

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH 2026, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT:

Councillor M Adams (Chairman).
Councillors J Dunlop, D Andrews,
R Buckmaster, P Boylan, C Brittain,
M Butcher, I Devonshire, E Buckmaster,
V Burt, R Carter, N Clements, M Connolly,
S Copley, N Cox, B Crystall, A Daar,
B Deering, T Deffley, J Dumont, V Glover-
Ward, M Goldspink, A Holt, S Hopewell,
C Horner, T Hoskin, D Jacobs, S Marlow,
G McAndrew, S Nicholls, A Parsad-Wyatt,
C Redfern, V Smith, T Stowe, M Swainston,
J Thomas, R Townsend, S Watson,
D Willcocks, G Williams, C Wilson, J Wyllie
and D Woollcombe.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

359 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded attendees that the meeting was being webcast. The full webcast of the meeting can be viewed here: Council – [4 March 2026](#)

A minute's silence was held to mark the passing of former councillors Angela Alder, Roger Beeching and Jill Demonti. Tributes were offered by several Members, recognising their long service and community commitment.

Members paid tribute to former Councillor Beeching's long and dedicated public service to Sawbridgeworth and East Hertfordshire. His service included many years as a Governor and then Chairman of Leventhorpe School from 1977 to 2013, for which he received an MBE. He served four terms as Mayor of Sawbridgeworth and held civic roles at both East Herts District Council and Hertfordshire County Council. Members commented on his strong sense of duty, deep commitment to the town and the positive legacy he left in the community.

Former Councillor Alder was remembered for her decades of service dating back to the 1970s, including her time as Chairman of the former Sawbridgeworth Urban District Council and four terms as Mayor. She was well-known for her exceptional work ethic, commitment to duty and leadership in local organisations. Members highlighted her dedication to serving residents and her strong advocacy for women and girls.

Tributes were also paid to former Councillor Jill Demonti, who served as both a Town and District Councillor. It was noted that she took a particular interest in planning matters. Members remembered her as a formidable and committed advocate for her community who will be greatly missed.

Members sent their best wishes and condolences to their

families.

It was noted that James Ellis, the Council's Monitoring Officer, would shortly be leaving the authority. Members thanked him for his contribution to East Herts Council and offered their best wishes for his future role.

360 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader informed Members that Rebecca Cercelea, who had been presented with a certificate for outstanding achievement in sports in East Hertfordshire, had recently returned from an international Taekwondo competition, where she had won a bronze medal. Members extended their congratulations to Rebecca.

The Executive Member for Wellbeing provided an update, noting that BEAM had been shortlisted for the Royal Institute of British Architects East Awards. It was acknowledged that this was a prestigious recognition and a strong endorsement of the venue. Members heard that all 18 shortlisted sites would be visited by a regional jury, with the winning projects to be announced later in the spring.

361 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bull, Estop, Hart, Hill, Hollebon and Williamson.

362 MINUTES - 10 DECEMBER 2025

Councillor Goldspink proposed, and Councillor Connolly seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2025, be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

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

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2025, be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

363 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

364 PETITIONS - STOP EAST HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL SPLITTING UP SAWBRIDGEWORTH & STOP EAST HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL SPLITTING UP BUNTINGFORD

Two petitions were submitted to the meeting and were considered in turn.

Councillor Angus Pasard-Wyatt presented the ‘Stop East Herts District Council splitting up Sawbridgeworth’ petition. The full presentation can be viewed here at 00:31:25: [Sawbridgeworth petition](#)

Mayor Duncan Wallace presented the ‘Stop East Herts District Council splitting up Buntingford’ petition. The full presentation can be viewed here at 00:35:17: [Buntingford Petition](#)

Councillor Nicholls and Councillor Woollcombe spoke as Local Members for the Buntingford petition.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services responded to both petitions and thanked the residents of Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford who had taken the time to organise and sign the petitions, and to the lead petitioners for presenting the petitions to Council.

The Executive Member advised that the introduction of warding in both towns followed a Community Governance Review undertaken by East Herts District Council. The review was undertaken in accordance with the statutory framework set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Local Government

Boundary Commission for England under Section 100 of that same act.

As part of that process, the Council agreed formal terms of reference, invited submissions from residents and stakeholders, and undertook a public consultation. In accordance with the council's established democratic processes, a cross-party member working group considered different options and it considered representations from stakeholders. The group then put forward recommendations that were brought before Council. Those recommendations were agreed by a majority of elected members in the chamber.

Following the decision, a Community Governance Reorganisation Order implementing these changes was formally made on 27 January 2026. Therefore, in response to the request contained within the petitions, the Executive Member explained that it was not possible for such an Order to be 'scrapped' as there was no mechanism by which the Council may do so, even if it wished to, at this stage. Any change would require the Council to undertake a new Community Governance Review.

The Executive Member noted that whilst the petitions called for a new Community Governance Review, the Council was not obliged to consider a new review within the two years following the making of a formal Community Governance Reorganisation Order. However, it was noted that a Council could conduct a further review if it chose to do so. The Executive Member noted that there was a motion later on in the agenda proposing that the Council undertook new Community Governance Reviews in Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford and highlighted that the Motion would therefore provide the democratic opportunity for the Council to debate the matter and determine whether it wishes to revisit the arrangements.

There were no public questions.

366 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The full responses to the submitted Members' Questions can be found in the supplementary document [here](#).

367 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 13 JANUARY 2026 & 10 FEBRUARY 2026

The Leader of the Council presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the Executive at its meetings on 13 January 2026 and 10 February 2026.

367 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2025/26 MID-YEAR REVIEW

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review. The report outlined the external economic context, including the rise in the 10-year gilt rate from 4.65% to 4.7%, which was a key determinant of the Council's borrowing costs.

The Council's external borrowing had reduced from £64.5 million to £61.5 million over the period, while investments had fallen from £34.1 million to £29.4 million, resulting in a net increase in borrowing of £1.7 million due to ongoing capital programme requirements. It was reported that most borrowing remained short-term, reflecting the Council's intention to refinance at lower rates when possible. Inflation was forecast to fall, and interest rates were expected to decline accordingly. Since the report had been produced, the gilt rate had fallen slightly and the base rate had been reduced to 3.75%.

The report confirmed that the Council continued to comply with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code through the monitoring of prudential indicators.

Councillor Brittain, the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Dumont seconded the proposal.

Members thanked the Executive Member for the report and confirmed they had no objections to it. Members noted that the previous optimism around interest rates falling was now unlikely to be realised. Members noted the wider economic challenges and highlighted the potential for higher inflation and the possible impact on gilt rates and future interest rate decisions.

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) Council approved the Mid-Year Treasury Management Review and Prudential Indicators for 2025/26.

367 CAPITAL STRATEGY, MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY AND TREASURY STRATEGY 2026/27

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Treasury Strategy 2026/27. The Capital Strategy outlined the Council's capital programme, its financing and the annual review process. Capital spending remained low and funded by capital receipts, with debt levels projected to fall over the next three years. The Treasury Management Strategy set out how borrowing, investments and cash flow were managed in line with CIPFA codes. The Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2026/27 confirmed the continued approach of repaying borrowing over the useful life of assets.

Councillor Brittain, the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Thomas seconded the

proposal.

Whilst there were no objections to the report, concerns were recorded in relation to the capital disposals programme, noting that the cross-party disposals group had not met for some time and that progress on disposals appeared slow.

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) Council approved the Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and the Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27, including the Prudential Indicators contained within the reports.

368 BUDGET 2026/27 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2026 -2031

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the 2026/27 Budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2026–2031. The Executive Member outlined the impact of the Government’s provisional settlement, the fair funding review and ongoing reductions in government support. Members were informed that although funding would continue to fall, three-year settlements provided greater certainty. Additional budget pressures had been identified, including £706,000 from service reviews, £1 million over two years for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and a £203,000 contingency relating to BEAM due to slower-than-expected growth. Significant savings had arisen from the recent Hertfordshire Pension Fund revaluation, enabling a balanced budget to be set. The proposed council tax increase was 2.99% and the capital programme and reserve position were summarised along with the Section 25 assurance statement.

The Executive Member highlighted that despite

improvements in the Council's financial position, external risks such as global instability and inflation remained.

Councillor Brittain, the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Wilson seconded the proposal.

Two [amendments](#) were tabled by the Conservative Group and debated in turn.

Councillor Deffley proposed the following amendment to the recommendation:

'In the capital budget, £170k has been allocated for works at the URC Hall. However, this would represent a poor use of taxpayers' resources. Instead, the funding should be used to reduce existing borrowing, thereby lowering the Minimum Revenue Provision. This approach would reduce the revenue budget by approximately £15k per year and help moderate future Council Tax increase.

That the Budget be amended as follows:

- a) Appendix A MTFP be deleted and replaced with an amended Appendix A as Annex 1 to this amendment.
- b) Appendix E Capital Programme be deleted and replaced with an amended Appendix E as Annex 2 to this amendment.

This would result in the 2026/27 showing a £15,000 surplus for the year, against the original proposed breakeven budget.'

Councillor Deering seconded the proposal.

The proposer highlighted that the scheme was financially unviable and that continuing to hold funds for it represented poor value for taxpayers.

Members heard that a public consultation and community-

led business planning exercise was still underway and that the £170,000 would only be spent if a viable community proposal emerged; otherwise, the money would remain unspent.

Members speaking against the amendment emphasised strong community interest in retaining the building and the importance of allowing the ongoing process to conclude.

Members questioned the viability of fundraising but agreed that the community should have further time.

A recorded vote was held on the amendment proposed by Councillor Deffley. The result was as follows:

FOR

Councillors Andrews, Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Deering, Deffley, Devonshire, Holt, McAndrew, Parsad-Wyatt, T Smith, Stowe, Wyllie.

AGAINST

Councillors Brittain, Burt, Butcher, Carter, Clements, Connolly, Copley, Cox, Crystall, Daar, Dumont, Dunlop, Glover-Ward, Goldspink, Hopewell, Horner, Hoskin, Jacobs, Marlow, Nicholls, Redfern, V Smith, Swainston, Thomas, Townsend, Watson, Willcocks, Williams, Wilson, Woollcombe.

ABSTAIN

Councillor Adams.

For: 13
Against: 30
Abstain: 1

The motion to amend the recommendation was LOST.

Councillor Deffley proposed a further amendment to the

budget:

‘£250k is proposed to be placed into an Earmarked Reserve in both 2026/27 and 2027/28. However, no specific purpose has been identified for this reserve. The Administration suggests that the Executive should subsequently determine how these funds will be used. This is unacceptable. Decisions on how taxpayers’ money is allocated should be made by the full Council, not delegated to the Executive. We therefore propose that either:

- 1) The proposed reserve should not be created, and the funds should instead be used to help moderate future Council Tax increases; or
- 2) Any Member should be able to put forward a scheme for consideration, with approval resting with the full Council rather than the Executive; or
- 3) The proposed reserve should be divided equally among all Members, effectively creating a ‘Locality Budget’ for each Member to spend on local good causes as they see fit.’

Councillor Deering seconded the proposal.

Members considered the options presented. The Executive Member opposed reducing council tax due to long-term risks and opposed locality budgets due to concerns about administrative burden and fragmentation of spending. Support was expressed for the principle in the second option of allowing members to bring forward proposals, with final approval resting with Full Council.

Members considered the benefit of supporting locality budgets to ensure fairness across wards, against considerations that the funding should be used for larger projects benefiting the whole district. Concerns were raised about practicality, capacity and the risk of delaying decision-making.

Following advice from the Monitoring Officer, it was

explained that each member would be asked individually, in a recorded vote, to state their preference for Option 1, Option 2, Option 3, or to vote against. If one option secured a clear majority in the first round, that decision would stand. However, if no option achieved a majority vote, the least-supported option would be eliminated, and further rounds of voting would take place. This process would continue until one option gained a majority.

A recorded vote was held on the amendment proposed by Councillor Deffley. The result was as follows:

OPTION 1

None.

OPTION 2

Councillors Andrews, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Deering, Deffley, Holt, McAndrew, Parsad-Wyatt, Stowe, Williams, Wyllie.

OPTION 3

Councillors Boylan, Devonshire, T Smith, Willcocks

AGAINST:

Councillors Brittain, Burt, Butcher, Carter, Clements, Connolly, Copley, Cox, Crystall, Daar, Dumont, Dunlop, Glover-Ward, Goldspink, Hopewell, Horner, Hoskin, Jacobs, Marlow, Nicholls, Redfern, V Smith, Swainston, Thomas, Townsend, Watson, Wilson.

ABSTAIN:

Councillors Adams, Woollcombe.

Option 1: 0

Option 2: 11

Option 3: 4

Against: 27

Abstain: 2

Following a recorded vote in which members were asked to select one of the options or reject them all, the motion to amend the budget was LOST.

The debate returned to the original recommendations in the report.

Members raised issues including global economic risks, Local Government Reorganisation costs, asset disposals and the purpose of the new Executive reserve. It was reiterated that the reserve would be used for projects that aligned with Council priorities and that all members' ideas would be welcomed.

The motion to support the recommendations having been proposed and seconded was put to a recorded vote and the result was as follows:

FOR

Councillors Brittain, Burt, Butcher, Carter, Clements, Connolly, Copley, Cox, Crystall, Daar, Dumont, Dunlop, Glover-Ward, Goldspink, Hopewell, Horner, Hoskin, Jacobs, Marlow, Nicholls, Redfern, V Smith, Swainston, Thomas, Townsend, Watson, Willcocks, Williams, Wilson, Woollcombe.

AGAINST

Councillors Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Deering, Deffley, Devonshire, Holt, McAndrew, Parsad-Wyatt, T Smith, Stowe, Wyllie.

ABSTAIN

Councillor Adams

For: 30

Against: 12

Abstained: 1

RESOLVED: a) That the final General Fund Budget for 2026/27, including a Band D Council Tax of £207.03 (reflecting a 2.99% increase), be approved.

b) That the updated position on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), as set out in Appendix A, be noted.

c) That the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27, as detailed in Appendix B, be approved.

d) That the minimum level of General Fund balance of £3.649 million, based on the 2026/27 risk assessment of balances in paragraph 6.3, be approved.

e) That the budget pressures identified in Section 4 of the report be noted.

f) That the savings proposals identified in Section 5 of the report be noted.

g) That the Section 25 Statement on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves, as set out in Appendix D, be noted.

h) That the Capital Programme for 2026 to 2029, as set out in Appendix E, be approved.

i) That the minutes and comments of the Joint Scrutiny Committee from 28 January 2026, as set out in Appendix F and paragraph 11.1, be noted.

369 COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2026/27

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Council Tax Setting Report for 2026/27. The report brought together all elements of the final

council tax bill, including local precepts, the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner and calculated the total council tax for each parish and town, as set out in Appendix A.

Councillor Brittain, the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Goldspink seconded the proposal.

Members noted that, had an alternative budget proposal been accepted, different council tax figures would have been reached. However, there was no objection to the report and Members accepted the calculations as presented.

The motion to support the recommendation having been proposed and seconded was put to a recorded vote and the result was as follows:

FOR

Councillors Boylan, Brittain, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Burt, Butcher, Carter, Clements, Connolly, Copley, Cox, Crystall, Daar, Deering, Deffley, Devonshire, Dumont, Dunlop, Glover-Ward, Goldspink, Hopewell, Holt, Horner, Hoskin, Jacobs, Marlow, McAndrew, Nicholls, Parsad-Wyatt, Redfern, V Smith, Stowe, Swainston, Thomas, Townsend, Watson, Willcocks, Williams, Wilson, Woollcombe, Wyllie.

AGAINST

None.

ABSTAIN

Councillor Adams, T Smith.

For: 41

Against: 0

Abstained: 2

RESOLVED – that (A) the Council Tax resolution, as submitted at Appendix A, be approved.

(B) the local precepts as set out at Appendix A be noted.

(C) the Hertfordshire County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire precepts be noted.

370 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2026/27

The Executive Member for Corporate Services presented the Pay Policy Statement 2026/27. Members heard that the Council was legally required, under the Localism Act, to publish a Pay Policy Statement each year. The report set out the remuneration of Chief Officers and other employees.

Councillor Dumont, the Executive Member for Corporate Services proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Carter 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 – that (A) the Pay Policy Statement 2026/27 be approved.

At this point in the meeting, as it was approaching 10pm, Councillor Watson proposed a motion that the meeting took a short break and continue past 10pm. Councillor Williams seconded the motion. Having been proposed and seconded, the motion was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the meeting took a short break,

reconvened at 9:45pm, and continued past 10pm.

371 STANSTEAD ABBOTTS AND ST. MARGARET'S
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report. Members were advised that Stanstead Abbots Parish Council, working with the parish councils of Stanstead St Margaret's and Great Amwell, had developed a neighbourhood plan over several years to meet district housing requirements. The plan released land from the Green Belt, allocating both brownfield and greenfield sites. Despite significant constraints such as flood risk, Green Belt designations and protected nature sites, the plan successfully balanced housing growth with policies to protect local character and the environment. It designated new local green spaces, protected views, heritage assets and prioritised enhancement of the river environment. The examiner commended the plan for addressing local issues while meeting housing needs. It was noted that at the January 2026 referendum, 80% voted in favour of using the plan and it was considered a positive addition to East Herts' development management process.

Councillor Glover-Ward, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Dumont seconded the proposal.

Members acknowledged that the process had been challenging for the parish councils, with differing views at times, however a positive conclusion had been reached. It was noted that producing a neighbourhood plan was a long process and a testament to the dedication of the community and everyone that contributed. It was noted that such plans deserved to progress and be recognised as important planning documents.

Members spoke in favour of neighbourhood plans, however commented on the lack of housing supply

diluting the effectiveness. Members heard in response that whilst the area was facing delivering more housing, the neighbourhood plan, despite requiring the release of a small amount of Green Belt, offered some protection through designated views, green spaces and other safeguards.

Members acknowledged that the area faced significant flood risk, with significant work taking place over the past couple of years to address the issue.

Concern was expressed with emphasis that the land demanded protection, and that the council was being asked to sacrifice scarce green belt, including part of the Lee Valley Regional Park. It was noted that the park authority opposed the proposal, and concern was shared that approving development would be capitulation, setting a damaging precedent ahead of future unitary mergers. Members acknowledged the need to protect green belt land and considered this against the positive outcome of the referendum.

Members were advised that the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, along with any member of the public, would be able to comment on future planning applications and that any potential harm to the park would be a valid planning consideration for the case officer.

Members thanked the residents' group and parish councillors for their hard work.

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) That the Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets Neighbourhood Area Plan 2017-2033, as detailed at Appendix A to this report, be formally made.

372 MINOR AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer presented the report which set out minor changes to the Councils constitution. The Monitoring Officer explained that constitutional changes required to support the proper administration of the council could be made, provided they were reported to full Council as soon as reasonably practicable. The proposed amendments in appendices A to E updated the policy framework, clarified section 8.5 in relation to the District Planning Executive Panel (DPEP), adjusted officer delegations following the management restructure and aligned the executive decision-making processes for non-key decisions.

The revisions to the policy framework and section 8.5 of the constitution were intended to clearly distinguish between matters for the Executive and those requiring full Council approval during the new local plan process, preventing unnecessarily heavy Council agendas. The Executive had agreed in June 2025 to reconvene the DPEP to progress the new local plan, with all Members invited to attend its meetings.

Further amendments corrected delegation gaps, including transferring environmental health responsibilities to the Director for Place. Appendices D and E ensured consistency in how non-key officer decisions were recorded and processed.

It was requested that the recommendation be updated to refer to appendices A to E rather than A to D.

Councillor Dumont, the Executive Member for Corporate Services proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Williams seconded the proposal.

In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that in relation to 8.5.1 of the constitution the intention was for the DPEP to make recommendations to the Executive on

matters such as evidence-gathering and strategy formulation, whilst formal stages of the process would still be presented to full Council.

Members commented on the role of the Constitution Working Group. Officers agreed to refresh the group to ensure it was actively reviewing the constitution and supporting the keeping of it up to date.

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) Council approved the minor amendments to the Constitution as set out in Appendices A to E.

373 MILLSTREAM BUSINESS PLAN 2026/27

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the Millstream Business Plan 2026/27. Members heard that that Millstream Property Investments Ltd had been established by the Council in 2018 to generate a competitive return on its capital, with the Council acting as the sole shareholder.

By 2025, it had been determined that the returns from Millstream's property investments were lower than the financial benefit the Council could achieve by reducing its debt. This shift resulted from the need for external borrowing and changes in the regulatory environment. Consequently, the Council decided to sell Millstream's properties as tenancies ended. Disposals had begun, and it was expected that all properties would be sold by the end of 2027/28, with the business plan set out in the restricted appendix.

Councillor Brittain, the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability proposed that the recommendations in the report be supported. Councillor Horner seconded the proposal.

In response to Member questions that would likely lead to the disclosure of exempt information, it was moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Williams that that the meeting move into Part II.

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

RESOLVED – that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

Following return to Part I, 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 – a) That Millstream Property Investment Ltd's 2026/27 Business Plan, presented in the EXEMPT Appendix A, which includes the continued disposal of the company's properties, be approved.

374 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

There was one motion on notice.

374 MOTION TO UNDERTAKE NEW COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS IN SAWBRIDGEWORTH AND BUNTINGFORD

In advance of the motion being considered, Councillor Parsad-Wyatt requested a recorded vote. This was supported by Councillors Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Deering, and Holt.

Councillor Parsad-Wyatt presented his motion on notice.

Councillor Woollcombe seconded the motion.

Members considered the motion relating to the Community Governance Reviews for Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford. The debate focused on whether the original consultation had been adequate and whether a further review should be undertaken.

Several Members stated that a significant number of residents had reported not receiving the consultation leaflet and expressed concern that the leaflet, even when delivered, did not clearly explain the proposed town/parish warding arrangements. Members felt that the consultation process had therefore been insufficient and that a repeat process would help ensure residents were properly informed and able to contribute.

The Monitoring Officer advised that council records indicated that the required number of leaflets had been printed and delivered by the council's casual distribution staff. Email responses received during the consultation period were referenced as evidence that some residents had engaged with the material.

Some Members raised concerns about the petitions circulated, noting that the messaging used had been highly emotive and, in their view, had not provided balanced information about warding. They expressed the view that this had contributed to misunderstanding amongst residents.

Members acknowledged weaknesses in the original consultation material but emphasised that the Community Governance Review Working Group had followed the statutory process and had made recommendations based on the information available. They noted that further Community Governance Reviews could take place in two years, as normal practice allowed.

Some Members stated that despite reservations about the tone of the petitions, they believed the reported lack of awareness among residents indicated that the consultation had not been effective.

Members concluded the debate by considering the distinction between the principle of warding and the procedural concerns raised.

The proposer emphasised that the motion sought to repeat the consultation at the earliest opportunity and did not seek to predetermine the outcome.

The motion having been proposed and seconded was put to a recorded vote and the result was as follows:

For

Councillors Boylan, Brittain, E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, Burt, Derring, Deffley, Devonshire, Holt, Horner, McAndrew, Parsad-Wyatt, T Smith, Stowe, Wilson, Woollcombe.

Against

Councillors Butcher, Carter, Clements, Connolly, Copley, Crystall, Daar, Dumont, Dunlop, Glover-Ward, Goldspink, Hopewell, Hoskin, Jacobs, Marlow, Nicholls, V Smith, Swainston, Thomas, Watson, Willcocks, Williams.

Abstain

Councillors Adams, Cox, Redfern, Townsend.

RESOLVED – After being put to the meeting and a recorded vote taken, this motion was declared LOST.

The meeting closed at 11:24pm

Chairman

Date