MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2026, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Jacobs (Chair)
Councillors D Andrews, E Buckmaster, R Carter, A Holt, C Horner, S Marlow, S Nicholls, T Smith, M Swainston, G Williams and J Wyllie

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors B Crystall, B Deering, D Hollebon and T Hoskin

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Erica Carter	-	Committee Support Officer
James Ellis	-	Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	-	Director for Communities
Peter Mannings	-	Committee Support Officer
Ben Wood	-	Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services

375 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor P Boylan and N Clements. It was noted that Councillor Holt was substituting for Councillor Boylan.

376 MINUTES - 20 JANUARY 2026

Councillor Nicholls proposed, and Councillor Wyllie seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2026, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

377 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no chair's announcements.

378 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

379 PRESENTATION BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY (CLLR HOSKIN) - THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO ACHIEVING NET ZERO CARBON BY 2030: SCRUTINY OF EAST HERTS COUNCIL'S 2025 CARBON EMISSIONS REPORT

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability submitted a presentation that updated Members in respect of the council's progress in moving towards net zero carbon. He set out of the context and referred to the UK government's legally binding target of reaching net zero emissions by 2050 and the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2022-2026.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability reminded Members of the council's aim to become a net zero carbon council by 2030, and he reminded Members of the climate change declaration that had been recently restated and reinforced by the council.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability set out the 2025 figure for the council's gross emissions in tonnes and the figures each year since a baseline figure in 2019. He set out details behind the 2025 figure and summarised the actions that were completed or underway.

Members were advised of the actions undertaken since the 2025 emissions report was published and the Executive Member presented a series of slides and graphs detailing the council's performance in terms of emissions and the sequestration of green assets in the context of research by the University of Hertfordshire and the English and Welsh LGA.

The Executive Member for Environment Sustainability presented a graph of net emissions projected to 2027 in the context of a gap of 335 tonnes of carbon to be reduced to a net zero position by 2030. He also referred to a table containing a list of actions aimed at eliminating residual carbon.

Members asked a number of questions, and these were answered by the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability.

Members received the presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

380 PROGRESS ON THE PARKING STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability submitted a report that summarised the progress on the East Herts Parking Strategy, which had been adopted in January 2025. He said that there had been extensive consultation in 2024, and the aim of the strategy was to make parking rules simpler and more consistent whilst supporting longer term sustainability and behaviour change.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the strategy was not solely focussed on parking services, and it brought together actions and resources from across the council and different partners.

Members were advised that the strategy was underpinned by three objectives, which were (A) support the take up of environmentally friendly vehicles and sustainable alternatives to driving, (B) take a balanced approach to parking to make it fairer, easier and more consistent across East Herts and (C) adopting a more considerate approach to managing parking services throughout East Herts.

Members were advised that each of the objectives was underpinned by several individual actions. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that Appendix A detailed a number of strategic objectives and progress had been made in several areas. A number of the objectives were strategic in nature and were designed to encourage long term behaviour change and modal shift.

Members mentioned parking tariff reviews and car park capacity, relating to BA4 and CA3, and whether there would be a period of monitoring after the prices increases in April to how this had impacted on dwell time, car capacity and behaviour change as well as monitoring of the impact of increases in parking on residential roads in town centres.

The Committee also mentioned CA5 in the context of a review of parking enforcement in terms of whether this would include on street parking. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability touched on the limited Civic Enforcement Officer (CEO) resource and said that the council used this APCOA resource as efficiently as possible. Requests for ad hoc inspections were accommodated where possible and the aim was to ensure a visible presence when CEOs were out on site and there was an impact.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the council needed to reinstate the footfall reports that related to town centres so that there was a before and after comparison. He said that questions around modal shift were extraordinarily difficult to answer and there were initiatives whereby people were rewarded for using alternative modes of transport. Members were advised that a couple of schemes were being explored for secure electric bike stores where expensive bikes could be stored securely.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that dwell times had reduced dramatically in Apton Road and Basbow Lane car parks in Bishop's Stortford, and the dwell time in Northgate End had increased. He said that a third phase of the strategy was charging on an emissions-based tariff structure.

Members commented on the responsiveness of the parking team in the context of requests from councillors or residents for support across East Herts. Some concerns had been expressed by sports clubs and community organisations which were located adjacent to car parks. A concern was expressed about a counterproductive situation where people discouraged from using car parks and then parking on street causing complaints from residents. There was a need for a significant review in that regard.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability talked about the impact of any action having unplanned consequences and there was no parking policy that could affect or prevent inconsiderate parking by the public. He said policies were in place to police inconsiderate parking.

A question was asked about BA1 and a review of the all-day parking tariffs option for some town centre car parks to better utilize car parking spaces for shoppers. Comments were made about consultation with the workers in the town who would find it more difficult if all day parking charges were reviewed and was the council

going to talk consulting with town centre workers or their representatives.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that reduced charges had been extended for town centre workers in Bishop's Stortford and charges had been reduced in Northgate End for all residents using that facility. A similar approach had been taken in Old London Road in Hertford and there were ongoing discussions with the BID and active engagement to explore the option of residential and business permits.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability confirmed that as regards emissions-based parking, this had worked elsewhere, and the issue was the pay and display machines were not new and whilst we recognize that they are they served a really useful purpose as not everyone used electronic payments. He said that a more limited number of more modern payment machines which were capable of linking to the DVLA databases allowing the rate to be set automatically based upon the car type.

The Chair reminded the committee that it was for the committee to shape recommendations for future priorities for the Executive to consider. He said that first one he had noted down was for emissions-based car parking rates.

A question was asked about car clubs and where the council was in that regard and could this be taken forward in collaboration with other companies. The Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services said that the previous car club operated from Wallfields, supported by a central government grant, had not worked financially as the demand from private users was insufficient to cover the cost of the extra insurance and maintenance. He also mentioned the logistically challenges for residents using the cars in an out-of-town location. Members were advised that this was an option that could be explored going forward for Old River Lane or Northgate End in Bishop's Stortford.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability commented on the possibility of a mechanism within an RPZ where there were discounted spaces on offer for a car share scheme. A number of houses could club together and there would one vehicle for which there would be a reserved space at a reduced rate within the RPZ.

There was a discussion around the future impact of significant expansion of Stansted Airport and the current signage and parking monitoring in Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth. The Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services said that discussions were ongoing with MAG about recognising this issue and whether funding could be forthcoming about residents permit zones and the forward plan for new permit zones.

The Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services commented the future options for the top floor of the Northgate End Car Park, as this had been closed for a while. Members were advised that RPZs had to be hyper local and there had to be consultation and there was a threshold for future considerations of an RPZ, and there also had to be consideration of the knock-on impacts in terms of the displacement of parking.

Members discussed the possibility of single hours being permitted on single yellow lines, and the enforcement officers knowing when this was across the district. A concern was expressed about badly maintained cars causing a lot of emissions.

Councillor Nicholls proposed and Councillor Swainston seconded, a motion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have reviewed progress made to date in respect of the Parking Strategy and the Executive be asked to consider the following:

- emissions-based car parking rates.
- impact and monitoring of unintended consequences of the proposed changes

- single yellow line restrictions changed from all day to a single specific hour
- promote resident and business permits more to help increase uptake of the scheme and to help reduce parking costs for regular users of the car parks.

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

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have reviewed the progress made to date in respect of the Parking Strategy and the Executive be asked to consider the following:

- emissions-based car parking rates.
- impact and monitoring of unintended consequences of the proposed changes
- single yellow line restrictions changed from all day to a single specific hour
- promote resident and business permits more to help increase uptake of the scheme and to help reduce parking costs for regular users of the car parks.

381 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) POLICY REVIEW

The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance submitted a report that updated the Committee on the Council's recent IPCO inspection. The report sought Member approval of the RIPA policy.

Members were advised that the Regulation of the Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) was a piece of legislation that allowed local authorities to make use of covert surveillance for the purposes of investigations. The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance said that in reality the council did not use this legislation and neither did most other local authorities.

Members were advised that irrespective of the above reality; it was important that robust policies and

procedures were in place and that both officers and members were aware of the powers and that they could be used at some point.

The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance advised that the Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office (IPCO) inspects local authorities every three years, and with the last review being in 2022 the next scheduled inspection had taken place in 2025 on the 12 September. He said that the IPCO was generally happy that the council's RIPA policy was up to date but noted that it had not been before members for a number of years. The IPCO also remarked that Authorising Officers had not undergone RIPA training for a while and that this should be addressed at the earliest opportunity.

Members were invited to review appendix B and were advised that the report would also go forward to the Executive on 24th March 2026. Authorising Officers had also been booked in for specific RIPA training on the 30 June 2026.

The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance answered a number of questions from the committee.

The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance said that there were forms and links to forms whereby the council had to set out the case for using RIPA powers.

Councillor Andrews proposed and Councillor Williams seconded, a motion that the report be received and any observations from Members be forwarded to the Executive by the Director of Legal, Policy and Governance.

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

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received; and

(B) any observations from Members be forwarded to the Executive by the Director of Legal, Policy and Governance.

382 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee Support Officer submitted the work programme report and Members were invited to consider and determine the work programme going forward. He referred to the workshop held on 5 March 2026 and said that the topic of Sustainable Development might not now come forward for scrutiny and that the AI topic would now be discussed on 9 June 2026.

Members were advised that the matter of sewage discharge into rivers could come before the committee in June or September. The Committee Support Officer said that the members present at the workshop mentioned receiving an update on BEAM. He reiterated that the Chief Executive had confirmed that it would be premature for Overview and Scrutiny to consider local government reform before January 2027.

The Committee Support Officer summarised the other topics that had been mentioned during the workshop including the council being a listening council, the consultation around the new Community Governance Reviews in Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford and the assets held by the council.

The Committee Support Officer said that the Director for Communities had said that a topic for consideration for adding to the work programme, following a discussion he had with the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, was the consideration of progress against the Housing Strategy action plan. The Committee could consider the 2025/26 end of year position, which would be known by the end of April, and the committee could consider this matter after that.

The Director for Communities had also mentioned that East Herts was looking to establish a charity regarding external funding towards arts and cultural activities in East Herts, and he had requested that this matter be added to the work programme.

The Committee discussed the work programme and the future topics. Councillor Andrews proposed, and Councillor Holt seconded a motion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme, as amended, be agreed. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

> **RESOLVED** – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme, as amended, be agreed.

383 FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE

There were no items for Executive feedback. The Leader said that there would be presentations in more detail at future meetings.

384 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (IF REQUIRED)

There was no urgent part two business.

385 URGENT ITEMS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.51 pm

Chairman .....

Date .....

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