

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD AS AN ONLINE MEETING
ON WEDNESDAY 22 JULY 2020, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Kaye (Chairman).
Councillors A Alder, D Andrews, T Beckett,
R Bolton, P Boylan, M Brady, E Buckmaster,
R Buckmaster, J Burmicz, L Corpe,
K Crofton, B Crystall, A Curtis, G Cutting,
B Deering, I Devonshire, H Drake,
J Dumont, R Fernando, 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,
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:

Richard Cassidy	- Chief Executive
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive
Rebecca Dobson	- Democratic Services Manager
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Jess Khanom-	- Head of

Metaman	Operations
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Simon O'Hear	- Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Bob Palmer	- Interim Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Sara Saunders	- Head of Planning and Building Control
Paul Thomas-Jones	- Environmental Health Manager - Commercial
William Troop	- Democratic Services Officer
Ben Wood	- Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy

83 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed those attending the online meeting, and any members of the public who were viewing the internet livestream.

The Chairman explained the protocol for voting and speaking. For votes on matters which were by "show of hands", Members would use the electronic green tick or red cross to signify voting "for" or "against". To

signify abstention from a vote, Members would use the blue “raise hand”. The Chairman said that, for the benefit of the public, he would then state whether the item was carried.

The Chairman asked whether there were any Members participating only by telephone. The response from all present indicated that no Members were doing so.

The Chairman then gave an account of his recent civic duties. He said that as most civic events had not been taking place during the pandemic restrictions, he could report on very little. However, he had been able to give cheques to his chosen charities, CHIPS (Children’s Integrated Playschemes) and Isabel Hospice. He had met the Chairman of CHIPS, and had been pleased to hear his plans for restarting play schemes.

84 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bell, Bull and Frecknall.

Upon taking a roll call of Members, it was established that Councillor Ranger was absent.

85 MINUTES – 13 MAY 2020

Councillor Kaye proposed and Councillor Huggins seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2020 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 13 May 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

86 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

87 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chairman invited David Royle, who was attending as a representative of the Bishop's Stortford Climate Change Group, to ask the question he had submitted.

Mr Royle asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability, Councillor McAndrews:

“The County Council declared a Climate Emergency on 16 July last year. On 24 July, this Council passed a climate change motion and committed to 'do everything...to reduce its impact on the climate and moreover do everything ... in supporting the whole of East Herts District to become carbon neutral by 2030'. This is only 9 years and six months away. What is the timescale for an action plan to meet this commitment, what progress has been made to date, and what will be the process of consultation on its final form?”

Councillor McAndrew responded as follows:

“Thank you for this question. Sustainability is at the heart of the council’s priorities. To that end, a detailed action plan linked to the council’s nine Climate Change commitments, including achieving carbon neutrality, has been drawn up. Importantly, the plan attempts to quantify the carbon efficiencies associated with individual actions.

The questioner may recall that we started sharing our work through the first East Herts Environmental and Climate Change Forum meeting held in Ware in January. While delayed by the lockdown, we are now preparing for a second Forum meeting via a videoconference at the start of September at which we can share the latest version of the action plan, seek comments and amend it accordingly as we consider it to be a ‘living document’.

Also in September, consultation will commence on the council’s new Environmental Sustainability Supplementary Planning Guidance which aims to facilitate reductions in carbon emissions from new buildings and maximise sustainability during development.

Finally, the council is aiming to maximise its influence and pool skills by playing a pro-active role in the newly formed Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership which brings together all ten districts, the County Council and the Local Enterprise Council. The Partnership will also be reaching out to the public and other groups through several conference events each year.

Mr Royle thanked Councillor McAndrew for his response.

88 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Chairman invited those who had submitted questions to put them to Executive Members.

Councillor Crystall asked Councillor McAndrew, the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

“According to the final report from the Climate Change Task and Finish Group, received by Council on 5th March 2019, EHDC should consider looking to procure 100% “green” energy (i.e zero carbon) in terms of corporate electricity supply contracts. How far has the council got with this process? Is he aware that Green Energy UK, one of the UK’s only wholly green energy suppliers which is offering 100% renewable electricity and 100% non-fossil fuel derived gas, is based in Ware, at the heart of our district?”

Councillor McAndrew responded as follows:

“May I thank Cllr Crystall for his question. In the first instance the council is identifying ways to reduce its base line energy use in its own premises so as to reduce carbon emissions at source. This is particularly important as an immediate switch to non-fossil fuel-derived gas is likely to be hampered by insufficient supply at present.

“That said, procurement of green energy is an important means of moving to carbon neutrality and

so the council's Property Services Manager continues to reassess the existing procurement contracts for both gas and electricity which run until 2024. Until that time, we will seek to maximise the 'green energy' within the mix of energy bought and also investigate the possibility for an option of an earlier review in 2021. At contract renewal, we intend to effect a more substantive switch to renewable energy. To that end, we would be very keen for Green Energy UK to become one of the suppliers included in the energy procurement framework we use and will advise them on applying."

Councillor Crystall asked a second question, as follows:

"The final report from the Climate Change Task and Finish Group, received by Council on 5th March 2019, recommended that the Council should investigate energy investment options that have potential to produce ongoing revenue return for the Council, along with carbon saving opportunities, e.g. electrical battery storage technology, renewables etc. on Council land. It was also recommended that an audit was conducted of Council owned sites which may be suitable for such projects. Apart from existing projects at the theatre, the hydro-scheme in Hertford and the two new leisure centres, has the Council made any progress in investigating investment options in renewables and how far has it progressed with the audit of Council owned sites?"

Councillor McAndrew responded:

"As Councillor Crystall rightly identifies, investment in

carbon reduction measures in relation to energy consumption can also include the opportunity to generate income from renewable energy generation or storage.

“Unfortunately, the council has not been able to identify sites in its ownership for viable solar photovoltaic (PV) generation. We recognise, however, that there is considerable theoretical potential for solar PV installation on community buildings that are not necessarily in the ownership of the East Herts. While the national economic mechanism to encourage installation has reduced the previous rate of return on investment I am hopeful that this will improve with the continued decrease in solar installation costs and possible new government support. We are keeping the situation under review.

“In relation to battery storage, this is a relatively fast moving area. On behalf of Hertfordshire, East Herts Council led the development of a regional energy strategy for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) which looked at sites that were under most stress in terms of grid capacity both now and from future housing development. We believe that major development sites such as Gilston may offer opportunities for use of future battery technology. In addition, the council has recently become one of only three partner authorities in Eastern New Energy, a major European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funded project, which is looking to develop innovative renewable generation and battery storage options as well as developing the associated technological skills for construct of such

infrastructure.

"I am therefore confident that East Herts Council will continue to play a very active role in identifying and deploying opportunities for energy generation and storage."

Councillor Huggins asked Councillor Cutting, the Executive Member for Corporate Services:

"What measures are being implemented to support officers' and Members' wellbeing during this period of remote working, with particular focus on their mental health?"

Councillor Cutting responded:

"It is important to not only say what measures have been implemented but also to ensure Members understand that we have a core set of measures already in place which have been adapted to the home working situation as well as adding more support to deal with challenges caused by home working and the pandemic.

"The council has continued to support staff with existing measures:

- Line management – which includes regular 1 to 1s with staff, this has continued but is carried out through Zoom or on the phone with staff working from home (WFH)
- Access to mental health first aiders has continued, again access has moved to email, with Zoom and

- phone support as required
- Access to the My-rewards Wellbeing Centre – which provides exercises, training, advice and guidance to maintain wellbeing/mental health
- Access to the Employee Assistance Programme which provides both telephone counselling and face to face counselling as appropriate. This access is also given to Members
- The majority of our line managers have been trained to support staff with mental health, this training took place in January/February 2020
- Regular team meetings and Staff Briefings to ensure staff remain informed, engaged and feel less isolated – again this has moved to Zoom
- MiCollab phone system chat system has continued to be used and it allows chat rooms to keep up less formal team working practices whilst working from home.

“In terms of additional support during this period of remote working the following are key highlights:

- Advice/guidance was given to staff/managers to help staff to improve their resilience whilst working at home
- Article featured in Connect reminding staff of the wellbeing support available to them including further mental health support from Able Futures, a new partnership which provides staff with up to 9 months support around their mental health. Advice from the Council’s Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), support from Mental Health First Aiders, access to the MyRewards Wellbeing Centre, and for further sources of support the

Wellbeing Hub on the Intranet. The article also provided support for those juggling childcare and work.

- Mental Health Awareness Week (18-24 May) was promoted with a series of daily articles on for example how employees can be kind to themselves and others during lockdown, how physical activity can help with wellbeing and promoting what's on offer at the Council for example online yoga sessions, exercise videos available on MyRewards website and promoting other sources of support mentioned above.
- Managers have agreed support for employees e.g. for those with caring responsibilities, having flexible start and finishing times and allowing staff to come into the office to work (on a limited and appropriate basis).
- Staff have been allowed to return to the office to collect further equipment to support them working more effectively from home for example laptops, mouse, keyboards.
- Bereavement guides for those who had lost loved ones due to Covid-19 or during the pandemic were shared with staff.
- A Wellbeing Survey was sent to all staff to identify how they could be supported further whilst working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic. The response rate was excellent (89% of all staff completed the survey) and the results were positive overall. Where staff experiences have not been so positive, managers are contacting staff to follow up discussions and put further support in place. The survey results and actions the council is proposing to take are being

shared with staff

- The Wellbeing survey allowed staff to raise any issues or concerns they had about working from home or eventually returning to the office so that the Council can support them and address any concerns, each employee is being phoned by their line manager with HR support to follow up on their survey, confirm support where appropriate (this includes staff who did not respond) and was completed on 10/7/2020.
- The Survey asked staff to inform us if they are currently shielding in line with government guidance so that further support can be provided to support this including further equipment being delivered to their home where appropriate
- Also in order to support mental wellbeing as well as complying with Government Guidance and H&S requirements: Risk Assessment have been completed for all Council services in relation to COVID-19 restrictions and safe practice. (Unison have been consulted on all as well as the staff who will then follow them. We have a main Wallfields Risk Assessment which allows limited numbers of staff to return to the office on a limited basis with clear Office Protocols for staff and Members to follow in order to adhere to social distancing requirements. Where a service requires work to be done away from the office or home, risk assessment have been undertaken and implemented to ensure this is done safely and relevant measures but in place including PPE being provided where identified.

Further measures which are being developed and implemented, based on the Staff Survey Results, which will also support mental wellbeing, are:

- East Herts Together have been tasked with developing guidance and briefings for employees to reduce email traffic/make more effective use of email.
- East Herts Together have also been tasked with sharing best practice from Revenues and Benefits in terms of effective home working including more use of MiCollab chat to avoid emails and sharing advice regarding building in breaks from the screen and having informal interactions with the team etc.
- East Herts Together have also been tasked with creating Zoom guides which focus on building in breaks and etiquette to make use more effective and less demanding.
- The Leadership Team will explore whether team, service or Council-wide level events could be arranged with social distancing measures in place which allows there to be a physical employee presence at an event to help support staff engagement and reduce feelings of isolation.”

Councillor Dumont asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

“Residents in my Ward are very concerned about the levels of litter they see in public spaces and I receive regular emails from concerned individuals. I am sure this will be familiar to other Members. Is the Executive Member aware of our Contractor’s performance in

relation to meeting the cleaning schedules for public spaces and what is he doing to hold them to account?"

Councillor McAndrew responded:

"We are aware that litter dropping and overflowing bins has increased since lockdown measures were introduced. In terms of our contractors we have two that manage this issue, Urbaser in terms of street cleansing and Glendale services in relation to parks and open spaces.

"Both of these contracts have performance management regimes in place which bear financial deductions should cleansing not be achieved at the standard we expect, I have regular meetings with the officers who manage these contracts.

"We have been in unprecedented times with more people using our parks and open spaces whilst other social venues have previously been closed. We have recognised this and both the frequency and standard of cleansing in parks and open spaces has increased, however it is not possible within our resources to patrol all areas to keep them free from litter all the time whilst there is an greater influx of people using our parks and open spaces.

"The frontline staff are doing everything they can to stay on top of the new demands. I would ask that we all encourage our residents to log any concerns with our customer services team so that we can monitor any trends and respond to these accordingly.

“We also need to explore how we can change the behaviours of those that produce litter in the first place, we need to deal with the cause of the problem not just the symptoms else we are simply reinforcing that we will continue to clean up after those that litter.”

Councillor Dumont thanked Councillor McAndrew, and said that, whilst he did not have a supplementary question, the many emails he had received regarding littering had preceded lockdown.

Councillor McAndrew asked that Members who received complaints of littering from residents should please send these to the Customer Services team.

Councillor Curtis asked the Executive Member for Planning and Growth:

“What measures will be implemented by the Council, other than those related to land use/spatial planning or involving the direct provision of financial support to local businesses, in the coming months and years to maintain and enhance the prosperity and vitality of East Hertfordshire's town centres?”

Councillor Goodeve, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, responded as follows.

“First, addressing what is going on now, major capital projects which will increase footfall are:

- Bircherley Green Regeneration – private sector initiative to include homes, shops, restaurants, recording studio, NHS facility, hotel, refurbished

bus station and waiting room. This project is anticipated to take 3 years to complete;

- Hertford Theatre Transformation to include first release cinema;
- Old River Lane, Bishops Stortford;
- New Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre, Bishop's Stortford – well-being is of course one of our objectives;
- Hartham Leisure Centre, Hertford - refurbishment and extension;
- Castle Park Project Bishop's Stortford – raising the profile of this heritage asset to near to the town centre to increase visitors.

“In terms of events, Town Centre Events Programmes will recommence when safe to do so.

“In terms of partnership working, East Herts has established Town Centre working groups including;

- Town Councils
- BIDs
- Hertford Hub
- Ware in Bloom
- Volunteers
- Night-time Economy Group in Hertford
- Mama Hive
- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Herts Chamber of Commerce
- Local Police
- Other local groups

“Next, addressing where do we go next, post Covid-19? This is not a conventional economic slow-down and we

don't know yet how consumers, retailers and manufacturers are going to react. Localisation is coming through, global trade will of course continue but modify. The stop in the economy has allowed people and businesses to think about what they want and need next. Above all businesses need to be flexible.

"Historically our towns have proven to be quite resilient and we have a small number of empty units compared to some other areas, retail was already struggling but post Covid-19 there are greater challenges, people have got used to shopping online and staying at home.

"On the supply side, digitisation has been accelerated, structural change cannot be stopped, town centre retail will be smaller and may have to change the way it does business. The hospitality sector faces other pressures from social distancing requirements and a public lack of confidence in face to face gatherings.

"Both sectors need assistance; the former in business transformation, the latter in terms of increased capacity to ensure viability.

"Local councils could have a role in facilitating strategic advice for small businesses and networking opportunities. East Herts are working with the Hertford Hub, Bishops Stortford Business Improvement District and the county business support organisations to ensure that the advice and support is available for business transformation. We are also organising the Town Centre working groups to give locally derived

strategic direction and vision to changes to the road layouts and licensing of chairs and tables and in the public areas of our towns. This includes on our assets where possible, for example Tudor Square in Ware is now being used by restaurants nearby to create a European style café culture by allowing al fresco dining whilst still leaving plenty of space for social distancing.

“On the demand side, some households have been negatively affected by Covid-19 and their income has dropped, others are better off not paying for rail travel into London and lunches away from home. However, people are reluctant to spend when their future incomes are seen as at risk.

“What can towns do to attract those working from home for the foreseeable future, and encourage them to take a walk and pop into town? Even once a week would be a help – or even work from a location in town to get out of the house. 45% of jobs can be done from home going forward, particularly in an area such as ours where knowledge-based employment is so prevalent. We recognise the rapid changes in working patterns and working practice. The use of cash has declined rapidly, banks firstly being shut and now being open limited hours has led to people having to learn how to use internet banking. This will accelerate the closure of high street branches – freeing up more units on the high street.

“So how do we attract people to the town centres? We want to create new, flexible workspace environments built around buzzing, active places, both in and around the town centre and out on the edge of town. This is

already happening with a mixture of both private and public sector initiatives. We need to support innovation and start-ups, providing the space and facilities not available at home. We opened our Launchpad facility just over two weeks ago after undertaking the necessary risk assessments and limiting numbers. Clients can book desk space and time slots on line and of course as these businesses often spend money in the town centre when they use the space. I'm also pleased to announce we plan to re-open the Ware Launchpad shortly in conjunction with the Town Council and have secured new tenants for the space.

"Shifting the balance of priority given to movement across our towns we need to encourage sustainable transport, incorporate more/better bike storage, places to sit and dwell, places to learn new skills, could opening hours be changed – become more continental as people's working hours become more flexible?

Pavement seating is being encouraged, people still want to connect with one another. Creative use of urban spaces to be encouraged and we are in discussions with Herts Highways about more permanent street furniture arrangements to the town centres, involving the local traders to make best use of the space available.

"More residential accommodation in town centres – 98 apartments as part of the Bircherley Green regeneration in Hertford, more homes being created above shops, new homes in Ware (Crane Mead nearing completion), Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's Stortford

strategic sites will all provide potential new customers and service users. We may, however, lose some shops to residential particularly those that are on the periphery of towns and perhaps more difficult to let especially under the new Permissive Development Rights regulations.

“Finally, we need to consider what other attractors we might have in our town centres – do we consider moving some of our Council services to town centres? What’s happening about our MP having an office/shop space in the constituency rather than in another County? Are there community groups that could be better placed in a town centre? Please could Members give this some thought.”

Councillor Curtis thanked Councillor Goodeve, and asked that these initiatives be focused more widely, and not solely on Hertford and Bishop’s Stortford.

Councillor Corpe asked the Executive Member for Corporate Services and the Executive Member for Communities:

“Name-blind recruitment is a process which involves removing the candidate’s name and other personal information to ensure that people will be judged on merit and not on their background, race or gender. In an effort to build a more diverse, inclusive workforce that better reflects the community we serve, will this Council commit to follow the example of numerous public sector organisations, such as TfL and the Civil Service, and implement this recruitment technique?”

Councillor Cutting, the Executive Member for Corporate Services, said his reply was also on behalf of the Executive Member for Communities. He said:

“The Council does not plan to implement ‘name blind’ recruitment for the following reasons:

“The Chairman of the Human Resources Committee, Councillor Bolton, on behalf of the Committee has confirmed that it is satisfied that a robust and fair recruitment process is in place.

“The Head of Paid Service, Richard Cassidy, the Chief Executive, has stated the following:

From my perspective as Head of Paid service it makes absolute sense to ensure that as an organisation we employ staff from as diverse a range of candidates as possible, to reflect our whole community at East Herts. After all, a diverse team will always bring new and different perspectives to the problems we face and help drive the innovation that we have been proud of over a number of years.

I am very happy that the Head of HR and OD review our current recruitment policies with our HR Committee as part of the reports provided. We have a devolved recruitment process that is based upon demonstrably matching candidates’ applications to a written person specification prior to selection for interview and this is independently audited on a regular basis by the Shared Internal Audit Services (SIAS) so we can have some confidence that the process is working and this is also supported by our last annual Equality Report. In terms of

Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) candidates I would be more inclined to focus on such things as how and where we are advertising, the language and visuals in any recruitment adverts and putting forward positive examples of how we have developed staff (including BAME staff) rather than simply adding a name 'blind' phase into the actual selection process. HR are developing the recruitment advertising and employer brand to support this, all our adverts state:

'EHC is an equal opportunity employer committed to embracing a diverse and inclusive work environment. We aim to attract and retain the best people regardless of their gender, marital/parental status, ethnic origin, nationality, age, background, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity.'

"The Head of HR & OD commented: the current HR and Payroll system does not provide a 'name blind' recruitment platform, however there is not sufficient evidence to support the need to implement this process:

All equality information and criminal record declarations are removed before shortlisting by capturing this on separate forms. It is important to outline that recruiting managers are supported by HR to recognise and manage unconscious bias (a guide is provided and recruitment training also covers promoting equality and removing any bias conscious or otherwise). More significantly the last annual Equality Report which was received by HR Committee at the beginning of 2020 covering the 18/19 period did not suggest bias was a concern based on statistics. As stated by the Chief Executive, we are working on our employer brand and recruitment messages to

continue to attract more diverse applicants in terms of BAME and other equality areas i.e. disability and gender.

“Significant additional data and interpretation of it will be made available on the website.”

Councillor Corpe thanked Councillor Cutting for his response. He referred to the 2018-19 Equalities Report, and said that whilst progress had been made, the table shown at figure 8 of that report gave him concern in that it showed evidence of a small degree of unconscious bias in the recruitment process during shortlisting of candidates. He asked whether this could be improved.

Councillor Cutting said the response he would place on the website would include a significant amount of data on the process.

Councillor Goldspink asked the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods:

“Is the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods aware of the plans being made by Manchester City Council to build 500 Affordable and Social Houses? Would he be willing to look at these plans as part of his current research into all the different methods of providing Social Housing?”

Councillor Boylan, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, responded:

“I wish to thank Councillor Goldspink for bringing to my attention Manchester City Council’s publicity about

their proposals for building homes in their city. It is my understanding that Manchester City Council has only just approved a proposal to establish a housing company, something East Herts Council did back in February 2018 with the setting up of Millstream Property Investments Ltd.

“Over the last three years, Manchester City Council has enabled a total of 1,105 new affordable homes, that is, 20 new affordable homes per 10,000 residents. This lags far behind East Herts Council’s performance of 45 affordable homes per 10,000 residents, some 675 homes in total over the same period. So, it is absolutely understandable that Manchester City Council is keen to explore new ways to provide more affordable housing tailored to the city’s particular needs.

“Despite East Herts Council’s relatively strong performance, as I have outlined previously, I am equally eager to explore the full range of options available for affordable housing matched, of course, to our own district’s specific needs. As you are aware, a detailed piece of work has been commissioned from the Housing Quality Network which will draw on the approaches of other authorities, such as Manchester City Council, as well as Members’ views and officers’ professional expertise, to provide us with a robust base on which to assess our opportunities for affordable housing delivery in the years to come.”

Councillor Haysey thanked the Chairman for having agreed she could make a statement on the recent discussions which were taking place on local government reform.

She said Hertfordshire was a multi-tiered authority, comprising the county council, the district and borough councils and the town and parish councils, each with their areas of responsibility. For residents, local government could appear complex and not necessarily transparent.

Some simplification was long overdue, but any reorganisation had to be right for residents and offer greater advantages over the existing structure.

The 10 leaders of Hertfordshire's districts and boroughs had issued a joint statement expressing their concerns that Hertfordshire County Council had already decided that the best way forward was through one unitary council covering the whole of Hertfordshire. She did not agree. Hertfordshire had a population of 1.2m, which she believed was too large to provide residents with the service and representation they were entitled to expect.

A unitary council would provide the vast majority of all the services currently provided by both the County and the District. However, there were other models which she and the other Leaders considered more appropriate. The 10 districts and boroughs were working with consultants to explore all options.

Councillor Haysey then expressed gratitude to East

Hertfordshire District Council staff. She said they had experienced a very difficult few months. They had kept services going, working from home, often away from their teams, and had been required to be flexible and learn new skills. She thanked all staff for “getting the job done” in their usual professional, cheerful way. They had shown the value this district council added to the lives of its residents over the last four months.

Now all faced the potential uncertainty of local government reorganisation. The White Paper, which might give more clarity, was due out in September. The Council would do its utmost to achieve an outcome that was in the best interests of residents and businesses.

Councillor Haysey then referred Members to the Executive report regarding matters considered at the meeting of 2 June 2020.

The following Minute refers to the item for recommendation.

90 GILSTON AREA CHARTER SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT - FINAL FOR ADOPTION

The Leader said a report had been submitted to the Executive on the proposed changes to the Gilston Area Charter Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Executive had recommended the proposals to Council. She moved that the recommendations be approved.

Councillor E Buckmaster seconded the motion. He said he had worked closely with the Neighbourhood Planning group on this matter, and was delighted it

was proceeding.

Councillor Goldspink said that, with the exception of one Member of her Group, the Liberal Democrat Group were happy to support these recommendations.

Councillor Wilson referred to the Minutes of the Executive meeting, which recorded concern expressed by Councillor Page regarding the need for strengthening affordable housing provision in relation to the Gilston Area SPD. Councillor Wilson said he shared this concern. The Council lacked power of enforcement if the developer were to retract its commitment to the level of affordable housing provision.

Councillor Haysey said she shared these concerns. This Council had high aspirations regarding the level of affordable housing on this site. The planning team worked very closely with the developers, who were aware of the provisions stated in the Council's policies, and had given assurances.

On being put to the meeting, and a vote taken, the motion to support the recommendations was declared CARRIED.

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

(B) The Gilston Area Charter SPD, as detailed in the 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 Gilston Area Charter SPD is not required as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects; and

(D) That the Head of planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, be authorised to make any further minor changes to the document which may be necessary.

91 EXECUTIVE REPORT – 7 JULY 2020

The Leader submitted a report setting out the recommendations of the Executive made at its meeting of 7 July 2020.

The following minutes refer to the matters recommended.

92 EAST HERTS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME - UPDATE JULY 2020

The Leader submitted a recommendation from the Executive on the East Hertfordshire Local Development Scheme.

Councillor Haysey said the Council now had an

adopted district plan, so the focus was now on the timelines for the various supplementary planning documents which were required. She proposed and Councillor Bolton seconded, a motion supporting the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Goldspink said she was happy to support this motion. She noted with pleasure the fact that reference was made in the report to the importance of community involvement and to requirements to reassess sites which might be subject to changing economic circumstances. She asked how Members could be kept involved.

Councillor Haysey said she recognised the importance of such assessment and that the Council did monitor changing circumstances.

Councillor Curtis said he was concerned regarding an aspect affecting his ward, the proposed quarry at the Hunsdon site. He asked whether the Council would stand up for residents of the surrounding villages.

Councillor Haysey said the Council had taken a position, and did not consider there was any reason to change that position.

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

RESOLVED - that the Local Development Scheme July 2020, as set out in the report, be agreed to take effect from July 2020.

93 CAPITAL CONTINGENCY

The Leader proposed a motion supporting the recommendations of the Executive on the establishment of an additional Capital Contingency.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, Councillor Williamson, seconded the motion.

Councillor Goldspink proposed additional wording “and be reported to all Members of the Council at the end of the week by means of the Members’ Information Bulletin”, to be added after “that use of the contingency be reported to the next meeting of the Executive”.

Councillor Wilson seconded the amendment, and said he reserved his right to speak if necessary. Councillor Williamson confirmed he had no issues with the wording.

There being no further debate, a vote was taken on the amendment, which was declared CARRIED. A vote being then taken on the substantive motion, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - that (A) a capital supplementary estimate of £2.5 million be established as a general capital contingency; and

(B) that use of the capital contingency be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability and that use of the contingency be

reported to the next meeting of the Executive, and be reported to all Members of the Council at the end of the week by means of the Members' Information Bulletin.

94 ANNUAL REPORT 2019 - 20

The Leader submitted the Annual Report for 2019-20, which the Executive had recommended to Council. She moved and Councillor Andrews seconded that it be noted.

Councillor Goldspink welcomed the report, and said it listed many achievements. She was, however, disappointed that no social housing was provided last year, and there appeared to be no reference to any action on climate change or global warming. If that was the case, then this was a serious omission, in view of the debate which had taken place a year ago on these matters.

Councillor Haysey said this report had been based on the priorities of the previous year, therefore climate change was reflected in the Council's new priorities ("*SEED*" – *Sustainability at the heart of everything we do; Enabling our communities; Encouraging economic growth and Digital by design*), and would be referred to in next year's annual report on the current year. Regarding the comment on social housing, this subject would also appear in next year's annual report, to reflect work being undertaken by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods. The appendices to the report gave more detailed information.

On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion to support the recommendation was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – to note the content of the Annual Report 2019-20.

95 PATMORE HEATH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth submitted a report on the Patmore Heath Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) and Management Plan. A number of alterations to the conservation area boundaries were proposed. Councillor Goodeve said the report was very comprehensive, and she commended Officers. She moved and Councillor Ward-Booth seconded that the recommendations in the report be supported.

Councillor Williamson said there had been a high degree of engagement. Various concerns of residents regarding which areas should be included in the conservation area had been addressed, as Officers had referred to the need to consider the national guidance and local policies. He trusted this approach had given residents the assurance they needed.

Councillor Goldspink said the Liberal Democrat Group supported the recommendations.

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

RESOLVED - that (A) the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Patmore Heath Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be supported;

(B) the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, be authorised to make any further minor and consequential changes to the document which might be necessary; and

(C) the Patmore Heath Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be adopted.

96 STREET TRADING CONSENT POLICY

Councillor E Buckmaster, the Executive Member for Wellbeing submitted a report on a review of the Street Trading Consent Policy.

Councillor Buckmaster said the report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which had made a number of recommendations. These recommendations were detailed in the report, and had been accepted by the Executive. He proposed and Councillor Cutting seconded, a motion that the proposals be supported.

Councillor Wyllie asked that a minor change be made, to ensure all references to sky lanterns were shown correctly, rather than using the phrase "Chinese lanterns".

Councillor E Buckmaster agreed to this correction. Councillor Goldspink said this policy would be flexible, and she supported it.

Councillor Wilson said a minor correction of the spelling of the word “peripatetic” should be made. He queried the rationale for additional condition (e) in Appendix 1 that peripatetic street traders should not wait in one location for more than 20 minutes. He did not think that restriction had been the practice before, and did not wish to impose restrictions unnecessarily.

Councillor Buckmaster said he would respond in writing.

Councillor Crofton said he welcomed this policy. Across the district, 60 playgrounds had opened last week following the Covid 19 lockdown. He asked about the process for ensuring that rural playgrounds were safe in terms of social distancing.

Councillor Buckmaster said he could not answer this question in the context of the present agenda item, but would respond separately. However, the onus would generally be on parents to ensure children’s safety.

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

RESOLVED – that (A) the proposed revised Street Trading Consent Policy be adopted by the Council;

(B) the proposed revised fees and charges structure as detailed in the Policy be agreed by the Council; and

(C) Any minor amendments to the new Policy be made by the Head of Housing and Health in consultation with the Executive Member for Wellbeing.

97 MOTION ON NOTICE - ANTI RACISM

Councillor Goldspink proposed a motion on notice on anti-racism. She spoke to the motion she had submitted, referring to the experience of many people who suffered institutional racism and setting out the importance of addressing unconscious bias. Her motion sought a commitment on the part of the Council to do all in its power to identify and end any instances of racism or prejudicial practices within its own organisation, and to appoint an external professional to assess the Council's activities in this regard, who would list actions to ensure diversity and equality pledges were fulfilled.

Councillor Wilson seconded the motion.

Councillor Bolton said that, as Chairman of the Human Resources Committee, she wished to emphasise that the Council had a statutory duty to comply with the Equalities legislation, and the Council published an annual report on how it had done so. The Council was opposed to racism in all its forms.

Councillor Williamson said that from a financial

perspective, Members were deeply aware of unbudgeted costs and of putting additional pressure on services.

Councillor Drake said she had submitted a motion on notice in similar terms without having initially been aware of Councillor Goldspink's motion. She therefore proposed amendments to the motion. The amendments were:

in the first paragraph, to add the wording "in the USA" and delete "America";

in the second paragraph, to delete the word "institutional" before "racism" and add " and discrimination" after the word "racism";

also in the second paragraph, to add the wording "that may exist" before the words "within its own organisation";

to delete the final paragraph starting "To ensure full transparency", and add two further paragraphs as follows: "East Herts Council stands united against all forms of inequality. As community leaders we must challenge injustices wherever and however they arise. We support the freedom of all individuals and all communities to speak out and share their experiences and frustrations and work alongside them and society as a whole to reduce overt prejudice and unconscious bias.

"As it is our responsibility to be part of the conversation, we will work with internal structures,

external groups and organisations to ensure an anti-racist culture is embedded in all that the council says and does as an employer and a provider of public services so we can better educate, understand and bring about positive change to achieve a more equal and fair society.”

Councillor Crystall seconded the amendment. He said the issues of inequality and racism had already started to slip down the news agenda, and it was important to keep them in mind. The wording of a motion was no substitute for action.

Councillor Corpe said he was pleased that the Council was considering a motion to condemn systematic racism. Whilst he welcomed the proposed amendments, it was a pity to remove the provision for an external professional to assess the Council’s procedures. The Council employed auditors such as EY and it should not mark its own homework.

Regarding the monitoring of inequality, Councillor Corpe said the report referred to by Councillor Bolton included a table, at figure 8, which indicated some systemic bias.

Regarding the point which Councillor Williamson had raised, Councillor Corpe said it was laughable that cost was a prohibitive factor against employing a consultant for the purpose of ensuring the Council’s own organisation was free from racist practices. The cost would likely be in the range of £10K to £15K, which seemed reasonable compared to the cost payable to the external auditor, EY, which was approximately

£40K each year. Further, it had been agreed this evening that officers could spend £2.5m without consulting Council. Finally, a number of other authorities, such as Havering and Dudley councils had commenced reviews of this nature. He concluded by saying that actions spoke louder than words.

Councillor Dumont questioned whether Councillor Williamson had been aware of the likely level of cost, given that scoping he had undertaken had shown the possible cost of employing a consultant to review the Council's organisation would amount to £10K - £15K. It was known that a diverse workforce increased productivity, so undertaking this exercise to ensure diversity would potentially result in a return on that investment.

Councillor Goldspink said she was against the amendment, which undermined the actions in the motion, and left only gentle words. The changed motion would do nothing to combat problems. The Administration had in previous debates said actions spoke louder than words. This Council had to show it was serious about anti-racism, but it was still looking at its organisation from a very white perspective, with little understanding of what it was like from the Black, Asian and minority ethnic group (BAME) perspective.

Councillor Wilson said this debate echoed previous debates, such as when his Group had pointed out that funding for the Citizens Advice Bureau would mean a return in investment. There was unity in that all here were opposed to discrimination, and the comments made tonight were intended not to criticise but to

improve. It was always possible to do better.

Councillor Redfern said she supported the comments of Councillors Goldspink and Wilson. The whole point of bias was that it was unconscious, so a third party assessment was necessary. She did not agree with the amendment, as it removed the teeth of the motion.

Councillor Beckett said he was proud to represent East Herts Council, but he would like to feel he could look residents in the eye and say he was sure there was no bias. The Council could only do so if it did not mark its own homework.

The amendment being put to the meeting, and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED, and became the substantive motion, as follows.

“This Council notes with serious concern and distress the death of George Floyd at the hands of the police in the USA, and the subsequent world-wide protests and demonstrations against systemic racism.

“This Council acknowledges that many members of our community continue to suffer the effects of racism and discrimination even today. This Council therefore resolves to do all in its powers to identify and end any instances of racism or prejudicial practices that may exist within its own organisation.

“East Herts Council stands united against all forms of inequality. As community leaders we must challenge injustices wherever and however they arise. We support the freedom of all individuals and all

communities to speak out and share their experiences and frustrations and work alongside them and society as a whole to reduce overt prejudice and unconscious bias.

“As it is our responsibility to be part of the conversation, we will work with internal structures, external groups and organisations to ensure an anti-racist culture is embedded in all that the council says and does as an employer and a provider of public services so we can better educate, understand and bring about positive change to achieve a more equal and fair society.”

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

RESOLVED – that this Council notes with serious concern and distress the death of George Floyd at the hands of the police in the USA, and the subsequent world-wide protests and demonstrations against systemic racism.

This Council acknowledges that many members of our community continue to suffer the effects of racism and discrimination even today. This Council therefore resolves to do all in its powers to identify and end any instances of racism or prejudicial practices that may exist within its own organisation.

East Herts Council stands united against all forms of inequality. As community leaders we must challenge injustices wherever and however

they arise. We support the freedom of all individuals and all communities to speak out and share their experiences and frustrations and work alongside them and society as a whole to reduce overt prejudice and unconscious bias.

As it is our responsibility to be part of the conversation, we will work with internal structures, external groups and organisations to ensure an anti-racist culture is embedded in all that the council says and does as an employer and a provider of public services so we can better educate, understand and bring about positive change to achieve a more equal and fair society.

98 MOTION ON NOTICE - WORKING TO ACHIEVE A MORE EQUAL AND FAIR SOCIETY

Councillor Drake confirmed that in view of the amendments to the motion on anti-racism which had been carried, she withdrew her motion on notice.

Councillor Crystall confirmed he agreed to such withdrawal as the seconder of the motion.

The meeting closed at 8.38 pm

Chairman
Date