

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 18 DECEMBER 2019, AT 7.00
PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Kaye (Chairman).
Councillors T Beckett, S Bell, R Buckmaster,
R Bolton, P Boylan, M Brady, E Buckmaster,
A Alder, S Bull, J Burmicz, L Corpe,
K Crofton, B Crystall, A Curtis, G Cutting,
B Deering, I Devonshire, H Drake,
J Dumont, R Fernando, J Frecknall,
M Goldspink, J Goodeve, A Hall, L Haysey,
D Hollebbon, A Huggins, J Jones, I Kemp,
G McAndrew, S Newton, T Page, M Pope,
S Reed, C Rowley, P Ruffles, S Rutland-
Barsby, M Stevenson, T Stowe, N Symonds,
A Ward-Booth, G Williamson, C Wilson and
J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Cassidy	- Chief Executive
Isabel Brittain	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Rebecca Dobson	- Democratic Services Manager
Andre Ferreira	- Democratic Services Officer
James Gardner	- Project Manager
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health and

	Acting Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Lorraine Kirk	- Senior Communications Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Bob Palmer	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Graeme Reid	- Revenues Manager
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive
Alison Stuart	- Interim Monitoring Officer

261 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed those present, and reminded all that the meeting was being webcast.

The Chairman invited Councillor M Goldspink, as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, to pay tribute to former Councillor Mike Wood. Councillor Goldspink said Mike Wood, an Honorary Alderman of East Hertfordshire, and Member for Bishop's Stortford All Saints ward, had been hardworking and popular. She said his ambition had been to improve the lives of the people of East Hertfordshire, and she saluted his record as an excellent Councillor and good friend.

The Chairman asked all to stand to observe one minute's silence in commemoration.

The Chairman invited Lesley Titcomb, who had received the award of CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List earlier in the year, to come forward. The award had been given in recognition of services to pensions regulation, and he was pleased to present her with a certificate from this Council in recognition of her achievements.

The Chairman invited Susannah Carr and Jo Baily of the Secret Society of Hertford Crafters to come forward to have their achievements recognised in raising money for charities. He thanked them for their wonderful festive "yarn bombing" activities, and congratulated them on raising over £57,000 for local charities since being established, including for the Chairman's charities, Isabel Hospice and CHIPs (Children's Integrated Playschemes).

Susannah Carr thanked Members for their support and said all were welcome to join the Society, which not only raised money, but engendered community spirit with weekly meetings.

The Chairman reminded all Members that he was seeking donations to his charities for those wearing a Christmas jumper.

262 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Andrews, M McMullen, J Ranger, C Redfern and D Snowden.

263 MINUTES - 23 OCTOBER 2019

It was moved by Councillor J Kaye and seconded by Councillor T Beckett, that the Minutes of the meeting of 23 October 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

264 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor G Williamson declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to Old River Land and Northgate End Land Assembly, in that he was an employee of one of the parties.

Councillors E Buckmaster, K Crofton, B Deering, J Jones, J Kaye and J Wyllie declared their non-pecuniary interests in relation to the same item.

Councillor K Crofton declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to the Benington Conservation Area Appraisal, in that he was the ward Member for Walkern in which Benington was located.

The Interim Monitoring Officer said, in relation to Item 8 on the agenda, the Council Tax Empty Homes Premium, that Members who had a disclosable pecuniary interest as disclosed on their notice of registrable interests, had been granted a dispensation to enable them to participate in the discussion and voting on the item. The dispensation had been granted by the Members of the Performance, Audit and Governance Oversight Committee.

265 PETITIONS

The meeting received a petition entitled “Stop expansion of Harlow and building on green wedges”. As the lead petitioner was not in attendance to present the petition, no comment was made.

266 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

David Royle asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability, in relation to his preparing an action plan for the Council’s climate change motion, what he was doing to quantify the heat used by the existing housing stock in the District and identify how the Council could support becoming carbon neutral by 2030. He asked whether the Executive Member had sought government HNDU (Heat Networks Delivery Unit) funding to analyse the potential for heat networks to be part of the solution.

Councillor G McAndrew agreed tackling the decarbonisation of heat was a key issue, at both local and national level. The Council had previously undertaken a domestic housing stock condition survey,

and had access to national EPC data. A range of actions would be considered for existing housing in the new Environmental Sustainability Action Plan. Energy efficiency and encouraging the use of low carbon fuels would be essential.

Councillor McAndrew said that, from a planning perspective, whilst HNDU funding had not yet been used, the Hertfordshire Renewable and Low Carbon Study (2010) had considered opportunities for district heat networks in East Herts. To explore potentially viable locations for heat networks, the study had concluded that the areas which were most likely to provide opportunities for such networks were urban areas and higher density new developments. For new developments, the adopted East Herts District Plan (2018) required such developments to demonstrate how carbon emissions would be minimised, and heat networks could potentially be part of this process. The Council would be producing a new Supplementary Planning Document on Environmental Sustainability.

267 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor I Devonshire asked the Executive Member for Planning and Growth what the Council was doing to ensure fast and reliable broadband services were provided in the District's rural areas.

Councillor J Goodeve said the Council's role in providing broadband to communities was via planning policy, focusing on new developments. She recognised that some existing communities, particularly rural ones, experienced broadband issues, as indicated by

many users of Launchpad in Bishop's Stortford. Launchpad offered speeds of up to 100 Megabytes, significantly better than in some areas.

Councillor Goodeve said broadband installation was not required by statute or the National Planning Policy Framework for new dwellings. Prior to the adoption of the District Plan, the Council had refused planning permission where new developments had been built without such provision, but such refusals had been overturned on appeal. Now, although the Plan had been adopted and included guidance for Fibre To The Premises, the largest national provider, BT Openreach, had discretion in what it offered, which could result in inconsistent delivery.

Regarding existing developments, Councillor Goodeve said the government had invested in broadband provision for areas which were not commercially viable. An example was the "Connected Counties" programme, an initiative jointly funded by Herts County Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and BT Openreach.

Councillor Goodeve referred to voucher schemes to offset the cost of installing fibre, such as the Rural Gigabyte Voucher Scheme, details of which were available on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport website. A further option was a community fibre partnership, by which residents could work with providers through joint funding arrangements.

Finally, Councillor Goodeve described the work taking place with the Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ), a public,

private and voluntary partnership across East Hertfordshire and West Essex. Subject to a number of operational and assurance issues being addressed, it would deliver enhanced fibre connectivity across the DIZ based around the locations of public sector assets.

Councillor M Stevenson asked the Executive Member for Wellbeing what the Council's plans were for the Hertfordshire Year of Culture 2020, and how Members could be involved.

Councillor E Buckmaster said the East Hertfordshire Year of Culture 2020 had been launched at Hertford Theatre. Many organisations had attended the event and shared initial ideas. The programme would feature different activities each month, and he asked all Members to encourage organisations in their areas to participate by registering. Creative events could be held in a variety of venues, such as schools, empty shops or in town centres in the same way as the "Yarn Bombers". Community grants were available, and he encouraged Members to raise the profile of the Year of Culture.

Councillor M Stevenson asked whether the initiative would make a positive contribution to health and wellbeing.

Councillor E Buckmaster confirmed the programme would provide opportunities for social prescribing.

Councillor J Wyllie asked the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods what steps the Council was taking to minimise the disruption and distress caused by

fireworks, particularly towards animals in the District, as well as anti-social behaviour issues.

Councillor P Boylan said the Council was keen to play its role in ensuring that local people could enjoy fireworks around Bonfire Night, Diwali, New Year's Eve and during other celebrations. However, it was imperative that fireworks were used safely and in a way that minimised disruption and distress to residents, pets and other livestock and wildlife.

The Council had issued information regarding safe use of fireworks earlier in the year, which referred to advice from various sources including the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals. The Council's website included a link to Trading Standards regarding licences for sale of fireworks. The Council had continued to work with partners to tackle fireworks mis-selling and misuse, including in relation to anti-social behaviour. He welcomed the County Council's Trading Standards crackdown on illegal fireworks, and would ensure the Community Safety Partnership and Council would discuss and agree any necessary further action regarding fireworks misuse.

Councillor A Curtis asked the Leader what steps she was taking to attract investment into East Hertfordshire.

Councillor Haysey said this District was at the heart of the innovation corridor, and supported the Launchpad initiative in Bishop's Stortford and Ware. East Hertfordshire's District Plan was now in place, and the aim was to balance dwellings with employment, and avoid the "dormitory town" effect. This area provided

the opportunity to work across the corridor and she hoped to attract companies with high quality business to invest here. She had set up a High Growth Group to assess the opportunities to grow businesses and to work with the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Chairman said he would permit one further question, as the time limit of 15 minutes had been reached.

Councillor J Dumont asked the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability whether he was aware that doubling tree cover across the UK could draw down 50 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually across the country and significantly contribute to reducing the effects of climate change. Councillor Dumont asked whether, with this in mind and given that the Gilston Villages development was the largest release of Green Belt land in England, he would adopt the ambition to double the amount of tree cover over the whole of the District.

Councillor G McAndrew referred to the motion on Climate Change in July 2019, when the Council confirmed it would seek to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and to support working to achieve a similar target for the District. The main focus in carbon reduction was to reduce emissions at the point of generation, reducing the need for carbon capture and storage.

For the District, emissions from Land use, Land use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) were negative, so the land was acting as a valuable carbon sink. A doubling of tree cover would amount to 20% woodland cover.

Whilst clearly possible, such an increase would be a significant change of use, possibly replacing other biodiversity habitats or open space/agricultural land with woodland. The Council's new Environmental Sustainability Action Plan would be likely to include the aim of increasing tree cover, where appropriate.

Over the last few years, Greenspace Action Plans had led to considerable planting programmes in open spaces, whilst aiming to keep such areas in multi-purpose use. There were approximately 70,000 trees in the Council's tree stock, in a variety of settings. However, as the Council owned very little land, it was not possible to commit to planting significant new wooded areas unless land currently used for other leisure purposes was used, impacting on open space for recreation or sport, and possibly resulting in increased emissions if people had to travel further for leisure pursuits.

The Council would work with partners to encourage the planting of more trees, and intended to produce a Supplementary Planning Document on Environmental Sustainability, which would seek new developments and consider appropriate opportunities for increasing tree cover.

With regard to Gilston, 66% of the area allocated in the District Plan was proposed to remain as undeveloped landscaped areas, with the rest comprising new villages. There were opportunities for additional tree planting, but the area included existing woodlands. The allocation was subject to outline planning applications which included the protection for many

existing landscape assets including woodlands, standalone trees and hedgerows and areas that would remain undeveloped.

In conclusion, Councillor McAndrew said additional tree planting would need to be managed, perhaps ideally creating a new forestry industry utilising timber and wood products in construction and for other products in order to genuinely “lock up” carbon for the long term.

The Chairman said responses to the remaining Members’ Questions would be circulated to all Members by Democratic Services.

268 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 3 DECEMBER 2019

The Leader presented a report from the Executive’s meeting of 3 December 2019. She took the opportunity to pay tribute to former Member and Honorary Alderman Mike Wood.

The Leader also thanked Councillor T Page for his work as Chairman of the Development Management Committee. She said Councillor Page had been exceptionally thorough in fulfilling the duties of that role, and had left the Committee in better shape than before.

The Leader thanked the Head of Strategic Finance and Property for her work at this Council and wished her well in her future roles.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 3 December 2019 be received.

(See also Minutes 269 - 271)

269 COUNCIL TAX LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES

Council considered the recommendation from the Executive on Council Tax Long Term Empty Properties.

Councillor G Williamson proposed, and Councillor L Haysey seconded, a motion that the recommendations, as detailed in the report, be approved.

Councillor M Goldspink spoke in support of the proposal, which she said was fair and brought the Council's position into line with that of a number of other authorities.

The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that a Council Tax premium of 100% be adopted for long term empty homes.

270 BENINGTON CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Councillor J Goodeve proposed, and Councillor L Haysey seconded, a motion that the recommendations of the Executive, as detailed below, be approved.

Councillor K Crofton spoke in support of the motion, and thanked Officers for the extraordinary work carried out on this and other area appraisals. He referred to the historical features which contributed to

the exceptional character of Benington.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Benington Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be supported;

(B) the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, be authorised to make any further minor and consequential changes to the document which may be necessary; and

(C) the Benington Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, set out as Essential Reference Paper A to the report, be adopted.

271 HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN STEWARDSHIP OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

Council considered the recommendation from the Executive on the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Stewardship Objectives and Principles.

Councillor L Haysey proposed, and Councillor E Buckmaster seconded, a motion that the recommendations, as detailed below, be approved.

Councillor M Goldspink said the Liberal Democrat Group largely supported these proposals, in that they

provided community cohesion and environmental sustainability.

Councillor J Dumont said he had continued to receive representations from his Ward residents expressed concerns regarding the Gilston proposals. He referred to a letter from the Council received by residents inviting them to a consultation, which had unfortunately not been clear.

Councillor L Haysey asked that he send a copy of the letter to her, and said she would be happy to talk to residents in Councillor Dumont's ward. The proposals had been taken through the District Plan process and would be subject to extensive consultation as part of the Masterplanning Framework. Nearly half of the site within Gilston would be left as open space, and the aim was to build communities, not just houses.

Councillor J Kaye said he supported the proposals and referred to the sensible provision being made with the invoking of Article 4 directions.

The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - that the Stewardship objectives and principles, relating to development proposals coming forward as part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, be endorsed.

272 COUNCIL TAX CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE

Council considered a report presented by the

Executive Member for Financial Sustainability recommending the calculation of the Council Tax base for the District, and for parish and town councils, for 2020/21.

Councillor G Williamson proposed and Councillor J Wyllie seconded, a motion that the recommendations as detailed below be supported.

The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the calculation of the Council's tax base for the whole district, and for the parish areas, for 2020/21 be approved; and

(B) pursuant to the report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by East Hertfordshire District Council as its council tax base for the whole area for 2020/21 shall be **61272.0** and for the parish areas listed below for 2020/21 shall be as set out in the report.

273 CONSIDERATION OF RESPONSES TO THE PROPOSAL TO LIMIT HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE LICENCES TO TWO HUNDRED

Council considered a report submitted by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, setting out the recommendations made by the Licensing Committee at its meeting of 30 October 2019.

Councillor P Boylan referred to results of the survey on unmet demand and the conclusion of the Committee that there was no significant unmet demand. A limit on the number of hackney carriage licences was proposed.

In reply to a question from Councillor T Beckett, Councillor Boylan confirmed that the reduction of licences would be achieved through natural wastage.

Councillor P Boylan proposed, and Councillor G McAndrew seconded, a motion that the recommendations as detailed be supported.

The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that a limit of 200 be imposed on the number of hackney carriage vehicle licences that are issued from 1 January 2020.

274 ADOPTION OF THE IHRA REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE
WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

Council considered a report submitted by the Leader of the Council, seeking approval of the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism and reaffirming the Council's commitment to promoting equalities in East Hertfordshire.

Councillor L Haysey said it was the responsibility of all to combat antisemitism, as such prejudice was totally

unacceptable.

Councillor M Brady agreed and said she fully supported this motion, on behalf of the Labour Group.

Councillor M Goldspink said the Liberal Democrat Group supported the motion most strongly. Councillor B Crystall said he echoed these sentiments on behalf of the Green Group.

Councillor L Haysey proposed, and Councillor A Curtis seconded, a motion that the recommendations as detailed be supported. The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) East Hertfordshire Council adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, that is, “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities”; and

(B) reaffirms that it finds antisemitism and all forms of prejudice targeted at those with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 abhorrent and not in keeping with the council’s values and its duties under that Act.

275 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN TO DEVELOPMENT
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Council considered a report submitted by the Interim Monitoring Officer regarding the appointment of the Chairman of the Development Management Committee.

Councillor L Haysey said the recommendation was brought before Members as Councillor T Page had stepped down from the chairmanship of the Committee.

Councillor T Beckett expressed gratitude to Councillor Page for his chairmanship and for his support to him as a new Member of the Development Management Committee. His successor would, he was sure, be an excellent chairman.

Councillor L Haysey moved, and Councillor I Kemp seconded, a motion to support the recommendation as detailed. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED. Councillor Deering abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED – that Councillor B Deering be appointed Chairman of the Development Management Committee.

Councillor Deering thanked Members for their comments. He paid tribute to Councillor Page, who he said had been a terrific chairman, and had made the integrity of the Committee a priority. He had undertaken a huge amount of work for the Committee

and for the Council.

276 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 2018/19

Council considered two reports submitted by the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, reviewing the Council's treasury management activities for 2018/19, and reviewing the treasury management activities for the first six months of the 2019/20 financial year.

Councillor G Williamson highlighted the main points contained within the reports, which had been considered by the Performance, Audit and Governance Oversight Committee on 29 October 2019. He said he intended to alter the recommendation in each report to state that the items be noted rather than approved, as the activity had in fact already been approved.

Councillor G Williamson moved, and Councillor M Pope seconded, a motion that the recommendations in each report as detailed be supported. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the 2018/19 treasury management activity and prudential indicators be noted.

(See also Minute 277)

277 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEARMID-YEAR REVIEW
2019-20

RESOLVED – that (A) the treasury management activity for the first 6 months of the 2019/20 financial year, be noted; and

(B) the changes to the prudential indicators as set out in paragraph 2.6 of the report, be noted.

(See also Minute 276)

278 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY
PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

Council considered a report submitted by the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, presenting and seeking approval of the ICT Partnership Strategy 2019/20 to 2021/22, setting out the joint approach proposed between the Council and Stevenage Borough Council.

Councillor G Williamson said the key outcomes were listed in the report, and described the governance arrangements which included the formation last year of the IT Steering Group, and a new Member Group, which he would attend, with Councillor I Kemp, and their counterparts from Stevenage Borough Council.

Councillor Williamson proposed, and Councillor I Kemp seconded, a motion that the recommendations as detailed be supported. The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the joint ICT Partnership Strategy 2019/20 – 2021/22 between East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council be approved; and

(B) delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive, acting in consultation with the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, to negotiate and agree a new ICT Shared Service Agreement with Stevenage Borough Council for period 2019/20 – 2021/22.

279 APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

Council considered a report submitted by the Chief Executive, seeking approval of the appointment of the Council's Monitoring Officer.

Councillor G Cutting proposed, and Councillor J Jones seconded, a motion that the recommendation as detailed be supported. The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that James Ellis be appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer.

280 APPOINTMENTS TO INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Council considered a report submitted by the Head of Housing and Health and Acting Head of Legal and Democratic Services seeking approval of an approach to other authorities within Hertfordshire to request the services of a member to fill a vacancy on the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Head of Housing and Health and Acting Head of Legal and Democratic Services said the Panel comprised five members, and that it was currently necessary to fill a vacancy. It was expedient to do so through obtaining the services of an existing panel member from another authority.

Councillor L Haysey proposed, and Councillor P Boylan seconded, a motion to support the recommendation as detailed. The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – (A) to approve that whenever a vacancy on the Council’s Independent Remuneration Panel arises, other Hertfordshire authorities are approached in the first instance to request the services of the authorities’ remuneration panel members to serve on the Council’s panel; and

(B) that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be granted delegated authority to consider and confirm appointments of Independent Panel Members approached in this way.

281 REVISED COMMUNITY GRANTS POLICY 2020/21

Council considered a report submitted by the Executive Member for Communities on proposed revisions to the Council’s Community Grants Policy, which included provision for annual review.

Councillor S Rutland-Barsby said the policy supported investment in the District's communities, to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. She highlighted key proposals and changes to the existing scheme, which widened the offer but remained in line with the principles of the policy. These changes were proposed on a pilot basis.

Councillor S Rutland-Barsby proposed, and Councillor R Fernando seconded, a motion that the recommendations as detailed be supported. The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the revised Community Grants Policy 2020/21 as detailed in Essential Reference Paper 'B' to the report, be approved.

282 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 6 NOVEMBER 2019

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Development Management Committee held on 6 November 2019, be received.

283 PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: MINUTES - 24 SEPTEMBER AND 29 OCTOBER 2019

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meetings of the Performance, Audit and Governance Oversight Committee held on 24 September and

29 October 2019 be received.

284 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Councillor M Goldspink proposed a motion on notice as follows: "This Council is extremely concerned about the inadequate provision of affordable and social housing within the district. There are 2,000 families on the housing 'waiting list', and the prices being charged for so-called affordable homes are way beyond the reach of many people in our community. This Council therefore resolves to conduct an investigation into the possibility of building its own council houses once more (as was done in the past)."

Councillor Goldspink said the number of people on the housing waiting list had remained the same for the last five years. The Council did not own any housing. There was provision for developers to provide a percentage of affordable housing, but none were for social rent. Other Councils such as Cheltenham and Norwich had started building again, and there was no reason why this Council could not do so.

Councillor T Beckett seconded the motion.

Councillor P Boylan said good quality housing was the foundation for healthy prosperous communities. The Council had made a great deal of progress in identifying and meeting the needs of those requiring affordable housing, supported by policies in the District Plan and the draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

He said developers of all strategic sites had committed to building 40% affordable homes. "Affordable housing" comprised various types of housing, including social rented, affordable rented and low cost home ownership tenures. Eligibility was impacted by local incomes and local house prices. In East Hertfordshire, housing association housing stock currently totalled 8,005 homes, comprising social rented and affordable rented accommodation.

Councillor Boylan said the register was not a "waiting list", but was a points based system based on individual needs. It included those who did not live within the district and those who wished to upsize or downsize. Not all applicants were families, as 49% were single person households or couples requiring one bedroom accommodation.

Councillor Boylan referred to the approaches of neighbouring authorities. He said Broxbourne and North Herts also worked with housing associations. Welwyn Hatfield had the highest numbers on their housing needs register, followed by Stevenage. These authorities were the only two districts with their own housing stock. Whilst acknowledging there were particular challenges for these two authorities due to their having some areas with significant social deprivation, such comparison did not provide convincing evidence that for East Hertfordshire to build its own council housing would reduce the number of households on its housing needs register.

Councillor Boylan said he therefore could not support the narrow format of the motion. However, to ensure

the Council was able to consider a broad range of potential solutions, he had commissioned a report to better understand all options available, to increase and improve the range of social rented housing available in the district, as well as any other affordable tenures which would benefit local people. Following completion of the report, a decision would be taken on how best to take forward the options.

Councillor E Buckmaster said a further aspect was availability. The right to buy one's home was for many people a positive factor. However where homes were owned by a council's partner organisations, their continued availability tended to be more protected. The District Plan aimed to meet the demand for homes of all sizes and tenures. The population was increasing, yet the number of people on the housing needs register had remained stable. The District Plan provided for future demand, and there were other ways in which needs were met, such as working in partnership with the County Council regarding care homes. Although he accepted the motion was written with good intentions, he could not support it as drafted.

Councillor C Wilson said sections of the community found it difficult to meet their housing needs. Mortgages were several times the average salary, and the local housing allowance was indexed to local housing prices. If developers could not make a profit then social housing provision was affected, and if the right to buy was exercised there was no guarantee that the level of provision would continue to be sufficient. The charity Shelter recommended increasing the

numbers of social rented, affordable rented and low cost homes.

Councillor T Beckett said notwithstanding the right to buy and protection of affordable housing stock, it was an option within that to negotiate land to be given to create housing stock and acknowledge there were issues. But he would encourage the Executive Member not to rule out options including the Council holding some stock.

Councillor L Corpe said there was a difference between addressing demand and addressing need. Upsizing could not be said to alleviate the numbers on the housing needs register, as it included situations where people were in unsuitable accommodation too small for their needs. The Council should not rule out the possibility of owning its own housing stock. One of the disadvantages of not owning stock was that the Council could not plan in advance. He welcomed the report which Councillor Boylan had referred to.

Councillor J Dumont said this was about actions rather than the correct terminology for referring to the housing register. There was a need to highlight the plight of a large number of families that might not join the register because the number of people on the register did not reduce so the actual number of those in need was higher. People were concerned about insecure accommodation.

Members continued to debate the motion.

At the conclusion of the debate, Councillor M

Goldspink welcomed the comments made by the Executive Member.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared LOST.

285 OLD RIVER LANE AND NORTHGATE END LAND ASSEMBLY

Councillor G Williamson left the Chamber for this item, having declared a pecuniary interest.

The Leader submitted a report setting out the case for the acquisition of land at Northgate End, Bishop's Stortford, as part of the delivery of the Old River Lane scheme.

Councillor L Haysey said the acquisition of the land would enable a fantastic scheme to move forward, as this plot was an essential part of the development. It was pleasing that there had been a positive outcome to the Old River Lane judicial review. She trusted Members would be delighted by this good news. With Members' approval of the recommendation to acquire this plot from Hertfordshire County Council, the project could start moving ahead. She moved the recommendations as detailed in the report.

Councillor K Crofton seconded the motion.

Councillor M Goldspink said she could not support the recommendations. She considered it was wrong to purchase land which at the moment was used for the benefit of young people, as the Council should do all it could to encourage the provision of community facilities for this age group.

Councillor L Haysey said such facilities were not being reduced through approval of this scheme.

The motion being put to the meeting and a vote taken, it was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) a section of the land currently in the ownership of Hertfordshire County Council at Northgate End, Bishop’s Stortford be purchased in line with the valuation presented in the exempt Essential Reference Paper B, in pursuance of delivery of the Old River Lane scheme; and

(B) authorisation be delegated to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to make all necessary arrangements to complete the purchase of the land at Northgate End, Bishop’s Stortford.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Chairman
Date