

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 17 MAY 2023, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Butcher (Chairman).
Councillors M Adams, D Andrews,
P Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster,
S Bull, V Burt, R Carter, T Clements,
M Connolly, S Copley, N Cox, B Crystall,
A Daar, B Deering, T Deffley, I Devonshire,
J Dumont, J Dunlop, Y Estop, V Glover-
Ward, M Goldspink, C Hart, G Hill,
D Hollebon, A Holt, S Hopewell, C Horner,
T Hoskin, D Jacobs, S Marlow, G McAndrew,
S Nicholls, A Parsad-Wyatt, C Redfern,
V Smith, T Stowe, Swainston, J Thomas,
R Townsend, S Watson, D Willcocks,
G Williams, G Williamson, C Wilson,
F Woolf, D Woolcombe and J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Democratic Services Officer
Lorraine Blackburn	- Scrutiny Officer
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

Peter Mannings	Property - Democratic Services Officer
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive
Ben Wood	- Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting and reminded them that the meeting was being webcasted.

The Chairman presented the meeting with the Annual Report video for 2022/23 which highlighted the work of the council over the last year.

The Chairman thanked Stephen Bate for attending the council meetings throughout his term as Chairman and for providing the reflections at the start.

The Chairman said that he had thoroughly enjoyed his year as Chairman and said that it was a real honour to represent East Herts. He said that throughout the year he had celebrated the Queen's Jubilee, marked the sad passing of the Queen, proclaimed the new King and celebrated King Charles III's coronation. He said that he had also met many inspiring people throughout the district.

The Chairman thanked the Chairman's PA, the Digital and

Communications Manager, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Democratic Services Manager and the Leadership Team for their help and support over the last year. He also thanked his wife and his children who had helped out at his charity events.

The Chairman announced that he had raised £3,496 for his chosen charity, The Stroke Association.

Councillor Deering offered his thanks to the Chairman for a fantastic year and said that he had celebrated some great moments but had also marked some sad events. He said that the Chairman had conducted himself superbly and represented the Council extremely well.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Brittain.

3 ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN 2023/24

It was proposed by Councillor Crystall and seconded by Councillor Goldspink that Councillor Butcher be elected as Chairman of the Council for the 2023/24 Civic Year. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Butcher be elected as Chairman of the Council for the 2023/24 Civic Year.

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

4 ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN 2023/24

It was proposed by Councillor Wilson and seconded by Councillor Crystall that Councillor Horner be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2023/24 Civic Year. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Horner be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2023/24 Civic Year.

Councillor Horner made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office.

Councillor Horner thanked Members for his election to Vice Chairman and said it was a great honour and not one he expected so soon after first being elected. He said that he looked forward to supporting Councillor Butcher as Chairman, his fundraising efforts and supporting the varied and valuable work of East Herts residents and its voluntary organisations.

5 FURTHER CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked the Council for electing him to the position. He said it was an absolute honour and privilege and looked forward to working with all colleagues across the Chamber.

The Chairman announced that he had chosen two charities to support over his term, they were CPRE Herts and Community Alliance. He said both organisations were key

in addressing the issues that confront the council and residents of East Herts.

The Chairman made a personal announcement and said that he was neurodiverse and had been diagnosed with ADHD.

Councillor Goldspink offered the Chairman and Vice Chairman the Liberal Democrats' congratulations on their election and wished them both a happy and successful year of office. She expressed her thanks to Councillor Devonshire for his work over the last year representing the council.

Councillor Deering congratulated the Chairman and Vice Chairman on their new roles and wished them every success.

6 ELECTION OF THE LEADER 2023-2027

It was proposed by Councillor Daar and seconded by Councillor Goldspink that Councillor Crystall be elected as Leader of the Council for the 2023-2027 term. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Crystall be elected as Leader of the Council for the 2023-2027 term of the council.

Councillor Deering congratulated the Leader on his election. He wished him well and said that his group had voted to support him. He said the Conservative group would support him where they could and would support

the administration in the completion of Hertford Theatre, Old River Lane and the formulation of the new District Plan. He said that the Conservative group would also hold the administration to account and the previous Conservative administrations had delivered balanced budgets and they would expect the same moving forward.

7 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council thanked Councillor Devonshire for an incredible year as Chairman and congratulated him on all the good work he had done across the district. He also congratulated the new Chairman and Vice Chairman and hoped they would have a positive experience in the role.

Councillor Crystall thanked Councillor Deering for his kind words and said it was an incredible honour to lead the Council and he said he would do his best for Officers, Councillors and residents. He welcomed the new Members across the Chamber and said the council would value their energy and enthusiasm.

Councillor Crystall thanked the councillors that served in the last administration who had stood down or were not re-elected and said the council recognised their service and thanked them. He said that there were plenty of challenges ahead for the council and he hoped that Members would treat each other and Officers with respect and said that it was important at a time where many people had become disillusioned with politics and the council must lead by example.

Councillor Goldspink offered the Leader of the Council her and her group's warmest congratulations on his election. She said she would like to recognise the work of previous councillors and said they had not always agreed but were sincere in their wish to serve residents. She also thanked Officers for their tireless work in the smooth running of the elections to making arrangements for Annual Council.

8 MINUTES - 1 MARCH 2023

Councillor Goldspink proposed, and Councillor Redfern seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2023 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Buckmaster raised a point of order about whether only Members who were present at the last meeting would be able to vote on their accuracy.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that if Members were not at the previous meeting, they should abstain from the vote.

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

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

10 PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

11 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

12 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

There were no Members' Questions.

13 POLITICAL BALANCE AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the Political Balance and Committee Membership of the Council report. He said that Council was required to approve the decision-making arrangements for the discharge of functions; this includes being told by the Leader about the composition and constitution of the Executive for the ensuing year, the names of those Members chosen to be Executive Members and also determine the Council's Committee structure and Chairmen/membership of those committees in line with the political balance of the Council.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services said the appointment of Members to outside bodies was delegated to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Leader and would be appointed following the Annual Council meeting.

Councillor Crystall proposed that the recommendations in

the report be supported. Councillor Goldspink seconded the proposal.

Councillor McAndrew asked if calendar invites would be put into Members' diaries.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that invites would be put into Members' diaries.

Councillor Thomas said that his name was spelt incorrectly in Appendix B and asked for it to be corrected.

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

RESOLVED – That (A) the Scrutiny Committees, Regulatory Committees and Joint Committees with the number of voting Members listed in paragraph 2.1 be appointed;

(B) That the political balance of the Council at Appendix A be agreed

(C) That the membership and Chairman of Scrutiny Committees, Regulatory Committees and Joint Committees be as set out in Appendix B, with Members being appointed in accordance with the wishes of the political group to whom the seats on these bodies have been allocated;

- (D) That the intention of the Leader of the Council to appoint Members to the Executive (in addition to the Leader) with the portfolio responsibilities as detailed in Appendix C be noted;
- (E) That the programme of Council meetings, as detailed at paragraph 4.1, be approved;
- (F) That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make changes in the standing membership of committees, joint committees and panels in (A) above, in accordance with the wishes of the political group to whom seats on these bodies have been allocated;
- (G) That the action to be taken by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Leader, under delegated authority, concerning the appointment of representatives to outside bodies, be noted; and
- (H) The Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make such amendments to the Council's Constitution as may be necessary to account for the decisions in (A) to (G) above.

The previous Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Wyllie, presented the Annual Scrutiny 2022/23 report.

Councillor Wyllie proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Wilson seconded the proposal and thanked Councillor Wyllie for his excellent service as Chairman for the last four years.

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

RESOLVED – that (a) the Annual Scrutiny Report covering the 2022/23 Civic Year be agreed and published on the Council’s website; and

(b) workshops be arranged with Members and Key Officers to establish Work Programme priorities for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24.

15 INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the report which provided Members with information on the appointment of two independent people to the Audit and Governance Committee as recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

He said that as a result of the Redmond Review in 2020, which considered the effectiveness of external audit and the transparency of financial reporting in local authorities, it was recommended that local authority audit committees should appoint at least one independent member. This was then endorsed by the government in June 2022, and latterly CIPFA who issued guidance recommending that local authority and police audit committees include at least two independent members.

The Audit and Governance Committee recommended to Council at its meeting on 12 April 2023 that two independent members should be appointed to it.

Councillor Dumont proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Daar seconded the proposal.

Councillor Boylan said he welcomed the introduction of an independent member to the Audit and Governance Committee to provide even more scrutiny of public sector finance. He asked if any benchmarking had been done to come up with the level of remuneration.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services said that benchmarking had taken place amongst other local authorities and the council also had an Independent Person for the Standards Committee so that rate was also taken into consideration.

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

RESOLVED – that (a) the appointment of two independent people (known as independent members) to sit on the Audit and Governance Committee for a period of four years, with a possible extension of a further six months to align to the municipal year be approved;

(b) the job advert and job pack as at Appendix A and Appendix B be approved.

16 CONSIDERATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE HACKNEY CARRIAGE UNMET DEMAND SURVEY

The former Chairman of the Licensing Committee presented the Hackney Carriage Unmet Demand Survey report. He said that the legislation currently allowed local authorities to limit the number of taxi licenses issued. In 2019, a survey indicated that there was no significant unmet demand but the restriction of taxi licences must be re-evaluated every three years. He said that a survey carried out at the end of 2022 identified an unmet demand and the Licensing Committee considered an increase of 5% which equated to 10 extra vehicles.

Councillor Andrews proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Wilson seconded the proposal.

Councillor Wilson thanked Councillor Andrews for his excellent leadership of the Licensing Committee and said he enjoyed working with him. He said that there was a

nationwide shortage of taxi drivers and it was a real problem in Bishop's Stortford with not enough taxis available to service the train station. He said that taxis were an important part of public transport and served vulnerable people. He suggested that a public rank was required next to the private rank and did not feel that increasing the number of licences would help the issue. He hoped that the Licensing Committee would look at this issue moving forward.

The Chairman also thanked Councillor Andrews for his service on the Licensing Committee

Councillor Crystall also thanked Councillor Andrews, Councillor Deering and Councillor Wyllie for their time as Chairmen of Development Management Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He said it was hard to appreciate how difficult these roles were unless Members sat on the committee.

Councillor Deering thanked Councillor Crystall for his thanks. He said he would also like to every Member of the outgoing administration, especially Linda Haysey who had led the Council for eight years. He referred to the Licensing Committee and said they worked hard to ensure that taxi drivers in East Herts were of the highest standards to protect the people of Hertfordshire.

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

RESOLVED – That the number of Hackney Carriage vehicle licences issued by East Herts Council should

be increased by 10 (approximately 5%) over the number currently issued, bringing the total to 210.

17 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

There were no motions on notice.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm

Chairman
Date