

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2026, AT 7.00
PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

James Ellis	- Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Brian Moldon	- Director for Finance, Risk and Performance
Helen Standen	- Chief Executive
Stephanie Tarrant	- Assistant Director for Democracy, Elections and Information Governance

320 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

321 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded attendees that the meeting was being webcast. The full webcast of the meeting can be viewed here: Executive – [10 February 2026](#).

322 MINUTES - 13 JANUARY 2026

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods proposed, and the Executive Member for Communities seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2026 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 13 January 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

323 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

324 BUDGET 2026/27 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2026 -2031

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the report. The report set out an updated MTFP for 2026/27 to 2030/31 and the proposed Capital Programme for 2026/27 to 2028/29. Members heard that the Government's settlement had aligned with the Council's most optimistic assumptions, meaning that whilst funding had still declined it was less sharp than expected.

The final settlement confirmed an increase in grants for homelessness, rough sleeping and domestic abuse, which would be reflected in the final budget. A review of the council's finances had identified £706,000 of new pressures for 2026/27, alongside significant uncertainty linked to Local Government Reorganisation. To prepare, the Council had prudently set aside £1 million over two years. Slower than expected growth from BEAM also required a £203,000 contingency, though performance

improvements were noted.

To maintain financial sustainability, the Council continued efficiency work and planned inflation-linked increases to fees and charges, whilst freezing some proposed car park rises. A favourable pension fund revaluation delivered nearly £1 million in annual savings, enabling the setting of a balanced budget and allowing additional reserves to be created to strengthen resilience.

Council tax for 2026/27 was proposed to rise by 2.99%. The capital programme remained limited due to low capital receipts, with new projects dependent on future asset disposals. The MTFP and draft budget had reviewed by the Joint Scrutiny Committee and the recommendations made were appended to the report.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services seconded the proposal.

Members commented on why Local Authorities were expected to fund Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) themselves, and whether Councils would be incentivised to minimise costs or required to pool larger contributions into a shared fund for the new Unitary Authority. Officers explained that many details of LGR were still unknown, including which structural option the Government would choose. All district councils and the County Council had agreed to set aside initial funds, but this was being held until further information emerged. It was advised that costs would depend on the final model selected, noting that other councils elsewhere had set aside larger sums.

Members praised staff at BEAM, noting that they had been undertaking a significant amount of work across the building and its programming. It was highlighted that this effort had been ongoing for some time and that there

were promising developments ahead.

In response to a Member question regarding whether recent Government changes to grant structures had effectively reduced funding for homelessness prevention, noting that the council now had to set aside its own money to cover temporary accommodation costs, officers explained that the situation was complex but confirmed that the temporary accommodation element of the homelessness grant had been moved into Revenue Support Grant. As a result, the Council had allocated around £400,000 from its general funding to cover these costs, as it had done in previous years. It was noted that this sat alongside roughly £1 million in other homelessness-related grants.

Members acknowledged how challenging the budget had been and praised officers for balancing it despite difficult economic conditions. It was noted that the introduction of the report highlighted the bleak wider economic outlook, including stubborn inflation and very modest national growth, which compared poorly internationally and contrasted with the more optimistic narrative from Central Government. Members highlighted that this context was important, particularly with Local Government Reorganisation approaching, as future Councillors would need to understand the realities they would face.

Members reflected on the Council's current financial position, noting previous large loans and commended officers and the Executive Member for managing the situation well and leaving the Council in a stable position.

It was acknowledged that the budget had been further scrutinised by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committee. Comments made at the Joint Committee highlighted the use of £250,000 reserves set aside and Members were reminded that they could propose ideas for how those reserves could be used.

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 following recommendations be submitted to Council for approval as part of the final Budget for 2026/27:

- a) That the final General Fund Budget for 2026/27, including a Band D Council Tax of £207.03 (reflecting a 2.99% increase), be approved.
- b) That the updated position on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), as set out in Appendix A, be noted.
- c) That the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27, as detailed in Appendix B, be approved.
- d) That the minimum level of General Fund balance of £3.649 million, based on the 2026/27 risk assessment of balances in paragraph 6.3, be approved.
- e) That the budget pressures identified in Section 4 of the report be noted.
- f) That the savings proposals identified in Section 5 of the report be noted.
- g) That the Section 25 Statement on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves, as set out in Appendix D, be noted.
- h) That the Capital Programme for 2026 to 2029, as set out in Appendix E, be approved.
- i) That the minutes and comments of the Joint Meeting of Scrutiny Committees from 28 January 2026, as set out in Appendix F and paragraph 11.1, be noted.

325 CAPITAL STRATEGY, MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION
POLICY AND TREASURY STRATEGY 2026/27

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the report. The report set out the Council's investment programme, its financing and the process for

developing new proposals. It was noted that it was reviewed annually to ensure transparency and compliance with statutory guidance. Capital spending remained low and was being funded mainly through new capital receipts. It was noted that projected debt levels were falling and were expected to continue to decline over the next three years, with a corresponding improvement in the impact on the revenue account.

Members heard that the Treasury Management Strategy, emphasised the need to manage borrowing, investments and cash flow prudently in line with CIPFA codes. It was noted that the proposed 2026/27 policy continued the approach used over previous years, ensuring borrowing for capital purposes was repaid over an appropriate period.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods seconded the proposal.

In response to a question from a Member regarding two major Public Works Loan Board loans that were due for refinancing later in the year, officers advised that the Council had several loans, however the two large £25 million loans were due for refinancing in June and September 2026. Members heard that options would be explored with the Council's treasury advisers, taking account of market trends and the likelihood of falling interest rates. Officers added that decisions would need to be made closer to the refinancing dates and would also have to factor in Local Government Reorganisation, as a new unitary authority might have cash reserves that could allow internal rather than external borrowing, which could be more beneficial overall.

Members observed that the Council's debt had been steadily reducing and asked for context on how the Council had managed to bring debt down and whether

any risks might reverse that trend. Officers explained that debt reduced each year because the Council set aside minimum revenue provision (MRP) of around 2% annually to repay it. They added that no new borrowing was planned, with future capital spending intended to be funded through capital receipts from asset disposals. This approach avoided increasing debt and therefore avoided higher MRP charges on the revenue budget, whilst ensuring existing debt continued to fall.

Members noted that the Council had reduced its debt by nearly £8 million in the year, which appeared to be more than the 2% annual reduction previously mentioned and suggested this showed strong performance. Officers explained that in addition to the standard 2% minimum revenue provision, the Council had also made a voluntary repayment relating to vehicles purchased for the waste service, funded through capital receipts from asset disposals.

In response to a request for clarification following a newspaper report suggesting that the Old River Lane public square had been deferred, Members heard that the project had not been postponed. It was explained that the capital budget had been realigned to reflect the expected timetable, with expenditure moved from 2026/27 to 2027/28 because progress depended on the developer's pace. It was noted that the scheme had only recently submitted its planning application and could not proceed without permission. It was confirmed that the funding remained in place and that there was a strong intention to deliver the public square, subject to planning approval being granted.

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) Executive recommends to Council that it approves the Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and the

Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27, including the Prudential Indicators contained within the reports.

326 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 19:31

Chairman
Date