

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
COUNCIL HELD AS AN ONLINE MEETING  
ON WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER 2020, AT  
7.00 PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Cassidy	- Chief Executive
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Peter Mannings	- Democratic

Sara Saunders	Services Officer - Head of Planning and Building Control
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive
Su Tarran	- Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

## 294 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said that the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on Saturday 4 April 2020 to enable councils to hold remote committee meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic period. This was to ensure local authorities could conduct business during this current public health emergency. This meeting of Council was being held remotely under these regulations, via the Zoom application and was being recorded and live streamed on YouTube.

The Chairman welcome the Rev'd Ysmena Pentelow from St Mary's Church in Ware. The Rev'd Pentelow thanked the Chairman for inviting her to address Members. She shared some personal reflections on the year and the religious celebrations of Hanukkah as celebrated by a friend. She mentioned the light that did not go out and talked about the celebration of advent in Christian Churches. The Rev'd Pentelow talked about images of light and the hope that light

kindled and she led Members in an adapted prayer.

The Chairman welcomed those attending the meeting online and those observing the livestream. He reminded Members that voting would be via the green tick or red cross voting tools within the online software and he asked whether there were any Members who were attending by telephone. The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that there were no Members participating by phone.

The Chairman said that guests were welcome to stay or to leave the meeting but should turn their camera off if they were staying online. Members and Officers were reminded to mute all microphones during the course of the meeting.

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Barbara Doherty to Members and thanked Members for following the festive tradition of wearing seasonal jumpers, ties and hats. He mentioned the involvement of Members with the Isabel Hospice and said that this had been a tough year as the hospice had been unable to hold fundraising events.

The Chairman drew attention to an email sent by his PA regarding donations to the hospice. Barbara Doherty, president of Isabel Hospice, addressed the Council meeting and gave an update on the work of the Hospice. She thanked the Chairman for the invite and set a context by setting out the financial position of the hospice in 2020. She said the hospice had been set for a good year before COVID-19 affected everybody. She said that the living well centres (day

hospices) had all been closed down in March.

Members were advised that the hospice specialist nurses had to work virtually which was very challenging for them. The inpatient unit had stayed open and 6 beds were let to the NHS and the hospice took in some COVID-19 patients. Barbara Doherty detailed the ways the hospice had adapted its operations and she summarised a number of ways the hospice had assisted people during the pandemic. She said that the most important thing was that the Isabel Hospice inpatient unit had been kept up and running.

Barbara Doherty said that all the major mass fundraising events were cancelled although some marathon runners did complete their runs in some strange locations. She summarised the new ways and initiatives that had been undertaken to raise money for the Isabel Hospice. Barbara Doherty wished Members of the Council a very Happy Christmas from everyone at the Isabel Hospice.

The Chairman congratulated Mr Kevin Glogner on being presented with the Peterkin award by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). He talked about Mr Glogner's work as a parish councillor in Hormead and in particular, using his horticultural skills to improve the Meads recreational ground as this was in a poor state. The Chairman said that Mr Glogner had improved the pavilion both inside and out, had planted many new trees and had improved the play area and installed some new benches.

Mr Glogner thanked the Chairman for his kind words and for inviting him to the meeting. He said he would recommend becoming a parish councillor to anyone as a way of making new acquaintances and finding out what was going on. He said that improvements to the recreation ground and the village as a whole had lifted everyone's spirits during these very tough times. He thanked Councillor P Boylan for his support as a District Councillor.

The Chairman said other award winners of the Peterkin award included Birch Green village shop and the Chairman's award had gone to the Tewin Village Store. Finally, he congratulated Steven King, financial management trainee, for passing his level 3 association of accountancy technical exams with distinction. He said that Steven had started at the Council in 2017 just out of school and Steven Linnett had said that Steven King had demonstrated a very mature, can do and helpful attitude.

295 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Newton, Rowley and Symonds. Upon taking a roll call of Members, it was established that Councillor Ranger was absent.

296 MINUTES - 21 OCTOBER 2020

Councillor Haysey proposed, and Councillor Goodeve seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the

deletion of duplicate narrative in minute 197 regarding public questions.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the deletion of duplicate narrative in minute 197 regarding public questions.

297 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

298 PETITIONS

The Chairman said that a petition, relating to the development generally known as Old River Lane (ORL), had been received from Change.org. Members were reminded that the lead petitioners were permitted to address the Council for up to three minutes, after which the relevant Executive Member will respond to the petition. There was no provision for any general debate by Members, but local Ward Members may also speak on the subject of the petition if they wished to do so.

The Chairman invited the lead petitioner, Mr Calvin Horner, to present the e-petition relating to the development generally known as Old River Lane (ORL). Mr Horner, on behalf of the signatories to the e-petition, addressed the Council meeting. He

summarised the reasons for submitting the e-petition and said that this called upon East Hertfordshire District Council to:

- 1) Halt the development generally known as Old River Lane (ORL), and
- 2) Publish the business case for ORL, and
- 3) Organise a Full Public Consultation, to be run over several weeks, with the Residents and Businesses in Bishop's Stortford, in order to ascertain the community's views on the whole ORL scheme.

Councillor Williamson, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability thanked Mr Horner for submitting the e-petition and for addressing the Council meeting. He acknowledged receipt of the e-petition and said that elements of the Old River Lane scheme would come before the Council at a meeting on the 13 January 2021 and a full business case would be considered in March. He stated that a substantial amount of public consultation had already taken place and further consultation would be taking place at the master planning stage.

Councillor Goldspink, as one of the local ward Members, addressed the Council meeting on the basis that she fully supported this e-petition. She said that she realised that the first two elements of the e-petition had already been answered in that the plans for the site had now been halted and the 500 seat theatre would not now be built.

Councillor Goldspink spoke in support of the third element of the petition for a full public consultation in

that there was now a golden opportunity to use the Old River Lane site in such a way as to bring great benefit to the whole town and to do something really good for the community.

Councillor Goldspink requested that the Executive permit at least five Councillors from across the political spectrum to be involved in designing the consultation and in the framing of any questions, which should be open ended for the contribution of many different and imaginative ideas.

## 299 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chairman invited David Royle to ask his question.

David Royle asked the Executive Member for Planning and Growth the following question:

“Several major housing developments have been approved and are now being built. Both physical quality and the energy performance of the schemes clearly require careful monitoring. This would ensure compliance with planning conditions and statements of intent forming part of the planning permission documentation. There are two separate but overlapping fields of monitoring:

1. Planning permission monitoring: to check developers are complying with the approved drawings and conditions.
2. Building Control monitoring: to check whether energy efficiency targets are exceeding Building Regulations Part L.”



“Could you please clarify what arrangements are in place for:

- Early and regular monitoring of the build-out of new homes against the permissions granted, in order to provide assurance on the delivered design, quality and energy sources of housing in new developments, and to impose any necessary enforcement steps in good time to influence the rest of the development.
- Building Control service monitoring compliance with stated energy performance targets.”

Councillor J Goodeve responded as follows:

“As indicated in the question, there are several major developments that have been consented and are currently under construction. These developments must be constructed according to the consented plans that have been submitted to the Planning Service and any Building Control Service supplier respectively. The duty for ensuring that development undertaken complies fully with what has been consented ultimately rests with the developer; this includes ensuring that details relating to any planning conditions have been submitted on time and are fully adhered to.”

“In order to assist with the monitoring of development, the Planning Service has, through the use of planning conditions sought to control some aspects of construction work that does not involve the use of personnel. For instance, conditions have been imposed

that require a developer to build a sample board of the elevations of the structure on site and once this has been approved, it is to be maintained on site so that it can be compared to what has been constructed.”

“In addition to this, there is a Compliance Officer resource within the planning service in order to assist with the monitoring of developments on the ground as they are built out and options to extend this are currently being considered.”

“Planning conditions regarding energy/sustainability matters are normally submitted to the Planning Service for approval and once approved it is expected that they will be implemented as consented. There is an overlap with Building Regulations on this matter as the Building Control Officers will supervise the implementation of these measures including testing and finally approving their installation with the appropriate certification. However, in the case of a scheme whereby the Planning Service has agreed a scheme that exceeds Approved Document Part L, it would be expected that this is the plan that the developer is working to in their submission to Building Control. Developers can select which Building Control Service they use to supervise their construction works and some choose to use Approved Inspectors rather than Hertfordshire Building Control. However, this does not alter the requirements of the developer to comply with what has been approved at the planning stage.”

“In terms of planning enforcement, if there is a concern that new developments have not been built in

accordance with approved plans and planning conditions, then this would need to be reported to the planning enforcement team who would investigate the concern and depending on the nature of the breach would consider whether it was expedient to the public interest to take enforcement action having regard to the level of harm caused.”

Mr Royle asked as a supplemental question, that there was no mention in the response about any planned monitoring which might include for example a planner or an architect and a town or parish council representative, and the latter having been closely involved in the planning application process and whom attach a great deal of importance to quality and compliance.

Councillor Goodeve responded as follows:

“I would suspect that it would be considered inappropriate for a town or parish council to become involved but I can certainly check with Officers on that point and will come back to Mr Royle.”

## 300 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Crystall asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability the following question.

“More than a year after declaring a climate motion, East Herts Council still has no visible message on its website giving residents advice on measures they can adopt to reduce their carbon footprint.”

“Given that East Herts Council plays a leading role as influencer in the district, and the fact that adding a page of guidance on the council website would have minimal cost implications, isn’t the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability concerned that East Herts Council is missing out a simple but crucial step in providing its residents with actionable guidance on cutting their own, and the district’s, carbon emissions?”

Councillor G McAndrew responded as follows:

“Can I thank Councillor Crystall for advanced warning of his question.”

“East Herts Council recognises the important role it can play as a purveyor of trusted, impartial information on environmental sustainability which can help residents to reduce their own carbon footprints. The Council’s website has in fact carried a wealth of information for some time although the problem, as highlighted by Cllr Crystall’s question, has been that the information has not been as easy to find as it should be.”

“I am therefore very pleased to announce that today, the council has launched a totally updated Environmental Sustainability webpage which links together all the Council’s existing and additional information. It is now far easier to access practical guidance on the steps residents can take to reduce their carbon footprints, including advice on home insulation, tips on maximising home energy efficiency, how to access national and local grants and the ways to get involved with the council’s sustainability work. The page can be found on

[www.eastherts.gov.uk/sustainability](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/sustainability)”

“This is just the start. We have recently employed a Sustainability Projects and Policy Officer for six months and, having revamped our website, she will now be improving our overall communications on sustainability issues.”

“Given the Council’s leading role as an influencer, we must think carefully about promoting any particular service providers or signposting to other parties’ personal or business carbon footprint calculators. We are aware, however, that some other Councils are providing this kind of useful information and so our new Officer has already started identifying the options for plugging any obvious gaps on our website.”

“We believe that upgrading and publicising our website will help strengthen the ways East Herts Council can support local residents to take the necessary steps to reduce the overall carbon footprint of our District. My thanks for the question which has allowed me to promote the new page.”

Councillor Crystall thanked Councillor McAndrew and asked as a supplemental question, thank you very much for the answer and I am delighted that the page has been put up, that’s great news. Next May, Her Majesty the Queen is launching the Queen’s green canopy project, which is a nationwide tree planting programme to celebrate her 70 years in service. I wonder whether you think it might be possible to use the green canopy programme in May as an ideal project with which to launch this new page to the

public.

Councillor McAndrew responded as follows:

“That is a good idea. Please email me the details we can look to see how we can actually do that if we can. We won’t rule it out at this stage.”

Councillor Deering, on behalf of Cllr Symonds, put the following question to the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods.

“I am very concerned about the impact that COVID 19 may have on our homeless in the District. Losing your home often through no fault of your own, and at any time in your life, is totally devastating. What is East Herts Council doing to support families and individuals at this very challenging time?”

Councillor P Boylan responded as follows:

“I would like to thank Cllr Symonds for prior notice of this question.”

“As Cllr Symonds has stated in her question, becoming homeless can be totally devastating for individuals and for families at any time. The COVID-19 pandemic has only added to this devastation.”

“Many of you may be aware that during the first national lockdown in March, this Council used government funding to quickly secure hotel accommodation in Stevenage for rough sleepers and those with nowhere else to go other than sleeping on

friends' sofas."

"What is perhaps not so well known, is that the Council's help has continued once government funding ceased in the summer. Of the 24 people with complex histories of entrenched rough sleeping housed in the hotel, we have secured longer term housing for 11. We are continuing to provide temporary accommodation for another six as we continue to support them, with the remaining seven finding their own housing solutions."

"In addition, this year we will again provide revenue support to the winter night shelter in Bishop's Stortford which is due to re-open in a COVID-secure way in January."

"Even without the COVID-19 pandemic, high local house prices and private rents have seen increasing numbers of people turning to the Council for help. So, even while the government has put a temporary halt on evictions, the council continues to help people facing homelessness due to the breakdown of relationships or the need to escape domestic abuse. Our contract with the Survivors Against Domestic Abuse support service operated by Stevenage Borough Council, which started in the spring, has supported 12 local families over its first six months."

"With increasing numbers turning to the Council, we have had to make more use of bed and breakfast hotels for temporary accommodation, typically outside of this District. On average there were just five households in bed and breakfast accommodation at

any one time during 2018/19, but now there's an average of about 21, excluding the additional need resulting from the coronavirus emergency."

"I am particular pleased, therefore, that the Council recently purchased a building in Stanstead Abbots, to be known as The Rectory, to provide 13 self-contained one-bedroom and studio flats. This accommodation is not only far more suitable than hotel rooms but would provide much needed accommodation on the western side of our District to complement the other 11 temporary accommodation flats the council already owns just outside of Bishop's Stortford."

"To add to this, the Council has been successful in its bid to Government to convert three flats into six one bedroom and studio flats specifically for those making the move from rough sleeping towards a more permanent home again. We will also use Government funding for a Specialist Support Officer for three years, working with other agencies, to provide a wraparound service to improve the health and welfare and future access to accommodation and employment for these former rough sleepers."

Councillor Devonshire put the following question to the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability.

"The Hospitality Sector throughout this country is suffering badly from the economic effects due to the restrictions being imposed to protect the public from COVID-19. Can the Executive Member please tell us how this Authority is helping to support the hospitality



sector, including hotels, bed and breakfast and leisure accommodation, who have been under some form of restriction this year since March.”

Councillor G Williamson responded as follows:

“Thank you Councillor Devonshire for raising this very important issue and yes the hospitality sector is one of the worst-hit industries globally and locally. Visit England estimate that there has been a 48% drop in domestic tourism this year and that international visits were unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels before 2023 at the earliest.”

“One of the ways we support this sector is through our relationship with Visit Herts, who provide destination management services for East Herts and the county. They have been focusing on providing advice and guidance to businesses through regular updates and a series of virtual workshops and seminars.”

“They are also managing a crowdfunding platform which is supported by the Herts LEP. This allows businesses to outline a new initiative to help them diversify and stay relevant amongst COVID-19 restrictions. The public are able to pledge their support and if the business hits its target, it is topped up with LEP funding. So far, five businesses from within East Herts have put ideas forward: an example is “Standon Calling” who are offering rewards and experiences for next year’s festival (assuming it can go ahead of course). By getting people to crowdfund they have managed to raise £88k so far which will certainly help them with their cash flow challenges. So this shows

how we can support these industries by all getting involved and I would urge fellow Councillors to look at the crowdfunding site if they have not already done so."

"But very importantly we have been providing direct financial support. The Government has provided a number of grant schemes to support businesses suffering the impact of COVID-19 which we are administering, in addition to the variety of other support for business detailed on Government websites."

"In the first round of Discretionary grants from March, the council specifically supported Bed and Breakfast establishments, which paid Council Tax rather than just Business rates. More recently the lockdown produced a mandatory scheme called **Local restrictions support grant (closed) - addendum**, for those businesses liable for business rates which were mandated to close. This will include those in the hospitality, leisure and accommodation sectors that fell into those definitions."

"A further mandatory grants scheme called **Local restrictions support grant (SECTOR)** is also enacted at this time for businesses such as nightclubs which have been mandated not to open since March. A discretionary scheme was also announced, called the **Additional restrictions grant scheme** which runs until March 2022. The Council is using this opportunity to prioritise in the first tranche of grants those businesses which it considers may have fallen outside of the mainstream grants previously offered, and this

is particularly helpful for those who supply to, or manufacture for, the hospitality and events industries.”

“Specific support is also targeted at taxi drivers and market traders, and provision is made for those whose businesses were mandated to close during the lockdown but did not qualify for the main lockdown grant as they do not have a liability for business rates.”

“As we entered Tier 2 on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, a further discretionary grant scheme called **Local restrictions support grant (open)** became available, which is directed at businesses that are not legally required to close but which are severely impacted by the localised restrictions on socialising put in place. The government is encouraging Councils to prioritise those in the hospitality, leisure and accommodation sectors.”

“A further mandatory scheme called **Local restrictions support grant (CLOSED)** is also available for those businesses mandated to stay closed for as long as we remain in Tier 2 (or indeed should we ever move into Tier 3). This again will support those businesses in this sector that have to remain closed. And finally for the moment at least, we have the **Christmas support payment** of £1000 for wet service pubs. i.e. those that derive less than 50% of its income from food service.”

Councillor Devonshire thanked Councillor Williamson and asked as a supplemental question, does this Council proactively go out to these hospitality companies to inform them of the grants that are available to them?

Councillor Williamson responded as follows.

“Yes, indeed we are. In terms of communicating the grants programme Comms have been promoting the schemes via social media, concentrating on LinkedIn and Facebook. We have also used existing business networks including the Chambers of Commerce, Bishop’s Stortford BID, Hertford Hub and Visit Herts to make sure we are getting to as many businesses as possible.”

“In addition, the Business Rates’ team have been actively contacting businesses that may be eligible by both email and telephone. We want to make sure every eligible business is receiving the money they are entitled to, so if any Councillor here knows of businesses that aren’t aware of these schemes I would encourage you please to direct them to the Council website and the application form.”

Councillor Goldspink put the following question to the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

“Is it true, as was reported recently in a local newspaper, that the Builders of the new houses on the Old Goods Yard site in Bishop’s Stortford, have abandoned the Carbon Dioxide reduction prediction of 24%, and have now settled on a tiny 3.2% reduction? The original prediction was included in the overall Planning Application for the site, which was granted with conditions. A revised prediction, for 3.2%, was submitted in 2019. I believe that this has not yet been approved by the Council, but, the building works are none the less going ahead. Can the Executive Member

please tell me what level of CO<sub>2</sub> reduction has been accepted, and is it compatible with this Council's stated ambition of making the whole of the district Carbon Neutral by 2030?"

Councillor J Goodeve responded as follows:

"I would like to thank Cllr Goldspink for the advance notice of this question."

"The planning application documents submitted for the redevelopment of the Goods Yard site indicated that a carbon dioxide reduction of around 24% was achievable at this site."

"However, since the grant of planning consent, part of the site has been sold onto a developer (Bellway Homes) who are intending to implement part of the planning permission (Blocks A1 – 5 which comprises of two commercial units and 149 residential units). Bellway Homes have proposed a lower carbon dioxide reduction level of 3.2%. This has been sent to specialist consultants for review and discussions are on-going with the developer with the aim of seeking to improve this carbon dioxide reduction level."

"Given this, I can confirm that the current offer from Bellway Homes has not been accepted but we do need to be mindful that the Council's planning policy is not prescriptive on this matter in that no specific target level is outlined. Policy CC2 requires developments to achieve standards above and beyond the requirements of the Building Regulations (Approved Document L). The current offer exceeds the

requirements of the Building Regulations and therefore technically complies with the Council's Policy CC2, notwithstanding given the previous offer of 24%, and whilst being mindful of overall development viability (as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework ), it is considered appropriate to seek to encourage the developer to be more aspirational on this matter."

Councillor Goldspink thanked Councillor Goodeve and asked as a supplemental question, I am interested to hear that this reduced percentage ambition has not yet been accepted. Is the Executive Member able to tell me when the Council will make the judgement and what is happening in that the building is still proceeding, should it not be halted whilst the Council decides whether to accept this lower level, or do we just have to accept it and hope that everything will turn out alright?

Councillor Goodeve responded as follows.

"All I can say is that discussions are still ongoing and that the conditions have not been discharged."

Councillor Page put the following question to the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

"Buyers of new build properties in my ward have brought alleged building control breaches to my attention. Building Control compliance is often undertaken by approved inspectors who are engaged by developers. Could the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth clarify how this work is monitored and

enforced, across the District, and if the enforcement regime also covers compliance with planning conditions.”

Councillor J Goodeve responded as follows:

“I would like to thank Cllr Page for the advance notice of this question.”

“There are two parts to this question. The first part relates to Building Control and how this is monitored and enforced across the District and the second part relates to planning enforcement and compliance with planning conditions.”

“Building regulations approval works differently from planning permission, and is open to competition so people can apply to any local authority building control service or Approved Inspectors for building regulations approval. This means that whilst Hertfordshire Building Control provide the local authority statutory building control service across Hertfordshire, their services are not necessarily used by everyone, and building regulations for some new developments can be signed off by Approved Inspectors.”

“Unfortunately, if there is a problem with the buildings on a development which has been signed off by an Approved Inspector then Hertfordshire Building Control cannot necessarily step in unless they receive a complaint that shows that the approved inspectors recklessly issued completion certificates. Proving this can be very difficult although not impossible.”

“This means that any concerns about compliance with building regulations needs to be made directly to the Approved Inspector and Construction Industry Council Approved Inspectors Register (CICAIR) who govern Approved Inspectors. CICAIR have a complaints procedure and residents should complain through the Approved Inspector to them.”

“If there are specific snagging issues with the new properties relating to minor faults and finishing off then this would be a matter for the house builder to resolve rather than anything more significant relating to compliance with building regulations.”

“In terms of planning enforcement and compliance with planning conditions, if there is a concern that new developments have not been built in accordance with approved plans and planning conditions, then this would need to be reported to the planning enforcement team who would investigate the concern and depending on the nature of the breach would consider whether it was expedient in the public interest to take enforcement action having regard to the level of harm caused.”

Councillor Page thanked Councillor Goodeve and asked as a supplemental question, Is the portfolio holder content that on site monitoring of building control regulations is sufficiently objective and robust?

Councillor J Goodeve responded as follows:

“I think that is a broader question Cllr Page and is something that applies not just to East Herts, but up



and down the country now that approved inspectors are now permitted rather than just local authority building control.”

301 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 24 NOVEMBER 2020

The Leader shared a number of personal reflections on the end of the year and in particular on the last 8 months. She mentioned a much greater interaction in meetings compared to those being held under the arrangements in place during normal activities. The Leader said that the personal interaction between professional human beings had been missed and COVID-19 had produced some good community work. She thanked Officers for the extraordinary things that they had had to do in the last 8 months and said that she hoped that things could soon be getting back to what used to be considered normal.

Finally, the Leader congratulated Councillor Corpe on just becoming a father. Members congratulated Councillor Corpe. The Leader presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the Executive at its meeting on 24 November 2020. Minutes 296, 297, 298, 299, 300 and 301 referred to the six items on which recommendations were made.

302 SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL TOWN BIDS

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability presented the two recommendations, which were referred to in the Executive report of 24 November 2020, regarding Sustainable Travel Town Bids.

Councillor Bell said that she supported the idea behind these proposals and she had some reservations coming from a more rural community where public transport made accessing towns by any means other than a car quite difficult. She said that in general this report went some way towards making East Herts a more carbon neutral community by reducing pollution on the road network.

Councillor Goldspink stated that she found this proposition difficult for several reasons. She supported the idea of a sustainable travel town and said that the County Council's picture of a town in which everyone walked, cycled or used public transport was a most attractive picture. She said however that there were some flaws in the detailed plans as there was no mention of how public transport would be provided and there was no allocated budget.

Councillor Goldspink said that the criteria for becoming a sustainable travel town contained some drastic changes to the planning requirements such as high density housing with no parking spaces or at the very least with reduced parking standards. She said that she could not support these recommendations and with regret would be voting against them as she was not content with it being made impossible for people to own cars due to there being nowhere to park.

Councillor Crystall defended the idea of the sustainable travel town programme. He said that the proposals had to be considered as a whole as they did

include improved bus and train services, bus priority infrastructure, improved cycle and pedestrian access and park and ride. He said that if these elements were taken together and were implemented on a long terms basis, it might be possible to arrive at a point in a couple of years where free parking in towns and parking on developments could be reduced.

Councillor Wilson said that he praised the general direction of Hertfordshire County Council and East Herts Council. He stated that he was supportive of modal shift and sustainable transport. He talked about the context of the proposals and said that the most important things were incentives and investment. He said that the infrastructure was not in place for some vital journeys that people needed to make, to Epping, Stevenage and Cambridge.

Councillor Wilson stated that he believed that a reduction in car parking would be overly draconian and unfair. He concluded that he would be supporting these proposals as doing something was better than doing nothing.

Councillor Curtis said that some important points had been raised by the opposition Members. He highlighted the fact that the Executive was recommending that the Council was supportive of the aspirations of policy LTP4 regarding sustainable travel towns. He said that the infrastructure must be in place for alternative forms of travel before there was a move towards sustainable travel towns.

Councillor Redfern said that she wanted to support the

proposals but felt unable to do so due to a number of specific points mentioned in the report. She referred in particular to the situation for residents in remote villages with no bus services.

Following a number of points made by Councillor Redfern regarding parking, Councillor McAndrew raised a point of order and said that the matter being considered by Members was sustainable travel town bids and not the Review of Outcomes of the Parking Task and Finish Group, which was the next item.

Councillor Kemp said that one thing that was clear was that Councillors wanted to see sustainable transport developed and encouraged wherever possible. He said that there was no one size fits all solution and sustainable travel town status would not work for some towns. He said that it should be down to individual towns to make a choice whether or not to seek sustainable travel town status.

Councillor Goldspink raised a point of order in that if the Council supported these bids in principle, the District Council would be responsible for signing up to actions including significant changes to the planning regulations. Councillor McAndrew made a number of points regarding the ten applications that had been made to the County Council for towns seeking sustainable travel town status. He said that funding could be secured via Section 106 legal agreements in support of sustainable transport.

Councillor McAndrew proposed that the recommendations in the Executive report (at Minute

295 above), be supported. Councillor Devonshire seconded the proposal. The motion to support the recommendation having been put to the meeting, and a vote taken, was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that (A) East Herts Council supports in principle the aspirations of LTP4 and the Sustainable Travel Town Criteria; and

(B) East Herts Council supports in principle towns wishing to submit bids for Sustainable Travel Town Status.

### 303 REVIEW OF OUTCOMES OF THE PARKING TASK AND FINISH GROUP

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The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability proposed the recommendation made by the Executive, as referred to in the Executive report of 24 November 2020, in respect of a review of outcomes of the Parking Task and Finish Group. He proposed a motion to support the recommendation. Councillor Bolton seconded the motion.

Councillor Bell said she that she was disappointed that the lobbying for extra parking spaces at the Station Car Park at Watton at Stone had been dropped from the proposals. She highlighted the problems with the car park and said that other options open to other towns such as residents parking zones were not possible in Watton at Stone. She said that the available spaces in the car could be doubled by removing areas of grass verge between the spaces.

Councillor Goldspink said that she was disappointed that Members had not had the chance to discuss the Executive's thoughts when they had been reviewing the very sensible recommendations of the Task and Finish Group. She said that she fully supported the recommendation for the amendment to the policy regarding residents parking zones.

Councillor Wilson also expressed his support for the very sensible change to the RPZ policy and the benefits for the residents of Bishop's Stortford All Saints ward in respect of the difficulties with airport parking in the area. Councillor Haysey commented on whether East Herts Council owned the station car park at Watton at Stone.

Councillor Bell said that East Herts Council did not own the land but the original recommendation was that the Council would lobby those that did own the land to expand the provision.

Councillor Haysey said that this was a difficult thing to do and Members had no idea how train and work travel was going to evolve in the next 12 months. She said that the Council should consider this in a balanced way and avoid adding tarmac in place of grass verges as this was not environmentally friendly. She commented on identifying other ways for residents to get to train stations.

Members of the Council had a general debate in respect of public and sustainable transport and the protection of grass verges. Councillor Redfern commented on the importance of balancing the

availability of car parking versus ready access to public transport. Councillor Stowe said that prices should be increased in station car parks to discourage parking in favour of more sustainable modes of transport such as electric bikes.

Councillor McAndrew said that long stay car parking had had reduced by 15-20% since the pre COVID-19 period and it had not really increased. One option being considered was converting long stay spaces to short stay to benefit shoppers. He said that commuters were now working from home and when things returned to a sense of normality, fewer people could be commuting to work and a step back should be taken until the position was known in 12 months.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the amendment in the Residential Parking Zone Policy, as described in paragraph 2.24 and Appendices Ci and Cii, be adopted.

304 HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD - JOINT COMMITTEE PROPOSAL

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The Leader said that the Hertfordshire Growth had been established in an informal way for the last couple of years, in order to coordinate growth across Hertfordshire. She said that the growth board had worked very closely with all 10 District and Borough leaders, the County Council and the Local Enterprise

Partnership (LEP).

Councillor Haysey said that the time had come where the growth board should be set up to allow for more transparency and greater public engagement, as well as securing a tighter legal footing. She said that Stevenage Borough Council were also voting on this matter this evening at Full Council and all the other Hertfordshire District and Borough Councils had voted on this proposal.

Councillor Haysey proposed the recommendation made by the Executive, as referred to in the Executive report of 24 November 2020, in respect of the Hertfordshire Growth Board – joint Committee proposal. Councillor Curtis seconded the motion and commented on the very important work of the Hertfordshire Growth Board.

Councillor Crystall said that this proposal sounded very interesting and positive. He asked how the agendas and minutes were available to Councillors who were not Members of the Growth Board. Councillor Goldspink said that the Liberal Democrat group was very happy to support these proposals.

Councillor Haysey said that there was a Hertfordshire Growth Board meeting tomorrow where the detailed governance arrangements would be agreed and she said that there would be a public ability to see the agendas and minutes.

A motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a



vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that (A) Council endorses the establishment of the Hertfordshire Growth Board Joint Committee and Hertfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Joint Committee (to hold their inaugural meetings in January/February 2021 and then HGB Scrutiny aligned to confirmation of securing Government funding in 2021) and that the Council becomes a member of both;

(B) Council adopts the Growth Board Integrated Governance Framework into its own constitutional framework.

(C) Council nominates a Member and substitute Member as the Council's representative on the Hertfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Joint Committee (note that nominees must not be members of the Executive); and

(D) Council notes that, subject to approval of Recommendation (A), the Leader is nominated as the council's representative on the Hertfordshire Growth Board Joint Committee with delegated authority to appoint a substitute representative as required.

## 305 SHARED WASTE SERVICE ALIGNMENT

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability proposed the recommendation made by

the Executive, as referred to in the Executive report of 24 November 2020, in respect of the shared waste service alignment.

Councillor McAndrew said that when North Herts and East Herts Councils came together to form a shared waste service, there had not been a realignment of the fees and charges for waste and recycling services, as was now detailed in the report for a realignment of that service.

Councillor McAndrew referred to consultation that had been carried with the Head of Strategic Finance and Property and the Executive. He proposed a motion to support the recommendation. Councillor Deering seconded the motion.

Councillor Goldspink said that the Liberal Democrat group was very happy to support the recommendations. A motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that decision making for setting the fees and charging regarding waste services, as detailed in the report submitted, be delegated to the Head of Strategic Finance and Property, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment Sustainability, through the Shared Service Waste Partnership Board, as endorsed by the Executive.

306 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2019/20

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed the recommendation made by the Executive, as referred to in the Executive report of 24 November 2020, in respect of the Annual Treasury Management Review 2019/20.

Councillor Williamson said that the review had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee and the Executive. Councillor Ward-Booth seconded the motion. A motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that the Annual Treasury Management Review 2019/20, be approved.

307 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW 2019/20

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed the recommendation made by the Executive, as referred to in the Executive report of 24 November 2020, in respect of the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2019/20.

Councillor Williamson said that the mid-year review had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee and the Executive. He said that the third recommendation was to raise the counter party limit from £20m to £30m, due to the unusual circumstances of receiving a large lump sum from the government for the COVID-19 related business support grant, which

had briefly exceeded the current limit. Councillor Pope seconded the motion.

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

**RESOLVED** – that (A) the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2019/20, be approved;

(B) the revised Prudential Indicators as detailed in Appendix A (columns, entitled revised estimates, highlighted 'green' within tables), be approved; and

(C) the increase in the counter party limit, from £20m to £30m, for the National Westminster Bank, be approved.

### 308 COUNCIL TAX BASE

Councillor G Williamson, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Financial Sustainability submitted a report in respect of the Council Tax base. He said that the report sets out the anticipated Council Tax base at District and Parish levels for the next financial year.

Councillor Williamson said that this was important as the numbers were used to shape the overall Council Tax calculation by East Herts Council, the County Council, Town and Parish Councils and also Hertfordshire Constabulary. The report took in account the number of band D equivalent properties within

each area, subject to the relevant discounts as detailed in the report submitted.

Councillor Williamson reminded Council that the calculations of the Council Tax base were governed by statute and the Council had very limited discretion and this decision had to be taken so the other authorities could be notified of the Council Tax base figures.

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

**RESOLVED** – that (A) the calculation of the Council's tax base for the whole district, and for the parish areas, for 2021/22, be approved; and

(B) pursuant to the report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by East Hertfordshire District Council as its Council Tax base for the whole area for 2021/22 shall be **61734.4** and for the parish areas listed for 2021/22, shall be as detailed in the report submitted.

### 309 UNREASONABLE AND PERSISTENT BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Councillor G Cutting, the Executive Member for Corporate Services, submitted a report in respect of the Unreasonable and Persistent Behaviour Policy. He

said that the draft policy was designed to replace the current vexatious complainant policy and provide more flexibility in dealing with customers.

Councillor Cutting said that customers who had been through the former procedures and were still not happy with the outcome had on occasion been labelled as vexatious and were told not to contact the Council. He said that this approach was something of a blunt tool and the reaction to receiving a letter like this was not positive and, in cases where customers had complex needs and lifestyles, this approach had not helped.

Councillor Cutting said that what was needed was a policy which allowed customers to feedback concerns in a way where Officers did not use the language of vexatious. He said that the policy set out a series of actions and interventions that were proportionate to the customer's behaviour and there were also a whole range of steps that could be taken to help the Council manage better manage its resources, protect staff and not stigmatise customers.

Councillor Cutting concluded that the policy had been considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and was now recommended to Council and he hoped that it could be endorsed. Councillor Cutting proposed and Councillor Alder seconded, a motion that the proposals be supported.

Councillor Alder said that the proposals were eminently sensible and she thanked the Officers who had drawn up this policy. Councillor Goldspink said

that the Liberal Democrat group were very happy to support this proposal. Councillor Stowe asked whether mental health issues had been taken into account as he knew of residents in his ward who struggled to communicate with people who were not listening to them and could appear aggressive but were not really aggressive.

The Leader said that she totally supported this revision of the policy as Officers had been subjected to some very rude and aggressive emails and this was totally unacceptable behaviour that was not good for the mental health of Officers.

Councillor Cutting said that the policy was intended to cater for the wide ranging needs of residents and he hoped that the policy would not impact any further on the lifestyles or possible health issues of residents.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the new Unreasonable and Persistent Behaviour Policy, be approved.

#### 310 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

There were no motions on notice.

The meeting closed at 9.28 pm

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