

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH 2015, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor R Beeching (Chairman).
Councillors M Alexander, D Andrews,
P Ballam, E Buckmaster, S Bull, M Carver,
Mrs R Cheswright, K Crofton, G Cutting,
A Dearman, Mrs D Hollebon, Mrs D Hone,
A Jackson, G Jones, J Jones, G Lawrence,
J Mayes, G McAndrew, M McMullen,
P Moore, W Mortimer, M Newman, T Page,
P Phillips, M Pope, J Ranger, C Rowley,
P Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby, N Symonds,
M Tindale, K Warnell, G Williamson, J Wing,
M Wood, C Woodward, B Wrangles 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

566 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Members and reminded them that the meeting was being webcast.

He advised that there were five umbrellas still available with the proceeds being donated to the Community Chest, for which over £1400 had been raised to date. He also reminded Members of the arrangements for his Civic Dinner on 20 March 2015.

The Chairman referred to this being the last Council meeting of the civic year and indeed, this Council's four year term. He understood that some Members would be retiring and highlighted Councillor Ranger's 42 years' service. He paid tribute to his dedicated service and hard work on behalf of residents and wished him well in his retirement. The Chairman advised that Councillor Ranger had provided light refreshments for all Members which would be available after the meeting.

The Chairman also thanked Officers for their hard work and wished George A Robertson well in his forthcoming retirement. Finally, he thanked the Vice-Chairman for her support to him throughout the year.

At the Chairman's invitation, Councillors A Jackson, M Newman and J Wing, on behalf of their Groups, spoke in honour of Councillor Ranger.

567 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 February 2015 be approved a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

568 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Question 1

Councillor G Jones asked the Executive Member for

Economic Development if he could outline what impact the introduction of the 30 minutes free parking in September 2014 had had on the local economy.

In reply, the Executive Member believed that there had been a significant impact. He advised that an additional 26,000 visits to the car parks in Bishop's Stortford, Hertford and Ware per month had been recorded and that evidence suggested that the introduction of the £1 flat charge had increased use of the car parks across the day. He also referred to the financial impact for the Council not being as great as anticipated, resulting in positive news all round.

Question 2

Councillor J Wyllie referred to the current pay and display machines in the Council's car parks having been in operation for a number of years and asked the Executive Member for Economic Development if there were any plans to replace these and improve the convenience of parking in East Herts.

In reply, the Executive Member advised that a tendering process was underway and that an appraisal of options would be reported to Environment Scrutiny Committee in September 2015. Subsequent to this, the Executive would be asked to determine which option to proceed with a contract being awarded in early 2016. Any new system agreed would need to maximise convenience for residents and offer value for money. The Executive Member also referred to the success of the RinGo scheme.

Question 3

Councillor C Rowley asked the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support if she agreed that the Council's continued investment in summer activities programmes and funding for sports, music, drama, arts and other community groups all year round was vital to ensuring every child in East Herts had the opportunity to discover new talent, have the best possible start in life and reach their full potential.

In the absence of the Executive Member, the Leader agreed with Councillor Rowley. He detailed the opportunities provided for young people through the provision of playschemes, community grants and sports facilities. The Council continued to support development in culture and the arts and the Leader highlighted 3music, the annual event for singers and musicians now in its tenth year. He encouraged Members to support this year's event at Hertford Theatre on 29 May 2015.

Question 4

Councillor M Pope asked the Executive Member for Finance if it was not the case that, given the difficult decisions that had had to be taken nationally to restore the public finances, it had been down to the effective management at East Herts that had enabled the Council to budget efficiently to protect and maintain public services, whilst at the same time, helping hardworking residents right across East Herts by freezing and reducing its council tax.

The Executive Member agreed with Councillor Pope. He referred to the economic situation nationally and stated that the Council had reduced the council tax burden significantly.

Question 5

Councillor E Buckmaster asked the Executive Member for Community Safety and Environment to outline what measures had been put in place that had been the reason for the increase in households recycling more waste and to list other measures that had helped contribute to protecting the environment.

In reply, the Executive Member chronicled the progress of the recycling service in achieving a rate of nearly 53% and also reducing the volume of residual waste being sent to landfill. As well as the environmental impact of these achievements, the Council had reduced its costs and increased resident satisfaction levels with a service where more materials could

be recycled.

He also stated that the Council had reduced its carbon footprint by 27% since 2008/09 and that progress was being made to reduce this by a further 25% by 2020. Overall, complaints on missed bin collections were at their lowest recorded level. Finally, the Executive Member referred to the continuing delays of the hydro scheme and undertook raise this further with the Government before he retired in May 2015.

Question 6

Councillor N Symonds asked the Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support about what planned investment the Council had to contribute to public health.

In the absence of the Executive Member, the Leader referred to the Council's Public Health Strategy as a model for others to follow, as acknowledged by the Director of Public Health for Hertfordshire. This had been bolstered by the £100k funding provided by Hertfordshire County Council for the next two years which would be match funded by East Herts Council. This exciting opportunity would enable further schemes to be developed with a range of partners that would ensure that the public health agenda remained effective.

Question 7

Councillor P Ruffles asked the Leader of the Council, with just over two months to go until the election, what he believed local Members needed to do to encourage young people and first time voters, many of whom would have been 14 at the last elections, to vote on 7 May 2015.

In reply, the Leader referred to the range of social media tools that were now available and the need to speak the language of young people. He referred to visits to various schools where in discussions with young people, voting had been referred to as a privilege not enjoyed in some parts of the world. He also referred to older people who had not voted

before and believed that, if involved, they could make changes.

Question 8

Councillor C Rowley asked the Leader of the Council what measures he would list as successes of the Council over the last 4 years.

In reply, the Leader believed that the list would be too long to go through at this meeting. His edited highlights were the successes of Hertford Theatre, the New Homes Bonus funding that had been allocated to parish and town councils with no strings attached and the 24 loan agreements that had been achieved under the Mortgage Guarantee scheme. He reiterated the public health, recycling and car parking successes referred to earlier. The Leader also highlighted the increased funding for the Citizens Advice Service and the support for businesses, including the European funding that had been achieved. Finally, he referred to the 2% reduction in council tax.

569 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 3 MARCH 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 3 March 2015 be received.

(see also Minutes 570 – 571)

570 EAST HERTS CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY (2015-2020)

RESOLVED - that (A) the Council's Customer Service Strategy be approved as detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report submitted; and

(B) Officers be authorised to progress an outline project plan for its delivery, with any resource requests needed to deliver the Customer Service Strategy being reported to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 26 May 2015 and the Executive on 2 June 2015.

(see also Minute 569)

571 AFFORDABLE HOUSING - AMENDMENT TO POLICY

RESOLVED – that (A) the changes in national planning policy announced through the Ministerial Statement be noted;

(B) the Council implements a threshold of 5 units or less in Category 1 and 2 Villages, below which affordable housing contributions will not be sought; and

(C) the Council's policy requirement for the provision of affordable housing in Category 1 and 2 Villages be amended and the revised wording for policy HSG3 (II), (III) and (IV) as set out in paragraph 2.18 of the report submitted, be approved.

As a result, the threshold and requirement for provision of affordable housing would be as follows:

(a) Main Settlements:

Threshold: Sites over 15 units or 0.5ha

Provision: Up to 40%

(b) Category 1 and 2 Villages:

Threshold: Sites of up to 5 units or 0.17ha

Provision: None

Threshold: Sites of 6-10 units or 0.18 – 0.32ha and a combined gross internal floorspace of less than 1000sqm

Provision: Financial contribution

Threshold: Sites of 11-14 units or 0.33 – 0.49ha or combined gross internal floorspace of more than 1000sqm

Provision: Up to 25%

Threshold: Sites over 15 units or 0.5ha

Provision: Up to 40%

(see also Minute 569)

572 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 17
FEBRUARY 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 February 2015, be received.

573 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: MINUTES -
25 FEBRUARY 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Management Committee meeting held on 25 February 2015, be received.

574 COUNCIL TAX 2015/16

The Executive Member for Finance submitted a report proposing Council Tax levels in 2015/16. 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 M Alexander, D Andrews, P Ballam, R Beeching, E Buckmaster, S Bull, M Carver, Mrs R Cheswright, H Crofton, G Cutting, A Dearman, Mrs D Hollebon, Mrs D Hone, A Jackson, G Jones, J Jones, G Lawrence, J Mayes, G McAndrew, M McMullen, P Moore, W Mortimer, M Newman, T Page, P Phillips, M Pope, J Ranger, C Rowley, P Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby, N Symonds, M Tindale, K Warnell, G Williamson, C Woodward, B Wrangles, J Wyllie.

AGAINST:

None

ABSTENTIONS:

Councillors J Wing, M Wood.

For: 37

Against: 0

Abstentions: 2

Council approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the Council Tax resolution, as now submitted, be approved;

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

(C) the Hertfordshire County Council’s and Hertfordshire Police Authority’s precepts be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.03 pm

Chairman
Date