

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL  
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON  
TUESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2025, AT 7.00  
PM

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PRESENT: Councillor B Crystall (Chairman/Leader)  
Councillors 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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

James Ellis	- Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Director for Communities
Laura Guy	- Principal Planning Policy Officer
Brian Moldon	- Director for Finance, Risk and Performance
Sara Saunders	- Director for Place
Helen Standen	- Chief Executive
Stephanie Tarrant	- Assistant Director for Democracy, Elections and Information Governance

236 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

237 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded attendees that the meeting was being webcast. The full webcast of the meeting can be viewed here: [Executive - 18 November 2025](#)

238 MINUTES - 7 OCTOBER 2025

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods proposed, and the Executive Member for Resident Engagement seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 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 October 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

239 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

240 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE – SUBMISSION OF FINAL PROPOSALS

The Leader of the Council presented the report on Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire – Submission of final proposals. He acknowledged the outcome of the indicative vote from Council on [13 November 2025](#) and highlighted that the Executive was to express the preference to be included in the submission to Government. It was noted that the submission was required to be made by 28 November 2025 and that it would be Government that made the final decision.

The Leader of the Council proposed the recommendation as set out in the report. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods seconded the proposal.

The Executive Member for Communities highlighted that the last reorganisation of local government had taken seven years, whereas the current move to unitary authorities was due to take place over two years. She acknowledged that residents would find the principle of fewer layers to government less confusing, however expressed concern that the proposal stemmed from austerity cuts and lacked funding for key issues such as social care for the ageing population. Having reviewed the evidence, they believed the three-unitary model to be the least damaging option, highlighting that East Herts could suffer financially under the four-unitary model and that the two-unitary model would be too large democratically.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth reiterated their views on the consultation process for local government reorganisation, explaining that whilst they would have supported a genuine bottom-up review to improve operational models, the current process had been flawed and constrained. They acknowledged the government's claim that councils required populations of 500,000, however noted research from the District Council Network which found that smaller councils performed better and were more cost-effective. Despite financial projections, they supported the four-unitary model, noting that evidence and personal experience demonstrated smaller councils could succeed and acknowledged that four councils would be the best option for a large rural area like East Herts and respected the majority view.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing considered the uncertainty of long-term financial projections. They reflected on the burden of wanting to achieve projects, such as swimming pools, but being constrained by limited finances. Whilst recognising strong arguments for local democracy, they emphasised that democracy was only meaningful if it was supported by adequate financial resources.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

highlighted that the choice was between protecting local democracy and ensuring fiscal prudence for residents. They noted that each model included a community engagement structure, although none had a monopoly on protecting locality. Drawing on experience, they emphasised the need for financial sustainability to support services and summarised their view on each option.

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods advised that they were not in favour of the reorganisation of local government, believing it would not improve service delivery and would instead create fragmentation. They expressed concerns that fewer councillors would face heavier workloads becoming like full-time professionals, which would reduce the diversity of future councillors and harm representation. They concluded that the three-unitary model represented the least bad option, since two would be too remote and four would be fragmented and difficult to manage.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability noted that the two-unitary option had been unpopular, with size seen as its only advantage. He cited Cumbria's recent experience, where the larger council had struggled financially whilst the smaller had succeeded, concluding that size was not the key issue. He expressed concerns about the four-unitary model being proposed, particularly in relation to boundary changes, the complexity of aggregating services and the loss of corporate knowledge. He noted that given limited resources and the wider financial difficulties, the three-unitary model would be the safest and least complex option.

The Executive Member for Resident Engagement reflected on the many views expressed throughout recent debates and conversations with residents, acknowledging that the reorganisation was not seen as the best outcome. He acknowledged that how services were delivered was more important than boundary lines, noting that district-level services could still be managed locally within larger unitary authorities. He recognised that three-unitary

model looked financially strongest, however expressed reservations. He noted that the four-unitary model was too uncertain with unresolved boundary changes. He emphasised that the decision should not be based on party politics, noting residents would live with the outcome for decades.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services advised that it had been difficult to determine the best option when the information available had been insufficient. He acknowledged alternative ideas, such as a single unitary authority with stronger towns and parishes, as raised during the Council discussion. He welcomed the chamber debate, acknowledging that whilst views had been diverse, no one had believed the reorganisation was genuinely good for communities. He expressed concern about the financial burden and noted that the complexity of implementation would be costly and disruptive. He acknowledged that genuine reform was needed, with councils empowered to raise revenue locally, rather than the current system.

The Conservative Group Leader spoke on behalf of the Conservative group. He reiterated strong opposition to the proposed local government reorganisation and to the proposal of an Elected Mayor. Whilst recognising that the decision remained with the Executive, he noted that the Extraordinary Council meeting had produced a majority vote in favour of the four-unitary model, for which it appeared the Executive was not minded to agree.

The Leader of the Council recognised the comments and noted that at the Extraordinary Council meeting a number of Members abstained from the vote, which included Members of the Executive. This was supported by the Executive Member for Corporate Services who noted that they had listened to the views of Members before forming their own opinion.

The Leader thanked officers for the huge amount of effort and work undertaken to get to this point of the process.

The Leader of the Council thanked Members for their contributions and explained that the choice lay between financial sustainability and local democratic representation. He stated that the four-unitary model did not necessarily provide better representation, highlighting large variations in elector-to-councillor ratios and significant inequalities across wards. He noted that boundary reviews could take years to resolve and illustrated how residents in current wards would lose councillors under the four-unitary model. By contrast, he highlighted that the three-unitary model would preserve stronger representation, giving residents more councillors than under the four-unitary model.

The Leader of the Council recognised that following the Extraordinary Council meeting on 13 November 2025, during which Councillors from all parties expressed anger and frustration with the Local Government Re-organisation process, proposed the following amendment to add a second recommendation as follows:

- Add: That the Executive resolves that the Leader write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government at MHCLG, setting out strong objection to the changes being imposed on the district, the manner in which they are being implemented, and the threat they pose to local democratic representation for residents

Councillor Goldspink seconded the amendment.

The Conservative Group Leader confirmed that the group would align to the proposed wording and approach. He noted that the key outcome was to deliver the best result for residents, noting that the majority of the Conservative Group voted for the four-unitary model with others abstaining due to a dislike of the whole process.

The Executive Member for Communities stressed the importance of East Herts' strong network of town and

parish councils, noting that this was unique compared with areas such as Broxbourne and Stevenage, where such councils did not exist. She expressed concern that reorganisation could lead to a collapse into a single model, risking the loss of this local democratic representation.

Having been proposed and seconded, the amendment was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

Having been proposed and seconded, the recommendation in the report was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken option b) was CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – Executive agreed option b) as the as the preferred option:

b) Submit proposal and identify modified three unitary option (3UA modified) as preferred and request that Secretary of State formally modify the proposal by agreeing boundary changes, as set out in the proposal.

Having been proposed and seconded, the additional recommendation was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken was CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** – That the Leader write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government at MHCLG, setting out strong objection to the changes being imposed on the district, the manner in which they are being implemented, and the threat they pose to local democratic representation for residents.

## 241 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2026/27

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the report on the Council Tax Support Scheme

for 2026/27. He explained that Council Tax Support schemes were devised annually by local authorities and had to be approved before 11 March. The proposal to move to a banded scheme, intended to reduce administration costs, had been worked on during the year, however due to the complexity of the proposed changes, significant work was required to ensure the scheme would remain broadly cost neutral compared to the current model, whilst also ensuring that individuals would not be materially worse off. As a result, there was insufficient time to finalise and consult on the scheme and it was proposed that the existing scheme remained unchanged for 2026/27.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said that work on a banded scheme was to continue, with a consultation planned for early in the new financial year. Neither the County Council nor the police had raised any objection to the unchanged scheme for 2026/27.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. The Executive Member for Communities seconded the proposal.

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** – To recommend to Council that there be no change to the local council tax support scheme for 2026/27.

## 242 PLAYING PITCH AND OUTDOOR SPORT STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report on the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy. She advised that the Council had agreed to undertake a review of the district plan including an update of the evidence documents needed to support the new District Plan.



The Executive Member for Planning and Growth said that the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2025 replaces the previous playing pitch strategy, published in 2017. The report summarised the findings, provided a robust assessment of the supply and demand for outdoor sports facilities across East Herts and set out a framework for protecting, enhancing and providing new facilities to meet community needs up to 2043.

Members acknowledged some shortfalls in grass pitches for football, rugby and cricket and quality issues being a major factor in participation. There was a need for additional 3G pitches and a new full-size hockey pitch, alongside provision for emerging sports such as paddle. Demand for non-pitch sports was broadly being delivered; however, some clubs were operating at or above capacity.

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. The Executive Member for Corporate Services seconded the proposal.

Members commented on the lack of running track facilities in Bishop's Stortford and noted that as there was no existing club locally, feedback would not have been incorporated. Officers advised that whilst the evidence base followed Sport England Guidance, it also took account of the Governing Bodies with England Athletics on the steering group. Officers advised that dialogue was ongoing and did not preclude other options coming forward.

Members expressed a concern in relation to 3G pitches and their characteristics. Members noted that whilst Sports England were currently supporting them, there was research ongoing into the environmental impact of the microplastic particles and the potential for alternative infill materials.

Members welcomed the importance placed on sports, exercise and wellbeing and noted that being able to provide facilities at grassroots level was important.

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** – To recommend to Council that:

a) The Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy, attached as Appendix A, B and C be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform the new East Herts District Plan and as a material consideration for Development Management purposes in the determination of planning applications.

b) Future updates of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Action Plan be delegated to the Director for Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

#### 243 DISPOSAL OF COUNCIL-OWNED LAND SURPLUS TO REQUIREMENTS

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented a report which detailed the disposal of two Council-owned assets surplus to requirements.

The first asset for consideration was land at Harlow Mill. A sale or reduction in the ownership of this land would save the council from the liability of ongoing inspections and tree surveys. The site map and estimated value of the land was included within the exempt appendix A.

The second asset for consideration was a piece of land in Hertford. Two buildings on the land were now at the end of their useful lives and the tenants would like to work in partnership with East Herts to sell the site.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability said

that a reduction in the ownership of this land would save the council from the liability of ongoing road and street lighting maintenance as the access road to these sites were not public highway and were maintained at the expense of East Herts Council. The site map and details of the existing tenancies were included within the exempt appendix A.

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the recommendation in the report be supported. The Executive Member for Resident Engagement seconded the proposal.

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** - Executive agreed that:

(A) land at Harlow Mill, Sawbridgeworth be disposed of for best consideration, with authority to determine the method and management of the disposal delegated to the Director for Communities.

(B) land in Hertford be disposed of for best consideration, with authority to determine the method of disposal delegated to the Director for Communities and confirmation to proceed to actual disposal delegated to the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, acting in consultation with the Director for Communities.

244 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.12 pm

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Chairman .....
Date .....