

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 7 AUGUST 2012, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Taylor (Chairman)
Councillors D Abbott, D Andrews, W Ashley,
P Ballam, S Basra, E Bedford, R Beeching,
E Buckmaster, M Carver, Mrs R Cheswright,
T Herbert, Mrs D Hollebon, Mrs D Hone,
A Jackson, G Lawrence, J Mayes,
G McAndrew, M McMullen, P Moore,
W Mortimer, M Newman, P Phillips, M Pope,
N Poulton, J Ranger, S Rutland-Barsby,
C Rowley, P Ruffles, N Symonds, M Tindale,
N Wilson, J Wing and C Woodward.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services
Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Alan Madin	- Director of Internal Services
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services

226 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the press and public to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast.

The Chairman advised that she had sent some flowers to Councillor B Wrangles on behalf of all Members and had hoped to see her present tonight.

She recalled that the Authority had adopted a new code of conduct for its Members and maintained a register of Members' interests. Under the Authority's new code, Members only needed to register any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as specified under the legislation. Members only had to disclose any personal or personal and prejudicial interests that were Disclosable Pecuniary Interests. The Chairman advised that the Monitoring Officer would shortly be contacting all Members with details of training events on this subject. In the interim, any queries should be directed to either the Monitoring Officer (Simon Drinkwater) or Deputy Monitoring Officer (Jeff Hughes).

The Chairman referred to the ongoing Olympic Games and the efforts of the Vice-Chairman in supporting the voluntary effort. She also referred to the torch relay events that had been held in East Herts and paid tribute to the Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services and his team for their work in the preparations.

The Chairman stated that she had performed 12 duties since the previous meeting and highlighted two in particular. The presentation of the Hertfordshire Village of the Year competition in Braughing had been a splendid summer's day attended by many local residents, including Councillor Mrs R Cheswright. The thirty seventh anniversary celebrations of Abbeyfield House in Bishop's Stortford, had also been a memorable occasion and she congratulated the staff for their high standards of care.

Finally, the Chairman reminded Members that her Civic Service would be held on 9 September 2012, at 3.00 pm, at the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Ware. The Civic Dinner would be held on 20 October 2012, at Fletcher's Lea, Ware Priory. All Members were invited to both events and to contribute raffle prizes.

227 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2012, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

228 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In respect of Minute 238 – Strategic Land Availability Assessment – Stage 2 – Update Report, Councillor R Beeching disclosed a pecuniary interest and left the chamber whilst it was considered.

229 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Question 1

Councillor N Symonds asked the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support if she could explain what East Herts Council was proposing to do in alleviating the time from when a housing benefit form was given to the team and the time it took to process. She believed this was in the region of six to eight weeks, which meant that the most vulnerable residents were being given a notice that an eviction notice would be served if no money was forthcoming. This was both true of the housing associations and private landlords. Councillor N Symonds emphasised that this in no way reflected on the team or managers who were working flat out to clear the backlog.

In the absence of the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support, the Leader responded and stated that the Executive Member could supply any detailed information if necessary.

The Leader acknowledged the increase in the backlog for processing claims and agreed that this was no reflection on the efforts of the staff. He referred to the last meeting of the East Herts and Stevenage Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee, which had noted a dramatic increase in the post received for the first three months of this financial year. As a result of Department of Work and Pensions changes to

working practices, the service was now dealing with more frequent amendments for claimants with a “change of circumstances”. The increased workload had resulted in new claims taking an average of 43 days and “change of circumstances” taking an average of 12 days, which the Leader believed was an unacceptable time.

The Leader advised that the joint Committee had agreed that an additional £120k from each Authority should be allocated to deal with the backlog, by using agency staff in the first place. This would be monitored closely, and if necessary, the Joint Committee would be reconvened. In respect of eviction notices, the Leader assured Members that the Council would be working closely with all landlords.

On a point of information, the Executive Member of Finance commented that the staff had recommended an additional £40k be allocated, but that the Joint Committee had decided on £120k per Authority.

In response to a supplementary question expressing concern for the impact of eviction notices being served on vulnerable sections of the community and the time it would take to clear the backlog, the Leader could not answer when the backlog would be cleared. He gave an assurance that everyone concerned was working hard to bring this down as quickly as possible.

230 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 10 JULY 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 10 July 2012, be received.

(see also Minutes 231 - 234 below)

231 BISHOP'S STORTFORD TOWN CENTRE BOUNDARY

RESOLVED – that (A) the town centre boundary as defined by the Chase and Partners Retail and Town Centres Study 2008 and attached to the report submitted be agreed;

(B) the boundary as described be adopted by East Herts Council for the purposes of informing the East Herts District Plan and be given the status of material consideration in any planning matters relating to the area described; and

(C) in describing the town boundary, emphasis is given to sustainable mixed uses, retail led / services activities in line with the Central Government guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

(see also Minute 230 above)

232 EAST HERTS COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 2012

RESOLVED - that (A) that the comments of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee be received; and

(B) the 2012 Communication Strategy as now amended, be approved.

(see also Minute 230 above)

233 PEDESTRIANISED/SHARED SPACE PROPOSALS FOR AN AREA OF BISHOP'S STORTFORD TOWN CENTRE

RESOLVED – that (A) exploration of a combined scheme for time limited pedestrianisation of South Street/Potter Street and creation of Shared Space focused around the South Street/ Station Approach, be endorsed;

(B) Hertfordshire Highways be requested to prepare a programme which sets out the options for a time limited pedestrianisation scheme by carrying out a technical assessment of through traffic, servicing requirements for local traders, public transport facilities and access arrangements from the surrounding catchment area; and

(C) Hertfordshire Highways be requested to prepare

design details of Shared Space for the area around the junction of South Street and Station Road they as part of their current work programme of traffic improvements schemes for Bishop's Stortford.

(see also Minute 230 above)

234 GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN
2011/12

RESOLVED – that the establishment of new Reserves in respect of Environmental Pollution - £62k and Preventing Repossessions - £30k, be approved.

(see also Minute 230 above)

235 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 31 JULY 2012

In respect of Minute 225 – Council Tax Support Scheme, Councillor J Wing asked whether, in view of the complexity of the legislation, it would be possible or appropriate for Members to be given a full briefing on the consequences of the proposed Scheme for benefit claimants.

The Leader stated that he would ask Officers to provide as much information as possible, so that Members fully understood the Scheme when the time came for a decision to be made. This only started the consultation period and he urged all Members to engage in the process.

The Executive Member of Finance added that the proposed Scheme would be submitted to the Community Scrutiny Committee at the end of the consultation process.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 31 July 2012, be received.

(see also Minutes 236 - 241 below)

236 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS) VERSION 4
(AUGUST 2012)

RESOLVED - that the Local Development Scheme (LDS) Version 4 – August 2012, attached at Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report submitted, be supported to take effect from 8 August 2012.

(see also Minute 235 above)

237 SUB-DISTRICT POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD
FORECASTS – PARISH GROUPINGS AND TOWNS:
PHASE 1 (MAY 2012)

RESOLVED - that the Sub-District 'Population and Household Forecasts - Parish Groupings and Towns: Phase 1' (May 2012) technical study as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted, be supported as part of the evidence base for the preparation of the East Herts District Plan.

(see also Minute 235 above)

238 STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT – STAGE
2 – UPDATE REPORT

RESOLVED – that (A) the feedback received from stakeholders as part of Round 2: Stakeholder Engagement of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) be considered and amendments made as appropriate, before a final SLAA Round 2 report is published; and

(B) the use of the District-wide interim SLAA Round 2 capacity of 2,173 dwellings to inform ongoing work in developing the District Plan: Part 1 - Preferred Strategy, be supported.

(see also Minute 235 above)

239 DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 – STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT – UPDATE REPORT

RESOLVED – that (A) Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ of the report submitted, containing the latest version of the 1-page summary of the Stepped Approach to strategy selection for the District Plan, be supported; and

(B) the approach to the Audit Trail, be supported, subject to a period for Member comment on the proposed Appendix B: Documents and Feedback, until 31 August 2012.

(see also Minute 235 above)

240 DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 – STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT – MATERIAL CHANGES TO DRAFT TOPIC ASSESSMENTS

RESOLVED – that (A) the Material Changes to the Draft Topic Assessments attached at Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ of the report submitted, be supported as replacements to those reported to the Local Development Framework Executive Panel on 29 March 2012, subject to a period for Member comment until 31 August 2012; and

(B) their use be supported as an element of the emerging Supporting Document to the draft District Plan: Part 1 – Strategy.

(see also Minute 235 above)

241 DISTRICT PLAN PART 1 – STRATEGY SUPPORTING DOCUMENT – CHAPTER 4: PLACES AND NEXT STEPS

RESOLVED - that (A) the Draft of Chapter 4: Places contained in Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ of the report submitted, and consisting of Sieve 1 and Sieve 2 in the strategy selection process, be supported;

(B) the scenarios presented in the report and explained in more detail in Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted, be supported for further assessment in Chapters 5 and 6; and

(C) Essential Reference Papers 'B' and 'C' of the report submitted, be supported, subject to a period of Member comment in respect of factual content, until 31 August 2012.

(see also Minute 235 above)

242 STANDARDS COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 29 JUNE 2012

Council placed on record its appreciation to the independent, parish and town councils' representatives, who had served on the Standards Committee, for their efforts and hard work. The Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services was requested to write to them individually.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 29 June 2012, be received.

243 HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 11 JULY 2012

Council noted Councillor P Ballam's claim that Councillor A Warman's apology had not been recorded.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 11 July 2012, be received.

244 AUDIT COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 11 JULY 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 11 July 2012, be received.

245 LICENSING COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 12 JULY 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 12 July 2012, be received.

246 CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
MINUTES - 17 JULY 2012

Council noted Councillor M Pope’s claim that his apology had not been recorded and that Councillor K Crofton had substituted for him.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 July 2012, be received.

247 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 18
JULY 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Control Committee meeting held on 18 July 2012, be received.

The meeting closed at 7.32 pm

Chairman
Date