MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE 2026, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Dunlop (Chairman).
Councillors D Andrews, R Buckmaster, C Brittain, M Butcher, E Buckmaster, S Bull, V Burt, R Carter, N Clements, M Connolly, S Copley, N Cox, B Crystall, A Daar, T Deffley, J Dumont, V Glover-Ward, M Goldspink, C Hart, G Hill, D Hollebon, A Holt, S Hopewell, C Horner, T Hoskin, S Marlow, G McAndrew, S Nicholls, A Parsad-Wyatt, C Redfern, V Smith, T Stowe, M Swainston, S Watson, C Wilson, J Wyllie, D Woollcombe, J Jones and J Thomas.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Stephanie Tarrant	-	Assistant Director for Democracy, Elections and Information Governance
Brian Moldon	-	Director for Finance, Risk and Performance
Sara Saunders	-	Director for Place
Helen Standen	-	Chief Executive

1 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 – 10 June 2026.

It was noted that there had been a recent change within the Conservative Group, with Aubrey Holt appointed as the new Group Leader. Councillor Holt paid tribute to Councillor Bob Deering, who had stood down after three years as Group Leader. Thanks were expressed for his hard work, dedication and leadership, both to the Group and to the wider district. Councillor Holt shared that it was an honour to take on the role of Group Leader and acknowledged the responsibility it carried. He confirmed that the Group's focus would remain on representing local residents.

The Chairman also recorded thanks to Councillor Deering.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adams, Boylan, Deering, Devonshire, Jacobs, Townsend, Willcocks and Williams.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 EXECUTIVE REPORT - 2 JUNE 2026

The Leader of the Council presented a report setting out recommendations to the Council made by the Executive at its meeting on 2 June 2026.

4 LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE AND NOTICE OF INTENTION TO COMMENCE LOCAL PLAN PREPARATION

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report and explained that East Herts Council had a statutory duty to maintain an up-to-date Local Plan which would guide development and was central to setting out the spatial strategy, planning policies and land allocations. Members were advised that the Government had introduced a new plan-making system in November 2025, with regulations coming into force on 25

March 2026, including a statutory 30-month timetable and gateway assessments.

The report was presented as the first formal step in implementing this framework, initiating the preparatory phase and seeking approval to publish the Local Plan timetable and Notice of Intention, which would establish key milestones, ensure transparency and formally commence the plan-making process in line with national guidance. It was further noted that, despite uncertainty regarding local government reorganisation, progressing the Local Plan would ensure an up-to-date planning framework and a robust evidence base for future arrangements.

Councillor Glover-Ward, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. Councillor Goldspink seconded the proposal.

Members suggested that the timetable remained indicative, with a typical minimum period of approximately 36 months required to adoption and highlighted that concerns persisted with regards to the five-year housing land supply and the implications of the tilted balance. It was suggested that the Council write to Government to seek recognition of progress on the District Plan and to secure protection from speculative development, particularly given that major schemes were already underway locally. Members heard that engagement with Government was ongoing, and that existing or emerging plans were usually completed in areas moving to unitary authorities, and that coordination across authorities was already taking place.

Members raised queries regarding the role and membership of the District Planning Executive Panel. It was confirmed that the Executive Member for Planning and Growth chaired the Panel alongside the Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Services and that all Councillors could attend and participate in the Panel’s discussions.

Members commented on the significant workload required within the proposed timescales, particularly in the context of Local Government Reorganisation, with concerns about pressures on staff and potential impacts on service delivery. It was confirmed that the planning policy team responsible for progressing the plan were largely separate from the development management function and that government grant funding would be available to support the 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) the East Herts Local Plan Timetable, attached at Appendix A, be approved for publication; and

(B) the Notice of Intention to Commence the East Herts Local Plan, attached at Appendix B, be published on the Council's website.

4 LOCAL PLAN SCOPING CONSULTATION

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report and explained that following the publication of the Local Plan timetable, the scoping consultation represented the third stage of the plan-making process and would be undertaken in accordance with Government regulations.

The report sought agreement to the consultation document, engagement approach and its distribution, with the consultation forming part of the four-month preparatory period prior to the formal 30-month plan timetable. It was noted that the consultation would run for four weeks from 11 June to 10 July 2026, exceeding the minimum requirement and would enable early, high-level engagement with statutory bodies, stakeholders and residents.

Members were advised that responses would focus on key strategic issues, including plan content and methods of engagement, with the consultation document structured around concise questions to encourage focused feedback. It was further noted that the outcomes would inform subsequent stages of plan preparation, with a further report to be brought forward ahead of the next phase of engagement in 2027.

Councillor Glover-Ward, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. Councillor Copley seconded the proposal.

Members discussed the need to maximise awareness and participation in the scoping consultation, particularly among residents without digital access and emphasised that communication should extend beyond online channels.

It was suggested that town and parish councils be formally engaged to support wider communication, and Members highlighted their own role in promoting the consultation within their wards and communities. In response, it was confirmed that a briefing for town and parish councils had been arranged and that councillors were requested to act as community ambassadors, supported by existing communications activity.

Concerns were raised that the proposed four-week consultation period, during a busy time of year, may limit engagement and that a longer duration could provide greater opportunity for residents and local councils to participate. It was noted that previous consultations in the district had achieved comparatively strong response rates and that whilst the consultation period was constrained by timetable requirements, further opportunities for engagement would follow as the plan progressed, particularly at more detailed stages.

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. It was noted that Councillor Hart abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED – that (A) Subject to the publication of the Notice to Commence Local Plan Preparation and the Local Plan Timetable, the East Herts Local Plan – Scoping Consultation document (Appendix A) is made available to relevant stakeholders and the wider community to begin a discussion about the
district's new Local Plan, and to seek comments in accord with the Regulations;

(B) Engagement on the Scoping Consultation document should commence, taking place between June 11 and July 10 2026, through a range of different forums, including online on the Council's website; and

(C) Any minor amendments required to the content of the Scoping Consultation document prior to the consultation period be delegated to the Director of Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth; and

(D) A further report detailing any feedback is prepared for Executive following engagement, with the intention of informing the Local Plan content and evidence stages of the plan-making process.

4 LOCAL PLAN SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL (SA) / STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) SCOPING REPORT

The Executive Member for Planning and Growth presented the report and explained that the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) were separate but complementary processes required to be undertaken alongside the Local Plan. The SA, required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, assessed the extent to which the emerging plan, when considered against reasonable alternatives, would support environmental, social and economic objectives, whilst identifying opportunities for improvement and mitigating potential adverse impacts. The SEA, undertaken in accordance with the relevant Regulations, focused specifically on likely significant environmental effects.

It was noted that the scoping document identified relevant plans, baseline conditions and future trends and established a framework of objectives against which policies and site options would be tested. Members were informed that statutory consultees would be consulted at the same time as the wider public, in line with the Local Plan scoping exercise and that the findings would help shape, refine and monitor the plan.

Councillor Glover-Ward, the Executive Member for Planning and Growth, proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. Councillor Swainston seconded the proposal.

Members sought clarification on how the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was being incorporated into the Local Plan, including its influence on the call for sites process and whether relevant agencies had been engaged. It was confirmed that the LNRS formed part of the evidence base and that matters such as biodiversity net gain were being considered alongside it.

It was confirmed that population projections were based on ONS data and Members were encouraged to contribute further during the consultation period given the iterative nature of the process.

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) subject to the publication of the 'Notice to Commence Local Plan Preparation and the Local Plan Timetable', the content of the SA/SEA Scoping document (Appendix A) is approved;

(B) the SA/SEA Scoping document be formally consulted upon with the Environment Agency (EA), Historic England (HE) and Natural England (NE) in accordance with statutory requirements;

(C) That subject to the approval of the 'Local Plan Scoping Consultation', the SA/SEA Scoping document will be made available alongside the Local Plan Scoping Consultation, and will include a period of activity between 11 June 2026 and 10 July 2026 through a range of different forums, including online on the Council's website; and

(D) Any minor amendments required to the content of the SA/SEA Scoping document prior to the consultation period be delegated to the Director of Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Growth.

5 PROPOSAL FROM MILLSTREAM PROPERTY INVESTMENTS LTD TO SELL THE COMPANY TO ENABLE DISPOSAL OF ALL ITS PROPERTIES

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability presented the report and explained that following the Council's February 2025 resolution for Millstream Property Investments Limited to dispose of its property portfolio, an approach had subsequently been received from a prospective purchaser expressing interest in acquiring the entire portfolio. Negotiations had progressed and an offer was received which was considered to represent fair value.

The company therefore sought consent from the Council, as sole shareholder, to dispose of the company as a whole, in line with the original intention to liquidate its investment. Members were advised that approval was sought only for the principle of disposal, not the sale price or purchaser. It was further noted that disposal of the company offered financial advantages, including earlier capital receipt, reduced borrowing and associated costs.

Councillor Brittain, the Executive Member for Financial Sustainability, proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report. Councillor Goldspink seconded the proposal.

Members reiterated their support for the principle of disposing of the Millstream assets, as previously agreed, but expressed concern at the delay in progressing disposals over the preceding period and the impact this had on the Council's financial position. It was suggested that slower action and changing market conditions had reduced the effectiveness of the original approach of selling properties individually. In response, it was clarified that the original strategy had been to dispose of properties gradually as they became vacant, in part to avoid displacing tenants and that lower than anticipated tenant turnover had slowed progress.

It was further noted that the proposed sale of the company represented an unexpected opportunity, enabling properties to be sold with tenants in situ and delivering a more efficient outcome. Members acknowledged the advantages of the revised approach and expressed support for proceeding.

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) acting as Millstream's sole shareholder, Council uses its reserved power, under the Shareholder Agreement with the company, to consent to Millstream's request to sell

the company in pursuit of the shareholder's existing resolution that the company disposes of all of its properties.

<u>The meeting closed at 7.55 pm</u>

Chairman	....
Date	....