

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: 3 June 2025

Report by: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward – Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Report title: District Plan Executive Panel (DPEP) Membership

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – To assist with the progression of the new District Plan, the District Plan Executive Panel (DPEP) is proposed to be reconvened. This paper discusses the purpose of the Panel and proposes the format and membership arrangements.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE to recommend to Council that:

- a) **The District Plan Executive Panel is reconvened as a sub-group of Executive for the specific purposes of advancing the new District Plan;**
- b) **Three Members are drawn from the Executive to sit on the DPEP, namely Cllrs Vicky Glover-Ward (Chair), Ben Crystall and Joseph Dumont, with Cllr Tim Hoskin nominated as a substitute for Green Party members and Cllr Chris Wilson for Cllr Joseph Dumont, and**
- c) **The Council's website is updated to reflect the formation and purpose of the Panel and forms the primary source of information pertaining to the Panel.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the arrangements and membership for the reconvened DPEP.

2.0 Background

2.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to complete a review of their local plans at least once every 5-years from the adoption date of a plan to ensure that plans remain relevant and take account of changing circumstances. Members resolved to undertake an update of the East Herts District Plan at its Executive meeting on 3 October 2023, with a view to formal work commencing in January 2026 (subject to secondary legislation).

2.2 Since that time, officers have been taking preparatory steps to facilitate progress on the new District Plan, including:

- Agreeing a revised timetable for the preparation of the District Plan in the form of a Local Development Scheme (LDS).
- Undertaking a 'Call for Sites', the initial outcome of which was discussed at the Executive meeting on 11 February 2025.
- Agreeing a 'Strategic Vision' to chart a clear and ambitious course for the district's future, informing policies and decision-making that will shape East Herts in the years to come.

2.3 Planning Policy officers presented an indicative programme of work for the new District Plan to the Council's Leadership Team on April 8, 2025. This was informed by an initial discussion with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth. **Appendix A** sets out the anticipated programme of work expected to be considered by the Executive over the course of the coming 12 months, and also the extent of evidence that is likely to be required to inform the policies of the new District Plan, much of which will need to be considered by Members.

2.4 The current adopted District Plan was enabled by a District Plan Executive Panel (DPEP) consisting of a sub-group of Executive Members whose remit was to make recommendations to Council, via the Executive, on matters associated with the District Plan. For details on how DPEP will operate, see paragraph 3.4 below. For the reasons set out below, the intention is to reconvene the DPEP in advance of formal work on the new District Plan starting in early 2026.

2.5 The Constitution (paragraph 8.5.2) sets out that the DPEP will be appointed annually by the Executive and formal membership will be drawn from the Executive only, but that all members will be invited to the meetings and may speak at the DPEP.

3.0 Reasons

3.1 The process of preparing a statutory District-wide plan is a lengthy and complex exercise for a Council, but essential in planning for the future needs of a place. The process, which can take several years from start to finish, requires a wide range of evidence to support it and is subject to public engagement and independent examination through various stages and procedures that are set out in law. Some of these stages are yet to be fully established because they are to be rolled out later this year through new procedures introduced in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA), which proposed a new approach to plan-making.

3.2 These factors mean that it is highly likely there will be an ongoing, continuous need to inform members of progress, both on the plan's preparation and on feedback from the community. From previous experience, this would become time consuming for the Executive meeting, which clearly needs to consider other Council business as well.

3.3 As a sub-group of the Executive, the DPEP provides a means of ensuring there is a forum for considering the District Plan in a comprehensive and consistent way. The current adopted District Plan used DPEP as a means of focusing discussion on progression between 2007 and 2017, with the Panel being employed eleven times in 2015 and 2016 as the Plan approached its critical stages. During this time, DPEP considered reports on many aspects of plan-making, including evidence, duty to co-operate, delivery and compliance with various stages of the process. A similar agenda for DPEP is envisaged this time.

3.4 The Executive has previously nominated three Executive Members to sit on the DPEP, with all other Members able to attend sessions to allow a discussion of the matters on the agenda and questions to be raised with Planning Policy officers who will be present to address these. There is flexibility to convene meetings as and when they are required. Meetings are open to the public, and agendas and minutes will be made available on the Council's website. Items considered by the DPEP are then discussed at Executive and full Council.

3.5 Planning policy officers have discussed potential membership with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, which has resulted in nominations for:

- Cllr Vicky Glover Ward (Chair)
- Cllr Ben Crystall
- Cllr Joseph Dumont

Substitutes

- Cllr Tim Hoskin
- Cllr Chris Wilson

The nominations and substitutes ensure Panel involvement from both parties that form the administration.

3.6 As mentioned in para 2.4, it is anticipated that DPEP would establish itself with the commencement of formal plan-making in early 2026 and be convened on a regular basis through the 30-month period anticipated timeline for producing the District Plan. However, as the programme of work is already gathering momentum and becoming of interest to our communities, there may be scope for DPEP to be used later in 2025, and it is prudent to consider the format of DPEP now to allow for earlier meetings, should they be required.

3.7 As with other formal committees, DPEP would be managed through the Democratic Services team, and meetings and agendas would be available on the Council's website.

4.0 Options

4.1 The Council could choose not to establish a separate committee forum for the District Plan.

5.0 Risks

5.1 If DPEP was not to be reconvened, the progression of the new District Plan would be primarily delivered through the Executive, which may limit the amount of debate and discussion on the issues the Plan raises across the District for all Members.

5.2 DPEP adds a further layer of meetings into the committee hierarchy, but the separate discussion of matters relating to the new District Plan in a dedicated forum is intended to reduce the time that these items would take at Executive, thereby giving more time to other Council matters at the Executive meetings.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 The DPEP page will be updated on the Council's website, and terms of reference established for the meetings. The Planning Policy team will maintain close communication with the Portfolio Holder to establish a programme for DPEP as meetings become required.

Community Safety

There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

Equalities

There are no direct equality, diversity, or inclusion implications in this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be carried out of the updated District Plan in accordance with The Equality Act 2010.

Environmental Sustainability

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development and infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

Financial

The District Plan is being updated from existing budgets, including reserves that have been safeguarded for this purpose.

Health and Safety

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

Human Resources

There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

Human Rights

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Specific Wards

All

7.0 Background papers, appendices, and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A – Anticipated Programme of Future Executive Reports and Evidence Requirements for the new District Plan

Contact Member

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Appendix A: Anticipated Programme of Future Executive Reports and Evidence Requirements for the new District Plan

Executive
June 3

- Statement of Community Involvement
- Endorsement of Green Infrastructure Study (Herts County Council)
- DPEP membership

Council
23 July

Executive
July 8

- Bishop's Stortford Employment Study
- Hatfield Forest Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) Governance
- Gilston Monitoring Framework
- Stocking Pelham Neighbourhood Area designation

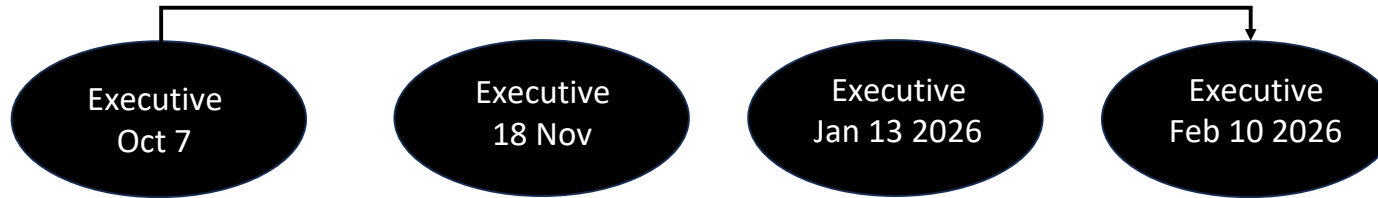
Council
23 July

Executive
Sept 9

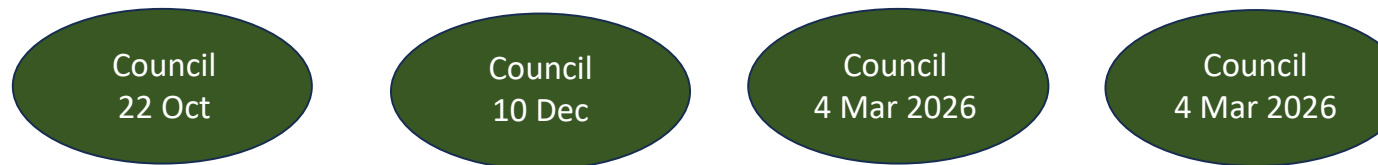
- Sport and Open Space Strategy
- District Design Code
- District-wide Employment Land Review

Council
22 Oct

Four months



- Give notice of intent to start formal plan-making, including:
 - Local Plan timetable
 - Local Plan Project Initiation Document (PID)
- Report back on Strategic Vision engagement
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
- Stanstead Abbots & St. Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan
- Gateway 1 report (formal commencement of plan-making)



New District Plan - Evidence Documents

District Plan Documents

Local Development Scheme
Strategic Visioning Document
Statement of Community Involvement
Sustainability Appraisal
Habitat Regulation Assessment
Plan Viability

Housing and Population

Strategic Housing Market Assessment
Affordable Housing Needs Assessment
Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment
Call for Sites/ Strategic Land Availability Assessment

Community and Leisure

Open Space and Sport Facilities Assessment
Village Hierarchy Study

Employment and Retail

Employment Studies:
Buntingford
Bishop's Stortford
Hertford & Ware
Sawbridgeworth
Employment Land Review
Economic Needs Assessment
Retail and Town Centres Study

Environment and Landscape

Green Belt Review
Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Level 1 & 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
Climate Change Study
Water Cycle Study
Local Areas of Special Landscape Value Study
Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

Transport and Infrastructure

Infrastructure Delivery Plan
Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan
Transport Modelling

Design and Heritage

District Design Code
Local List of Historic Buildings
Local List of Historic Parks and Gardens