

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 9 JULY 2024, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor (Chairman/Leader)
Councillors B Crystall, M Goldspink,
C Brittain, A Daar, J Dumont, V Glover-Ward,
S Hopewell, T Hoskin and C Wilson.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, E Buckmaster,
S Bull, B Deering and D Jacobs.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Cassidy	- Chief Executive
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Laura Guy	- Principal Planning Officer
Chloe Hipwood	- Service Manager - Waste, Recycling and Street Cleaning
Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Jess Khanom-Metaman	- Head of Operations
Katie Mogan	- Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive

There were no apologies for absence.

74 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader said that this was the first meeting since the parliamentary election, and he thanked the team involved for their work over the election period and overnight at the count.

He reminded Members to use their microphones as the meeting was being webcast.

75 MINUTES - 4 JUNE 2024

Councillor Goldspink proposed, and Councillor Glover-Ward seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2024 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Leader. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from the Executive.

Councillor E Buckmaster referred to Item 5 and declared that he was the Chairman of the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership and cabinet member for the waste disposal authority.

77 AWARD OF THE WASTE, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability presented the report for the Award of the Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract. He said that the report sought the Executive's approval to allow North

Hertfordshire District Council, as the lead authority, to award the contract.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the waste service was the largest spend each year for East Herts, and it was a high-profile service that had a significant impact and influence on the council's ability to achieve its carbon reduction aims. He said that the Executive agreed the service design in December 2023 and officers have been involved in a competitive dialogue to award the contract to the preferred bidder.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the government had undertaken a consultation on proposed statutory guidance relating to recycling proposals. He said that some of the elements of the guidance were not aligned with the service changes in the proposed contract, especially the frequency of waste collections. He said that the council had received independent legal advice contained in the part 2 appendix but said it was not prudent for the council to delay this decision.

Councillor Hoskin proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Goldspink seconded the proposal.

Councillor Brittain referred to the Letchworth depot and asked for the latest update.

Councillor Hoskin said the depot was not available as of the 9th July. He said the recommendation remained the same and North Herts would award the contract, if agreed, on the immediate arrival of the documentation.

Councillor Daar referred to page 19 and the data from Wales about three weekly waste collections which showed that two councils were able to increase their recycling rates. She referred to page 17 and asked for more details about the soft plastic collections and the survival bags.

The Waste Shared Service Manager said that the new contract would allow residents to put soft plastics in loose in the mixed recycling bin. She said the team were still consulting with various material recovery facilities to understand the sorting technology available to sort the materials. She said that the survival bags were a backup plan if the technology was not sufficient so residents would put their soft recycling into these bags in their recycling bin.

Councillor Hoskin said the council were part of a trial that was running nationally.

The Waste Shared Service Manager said that this was part of the Flex Collect trial funded by the Flexible Plastics Fund. She said that the government have indicated that all councils would be expected to collect soft plastics by 2027 and the trial was looking at the types of soft plastics being recycled and how it could be recycled and processed. The trial would be expanded into East Herts when the survival bags had been delivered.

Councillor E Buckmaster spoke on behalf of the Herts Waste Partnership and said that they felt three weekly collections were the way to go and there was enough flexibility in the guidelines to move to three weekly collections if there was a good reason. He said there would be challenges around the additional containers for residents but said it was important to start getting food waste collected separately. He said that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed communicating to residents the collection cycle as no two weeks would be the same in a six-week period. He felt this was positive and could see recycling rates increasing.

Councillor Hoskin said a large part of the work after this decision would be communication and engagement with residents and said that councillors would play a vital role in this.

Councillor Crystall said that the project had been running for several years and started under the previous administration. He said it was satisfying to see change happening for the better and it was something to be celebrated.

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 Executive agrees to North Herts District Council awarding the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to the preferred bidder, on behalf of East Herts Council, as identified in Appendix 1 Part 2 of this report;

(B) the Executive agrees to approve the formation of a joint mobilisation project board to include the Executive Members responsible for digital transformation as well as the Executive Member covering waste, recycling and street cleansing services for both EHC and North Herts to monitor the progress of the mobilisation of the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract;

(C) The Executive has regard for the draft statutory guidance in Appendix 6 and taking into account the matters set out in this Part 2 report and any Part 2 clarifications, reconfirms the decision on the 3-weekly collection frequency of residual waste collections made by Executive as per 2.5 and provides clear reasons for the decision;

(D) The Executive agrees to the commencement of a procurement exercise for the provision of a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) and haulage.

78 REQUEST FOR AREA DESIGNATION FOR
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING: HERTFORD CASTLE
PLUS, HERTFORD TOWN COUNCIL

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report. She said that Hertford Town Council had applied for the designation of the Castle ward. Prior to the 2023 boundary changes, the whole area was in the Castle ward, and so the proposal was to call the area Hertford Castle Plus.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the council had undertaken a public consultation and six responses were received, five positive and one response concerned that the area was too large. She said that other Neighbourhood Plans in Ware and Bishop's Stortford covered a larger area than the proposed Hertford Castle Plus. She said it would be sensible to ensure that the whole of Hertford was covered by Neighbourhood Plans.

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

Councillor Deering referred to the low responses in the consultation and asked how much the exercise had cost.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the consultation was procedural and said that six responses was higher than received in other areas. She said there would be further opportunity for consultation and engagement when the plan started to be developed.

Councillor Deering asked for a figure of the cost.

The Principal Planning Officer said the process was covered by government grants and there was not a cost to the council. She said there was some officer cost in the support and guidance provided to develop the plan.

Councillor Deering asked for a written response after the meeting with figures provided.

Councillor Daar said that she had been involved in the Bengeo Neighbourhood Plan and said the public meetings had been very busy and local people got involved in developing the plan.

Councillor Hopewell said she had received informal interest from residents at this early stage. She said the procedural consultation had not sparked interest yet.

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 consultation responses, as detailed in Appendix C to this report, be received and considered; and

(B) the application, submitted by Hertford Town Council, for the designation of Hertford Castle Plus as a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of producing a neighbourhood plan, be supported

79 A LISTENING COUNCIL REPORT - FEEDBACK ON CONSULTATION

The Executive Member for Resident Engagement presented the Listening Council report. He said that he felt that there was a disconnect between politicians and residents which could be seen in a declining turnout in elections. He said there had been huge cuts to funding which produced a misunderstanding of what the council could and could not provide.

The Executive Member for Resident Engagement said he wanted the public to be involved with knowing what challenges the council faced and the document provided a set of principles with how to interact with the public. He said that the consultation provided largely positive comments and said that good communication would result in money being saved not spent. He referred to examples of successful projects in the report and

upcoming projects such as the parking strategy which would involve visits to various towns and villages across the district.

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

Councillor E Buckmaster highlighted that the engagement with officers and Members was excellent in terms of the Member Enquiry system. He said he understood the intentions of the report but thought that it was difficult for the council to brand itself as listening as decisions had to be made and the council could not please all residents. He added that residents and parish councils had told him that they felt engagement was worse now than under the previous administration.

Councillor Wilson said he understood the point about branding the council as a listening one. He said the council would be listening if the strategy was done well and let residents know that their concerns were being heard and the council would convey why it could not agree with what they want. He said that listening did not mean agreeing and thought it was possible to achieve.

Councillor Glover-Ward said that planning matters were likely to have decisions made which most people did not agree with. She said however, that she had introduced Community Forums for residents to engage with the council and developers. She felt that this had been extremely valuable and said that people might be unhappy but did not think they were getting communicated with any less.

Councillor E Buckmaster responded and said that he had heard the complaint many times and residents and parishes were not getting responses in a timely fashion.

Councillor Glover-Ward said that she was not getting that feedback but encouraged those who were unhappy to

write to her and explain what they'd like.

Councillor Crystall said that the planning process had changed and evolved, and the council had to listen more which was why they had created new forums.

Councillor Goldspink thanked Councillor Buckmaster for his comments and said it was important to listen to everyone's views. She said the aim of the paper was to indicate to residents that the council wanted everyone to be involved and have their point of view heard and respected. She felt this was a positive first step.

Councillor Daar referred to paragraph 1.5 which showed a good example of communication and engagement.

Councillor Hoskin said that this report represented a way forward and there were many opportunities for the council to show willing.

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 'A Listening Council' document as amended following public consultation, presented in Appendix A, be approved.

80 WARD FREMAN COMMUNITY POOL GROUP CIO MATCH FUNDING SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP FUND BID

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the report. He said that the Ward Freman pool had to be closed in December 2023 due to health and safety concerns but since then, a community pool group had been formed and registered as a charity. He said that this group intended to make a bid to the Community Ownership Fund, but this required 20% of match funding.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that East Herts Council had agreed to provide the match funding of £200,000 and write a letter of support for the application. He said the funding was to cover repairs to the pool and to cover the refurbishment of the changing rooms. He said this report was seeking approval to write the letter of support and the decision to provide the match funding would come later.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that the match funding would be sourced from the existing management charge payment to SLM, and the future costs were already provided in the Medium Term Financial Plan to fund this. He said this was the best way to bring the community asset back into use and the pool would close permanently if the match funding was not agreed.

Councillor Brittain proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Hopewell seconded the proposal.

Councillor E Buckmaster said he could not see any risk to this and wanted to acknowledge the efforts by Councillor Hopewell to move this project forward.

Councillor Bull also congratulated the Executive in pushing this forward and wished the community group every success.

Councillor Dumont commended Councillor Hopewell for trying to find solutions to this issue.

Councillor Hopewell thanked officers for identifying the pot of funding and all the volunteers on the community group.

Councillor Wilson said this was an example of talking with the community and getting difficult points across and listening to concerns of residents.

Councillor Andrews said he was pleased to see this come forward. He said £200,000 was a lot of money to invest in an old facility. He asked if the Executive had investigated building a new facility.

Councillor Hopewell said that the condition survey had said that the structure of the building was in good condition. She said that all information would be made available to the community ownership fund for them to decide whether it was worth investing in.

Councillor Glover-Ward said that a new facility would cost about the same as the Arts Centre in Bishop's Stortford which had to be cancelled. She said it would not be fair to give money to the Ward Freman pool if not going to the Arts Centre.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services clarified that the Arts Centre in Bishop's Stortford had been postponed, not cancelled.

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 Executive agree in principle to provide match funding of up to £200,000 to support the Ward Freeman Community Pool Group CIO application to the Government's Community Ownership Fund; and

(B) The Head of Strategic Finance and Property be authorised to issue a letter of support for the Community Ownership Fund bid setting out the in-principle match funding agreement.

(C) Authorise the Head of Strategic Finance and Property to include in the letter the additional information concerning a publicly owned asset that the application will require.

81 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

Chairman
Date