

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY  
24 JULY 2024, AT 7.00 PM

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PRESENT: Councillor M Connolly (Chairman).  
Councillors M Adams, D Andrews,  
R Buckmaster, P Boylan, C Brittain,  
I Devonshire, E Buckmaster, V Burt,  
R Carter, N Clements, S Copley, B Crystall,  
A Daar, B Deering, T Deffley, J Dumont,  
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, M Swainston,  
J Thomas, S Watson, D Willcocks,  
G Williams, C Wilson and J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Katie Mogan	- Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Helen Standen	- Interim Chief Executive

99 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded Members that the meeting was being webcast online.

The Chairman announced that two East Herts residents

had been recognised in the 2024 King's Birthday Honours and she read out a list of achievements for each recipient:

- Stuart Storey – Awarded a Member for the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to sport and to the community in East Herts.
- Suzannah Nichol – Awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to the construction industry.

Stuart Storey was in attendance and thanked the Council for recognising his achievements.

The Chairman said she had attended 13 events since being in the role including civic events, community events and the D-Day beacon lighting event. She encouraged Members to complete the event form so that the Chairman could attend events or raise the profile of local community groups.

A minute's silence was held for Paul Stevens, Principal Landscaping Officer, who had sadly passed away.

## 100 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council said that Councillor Bull was not well and sent the Council's best wishes to him for a speedy recovery.

The Leader ran through some recent highlights. He thanked the Elections team for their work on the parliamentary election on 4 July 2024 and thanked all staff who worked on polling stations and at the count.

The Leader said he had attended the Annual Employee Award Ceremony earlier in the month and said awards were presented to individuals and teams for their outstanding work. He said that it was a genuine

celebration of exceptional staff and passed the Council's congratulations to the winners and those who were nominated.

Finally, the Leader reminded Members that there was a visioning session taking place at Fletchers Lea for the new District Plan and said it was important for everyone to have their say.

101 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bull, Butcher, Cox, Dunlop, Townsend, Watson, Williamson, Woolf and Woollcombe.

102 MINUTES - 15 MAY 2024

Councillor Marlow proposed, and Councillor Hill seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meetings held on 15 May 2024 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – that the Minutes of the meetings held on 15 May 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

103 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

104 PETITIONS

There were no petitions submitted.

105 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The full responses to the submitted Public Questions can

be found in the supplementary document [here](#).

106 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The full responses to the submitted Members Questions can be found in the supplementary document [here](#).

107 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 4 JUNE 2024

The Leader of the Council presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the Executive at its meeting on 4 June 2024. He said that the Executive also met on 9 July 2024, but there were no recommendations to Council.

107 HERTFORDSHIRE DEVELOPMENT QUALITY CHARTER

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the recommendations to Council. She explained that the Charter had been launched by the Hertfordshire Growth Board in 2023 and had been designed to raise the standards of construction in Hertfordshire. She said that the Charter was not a design guide or specific to East Hertfordshire, it was a document designed to cover all ten districts and boroughs and the county council.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the Charter set out seven pledges focussed on design and sustainability and that two developers had already endorsed the Charter. She said that the Charter did not seek to replace higher standards than current regulations and would help encourage developers be more ambitious in excellence and design.

Councillor Glover-Ward proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Goldspink seconded the proposal.

Councillor Estop said that she welcomed the Charter in

principle but felt it was quite weak and that the Growth Board could have been more challenging to developers across the county. She said that the Charter did not acknowledge the role of Development Management Committees in councils and felt that the Charter did not add anything to what already existed in the District Plan.

Councillor Deering said that the Charter was the first of its kind and felt it was a very positive step. He said he was pleased that the Council were recommending its adoption and said the Conservative group would be voting in favour of the recommendations.

Councillor E Buckmaster said that it was good to have a common approach across Hertfordshire and referred to the pledges in the Charter and said the council were already doing these.

Councillor Goldspink said she strongly supported the Charter and was pleased to see that it encouraged environmentally friendly building. She welcomed that the Charter was raising ambitions within the county.

Councillor Crystall said that it would be great if the ambition was higher but there was a trade off in order to get as many authorities as possible to sign up to it. He said he supported it strongly.

Councillor Hart said she agreed with the comments from Councillor Estop. She said that if the bar was set too low to get developers to sign up to it, it meant there won't be any meaningful impact. She said it was good to hear that East Herts were ahead of the game in balancing the need for housing and protecting the natural world but felt the council should stay ahead and not sign up to a watered-down charter.

Councillor McAndrew said that the review of the District Plan would help the council raise the bar again. He said

that this Charter let developers know that there was a minimum standard across all the districts and boroughs and would stop developers moving across the county to take advantage of lower standards.

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 Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter be agreed as a material consideration for Development Management purposes; and

(B) Developers, landowners and housing associations in the district be encouraged to voluntarily sign and commit to the design and sustainability pledges set out in the Quality Charter.

107 WALKERN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FIRST REVISION - ADOPTION

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the recommendation to Council. She said that Neighbourhood Plans gave communities the power to identify local priorities to shape development in their area. She described the changes to the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan and said that it did not allocate sites for development because the District Plan housing target has already been achieved in the village.

Councillor Glover-Ward proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. Councillor Deffley seconded the proposal.

Councillor Crystall said it was positive that Walkern had got an updated Neighbourhood Plan and the parish council were actively engaged in the process.

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

**RESOLVED** - That the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan First Revision 2021- 2033, be formally made.

## 108 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Leader of the Council presented the Community Governance Review report. He said that government guidance recommended that a council carried out a Community Governance Review every 10-15 years and referred to paragraph 2.2 of the report which showed what was in the remit of a Community Governance Review.

The Leader of the Council said that in 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission carried out a review of East Herts Council and recommended that a Community Governance Review be carried out in Ware, Wareside, Thundridge and Rush Green. He said that Council agreed that these reviews be carried out in July 2023, but the timetable had now elapsed due to staff resources and the elections in May and July. He said that this review proposed starting again but taking in all town and parish councils across the district.

The Leader of the Council said that the council wrote to all town and parish councils in May to seek informal views as to whether they'd like to be included in the review and once the statutory process had been triggered, the council would consult with the public on the proposals.

Councillor Crystall proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Horner seconded the proposal.

Councillor Jacobs said he welcomed the review and the approach. He asked for the level of response from the initial write out and said it would be useful to understand the next steps.

Councillor Deering said he echoed the Leader's comments and was supportive of the recommendation.

Councillor Parsad-Wyatt asked if there would be any public consultation in areas where the parish council had not requested any changes.

Councillor Goldspink said that Bishop's Stortford Town Council were interested in the review as they had some anomalies on their boundary.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that adjacent parish councils would be consulted if they were impacted by changes suggested by other councils. He said that the process was laid out at paragraph 2.13 of the report.

Councillor Holt asked about the impact of changing parish boundaries on district and county wards.

Councillor Horner said at the last Community Governance Review, any impacts on district and county boundaries were picked up by the Local Government Boundary Commission at an appropriate time.

Councillor Crystall reminded group leaders to appoint Members to the group.

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

**RESOLVED** - That a Community Governance Review working group be established to



commence the review process.

109 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Councillor Goldspink presented her motion on notice. She said that the Local Government Association (LGA) had published a White Paper about funding reform and improving the relationship between central and local government. She said that the government decided each year how much money would be given to each local authority which meant no long-term commitment. She said that the motion called for adequate long-term funding and financial certainty for local authorities.

Councillor Thomas seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor E Buckmaster said it was appropriate to support the motion and said the financial challenge was even more difficult at the county council. He said that nationally, there was a £6.2 billion funding gap in social care.

Councillor Deering said he strongly supported the motion as he was responsible for finances at Hertfordshire County Council, and it was an extremely challenging situation. He encouraged the new government to come up with more funding for local government.

Councillor Wyllie suggested that the proposer and seconder of the motion might wish to include writing to the new MPs representing East Herts to lobby the Minister.

Councillor Daar said the council often received different pots of money and it was a lot more work to make efficient use of it.

Councillor Dumont said that local authorities had less

spending power but were being asked to do more. He said no Member wanted to make cuts and hoped that the new government would change the system.

Councillor Williams said that local authorities needed to be given adequate funding to provide a decent level of service. He said that adequate funding meant that councils could engage early before issues become difficult to resolve. He said that he benefitted from early intervention when he was at school which allowed him to change his behaviour and achieve qualifications. He said the council would save money in the long term if they had the resources to intervene early.

Councillor Wyllie proposed the following amendment:

To add the words "and to the four local MPs" in the last paragraph after 'Local Government'

Councillor Glover-Ward seconded the amendment.

Councillor Goldspink said she was happy to accept the amendment.

The motion to support the amendment having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED. The amended motion then became the substantive motion as follows:

"This Council recognises that Local Government nationally is facing a £6.2 Billion funding gap over the next 2 years, and this will have a big impact on the financial situation in East Herts.

This council also notes that Central government relies on Local government to provide essential community services – like collecting rubbish bins, cleaning the streets, providing new homes, providing social care and much more.

It is clear that a much better relationship is needed between Central and Local Governments, - one which would provide long-term financial certainty and confidence for Local Authorities.

This Council further notes that the Local Government Association, (LGA) of which this Council is a member, published on 7 June 2024 a Local Government White Paper on funding reform and also on improving the relationship between Central and Local government. The paper sets out 6 of the Challenges which are facing the country at the moment, and which are all relevant to the residents of East Herts District. They are:- Delivering Inclusive Financial Growth, Building the Homes we need, Supporting our Children and Young People, Reforming and Sustainably Funding Social care, Supporting Place-making, and Backing Local Climate Action. In this paper it makes detailed proposals about the actions which could be taken to tackle these challenges.

The LGA is calling on Central Government to provide adequate, longer-term funding for Local Authorities which would give them long-term financial certainty and sustainability in the provision of services. There should be an end to the proliferation of different funding pots and to the competitive bidding for grant funding.

This Council resolves to express its strong support for this White Paper. This Council also calls on our new central Government to respond positively to the White Paper, and to demonstrate this by providing adequate, long-term funding for all Local Authorities.

Accordingly, it will write to the LGA Senior Vice-Chairman, and also to the government's Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and to the four local MPs expressing these views."

The Chairman said that Members could now debate the

substantive motion.

Councillor Goldspink responded to points raised in the debate. She thanked Members for the support across the Chamber and said all Members wanted to do the best and were frustrated by a lack of funds.

Having been proposed and seconded, the substantive motion was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED – that**

This Council recognises that Local Government nationally is facing a £6.2 Billion funding gap over the next 2 years, and this will have a big impact on the financial situation in East Herts.

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Social care, Supporting Place- making, and Backing Local Climate Action. In this paper it makes detailed proposals about the actions which could be taken to tackle these challenges.

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## 110 THE ECOLOGICAL AND BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

Under paragraph 3.22.7, Councillor Hoskin presented an altered motion to Council following cross party discussions.

The altered motion was as follows:

This Council recognises that there is an ecological and biodiversity crisis, and the natural world is under threat. In our county alone 76 species became extinct in the last 50 years<sup>1</sup>. Insect populations have suffered drastic declines, with far-reaching consequences for both wildlife

and people. With a third of our food crops pollinated by insects, there is a lot to lose. Much of our wildlife relies on insects for food. Without them, we risk the collapse of our natural world.

This growing ecological crisis is intrinsically linked to climate breakdown which is beginning to seriously affect the health of our environment and the wellbeing of residents.

In East Herts we have special responsibility for valuable wetland areas found in the Stort Valley, and the internationally important, Lea Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site. Our chalk rivers are not yet protected by statutory designations but are under increasing threat from water abstraction and pollution, and so need special protection. A recent chalk stream survey by Salmon and Trout Conservation UK showed that numbers of mayflies, a key indicator species for river health, were down by 44 per cent when compared with 1998 data.

This Council believes that the consequences of biodiversity loss and ecological impacts, alongside the climate emergency, are so severe that one of our top priorities must be to put actions in place that help prevent these impacts from getting worse. We have already started to review what can be done to conserve and enhance biodiversity, as required under the Biodiversity Duty of the Environment Act 2021. Furthermore, the Council has contributed to the formulation of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership's Biodiversity Action Plan and is working with partners across the county on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy which is due to be finalised within the coming 18 months. The council has fully incorporated the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, also introduced by the 2021 Act, into its planning requirements, with detailed guidance available to developers on the Council's website.

Despite the activity, however, this Council recognises it must continue to change practices and both listen to the voices of and use its own voice to advocate on behalf of, our residents, rural and urban communities, businesses, farmers, landowners and our precious species, habitats, and ecosystems to protect our critical natural capital. Across its own estate this Council will lead change, improve resilience, inspire the community and collaborate with all interested parties and organisations to promote the recovery of biodiversity.

This Council reaffirms its commitment to protecting our environment, as follows:

1. This Council declares an Ecological and Biodiversity Crisis (EBC).
2. We commit to embedding nature's recovery at the heart of its strategic plans (including the East Herts Local Plan), policy areas, service contracting and decision-making processes.
3. We support the goal defined by the Wildlife Trusts to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030, in line with national and international commitments to biodiversity.
4. We commit to tackling the climate and nature emergencies together and prioritising investment in nature-based solutions to climate change.
5. We resolve to use an evidence-based approach to protect critical natural capital, build back and reverse losses to our nationally and internationally important species, habitats and ecosystems including our rare chalk streams.
6. We resolve to set up a Biodiversity Forum, consisting

of elected members (cross party), officers and co-optees from expert bodies, to examine the ecological and biodiversity needs of the district and put forward proposals for the Council's consideration. The output from the East Herts forum and Hertfordshire's Nature Recovery Strategy be used to establish potential delivery mechanisms and to leverage government funding towards achieving the crucial recovery of nature in our area.

Councillor Nicholls seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

Councillor E Buckmaster said he was grateful for Councillor Hoskin reaching out to him. He said that the declaration of an ecological and biodiversity crisis was complimentary to the Local Nature Recovery Partnership. He said the partnership were looking to encourage investment and bring skills. He said that the government needed to be influenced and that he had written to the Secretary and State and the 12 Hertfordshire MPs as the Chair of the Local Nature Recovery Partnership.

Councillor Deering said that the Conservative group would be supporting the motion. He said that he was supportive of protecting chalk streams in the district as they were really important assets. He said he was concerned over the new government's plans to designate areas as grey belt and this could have a serious impact on nature.

Councillor Glover-Ward said that she was anticipating having further clarity on what grey belt meant in the next week. She said, assuming the motion passed, then the council could respond accordingly to any definition of grey belt.

Councillor Carter said that this was an important motion, and that the biological crisis was one of the biggest challenges faced. She said it was important to have



practical steps to influence development and protect and enhance habitats. She hoped that the District Plan could look at ways in which the council could create nature corridors and tiny green landscapes in the towns, as well as rural areas.

Councillor Williams said this motion was good news. He said that there were fantastic groups within East Herts who were raising awareness and lobbying government about the protection of swifts. He said the potential grey belt concerned him as some disused industrial areas were now home to many plants and insect species.

Councillor Estop said that it was important to also think about the threat of industrial agriculture such as the removal of hedgerows to increase field size.

Councillor Swainston said she supported the motion. She said she was concerned about the lack of moths this year.

Councillor Daar said that she was involved with the steering group and said that a third of wildlife sites in Hertfordshire were in East Herts. She said they were great natural assets and should protect and enhance what exists.

Councillor Hart said that little acts could go a long way. She said that in Ware, nesting boxes for barn owls were installed and owls had begun nesting in there. She said it was important to educate people on the little things they could do to help biodiversity.

Councillor Nicholls said that it was a crucial time for nature and there was a public consultation of the Herts Nature Recovery Strategy. She said that there were huge mental and physical benefits of being immersed in nature and healthy diverse habitats migrate against the effects of climate change.

Councillor Hill questioned whether there was any scope to work with businesses who have premises that were not used overnight and could be a could place for encouraging biodiversity.

Councillor Hoskin responded to the points raised. He said that losing chalk streams was careless and there was a need to work harder to encourage enthusiasm within residents. He said there was an opportunity in the District Plan review to influence what the council wanted to achieve.

Having been proposed and seconded, the substantive motion was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** - This Council recognises that there is an ecological and biodiversity crisis, and the natural world is under threat. In our county alone 76 species became extinct in the last 50 years<sup>1</sup>. Insect populations have suffered drastic declines, with far-reaching consequences for both wildlife and people. With a third of our food crops pollinated by insects, there is a lot to lose. Much of our wildlife relies on insects for food. Without them, we risk the collapse of our natural world.

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Despite the activity, however, this Council recognises it must continue to change practices and both listen to the voices of and use its own voice to advocate on behalf of, our residents, rural and urban communities, businesses, farmers, landowners and our precious species, habitats, and ecosystems to protect our critical natural capital. Across its own estate this Council will lead change, improve resilience, inspire the community and collaborate with all interested parties and organisations to promote the recovery of biodiversity.

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crucial recovery of nature in our area.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm

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