

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 5 MARCH 2014, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor G McAndrew (Chairman).
Councillors D Abbott, M Alexander,
D Andrews, W Ashley, P Ballam, E Bedford,
R Beeching, E Buckmaster, S Bull, M Carver,
Mrs R Cheswright, K Crofton, L Haysey,
Mrs D Hone, A Jackson, J Jones,
G Lawrence, J Mayes, M McMullen,
M Newman, T Page, M Pope, J Ranger,
C Rowley, P Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby,
R Sharma, N Symonds, J Taylor, J Thornton,
K Warnell, G Williamson, N Wilson, J Wing,
M Wood, C Woodward and J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

577 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

The Chairman detailed the raising of the Commonwealth flag event on 10 March 2014. He also reminded Members to respond to their invitations to the forthcoming Civic Dinner.

578 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2014, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

579 PETITIONS

Kim Shaw, a resident of Bishop's Stortford, had submitted an e-petition, which had been hosted on the Council's website and had attracted 13 signatories. The e-petition read as follows:

We the undersigned petition the Council to prohibit the culling of badgers on council-owned land and invest in vaccination programmes locally. We ask this because we believe culling to be inhumane, inefficient and unscientific.

This is a national issue which will be of direct concern to the people of East Herts when DEFRA "rolls out" its culling policy in 2014. The object of the petition is to ensure that East Herts' badger population is as safe as possible from slaughter and that the already available injectable badger vaccine against bTB is used in as many cases as possible. We ask this because we believe the culling policy is inhumane (DEFRA's measurement of "humaneness" is to time the screams of wounded badgers), inefficient (previous culls showed an increase in bTB because of badger movement) and unscientific (the majority of scientific opinion hold that a cull will have "no meaningful result").

The lead petitioner was not present at the meeting. The Executive Member for Community Safety and Environment commented that culling on Council-owned land was not permitted unless there was clear evidence that it was necessary. Requests would need to be considered on their merits. He referred to the uncertainty surrounding the issue and the Government's ongoing trial. Finally, he stated that no future decisions would be made on this issue without Members having the opportunity to consider the evidence.

580 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor D Andrews asked the Leader of the Council if he was aware of any steps the Liberal Democrat Members had taken to engage in this year's annual budget-setting round.

In reply, the Leader expressed his confusion as to the extent of the Liberal Democrat Members' engagement in the budget process. He noted that they had voted against the budget and yet the only explanation had been given in a recent issue of the Mercury newspaper.

He referred to a quote attributed to Councillor J Wing on the impact of the budget on the more vulnerable sections of society and yet they had remained silent when the budget had been determined. The Leader believed Members had an obligation to their residents to debate issues and he welcomed opposite views and alternative proposals.

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader referred to the Council's continuing funding support for the Citizens Advice Bureaux and commitment to protecting the more vulnerable.

581 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 4 MARCH 2014

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 4 March 2014 be received.

582 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 25
FEBRUARY 2014

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25 February 2014 be received.

583 COUNCIL TAX 2014/15 - FORMAL RESOLUTION

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report proposing Council Tax levels in 2014/15. Council noted the precepts set by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), Hertfordshire Police Authority (HPA) and Parish and Town Councils.

In accordance with the provisions of The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken on the Council Tax resolution, the result being:

FOR:

Councillors D Abbott, M Alexander, D Andrews, W Ashley, P Ballam, E Bedford, R Beeching, E Buckmaster, S Bull, M Carver, Mrs R Cheswright, H Crofton, L Haysey, Mrs D Hone, A Jackson, J Jones, G Lawrence, J Mayes, G McAndrew, M McMullen, M Newman, T Page, M Pope, J Ranger, C Rowley, P Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby, R Sharma, N Symonds, J Taylor, J Thornton, K Warnell, G Williamson, N Wilson, C Woodward, J Wyllie.

AGAINST:

None

ABSTENTIONS:

Councillors J Wing, M Wood.

For: 36

Against: 0

Abstentions: 2

Council approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Council Tax resolution, as detailed at Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ to the report submitted, be approved;

(B) the local precepts as set out at Essential Reference Paper ‘C’ of the report submitted, be noted; and

(C) Hertfordshire County Council’s and Hertfordshire Police Authority’s precepts, as now submitted, be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm

Chairman
Date