

East Herts Council Report

Council

Date of meeting: Wednesday 14 May 2025

Report by: Councillor Ben Crystall – Leader of the Council

Report title: Outside Bodies' Review 2024/25

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary

- To consider the findings and recommendations of the Outside Bodies Review 2024/25.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL:

- A. That the Outside Bodies' Review 2024/25 report be received.**
- B. That with effect from the commencement of the municipal year 2025/26 East Herts Council no longer appoint representatives to the Outside Bodies tabled in Appendix A.**
- C. That with effect from the commencement of the municipal year 2025/26 East Herts Council appoint representatives to the Outside Bodies tabled in Appendix B.**
- D. That Members appointed to Outside Bodies continue to give an annual update report to Council on the key points from their attendance as per paragraph 3.9.2 (j) of the Council Constitution.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 That the Outside Bodies Review 2024/25 be received.

- 1.2 That Council agree the actions recommended as detailed in Appendices A and B.
- 1.3 That Council agree the recommendation for Members appointed to Outside Bodies to continue to give an annual update report to Council as per paragraph 3.9.2 (j) of the Council Constitution.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 At the Annual Council meeting each year, Council determines the arrangements for Outside Bodies. At the Council meeting held on 15 May 2024 Council also approved that a review of Outside Bodies for 2024/25 be undertaken and reported back at a future Council meeting.
- 2.2 This report details the findings of the Outside Bodies Review 2024/25, as undertaken by Democratic Services.
- 2.3 The methodology used in reach these conclusions was as follows

Desktop Research

- 2.4 Research was undertaken to look at other Councils and how they reviewed their Outside Bodies. It was found that other authorities had completed similar reviews and adopted comparable approaches in engaging with and attendance at Outside Bodies. The use of survey forms, sent to both Outside Bodies and the authorities appointed Members, was widely used to gather information.
- 2.5 It was also found that following a review many authorities had implemented a feedback cycle to enable appointed Members to give a regular update on the Outside Body which they represented. Many had opted to design and use a standardised Members' reporting form for this purpose, to enable comments to be captured and to aid consistency and transparency. It should be noted that East Herts already uses such a form for Members to submit their annual Outside Bodies reports to Council. For reference, this form, the 'Outside Body – Annual Update' can be seen at **Appendix D**.

Survey to Outside Bodies

2.6 A questionnaire was produced and sent to all of the currently listed Outside Bodies with the aims of;

- Updating contact details held on file.
- Confirming if the Outside Body was still in existence.
- Confirming the bodies' purpose.
- Confirming the bodies' meeting patterns.
- Confirming the capacity of the representative's role.
- Confirming the time commitment of the representative.

Survey to Appointed Members

2.7 A questionnaire was also produced and sent to all appointed Members with the aims of:

- Confirming the bodies' contact details as held by the representative.
- Confirming the representative's sitting capacity.
- Obtaining an outline of the key subjects covered during the year.
- Confirming how the bodies' activities linked with East Herts Council's corporate priorities.
- Identifying any bodies which currently do not have East Herts Councillor oversight, and which may benefit from this.

2.8 Both the Outside Bodies and the appointed Members were also given an opportunity to add any other comments which they felt may be relevant on their survey forms.

2.9 Responses

Responses from Outside Bodies

2.10 A good level of response was received, however there were some organisations for which little or no information could be obtained. In these circumstances Democratic Services used a combination of emails, telephone calls, web research, officer knowledge and Member feedback to enable a judgement to be made based on

what was found.

Responses from Appointed Members

- 2.11 A good level of response was received. However, despite Democratic Services sending reminder emails and making follow up telephone calls there was no engagement from some appointed Members.
- 2.12 **Actions**
- 2.13 The survey responses from the Outside Bodies and appointed Members were collated, and where possible information was cross checked.
- 2.14 Details held on file were updated, and a red, amber and green status applied with those highlighted as:
- Red: Bodies being non-operational and/or an East Herts appointment no longer required.
 - Amber: Work required to ascertain as to whether the appointment should continue based on the response received, or in some cases that no response could be obtained.
 - Green: The Body was active, and feedback received from the Body and/or appointed Member was positive.
- 2.15 A list of those Bodies with red status and which the Council should no longer appoint to is set out in **Appendix A**.
- 2.16 With bodies awarded amber status, Democratic Services used a combination of research methods to enable a judgement to be made regarding organisations identified as potential appointments. A list of Bodies which the Council should consider appointing to is set out in **Appendix B**.
- 2.17 The Hertfordshire Sports and Activity Partnership (HSP) was identified as a potential appointment. However, research and subsequent contact with the organisation has established that they do not have designated Councillor representatives, instead inviting Councillors their events which are held during the year. It

was substantiated that HSP also hold regular meetings at officer level, which the East Herts Council Healthy Lifestyles Programme Officer attends.

- 2.18 A list of those Bodies with green status and which therefore the Council should continue to appoint can be seen in the table below:

Outside Bodies – Appointments to continue.
Ancient Charities of Hertford
Bishops Stortford Chamber of Commerce Committee
Business Improvement District
CCTV Partnership
Co-operation for Sustainable Development Board
East of England Local Government Association
Health Scrutiny – Hertford County Council
Hertford Museum Trust
Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust Ltd
Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership
Hertfordshire H.M Armed Forces Covenant Board
Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership
Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel
Hertfordshire Waste Partnership
Historic England – Heritage Champion
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
Local Government Association General Assembly
PATROL
Scotts Grotto
* Stansted Airport Community Fund
Stansted Airport Advisory Committee
Ware Charities
Wodson Park Sport and Recreational Association Executive

* Stansted Airport Community Fund was suggested as a potential Member appointment. The fund is currently attended by an East Herts officer, as per the decision of the previous administration. This decision was made on the basis that both the fund and the council

would benefit from the participation of an officer, who would have a more detailed operational understanding of the grant giving processes. It is understood from feedback with the fund that this officer input has been very helpful over recent years.

- 2.19 It was regularly reported by Members that no contact had been received from the Outside Body which they had been appointed to, and it became evident that there was a mixed approach when appointments were made.
- 2.20 As a result, it was concluded that the appointment process needed to be standardised and managed by Democratic Services. A process has therefore been agreed with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, and the 'Appointment to an Outside Body Information Sheet' which sets out this process, and will be which be sent to appointed Members going forward can be seen at **Appendix C**.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 The review of Outside Bodies was undertaken to give assurance that the current list of Outside Bodies on which East Herts Council Members sit remains up to date and appropriate.
- 3.2 The review also sought to identify which appointments continue to be beneficial, which appointments may no longer be required, and to identify any Outside Bodies which may benefit from East Herts Council representation.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 No other options are considered for recommendation a).
- 4.2 Should recommendations b) and c) not be approved there would be no assurance that the current list of Outside Bodies on which East Herts Councillors sit remains updated and appropriate.
- 4.3 No other options are considered for recommendation d) as this is a requirement in accordance with the Council Constitution.

5.0 Risks

5.1 Reputational. Members appointed to an Outside Body could act contrary to East Herts policies/guidelines. As this is unlikely, the risk is classified as minor.

5.2 Financial. Members could claim substantial expenses if an Outside Body had a large number of meetings. As most Outside Bodies have a set number of meetings, this is unlikely, and the risk is therefore classified as minor.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

None

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 **Appendix A** – Table of Outside Body appointments to cease.

7.2 **Appendix B** – Table of Bodies to appoint.

7.3 **Appendix C** – Appointment to Outside Body Information Sheet.

7.4 **Appendix D** – Outside Body – Annual Update form

Contact Member

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