

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2025, AT 7.00 PM

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Andrews, B Deering, Y Estop,
D Jacobs, G McAndrew, C Redfern and
J Wyllie.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mathew Crosby	- Interim Head of Strategic Finance
James Ellis	- Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Jess Khanom-Metaman	- Head of Operations
Dominique Kingsbury	- Parking Services Manager
Kay Mead	- Principal Planning Officer
Katie Mogan	- Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Claire Sime	- Service Manager (Planning Policy, Design and Conservation)

Helen Standen

- Interim Chief
Executive

323 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

324 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader reminded Members and Officers that the meeting was being webcast.

The Leader said he would be taking Item 9 first on the agenda. The items have been minuted in the order they were heard.

325 MINUTES - 7 JANUARY 2025

Councillor Goldspink proposed, and Councillor Wilson seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2025 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 7 January 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

326 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

327 CALL FOR SITES - UPDATE

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the Call for Sites report. She said that the Council agreed to a review of the District Plan in late 2023 and a revised timetable

was agreed in October 2024. In order to update the District Plan, the planning department needed to assemble a huge amount of evidence and paragraph 3.5 – 3.6 of the report detailed the Call for Sites exercise.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said the Call for Sites took place between July and September 2024 and landowners, developers, agents and site promoters were invited to submit areas of land for the council to determine if they would be suitable for development. She said that submitting a site did not confirm that it would be selected for allocation in the District Plan and the report only detailed the outcome of the call for sites and presented the sites submitted.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that 282 sites had been submitted and two further sites had been submitted since the report had been published which were included in the addendum. One site had been withdrawn which left 283 sites for submission.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the planning team will use the information submitted to move onto the next stage in the plan processes which was to form a Strategic Land Availability Assessment which would be reported back to Members.

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

Councillor Hopewell asked the Executive Member if she could expand on the consultation plans.

Councillor Glover-Ward referred to the visioning process that took place last year and said there would be engagement starting in the Spring. She said that there would be two consultations on the District Plan; one in Autumn 2025 and one in summer 2026. A consultation in summer 2027 would look at the proposed sites.

Councillor McAndrew asked what the difference was between a gross site and a net site.

The Planning Policy, Design and Conservation Manager explained that gross referred to the total area of the site and net was the area that was capable of being developed.

Councillor McAndrew said that some of the gross and net figures were the same in the report.

The Planning Policy, Design and Conservation Manager said that the information in the report had come directly from site promoters and the team had not had the chance to verify the information.

Councillor McAndrew asked how many houses could be built on an acre of land.

The Planning Policy, Design and Conservation Manager said it would depend on density but the planning team worked with 30 per hectare.

Councillor McAndrew asked the Executive how they would reduce congestion and air pollution in Bishop's Stortford in relation to these identified sites as development would compound the current problems.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the previous District Plan had 18 strategic sites from 288 that were submitted. She said that none of the sites in Bishop's Stortford may be suitable as the assessment had not been carried out yet.

Councillor McAndrew said that congestion in Bishop's Stortford needed to be alleviated and said that sites outside of Bishop's Stortford should be looked at.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the

council would not solely build in Bishop's Stortford and she could not specify at the moment where the development might take place. She said that site assessments needed to be completed and discussions needed to take place with other authorities.

The Leader of the Council said that joint strategic planning was going on within North East Herts to look at wider infrastructure which was separate from the District Plan.

Councillor Hopewell asked if this was the only opportunity for sites to be submitted.

Councillor Glover-Ward said there would be a further opportunity to submit sites next year for the planning team to check they had received all options.

Councillor Daar asked how many sites were rejected last time.

The Planning Policy, Design and Conservation Manager said that 288 sites were submitted, and 18 sites were allocated in the District Plan. She said it came down to site suitability and strategy decisions.

Councillor Estop asked about the forms that were used for the responses. She said renewable energy was listed but asked what that included. She also asked if the planning team would continue to identify land itself.

The Planning Policy, Design and Conservation Manager said that site promoters were asked to tick a series of boxes and there was an opportunity to provide some free text if they wished and said the team had the raw data behind the forms to use. She confirmed that the planning team would continue to look at other opportunities across the district.

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

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that (A) the Call for Sites submissions be noted and agreed for evaluation through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment; and

(B) the results of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment be reported in due course.

328 BUDGET 2025/26 & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025-2035

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Budget 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2025-2035 and said that despite the uncertainty of the future of the district council following the government's Devolution White Paper, the council were still required to set a balanced budget.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that the report presented a balanced budget with a small surplus of £6k. He said the savings proposals had been presented to the Joint Meeting of Scrutiny Committees on 29 January 2025 and their comments were listed at Appendix F. Savings proposals to be taken forward and those that were rejected by the Executive were also included in the appendices.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that Council Tax would be increased by 2.98%, the maximum allowed without a referendum, as the Council had been left with little choice. He said that all planned savings needed to be realised in 2025/26 and £164k had been drawn down from reserves with no plan to add the money back. He said that Leadership Team would meet on a regular basis to review the savings plan and deal with any issues as soon as they arose.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that there was a £1.7million shortfall in the budget for 2026/27 and work would be undertaken to review this and consider new transformation options to drive efficiencies.

Councillor Brittain proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Hoskin seconded the proposal.

Councillor McAndrew referred to Appendix F that contained comments from the Joint Scrutiny meeting. He felt that it was lacking a lot of detail and some topics had not been recorded at all. He then referred to the annual waste contract and its year on year increase. He asked what the percentage increase was.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that it was an estimate based on contract inflation. The Head of Strategic Finance said it was a variable rate.

Councillor McAndrew referred again to the contract inflation figures.

The Head of Operations said that contract inflation was based on the CPI index, fuel index and labour costs. She said the council would not know what that figure was until May and so a £1 increase on the garden waste charge had been built into the MTFP and inflation was likely to be more.

Councillor McAndrew said that the contract increase was far below the current rate.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that there had been a large amount on inflation over 2020-21 reaching 10%. He said he would expect figures to be lower now and therefore the forecast is lower.

Councillor McAndrew wanted to know the breakdown of the figures and be given a rationale behind the increase.

The Head of Operations said that as an estimate, a £1 increase had been built into the MTFP and contract inflation figures would not be known until May.

Councillor Hoskin, the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability, presented a breakdown of figures and said the increase in the garden waste charge had been a catch up exercise as inflation and rising costs had not been applied by the previous administration.

Councillor McAndrew said that the Joint Scrutiny Committee was told that the increase was to cover the cost of the service. In 2021, the cost of the service was £821k and this paper was saying £1.7million.

Councillor Hoskin said the catch up on cost now meant the service cost £59.81 to residents but they had capped it at £59. He said this charge would recover the cost of the service for those who opt in.

Councillor Jacobs referred to the summary from the Joint Scrutiny Committee and felt it did not provide a comprehensive view of what was discussed at the meeting. He requested that this was amended before being presented to Full Council.

Councillor McAndrew again referred to the garden waste charge. He said that the additional planned 3,328 houses all paying £59 a year would equate to a £201,392 income that he did not believe had been accounted for.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that the extra houses would cause extra costs.

Councillor Hopewell said that just because houses were being built did not mean that they would all opt in to the garden waste charge.

Councillor Hoskin said that the challenge was to recover costs and any extra volume in customers would still recover its costs and would not make additional money.

Councillor Jacobs referred to page 31 and the proposed changes to charges. He asked if the pre application advice fee was a typo as it had decreased from £350 to £218.

Councillor Deering said he agreed with the comments from Councillor Jacobs about the comments from the Joint Scrutiny Committee. He said he had a number of questions about the garden waste charge and would raise it at Full Council.

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

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council to approve the Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 including the Prudential Indicators contained within the reports.

329 CAPITAL STRATEGY, MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY & TREASURY STRATEGY 2025/26

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Treasury Strategy 2025/26. He said that 2025/26 was the peak of council borrowing and should reduce as a result of receipts and limited capital expenditure. He referred to the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement at Appendix B and said there were new regulations being implemented from 1 April 2025 but council advisors had said they did not expect changes to have a significant effect on the council.

Councillor Brittain proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Wilson seconded the proposal.

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

RESOLVED - To recommend to Council to approve the Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 including the Prudential Indicators contained within the reports.

330 AUTHORITY TO DISPOSE OF ASSETS BY SALE

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Authority to Dispose of Assets by sale report which included three assets. He referred to the sale of Northgate End which had already been approved for sale but the recommendation was now requesting it to be sold as a whole block to a single buyer. He said this had many advantages including simplifying the sale process and brought forward the date of the capital receipts which would avoid further borrowing costs. Three options had been modelled and the financial details of these were included in the exempt appendix.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said recommendation B related to the proposed freehold of Layston Gardens to Buntingford Town Council and this would reduce the level of council's debt. Recommendation C was the land at West Street where the football club had asked to purchase the freehold. He said that the site brought in a small income but there were also a number of associated costs that were detailed in the report.

Councillor Brittain proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Goldspink seconded the proposal.

Councillor Dumont said that the football club in Hertford had social value and was a community asset. He sought to clarify

that there would be only one potential purchaser and there would be a covenant that they could not demolish and build houses on the land.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said there was only one potential buyer and it would be protected as a sports facility.

Councillor Wilson said that he welcomed the proposal for Northgate End and felt it was important to have the commuted sums for more affordable housing. He asked what the economic benefits were of selling the lot in one go and what costs did the council incur at the moment.

The Head of Housing and Health said the detail was provided in the exempt appendix.

Councillor Goldspink said that she welcomed the report and said it was essential to ensure the commuted sums for affordable housing were provided as part of the sale of Northgate End.

Councillor Deering referred to the football ground in West Street and he said that the traffic on West Street was already a problem. He felt that sport was important but traffic had increased after the football club had installed an artificial pitch. He said on behalf of residents of West Street, he raised their concerns about increasing traffic and it was imperative that the council did their best for the residents. He asked if there would be the possibility of a different entity emerging as buyer of the ground.

The Head of Housing and Health said that the buyer would be the existing leaseholder. He confirmed that the recommendation was for the Executive to agree to the principle of selling the freehold subject to negotiations and price.

Councillor Deering said he was not casting aspersions on the

football club but said the identity of the purchaser was important in case of any future enforcement issues.

Councillor Crystall said the issues faced by residents in West Street was a multi council challenge and required a joined up approach to solve.

The Head of Housing and Health said that the administration were keen to expedite disposals and there would be an independent valuation and a discussion about terms and prices and the decision to complete the sale would be delegated to the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability.

Councillor Hoskin said that the football club could be encouraged to have a sustainable travel plan to potentially reduce issues faced by residents.

Councillor Crystall proposed and Councillor Glover-Ward seconded, a motion that pursuant to Section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended, the press and public be excluded during consideration of the business referred to in Minute 330, on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

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

RESOLVED – that the press and public be excluded during consideration of the business referred to in Minute 330, on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

The details of the discussion can be found in the part 2 minutes.

Councillor Estop said she wished the Executive well in achieving the sale at Northgate End and resolving the situation. She queried whether possible lessons had been learnt from this.

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

RESOLVED – That (A) in order to expedite the disposal of the Northgate End residential and commercial block, the entire freehold be sold to a sole purchaser with authority to complete the disposal for best consideration delegated to the Head of Housing, Health and Property;

(B) the freehold of Layston Court Gardens, Buntingford be disposed of for best consideration, having regard to the council's chartered surveyor's valuation, removal of revenue liabilities the safeguarding the council's interests in decisions over future use, to Buntingford Town Council with authority to complete the disposal delegated to the Head of Housing, Health and Property;

(C) the freehold of land at West Street (known as Hertford Football Club) be disposed of to the existing long leaseholder, subject to an acceptable disposal price and terms being negotiated, having regard to an independent valuation to which both parties would consent, the removal of revenue liabilities for the council and the safeguarding the council's interests in decisions over future use, with authority to proceed to disposal with the negotiated price and terms delegated to the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, acting in consultation with to the Head of Housing, Health and Property.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability presented the draft Parking Strategy following a public consultation held in autumn 2024. He said that Council had agreed a £1.75million income target for parking in February 2024 and the strategy set out the strategic context and principles to meet the approved income target and the wider ambitions of the Council.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that as a listening council, the resident and business engagement had been extensive and 1700 responses had been submitted online and at the in person sessions. He said the strategy aimed to support alternative methods of transport, be balanced and make fairer changes and be environmentally considerate.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that 22 actions had been set in place for the short medium and long term with an altering price structure and abolish paper permits. He hoped the strategy would have an enduring legacy and be a direct deliverer of change. The strategy had been presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2025 and their comments were attached at Appendix F.

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

Councillor Crystall said that this was a great document and thanked the parking team and the Head of Operations for their hard work in producing it.

Councillor Dumont said that he could not support the recommendations in the report. He said that as a Liberal Democrat, he had a strong commitment to fairness and the car park in Stanstead Abbots had been previously subsidised by a private donation and as this had now ended, people of the village were now being asked to pay for parking. He felt

that this was unfair when similar car parks in Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford did not have to pay for weekend parking. He said that when he voted previously on this, he was told that car parks operating under different rules would be temporary, but the report showed that parking charges were not aligned.

Councillor Goldspink said she agreed with Councillor Dumont and also would not be voting for the recommendations. She said she was in support of the parking strategy overall but could not support once of the charges proposed for Sunday parking in Stanstead Abbotts. She said fairness had not been achieved across all car parks and felt it was within the power of the Executive Member to make this charge nil.

Councillor Wilson said that he had enjoyed talking to residents regarding the parking strategy and had heard a lot of views. He said he would be voting alongside the Liberal Democrats and that there was an unfairness in the mismatch of charges on a Sunday.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability thanked the councillors for their comments. He said that this was a staged process with short, medium and long term time frames to structural changes subject to Traffic Regulation Orders. He said he had tried to address fairness throughout the process and the other parking charges in Stanstead Abbotts had been reduced following consultation. He said there was limited scope within the pricing as they needed to recover a considerable amount of money.

Councillor Crystall said that he recognised that there was a disparity, and it was frustrating that Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) could take 18 months to complete but clear reductions had been undertaken across the week and the Sunday charge had remained the same. He said every time the cost was reduced, someone else had to pick it up.

Councillor Dumont asked if a TRO was required to reduce it to nil on a Sunday.

The Head of Operations confirmed it would have to be sent out for consultation.

Councillor Dumont said that Stanstead Abbots brought in £7k a year more than as projected. He did not believe that reducing Sunday charges would have a negative effect on achieving the income target.

The Head of Operations said that any surplus would be carried across to help meet the income target,

Councillor Estop referred to the Crown Terrace and Jackson Square car parks and the proposed hotel near the station. She said she believed arrangements were in place whereby the hotel has use of some spaces in different car parks and wondered if it was a good use of space to ask people to make awkward journeys coming from a place of limited parking to one with lots.

Councillor Hoskin said it was a fair challenge and any activity around Hockerill junction was not good news. He said the Jackson Square car park fulfilled local needs and there was a demand on spaces there. He said there was work ongoing offline to see how Hockerill Junction could be improved.

Councillor Glover-Ward asked about resident permit zones and said the current criteria made it difficult for residents' requests to be accepted.

Councillor Hoskin said the criteria had been set in 2022 and there had not been a successful application since.

The Parking Manager said that the threshold for the parking zones had been recommended to be removed which would hopefully simplify the process.

The motion to support recommendation A having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a

vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED - That the comments put forward by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were considered, listed in Appendix F, and the resulting actions proposed by the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability as also detailed in Appendix F be endorsed.

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

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council the approval of the draft Parking Strategy 2025.

The motion to support recommendation C having been proposed and seconded was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED. It was noted that Councillors Dumont, Goldspink and Wilson voted against the recommendation.

RESOLVED – That the proposed changes to car parking tariffs as described in Appendix D from April 2025 be supported and recommend them to the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability for approval and implementation

332 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm

Chairman

Date
