

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 2 JUNE 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 and
C Wilson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Crutchley	- Team Leader (Planning Policy)
Jonathan Geall	- Director for Communities
Katherine Gilcreest	- Assistant Director, Housing
Sara Saunders	- Director for Place
Claire Sime	- Assistant Director (Place Shaping)
Stephanie Tarrant	- Assistant Director for Democracy, Elections and Information Governance

1 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor T Hoskin.

2 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 – 2 June 2026](#).

3 MINUTES - 24 MARCH 2026

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods proposed, and the Executive Member for Resident Engagement seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 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 24 March 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 SCRUTINY OF REGISTERED PROVIDERS' COMMUNICATIONS METHODS

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods presented the report and thanked members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Task and Finish Group and Councillor S Nicholls for their work. It was noted that communications between councillors, residents and housing providers were complex but vital. The Task and Finish Group had undertaken detailed work and developed a programme of actions aimed at improving communication across these groups, with the intention of delivering benefits, particularly for residents and tenants.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Corporate Services seconded the proposal.

Executive Members welcomed the report and commended the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Task and Finish Group, noting that it represented a constructive approach to addressing

longstanding communication challenges between housing providers, the Council and residents. It was recognised that poor communication had been a significant contributor to dissatisfaction and that the recommendations sought to improve transparency, escalation processes and accountability. Members emphasised that outcomes for residents, particularly the timely resolution of issues, remained of primary importance.

A specific case highlighted the experiences of a vulnerable elderly resident living in unsuitable conditions over a prolonged period, demonstrating shortcomings across multiple agencies. Members agreed that residents should not have to rely on councillor intervention for issues to be resolved and that systems should be more proactive and responsive.

Executive Members supported exploring the development of a Housing Charter to set clear standards and expectations for providers, alongside calls for stronger powers and improved coordination between housing, social care and health services.

Executive Members also highlighted the importance of better support for vulnerable residents and commented on the recommendation for training and accessible guidance for councillors. The Shelter UK website was referenced as a good source of information for councillors and residents.

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 Executive:

(A) Considered and approved the recommendations found in the action plan at appendix A.

(B) Agreed that the recommendations outlined in the action plan to be taken forward are

implemented and Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided with a progress report on implementation.

6 JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN EAST HERTS COUNCIL AND SNG HOUSING

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods presented the report which proposed a joint working agreement with Sovereign Network Group (SNG) to improve homes at Sele Farm, Hertford and increase affordable housing supply.

Concerns were noted regarding SNG's capacity to maintain tenant care standards. It was clarified that the Memorandum of Understanding was to cover strategic matters and that officers had been asked to progress a separate agreement to ensure high standards of customer care and repairs performance.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Wellbeing seconded the proposal.

Executive Members welcomed the proposed regeneration programme at Sele Farm. Members recognised that the project represented the beginning of a long-term programme, likely to span a decade and emphasised the importance of ongoing consultation, careful planning and providing opportunities for residents to share their views throughout the process.

Whilst there was support for partnership working to improve outcomes in social housing, some concerns were raised regarding accountability. It was noted that, although a Memorandum of Understanding could set out intentions and ways of working, residents would ultimately judge success based on tangible outcomes. Executive Members emphasised the need to maintain strong scrutiny and challenge to ensure that the arrangements delivered meaningful benefits, particularly for vulnerable

residents.

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. It was noted that Councillor Dumont abstained from the vote.

RESOVLED – that Executive (A) approved in principal the Memorandum of Understanding (included at Appendix A) covering joint arrangements for collaborative working at Sele Farm, Hertford; and

(B) delegated authority to the Director for Communities, acting in consultation with the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, to sign the finalised Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of East Herts Council.

7 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2026-31

The Leader advised that this report had been deferred to the Executive meeting being held on 14 July 2026, following presentation of this item to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2026.

8 LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE AND NOTICE OF INTENTION TO COMMENCE LOCAL PLAN PREPARATION

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report and highlighted the Council's statutory duty to maintain an up-to-date Local Plan and the introduction of a new Government plan-making system, including a 30-month timetable and gateway assessments.

It was reported that this marked the initial stage, requiring publication of a Local Plan timetable and Notice of Intention. Approval was sought for both, with the timetable setting out key stages and the notice formally

commencing the process and advising how stakeholders could engage.

Executive Members noted that the report should be read alongside the forthcoming scoping consultation report, outlining early engagement. It was further noted that, despite uncertainty regarding Local Government Reorganisation, work on the Local Plan would continue to ensure an up-to-date and robust planning framework remained in place.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods seconded the proposal.

Members noted that the proposed timetable reflected a significant and intensive programme of work required to progress the new Local Plan and acknowledged the considerable effort already undertaken by officers in preparing the evidence base. Appreciation was expressed to officers and councillors for their ongoing work and commitment.

It was emphasised that councillors should actively engage residents and community groups to ensure wider understanding of the plan and its implications.

In response to a question, it was advised that Neighbourhood Plans would continue to form part of the development framework. However, it was noted that the Council would need to determine their future role, including whether communities would be expected to prepare or update plans going forward.

In response to concerns regarding the 'call for sites', it was confirmed that decisions on site selection would not be made for some time and that further evidence would be presented to the appropriate committees later in the year.

Regarding resourcing, Executive Members were informed that whilst there were recruitment challenges in parts of the planning service, the policy team responsible for the Local Plan was currently fully staffed. It was noted that the timetable had been set nationally and must be adhered to, with appropriate use of resources, reserves and government grant funding to support delivery.

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 Executive recommended to Council that (A) the East Herts Local Plan Timetable, attached at Appendix A, be approved for publication; and

(B) The Notice of Intention to Commence the East Herts Local Plan, attached at Appendix B, be published on the Council's website.

9 LOCAL PLAN SCOPING CONSULTATION

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report which sought agreement on the scoping consultation document, the approach to engagement and its distribution to the community. It was noted that the scoping consultation formed the third stage of the Local Plan process and was guided by national regulations. The consultation was scheduled to run from 11 June to 10 July 2026 to support early engagement with stakeholders and residents.

It was noted that the consultation document included 14 focused questions on key issues such as the plan's purpose, local challenges, vision and engagement approach. Feedback received would inform the next stages of plan-making, with further reporting anticipated ahead of formal consultation in early 2027.

A communications programme, including digital and

media activity, had been prepared to support participation.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Wellbeing seconded the proposal.

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.

RESOVLED – that Executive recommended to Council that (A) subject to the publication of the Notice to Commence Local Plan Preparation and the Local Plan Timetable, the East Herts Local Plan – Scoping Consultation document (Appendix A) is made available to relevant stakeholders and the wider community to begin a discussion about the district’s new Local Plan, and to seek comments in accord with the Regulations;

(B) Engagement on the Scoping Consultation document should commence, taking place between June 11 and July 10 2026, through a range of different forums, including online on the Council’s website;

(C) Any minor amendments required to the content of the Scoping Consultation document prior to the consultation period be delegated to the Director of Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth; and

(D) A further report detailing any feedback is prepared for Executive following engagement, with the intention of informing the Local Plan content and evidence stages of the plan-making process.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) SCOPING REPORT

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report and explained that the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) would be undertaken alongside the Local Plan. The SA was required under Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, with its role to promote sustainable development by assessing sustainability across environmental, social and economic factors. The SEA process was separate and focussed on environmental impacts.

The report outlined how baseline data, relevant policies and future trends would be analysed to create a framework, which would be used to test plan options and identify mitigation measures. The process would be informed by consultation, including statutory bodies and the public and would support the development, refinement and monitoring of the Local Plan.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods seconded the proposal.

In response to a question on the consultation process, detailed in recommendation C, Members heard that the consultation would run between 11 June and 10 July 2026 and would be delivered through a range of channels including the Council's website, social media, press releases and an online consultation portal. It was noted that a dedicated briefing session had been arranged with town and parish councils at the start of the consultation period. This session was intended to explain the scope of the consultation and enable local councils to share information within their communities. In addition, a newsletter would be circulated to subscribers and Members were encouraged to promote the consultation.

It was confirmed that residents could join the consultation mailing list via the email address published on the Council's planning policy webpages, which were to be updated ahead of the consultation launch.

Members highlighted concerns about the quality and environmental impact of development, including the loss of green space and biodiversity. It was confirmed that such matters would be considered through the evidence base, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the preparation of a District Design Code. This code was expected to address design quality and environmental considerations and was anticipated to be delivered ahead of the Local Plan. It was further noted that there may be opportunities to introduce locally specific planning policies, subject to evidential support and examination, including measures relating to landscaping and the protection of green space.

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.

RESOVLED – that Executive recommended to Council that (A) Subject to the publication of the 'Notice to Commence Local Plan Preparation and the Local Plan Timetable', the content of the SA/SEA Scoping document (Appendix A) is approved;

(B) That the SA/SEA Scoping document be formally consulted upon with the Environment Agency (EA), Historic England (HE) and Natural England (NE) in accordance with statutory requirements;

(C) Subject to the approval of the 'Local Plan Scoping Consultation', the SA/SEA Scoping document will be made available alongside the Local Plan Scoping Consultation, and will include a period of activity between 11 June 2026 and 10

July 2026 through a range of different forums, including online on the Council's website; and

(D) Any minor amendments required to the content of the SA/SEA Scoping document prior to the consultation period be delegated to the Director of Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

11 EAST HERTS LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LCWIP)

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report and explained that the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) provided a long-term strategic approach to improving walking and cycling. The Plan supported Government objectives and enabled access to funding and developer contributions.

Members noted that the East Herts LCWIP was a high-level document, setting out key routes, barriers and a prioritised programme of improvements. Due to resource constraints, it had focused on main towns, key villages and linkages, with potential for future expansion.

Members acknowledged the extensive consultation undertaken, which informed revisions and strengthened the final document. It was further noted that, although delayed, this had resulted in a more robust plan aligned with the emerging Local Plan.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Corporate Services seconded the proposal.

In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that the LCWIP would also be considered by Hertfordshire County Council.

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.

RESOVLED – that (A) the East Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), attached as Appendices E and F (1 to 7) be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform the new East Herts Local Plan and as a material consideration for Development Management purposes in the determination of planning applications; and

(B) Any minor amendments to the content of the East Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) be delegated to the Director for Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

12 EAST HERTS OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report and highlighted that the updated Open Space Assessment, replaced the 2017 study and provided an up-to-date evidence base to support the emerging Local Plan.

It was noted that national policy required robust assessments of open space provision. The importance of such spaces in delivering social, environmental and community benefits was highlighted, alongside the need to understand current provision and future demand.

Members were advised that changes since the previous study included population growth and new provision arising from recent development. The assessment, undertaken by Knight, Kavanagh and Page, audited over 570 publicly accessible sites and found that, whilst some gaps existed, overall provision was of good quality and widely accessible.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth

proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Wellbeing seconded the proposal.

Executive Members highlighted that green and open spaces were a key concern for residents and welcomed the document as useful and informative, noting it was positive to have this information included and accessible.

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 Open Space Assessment, attached as Appendix A, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform the new East Herts Local Plan and as a material consideration for Development Management purposes in the determination of planning applications.

13 EAST HERTS DISTRICT WIDE EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report and highlighted that the review assessed allocated employment areas and would inform policy and planning decisions, replacing the previous 2013 review.

It was explained that policy changes and wider economic factors, including COVID-19 and Brexit, had significantly impacted employment land and that the review provided updated evidence and recommendations for the new Local Plan.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Resident Engagement seconded the proposal.

Executive Members thanked officers for the detailed survey work and noted the useful insights provided by the review, whilst expressing concern about the gradual loss of employment sites across the district. It was queried whether these changes had been anticipated in the previous Local Plan and Members heard that whilst some changes were planned through allocations, others reflected wider shifts, including changing working patterns and hybrid working.

It was further noted that traditional employment land may reduce, alongside changing town centre uses. Further work on employment needs, including the rural economy and future land requirements, would be brought forward in due course.

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.

RESOVLED – that (A) the Employment Land Review, attached as Appendix A to the report, was agreed as part of the evidence base to inform the new East Herts Local Plan and as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

14 BISHOP'S STORTFORD EMPLOYMENT STUDY

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the Bishop's Stortford Employment Study, noting that it updated evidence on the town's employment market and would inform the new Local Plan. It was acknowledged that recent economic changes had been considered, alongside growth in the town and maintaining a balance between homes and jobs. The study identified limited demand for office space but strong demand for industrial and logistics uses. It highlighted the need to safeguard existing employment land and support future provision.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods seconded the proposal.

Members welcomed the study, noted its importance and highlighted concerns regarding Bishop's Stortford historically functioning as a commuting town, contributing to congestion. It was emphasised that retaining and expanding local employment opportunities, including within mixed-use developments, would be important to support sustainability and reduce out-commuting.

In response to a question on health infrastructure, Members heard that requirements would be addressed through an Infrastructure Delivery Plan in partnership with the NHS, with developer contributions supporting the provision of facilities.

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.

RESOVLED – that (A) the Bishop's Stortford Employment Study, attached at Appendix A to the report, was agreed as part of the evidence base to inform the new East Herts Local Plan and as a material consideration for Development Management purposes in the determination of planning applications.

15 DRAWDOWN FROM EXECUTIVE PRIORITY RESERVE -
WARD FREEMAN PROJECT

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the report and highlighted that subsequent to the report being published a non-executive Member had proposed the following additions to the recommendation: (1) prior to the release of any Council funds a detailed viability breakdown be provided to all councillors representing all residents across the District; and

(2) if the project fails to progress to the successful opening of the pool any funds released shall be returned to the Council.

The report sought approval to allocate £105,000 from the Executive Priority Reserve to support essential repairs to enable the reopening of Ward Freeman Swimming Pool in Buntingford, following a funding request from the Ward Freeman Community Group.

It was noted that the proposed allocation represented the minimum required to progress works, with further funding for the air handling unit to be considered separately in the future. The initial investment aimed to support reopening by October 2026.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Wellbeing seconded the proposal.

Executive Members expressed strong support for the proposal, noting the importance of the pool as a valued community facility and welcomed the relatively modest investment to support its reopening.

Gratitude was expressed to Councillor Hopewell, officers and the community group for their significant efforts in progressing the project, including securing the transfer of the site and developing a phased approach to works and future funding.

Concern was raised regarding the proposed amendments to the recommendation. It was acknowledged that there had been a collective effort from Members, officers and the community pool group, whose work had enabled progress to this stage, following the withdrawal of funding from the previous administration. It was highlighted that the group had access to fundraising routes, grants and support not available to councils.

Members highlighted the importance of the pool for Buntingford, particularly given its growth and limited facilities. It was noted that the scheme would support the town’s sustainability and wellbeing.

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.

RESOVLED – that a) Executive approved an allocation of £105,000 from the Executive Priority Reserve to support the reopening of Ward Freeman Swimming Pool in Buntingford.

16 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.38 pm

Chairman
Date