

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD AS AN ONLINE MEETING
ON WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2020, AT
7.00 PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Cassidy	- 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- Metaman	- Head of Operations

Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Sara Saunders	- Head of Planning and Building Control
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive

193 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed all those attending the meeting online and those observing the livestream. He reminded Members that “show of hands” voting would be via the tools within the online software and that any Members who were participating by telephone would need to speak to say how they vote. He asked whether there were any Members who were attending by telephone.

Councillor Frecknall confirmed he was attending by telephone.

The Chairman then reported on his recent civic duties, including attending a service in St Alban’s Cathedral.

The Chairman referred to the Queen’s Birthday Honours List, and said he was delighted that a number of East Hertfordshire residents had received recognition. All had been invited to attend this meeting, and it gave him great pleasure to welcome to the meeting two recipients, Laura Higgins and Claire

Uwins, who were present. He outlined the achievements for which both had received recognition.

The Chairman said Laura Higgins, from Bishop's Stortford was the National Crime Agency's Head of Strategy and Portfolio within the Digital, Data and Technology team (DDaT). She had been awarded the MBE for her services in enabling the agency to maintain critical operational effectiveness during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Her leadership had ensured that over 3,500 officers were kept safe during lockdown, enabling effective remote working, and assured support and sustainment to the agency's investigative capabilities and services.

Laura Higgins said she was overwhelmed at having been nominated and was incredibly proud to receive this award. She was also very humbled that her contribution had been recognised in this way. She said it was important to her that this recognition was not just of her personally but rather the role the NCA had in protecting the public. This year had been a challenge for everyone and this award was an incredible bright spot in an otherwise difficult time. Having the agency's work and contribution to law enforcement recognised on such a level was something for all her colleagues to be proud of.

The Chairman said Claire Uwins, who had received a BEM for services to her rural community in Much Hadham, had initiated a wonderful project that had seen the village come together during the virus. She had set up a buddy system whereby residents had

kept in contact with more isolated members of the community. Councillor Devonshire had buddied with a 94-year-old lady for whom he did shopping, picked up medicines, posted letters and generally kept an eye on her welfare. The scheme had expanded into the surrounding areas, including Perry Green, Green Tye and Hunsdon.

Claire had also expanded her Sunday Lunch Club which she had run for many years. People could turn up at a local pub for lunch at no cost in a friendly atmosphere.

Claire Uwins addressed the meeting. She said she had felt humbled to have received the honour on behalf of the health centre. She thanked all Members, and in particular the Leader, who had originally suggested to her 10 years ago that she might wish to consider volunteering. She paid tribute to Colin Woodward, who had encouraged her work with Stepping Stones. She said she also wished to thank Councillor Goldspink.

The Chairman then mentioned Tony Eastaugh and Marian Newman who were unable to attend this meeting. He said Tony Eastaugh, from Bishop's Stortford, was a specialist in command and control systems and processes and director of immigration enforcement at the Home Office. He was named a CBE for services to law and order. He had been a commander in London's Metropolitan Police Service since 2009 and before that, as a chief superintendent, was the borough commander for Barking and Dagenham for 21 months.

The Chairman read out a statement received from Tony Eastaugh, who had said he felt very humbled to have received this honour and saw it as recognition of the crucial and often unseen work played by hardworking civil servants, alongside colleagues in law enforcement and the intelligence services, in keeping the public and country safe.

The Chairman then spoke about Marian Newman, who had received a BEM for services to the beauty industry during Covid-19, and lived in the village of Waterford. Her response to the Covid-19 crisis had been to set up a group on Facebook so nail professionals could come together, sharing concerns and offering support to each other, as the salon industry came to a halt. The British Beauty Council had then asked her to write guidelines for nail professionals returning to work. On release of the guidelines her group extremely quickly became a place the nail industry turned to, to obtain advice and support. Her group now had around 5,000 members and through this platform she had guided an industry that was worried, anxious and concerned about their businesses, their livelihoods and their future.

Members expressed their congratulations to all the District's recipients of the Birthday Honours, with a round of applause.

194 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bull and Crystall.

195 MINUTES – 22 JULY 2020

Councillor Jones proposed, and Councillor Fernando seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 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 22 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

196 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

197 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chairman invited Chris Ramsden to ask his question.

Chris Ramsden asked the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability the following question:

“The Council has been wise to re-examine the current business plans for the impact of Covid and Brexit. If I am not mistaken, the capital budget over the next 4 years is 120M which is a considerable amount of money, and if borrowed at existing interest rates would lead to an annual finance charge of just under 6M which is roughly 40% council tax income. If any of

these figures are wrong, I am of course happy to be corrected. In the interests of prudent financial management and Council taxpayer buy in, all business plans should be independently, objectively and transparently reviewed by publishing as much information as possible so that interested Council tax payers are able to assess the position and that they are assured that the plans are robust to future changes, likely to achieve the benefits and planned returns, and that the risks of non-achievement are manageable. In my attempts to achieve this, my brief investigations have encountered a number of issues including entire documents being restricted and missing figures. In order for such a review to occur:

- All business plans currently being re-examined should be published. If there is a need to restrict any content, then they should be published in a way that minimises the restriction to sensitive data only.
- All published business plans should contain figures for Top line (total revenue), broken down into components, the various deductions, and the bottom line (council contribution surplus/subsidy). Various deductions includes figures for direct costs, indirect costs, staff costs, financing costs, and service costs as separate line items.

“The council tax payer (as end customer, ultimate funder and risk taker) requires from the review assurances that:

- there is high confidence that the top and bottom line figures are achievable, and that any risks of

- non-achievement are manageable;
- all assumptions are valid over a time period of at least the duration of the loans;
- the plans are robust with respect to any future long term Covid consequences and new trends including possible changes to car parking needs, cinema going use, retail shopping habits and EH residents working at home etc.

“Please will the Council:

1. publish the business plans as openly and transparently as possible (along the lines above) in a report to Council;
2. perform an independent open, and objective review that publishes as a report the answer to the question ‘What assurances can the Council give that each business plans is viable and that, for example, an independent hard-nosed business person would invest in each project?’

Councillor Williamson, the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, gave the following response.

“Thank you for your question Mr Ramsden. Within your question you say you are happy to be corrected if any of the figures you have given are wrong so, if I may, for the public record and to give context to my answer, I do feel it necessary to state the following:

- First, the capital programme as agreed by the Council in January is indeed £120M as you have correctly stated. However, not all of this is being used on our major schemes – there is a range of

other small and medium sized projects into which we are also making capital investment included in this number, and not all involve bricks and mortar;

- Secondly, there is no need for us to borrow anything close to the full amount as we are starting with considerable capital reserves, and furthermore the business cases include costs of any borrowing required, and still meet the rate of return test;
- Thirdly, for such borrowing as may be needed, the interest rates on public sector borrowing sourced via the Public Works Loans Board are much less than the 5% you have been working with – depending on the type and term of the loan, rates as of last Friday ranged between 2.2 and 2.73%.
- Lastly and this is really key, I should also make it clear that once the leisure centres are completed the operator will move from requiring a subsidy to paying money to the Council making a major saving on the revenue account. Similarly Hertford Theatre, once complete, moves from requiring a subsidy to returning a surplus. This means that rather than the schemes being a burden on our Council Tax payers, the improved revenue position actually releases resources which can be used to support the delivery of other Council services. However the key driver behind these projects is not just the financial return, but that we will be providing enhanced facilities for our residents. Due to these non-financial community values there is therefore a key distinction between how a local authority views investing in its projects to the way a private business person would, hard-nosed or otherwise.

“Nonetheless it is quite right that the business cases for our major projects do undergo appropriate degrees of scrutiny and there are various levels of scrutiny that the Council has in place.

“Various senior officers of the Council are directly involved with the projects and keep a watching brief on viability as each project progresses. Particular among these is our Head of Strategic Finance and Property who acts as what is known as our Section 151 Officer, a post every authority is required to have by law and must be held by a qualified accountant, and he has responsibility for the proper administration of the Council’s financial affairs. In addition he has a statutory responsibility to report in the public interest if the Council is about to, or has incurred unlawful expenditure or is setting an unbalanced budget.

“In terms of being tough and ruthless with costs, arguably local government finance officers are particularly adept – they have assisted local authorities to survive the last decade of decreasing central government funding and in this time out of many hundreds only one council has failed, requiring government intervention. There are also a number of Council Members here with considerable business acumen, who look at and vote on the budget. Indeed it was a call from Members that led to the recent full reviews of the major project business cases to be undertaken, particularly in the light of this changing world we are now living in, as you have alluded to. Therefore you and the public can be assured that the budget and the major projects business plans have

been subject to a rigorous examination by the Section 151 officer and others using a range of scenarios and have proved robust. I can also assure you that the Section 151 officer continues to challenge colleagues and Members on expenditure and risks, as is quite right and proper. The Section 151 officer has also informed me that our external auditors, Ernst and Young, will examine the business cases during the current year's audit to assess their value for money and their effect on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

"Following completion of the reviews, (and I am addressing my colleagues here too) in order to give all Members a full briefing, the Chief Executive is arranging for Members to be invited to an information session at which they will receive a presentation on each business case and Members will have the opportunity to ask searching questions. Many Members of the Council who are hard-nosed business people will, no doubt, bring their skills to bear.

"However in terms of the public or independent scrutiny that you have requested, I am advised by our Section 151 Officer, and our Monitoring Officer who safeguards the Council's legal position, that the major projects business cases cannot be put in the public realm, because they contain information that would prejudice current and future tendering for the works to be carried out. Quite simply, if these business cases were public knowledge then bidders for contracts would know our budgets for construction and for contingencies and then their prices would simply reflect those budgets. To put it in very formal terms,

the information is exempt from publication under Paragraph 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, as it contains the amount of any expenditure proposed to be incurred by the authority under any particular contract for the acquisition of property or the supply of goods or services. So whilst I cannot place these business cases into the public domain, I hope that the measures I have outlined reassure you and other council tax payers of East Hertfordshire that the business cases have been subject to full governance and democratic scrutiny and will continue to be so."

The Chairman asked Chris Ramsden whether he wished to ask a supplemental question.

Chris Ramsden asked whether Councillor Williamson would look more thoroughly at what could be published, and whether once tenders had been agreed, more information could be published.

Councillor Williamson said that in accordance with advice of the s.151 Officer and Monitoring Officer he could only publish the information which had been published. Any sensitive material which was not in the public domain would only be published once the data was no longer sensitive.

The Chairman invited Yvonne Estop, a representative of the Bishop's Stortford Climate Change Group, to ask her question.

Yvonne Estop asked the Executive Member for Planning and Growth the following question.

“The Bishop’s Stortford Climate Change group is very concerned that the planning white paper seriously threatens your policy-making role as Local Planning Authority, and gives unconstrained freedoms to developers. Can you let us know what representations you have made to the government challenging the white paper?”

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth, Councillor Goodeve, responded as follows:

“The Council will be submitting a detailed response to the Planning White Paper. The draft response is currently being considered via the non-key decision route and is available to view on the Council’s website.

“The Council’s final response also will be available to view on the website in due course.”

Yvonne Estop thanked Councillor Goodeve and asked, as a supplemental question, whether the Executive Member would undertake to vigorously pursue the matters raised as representations, and would interrogate the white paper to ensure local authority planning obligations were consistent with the Environment Bill.

Councillor Goodeve referred Yvonne Estop to the Council’s response and said the public could also comment on the white paper.

The Chairman invited Martin Adams to ask his question.

Martin Adams asked the following question:

"I consider that the published policies Map being presented today is inaccurate because a part of it was not a part of the normal Plan adoption process. I am referring to a change to the village boundary at Millers View, Much Hadham. My research indicates that it was not consulted upon, or presented to Council for adoption. I believe it was added entirely as a staff initiative.

"As per my two letters to Mr Cassidy I consider this to be a significant change, and that it has not been handled in a Democratic fashion. I have repeatedly put forward questions about this change that have never been answered, as per my second letter to Mr Cassidy.

"I would request that this Boundary change is withdrawn by staff because it was drafted after the Plan was adopted. Failing that I would like to see the matter opened up for proper consultation, so that my unanswered questions (as per my second letter) can be considered alongside comments from other interested parties.

"Staff have always dealt with my queries politely and respectfully, but I believe their overall response has been to say 'We're sorry that it happened this way, but we won't consider changing it'.

"I would ask Council to support the request that I make above. This would ensure fairness, consistency of decision making and ensure proper consultation about

Planning Decisions.”

The Leader responded as follows:

“To clarify, Mr Adams’ request does not directly relate to the material within the report before members tonight, this report seeks to make 3 factual amendments to Policy CFLR1 on the policies map in Perry Green and Green Tye. Mr Adams’ request relates to a concern about the Much Hadham village boundary and how the materiality of the boundary could impact upon a planning application at Millers View in Much Hadham – which has been refused and is currently at appeal.

“Mr Adams refers to a change that was made to the Much Hadham village boundary following the District Plan examination. Mr Adams is concerned that the change was made without consultation and does not reflect the built-up area of Much Hadham. Officers have previously advised that the area in question was incorporated into the village boundary to be consistent with Policy VILL1 which notes that village development boundaries are drawn around the main built-up area of the village. As such, the change made to the village boundary at Much Hadham was to incorporate a development that was being built-out at Millers View during the examination period. Once built out this development would clearly form part of the main built-up area of the village and its inclusion ensured that the policies map was consistent with policy VILL1.

“In response to the specific questions that Mr Adams raises: the Council is required to maintain a policies

map, the function of which is to geographically illustrate the application of the policies in the District Plan. The process for updating the policies map differs from the process for adopting a District Plan as the Local Planning Authority is only required to update its policies map to ensure that it is consistent with the adopted District Plan.

“Any changes that are required to be made to the policies map to ensure its consistency during the District Plan examination process are only considered as minor changes. There are no requirements to consult on any minor changes as they do not affect the soundness of the Plan and are not matters considered by a Planning Inspector.

“Officers identified a number of minor changes to assist the public and members during the examination process, some of those minor changes included changes to the policies map – despite the fact there was no requirement to do so. The change to the Much Hadham village boundary was not incorporated into the minor changes table that was presented to members on October 23rd 2018 as the aforementioned build-out of the Millers View development was not identified until after the main modifications consultation. However, the change was made to the policies map to ensure that the LPA addressed its responsibility of maintaining a consistent and up-to-date policies map upon adoption of the District Plan.

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The Chairman asked Martin Adams whether he wished to ask a supplemental question.

Martin Adams said there were inconsistencies to the village boundaries, which he had raised on numerous occasions but to which he had not had a satisfactory response. He thanked Councillor Haysey for her answer, but queried why she considered that his house, after 60 years, should be included in the village boundary, when other places which seemed more obviously would be included were not.

Councillor Haysey said the further question was not relevant to the policies maps, but to how the boundaries were determined. That determination was not for full Council to consider, as it was a planning matter.

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map, the function of which is to geographically illustrate the application of the policies in the District Plan. The process for updating the policies map differs from the process for adopting a District Plan as the Local Planning Authority is only required to update its policies map to ensure that it is consistent with the adopted District Plan.

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“Officers identified a number of minor changes to assist the public and members during the examination process, some of those minor changes included changes to the policies map – despite the fact there was no requirement to do so. The change to the Much Hadham village boundary was not incorporated into the minor changes table that was presented to members on October 23rd 2018 as the aforementioned build-out of the Millers View development was not identified until after the main modifications consultation. However, the change was made to the policies map to ensure that the LPA addressed its responsibility of maintaining a consistent and up-to-date policies map upon adoption of the District Plan.

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Martin Adams said there were inconsistencies to the village boundaries, which he had raised on numerous occasions but to which he had not had a satisfactory response. He thanked Councillor Haysey for her answer, but queried why she considered that his house, after 60 years, should be included in the village boundary, when other places which seemed more obviously would be included were not.

Councillor Haysey said the further question was not relevant to the policies maps, but to how the boundaries were determined. That determination was not for full Council to consider, as it was a planning matter.

198 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Ruffles asked the Executive Member for Wellbeing the following question.

“I’m aware that a number other agencies worked with Highways at County trying to ensure that our High Streets and Shopping Centres were able to re-open safely. Could the Executive Member for Wellbeing please explain the role of our East Herts Environmental Health team, and describe any particular challenges they may have faced?”

Councillor E Buckmaster responded as follows:

“The Environmental Health team has been playing a pro-active role supporting local businesses throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. This has included contacting more than 400 local businesses to give detailed, bespoke advice including undertaking advisory visits or phoning or writing to businesses to share information about how to operate safely with regards to both staff and customers alike. This is key way in which the council has sought to ensure business owners and managers are up-to-date on the latest regulations.

“Environmental Health officers have been conducting a significant amount of their duties outside of the council’s normal office hours so as to reach businesses when they are operating. This is particularly the case with cafes, restaurants and pubs. When the 10pm closing time was recently introduced, the team conducted 42 joint visits with the police to local businesses operating in the night time economy on a single Saturday night.

“To date the team have followed up 557 individual reports from the public, members, the police and others about businesses appearing to not be following the guidance properly. The team’s stance whether in response to a report or during a proactive visit is a supportive rather than a punitive one with a four Es approach being adopted to ensure compliance for everyone’s safety; that is, engagement, explanation, encouragement and then finally enforcement, although to date this later approach has not been necessary.

“Support to help local businesses stay afloat at this challenging time has also included the Licensing team speedily setting up a process to licence tables and chairs on the pavement. Being able to serve customers outside can overcome some of the restrictions applicable indoors. Any premises that sell food or drink for consumption either on or off the premises may apply. This is a temporary measure which acts as an alternative to the pavement licences that Hertfordshire County Council has the power to issue. East Herts Council’s licences are time-limited and the fee is less than a third of the cost of a licence issued by the County Council because the measure is expressly about helping businesses while of course, not interfering with the safe use of pavements. To date, the council has issued two pavement licences in Hertford and one in Bishop’s Stortford. ”

Councillor Ruffles thanked Councillor Buckmaster and asked as a supplemental question, what had been happening about Test and Trace.

Councillor Buckmaster responded as follows:

“It is worth noting that on top of this work, since the beginning of October, Environmental Health officers have also been involved with the local test and trace system. If neither the national tracing service nor the County Council can contact someone known to have been in close contact with a person with the virus, the Environmental Health team will pick up the case and try to find a phone number or knock on people’s door if that what it takes. Since the beginning of October, the team has worked on 44 such cases.

“The level of the workload and fast pace with which new national guidance is issued is challenging. This is continuing with much fresh information needing to be communicated to businesses and the public alike. The small team of officers have worked collaboratively across the county and have re-prioritised their work, often at short notice.”

Councillor Ward-Booth asked Councillor E Buckmaster the following question:

“Could the Executive Member for Wellbeing give Council an update on our Social Prescribing programme? Prior to Covid the service had been referring many hundreds of residents to community activities. How and to what extent could the service operate during the months of lockdown and restricted movement?”

Councillor Buckmaster responded as follows:

“I’m happy to report that East Herts Social Prescribing service has continued to operate throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, providing support over the phone. The number of clients referred to the service during April and May was lower than previously but have since steadily returned to pre-Covid levels.

“In 2019, 254 clients were supported through this service, and 122 so far this year. During lockdown more than 500 residents who had used the service previously were contacted as part of the welfare checks.

“Telephone support to new and existing clients has been very well received. Many of them are particularly vulnerable to Covid due to age and/or existing conditions, so the Social Prescribing service will continue to support them over the phone until further guidance suggests it is safe to return to face to face support.

“To date, East Herts Social Prescribing Service has used council resources and Hertfordshire County Council funds to focus efforts on the Stort Valley area in the east of the district. However we are currently looking at how to roll out the service more widely and/or combine its work with the county-wide Community Navigators and other similar services provided directly by the County Council and local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group. A further development of Social Prescribing is Healthy Hubs. This was launched using funding from County Public Health before lockdown as two physical locations to support people with advice and healthy lifestyle choices but unfortunately could no longer be held in that way. However I’m pleased to say that this month we have been able to start again but this time virtually or online with a number of partners to help people with their physical and mental wellbeing.”

Councillor Ward-Booth asked, as a supplemental question, whether the Executive Member could provide more information on Healthy Hubs.

Councillor Buckmaster responded as follows.

“In East Herts, this funding is being used for publicity materials and resources for participating partners to provide advice and support sessions and with the existing Social Prescribing service to act as a referral and signing posting route.

“The original plan was for partner organisations, such as Mind in Mid Herts, East Herts Citizens Advice and East Herts CCG among others, to run one-to-one and group sessions at Wallfields, with a satellite offer in Bishop’s Stortford.

“As mentioned work has now been undertaken to move the Healthy Hub to a virtual platform. In September, the Healthy Hub was completely relaunched offering 25+ virtual sessions a month starting in October, including sessions covering mental wellbeing, healthy eating, coping with cancer, support through bereavement and becoming a ‘dementia friend’.

“The Healthy Hub activities are being promoted via our Social Prescribing scheme, the council’s social media, and by the partners delivering the sessions. Uptake for the first sessions has been modest, with only a handful of people signing up, however, this is to be expected given the switch in format. Officers are confident that participation will grow as the scheme becomes more established.

“A rolling programme of virtual sessions, which are free to access, will continue to be delivered every month until face to face sessions are able to resume.

“Finally, I must offer my deepest thanks, not only to our staff who have worked so hard, but also to our members who have demonstrated great resilience, and of course our parishes and community that has stepped up to support vulnerable residents across the District. I know from conversations I have had recently that many, such as BS Operation Community are beginning to gear up again should the need arise.”

Councillor Andrews asked the Leader the following question:

“What steps is the Council taking to lobby central Government for additional funding for local authorities, such as East Herts, to help contribute towards the financial difficulties faced by the impact of the coronavirus pandemic?”

Councillor Haysey responded as follows.

“Let me first of all say that up to 15 October the government has already paid £43.8 million to East Herts Council with a further £9.2 million due but not yet received. The money already received is made up of:

- £41 million for East Herts Businesses - business rates relief, government grants to businesses, discretionary business grant money and support for Bishops Stortford BID
- £0.9 million for increased Local Council Tax support claims, increased Housing Benefit claims and money for discretionary accommodation for rough sleepers

- £1.8 million in grant to compensate the Council for lost income and also for new burdens

The money to be received is made up of:

- £8.7 million for business rate relief
- £0.192 million for increased housing benefit claims
- £92k for Test and Trace
- £49k for COVID Marshalls
- £71k for discretionary accommodation for rough sleepers

“The government scheme to compensate councils for the loss of income from sales fees and charges requires the Council to absorb the first 5% loss fully, after which the government will compensate 75p for every £1 lost. The rules on the compensation scheme exclude commercial rent losses and any investments but covers income which is transactional between the customer and the council so covers, for example, income from parking charges, theatre tickets, and planning applications. Claims are based on losses against the budget which helps the Council as fees and charges had been increased and thus the income budgets as part of the 2020/21 budget.

“There is still a lot to do and we need a longer term financial security and settlement, but we are grateful to the government for listening to the concerns of local authorities so far.

“This answer will be put on the website shortly tomorrow and further detail will also put onto the website.

“The Council continues to support the work on the Local Government Association in making the case of additional funding and we talk to our MPs to get the message through to government about funding.”

Councillor Andrews asked, as a supplementary question, what networks and opportunities the Leader had used to get the message across to government about the burdens local authorities were facing.

Councillor Haysey responded as follows.

“It is important we all recognise that local authorities have worked very hard in stating to Government the requirement for additional funding. The Leaders of HCC and the district and borough councils have been meeting, since March, initially once a week, and now once every two weeks, and we have conversations with the Ministerial Office every two weeks. The Local Government Association (LGA) has been very strong in lobbying the Government. “The Leader of the County Council is the Chairman of the County Councils Network, and has close contacts with Ministers. I am the Chairman of the East of England LGA and we are working on a regional basis to make sure the Government is very clear what challenges they face.”

On being invited to ask her question, Councillor Goldspink said whilst she had submitted to the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability the following question, it had been partly answered in his response to the public question asked by Mr Ramsden. Her initial question had been:

“Will the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability commit to publicising the latest report on the financial viability of the Council’s Capital Projects, and will he also publish the business cases for the projects and make them all easily available to members of the public?”

Councillor Goldspink said she had been disappointed in the response given earlier in the meeting. Therefore, as the first part of her question had already been answered, she would move straight to her supplementary question. She said she was disappointed that this response had indicated that the project board reports could not be published as unredacted documents, so when would the reports be published and when would the briefing take place?

Councillor Williamson said he understood that the provisional date for the briefing was 11 November. In terms of when the reports were to be placed in the public domain, such publication would only be at such time as any sensitive information was no longer sensitive. That would only be possible once all contracts for the projects had been placed, so it was difficult to confirm a timescale.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Goldspink asked a further supplementary question.

She asked when Members would be able to view the reports, would this be before the briefing or at the briefing?

Councillor Williamson said he would seek confirmation about that point, and let Councillor Goldspink know as soon as practical.

Councillor Goldspink then asked her second question on notice, which she put to the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, as follows:

“Why did the Executive Member for Planning and Growth decide to take a Non-Key Decision on this Council’s response to the Consultation on the Government’s White Paper on changes to the Planning System, rather than bringing it to Full Council for open, public discussion?”

Councillor Goodeve said it had not been possible to draft the response to the white paper in time to meet the committee cycle deadlines for reporting to the recent meeting of Council. This approach had been followed on previous occasions in relation to Government consultations where the timescales had not dovetailed with the committee cycle deadlines.

Councillor Goodeve added that the Council’s proposed response was, however, available for the public to view on the Council’s website. As the timings had not allowed for including the response on the Council agenda, a Members’ briefing had been held on 15 October to ensure Members were briefed on the Council’s response and that they had an opportunity to ask questions.

Councillor Goodeve said it should also be noted that the consultation was open to everyone to respond to

and the Government is keen to hear from a wide range of interested parties from across the public and private sectors, as well as from the general public.

Councillor Goldspink asked, as a supplemental, why, when the draft responses were available over a week ago, could the report not have been brought to full Council tonight, to debate it in the public domain. She said there were flaws in the document, and it would have been good to demonstrate to residents of East Herts that the Council was responding in a robust manner. She asked whether Councillor Goodeve shared her disappointment that such an opportunity had been lost, due to the response being dealt with away from the public gaze as a non-key decision.

Councillor Goodeve said she did not share that view at all. The matter had been in the public domain and had had substantial public attention, including from professional bodies. The document was available on the Council's website, and the response would not be submitted until later in the month.

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

“On 11th February 2020, the Executive received the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group on Parking. Among its recommendations was a suggestion to change the threshold for eligibility for Restricted Parking Zones (RPZ), which would alleviate many parking issues faced by residents in our wards. I can personally say that All Saints Ward would greatly benefit from such a change in position. The Executive

asked officers to bring a further report setting out cost implications. I recall that Officers stated informally that such a report would take some 6-8 weeks to produce.

We are now eight months down the line, and no update on this item has come forward. The pandemic of course has changed priorities, but also exacerbated parking challenges, so the changes in policy are needed now more than ever. Can the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability please comment on when we might expect the council to adopt the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, and change the policy on RPZ eligibility?"

Councillor Graham McAndrew responded as follows.

"Officers have been extremely busy responding to the impact of COVID-19, however an update report will be presented at the Executive meeting on 24 November 2020. As stated in the February meeting, the recommendations will be presented in the context of financial impact which has changed significantly since the beginning of the year. Receiving the report in November will be timely in light of the medium term financial plan and preparing next year's budget."

Councillor Corpe asked, as a supplemental question, whether the recommendations regarding the RPZ could be dealt with individually rather than all together, so that some could be taken forward.

Councillor McAndrew said no specific approach to the recommendations had yet been determined, and the report would take such matters forward.

The Chairman said the 15 minutes allotted for Members' questions had been exceeded, so no time remained for the next two questions. The responses to all questions, including those which had not been answered due to lack of time, would be published on the website.

199 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 1 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Leader presented a report on the matters considered at the meeting of the Executive on 1 September 2020. She said that meeting seemed a long time ago now, as a significant focus on measures to tackle Covid-19 was continuing for all local authorities. She congratulated the recipients of the Queen's Birthday Honours. They had demonstrated a real sense of looking after their community and were a credit to society and to this District.

Councillor Haysey referred to the recommendation in the Executive report regarding the updated safeguarding policy, which had been submitted for Council's approval with no amendments made by the Executive.

Minute xx refers to the item for recommendation.

200 REVISED SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said he was delighted to propose this item. The guidance reflected national guidance and now included additional areas such as management of VIP visits and

safer recruitment. The item had been supported by the Executive with no amendments.

Councillor Curtis seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink said the Liberal Democrat Group were happy to support the proposals, which were comprehensive.

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

RESOLVED – to adopt the updated Safeguarding Policy, as set out at appendix A in the report to the Executive on 1 September 2020.

201 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 6 OCTOBER 2020

The Leader presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the Executive at its meeting on 6 October 2020.

Minutes xx, xx, xx and xx refer to the four items on which recommendations were made.

202 EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN – AMENDMENTS TO POLICIES MAP

Councillor Haysey presented the recommendation which was referred to in the Executive report of 6 October 2020, regarding amendment of inaccuracies in the adopted East Hertfordshire District Plan Policies Map.

Councillor Devonshire, as the Ward Member for the area affected, proposed that the recommendation in the Executive report (at Minute xx above) be supported.

Councillor Goodeve seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink said the Liberal Democrat Group were happy to support the motion.

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

RESOLVED - that the amendments at Appendix B to the report be noted and approved to form part of the adopted East Herts District Plan 2018 Policies Map.

203 POLICY FOR ENFORCING STANDARDS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR LANDLORDS

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods proposed the recommendation made by the Executive, as referred to in the Executive report of 6 October 2020, in respect of new housing standards enforcement powers. The measures, which had been developed with other local authorities, would help improve housing standards and would provide for civil penalties to be imposed in a consistent way. He proposed a motion to support the recommendation.

Councillor Symonds said these measures had been

anticipated for a considerable time. She seconded the motion.

Councillor Goldspink said the Liberal Democrat Group supported the policy, but she questioned what would happen to tenants affected by banning orders. She asked whether a small amendment could be made to ensure the Council confirmed it would be alert to the needs of tenants.

Councillor Redfern supported Councillor Goldspink's comments.

Councillor Boylan said he took note of the point raised, but that there was no need for an amendment, as Officers would take all due consideration required in applying the policies.

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

RESOLVED – that the following policies relating to housing standards enforcement, using powers introduced in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 be adopted, as set out in Appendix C to the report submitted to the Executive on 6 October 2020:

- (1) Issuing of civil penalties;
- (2) Applications for rent repayment orders;
- (3) Applications for banning orders; and
- (4) Use of the Rogue Landlords and Property Agents Database.

204 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2021/22

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed a motion to support the recommendation of the Executive to Council on continuation of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021/22. He said the arrangement helped the most financially vulnerable citizens in the District, and he was pleased to recommend that it should continue unchanged.

Councillor Kemp seconded the motion.

Councillor Goldspink confirmed her Group's support for this item.

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

RESOLVED - to continue the current local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021/22.

205 IN PRINCIPLE AGREEMENT TO USE OF CPO POWERS TO ACQUIRE LAND TO IMPLEMENT GILSTON AREA DEVELOPMENT INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

The Leader presented the recommendation from the Executive on in principle agreement to use compulsory purchase order powers to secure land for the delivery of transport infrastructure in the Gilston Area allocation in the East Hertfordshire District plan. The powers would only be required if agreement with landowners could not be negotiated. She proposed a motion to support the recommendation.

Councillor E Buckmaster seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink said her Group supported this proposal.

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

RESOLVED – that (a), in principle, (and subject to Harlow District Council resolving to follow the same course of action) the Council be prepared to use powers available to it under section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to compulsorily purchase land in the Gilston area, as generally shown on the plans at Appendix 1 to the report to the Executive on 6 October 2020, to enable the construction of transport infrastructure to support the delivery of the Gilston Area allocation in the East Herts District Plan (The Gilston Area Allocation) and the achievement of the wider strategic planning benefits referred to in the report; and

(b) to note that Officers will undertake the work needed to prepare for a possible Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) together with the associated documentation and, if necessary, will bring a further report back to the Executive and Council seeking authority to make a CPO.

206 APPOINTMENT OF S.151 OFFICER

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking confirmation of the appointment of Steven Linnett as

the Council's section 151 Officer.

Councillor Andrews proposed a motion to support the recommendation in the report.

Councillor Bolton said she was delighted that Steven Linnett was on board, and seconded the motion.

Councillor Goldspink said she was very happy to support the motion.

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

RESOLVED – that the appointment of Steven Linnett as the Council's Chief Financial Officer and Section 151 Officer be approved.

207 REPORT OF URGENT KEY DECISION TAKEN BY THE LEADER
- SLM REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said the report before Members was for noting, in that an urgent key decision had been taken in August 2020, in relation to a request for financial support from the company operating the leisure centres in the District, Sports and Leisure Management Ltd (SLM Ltd). The decision had been taken with the consent of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in accordance with the urgency process. As the decision was outside the budget and policy framework, it was now required to be reported to Council. However, as an update on this item, he said SLM Ltd had applied

for Covid business support and no longer required the loan from the Council.

Councillor Goldspink asked that urgent decisions be reported to all Members at the time they were taken, in addition to being subsequently reported to Council.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that urgent key decisions were notified by email direct to Members when they were taken, but they could also be publicised in the Members' Information Bulletin.

The report was noted.

The Chairman said this was the final meeting at East Herts Council for the Democratic Services Manager, and on behalf of all Members, he thanked her and wished her well.

The Chairman reminded all Members that the next meeting on 16 December was traditionally an occasion when Members wore festive jumpers, upon making a donation to the Chairman's charities. He said this year he would ask that Members donate to the Isabel Hospice direct.

The meeting closed at 8.36 pm

Chairman
Date