

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 28 JULY 2015, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor L Haysey (Chairman/Leader)
Councillors A Jackson, G Jones,
G McAndrew, S Rutland-Barsby and
G Williamson.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors A Alder, M Allen, R Brunton,
J Cartwright, M Casey, M Freeman,
J Goodeve, Mrs D Hollebbon, M McMullen,
P Moore, T Page, M Pope, P Ruffles,
S Stainsby, K Warnell and J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Director of Neighbourhood Services
Philip Gregory	- Head of Strategic Finance
Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Adele Taylor	- Director of Finance and Support Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Nick Brammer	- Lambert Smith Hampton
Nigel Palmer	- Lambert Smith Hampton

178 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor E Buckmaster.

179 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of Minute 180 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

180 BISHOP'S STORTFORD TOWN CENTRE

The Executive considered a proposal to seek to acquire a site in Bishop's Stortford Town Centre as detailed in the report submitted. The Leader provided background information regarding the circumstances of the site and welcomed Nick Brammer and Nigel Palmer of Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) to the meeting.

A wide ranging discussion ensued and a number of Members made comments and asked questions of LSH and Officers. Members considered the potential investment returns and the risks associated with purchasing the site in question. There was also a discussion around the potential regeneration of the site and the Council's role in influencing its future for the benefit of the residents of Bishop's Stortford.

In general, Members expressed support for a bid to be made on the basis of the perceived investment returns and for the ability to influence any future regeneration opportunities on the site. Members also considered the level at which any bid should be submitted in order to be considered.

The LSH representatives explained the rationale for the market value of the site as detailed in the report submitted. They also provided an update in terms of the guide price for the site, comprising the market (base) value and a

consideration of the added value, in terms of redevelopment prospects. LSH also advised that, in their professional view, a competitive bid at a level above the guide price would need to be submitted for any realistic offer to be successful.

At 9.04 pm, it was agreed to adjourn the meeting for 15 minutes to enable Officers and LSH to clarify some of the figures. The meeting reconvened at 9.19 pm.

Officers gave advice on a number of issues for Members to consider, including:

- the Council's Investment Strategy in general and current property fund yields;
- the risks associated with different types of investments;
- the associated costs of any purchase, which would include due diligence, legal fees, stamp duty, etc;
- the need to justify the level of any bid and the wider interests of council taxpayers; and
- the need for a Red Book valuation prior to purchase, should the Council's bid be successful.

The Executive considered the advice of Officers, LSH and the views of other Members present. It was agreed that a bid to reacquire the site described in the report be approved and that Officers be authorised to submit a bid to the level of the competitive bid and upper ceiling as advised at the meeting

RESOLVED - that (A) a bid be submitted to reacquire the site described in the report, and if the Council is successful in its bid to reacquire the site then Pinsent Masons proceed with a detailed review of the title and contract documentation and report any further issues to the Council prior to completion; and

(B) Officers be authorised to submit the bid in (A) above to the level of the competitive bid and upper ceiling as advised at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.28 pm