

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 20 MAY 2015, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor P Moore (Chairman).
Councillors D Abbott, D Andrews, A Alder,
M Allen, P Ballam, R Brunton, K Brush,
S Bull, J Cartwright, M Casey,
Mrs R Cheswright, S Cousins, K Crofton,
G Cutting, B Deering, I Devonshire, H Drake,
M Freeman, J Goodeve, B Harris-Quinney,
L Haysey, R Henson, Mrs D Hollebon,
A Jackson, G Jones, J Jones, J Kaye,
P Kenealy, G McAndrew, M McMullen,
A McNeece, W Mortimer, D Oldridge,
T Page, P Phillips, M Pope, S Reed,
P Ruffles, S Rutland-Barsby, S Stainsby,
R Standley, N Symonds, J Taylor, K Warnell,
G Williamson, 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

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman (ex-Councillor R Beeching) opened the meeting by reminding Members that the meeting was being webcast live and that they should remain seated when speaking.

He congratulated all Members for their election success and, in respect of new Members, spoke of the learning curve in dealing with their responsibilities. He offered some advice to new Members based on his experience and wished the new Council well for the next four years.

The Chairman detailed some of the highlights of his year and advised that the various events held had raised over £15,000 for his chosen charities. He donated cheques to representatives of Macmillan Cancer Support and Isabel Hospice, after which, they thanked the Chairman and Members for their continued support.

The Chairman placed on record his appreciation to all Officers for their efficient and dedicated support to the Council. He also thanked Members for their support for the East Herts Community Chest. The Chairman spoke of the importance of service to the residents as the best way of being community leaders.

The Chairman thanked his wife for her continued support and presented her with a bouquet of flowers. He also thanked the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Moore, for her support throughout the year and presented her with a bouquet of flowers as well.

Councillor A Jackson, on behalf of Members past and present, congratulated the Chairman on his service, not only as Chairman, but also for his work on the Licensing Committee and as a ward councillor. He wished him well for the future.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor P Moore, presented the Chairman his Past Chairman's badge and a bottle of port.

2 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR 2015-16

It was moved by Councillor J Jones and seconded by Councillor N Symonds that Councillor P Moore be elected Chairman of the Council to hold office for the civic year 2015/16.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, Councillor P Moore was elected Chairman of the Council for the civic year 2015/16.

RESOLVED - that Councillor P Moore be elected Chairman of the Council and hold office for the civic year 2015/16.

The Chairman made the statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office, and took the Chair.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR 2015/16

It was moved by Councillor G Cutting and seconded by Councillor P Kenealy that Councillor K Crofton be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council to hold office for the civic year 2015/16.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, Councillor K Crofton was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council for the civic year 2015/16.

RESOLVED - that Councillor K Crofton be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council and hold office for the civic year 2015/16.

The Vice-Chairman made the statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office. He thanked Members and looked forward to supporting Councillor P Moore.

4 FURTHER CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman (Councillor P Moore) thanked Members for

giving her the opportunity to represent the District Council for the coming year. She stated that her main focus would be to act as an ambassador for the area. In respect of her chosen charities, the Chairman said that her main focus would be on carers and their families. To this end, she had invited a young carer aged 12, called Katy, to address the Council.

Katy told Members about her life caring for her father who was suffering from dementia and the impact his illness had on the rest of her family. The Chairman thanked Katie and presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

Finally, the Chairman detailed the civic events she would be attending in the immediate future.

5 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 4 March 2015, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

The Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services submitted a report reviewing the Council's decision-making structure. He advised that Council was required to approve the size of the proposed committees and the allocation of seats to political groups. Council noted that one political group of 50 Members had been formed and its nominations to the seats on committees were detailed in the report now submitted.

The Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services also advised that Council was required to appoint a Leader for the life of the Council and it would be the Leader's responsibility to determine the size of the Executive, portfolio arrangements and appointments. These were set out in the report now submitted.

The Leader thanked Members for her appointment and paid

tribute to Councillor Jackson for his 9 years of leadership which had been recognised nationally. She spoke of his significant contribution which had left East Herts in a very strong position.

Council approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the following Scrutiny Committees, Regulatory Committees, Joint Committee and Joint Member Panel be appointed, with the number of voting Members stated:

<u>Committee</u>	<u>No. of Members</u>
Community Scrutiny	10
Corporate Business Scrutiny	10
Environment Scrutiny	10
Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny	10
Audit	7
Development Control	12
Human Resources	7
Licensing	15
Standards	5
Chief Officer Recruitment	5
East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee (3 from East Herts and 3 from Stevenage)	6

(B) the membership of Scrutiny Committees, Regulatory Committees, the East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee be as set out in Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted, with Members being appointed in accordance with the

wishes of the political group to whom the seats on these bodies have been allocated;

(C) Councillor L Haysey be appointed as Leader of the Council for the life of the Council;

(D) the intention of the Leader of the Council to appoint 6 Members to the Executive (in addition to the Leader) with the portfolio responsibilities as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the report submitted, be noted;

(E) the programme of Council meetings, as detailed at paragraph 5.1 of the report submitted, be approved;

(F) the Director of Finance and Support Services be authorised to make changes in the standing membership of committees, joint committee and panel in (A) above, in accordance with the wishes of the political group to whom seats on these bodies have been allocated;

(G) the action to be taken by the Director of Finance and Support Services, in consultation with the Leader, under delegated authority, concerning the appointment of representatives to outside bodies, be noted;

(H) the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make such amendments to the Council's constitution as may be necessary to account for the decisions in (A) to (G) above; and

(I) the last Chairman of the Health of the Wellbeing Panel be authorised to sign as a correct record, the Minutes of the last Health and Wellbeing Panel meeting.

7 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Question 1

Councillor P Phillips asked the Executive Member for Finance and Support Services, when he had settled into his new role, to supply him with a written response on whether East Herts Council would be bringing forward another planning application for development of a community centre on the hugely valued public open space next to Watermill Lane, Bengoe, following the withdrawal of a recent application.

In reply, the Executive Member for Finance and Support Services undertook to provide a written response.

Question 2

Councillor H Drake asked the Leader of the Council to confirm this Council's commitment to the training and ongoing development of both new and returning councillors to be effective Members and Community Leaders.

In reply, the Leader referred to the number of new Members elected and recounted the hard work of the Member Development Group over the last few years. She referred to the Induction programme and urged all Members, returning and new, to attend as many of the events as possible, highlighting that all Members could learn from the programme. She believed that the full and varied programme would equip councillors with the necessary tools to ensure they made effective decisions. The development work would continue under the guidance of the Executive Member for Development Management and Council Support.

8 COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 10 MARCH 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Community Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10 March 2015, be received.

9 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 16 MARCH 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Development Management Committee meeting held on 16 March 2015, be received.

10 CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 17 MARCH 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17 March 2015, be received.

11 AUDIT COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 18 MARCH 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 18 March 2015, be received.

12 HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 25 MARCH 2015

Council noted that Councillor C Woodward had been omitted from the list of Members present at the meeting.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 25 March 2015, be received.

13 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 25 MARCH 2015

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

14 LICENSING COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 26 MARCH 2015

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 26 March 2015, be received.

15 REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report reviewing the Council's Constitution and proposing various amendments.

The proposed amendments related to various sections as follows:

- Financial Regulations
- Procurement Regulations
- The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015

Other minor amendments related to legislative changes and the establishment of a new scrutiny committee earlier at this meeting (Minute 6 refers).

Council approved the amendments as now submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the revised Financial Regulations and the Procurement Regulations, as now submitted, be approved; and

(B) the other amendments to the Constitution set out in the report now submitted, be approved.

16 ARRANGEMENTS WITH REGARD TO THE POST OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Council considered a report setting out interim management arrangements following the impending retirement of the current Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services. Council also considered proposed arrangements for dealing with the appointment of a Chief Executive and the appointment of Statutory Officers during the interim period.

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer left the chamber whilst this matter was considered.

The Executive Member for Ambassador and Shared Services paid tribute to George A Robertson and spoke of the excellent working relationship he had enjoyed with him as Leader of the Council. He thanked him for the cultural change he had led at the Council and wished him well in his retirement.

The Leader also thanked him for his work and referred to the enjoyment she had had working with him. The Chief Executive and Director of Cultural and Community Services thanked Members for their good wishes.

Council approved the proposals as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the current post of Chief Executive/Director of Customer and Community Services be deleted and a new post of Chief Executive be created;

(B) the Council proceed to the recruitment of a Chief Executive;

(C) the Director of Neighbourhood Services be appointed as acting Head of Paid Service until a permanent appointment is made;

(D) the Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services be appointed as acting Monitoring Officer until a permanent appointment is made; and

(E) a panel of the Council be appointed to consider and appoint the new position at (B) above.

17 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING STRATEGY: 2015-19 AND PLEDGE

Council was invited to adopt the updated Member Development Training Strategy and to authorise the Leader of the Council to re-sign the Member Development Pledge.

Council approved the recommendations as now detailed.

RESOLVED – that the (A) updated East Herts Member Development Strategy appended to the report now submitted be adopted; and

(B) East Herts Member Development Pledge be endorsed and formally signed, on behalf of Members, by the Leader of the Council.

18 MOTION OF CENSURE

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report advising that the Standards Sub-Committee, at its hearing meeting held on 30 March 2015, had considered a report by the Investigating Officer which had concluded that Councillor W Ashley had breached the Authority’s Code of Conduct in relation to the matters identified. The Standards Sub-Committee had decided that the then Member had failed to comply with the Code and decided that formal censure by motion was appropriate.

Councillor T Page questioned whether a precedent had been set by investigating an anonymous complaint and asked that this be looked into.

Council approved the censure motion as now detailed.

RESOLVED - that (former Councillor) William Ashley be censured for his conduct in respect of the matters detailed by the Investigating Officer in his report to the Standards Sub-Committee meeting of 30 March 2015.

The meeting closed at 8.17 pm

Chairman
Date