

Public Document Pack

C

C

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 11 MAY 2022, AT 7.00 PM

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Democratic Services Officer
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Steven Linnett	- Head of Strategic Finance and Property
Katie Mogan	- Democratic Services Manager

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Crofton said his year as Chairman had been an interesting adventure with many highlights. He said that the year saw an increase in the number of visits after the pandemic. He had attended the Holocaust Memorial Day organised by Councillor Kaye, attended many school award ceremonies, official opening of new premises and numerous speaking engagements. Councillor Crofton said that on 28 April 2022, eight Moldovan Mayors and their officials visited East Herts Council to learn about democracy. He showed them aspects of planning, housing, licensing and democratic services and gave his thanks to Officers who engaged with them.

Councillor Crofton said he had visited 30 local businesses that had benefited from the Covid Recovery Scheme and East Herts Council were able to give £240,000 out in support. He gave his thanks to the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy and the Communications and Digital Media Manager for their assistance in arranging the visits.

Councillor Crofton gave thanks to those who attended his Quiz Night earlier in the year and those who came to the garden party at the Henry Moore Foundation to say thank you to the district's Town and Parish Councillors. He said he had raised £3,852 for his chosen charity Macmillan Cancer Care.

Councillor Crofton thanked the Chairman's PA for her work and support over the last year and gave thanks to

the Vice Chairman, Councillor Ian Devonshire, for his full support in attending events when there was a clash of dates. He said that he had valued and enjoyed his year in office and thanked Members for their support in electing him as Chairman for the 2021-22 civic year.

The Leader of the Council gave her thanks to Councillor Crofton for what he had given to the community over the last Civic Year. She thanked him for the Garden Party he held for Town and Parish Councillors and many of them had said they were very grateful for the celebration as they were at the forefront of the work done in the community.

Councillor Goldspink echoed the Leader's comments and thanked Councillor Crofton on behalf of the Liberal Democrat group for his hard work and efforts on behalf of the Council and the community.

2 ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN 2022/23

It was proposed by Councillor Haysey and seconded by Councillor Williamson that Councillor Devonshire be elected as Chairman of the Council for the 2022/23 Civic Year. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Devonshire be elected as Chairman of the Council for the 2022/23 Civic Year.

Councillor Devonshire made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office and took the chair.

3 ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor Goodeve and seconded by Councillor Rutland-Barsby that Councillor Bolton be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2022/23 Civic Year. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Bolton be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2022/23 Civic Year.

Councillor Bolton made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office.

4 FURTHER CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked Councillor Crofton for his help, advice and support over the past year and congratulated Councillor Bolton on her election to Vice-Chairman.

The Chairman announced that he would be holding a Civic Service on Sunday 10 July 2022 at St Andrews Church, Much Hadham and a Race Night at Henry Moore Foundation Studios on Friday 23 September 2022. He added that he would be attending several events over the next year to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The Chair of Trustees for the Chairman's chosen charity, The Stroke Association, gave an introduction to the charity and the work they did.

The Chairman asked Councillor Jones to give a short presentation on his recent trip to Ukraine.

Councillor Jones addressed the Council on his two trips to Ukraine to deliver humanitarian aid and detailed his experience travelling to the warzone.

5 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrews, Beckett, Frecknall, Hall, McMullen, Newton, Snowdon and Ward-Booth.

6 MINUTES - 1 MARCH 2022

The Chairman said that an amendment to the Minutes for the Extraordinary Meeting on 1 March 2022 was to add Councillor Crystall to the attendance list.

Councillor Kemp asked for an amendment to the Minutes for the Ordinary Meeting on 1 March 2022. He referred to Minute number 366 and requested that "20 pence a week" be changed to "20 pence a month".

Councillor Haysey proposed and Councillor Fernando seconded a motion that the Minutes of the Extraordinary and Ordinary meeting held on 1 March 2022, as amended, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Extraordinary and Ordinary Meeting held on 1 March 2022, as amended, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

8 PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

9 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

10 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Ben Crystall to ask Councillor Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

“It is clear East Herts Council needs to promote active travel. It is also clear, according to HCC Highways, that in providing funds for active travel, the government looks extremely favourably on those districts and boroughs which have prepared Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).

Several authorities in Hertfordshire, including Stevenage and Broxbourne, have had LCWIPs for 3 or 4 years and have used these to develop ambitious active travel strategies. There is no mention of LCWIP

in our EHC Sustainability Action Plan.

Why hasn't East Herts developed an LCWIP, and when will we have one?"

Councillor Graham McAndrew's response:

"I would like to thank Councillor Crystall for his question and indeed his scrutiny of the council's Sustainability Action Plan. The action plan is a living document and I and officers are always open to observations and suggestions.

While developing an East Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is not within the council's Sustainability Action Plan, it is in the companion Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) Strategic Action Plan for Transport which, in fact, East Herts' Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator led on developing for the Partnership.

The HCCSP action plan obliges all districts in Hertfordshire to work with the County Council on LCWIPs, with a progress report to the Partnership required by the end of 2022 so as to build, monitor and maintain momentum.

We understand that the county council is taking a systematic area-by-area approach and following discussions with them, and in line with the Government's approach to partnership working, it has been proposed that the county council should lead on the scheme for East Herts. Officers from East Herts will

be actively engaged in the work and will oversee the progress of the project. We anticipate that the LCWIP development will commence in summer this year and will be reported to the Executive on completion.

It is also worth noting that Harlow Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) has an LCWIP that includes linkages to Gilston Village and discussions regarding existing and proposed cycling and walking routes across the district are already under way.

In conclusion, I would like to reassure Councillor Crystall that the council is working towards a comprehensive cycling and walking infrastructure plan which will play a crucial role in helping promote greener travel options."

Supplementary question from Councillor Ben Crystall:

Councillor Crystall asked for clarification about the deadline for the government's Active Travel Funds. He understood the deadline to be the end of summer 2022 so asked if the council would meet next year's deadline.

Response from Councillor Graham McAndrew:

Councillor McAndrew confirmed that was correct.

Councillor Ben Crystall to ask Councillor Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

"The excellent East Herts Sustainability Action Plan states that action 3.10: *"Incentivise the public to make more use of the council e-car pool"* has been completed.

It states: *"The scheme has now been fully re-opened to the public and promotion is now in place on our website."*

The link to the e-car page on our website is buried at the bottom of the Highways and Parking page.

Can you tell us the change in the numbers of sign ups that this promotion has led to, and whether you feel action 3.10 should be repeated, given that we are now coming out of COVID?"

Response from Councillor Graham McAndrew:

"I would like to thank Councillor Crystall for his question.

The council's e-car club pilot scheme has been running for almost three years with five e-vehicles. It has been entirely funded with a grant from Defra.

While remaining popular with staff, unfortunately for much of the time, COVID guidelines required closure of the scheme to the public. Since the relaxation in COVID regulations, we have been able to publicise the scheme in a number of ways. Public use at weekends has been limited; however, there have been an average of around 10 bookings a month.

Last month we reduced the e-car pool from five to two cars in order to stretch the Defra pilot monies, however, the funding will completely run out by the

end of May. To continue the scheme would cost the council £42,000 a year. Given the financial pressures the council is facing, I asked officers to develop a replacement, permanent scheme within the council's means.

To this end, officers have calculated that it is cost-effective to switch the council's diesel vans to five e-vehicles. The order for these vehicles will be placed by the end of this month although the level of demand for e-vehicles means we are facing delivery times of at least four months. We will look at whether it's possible to keep at least one of the remaining two e-cars on a week-to-week lease for a little longer.

While the council's new e-vehicles will be used primarily by the council's environmental services officers and parking officer currently using diesel vehicles, whenever the vehicles are not in use by these officers, they will be available for other members of staff to use throughout the working week, thus replicating the Defra-funded e-car pool in many ways.

With regard to public access, we are of course eager to promote this and officers are exploring the practicalities of how our new e-fleet could be made available outside of office hours. Until arrangements are put in place, I'm pleased to see that the market is responding to demand. Of note, a commercial operator now provides a hybrid car for hourly rental in Hertford and officers are already in discussion with a small number of private companies about developing more such schemes across the district.

As we switch from our diesel fleet to e-vehicles, I'd like to point out that in many respects we are already ahead-of-the-game. A national study by Smart Cities Connections conducted in February found that as many as one-in-five (19%) of the 295 councils responding to their survey had no e-vehicle strategy planned whatsoever, with a further 37% having made plans but taken no action. I am thus very pleased that in a matter of a few months, our own, albeit small, fleet will be all electric and added to this we have already attended demonstrations of e-waste collection vehicles to inform future decision-making.

So, may I assure Councillor Crystall that once we have a new operating model for our e-fleet in place, as well as cutting the council's carbon footprint, we will most definitely be looking at how best to enable the e-vehicles' wider availability to help our residents do the same."

There was no supplementary question.

Councillor Rishi Fernando to ask Councillor Jonathan Kaye, Executive Member for Communities:

"As we welcome arrivals from Ukraine to East Herts through both the Family Visa Scheme and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, how can our constituents most appropriately support these new arrivals in settling into Hertfordshire?"

Response from Councillor Jonathan Kaye:

"Thank you for your question. We have indeed seen an

outpouring of support from our local constituents who wish to welcome and assist those arriving from Ukraine into East Herts.

In Hertfordshire a collaborative county response to the crisis in Ukraine has been stood up for several weeks now, and is being led by the Hertfordshire Strategic Migration Steering Group. This Group draws representation from a wide range of local partners including the County Council, District and Borough Councils, the NHS and the voluntary sector, and supports not only arrivals from Ukraine but also small boat arrivals of asylum seekers and the mass migration waves from Afghanistan we experienced last summer.

A dedicated webpage has been created with key information for arrivals from Ukraine and Hertfordshire residents who are hosting Ukrainian nationals as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This can be found on Hertfordshire County Council's website or by searching 'Ukraine support in Hertfordshire'. Information has been translated into both Ukrainian and Russian for ease.

On behalf of the Strategic Migration Steering Group, Hertfordshire County Council are triaging all Ukraine related enquiries via the email address ukrainesupport@hertfordshire.gov.uk and are in direct contact with residents who have signed up to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Constituents who wish to offer support of any kind or have any queries relating to our support for arrivals can contact a County Council officer directly via that address.

The voluntary and community sector in East Hertfordshire and community mutual aid groups are also developing local responses to support sponsors and Ukrainian arrivals. I am pleased to see that VPAC (Volunteer and People Assistance Cell) are working across the county with these types of groups to help coordinate and provide information, and ensure the voluntary and community sectors views are feed into the Strategic Migration Steering Group.”

There was no supplementary question.

Councillor Norma Symonds to ask Councillor Peter Boylan, Executive Member for Neighbourhoods:

“We are all very aware of the significant impact Covid-19 has had upon individuals and families across the world. Can the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods please explain how the pandemic has impacted on the numbers turning to the council for help with housing and how our performance compares with other councils in Hertfordshire?”

Response from Councillor Peter Boylan:

“The COVID pandemic has placed both new and intensified demands on the council’s Housing service.

Back in March 2020 the government called on all councils to bring rough sleepers in from the streets. The council assisted 24 people in this way, of whom 17 were helped into settled accommodation. As the focus on rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping

continues, the council has accommodated a further 23 individuals into settled accommodation since April 2021 who wouldn't otherwise be housed under the existing national homelessness legislation.

The numbers approaching the council when homeless or threatened with homelessness is increasing each quarter, with some 324 households turning to the council between January and March this year. The council works very hard to avert homelessness by providing tailored advice and interventions such as rent deposits. Whilst the 37 East Herts households in temporary accommodation, under statutory homeless duties at the end of March can be considered too many, we in fact have the lowest number of households in temporary accommodation by far across Hertfordshire both in terms of absolute numbers and numbers per 100,000 households.

The council has benefitted from its acquisition of The Rectory in Stanstead Abbots around a year ago as this has doubled our direct provision of temporary accommodation. At the same time, the council gained government funding to create an additional six self-contained flats at the site specifically for those moving on from or at risk of rough sleeping.

Allied to this, the Housing service has taken on additional officers who work in partnership with a range of other statutory services, who provide drug and alcohol support and recovery services, mental health support, as well as Job Centre Plus.

I would also like to mention the council's work to assist

people into tenancies provided by registered providers, also known as housing associations. We have a statutory duty to take applications and nominate households to vacant homes. To fulfil these duties, housing officers work with many other agencies, for example SADA, that is the Survivors Against Domestic Abuse team operated by Stevenage Borough Council, who support those fleeing domestic violence into a safe new home. Also, the council provides funding for specialist debt advice for housing applicants from the East Herts Citizens Advice Service.

Citizens Advice share the council's drive to assist those in housing need and recently noted that East Herts has the third largest housing register of any district in Hertfordshire. The figure stands at just over 2,200 households, although this number is relatively stable year-to-year and is not growing.

East Herts has the second highest population of all districts and boroughs in Hertfordshire, after Dacorum, and so relatively high levels of housing need are to be expected. That said, when the number of households on the housing register is expressed per 100,000 households, we in fact have only the sixth largest list out of the ten districts.

Interestingly, all nine other Hertfordshire districts have chosen to apply a length of residency qualification such that someone has to have lived in that district for at least 2 years, and up to 10 years in the case of one district, before they can even *apply* for social housing, except in the case of homelessness, domestic abuse or Armed Forces personnel. East Herts Council puts no

such barrier in the way of applying and yet we are still in the lower half of Hertfordshire districts in terms of numbers on the housing register per 100,000 households.

And let me share one final interesting demonstration of how the council is addressing housing need. In the financial year, 2021/22, the Housing service made nominations to some 514 registered provider properties, over half of which, 260, were let at *social rents*.

So, in conclusion, I believe the council's approach to working with partners and housing people with a wide range of housing needs continues to be exemplary and is something about which this council should be rightly proud."

Councillor Chris Wilson to ask Councillor Graham McAndrew, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability:

"In the council meeting of 1 March 2022, the papers provided contained an error with respect to whether consultation was a legal requirement before imposing increases to the price of Resident Permits. I have, since the meeting, been informed that this was not a legal requirement. The effect of this error was to make it seem to members as if consultation would be undertaken and that therefore residents' views would be taken into account at some point in time. As this is the case, would the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability agree that it is a matter of regret that members were not in a position to consider

the views of residents before imposing such an increase? Would they also agree that in all circumstances we should strive to obtain views of residents and consult them on increases to services such as the one the council imposed on the RPZ users on 1 March?"

Response from Councillor Graham McAndrew:

"The increase to permit charges was implemented as part of the budget setting papers via "Notice of Variation", as opposed to Traffic Regulation Order.

Notices of Variation are provided for under sections 35C and 46A of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, informing stakeholders of a price rise and providing the legal authority to increase charges.

There is no opportunity or mechanism or invitation for stakeholders to formally object, unlike a Traffic Regulation Order which provides for a statutory consultation period of 21 days and opportunity for individuals to comment.

With regards to the line in the committee papers referencing "formal consultation via Traffic Regulation Order", unfortunately this was included in error. Members will be aware that we engaged with permit holders in January informing them of potential changes. The feedback from residents was captured and responded to in a further correspondence following the decision being made in March."

Councillor Wilson to ask Councillor Jonathan Kaye,

Executive Member for Communities:

“There have been, as many members will be aware, recent homophobic incidents in East Herts, with the most recently publicised one involving a former Mayor of Sawbridgeworth being threatened in the street. In addition, when I attended Stort Pride last year, it was impressed on me by many members of the LGBTQ+ community that they feel invisible and neglected in the District. Given this issue, can the Executive Member for Communities inform me of how many LGBTQ+ events and meetings he and the Chair of the council have attended during their tenures and also what plans there are to reach out to this often invisible community in the District. Can I also ask if the council intends to support and promote any Pride festivals that take place in the District in 2022?”

Response from Councillor Jonathan Kaye:

“May I thank Councillor Wilson for his question.

I would like to start by making clear that, like Councillor Wilson, I and the Executive believe that there can be no place for homophobia in our District. I was shocked to read in the newspaper that the Mayor of Sawbridgeworth was subject to this kind of hate in the street. It does serve, unfortunately, as a timely reminder that our LGBTQ+ residents can still face prejudice and discrimination in 2022. With this in mind, Members may be pleased to learn that earlier this year, the council put itself forward as a Hate Crime Reporting Centre; residents can now report incidents to us if they have any qualms about reporting the

matter to another agency. We then work with our partners across the Community Safety Partnership as appropriate.

The importance of ensuring all our residents are respected and feel part of our community is underlined in our 'East and Equal' Strategy for Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion approved by Full Council on 28 July 2021. Indeed, in my year spent at East Herts' Chairman, I set up a group called Living Together in East Herts which reaches out to a variety of community groups including religious and ethnic communities in East Herts. A number of my fellow members, including Councillor Symonds, Councillor Ruth Buckmaster and Councillor Beckett are also involved. I would be very pleased to invite LGBTQ+ groups to join the group and would ask members to let me know of any potential participants.

I'm sure many of us are aware of a growing number of events celebrating LGBTQ+ people and issues in the district and I am particularly pleased that I was able to attend last year's Pride event in Hertford, with the Chairman attending the Bishop's Stortford Pride event. I would urge my member colleagues to participate in this year's events if at all possible.

I am very pleased to report that the council is working hard to increase our support for LGBTQ+ residents. For example, as part of the delivery of the council's Cultural Strategy, which Councillor Eric Buckmaster is overseeing, the council is promoting and supporting the Bishop's Stortford Pride event this year. At the same time, officers are also working with the Stort

Pride community group, including helping them apply for funding.

We also recognise that LGBTQ+ residents can sometimes feel especially isolated and so I think it is worth noting that the Dementia Friendly Action Group facilitated by the council, and promoted by Cllr Eric Buckmaster, is benefiting from one of its members having developed of a Dementia Friends training module for care professionals on sexual identity. Furthermore, the council has recently started working with Re-engage, the charity which provides social connections for older people, to bring their Rainbow Call Companion service to East Herts. This will see volunteers building supportive and friendly relationships with older residents from our LGBTQ+ communities who may be feeling particularly lonely.

I hope I have been able to demonstrate that the council takes seriously its community leadership role when it comes to ensuring our LGBTQ+ residents feel safe and at home in our district and that their contributions to East Herts' rich cultural and social life is valued and celebrated."

Councillor Carolyn Redfern to ask Councillor Jan Goodeve, Executive Member for Planning and Growth:

"When was EHDC informed of the intention of Chase New Homes to withdraw all properties for sale in the Bircherley Green Development? What consultations have been done to determine the best course of action now? Could any condition have been inserted in the

planning permission to have prevented this extremely disappointing development?"

Response from Councillor Jan Goodeve:

"Thank you for your question Councillor Redfern. You may recall that when the most recent planning application for Bircherley Green was given planning permission in 2020 the scheme was not viable based on the viability evidence submitted part of the planning application and as a result no affordable housing was provided. The Development Management Committee carefully considered this position and took into account a number of planning benefits of the proposals including improvements to the site and town centre.

The Council is disappointed in the decision taken by Chase New Homes, chiefly in how let down people feel by them. The change to rent rather than sell the new homes is not a breach of planning permission, and a planning condition restricting this would not have been justified, and as you know from sitting on DMC, there are strict tests relating to applying conditions to planning permissions.

Unfortunately, Chase New Homes did not contact us about this change and I wrote to them to express concern on behalf of residents and to seek assurances of their future plans. I did this in my role as Executive Member for Planning and Growth as well as in my role as the Local Ward Member.

In response to this, we are pleased to hear of their

intentions to provide residents with the highest standards of accommodation and service, with fully staffed customer care and maintenance teams ensuring Lea Wharf will be a desirable and pleasant place to live. This is in line with the aspiration for the high standards in the private rented sector as laid out in our Housing Strategy to be considered later on this evening's agenda. It is also great to see how well the commercial part of the scheme is progressing and attracting a varied a mix of retail, hospitality and leisure to boost the vitality of Hertford town centre.

We monitor the mix of housing tenure across the district and will always endeavour to ensure the right types of property are built where they are needed."

11 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 8 FEBRUARY 2022

The Leader congratulated the Chairman and Vice-Chairman on their new roles and thanked Councillor Jones for his extraordinary effort, innovation and initiative to drive to Ukraine twice to deliver aid and bring back families.

The Leader presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the Executive at its meeting on 8 February 2022.

12 EAST HERTS HOUSING STRATEGY 2022 TO 2027

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods presented the recommendation, which was referred to in the Executive report of 8 February 2022, regarding the East Herts Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said there was no statutory requirement to produce a strategy but he believed the extent and range of housing issues made it imperative as the previous strategy had expired. The strategy included evidence from independent research by the Housing Quality Network, comments from organisations such as Town and Parish Councils, Hertfordshire County Council, the Chamber of Commerce and eight Registered Providers in the District.

Councillor Boylan said that the draft strategy had four evidence based priorities and was grateful to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their detailed consideration. He said that Members across the Council wished to increase the number of homes for social rent and said it was worth noting that the majority of affordable homes are already let at social rent levels and the strategy supports that and the first objective states a desire to increase supply of new homes close to 50-60% of market rents.

Councillor Boylan proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. Councillor Symonds seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink said that she was happy to see the strategy and thanked the Executive Member and the Housing Officers for their work. She referred to page 12 of the Strategy and the acceleration of house prices in East Herts when compared to the incomes on page 13. She said it was difficult for people to own homes with low to moderate incomes. She said she

was delighted to see the objectives on page 23 and hoped work would start soon on achieving the objectives.

Councillor Redfern echoed the comments from Councillor Goldspink and was pleased to see the objective on sustainability.

Councillor Curtis referred to the four priorities and asked the Executive Member to confirm if the priority to increase affordable homes would focus on increasing homes to own not just rent.

Councillor Boylan said the focus of the strategy was specifically around social rent and affordable rented accommodation. He said that other plans and strategies would deal with home ownership, such as the District Plan.

The motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - That the East Herts Housing Strategy from 2022 to 2027 be approved.

13 REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the report. He said that an Officer and Member Constitution Review Group had been set up to undertake a comprehensive review of the Constitution and recommend any amendments to Council.

Councillor Williamson proposed the recommendation in the report. He said the review was a comprehensive exercise and now hoped that the council had a document that was fit for purpose and would assist the council as it moved into the next Civic Year. Reviewing the Constitution would be a continuous, rolling exercise as and when required. He thanked the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Democratic Services Manager for providing helpful guidance, the Officers and Members involved in the review.

Councillor Deering seconded the recommendation. He thanked the Officers and the Member Group for their hard work.

Councillor Dumont asked how the Town and Parish Councillors would be chosen to sit on the Standards Committee and whether they would be voting members. He said that the addition of Leader's Announcements at Council was a good idea. He suggested that the time limit of 15 minutes for Members Questions at Council should be looked at.

Councillor Goldspink said that she struggled with the recommendation to change 'Chairman' to 'Chair' as she preferred the term 'Chairperson'. She thought the public participation rules at Overview and Scrutiny Committee was a good idea.

Councillor Symonds likewise did not agree with the change in terminology for the Chairman.

Councillor Curtis asked how the membership of the

review groups was chosen.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services said that the review groups looked at the terminology across other authorities in Hertfordshire and Chair was the most common term utilised. It would be for Council to decide whether to agree to the change or not. He said that the review groups would continue to meet as and when required so the 15 minute time limit for Members Questions could be looked at. He referred to the Standards Committee and said that Town and Parish councillors would be able to apply to sit on the committee and confirmed that they would be non-voting members. He responded to Councillor Curtis' question about the membership of the groups, he said that the Member Group was not an official committee of the Council so did not need to be politically balanced and said that Group Leaders were invited to put forward Members.

Councillor Redfern said she defended the new title of Chair.

Councillor Williamson said there were a variety of views on the terminology and so it was recommended to Council for discussion. He said that Chairman was an established term and was still a neutral term and did not need to cause offence.

Councillor Haysey agreed that the term Chairman was a term of respect and was not gender specific.

Councillor Williamson proposed a recommendation to stay with the term Chairman. Councillor Curtis

seconded the recommendation.

The motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the term Chairman continue to be used;

Having approved the recommendation to keep the term Chairman, the remaining changes to the Constitution identified in the report as proposed by Councillor Williamson and seconded by Councillor Deering, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (B) the updates and consequential amendments to the Constitution identified in the attached appendices to the report, except paragraph 2.8, be approved.

14 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND POLITICAL BALANCE OF THE COUNCIL 2022/23

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the Committee Membership and Political Balance of the Council 2022/23 report and said that Council were required to approve its decision making arrangements at the start of a new Civic Year. In May 2019, the Council appointed Councillor Linda Haysey as Leader for the “life” of the Council until the next scheduled District Council elections in 2023. It was the responsibility of the Leader to determine the size and membership of the Executive, as well as the allocation

of executive portfolio responsibilities. These remained unchanged at seven members, as well as the Leader, with the portfolios as set out in Appendix B. Two new committees had been established, the Standards Committee and the Joint Information Communication Technology Committee and Members have been appointed onto all Committees according to each political group's entitlements.

Councillor Williamson proposed, and Councillor Stowe seconded, a motion that the proposal be supported. A motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

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

<u>Committee</u>	<u>No. of Member</u>
Overview and Scrutiny	14
Audit and Governance	7
Development Management	12
Human Resources	7
Licensing	12

Standards	7
Chief Officer Recruitment	5
East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee (3 from East Herts)	6
Joint CCTV Executive (3 from East Herts)	12
East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council Joint Information Technology Committee (3 from East Herts)	6

- (B) the membership and Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees, Regulatory Committees, joint Committees be as set out in Appendix A, with Members being appointed in accordance with the wishes of the political group to whom the seats on these bodies have been allocated,
- (C) the Members to the Executive (in addition to the Leader) with the portfolio responsibilities as detailed in Appendix B, be noted;
- (D) the programme of Council meetings, as detailed at paragraph 5.1 of the report

submitted, be approved; and

- (E) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make changes in the standing membership of committees, joint committees and panel in (A) above, in accordance with the wishes of the political group to whom seats on these bodies have been allocated

15 REVIEW OF SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2022

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented the report on behalf of the Independent Remuneration Panel who had conducted a review of Members' Allowances under The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The Panel met three times and their recommendations and reasons for making the proposals are in the report.

Councillor Haysey thanked the Panel for their diligence and time spent looking at the Scheme of Allowances and providing recommendations that are fair and balanced. She thanked the Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer for supporting the Panel in their work. Councillor Haysey provided comments on each of the recommendations.

Councillor Haysey felt it was important that Members accepted Recommendation A, the 1% increase to the Basic Allowance. She said she appreciated that people

are facing hardship but also needed to recognise the work that councillors did and the value put upon it. She said that the District elections were approaching and new councillors should be a valued part of the community. She said it was not a great deal of money and if individual councillors did not think it was appropriate to increase the allowance, they can choose not to accept it or donate the increase to charity. She said that Members postponed the increase last year and historically had accepted the same as the staff pay award which this year was 1.75%.

Councillor Haysey said that the majority group did not accept Recommendations B and C, the increase in Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Development Management Committee. She said that the Chairmen of all Committees did a great job and felt the current level of remuneration was correct. She also said the group did not accept Recommendation D to give £50 to each Development Management Committee for each meeting attended. Councillor Haysey said that she believed this would become an attendance allowance and would be difficult to administer. She added that all Members took their jobs seriously and the council should not differentiate between members across committees.

Councillor Haysey referred to Recommendation E and the decrease in SRA for the Audit and Governance Committee. She believed there had been a misunderstanding in the roles of the Audit and Governance Committee and the new Standards Committee. She said the amount of work undertaken

by the Audit and Governance Committee that was now under the Standards Committee remit was minimal and therefore the reduction in SRA was not proportionate. She said the Council should not accept this recommendation.

Councillor Haysey referred to Recommendation F and the proposed SRA for the Standards Committee Chairman. She said this was the same as the Human Resources Committee Chairman and that committee met four times a year but the Standards Committee was proposed to meet twice a year. Therefore she proposed an amendment to recommendation F that the SRA for the Standards Chairman should be £2,431.

Councillor Haysey referred to Recommendation G and H and the increases to the Dependents Carers Allowance. She said she welcomed this increase and it recognised that Members with care responsibilities can become Members of the Council without being out of pocket. She urged Members to claim this allowance if they were entitled too.

Therefore Councillor Haysey proposed the following recommendations:

- (a) an increase of 1% from £5,375.04 to £5,428.79 in the Basic Allowance, as shown at Appendix A;
- (b) a Special Responsibility Allowance of £2,421 for the Chairman of the proposed Standards Committee
- (c) an increase from £10.15 per hour to £25.00 per hour in Dependent Carer's Allowance;
- (d) an increase from £9.00 per hour to £12.50 per hour in

Childcare Allowance

Councillor Ruffles seconded the amended recommendations.

Councillor Goldspink requested a separate vote on Recommendation A.

Councillor E Buckmaster spoke in favour of a modest increase and said he agreed with the amendments from the Leader of the Council. He said the important thing was to ensure the Council was accessible and diverse in line with the Council's objective to be inclusive. He said being a councillor was not just for the wealthy or those with good pensions and being a councillor does have an impact on other duties. He thought this was a move in the right direction to ensure that the Council does not become exclusive.

Councillor Goldspink thanked the Panel for their work in producing the report. She said that it was interesting that the Panel wanted to increase diversity on the Council. She felt that the Basic Allowance was a small sum and was not large enough to help those less well paid to afford to be councillors. She said that now was not the right time to be voting for an increase to Members' allowances and said it would send the wrong message during a huge cost of living crisis. She said that the Council should not accept the increase.

Councillor Curtis referred to the increase in the carer's allowance and he said he felt that an increase in the allowances should be at the Leader's discretion.

Councillor Haysey said she had not been asked in the past to agree to a higher level of allowances but if there were special circumstances, it would be the right thing to do.

Having been proposed and seconded, the amended recommendations were put to the meeting and declared CARRIED. The amended recommendations then became the substantive recommendations.

As requested by Councillor Goldspink, a separate vote was taken on Recommendation A. Having been proposed by Councillor Haysey and seconded by Councillor Ruffles, Recommendation A was put to the meeting and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) an increase of 1% from £5,375.04 to £5,428.79 in the Basic Allowance

Recommendations B-D, having been proposed by Councillor Haysey and seconded by Councillor Ruffles, were put to the meeting and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (B) a Special Responsibility Allowance of £2,421 for the Chairman of the proposed Standards Committee;

(C) an increase from £10.15 per hour to £25.00 per hour in Dependent Carer's Allowance; and

(D) an increase from £9.00 per hour to £12.50 per hour in Childcare Allowance.

The Leader of the Council presented the recommendation in the report and thanked Members who had volunteered to sit on Outside Bodies for their extra work to bring their substantial knowledge and experience to the Council. Councillor Haysey proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported and Councillor Curtis seconded the proposal.

The Chairman highlighted that the authors had spent a lot of time producing their reports and encouraged Members to go through the report and read the work they have done over the last year.

The motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - That the reports of Members appointed to Outside Bodies for the 2021 – 2022 civic year be received and noted.

17 ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2021/22

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2021-22 and proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. Councillor Pope seconded the proposal.

Councillor Goldspink welcomed the Annual Scrutiny Report 2021-22. She hoped that the Committee's suggestions and recommendations in relation to 'Digital by Default' would be taken on board. She also hoped that the cross party working group would be set up as soon as possible to look at the shared waste

service.

Councillor McAndrew assured Councillor Goldspink that the working group would commence the end of June/beginning of July.

The motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - That the reports of Members appointed to Outside Bodies for the 2021 – 2022 civic year be received and noted.

18 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S GRANT PRIORITIES

The Executive Member for Communities presented the recommendation, which was referred to in the report regarding the Review of the Council's Grant Priorities.

Councillor Kaye said the report set out the proposed updated priorities for 2022/23 and one of the new priorities would encourage applicants to think creatively in their neighbourhood. The policy was not changing so the council would continue to make available small grants of £100-£300 for small grounds and applications would need to focus on one or more of the following priorities: COVID recovery, diversity and inclusion, mental and physical wellbeing, environmental sustainability and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Councillor Kaye said that there had been many excellent bids for grants for the Queen's Platinum

Jubilee celebrations and East Herts Council has allocated over £9,000 to 45 charities, voluntary groups, community groups and individuals.

Councillor Kaye proposed, and Councillor Townsend seconded, a motion that the proposal be supported. A motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and a vote taken. The motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – That (A) the updated Community Grants priorities for community grant giving be approved; and

(B) authority be delegated to the Head of Housing and Health, acting in consultation with the Executive Member for Communities, to determine operational matters relating to community grant giving in 2022-23.

19 PLATINUM JUBILEE

Councillor Alder proposed the following motion on notice:

“This Council recognises that this year marks the 70th anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen’s accession to the throne.

This Council notes that Her Majesty the Queen is the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service to the people of the United Kingdom, the Realms and the Commonwealth.

The Council resolves that:

1. The Chairman of the Council will write to Her Majesty the Queen to congratulate her on this significant achievement; and
2. The Council will do what it can to support local community events and activities to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. "

The motion was seconded by Councillor Ruffles.

Councillor Bell was pleased that Councillor Alder had proposed the motion. She noted her pleasure in point 2 and that the Jubilee celebrations would bring communities together again after a difficult two years.

Councillor Goldspink welcomed this motion and supported it.

The motion having been proposed by Councillor Alder and seconded by Councillor Ruffles was put to the meeting and was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – That this Council recognises that this year marks the 70th anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen’s accession to the throne.

This Council notes that Her Majesty the Queen is the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service to the people of the United Kingdom, the Realms and the Commonwealth.

The Council resolves that:

1. The Chairman of the Council will write to Her Majesty the Queen to congratulate her on this significant achievement; and
2. The Council will do what it can to support local community events and activities to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee.

20 NO CONFIDENCE IN THE PRIME MINISTER

Councillor Wilson proposed the following motion on notice:

Council notes its severe disappointment in the Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Council further notes that the Prime Minister acted unlawfully, misled Parliament and lied to the residents of our country.

Council adds that while the Prime Minister attended Downing Street parties, millions of people, including countless East Herts residents, obeyed the lockdown rules, often at huge personal cost. They missed funerals, cancelled weddings and said goodbye to loved ones on video calls – some on the very day that Number Ten illegally hosted a garden party.

Council condemns the Prime Minister whose disregard for his own rules itself represents a threat to the health of our nation, including residents of East Herts as he

failed to set an example for the country to follow. This is also a threat to the rule of law and the standing of democracies at all levels. For these reasons he must resign.

Council calls upon the Leader of the Council to write to Boris Johnson stating that the Council has no confidence in his leadership and calls for him to resign.

Council resolves that we no longer have confidence in the Prime Minister.

Councillor Dumont seconded the motion.

Councillor Wilson spoke to his motion. He said that this motion was about standards in public life and the ideals of democracy. The current Prime Minister had breached these ideals and reports had emerged of him attending parties during lockdown resulting in a fine from the police. Councillor Wilson said that his actions had implications and others might start to think why they should follow the rules if the Prime Minister himself did not. Residents of East Herts will assume that all politicians are the same which he said was not the case and the Councillors at East Herts have done great things, they don't see that Councillor Jones has been to the Ukraine, the role that Councillor Haysey has played in the rebuilding of the District after Covid-19 or the work of Councillor Symonds with the homeless. Councillor Wilson said that Councillors do represent residents in an honourable way and asked the Council to condemn the Prime Minister.

Councillor Curtis said that the Council were being

asked to have no confidence in the Prime Minister but said that to do that, there needed to be confidence in an alternative. He said that this was a point scoring motion and he said he would be voting against it as the government had lots of good policies.

Councillor Redfern said that she fully supported Councillor Wilson's motion. She said it had a bearing on all elected officials when the public believed that all politicians were the same. She said that the Prime Minister had brought the country into disrepute. She believed the Prime Minister should be someone the country could trust, had integrity and was competent.

Councillor Goldspink said she supported the motion. She said that the residents of East Herts deserved to know what standards their Councillors find acceptable and that they should expect elected representatives to be people of honesty, integrity and to keep to the rules. She said that the Prime Minister's behaviour had made her ashamed to be British.

Councillor Bell said the actions of the Prime Minister set a dangerous precedent. She said that if Covid-19 remerged or there was another pandemic, there was a risk that the public would not follow any restrictions. She said that if Councillors do not pay their council tax, they were unable to vote on decisions and the Prime Minister should not be above the law.

Councillor Dumont said when he joined the Council he was pleasantly surprised at how hard working all the Councillors were from all parties. He said he employed carers that delivered services to residents in East Herts

and they put their lives on the line and they did not go for a curry or beer after work. He said his father in law came to visit his house on Christmas Day and wanted to come in to give his children presents but said no as he could not be seen to be breaking the rules. He sadly died a week later.

The Chairman said that every Councillor in the Chamber worked hard and with integrity.

Councillor Wilson said that it was clear that anyone who broke the rules, from any party, should resign. The Office of the Prime Minister was one that should be respected, regardless of party.

The motion having been proposed by Councillor Wilson and seconded by Councillor Dumont was put to the meeting and was declared LOST.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Chairman
Date