

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 3 OCTOBER 2023, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor B Crystall (Chairman/Leader)
Councillors C Brittain, A Daar,
V Glover-Ward, M Goldspink, S Hopewell
and T Hoskin.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors P Boylan, N Clements,
B Deering, C Redfern and T Stowe.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Barfoot	- Healthy Lifestyles Programme Officer
Richard Cassidy	- Chief Executive
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Steven King	- Finance Management Trainee
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
George Pavey	- Principal Planning Officer

Sara Saunders	- Head of Planning and Building Control
Claire Sime	- Service Manager (Planning Policy, Design and Conservation)
Helen Standen	- Deputy Chief Executive

169 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Dumont and Wilson.

170 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader reminded Members that the meeting was being streamed to YouTube and Members should remember to use the microphones.

171 MINUTES - 5 SEPTEMBER 2023

Councillor Goldspink proposed, and Councillor Glover-Ward seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Leader. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

172 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

173 COMMUNITY GRANTS POLICY AND PRIORITIES 2023/24

The Executive Member for Communities submitted a report that set out the updated priorities for 2023/24, with Members having the opportunity to review the community grants policy on an annual basis.

The Executive Member for Communities said that this policy had been to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive were being asked to recommend to Council that the updates be accepted and approved on 18 October 2023. She thanked Officers for their hard work in making sure that the policy aligned with the current priorities and reflected the updating of existing priorities so that the amount for community groups to apply for was maximised.

The Executive Member for Communities drew the Executive's attention to the items that were detailed in the report and what had been changed. She said that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had stated that individuals as well as constituted groups should have the opportunity to apply for funds.

The Executive Member for Communities said that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were also concerned about the amounts that could be applied for. Members felt that it was important that smaller amounts could be applied for by individuals and

smaller groups. She said that the figure had been changed to £300 at the lower end of the scale for grants.

The Executive Member for Communities explained that changes had also been made to the wording to make it clear that there were options for people to apply for funding relating to priorities around physical and mental health.

Councillor Daar proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Hopewell seconded the proposal.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods welcomed the changes and said that she was very pleased that policy had been made clearer and simpler. She welcomed the idea that small community groups would be eligible to apply for grants even if they were not officially charities or statutory bodies. She hoped that the changes would be publicised.

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 revised Community Grants Policy including the priorities for 2023/24, incorporating amendments agreed by the Executive Member for Communities following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be recommended to Council for approval.

174 REVIEW OF THE EAST HERTS DISTRICT PLAN 2018

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth submitted a report that assessed whether the East Herts District Plan 2018 needed updating and where there were any necessary actions arising from that assessment.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the East Herts District Plan was adopted in October 2018. She said that it's a legal requirement for a Local Plan to be reviewed within five years of adoption to consider whether it needed to be updated.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the planning department had undertaken the assessment of the current District Plan and the report had concluded that the District Plan did need updating. She said that Officers had reached this conclusion by assessing the consistency of the District Plan with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the PAS local plan route mapping toolkit and engagement with duty to cooperate bodies.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that there was significant uncertainty around the government's proposed reforms of the planning system. She referred to consultation regarding the NPPF and the government was also consulting on the implementation of a new plan making system due to start in Autumn 2024.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that given this uncertainty, it was being recommended

that a further report on the detailed scope of the update and the timetable be prepared once the implications of the new NPPF are better understood. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill has received royal assent and the statutory framework required to implement the reforms has been approved.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that it was clear that under the new plan making system, a strong evidence based would still be expected. She said that the next 12 months would best be used by updating the council's evidence base and carrying out other preparatory work needed to support an update to the District Plan, and this would include a Call for Sites. She said the report recommended that the District Planning Executive Panel be reconvened and that an engagement strategy was prepared to set out the council's approach to engaging with the community and stakeholders.

Councillor Glover-Ward proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Hopewell seconded the proposal.

Councillor Redfern referred to affordable housing and councils falling short of building enough social housing. She said that she would like this matter is given significant weight and consideration. The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the review was merely to find out if the District Plan needed to be updated. She said that this matter could be taken forward when the updating process commenced if the recommendations were approved.

She stated that the updating process was due to commence in Autumn 2024.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods said that she hoped that further consultation with the Environment Agency would continue in respect of sufficient water supply. The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability asked about the calculations of housing requirements using household projections from 2014 and whether this would be updated anytime in the future.

The Team Leader (Planning Policy) said that the standard method currently uses the 2014 projections. He said that in the near future this would continue to be the case, but there are discussions happening in central government and generally so there is a likelihood that this could change in the future. Members were advised that there was an adjustment for affordability, and this changed year on year.

The Executive Member for Communities asked about opportunities to look at conservation areas as part of the review and opportunities to install solar panels on housing as she had asked about this recently by residents. The Service Manager (Planning Policy, Design and Conservation) said that this could be looked at as part of the scope for the update of the District Plan.

Councillor Boylan said that the review should be broader than conservation areas as there were a huge number of listed buildings in East Herts and they had all been affected by how properties were being made

sustainable and energy efficient. He commented on the rural nature of the district and how different the villages now looked and asked for some focus on the village chapter in the plan.

The Service Manager (Planning Policy, Design and Conservation) said that some initial work had already started in respect of the village hierarchy study and there would be engagement with parish councils as this work progressed.

Councillor Clements asked for and was given some clarity in respect of the make-up of the District Planning Executive Panel.

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 following be recommended to Council for approval:

(A) Having assessed the East Herts District Plan 2018 in accordance with regulation 10A of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017, it is agreed that, in order that the Council can continue to fulfil its statutory duties, the District Plan needs updating;

(B) Work commences during 2023/24 on updating the technical studies needed to provide a robust evidence base to inform an

update of the District Plan;

(C) A 'Call for Sites' is undertaken during 2023/24;

(D) The District Planning Executive Panel is reconvened with membership drawn from the Executive in accordance with paragraph 8.5.2 of the Constitution;

(E) An engagement strategy is prepared which sets out the Council's approach to consulting and engaging the community and stakeholders;

(F) A further report on the detailed scope of the update and the timetable for its preparation is prepared at the earliest opportunity once the implications of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are better understood, the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill has received Royal Assent, and the statutory framework required to implement the reforms has been approved.

175 HERTFORD CASTLE GROUNDS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT - NLHF AWARD

The Executive Member for Wellbeing submitted a report that summarised a project to make improvements to Castle Grounds, Hertford, which had resulted in the successful award of a grant from National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). The report outlined the work that had already been carried and

how the project would now progress in partnership with the Town Council.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing said that the report explained the necessary commitment of resources and funds by the Council, which were implied by acceptance of the grant. She said that the report related to a successful joint bid following a period of consultation. She referred to the exciting opportunity to improve accessibility to the castle grounds and increase the habitat aspect.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing said that the bid was two stages, and the initial stage included the scoping aspect of the work. She said that the second application stage could potentially mean being successfully awarded around £2.5m to carry out the work.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing said that the council's contribution would be £20,517 in addition to the funding from Hertford Town Council. She said that this money, along with the grant of around £342,000, would be used to carry out extensive surveys, reviews and community engagement.

Members were advised that the approval of this report did not commit the Council to stage two of what would be a competitive process. The Executive Member for Wellbeing said that the approval from the Executive of this report would enable the opportunity to continue to stage two. She referred to the covering of costs being incurred in respect of improving accessibility to the site and moving the playground way from the

A414, in terms of concerns that had been raised in respect of air quality.

Councillor Hopewell proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported.
Councillor Hoskin seconded the proposal.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods welcomed the proposals as an excellent opportunity which could secure access to funds that the councils would not be able to raise by themselves.

Councillor Deering said that the Hertford Castle Grounds Improvement Project had been approved under the previous Conservative administrations of both Hertford Town Council and East Herts Council. The Leader thanked Councillor Deering for this reminder for Members.

Councillor Clements asked a question in respect of risk mitigation in terms of the financial risks. The Executive Member for Wellbeing commented on discussions that might need to take place in respect of which areas of the project that would need to be prioritised were costs to continue to rise. She referred to the cost of building materials.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth commented on potential sources of funding including Section 106 funding. 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.

RESOVLED - that (A) the terms and conditions of the grant be accepted; and

(B) the proposals to fund the initial development phase of the project with a £20,517 contribution submitted in the Council's Capital Programme for 2023/24, be approved.

176 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.34 pm

Chairman

Date