

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
16 SEPTEMBER 2025, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Jacobs (Chair)
Councillors E Buckmaster, R Carter, N Cox,
C Horner, S Marlow, S Nicholls, M Swainston
and G Williams

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors B Crystall, J Dumont,
M Goldspink, T Hoskin and C Wilson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer
James Ellis	- Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Director for Communities
Katherine Gilcreest	- Housing Lead
Dominique Kingsbury	- Parking Services Manager
Peter Mannings	- Committee Support Officer
Ben Wood	- Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services

147 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Andrews, Boylan, Clements, Woolcombe and Wyllie.

148 MINUTES - 10 JUNE 2025

Councillor Swainston proposed, and Councillor Cox seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendments:

The T be inserted before Councillor Smith's surname in the list of attendees and in minute 75 where he was welcomed to his first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as there were two Councillor Smiths on the council.

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

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the following amendments:

The T be inserted before Councillor Smith's surname in the list of attendees and in minute 75 where he was welcomed to his first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as there were two Councillor Smiths on the council.

149 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The chair reminded Members to use the microphones as the meeting was being webcasted.

150 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There we no declarations of interest.

151 REVIEW OF RESIDENT PERMIT ZONE POLICY

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability submitted a report that sought the comments of the

Overview and Scrutiny Committee on some targeted amendments to both the East Herts District Council's resident permit parking scheme and the operational guidance which accompanies that policy.

Members were advised that the proposed changes aimed to enhance accessibility, reduce procedural barriers and better align the guidance and policy with the council's strategic priorities. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability referred in particular to sustainability, air quality, community wellbeing and economic growth.

Members were advised that the recommendations were based on public feedback from the 2024 parking strategy engagement and an independent review provided by Citisense, who were the architects of the parking strategy and had been instrumental in benchmarking against best practice from comparable local authorities.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the changes were set out within the paper. He said that there was to be an amendment to the requirement that non-resident parking must be considered in awarding an RPZ scheme, specifically that non-resident parking must exceed 40% occupancy during times of peak period. The recommendation was that this be reduced to 10% to allow some more holistic assessments based on the local context, resident feedback and officer observation.

Members were advised that there was also a provision for Officer discretion which was also recommended to ensure that borderline or exceptional cases could be considered where there was compelling evidence to do so.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the second recommendation was that the council amend the policy that 75% of households in a proposed zone have on street parking capacity for one vehicle. The proposal was that this requirement be

reduced to 50% to reflect the practical constraints in historic mixed use or high-density areas such as constrained street layouts, pre-existing loading restrictions and compelling and competing demands on limited road space.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability summarised the report's three recommendations and welcomed comments from the Committee. The Parking Services Manager responded to questions from Councillor Jacobs regarding the Citisense report and the recommendations.

Councillor Jacobs requested that officers come back to the committee at some point regarding the Citisense recommendations contained within an appendix to the report.

Councillor E Buckmaster acknowledged the flexibility that was being introduced. He said that many Members dealt with parking and highways on a daily basis and he expressed wariness about introducing resident parking zones. Councillor E Buckmaster referred in particular to urban areas close to transport hubs or sports clubs and the issue of how an RPZ would impact on a wider area and move a problem elsewhere.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that this was a valid concern. He emphasised that RPZs were an imperfect solution to a tricky problem and said that RPZ schemes in Hertford bled into each other, leaving a question mark about the areas in between.

Members were advised that the paper sought to make the situation regarding RPZs more practical and more applicable, and to allow the council to apply the scheme where it was best suited.

Councillor E Buckmaster asked if the officer discretion and change of policy was considered and whether or not further problems would be caused by introducing an RPZ.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that there had to be some input in terms of expertise from officers if an area met the criteria for an RPZ.

Councillor Horner welcomed the changes in terms of securing more flexibility over the issues with RPZs. He said that there were no ideal solutions to parking issues and RPZs were one way of addressing them. He said that the resulting issues sometimes had to be lived with and that there were downsides to RPZs.

Councillor Horner said that where there was a desire for an RPZ, the Council should not have very prescriptive rules that ruled it out. He said that he welcomed the changes in general terms.

Councillor Swainston also welcomed the increased flexibility and asked if officers were now confident that this would give enough flexibility. She also asked if consideration be given to feedback from residents on the hours of operation of an RPZ.

The Parking Services Manager said that when carrying out informal consultation, officers would absolutely include a range of options for residents to consider and respond to in terms of timings for the operation of an RPZ. This information was taken into account to meet the needs of residents. The Council could then design a scheme based upon the thoughts and responses of the residents.

Councillor Marlow said that the scheme looked very equitable. He said that he had been struck recently by the size of some new cars, and he asked what metrics were being used for measure vehicles to give the figures.

The Parking Services Manager said that, in the context of permit zones, a typical measurement of 5.5 metres was used as a length per parking space in an RPZ area. This was the guide used to calculate the maximum number of spaces in an area. He said that an option in future was to

consider increasing this measurement to 6 metres.

Councillor Nicholls broadly welcomed the changes. She highlighted an issue in respect of the prevalence of dropped kerbs meaning that there would not be enough spaces to meet the requirements. She said that this issue was exacerbated by residents not living on roads trying to park there.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability that the reduction from 75% to 50% might help to an extent in that regard. He said that there was limited funding for RPZs, and the schemes needed to be funded, perhaps via Section 106 legal agreements.

Councillor Carter commented on the increased flexibility making it more possible for some schemes to be considered. She asked if there were less spaces than there were people with cars, if there would be competition for permits or if everyone would have a permit and have to find a space to park.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that residents were not renting a piece of the road and finding a parking space would be on a first come first serve basis. He said that there was no guarantee of a parking space within an RPZ.

The Parking Services Manager explained that the Council typically offered two permits per household in the majority of the RPZ schemes. He said that where there was insufficient space on the public highway, the Council would consider reducing this to one permit per household. Members were advised that this was partly to encourage people to move away from car ownership.

The Parking Services Manager said that the standard design methodology was to include the space in front of the driveways as a parking place. He said that this was how the Council had operated since 2005, and where there were bay makings involved, these would be

extended across the driveways to maximise the space available on the road.

Councillor E Buckmaster asked if the changes in respect of drop kerbs would link to any future policies around including on street electric charging, and any potential conflict. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that on street parking would raise a lot of questions about democratising the costs of EVs for residents. He said that lampposts or charging points would not belong to any one resident but would just happen to be available on a particular street.

The Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services referred to the Citisense appendix - which did pick up some more radical ideas, including some content about EV charging. He said that an original premise of this paper was to consider how to make the whole RPZ process more streamlined, and this included lowering the threshold for implementing an RPZ.

The Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services said that the paper for the Executive and Council could cover these issues.

Councillor Jacobs said that it was clear that there was broad support for what was being proposed. He commented that reducing the 40% occupancy to 10% felt quite drastic and could be too low. He said that everyone would consider their case for an RPZ as exceptional as no two cases were the same. He made a number of further comments about the criteria and the current and future application process.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that Members' remarks were helpful and the discretion for officers might need to be qualified a little bit more in terms of the parameters for considering an application for an RPZ.

Councillor Horner made a number of comments regarding

how an RPZ had operated in an area he had lived in outside of East Herts. He said that it was very important that residents should be made aware that they might not be able to park outside their house, but instead in nearby roads.

Councillor Horner asked if the hours of operation were being considered separately to the proposed changes. The Parking Services Manager explained that when officers initially consulted with residents, a range of times were offered including a 1-hour band within the day. He said that officers would adapt and propose a scheme that was in line with the majority of responses from the residents.

The Parking Services Manager said that officers had considered reducing or removing the majority of residents within a particular road, as per a recommendation from Citisense. He said that the threshold was considered to be an appropriate level to demonstrate a majority mandate by those residents that had engaged with the Council.

Members were advised that dropping this threshold any further could be considered as undemocratic in terms of not providing the necessary mandate to proceed, i.e in a sub majority context.

Councillor Nicholls proposed, and Councillor Cox seconded, a motion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered and provided comments on the proposed changes within the Resident's Permit Zone (RPZ) Operational Guidance.

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

RESOLVED – that Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and provide comments on the following proposed changes within the Resident's Permit Zone (RPZ) Operational Guidance:

- That in relation to the requirement that non-resident parking must exceed 40% occupancy at peak times as a condition for implementing an RPZ, this be reduced to 10% of occupancy at peak times;
- That the requirement for there to be sufficient kerb space to enable 75% of households in a proposed area to park one vehicle on-street as a condition for implementing an RPZ, be removed from the guidance;
- That in exceptional cases, officers may exercise discretion where local evidence and professional judgement support progression of a scheme.

152 SCRUTINY OF REGISTERED PROVIDERS' COMMUNICATIONS METHODS

Councillor Sue Nicholls said that Overview and Scrutiny Committee had expressed a wish to review and scrutinise the effectiveness of communications between housing associations (sometimes also called registered housing providers), their tenants, elected Members and Council Officers.

Councillor Nicholls said that the committee recognised that there were different practices across different housing associations which sometimes made it difficult for Members and Council Officers to work with housing associations to resolve issues for residents.

Councillor Nicholls said that some housing associations already had excellent communication with residents, elected Members and the council, and it was an ambition that this was the case for all residents. She said that the report outlined a proposed programme of work for the Overview and Scrutiny to help identify and make recommendations in this area, to highlight potential

improvements and to share best practice.

Councillor Nicholls explained that the scrutiny exercise sought to examine how registered housing providers operated within East Herts, communicated with their customer and with the council. The aims were to identify areas for improvement by housing associations and/or the council, examples of best practice that could be shared among housing associations, potential issues for lobbying national bodies such as regulators or government to improve housing association communications.

Councillor Nicholls said that a project plan had been developed to deliver these aims, and this document could be seen at Appendix A. She set out in detail the proposed timeline for this area of work and said that a draft of the proposed questionnaire was shared at Appendix B.

Members were advised that a task and finish group would be established of Overview and Scrutiny Members to consider feedback from questionnaires. The Task and Finish Group could request further information from housing associations and would meet between September and December 2025.

Councillor Nicholls said that she hoped that Members would be satisfied, as she was, with the proposed plan of work to make recommendations for improvements in this area. She therefore requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee support the review as outlined in the report and project plan and agree to the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to progress this work.

Councillor Swainston welcomed the ideas set out in the paper and said that most councillors had heard from residents who were not happy that they could not get hold of their housing association or had received responses that were not satisfactory. She said that if Members could improve that situation then that would very valuable.

Councillor Carter said that she agreed that

communication was probably the key thing that upset tenants in terms of not getting issues fixed or not being able to speak to the right person.

Councillor Marlow said that communication with housing associations was a very mixed affair. He wondered how this way forward was going to be delivered to the housing associations and what kind of weight it would be given when there was a housing ombudsman service and the regulator for social housing. He commented on how officers were going to persuade the housing associations to pay attention to what Members were saying on this topic.

The Housing Lead for Housing Services said that some initial conversations had been had with registered providers (housing associations). She said that officers had some great relationships with providers and there were some housing associations that had really good practices, who were keen to share their experience and use this as best practice.

Members were reminded that this might be different with other registered providers and that the Council had no powers to get housing associations to engage with this piece of work. The Housing Lead for Housing Services said that registered providers relied upon the Council for their nominations, and so there was an incentive for registered providers and housing associations to work with the Council.

Members were advised that officers would be advising the housing associations that they should work with the council to improve the situation as it would be positive for registered providers and for residents.

Councillor Marlow agreed and said that this was about relationship building with the registered providers. He commented on whether some work could be done to assist officers in creating those relationships with the housing associations.

Councillor Nicholls said that this matter would form a key part of the work programme, and that she thought that there would be an element of peer pressure on behalf of the providers to push for better practice. She said that she hoped that there could be engagement with the ombudsman as well and both sides, which could push for better outcomes for residents.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods thanked Councillor Nicholls for proposing this topic and for her efforts so far. She also thanked the Housing Lead for Housing Services for her description of the task ahead as set out in the report. She agreed that there was a need for the study.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that as a Council, a small start had been achieved with better communications and there were now regular quarterly meetings with Clarion Housing Association, which she hoped would enable problems and general procedures to be discussed.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that she hoped that such meetings with SNG housing association would also soon be held as they had a new community officer. She hoped that as many Members as possible would attend the consultation discussion groups with the housing associations as she felt that they were useful.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that she had been petitioning very hard for the housing associations to give the Council contact details and some of them had provided that information. She said that would endeavour to continue these efforts to secure the contact details for the other 40 housing associations in the district.

Councillor Buckmaster said that he was pleased that there were meetings being arranged. He said that there used to be regular meetings with the housing associations

on a quarterly basis and there also used to be a quarterly forum with a number of the housing associations invited into the council chamber where mutual items of interest would be discussed.

Councillor Jacobs proposed, and Councillor Horner seconded a motion that Councillor Nicholls be approved as chair of the task and finish group and work with officers to seek nominees from the committee.

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

Councillor Swainston proposed, and Councillor Carter seconded a motion for the substantive recommendation (as amended) for the approval the project plan at Appendix 1, and for the establishment of a task and finish group as outlined in the project plan.

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

RESOLVED – that (A) the project plan at Appendix 1 be approved;

(B) the establishment of a task and finish group as outlined in the project plan, be approved; and

(C) Councillor Nicholls be approved as chair of the task and finish group and that she works with officers to seek nominees from the committee.

153 WASTE COLLECTION CONTRACT INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT - VERBAL UPDATE

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability submitted an interim progress report and a detailed verbal progress presentation answering questions that had been pre submitted by Members. He said that a formal report would be submitted to the meeting on 4 November 2025.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability set out the context and scale of the project and the initial position in respect of the roll out of the new containers as at the 4 August, and the current position as of this morning.

Members were also advised of the underlying contractual performance, i.e. how well Veolia were performing at collecting both recycling and residual waste. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability set out in detail the structure of his update and he referred in particular to learning points in respect of communications and data integrity and how this was handled between organisations.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability set out some early post implementation initial results. He summarised the scale of the project in terms of the numbers of households, and set out the new containers, caddy starter packs and bin stickers which were required by each household.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the performance at the start of the roll out was 97% which sounded quite high. He said that although 97% was a large number of households, this left a significant number of households without the means to fully participate in the scheme by the 4 August.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability acknowledged that there had been huge inefficiencies in the communications channels that residents and Members were interacting with. He said that joint daily review meetings were set up and this very quickly short circuited many of the communications hurdles that were being experienced, enabling a common set of data which showed how the roll out was being managed.

Members were informed that a system had been set up that allowed residents to bypass customer services and lodge a requirement straight into the contractors control

sheet. This relieved the extraordinary business load on customer services and left them free to deal with day-to-day customer contact.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability set out in detail the current position for Members and answered their questions with input from the Executive Member for Corporate Services, the Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services and the Director for Legal, Policy and Governance.

The Chair thanked the Executive Members and the Directors for providing a verbal update report at short notice. Members received the verbal update.

RESOLVED – that the verbal update be received.

154 FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE

The Chair explained that this agenda item was a standing item that had been introduced, which gave an opportunity for the Executive to feedback to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on issues that had been raised at previous meetings. He said that he would ensure that this feedback was more detailed going forward.

Councillor Crystall provided an update in respect of local government reform. He said that part of the updated corporate plan presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June included engaging with the community in respect of local government reform (LGR).

Councillor Crystall said that this engagement had begun with an event in Hertford market, and there were events planned for the district's 5 towns, with another scheduled in the Council Chamber at Wallfields. He said that the actual details of LGR would be covered by an all-member briefing on the 13 November 2025, with a decision due to be made at a special meeting of the Executive on 18 November 2025. He said he was unsure at this stage whether there would be a special full council meeting.

Members received the feedback from the Leader.

RESOLVED – that the feedback be received.

155 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee Support Officer submitted the work programme report and Members were invited to consider and determine the work programme going forward. The Committee Support Officer set out the matters coming forward for the November meeting and the meetings in January and March 2026.

Councillor E Buckmaster said that he wanted to clarify what it was that the committee would be considering in respect of Local Government Reform (LGR). He referred to how the council would deal with assets.

Councillor E Buckmaster emphasised the importance of understanding what was important to members and residents. Councillor Jacobs said that LGR scrutiny proposal forms were submitted from Councillor E Buckmaster, and Councillor McAndrew, and that these forms had been circulated to the committee for comments.

Councillor Jacobs said that the next step was to share these forms and comments with the administration, and for Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to agree a reporting timescale. He said that he did not envisage that this subject would be included at the 4 November meeting and instead be more likely for the 20 January 2026 agenda.

Councillor Carter said that with regards the Sustainable Transport proposal, she believed that this was part of a task and finish group held in 2017, which researched matters linked to the District Plan.

Councillor Carter said that she wondered whether this matter would therefore be more usefully linked in with the planning department - in terms of evidence for the sustainable transport element of the District Plan. She said that there might be other things that the planning department wanted the committee to consider in that regard.

Councillor Carter said that another big topic was artificial intelligence and asked whether Members could have a summary bulletin on this topic, to enable Members to see where it was being used, what kind of packages were being utilised, and in what areas.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that he would speak to the Head of IT to ascertain to what extent this was being used at the council. He believed that the use of AI was quite limited at the moment, if at all, and that any update could include future plans for the use of AI.

Councillor Carter said that people in local government and other organisations were increasingly being encouraged to use AI to summarise matters or to write notes.

Councillor E Buckmaster said that, in respect of sustainable transport, a cross-party working group had just started in respect of the local transport plan which would include elements of sustainable transport.

Councillor Swainston mentioned Glyphosate as perhaps being lost in the wording about the re tendering of the ground's maintenance contract (as per the work programme). The Committee Support Officer suggested emailing the officer submitting this matter to reiterate that the use of Glyphosate should form part of the considerations.

Councillor Nicholls proposed, and Councillor Swainston seconded a motion that the Overview and Scrutiny

Committee work programme be agreed. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme in Appendix 1 be agreed.

156 URGENT ITEMS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm

Chairman
Date