

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING ON
WEDNESDAY 13 MAY 2020, AT 7.00 PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

Property

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed all those remotely in attendance, and welcomed any members of the public or press who were observing the meeting on the livestreamed broadcast. He explained the recording of the meeting would be available on the Council's website after the meeting.

The Chairman set out the legal basis on which the meeting was being held, as recent legislation which had been introduced in response to the Coronavirus pandemic now permitted meetings to be conducted remotely. This legislation, the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, had come into force on 4 April 2020.

The Chairman gave a summary of his recent civic duties, which he said had been constrained to a great extent by the "lockdown" measures and had therefore brought the civic year to an earlier close than would have been anticipated. He said the events planned for VE Day had not been able to take place, but that his immediate community had nevertheless marked the occasion by exchanging greetings. He had met neighbours, some of whom he had not met before. He hoped that this type of friendly and supportive relationship in the District's communities would continue to be a bonus during the next few weeks and months.

The Chairman then spoke of the sad news of deaths of those known to Members, including former Councillors Roz Standley and Linda Radford. He said Linda Radford had been a great ambassador for her ward of Hertford Castle, and for the District. He referred also to the loss of life arising from Covid-19, and asked that Members and Officers join him in a minute's silence for the 784 people in the County of Hertfordshire who had died.

Members observed a minute's silence, accordingly.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies had been received.

Upon taking a roll call of those Members present was taken, it was confirmed that all were participating both by video and audio.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Burmicz and Ranger declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to item 16 on the agenda, dispensation from attending meetings, in that they were the Members named in the report and were in receipt of the basic allowance.

4 MINUTES OF 3 MARCH 2020

Councillor Andrews proposed a motion to amend the Minutes at Minute 375 to delete the word "are" in the first line of paragraph 1 of the proposed amendment, and to make the same change in the substantive

motion which was approved, so that it read “declares that EU citizens have always been welcome in the District of East Herts and will continue to be so”.

Councillor Redfern seconded the proposal.

Those Members who had not attended the meeting on 3 March indicated that they would abstain from voting on approval of 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 meeting held on 3 March 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted by members of the public.

6 PETITIONS

No petitions had been submitted.

7 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chairman explained that the written responses to all Members' Questions would be published as soon as practical after the meeting, so that they would be available before the Minutes were published.

Councillor Newton asked the Leader:

“How is East Herts Council working with our partners and stakeholders to respond to the challenge of the Covid 19 pandemic?”

Councillor Haysey responded as follows:

“I’d like to thank Councillor Newton for her very important question at this time. At the outset of the Covid 19 this council engaged directly with partners and stakeholders so to maintain services and avoid wasteful duplication of effort. Central government sees county-wide Local Resilience Forums, LRFs, these are established bodies set up to co-ordinate actions in an emergency. The Hertfordshire LRF, a partnership of over 60 organisations, set up a Strategic Co-ordinating Group which includes local government, public health, clinical commissioning group, ambulance and police representatives. East Herts works closely with this group, including co-ordinating various work streams some such as county-wide bulk-purchasing of Personal Protective Equipment. As well as the immediate response to the crisis, the group recognises the potential long term impacts on our communities and of leading the Community Reassurance Group.

“Hertfordshire County Council is co-ordinating volunteering via Team Herts and we have encouraged all the voluntary groups in East Herts to register on the Team Herts list. Nationally, Operation Shield involves GPs and hospital doctors identifying the most vulnerable who have been invited to contact the

county council to discuss their support needs. To date, East Herts Council has supported Operation Shield by telephoning over 600 individuals who hadn't contacted the county. Our input has been vital in ensuring the most vulnerable are being reached.

"The national Operation Sustain programme is about assisting those who also may need support. Again, we are working with partners to support this by, for example, working with health and county colleagues to support all our Social Prescribing Service clients.

"We should be proud of how the residents of East Herts have 'stepped up to the plate' as over 1,253 volunteers have been logged on Team Herts- the highest of any district or borough in Hertfordshire.

"The challenges have been and remain significant but I am proud of the work by elected Members and officers alike to work together with partners and stakeholders with the sole aim of protecting local residents as best we can."

Councillor Beckett asked Councillor Williamson, Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, the following question:

"The current pandemic and resulting anxiety over the loss of income for many of our residents has driven a huge spike in enquiries to East Herts CAB, and as a council we are sending a lot of enquiries their way through our social media and individual communications. In addition, because of national guidelines on social distancing, CAB has closed face to

face communications and have had to set their teams up to work remotely in order to maintain the high standard of service our residents need and deserve.

“The remote set up cost for CAB remote working has been in the region of 12K, something no one could have budgeted for.

“Therefore as it is alleviating a huge workload and expense from the council, have we any plans in place to give an additional grant to assist CAB in delivering their increased service remotely due to the COVID19 crisis, to at least meet all or part of their contingency cost for remote working?”

Councillor Williamson responded as follows:

“Thank you Councillor Beckett for raising this question and firstly I would like to thank the CAB staff publicly for their continuing hard work during this difficult time.

“Over the past few weeks we have been in discussion with their Chief Executive, Laura Hyde, and as Councillor Beckett points out they have seen an increase in demand. Queries and requests for advice around universal credit and employment have increased and they estimate around a third of this increase is directly attributable to Covid-19. Interestingly they are also seeing more queries from people in their 20s which traditionally have not been a group that has engaged with citizen’s advice services.

“The nature of the discussions we are now having with the CAB is how we can work together more closely

when restrictions begin to be lifted. The CAB have by necessity closed their face to face offering, but have still managed to deliver an effective service over the phone and by email. Of course we too have done the same and have also managed to keep many of our services up and running. Going forward we want to ensure that we are able to bring all services back to normal operations, but also that we are able to take advantage of the changes in behaviour that have been forced upon us. With social distancing requirements set to remain for some time we will be aiming to make more use of digital means of communicating with clients and residents as an alternative to face to face meetings.

“Specifically in relation to the question, we are looking at how our customer service team and the CAB teams can collaborate further, particularly in relation to sharing space where social distancing can be maintained, and using technology which will allow staff from both organisations to be able to remain working at home but still have virtual meetings with clients over video conferencing platforms, for example. In these ways we can help to reduce CAB’s overhead costs and thus be key to how we support their services being sustainable into the future.

“More work will be undertaken in the coming weeks and I am happy to keep Members informed of progress.”

Councillor Kemp asked Councillor Williamson the following question:

“Can the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability confirm that the Council is doing everything in its power to support local businesses affected by the Covid-19 pandemic?”

Councillor Williamson responded as follows:

“Thank you to Councillor Kemp for raising this matter and I can confirm that this is the case. We have a number of roles in this regard both as a regulator and as a community leader. As of today we have administered £18m worth of business rates’ relief and given out an extra £24m in grants to over 1,900 businesses. In conjunction with the other packages of financial support outlined by the Chancellor this will no doubt be a vital injection of cash for many hard-pressed businesses; indeed we have received considerable positive feedback from those that have received the grant, stating how it has managed to keep them afloat in terms of paying their suppliers and employees.

“Furthermore and in common with many other landlords, we have taken a sympathetic view with any of our commercial tenants who are experiencing financial difficulties. Arrangements to defer rent have been agreed with nine of our tenants, although one of these subsequently decided to maintain normal payments.

“As we look ahead to restrictions being lifted we are also working closely with partners on re-opening town centres. Yesterday my colleague the Executive Member for Planning and Growth chaired a meeting

with town councils, business representatives, the police and highways on how to implement social distancing measures in our high streets so that we can get people supporting local shops, restaurants and cafes in a safe way when these venues are allowed to re-open. We are also working closely with our colleagues on the LEP to promote initiatives such as a crowdfunding platform which allows businesses to secure cash investment from local people as well as access match funding if they can diversify their offer during these difficult times. We will continue to build our support businesses as best we can going forward.”

Councillor Frecknall asked Councillor Boylan, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, the following question:

“The unprecedented time in which we are living is creating untold challenges for many residents across the district. While recognising and commending the work by officers and members alike in supporting those residents who are most vulnerable and in need, I would like to ask what the council is doing to tackle the increase in the rates of Domestic Abuse for both male and female residents. For instance, has the idea of 'safe spaces' has been discussed with local supermarkets and hubs? I recognise that much of this remit will fall to County Council, but it is to us, at the District level, to whom many residents will turn for help first.”

Councillor Boylan responded as follows:

“I would like to thank Councillor Frecknall for giving advance notice of this question. It is worth

remembering that victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse can be men, women and children and is devastating to individual victims and families at any time. However, the recent measures taken to control the spread of COVID19 virus, requiring everyone to stay at home have provided an environment for relationships within the home to become highly pressured. Both intimate and sibling relationships have been tested beyond normal circumstances with sometimes a feeling of nowhere to escape.

“It is widely recognised nationally that the incidence of domestic abuse has increased in the last few months. Since lockdown began, I have been taking part in a weekly Zoom meeting hosted by the Police and Crime Commissioner, along with the Assistant Chief Constable and all community safety portfolios holders from the ten districts and boroughs and county. Domestic abuse has been a constant theme of concern at those meetings from the beginning. There has been a rise in police reporting for domestic abuse across the county and the latest figures for East Herts show an 11% increase on last year, but that percentage has now started to reduce. Nevertheless, the responsibility for prevention, detection and victim support for domestic abuse is a multi-agency one, led by the two safeguarding boards in Hertfordshire. Different agencies have different responsibilities and contributions to this approach. This council has both housing and safeguarding responsibilities with respect to those experiencing domestic abuse and continues to work hard to maintain services during the coronavirus emergency. In February this year, the council entered into an agreement with the Survivors

Against Domestic Abuse service, known as SADA. This service is managed by Stevenage Council and provides East Herts residents with access to support with rehousing options including safe accommodation. SADA has been operating throughout the lockdown and the council has continued to make referrals. Both SADA and the Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Helpline have reported increased referrals and contacts from across the county throughout lockdown. However, I can assure members that there remains capacity in the safe accommodation the council can access.

“Furthermore, just this week, the Housing Team is advertising housing association vacancies for the first time since March; certain groups will have top priority for rehousing, including those escaping domestic abuse. The council is part of the countywide Domestic Abuse Partnership, which has been meeting weekly since it was set up on 20 April as part of the wider response to the coronavirus emergency. The use of supermarkets being ‘safe hubs’, which is an excellent approach, is being rolled out across the county by this Partnership. This partnership has engaged the local charity “Safer Places” to train staff in local supermarkets and pharmacies on how to support people who seek advice whilst out shopping alone, including providing posters, discreet leaflets and signposting. ‘Safer Places’ website provides straightforward and practical advice, including accessing service while shopping alone and, when dialling 999, pressing 55 so that the operator can hear what’s going on without themselves being heard or needing the victim to speak.

"The council's website provides detailed information and advice on the range of services provided by the council and others.

"I hope this provides Councillor Frecknall and other Members with assurance about how serious this council takes its responsibilities around this important subject."

Councillor Goldspink asked Councillor Williamson the following question:

"Could the Executive Member give details, please, about the steps which this Council is taking to assist our residents if they are having difficulty in paying their Council Tax?"

Councillor Williamson responded as follows:

"May I thank Councillor Goldspink for raising this important issue. For any residents who are experiencing difficulties the first step is to talk to us without delay, rather than simply stop paying. By doing so, this enables us to record the issues and provide tailored advice based on their particular circumstances.

"There are a variety of ways we can help - we can reschedule payments over the year, or delay payments by making their first instalment in June. If necessary we suggest that customers pay any small amounts they can afford regularly rather than nothing, to reduce pressure later on. We will also advise them about Council Tax Support and direct them to other

agencies if appropriate.

“Furthermore all recovery actions such as issuing a summons for non-payment have been stopped. The Council Tax Hardship Scheme, which grants up to an extra £150.00 for working age claimants, is also helping to reduce the pressure on the most vulnerable.

“We have to remember that East Herts is the collection agency for Council Tax for all preceptors, and HCC and the Police are not allowing us to delay our paying over their precepts, so we need to continue to collect what we can to enable other important services to continue running.”

Councillor Brady asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

“Could you please indicate which proposed projects may be affected by the blow to the economy of the Covid-19 Virus?”

Councillor Haysey responded as follows:

“We are working closely with the construction companies which have the best access to professional advice. Construction companies are taking direction from the Construction Leadership Council and guidance from central government on assessing whether their supply chains are still active as well as the feasibility of social distancing on sites. Following the announcement by the Prime Minister on Sunday evening, it seems construction is a sector where government are keen to keep things moving.

“At this stage we don’t expect too many delays in our major projects. At Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre we are eight weeks into construction and still anticipate the new centre being operational by October 2021. It helps of course that the current activities are mostly groundwork related which means social distancing is a lot easier.

“For Northgate we are proposing to press ahead with works and hope to agree a date for closing the car park soon with a view to works commencing thereafter.

“With regards to Hertford Theatre we are concerned that current restrictions could impact our ability to undertake any meaningful public consultation which is necessary before a planning application is submitted and we anticipate a delayed start date for works from January 2021 to July/ August 2021.

“However, the current situation provides us with an opportunity to undertake a different approach to consultation and engagement. Traditionally consultation activities carried out by the Council focus on face to face events and large mail outs. These tend to be costly to deliver and the least environmentally sustainable options available. Alternative approaches to consultation are now being explored across the country and provide different platforms to engage with wide sections of the community. There are a range of tools which are available to us such as email surveys, on-line live Q&A sessions through Facebook and YouTube, and bespoke software for virtual exhibitions, all of which are being used elsewhere and provide for

a more efficient, sustainable and inclusive approach to consultation.

“We will be looking at deploying some of these new approaches in our pre-application engagement for the Theatre. The old and the new.

“A similar situation arises on consultation from the new designs for Hartham Leisure Centre.

“I want East Herts to be an exemplar in the delivery of alternative consultation techniques and I would like external developers to follow suit in pursuing a range of alternative consultation options to reach a fully inclusive audience ahead of submitting planning applications.

“That hopefully gives a flavour of where we are however I note the question is about the economic dimension to these projects. We will have to wait and see what the macro effects of this pandemic are on the global economy, cost of materials, labour and so forth but we are committed to moving these projects ahead on time and in budget.”

8 CORONAVIRUS - DEFERRAL OF ANNUAL COUNCIL

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented a report on the Council’s deferral of its 2020 annual meeting and continuation of the existing arrangements and appointments.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services said this meeting would in normal circumstances have been the

annual meeting of Council, at which decisions on the structure of committees, appointments and the scheme of delegation were decided. However, as one of the measures to assist local authorities in continuing to conduct meetings during the Coronavirus lockdown, the government had introduced new legislation, the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. This report sought confirmation from Members that the annual meeting of the Council be deferred and that the existing arrangements and appointments be continued.

Councillor Haysey proposed a motion that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Williamson seconded the motion.

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

RESOLVED – that (A) Existing appointments of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council continue until the Council either convenes a deferred annual Council meeting or until annual Council in May 2021;

(B) The Council's committee structure and allocation of all seats and appointments for chairmen, vice chairmen and membership of committees, joint committees, sub-committees and panels continue in the same manner (in accordance with the existing political balance where applicable);

(C) It notes that the Leader has indicated that the existing composition and constitution of the Executive, and scheme of delegation, be continued;

(D) Existing appointments to outside bodies be continued; and

(E) The programme of ordinary meetings for 2020-21, to be held as virtual or physical meetings, be confirmed, as set out at Appendix A to the report, subject to changes if required.

9 OUTSIDE BODIES

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented a report on reports by Members appointed to Outside Bodies for the civic year 2019-20.

Councillor Rutland-Barsby thanked all Member for their hard work in acting as representatives to these bodies. She proposed a motion that the recommendation be supported. The motion was seconded by Councillor Curtis.

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

RESOLVED – that the reports of Members appointed to Outside Bodies for the 2019-20 civic year be received and noted.

10 REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented a report on a review of the Constitution. He said a number of changes were required to ensure the Constitution was up to date, and to reflect decisions taken throughout the year. An Officer working group had considered the necessary changes for presentation to Council, as set out in the report. There had also been new legislation as a result of the Coronavirus crisis, which amended councils' standing orders automatically. However, as a point of best practice, the recommendation sought Members' confirmation that the standing orders were amended to reflect any provisions of the legislation which were relevant to the Council's Constitution.

Councillor Cutting proposed a motion supporting the recommendations. Councillor Snowdon seconded the motion.

Councillor Goldspink said the Liberal Democrat Group supported these recommendations, and she noted that future changes to the Constitution could be agreed by Council, if required at a later date.

Councillor Andrews said he welcomed the report. However, he drew attention to a proposed increase in the amount of write offs for unrecoverable debts which the Chief Financial Officer had authority to decide, from £10K to £25K.

Councillor Kemp asked officers to advise what the

write off limit had been in the past.

The Head of Strategic Finance and Property said the change to £25K was in line with the delegated authority limit for many other district councils. In practice, exercise of such authority was not required often, and if Members preferred that the level remain at £10K this would not be problematic.

Councillor Pope said he agreed with Councillor Andrews and favoured leaving the limit unchanged.

Councillor Cutting said write offs of over £10K represented significant amounts of money, and agreed the current limit should be retained.

In response to a question from Councillor Beckett, Councillor E Buckmaster said this was a matter of process, as irrecoverable debt could not, by its very nature, be recovered. As long as the process was robust, he had no objection to the authorisation limit being increased to £25K.

Councillor Ward-Booth proposed an amendment to the motion, that the amount of the write off limit be £10K, rather than £25K.

Councillor Devonshire seconded the amendment.

Councillor Andrews said the appropriate body should receive for noting any decision for a write off of an amount of up to £10K. Councillor Ward-Booth consented to alter his amendment to add the words "and exercise of delegation of such write offs to be

reported to the Audit and Governance Committee”.

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

RESOLVED – (A) that the updates and consequential amendments to the Constitution identified in the attached appendices be approved, subject to the write off limit for the Chief Financial Officer to remain at £10K and exercise of delegation of such write offs to be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.

At a later point in the meeting, it was noticed that the substantive motion had not been voted on immediately after the amendment had been carried. The Chairman being alerted to this fact, the substantive motion was put to the meeting, and a vote taken. The substantive motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – (A) that the updates and consequential amendments to the Constitution identified in the attached appendices be approved, subject to the write off limit for the Chief Financial Officer to remain at £10K and exercise of delegation of such write offs to be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee..

(B) that in respect of the legislation introduced to permit meetings to be conducted remotely, the Council’s standing orders be deemed amended to enable its public meetings to be

conducted remotely in accordance with protocols to be decided by the Chief Executive;

(C) that authority to make any minor related changes to the Constitution is given to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

11 MEMBERS' SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES 2020

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented a report on recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Leader proposed an alteration to the recommendations set out in the report, to add the following words: "that Council (1) defers consideration of the Independent Remuneration Panel's review of allowances and recommendations as set out at (a) to (d); and (2) the current scheme of Members' Allowances be continued either until 13 May 2021, or until such time as the Council adopts a revised scheme of allowances, whichever shall be the earlier". She therefore proposed a motion to support the altered recommendations.

Councillor Devonshire seconded the motion.

Councillor Crystall said he echoed the decision to defer consideration of the review of Members' allowances, to show support for the District's residents.

Councillor Goldspink said she too agreed with this approach. She expressed her thanks to the Independent Remuneration Panel for the work they

had done in their review, which had preceded the Coronavirus pandemic's impact in this country and district.

Councillor Newton agreed that now was not the time to consider recommendations to increase Members' allowances.

Councillor Redfern agreed that it would be unconscionable to consider increased allowances when others were struggling financially. She also thanked the Panel, and expressed thanks to the Executive for their exceptional work in dealing with the Coronavirus situation.

Councillor Ward-Booth said he supported the alteration of the Leader to the recommendations, and hoped that the Panel would have the opportunity to meet again before making further recommendations to Council.

Councillor Bell echoed the support for the approach being taken, and said she was particularly keen to endorse acceptance, in due course, of the increased dependants' carers' allowance. This measure was important in ensuring Members or potential Councillors were not deterred from representing their community through having carer responsibilities.

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

RESOLVED – that Council (A) defers consideration of the Independent Remuneration

Panel's review of allowances and recommendations as set out at (a) to (d); and

(B) the current scheme of Members' Allowances be continued either until 13 May 2021, or until such time as the Council adopts a revised scheme of allowances, whichever is earlier.

12 MANDATING SUBSCRIPTION TO THE DBS UPDATE SERVICE FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

Councillor Boylan presented a report on a proposal recommended by the Licensing Committee that all Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers licensed by the council be required to register with the Disclosure and Barring Service Update Service and maintain that registration for the duration of holding that licence. He proposed a motion supporting the recommendation.

Councillor Andrews seconded the motion.

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

RESOLVED – that from 1 June 2020 the Council adopt the policy of requiring all Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers licensing by East Herts Council to register to the Disclosure and Barring Update Service and maintain that registration for the life of their dual driver or private hire driver's licence.

13 AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Councillor Goodeve presented a report outlining the results of the public consultation on the draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and seeking Members' consent to adopt a revised document. She said the statutory consultees had made no comment on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), so advised a SEA was not required. She proposed a motion that the recommendations in the report be supported.

Councillor Bolton seconded the motion.

Councillor Crystall said he recognised the National Planning Policy Framework limited what could be proposed in the SPD. However he was concerned that it would, despite best efforts ultimately benefit developers, at the expense of those who needed affordable homes.

Councillor Redfern said the requirements on developers which had been stated in the original SPD had now been watered down, and she queried how East Herts Council would meet its provision for affordable housing and social rent. She asked how the Council would guard against inadequate provision by developers, particularly if Covid - 19 had an impact on housing development. She also questioned, in relation to phasing of a site into separate parts what safeguards the Council could put in place to ensure developers did provide affordable housing near to the original site. Finally, she asked why this district did not

have a target for social rents, as other authorities such as Three Rivers did.

Councillor Goldspink said she supported the aspirations but could not support this SPD. She called for a recorded vote.

Councillor Ward-Booth said the document had been the subject of consultation earlier this year, and that timely submission of comments would have been helpful.

Councillor Beckett said, as a Member of the Development Management Committee, that the Committee was almost toothless in some cases due to lack of robust wording in the Local Plan, and this SPD would similarly lack robustness.

Councillor Symonds asked whether there was any key worker accommodation in the District, and if not, whether it could be reinstated.

Councillor Corpe said the SPD had been put out to consultation twice. The Liberal Democrat Group had responded during those consultations with similar comments, but those had been ignored. He questioned why there could not be a link to local salaries, as was the case at a number of other councils, such as West Midlands.

The Principal Planning Officer responded to a number of points, stating that it was necessary to follow national policy.

Councillor Boylan reminded Members that he had, at the December Council meeting, agreed to commission a piece of work on social housing and social tenures. Having drafted it, he had written to the Chief Executive and Head of Housing and Health to request for an officer to be recruited to carry out this work. He was glad to report that although recruitment had been slow, an appointment was shortly to be made. A more detailed proposal would be issued later in the year.

Five Members having confirmed a request for a recorded vote, a recorded vote was taken, the result being:

FOR

Councillors Alder, Andrews, Bolton, Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Bull, Burmicz, Crofton, Cutting, Deering, Devonshire, Drake, Fernando, Goodeve, Hall, Haysey, Hollebon, Huggins, Jones, Kemp, McAndrew, McMullen, Newton, Page, Pope, Reed, Rowley, Ruffles, Rutland-Barsby, Snowdon, Stowe, Symonds, Ward-Booth, Williamson and Wyllie.

AGAINST

Councillors Beckett, Bell, Brady, Corpe, Crystall, Dumont, Frecknall, Goldspink, Redfern and Wilson.

ABSTAIN

Councillors Curtis, Kaye, Ranger and Stevenson.

For: 36

Against: 10

Abstain: 4

RESOLVED – that (A) the responses of the consultation be noted and the officer responses and proposed changes to the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be supported;

(B) the Affordable Housing SPD, as detailed in Appendix C of this report, be approved for adoption; and

(C) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 it has been determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the emerging Affordable Housing SPD is not required as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

14 HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION

The Leader presented a report on the findings of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Employment Commission report, which recommended that the report be treated as a material consideration in the assessment of the planning applications relating to the Gilston area.

Councillor Haysey referred to the sustainability requirements of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

in terms of employment and land use. It was important to have a robust position in relation to securing employment related development. This report had been commissioned, to address the employment requirements of the Garden Town. She proposed a motion to support the recommendations.

Councillor Ward-Booth seconded the proposal.

Councillor Page said he had concerns about the democratic process. The Executive had considered the report by emailed circulation rather than at a meeting, which reduced opportunities for engagement. He questioned why Executive meetings were not being held.

Councillor Goldspink said the majority of her Group felt this was a good report despite the limitations. She understood the reason why Councillor Page had expressed concern, but overall supported the principles of the recommendation.

Councillor E Buckmaster said he understood some of the points Councillor Page had raised. However these were changing times, and adjustments to process were necessary. Council itself had the ultimate scrutiny role, however, and Members had the opportunity to ask questions and debate this report now.

Councillor Buckmaster said the report referred to changing patterns of employment. Due to the Covid-19 crisis there were likely to be further changes, and appropriate flexibility was required so that a planned approach could be taken.

Councillor Haysey responded to the point Councillor Page had raised regarding the April meeting of the Executive. She said at that time, the way in which public meetings would be held virtually was still being considered, and that as this report would be submitted in any event to the full Council, the view was taken that the opportunity for Members to discuss it would take place at this meeting.

Councillor Curtis thanked officers for the report and said it was necessary to retain employment land.

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

RESOLVED - that (A) The 'draft final' Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Employment Commission Report, as detailed at Appendix A to this report, be agreed as a material consideration for Development Management purposes; and

(B) Authority be delegated to the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy to agree the final version of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Employment Commission Report, in consultation with the Leader, following any further changes made to the Report.

15 PLANNING OBLIGATIONS FOR OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Councillor E Buckmaster presented a report on the Planning Obligations for Open Space, Sport and

Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). He thanked the Leader and the Executive Member for Planning and Growth for the opportunity to do so.

Councillor Buckmaster proceeded to introduce the report. He said that never more than now had open spaces been so important to people's wellbeing, and were now literally vital in helping them to stay safe and well.

Councillor Buckmaster outlined the amendments made to the SPD as a result of the consultation. He said the SPD added detail to the policies of the Local Plan. Originally, the SPD would have been considered at the Executive meeting on 21 April 2020, which had been cancelled, due to the Coronavirus crisis. It was now brought to this meeting of Council for Members' approval. He proposed a motion to support the recommendations.

Councillor Stowe seconded the motion.

Councillor Brady said some of the background papers were dated 2011, and the actions appeared not to have been followed up. She went on to make a number of points, and questioned why East Herts spending appeared to be less on sports and leisure than the average for other local authorities in this region. She asked what the impact of the Coronavirus situation would be on planning and provision for open spaces and sports provision.

Councillor Buckmaster said he could not respond on the historic recommendations, but could provide

information on investment, as this was clear from the Council's investments made during the last few months. Through masterplanning, provision of more opportunities for provision of sport and leisure would be explored fully. The Council did want to encourage walking and cycling, and was assessing how to enable extra cycling routes to be provided, in compliance with social distancing measures. Information on funding was clearly set out, for Members to read in detail.

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

RESOLVED – that (A) the responses of the consultation be noted and the officer responses and proposed changes to the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be supported;

(B) the Open Space Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), as detailed at Appendix A to this report, be approved for adoption;

(C) in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 it has been determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the emerging Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is not required as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects; and

(D) the Head of planning and Building Control, in

consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, be authorized to make any further minor changes to the document which may be necessary.

16 DECISIONS TO BE REPORTED TO COUNCIL

Councillors Burmicz and Ranger left the virtual meeting room during the consideration of the item.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented a report on a decision taken under delegated authority by the Chief Executive. The decision was to approve a dispensation from attendance at Council meetings of Councillors Burmicz and Ranger, for six months, as due to the Coronavirus crisis a number of qualifying meetings which these Members would potentially have attended, had been cancelled. At the time of the decision, the way in which virtual meetings would take place was being considered. In order to prevent inadvertent vacation of office for these Members, if opportunities to attend qualifying meetings remained limited, dispensation from attendance was approved. Under the Council's Constitution, the decision was required to be reported to the Council, to be noted.

Councillor Haysey proposed, and Councillor Williamson seconded, a motion to support the recommendation to note the report.

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

RESOLVED – to note the decision taken by the

Chief Executive under delegated powers on 15 April 2020.

17 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Councillor Haysey presented the motion on notice she had submitted. She said this was an opportunity to say thankyou to key workers. The community clapping on Thursday last week had been to show support for the volunteers who had kept communities going. The Chairman had referred to community spirit. She recognised what the Council's staff had accomplished in the last two months, and the commitment they had shown to the tasks they had undertaken, mostly through working from home.

Councillor Goldspink said it gave her great pleasure to second the motion. She agreed that all the people mentioned in the motion had worked incredibly hard to serve their community. She would like to add another group of people who deserved recognition, and proposed an amendment to add wording to the motion as follows:

“to thank all Members of the Executive and the Leader of the Council”.

Councillor Redfern seconded the amendment, and thanked the Executive.

Councillor Andrews added that he wished to place on record an acknowledgement of the great work of the postal service.

Other Members spoke to voice their appreciation of other workers, including the recycling teams, those officers who had arranged for grants to be given, the planning team and planning enforcement, and the District's many voluntary groups.

Councillor Haysey thanked Councillor Goldspink for her amendment.

The amendment "to thank all Members of the Executive and the Leader of the Council" was put to the meeting. A vote being taken, it was declared CARRIED.

The substantive motion, as amended, was then put to the meeting. A vote being taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – (A) to thank all members of staff of East Herts Council who have worked hard to respond to the challenges faced by this Council due to coronavirus and maintain the vital services needed by local residents;

(B) to thank all local volunteers who have given their time and effort to the local community response to the coronavirus pandemic;

(C) to thank all the NHS workers and care staff who are working on the front line to keep our community safe during these difficult times; and

(D) to thank all Members of the Executive and the Leader of the Council.

The meeting closed at 9.04 pm

Chairman
Date