

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2026, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor B Crystall (Chairman/Leader)
Councillors M Goldspink, A Daar, J Dumont,
S Hopewell and T Hoskin.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors B Deering, T Deffley and
I Devonshire .

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

James Ellis	- Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Brian Moldon	- Director for Finance, Risk and Performance
Helen Standen	- Interim Chief Executive
Stephanie Tarrant	- Assistant Director for Democracy, Elections and Information Governance

283 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C
Brittain, Councillor V Glover-Ward and Councillor C
Wilson.

284 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 – 13 January 2026](#).

The Leader acknowledged the sad passing of former Councillor Alder over the Christmas period. In addition, it was recognised that an officer from East Herts had also passed away just before Christmas. The Leader expressed sadness at the news and sent condolences and best wishes to their families and friends.

285 MINUTES – 18 NOVEMBER 2025

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods proposed, and the Executive Member for Communities seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 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 18 November 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

286 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

287 PARKING STRATEGY - OFF STREET TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS (TROS) - OBJECTIONS REPORT

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability presented the report. The report sought approval for changes to East Herts' off-street parking arrangements following a public consultation held between October and November 2025. Feedback led Officers to amend several proposals, which aimed to improve parking capacity, standardise operational hours and create a consistent charging approach across rural and urban car parks in

line with the Council's parking strategy.

The consultation received 636 responses, along with formal objections from local town councils and business representatives. In response to feedback, the proposals removed CPI increases for rural car parks, reduced the proposed all-day Sunday charge and allowed Blue Badge holders to extend their stay remotely beyond three hours. Members heard that the changes would improve consistency, support better management of demand, align with strategic objectives and help address financial pressures whilst maintaining local services.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods seconded the proposal.

Members welcomed the change to enable disabled Blue Badge holders to use parking apps to extend parking stays and queried whether this aligned to what other councils were doing in relation to Blue Badge charging in car parks. It was explained that Appendix A highlighted how practices varied across Hertfordshire. Members heard that the Council had been an early adopter of the National Parking Platform, which allowed drivers to use any parking app installed on their phone to pay for car parking across East Herts.

In response to a question from a non-executive Member in relation to the £2 all day parking fee on Sundays at the Bishop's Stortford police-station car park, when it had been stated that fees were rising to £1.50, Members heard that the £1.50 figure related only to rural car parks, whereas the Bishop's Stortford site was an urban car park. It was highlighted that Appendix B contained a full breakdown of charges.

Gratitude was expressed to the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability and the Officer team for their hard work, acknowledging the effort made to be fair whilst

covering costs and raising awareness of limited parking space and the wider impact of travel.

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 (A) Executive:
approve the extension of operational hours at Bowling Green Lane, Buntingford, to 7:30 am - 6:30 pm and the introduction of weekend charging, subject to the following mitigation:

- Retention of the proposed Monday to Friday tariffs with no inflationary increase over the existing structure currently applied in Stanstead Abbots.
- Introduction of Saturday charging at the same tariff levels as Monday to Friday, to ensure consistency across rural car parks.
- Introduction of a flat £1.50 all-day charge on Sundays and Public Holidays.

(B) Approved the introduction of weekend charging at Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth, aligned with existing weekday tariff levels, subject to the following mitigations:

- Retention of existing Monday to Friday tariffs with no inflationary increase.
- Introduction of Saturday charging at the same tariff levels as Monday to Friday, to ensure consistency across rural car parks.
- Introduction of a flat £1.50 all-day charge on Sundays and Public Holidays.

(C) Approved the introduction of a maximum stay

of 3 hours for all customers at Gascoyne Way Level A, Hertford.

(D) Approved amendments at Old London Road, Hertford, to provide both short-stay and long-stay parking.

(E) Approved the introduction of a 2.5-hour parking charge at Grange Paddocks A, Bishop's Stortford.

(F) Approved the extension of operational hours to 8:00 pm at Grange Paddocks B and C, Bishop's Stortford.

(G) Approved the merger of Kibes Lane North and Kibes Lane South, Ware, into a single car park, operating as short-stay parking Monday to Saturday and long-stay parking on Sundays and public holidays.

(H) Approved the renaming of the Library Car Park, Ware, to Burgage Lane, and the reduction of the maximum stay to three hours.

(I) Approved the merger of Amwell End East and Amwell End West, Ware, into a single Amwell End Car Park.

(J) Approved the conversion of several under-utilised disabled bays to Parent and Child bays at Northgate End, Bishop's Stortford.

(K) Approved corrections to administrative and operational arrangements at Link Road and Jackson Square, Bishop's Stortford, including car club bays and operational hours.

(L) Approved the introduction of a maximum free parking period of 3 hours for Blue Badge holders across all Council-managed car parks in disabled

and regular bays, and allow vehicles to remain in excess of the 3 free hours, during chargeable periods, with payment made.

Note that the Order also provides for tariff increases from April 2026, in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI), as previously agreed by the Council. Following feedback from the consultation, it is proposed that car parks in Buntingford, Sawbridgeworth, and Stanstead Abbots are not subject to inflationary increases in the existing applicable tariffs for 2026/27.

288 DRAFT BUDGET 2026/27 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2026-2031

The Leader of the Council presented the report on behalf of the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability. The report provided the draft budget for 2026/27 and the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan. It highlighted that whilst Government funding would continue to decline, it was less sharply than expected. Budget reviews identified new financial pressures, including costs linked to Local Government Reorganisation and slower than expected BEAM income, requiring additional contingencies. Savings from the positive pension fund revaluation significantly improved the financial position and supported a balanced 2026–27 budget, with some of the benefit placed in reserves to manage future risks. A new reserve was also to be created to give the council flexibility to respond to emerging priorities.

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

A question was raised about section 3.13, noting that homelessness, rough sleeping and domestic abuse grants had been consolidated into a single grant and temporary accommodation funding had been moved into the Revenue Support Grant, which could result in less

money being available. Officers confirmed that approximately £400,000 had been previously allocated for temporary accommodation and that the Council would allocate the same amount in 2026/27. Officers reassured Members that work was ongoing with the service in relation to the grant for homelessness and rough sleeping and that the funding had been split 49% for temporary accommodation and 51% for other homelessness support.

In response to a question from a non-executive Member in relation to the BEAM contingency, Officers explained that the 2026/27 budget had included a planned £200,000 surplus from BEAM, however, the food and beverage facilities had only begun operating in September to October 2025 and was still in the early stages of growth. It was therefore recognised that BEAM might take longer than 2026/27 to deliver the surplus assumed in the business plan. A review of the business plan was planned to determine whether the original assumptions remained viable or needed adjustment. The £200,000 contingency was included to give the Council flexibility should BEAM's growth take longer than expected.

Following a question from a non-executive Member with regards to the £1m pension savings, officers explained that the pension fund was valued every three years by actuaries through the Hertfordshire Pension Fund, with the most recent valuation work completed during 2025. Based on the actuaries' assumptions regarding the fund's position over the next three years, contribution requirements were recalculated. The fund was around 107% funded, which allowed the council's primary contribution rate to fall from 19.8% to 17.1% for the next three years. The secondary rate, an annual lump sum linked to past early retirements or ill-health costs, was no longer required as the fund was fully funded. As a result, the Council no longer needed to make that payment, generating the significant savings. Recognition was given to the Pensions Team at Hertfordshire County Council.

A non-executive Member recognised that the employer contribution to the Local Government Pension Scheme was around 17%, which was unusually high compared with most sectors. Concern was expressed about whether the Council reported employment costs in a way that made them clearly visible to residents and taxpayers, especially given the additional pressure from a 4% salary increase and the overall significance of staffing costs. Officers explained that the Council did not currently present this information in a detailed way. Reporting was produced at a high level based on service expenditure and the budget papers did not break down employment costs in detail. Further consideration would be given to the reporting breakdown.

In response to a question from a non-executive Member with regards to fees to Broxbourne Borough Council, officers advised that £15,000 related to Broxbourne providing one day a week of support to monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) and the corporate plan, enabling more regular performance updates for Members and the leadership team to ensure transparency and maintain performance reporting. It was noted that the Council already shared other services, such as Human Resources (HR) and were exploring further reciprocal arrangements.

In response to a Member question regarding whether the three-year fair funding settlement was masking the ongoing decline in Central Government support and whether the additional pension funding risked giving a misleading sense of security when underlying financial pressures remained, officers confirmed that it was a fair assessment. The unexpectedly large pension fund contribution had enabled the Council to set a balanced budget for the current and following year. Officers emphasised that this did not remove the longer-term challenges. From 2027/28 onwards, further financial pressures were expected and the Council would still need to deliver significant savings or identify alternative options to remain sustainable.

Members commented on the source of the unexpected pension fund gains and queried whether it had arisen from stronger equity performance or higher interest rates compared with the COVID period. Officers confirmed that the actuaries considered a wide range of assumptions, including mortality projections, changes to pension rules, such as the retirement age rising from 55 to 57 in 2028 and the improved performance of pension fund investments. In addition, assumptions about future CPI, RPI and other rates also played a significant role and these factors contributed to the unexpected improvement in the pension fund's position.

A non-executive Member queried whether in relation to Local Government Reorganisation, the new authority might have to assume the existing debts of other councils and manage them indefinitely. Officers confirmed that any new body would become responsible for whatever debt was carried into the new structure. It was noted that most Chief Financial Officers across Hertfordshire were comfortable with the levels of general fund debt, which were not considered problematic. The greater concern related to Housing Revenue Account (HRA) debt, which was significantly higher.

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) The draft General Fund Budget for 2026/27 is proposed for consultation purposes and a Band D Council Tax of £207.03 (assuming a 2.99% Council Tax increase).

(B) The updated position on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) as shown in Appendix A be noted.

(C) the proposed fees and charges, as set out in Appendix B, be approved for consultation.

(D) The minimum level of General Fund balance of £3.649 Million, based on the 2026/27 risk assessment of balances as shown in paragraph 6.3, is approved.

E) The pressures identified in section 4 of the report is noted.

F) The savings identified in section 5 of the report is noted.

G) The Section 25 Statement of Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves as set out in Appendix D is noted.

H) The decisions taken on recommendations a) to g) above be referred to the Joint Meeting of Scrutiny Committees on 28 January 2026 for consideration.

289 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2025/26 MID-YEAR REVIEW

The Leader of the Council presented the report on behalf of the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability. Members heard that the mid-year Treasury Management Review for 2025/26 reported a slight rise in the 10-year gilt rate, influencing borrowing costs. External borrowing reduced to £61.5m, whilst investments fell to £29.4m, increasing net borrowing by £1.7m due to capital programme demands. Most borrowing remained short-term in anticipation of future refinancing at lower rates. Since the report was drafted, gilt and base rates had begun to ease. It was noted that the Council completed its withdrawal from the Hermes property fund, reducing property investments to £2.6m.

The Leader of the Council proposed the recommendations as set out in the report. The Executive

Member for Environmental Sustainability seconded the proposal.

In response to a Member question in relation to whether there was a clear point at which the Council should stop relying on short-term loans, or whether it was safe to continue monitoring the market and wait for conditions to improve, officers advised that rates were monitored daily. It was noted that the Council held two £25 million Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loans due for repayment in June and September 2026 and that Officers were working with treasury advisers to determine the best refinancing options and timing.

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 (A) Members examined and commented on the Mid-Year Treasury Management Review and Prudential Indicators for 2025/26 and recommended its approval to Council.

290 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER QUARTER 2 MONITORING 2025/26

The Leader of the Council presented the report on behalf of the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability. Members heard that the Leadership Team had reviewed the corporate risk register and updated scores and mitigations. One new risk had been added concerning a potential shortage of election candidates due to uncertainty over the 2027 district elections. All other risks had remained unchanged, though the staff and skills risk had been significantly strengthened following reassessment.

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

In response to a Member question regarding the risk of a lack of election candidates and whether this had come from wider practice or was specific to the council, officers explained that this had been a general concern for Councils facing potential all-out elections in 2027. Many councillors elected in 2023 had not expected to serve beyond 2027, however due to anticipated Local Government Reorganisation there was a strong possibility that the 2027 all-out elections would be cancelled and replaced with shadow elections for the new authority. If this occurred, some members who did not wish to continue beyond 2027 may resign and trigger by-elections. This had been viewed as a potential, though unproven, risk for the final shadow year. Officers had agreed that the risk was reasonable to include, as being asked at short notice to serve an additional year could be difficult for some Members.

Members discussed what could be done about the uncertainty surrounding the 2027 elections. The Chief Executive explained that a meeting had taken place with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) that afternoon, where an early decision for 2027 elections had been requested, so assurances could be given to Members and other authorities facing all-out elections. MHCLG had also promised to pass the concern on to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) colleagues. It was noted that mitigation would be possible once the election timetable was known. Members acknowledged that no clear plan existed yet, with the priority remaining to reassure affected Members, as the situation remained uncertain. It was noted that political leaders had a responsibility to discuss risks and possible benefits with their groups, so that both officers and councillors could help manage and mitigate the situation from their respective sides.

Members commented on the quoracy of the Council, noting that a lack of candidates might not affect its ability to operate, even if some Members chose not to serve an additional year. Concerns were raised about the likelihood

and cost of multiple by-elections if Members did not wish to continue, as well as the wider expense of potentially running 2027 shadow elections. It was noted that these issues had also already been highlighted to MHCLG.

In response to a question from a non-executive Member regarding what proportion of time was taken up for the Chief Executive and other senior officers in relation to work for LGR rather than normal council work, Members heard that the Chief Executive continued to undertake her day job during normal hours, while most of LGR work had been undertaken in the evenings. It was noted that the impact on daytime duties had been less than expected due to the extra work being completed in time not usually working.

Members discussed whether LGR process would be delayed and considered whether concerns were being raised too early. Members considered that there was not a high risk of Members leaving early, acknowledging that this was something for group leaders to manage and that the overall risk remained small. It was noted that the idea of elected Members and shadow Members operating at the same time was not preferred, as it would create an unnecessary dynamic, particularly where some individuals held both roles.

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 (A) the 2025/26 quarter two corporate risk register and actions being taken to control and mitigate risk was considered and noted.

291 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT 2025/26 - QUARTER 2
FORECAST TO YEAR END

The Leader of the Council presented the report on behalf of the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability.

Members heard that the Quarter 2 forecast for 2025/26 had shown a £509,000 overspend. Over 90% of planned savings had already been delivered, though key pressures remained: a £270,000 income shortfall at BEAM and a £210,000 business-rates pressure under appeal. Interest movements had improved the position by £70,000. The Capital Programme reported a £722,000 underspend, mainly in transformation and ICT. It was noted that aged debt had reduced by £547,000, with work on older debt continuing.

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

In response to a Member question regarding whether Recommendation B on page 126, related to a future award from the Heritage Lottery Fund or to phase two of the project and the work already completed, officers confirmed that they would seek clarification and provide a later response. It was noted that there had still been some involvement with the lottery fund, possibly due to the Council handling the matter on behalf of the Town 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.

RESOVLED – that Executive:

- A) Considered and noted the net revenue budget end of year projected overspend of £509k.
- B) Accepted the additional Heritage Lottery capital fund grant of £238k for Hertford Castle Greenspace renewal and this additional resource was to be reflected in the capital programme.
- C) Considered and noted the capital programme forecast outturn underspend of £722k.

292 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.02 pm

Chairman

Date