

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
COUNCIL HELD IN THE ONLINE MEETING -  
LIVESTREAMED ON THURSDAY 29 APRIL  
2021, AT 7.00 PM

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PRESENT: Councillor J Kaye (Chairman).  
Councillors A Alder, D Andrews, T Beckett,  
S Bell, R Buckmaster, R Bolton, P Boylan,  
M Brady, E Buckmaster, J Burmicz,  
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 Hollebbon, 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, D Snowdon,  
M Stevenson, T Stowe, N Symonds,  
A Ward-Booth, G Williamson, C Wilson and  
J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Cassidy	- Chief Executive
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Ben Wood	- Head of Communications,

	Strategy and Policy
William Troop	- Democratic Services Officer
Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager

## 1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Father Simon Vivian led the reflection before the meeting started.

A minute's silence was held for all those who had died from Covid-19 over the last year, His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh and Surjit Basra, former District Councillor for Buntingford.

The Chairman invited Councillor Jones to say a few words about former Councillor Surjit Basra.

Councillor Jones led a tribute to Surjit Basra who was born in India in 1950 and moved to the United Kingdom in 1968. He was a hard worker who spent time in Leamington Spa, Coventry and Nottingham and married his wife in Hitchin in 1969. He bought his first shop in Letchworth and it was so successful that he purchased a second shop in Buntingford. He was incredibly popular with local residents with his sense of humour and kindness, he always had to time to chat and listen. Mr Basra took the time to be fully involved

in the community and was an active Town Councillor, serving for 18 years. He often said he considered himself to be a good councillor as he could see issues from all sides; a resident, parent and local businessman. He served as Mayor of Buntingford three times and was a wonderful ambassador for the town. Mr Basra was elected as the District Councillor for Buntingford and served for two years when Councillor Jones succeeded him in a by-election. He enjoyed his time at East Herts District Council but could not devote the time required to represent his community as well as being the Town Mayor and run a successful business. He made a huge contribution to the community and considered Buntingford his true home.

The Chairman said that Louie Corpe had recently stepped down as a District Councillor to begin his new life in Switzerland. He would be missed by his Liberal Democrat colleagues and others in the Chamber. The Chairman had sent him an email to thank him for his service and his reply was as follows:

"It has been a privilege and an honour to serve on the Council and although I regret not being able to serve a full term, I am proud of my achievements in the last two years. We are settling in to our new flat in the Geneva area and I am having a great time getting to grips with cutting edge sensors, radioactive sources and high voltage power supplies. It is quite a change from Bishop's Stortford!"

The Chairman ran through the highlights of his term:

- The Civic evening held in Ware in 2019 with special

guest, TV historian David Olusoga in aid of Isabel Hospice.

- One of the most enjoyable events attended was the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CHIPS who run regular play schemes for children with learning differences.
- Living Together in East Herts event in September 2019 at what is now the South Mill Arts Complex.
- Remembrance Sundays, Civic Services across East Herts and Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations which was held on Zoom this year.
- He represented East Herts at St Albans Cathedral on several occasions including the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire's service.
- It was a privilege to attend events put on by the Town Mayors, some sadly cancelled because of the pandemic.
- He hoped to soon be able to attend an East Herts social event outside at Wallfields when restrictions allow.

He thanked officers for their support over the last few years. He thanked Esther Piper who has found her role changing over the last few months, James Ellis, Katie Mogan and her predecessor Rebecca Dobson, and Will Troop, Peter Mannings and Steven King for hosting the Council meetings on Zoom. He thanked Kate Collins and Georgia Adamson for their work in the office and thanked his partner Kezia for her support. He paid tribute to all councillors who had played their part in civil democratic debates and discussions to do their best for their residents.

## 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rutland-Barsby. Upon taking a roll call of Members, it was established that Councillor Bull was absent.

### 3 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN 2021/22

Councillor Haysey thanked and congratulated Councillor Kaye on an incredible two years as Chairman.

It was moved by Councillor Haysey and seconded by Councillor Stowe that Councillor Crofton be elected as Chairman of the Council for the civic year 2021/22. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that Councillor Crofton be elected Chairman of the Council for the civic year 2021/22.

Councillor Crofton made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office and took the chair.

He thanked members for the honour of giving him the opportunity to represent the Council as Chairman. He thanked Councillor Kaye for his two years of service during a very challenging period when the usual meet the people opportunities were curtailed or absent and meetings were moved online. He took his hat off to Councillor Kaye and said his expertise behind the microphone on the radio was clearly evident with his calm, masterful and distinctive voice and would be a

lesson for years to come and would be impossible to follow. He said it was a pleasure to serve as his Vice-Chairman.

#### 4 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN 2021/22

It was proposed by Councillor Symonds and seconded by Councillor Deering that Councillor Devonshire be appointed Vice Chairman of the Council for the civic year 2021/22. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that Councillor Devonshire be appointed Vice Chairman for 2021/22.

Councillor Devonshire made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office.

Councillor Devonshire thanked Councillor Symonds and Councillor Deering for proposing and seconding him for Vice-Chairman. He said he was looking forward to the next year and was hopeful for a return to some normality and start to attend community engagement events and visit businesses and residents who have had a tough year. He promised to support Councillor Crofton, his chosen charity and East Hertfordshire.

#### 5 FURTHER CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Crofton said he was pleased that Councillor Devonshire had been elected to serve as Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Crofton said he served as Chairman five years ago under very different circumstances. The role was to represent the council in a non-political way and was there to support all members from all parties and reward people for what they have achieved to make East Hertfordshire a great place to live. He asked councillors to think about how the office of Chairman can be used to support members and acknowledge and appreciate the work of local charities, social clubs, sports club and other groups.

He reminded all members that there was a Joint Meeting of Executive, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels after Annual Council and asked all members to remain in the meeting at the conclusion of Annual Council.

## 6 MINUTES - 18 MARCH 2021

Councillor Goldspink requested a correction to the minutes under item 428. She said she had asked if it would have been more appropriate for Councillor McMullen to make the apology himself as the comment was made in public so the apology should be made in public.

Councillor Haysey strongly disagreed with this amendment and said it was totally inappropriate. The statement had been agreed with Councillor McMullen and the person who had received the comment. The recording of the meeting was on YouTube and did not need to go into the minutes.

Councillor Andrews proposed, and Councillor Deering seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

8 PETITIONS

There were no petitions to consider.

9 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

10 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Dumont asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability the following question:

“At Council in July of last year, I brought to the attention of the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability the issue of litter in our District. I asked what was being done to hold the Contractor to



account. The Executive Member assured me that he was meeting regularly with Officers and that this Council had powers to act if need be. He told me;

*'contracts have performance management regimes in place which bear financial deductions should cleansing not be achieved at the standard we expect'*

Since I asked this question last year, I'm sorry to say the situation has gone from bad to worse. The very stretch of verge, the A414 slip road into Stanstead Abbots, which was the section first brought to my attention as being a significant location for litter and fly tipping has still not been picked. This is despite the situation being raised many months ago. There have been phone calls, site inspections and emails about this one short stretch of verge, yet it remains an awful mess.

Across our District, the community has taken matters into its own hands, notably the Wombles of WareAbouts and also TUBS in Bishop Stortford. These are members of the public out and about picking litter because they want to live in a clean and tidy environment. Surely in East Herts not having rubbish all over the place is not too much to ask.

Will the Executive Member please join me in thanking the Wombles and members of TUBS for their good work, update me on his progress, specifically if the powers of 'contract management' have been applied and tell me when he expects the verge off the A414 into Stanstead Abbots to actually be cleaned?"

Councillor McAndrew responded as follows:

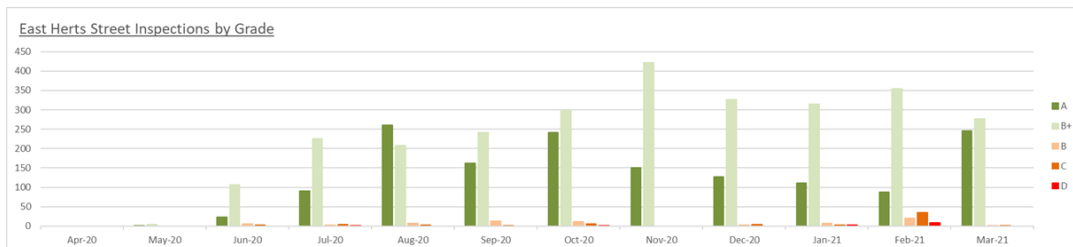
“Thanks to Cllr Dumont for drawing to the committee’s attention the excellent efforts of those residents who undertake litter picking in our district. Residents have been helping keep the district clean for years and indeed we still provide support to parishes where litter picking is undertaken by parishes rather than via our contracts. However we have seen a number of groups over recent months including the Wombles of Ware, residents in Buntingford and TUBS in Bishop Stortford helping to encourage community litter picking by more and more residents and I also wish to add my thanks for this fantastic work and commitment to our district.”

“Officers from the Shared Waste Service are gearing up for the Great British Spring Clean and are keen to liaise with groups about the initiatives they are putting in place to support the work of the community, and of course to make sure safety arrangements and arrangements for the collection of waste is in place. I would ask all Members to support this work by keeping an eye on our social media channels and by re-sharing our publicity material. After all if residents and visitors did not litter no one would need to be picking it up.”

“In response to the question from Cllr Dumont I can confirm the details regarding the contract monitoring which has been undertaken over the last year in specific relation to street cleansing.”

EH Street Inspections/ rectifications & Defaults			
	Inspections	Rectifications	Defaults
April	0	0	0
May	5	0	0
June	137	0	0
July	323	0	7
August	478	0	2
Sept	419	0	0
Oct	557	4	2
Nov	572	4	4
Dec	460	3	
Jan-21	438	1	2
Feb-21	505	10	0
Mar-21	525	4	3

“Cleansing inspections were suspended early last year due to the initial Covid-19 pandemic, cleansing was not. However, Members can see from the large number of inspections undertaken by the Shared Service in relation to street cleansing that officers are regularly monitoring the standards across the district. Where the inspection identifies that the standards are below the expectations of the contract a rectification is issued and where a rectification is not actioned within the contractual timeframes required a default is issued, with some elements resulting directly in a default where standards are considerably outside of the contract specification.”



“The Covid-19 pandemic has presented additional

challenges affecting both the resourcing of street cleansing services and of course the response to changing resident and visitor behaviours.”

“I am sure Members will agree that we have seen little disruption to waste and recycling collections over the last year and the roll out of the new charged garden waste service. It must be accepted that on occasion resources for waste and recycling have to be temporarily back filled at short notice by street cleansing staff, for example where test and trace has impacted on staffing levels. Despite all this, inspections of the contractor performance demonstrate a good standard of work overall.”

“Some areas of street cleansing have traditionally been undertaken alongside the work of Ringway and their grass cutting programme. This collaborative work was suspended last year but has begun again this year and the section of the A414 in question scheduled for 7th – 10th May 2021.”

“I’m sure Cllr Dumont will join with me, in that the current practise of tossing rubbish from vehicles spoils the environment, costs millions and puts road workers’ lives at risk when they have to clear up.”

“To that end there must be emphasis on behavioural change and the message to residents is take your litter home, in line with the duty of care legislation our individual waste is our responsibility. Dropping litter and dumping rubbish are offences and we will issue fix penalty notices and prosecute as necessary. Litter spoils the beauty of the countryside and can be

dangerous to wildlife and livestock. If we all work together we can enjoy a cleaner and greener district.”

11 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 30 MARCH 2021

Councillor Haysey said it was a privilege to be amongst the first to congratulate the new Chairman and Vice-Chairman. She said the civic positions were safe in their hands and were both excellent representatives of the District. She wished them both luck and said they had the support of the whole Council.

She thanked Councillor Kaye for his two extraordinary years of service and for leading the Council into virtual meetings. He had conducted virtual meetings with professionalism, humour and patience and had been responsible for introducing Holocaust Memorial Day into the civic calendar.

The Leader said that last year, the government introduced emergency legislation to conduct council business virtually and this would expire on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021 so meetings would return face to face. The Council Chamber is Covid safe for 25-27 people so Full Council meetings would be a challenge that needed to be resolved. Many residents had been following Council meetings on YouTube and the Leader assured residents that this would continue when meetings returned in person.

The Leader presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the

Executive at its meeting on 30 March 2021.

11 HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN: SUSTAINABILITY GUIDANCE AND CHECKLIST, FINAL DOCUMENT FOR ENDORSEMENT

The Leader presented the recommendation, which was referred to in the Executive report of 30 March 2021, regarding the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Sustainability Guidance and Checklist report.

Councillor Haysey proposed that the recommendations in the Executive report be supported. Councillor Kemp seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink added her thanks and congratulations to Councillor Kaye who had done an excellent job for the last two years. She congratulated and welcomed the new Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Councillor Goldspink confirmed that the Liberal Democrats were supportive of the recommendation.

The motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** - that the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Sustainability Guidance and Checklist be endorsed as material for development management purposes.

12 LICENSING COMMITTEE - 10 MARCH 2021

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the Licensing Committee at its meeting on 10 March 2021.

12 DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT (DFT) STATUTORY TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE STANDARDS

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that East Herts Council took its safeguarding responsibilities extremely seriously. It was for this reason that the Department for Transport's revised standards and best practice guidance regarding the licensing of taxi drivers and operators, issued in July 2020, were very much welcomed. The revised standards recognised there was clear evidence that taxis and private hire vehicles could constitute a high-risk environment. Often passengers travel alone, sometimes late at night when public transport was not available and it was not uncommon for taxis to be used by children and young people unaccompanied by adults. There was therefore the opportunity for the use of taxis to facilitate the abuse and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults and in some cases such exploitation has been perpetrated by members of the trade itself.

Councillor Boylan explained that East Herts was not immune. In recent years, the council had revoked taxi drivers' licences for sexual misconduct with passengers. Twice over the last couple of years the

council has had to defend its decision on appeal. In both cases, the evidence-based approach taken by the council meant it was able successfully defend its decisions. This demonstrated how robust the council's policies and procedures were, however, there was always room to strengthen the approach and hence the policies had been reviewed in light of the revised guidance. He thanked members of the Licensing Committee for their diligent attention to detail on this matter.

Following extensive consultation with the taxi trade, representatives of the night time economy, community groups, other local licensing authorities, stakeholders and the public, and consideration by the Licensing Committee, he recommended to Council the series of amendments to the council's taxi related policies presented in Appendix 2 of the report. As a licensing authority, the Council were required to have regard to the DfT's guidance and the proposed amendments demonstrated this. Taken as a whole, these amendments would act to strengthen the council's ability to determine whether someone is a fit and proper person to hold a taxi driver's licence or an operator's licence and so, in turn, would further enhance the council's ability to take swift action should any risk to the safety of the public arise and help to keep our residents and visitors safe.

Councillor Andrews commented that at the time of the Licensing Committee's consideration, there was a very low level of engagement in the consultation. He hoped that in future, a better response would be given.



Councillor Goldspink confirmed that the Liberal Democrat group was happy to support the recommendations.

Councillor Boylan proposed and Councillor Andrews seconded, a motion that the recommendation be supported. A motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** - That the policy changes detailed in Appendix 1 (a to f) be approved, with a commencement date of the 1 June 2021.

13 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND POLITICAL BALANCE OF THE COUNCIL 2021/22

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the report and said that Council, at its annual meeting, was required to approve the decision making arrangements for the discharge of functions. In May 2019, the Council appointed Councillor Linda Haysey as Leader for the “life” of the Council until the next scheduled District Council elections in 2023. It was the responsibility of the Leader to determine the size and membership of the Executive, as well as the allocation of executive portfolio responsibilities. These remained unchanged at seven members, as well as the Leader, with the portfolios as set out in Appendix B.

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 places a

duty on the Council to review the allocation of seats on its various committees, the aim being to ensure that the political composition of those committees reflects the political representation of the Council. The percentage political balance representation of each political group on East Herts Council remains unchanged from 2020/21; however this could change after the by-election for the Bishop's Stortford All Saints ward which takes place on 6th May 2021. Council would be notified of any amendment to its political balance after this time.

It was proposed that the Committees as set out at 2.1 be established, with the same terms of reference as last year. The proposed memberships of those committees are as set out at pages 5 to 7 of Supplementary Agenda No 1.

The Council's calendar of meetings for 2021/22 was proposed at paragraph 5.1 of the report.

Councillor Goldspink confirmed that the Liberal Democrat group was happy to support the recommendations.

Councillor Symonds proposed and Councillor Bolton seconded, a motion that the proposals be supported. A motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** - that

(A) the following Scrutiny Committees, Regulatory

Committees and Joint Committee be appointed, with the number of voting Members stated:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>No. of Mem bers</b>
Overview & Scrutiny	14
Audit & Governance	7
Development Management	12
Human Resources	7
Licensing	12
Financial Sustainability	10
Chief Officer Recruitment	5
East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee (3 from East Herts)	6
Joint CCTV Executive (3 from East Herts)	12

(B) the membership and Chairman of Scrutiny Committees, Regulatory Committees, Joint

Committees be as set out in Appendix A, with Members being appointed in accordance with the wishes of the political group to whom the seats on these bodies have been allocated.

(C) the Members to the Executive (in addition to the Leader) with the portfolio responsibilities as detailed in Appendix B, be noted

(D) the programme of Council meetings, as detailed at paragraph 5.1 of the report submitted, be approved; and

(E) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make changes in the standing membership of committees, joint committees and panels in (A) above, in accordance with the wishes of the political group to whom seats on these bodies have been allocated.

## 14 OUTSIDE BODIES

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the report to Council. He said that at the Annual Council meeting each year, Council appointed Members to serve on various outside bodies. The reports contained at page 9 to 42 of Supplementary Agenda No 1 detail these Members' involvement and activity on these bodies. It was recommended that Council receive these reports as detailed.

Councillor Newton proposed and Councillor Alder seconded, a motion that the proposals be supported. A motion to support the recommendations having been

proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** - that the reports of Members appointed to Outside Bodies for the 2020 – 2021 civic year be received and noted.

15 MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the report to members. He said that under the Council's Constitution, the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chief Executive, has delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Constitution arising from changes in legislation, staffing structures, job descriptions or terminology. The Constitution further requires that such changes be reported annually to Council and this report fulfilled this requirement.

In addition to those changes, it was recommended that Council agree a delegation to the Head of Planning and Building Control to determine footpath and bridleway matters as set out at recommendation B.

It was also recommended to formally replace the current Officer Code of Conduct at Part 5B of the Constitution with the new Code of Conduct for Employees contained at Appendix 2, which was agreed by HR Committee on 16th February 2021.

Councillor Williamson proposed and Councillor Curtis seconded, a motion that the proposals be supported. A

motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that

- (A) The report be received, as required by the Constitution, outlining the minor amendments to the Constitution made by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services acting in consultation with the Chief Executive; and
- (B) A delegation to the Head of Planning and Building Control to “determine any footpath and bridleways matters including their protection, creation, diversion, modification and extinguishment” be agreed.

16 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the report to Council. He said that the report detailed the recommendations to Council made by the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 16 March 2021, that the Council replace the current Members’ Code of Conduct as contained in Part 5a of the Constitution with the new Model Code of Conduct prepared by the Local Government Association.

The Committee on Standards in Public Life had recently published a report into local government ethical standards. This had 26 recommendations and 15 Best Practice recommendations.

Two of the recommendations of specific relevance to the report were:

- The Local Government Association should create an updated Model Code of Conduct, in consultation with representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government; and
- Best Practice Recommendation 3: Principal authorities should review their code of conduct each year and regularly seek, where possible, the views of the public, community organisations and neighbouring authorities.

The LGA Model Code of Conduct was a result of these recommendations and was contained at Appendix 1.

Adopting the Model Code of Conduct would ensure the good governance within the council that was reflective of a national governance model.

Councillor Goldspink confirmed that the Liberal Democrat group was happy to support the recommendations.

Councillor Huggins proposed and Councillor Snowdon seconded, a motion that the proposals be supported. A motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that

(A) the Members' Code of Conduct as

contained at Part 5a of the Council's Constitution be replaced with the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct (presented at Appendix 1 of this report) subject to Appendix C of the Model Code of Conduct being replaced with the text contained in Appendix 2 of this report; and

- (B) the replacement Member Code of Conduct be adopted with immediate effect.

17 ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORTS 2019/20 AND 2021/22

Councillor Wyllie presented the report to Council. He said that the reports provided an overview of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the years 2019-20 and 2020-21 and the reports were presented annually to Council as required in the Constitution.

Councillor Wyllie proposed and Councillor Pope seconded, a motion that the proposals be supported. A motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** - That the Annual Scrutiny Reports covering the civic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 be agreed and published on the Council's website.

18 RECONSIDER PLANS TO DEMOLISH THE URC HALL ON THE OLD RIVER LANE SITE IN BISHOP'S STORTFORD



Councillor Goldspink proposed the following motion on notice:

“This Council resolves to reconsider its plans to demolish the URC Hall on the Old River Lane site in Bishop’s Stortford. Instead, it will, either repair and refurbish the Hall or, if it is not practicable to refurbish it, The Council will build a new, equivalent Hall somewhere else on the Old River Lane site. This would be in accordance with policy CFLR8 of the Local Plan.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Wilson.

Councillor Goldspink spoke to the motion and said the United Reform Church Hall was a well-used community hall in the town centre of Bishop’s Stortford. It was used regularly by different community groups including badminton, table tennis, yoga, mothers and toddlers, Alcoholics Anonymous, Pilates, karate etc. The hall was also available for private hire and it seated 200 people with a stage. She questioned why the council wished to demolish the hall and said the council’s own policies were against demolition. Councillor Goldspink referred to Policy CFLR8 in the Local Plan which stated the loss of community buildings would be refused. Members were told previously that the original vision of the Old River Lane site would remove the car parking and replace with community facilities. Now, the building was going to be demolished and replaced with car parking. Councillor Goldspink felt this was a bizarre proposal and she was calling for a replacement facility.

Councillor Williamson responded to the motion

presented. He reminded the Council of the key points. Firstly, the Full Council voted to proceed with the Old River Lane regeneration with the published plans on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Secondly, the United Reform Church Hall was sold to the Council by the Church as part of its own plans to improve the community offerings. The present hall needs considerable repair work and upgrading to be suitable for future use. Therefore, he proposed an amendment to the motion. He proposed to delete all wording and replace with the following:

**“A) The Council Notes that:**

1. The Old River Lane regeneration offers the opportunity to create strong community and arts facilities for Bishop’s Stortford. The current Old River Lane regeneration plans agreed by Full Council on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021 are sufficiently flexible to offer the opportunity to work with third parties to deliver additional community facilities.
2. Given the current condition of the URC Hall it is not practical to repair and refurbish. The Council’s plans for the Old River Lane generation are compliant with CFLR8 of the East Herts District Plan 2018, satisfying both conditions (b) and (c).

**B. Therefore this Council resolves to:**

1. Work with local groups during the planning process and the pre-development marketing of the available space to provide additional community facilities as part of the ongoing re-generation of Old River Lane. These facilities

could include a community hall, community spaces and/or space for the delivery of community services. The Council will include the URC in this engagement to explore with them their plans for using the capital money the Council provided to them through our purchase of the hall.

2. Continue work on the Cultural Strategy which was agreed unanimously by Full Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021. Future workstreams to be undertaken include taking an inventory of publicly and privately owned facilities within Bishop's Stortford which can be used by community and arts groups; furthermore to discuss with Hertfordshire County Council to ensure local groups can access facilities at state schools outside of school hours.
3. Continue investigations into whether the cinema spaces within Old River Lane can be designed to allow larger capacity live performance events to be held on site.
4. Support the Old River Lane re-generation plans"

Councillor E Buckmaster seconded the amendment and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Bell said that the United Reform Church Hall was a popular facility and there was no provision proposed to replace it. The plans for an 80 seat cinema which could occasionally be used were not an adequate replacement for a venue with a 200 seat capacity. The Council should be championing participation in the performing arts and she implored the Council to find adequate provision in Bishop's

Stortford for these groups if redeveloping the hall is not feasible. This should be done in consultation with local groups to ensure the facilities are for local residents as opposed to progressing blindly without their input.

Councillor Goldspink welcomed the improvement for consultation but was still concerned that what is being proposed was not an adequate replacement for what was being lost. Some of the hirers currently at the United Reform Church Hall would not be accommodated in the new facility and these were groups that play badminton, table tennis and yoga. At the last meeting, the Council were told that a 200 seat theatre was not possible so Councillor Goldspink asked if the Council were now proposing a community hall for hire that would accommodate 200 people.

Councillor Williamson said they were looking at all the options to provide the best facilities across the town and would engage with different local groups.

Councillor Snowdon said that Councillor Goldspink was offered a seat on the Old River Lane Delivery Board but turned it down. He said she was a ward member in Bishop's Stortford and could have been in the room when decisions were made. He was disappointed that she had turned that opportunity down and was now trying to score political points.

Councillor Goldspink raised a point of order for a personal explanation. She explained that she was offered a seat but decided to offer it to Councillor Beckett who was also a Bishop's Stortford ward

councillor. She said if the Liberal Democrats were only allowed one seat, she felt Councillor Beckett was better qualified to attend the meetings.

Councillor Wilson said he welcomed the amendments from Councillor Williamson but questioned the timing of it and why it took a motion from the opposition to come up with the compromises. He provided some history to the project and said there had been inadequate consultation since the changes had been proposed. He said he understood why the theatre had to be abandoned and welcomed the fact that the Council were looking at consultation and other options and hoped that lessons had been learnt.

Councillor E Buckmaster said when he saw the proposed motion, he questioned the integrity. He said the Church was willing to dispose of the hall and it was clear from the church website that they had ambitions to create a new modern space. He said the Council had been inclusive in its approach with briefings and workshops open to all groups and members of the opposition group had a place on the Old River Lane Delivery Board. The business case for the project was reviewed after the pandemic and the Liberal Democrat motion has come as a standalone item with little or no attempt at prior engagement. There was little context to the motion with no funding proposals. The amendment proposed by Councillor Williamson gives the council a way forward and allows them to embark on a delivery mechanism for an engagement strategy. The amended motion gives the council more to work with moving forward.

After being requested by at least five members, a recorded vote was taken on the amendment, the result being:

FOR

Councillors Alder, Andrews, Bolton, Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Burmicz, Curtis, Cutting, Deering, Devonshire, Drake, Fernando, Goodeve, Hall, Haysey, Hollebon, Huggins, Jones, Kaye, Kemp, McAndrew, McMullen, Newton, Page, Pope, Ranger, Reed, Rowley, Ruffles, Snowdon, Stevenson, Stowe, Symonds, Ward-Booth, Williamson, Wyllie

AGAINST

Councillors Bell, Brady, Dumont, Goldspink, Redfern, Wilson

ABSTAINED

Councillors Beckett, Crofton, Crystall, Frecknall

For: 37

Against: 6

Abstained: 4

The motion was declared CARRIED, and became the substantive motion, as follows:

**A) The Council Notes that:**

1. The Old River Lane regeneration offers the opportunity to create strong community and arts facilities for Bishop's Stortford. The current Old

River Lane regeneration plans agreed by Full Council on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021 are sufficiently flexible to offer the opportunity to work with third parties to deliver additional community facilities.

2. Given the current condition of the URC Hall it is not practical to repair and refurbish. The Council's plans for the Old River Lane generation are compliant with CFLR8 of the East Herts District Plan 2018, satisfying both conditions (b) and (c).

**B. Therefore this Council resolves to:**

1. Work with local groups during the planning process and the pre-development marketing of the available space to provide additional community facilities as part of the ongoing regeneration of Old River Lane. These facilities could include a community hall, community spaces and/or space for the delivery of community services. The Council will include the URC in this engagement to explore with them their plans for using the capital money the Council provided to them through our purchase of the hall.
2. Continue work on the Cultural Strategy which was agreed unanimously by Full Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021. Future workstreams to be undertaken include taking an inventory of publicly and privately owned facilities within Bishop's Stortford which can be used by community and arts groups; furthermore to discuss with Hertfordshire County Council to

ensure local groups can access facilities at state schools outside of school hours.

3. Continue investigations into whether the cinema spaces within Old River Lane can be designed to allow larger capacity live performance events to be held on site.

4. Support the Old River Lane re-generation plans

After being requested by at least five members, a recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion, the result being:

FOR

Councillors Alder, Andrews, Beckett, Bell, Bolton, Boylan, Brady, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Burmicz, Crystall, Curtis, Cutting, Deering, Devonshire, Drake, Dumont, Fernando, Frecknall, Goldspink, Goodeve, Hall, Haysey, Hollebon, Huggins, Jones, Kaye, Kemp, McAndrew, McMullen, Newton, Page, Pope, Ranger, Redfern, Reed, Rowley, Ruffles, Snowdon, Stevenson, Stowe, Symonds, Ward-Booth, Williamson, Wilson, Wyllie

ABSTAINED

Councillor Crofton

For: 46

Against: 0

Abstained: 1

The motion was declared CARRIED.



The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Chairman .....
Date .....