to information regarding how to apply for EU Settled Status.
3. Will ensure that information on applying for settled status continues to be promoted until the deadline for applications is reached.”

A vote being taken, the amendment was declared CARRIED.

The amendment having then become the substantive motion, a vote was then taken on the motion, and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that this Council

1. declares that EU citizens have always been welcome in the District of East Herts and will continue to be so.
2. will undertake an urgent review of the information it provides on its website and elsewhere to ensure that all EU citizens, including vulnerable groups and those with impairments have easy access to information regarding how to apply for EU Settled Status.
3. Will ensure that information on applying for settled status continues to be promoted until the deadline for applications is reached.

The meeting closed at 7.56 pm

Chairman
Date