

Council
12 October 2023

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL held on Thursday 12 October 2023 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors

M.Birleson, J.Bond, S.Bonfante, J.Boulton, S.Boulton, J.Broach, L.Chesterman, J.Cragg, L.Crofton, H.Goldwater, S.Goldwater, R.Grewal, A.Hellyer, M.Holloway, D.Jones, S.Kasumu, J.Lake, F.Marsh, G.Michaelides, G.Moore, L.Musk, A.Nix, D.Panter, R.Platt, J.Quinton, T.Rowse, B.Sarson, P.Shah, M.Siewniak, J.Skoczylas, C.Stanbury, F.Thomson, K.Thorpe, R.Trigg, S.Tunstall, F.Wachuku, C.Watson, J.Weston and P.Zukowskyj

OFFICIALS PRESENT: K.Ng, Chief Executive
R.Baker, Executive Director (Finance & Transformation)
C Barnes, Executive Director (Place)
S.McDaid, Service Director (Resident & Neighbourhood)
C.Cade, Governance Services Manager

25. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

26. MINUTES SILENCE

Full Council participated in a minutes silence for people around the world suffering.

27. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs Scott, Kingsbury, Smith, Thusu, Ganney, Lass, Pace, McNamara and Mitchinson.

28. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

29. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

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No questions from the public were received.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillors J. Bond, S. Boulton and P. Zukowskyj each declared as Members of Hertfordshire County Council.

31. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcement from the Mayor

“Thank you to those who attended my first couple of charity events, an Afternoon Tea in August and a Curry night earlier this month.

Amazingly, we raised £916 and £881 totalling to £1,797 for my two extremely worthy local charities, the Hatfield Food Bank and the New Zion Christian Fellowship Foodbank, both help with providing emergency food to the people in crisis.

I sincerely hope that you will be able to come along to my next event, which will be a charity quiz night on Friday 1st of December at Campus West. More details on how to book will be sent out shortly.

Following on from the successful Youth Awards in March and the Mayors Civic Awards in May, I am delighted to launch the new One Welwyn Hatfield Community Awards 2024.

Welwyn Hatfield has some amazing residents who all contribute to improving the lives of other residents and their communities. The new awards will recognise the breadth of talent and commitment across the borough and will acknowledge and thank the people in our communities that go above and beyond in providing an atmosphere of celebration and pride.

The award categories will cover sport, youth, culture, environment, climate, health, business and many more and we hope that residents will get involved by nominating these local heroes whether they be stars of their local neighbourhood or quiet heroes. The deadline for the nomination will close on Friday 15 December and the winners will be announced at a special awards ceremony held at Campus West on Wednesday 28 February 2024.

Full details could be viewed on our website.”

Announcement from Leader of Council regarding bus service provision in the borough & knife crime

“We note the recent announcement of the £2 cap on bus fares have been extended to the end of 2024. But we also note that the residents of this borough may not benefit much from it as there is simply not a decent bus network serving our communities. I have recently been told that the Bus Service Improvement

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Plan for Hertfordshire does not identify our borough as an area of focus. This is extremely concerning, and we know other colleagues from the Joint Administration have also raised concerns previously about the lack of bus service provision in the Borough. We will therefore be writing to Hertfordshire County Council and the Department of Transport asking for a commitment that the bus network in Welwyn Hatfield will benefit from future rounds of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding and we will invite the Leader of the Opposition to also sign the letter.

I'm sure all involved with this council were as shocked and saddened as I by the death of Elianne Andam on the 27th September, the 15th young person to lose their life through violence this year in London alone.

Just a few days ago, on 4th October, a knife-violence incident in Hatfield resulted in the wounding of a victim and earlier this week just a few miles away another two knife violence incidents saw multiple young people wounded. Our thoughts are will all the victims and their friends and families.

Knife crime really is becoming a scourge in our communities and our country. This Council and this administration is committed to do all it can to reduce knife crime and we commit to working with all relevant partners and stakeholders to try and keep our young people safe.

Our Community Safety Team have been working hard already, engaging with all across our communities, and I know they are intending to begin, very shortly, sending out a regular safety bulletin to schools, community groups and further and higher education institutions across the Borough, which will include updates on knife crime, vaping and similar issues. I'll be seeking updates on what else we will be doing to reduce violent crime, including knife crime, going forward. We need everyone in our communities to take violent crime, including knife crime, seriously. Everyone in our community should be able to feel, and indeed be, safe in Welwyn Hatfield. Let's come together and redouble our efforts to try to remove this scourge from Welwyn Hatfield. Thank you.”
”

Announcement from Deputy Leader of Council regarding free parking days

“Since taking control, the joint administration has been looking to introduce a number of new initiatives. One of those we have previously mentioned is using targeted lifting of parking restrictions to encourage more people to visit the amazing businesses and retailers that we have in both of our Town Centres. We have worked hard with Officers to identify opportunities, and I am delighted to announce the following:

On Saturday 2nd December, we will be offering free parking in Welwyn Garden City at Hunters Bridge, Campus East Lower, Campus West and Cherry Tree car parks. This coincides with small business Saturday, a nationwide campaign to promote independent and small retailers, and we will be working with the BID to ensure that our business can capitalise on this.

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On Saturday 16th December, we will be offering free parking in Hatfield at Kennelwood Lane and The Common Multi-Storey Car Park. We have partnered with local businesses and will be handing out a limited number of adult and children's goodie-bags. There will also be Christmas activities for children.

We will continue to work on initiatives that promote our wonderful and diverse businesses within the borough, and I am pleased to be able to introduce this initiative. I would also like to thank my cabinet colleagues for their support with this.”

Announcement from Executive Member (Community) regarding Big Summer 2023 and Black History Month

“I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank members of the public and fellow Councillors for their positive comments on the activities that formed this year's big summer programme of events. I remember just last week, Councillor Birlson and was telling me how much our grandchildren enjoyed the events put on King Joseph Playing Fields. As most Members will know, Big Summer is now in its seventh year and it is a three week campaign hosted by this Council that provides free and low cost activity to the residents of our borough. This year Big Summer ran from 24th of July to the 13th of August and attracted a record number of activities and participants, there really was something for everyone and included arts, crafts and sports activities. In total, there were 314 activities offered across 19 indoor and outdoor locations 13 in Hatfield and 19 in Welwyn.

The activity programme catered for young people aged between five and 19 years old and included basketball football paddleboarding, graffiti, art, kayaking, climbing even DJ and music sessions to name but a few, so there really was something for everyone and it was organised by the community partnerships team, a team which does such amazing work in our borough they worked in partnerships with local groups, clubs and organisations to develop the programme as well as delivered directly delivering 79 activities. In total over 8,000 people took part in the programme, the biggest number to date.

I am sure the whole chamber will want to join me in thanking the team for their work, they really go above and beyond to support our residents and enrich our communities and the positive social value they bring shouldn't be understated.

I just want to end, if I may. Today I attended the first of these councils, black history events, where I got this lovely African print badge and thanks to the exhibitors and all the other Councillors who attended.

I just want to make members and members of the public aware that we have a fantastic event running at Mill Green Museum this Saturday from midday until 5 pm to celebrate 75 years of Windrush, and we have a full day of celebrations of workshops, food activities and a carnival really bringing together the best of community spirits and alongside the Windrush at 75 exhibition, there'll be children's story time, a presentation of Windrush inspired fabrics from artist and printmaker Karen Hamilton-Bannis craft activities and Caribbean themed food

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from the Middle East, kitchen and so yeah. Thank you very much, and I hope to see as many of you there,

Announcement from Executive Member (Environment) regarding grass cutting

“In my role as Executive Member for Environment, I want to provide an update about grass, cutting this season. A similar statement will be issued in next week's edition of the Welwyn Hatfield Times. You will all be aware there was a challenging start to the season and there was much feedback from residents and councillors raising their concerns. As a result of this feedback, I've worked hard with officers and a senior management team at Continental Landscapes to drive home the necessary improvements to the frequency and standard of the grass courts. I am pleased to be able to share with you that we have now seen the grass cutting being completed on schedule and that an improvement in the quality of standards has been seen, though there is still much more work to be done, I am confident residents will start seeing improvements.

In the coming weeks, the ground maintenance team will be focusing on winter bedding being planted and the beds being prepared for now, in both Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City's town centre. Over the winter, there will be a focus on leaf clearance and other winter works, as you will know I, as well as the joint administration, have a strong commitment towards biodiversity. While one recent example of my commitment towards this is the planting of 250 square metres of bulbs at Woodall open space, these bulbs are wintered to summer mix and a bee surprised mix. They are pollinator friendly, makes it which are good for biodiversity. I would continue to look at ways to increase biodiversity in our open spaces.

As you may be, where I was delighted that we were very successful in this year's Anglia in Bloom competition, we won two gold Awards for Best Town, Welwyn Garden City and, overall best historical parks and gardens for Danesbury Nature Reserve. I look forward to achieving similar results next year. It was the aim of the joint administration to improve on what came before us and receiving two gold awards this year compared to silver last year is an example of that.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank officers, staff and volunteers for their hard work in driving improvements are delivering these fantastic achievements for the borough. Thank you.”

32. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

No questions were received by Members.

33. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CABINET

The Council considered a recommendation from the meeting of Cabinet on 10 October 2023.

33.1. Local Plan

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Following consideration at the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel on 5 October 2023, and Cabinet on 10 October 2023, the Council were asked to consider the adoption of the Local Plan and delegate authority to the Assistant Director (Planning) to make any further minor amendments.

The Planning Policy and Implementation Manager provided a presentation to Full Council to highlight the context set out in the report.

The proposals were moved, and seconded, by Councillors Quinton and Chesterman.

RESOLVED:

Council noted the content of the Inspector's Report on the Examination of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan (2016) alongside the appended Schedule of Main Modifications (Appendix 1 and 2 to this report) and his conclusion that the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan (2016) provides an appropriate basis for the planning of the Borough provided that a number of Main Modifications are made to it.

The Mayor read the second recommendation as set out below:

"The Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan (2016), which was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination and amended by the Main Modifications (Appendix 2) and Additional Modifications (Appendix 4), be adopted as part of the statutory development plan for Welwyn Hatfield Borough (in accordance with Section 23 (3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended))"

At this point in the meeting Councillor Michaelides and Sarsons requested a vote was taken on the recommendation.

RESOLVED:

(FOR 32, AGAINST 4, ABSTAIN 3)

Full Council agreed the recommendation that the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan (2016), which was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination and amended by the Main Modifications (Appendix 2) and Additional Modifications (Appendix 4), be adopted as part of the statutory development plan for Welwyn Hatfield Borough (in accordance with Section 23 (3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)).

Full Council agreed the recommendations:

1. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director (Planning), in consultation with the Executive Member for planning, to make changes to text, graphics and layout of the Plan of a minor or inconsequential nature or in order to ensure consistency with the Main Modifications (Appendix 2) and Additional Modifications Schedules (Appendix 4) to this report, as considered appropriate and necessary prior to the publication of the final version of the

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adopted Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan (2016) and associated Policies Map in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)”.

2. Council note that, on adoption of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan (2016) the saved policies of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (adopted 2005) and associated Proposals Maps will have been replaced and will not be used for decision-making thereafter.

34. CONSTITUTION REVIEW

The report of the Executive Director (Finance) set out the proposed amendments through tracked changes to the Council’s Constitution.

The proposal was moved, and seconded, by Councillors Zukowskyj and Chesterman.

RESOLVED:

(38 FOR, 0 AGAINST and 1 ABSTAIN)

The Council agreed the revised Constitution and correction from Estates Management Scheme to Estate Management Scheme.

35. NOTICES OF MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 16

The following motion was moved by Councillor A.Hellyer, and seconded by Councillor Lake:

“At a recent meeting of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council’s Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel it was noted that provisions of the Environment Act 2021 for mandatory minimum Biodiversity Net Gain requirements will soon be brought into force for development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and that these requirements will stand at a net biodiversity gain of 10%.

It was also noted that if the Council wishes to mandate increases beyond this minimum or to create a proximity requirement for biodiversity sites this would need to be facilitated by the provision of biodiversity projects. Welwyn Hatfield’s Biodiversity Action Plan was last updated in 2004 ahead of the 2005 District Plan and is therefore not designed to integrate with this recent legislation.

Provision of such projects is required because it is not always possible to achieve the minimum biodiversity gain within a particular development site – so off-site enhancement projects are a needed alternative to on-site measures. Without such provision by the Council these projects can be located far outside the Borough as it would not be possible to create an enforceable proximity requirement. Creating a biodiversity net gain project register would allow this council to provide and facilitate such projects locally for the benefit of residents of Welwyn Hatfield.

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Therefore, in the context of a new Local Plan, which supersedes the old District Plan, and with the need to increase biodiversity in response to loss of valuable greenbelt land, this council moves to:

1. As a statutory planning authority, create a new Biodiversity Net Gain Project Register with the joint aims of: a. Providing biodiversity projects within the Borough so that a proximity requirement can be introduced for off-site BNG. b. Facilitating a higher net biodiversity gain than the statutory 10% (subject to revision by CPPP) for new developments from the implementation of the Local Plan Review.
2. As a landowner, put forward potential biodiversity projects that will allow the Council to provide Biodiversity Units.

To these ends, this council will:

- Put out a call for biodiversity projects from January to March. □ Nominate potential projects from the Council's own property.
- Carry out an assessment of nominated projects (from WHBC's own land and from private landowners) from the start of the next municipal year.
 - Assessment of a site carried out by Hertfordshire County Council as part of their BNG Site Matching scheme should be regarded as sufficient for this purpose.
- Revise policies implemented by the 2004 Biodiversity Action Plan to bring them up to date, with such updates proceeding through Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel

To allow for scrutiny of the new BNG Project Register, the responsible committee for the Register as a whole and related policies concerning development will be the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel. Individual projects brought forward by WHBC as a landowner will also sit with this committee until the Cabinet Climate Change Panel has been established to replace the Climate Change Member Group.”

Councillor Quinton proposed an amendment to the motion, which was seconded by Councillor Grewal.

The amended motion is set out below:

“At a recent meeting of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Councils Cabinet and Parking Panel it was noted that provisions of the Environment Act 2021 for mandatory minimum Biodiversity Net Gain requirements will soon be brought into force for development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and that these requirements will stand at a net biodiversity gain of 10%.

It was also noted that if the Council wishes to mandate increases beyond this minimum or to create a proximity requirement for biodiversity sites this would need to be facilitated by the provision of biodiversity projects. Welwyn Hatfield's Biodiversity Action Plan was last updated in 2004 ahead of the 2005 District Plan and is therefore not designed to integrate with this recent legislation.

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Therefore, in the context of a new Local Plan or a Local Plan review and with the need to increase biodiversity in response to well documented loss of natural habitat such as evidenced by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust "State of Nature" reports, this council moves to:

1. Encourage biodiversity net gain on site in the first instance, to maximise the potential benefit for nature and for communities and only consider off-setting of biodiversity net gain in exceptional circumstances.
2. Carry out a review into the practicalities of establishing a local list of sites suitable for biodiversity projects with the joint aims of:
 - a. Providing biodiversity projects within the Borough so that a proximity requirement for off-site BNG can be considered.
 - b. Facilitating a higher net biodiversity gain than the statutory 10% for new developments from the implementation of any new Local Plan or local plan review.
3. As a landowner, putting forward potential biodiversity projects that will allow the Council to provide biodiversity Units.

This review will need to consider resources, legal implications and best practice from other areas with a report to CPPP and cabinet within 6 months to enable the effect of national legislation to be understood.

- The review will consider the implications of putting out a call for biodiversity projects.
Consider the inclusion of projects from the councils own property.
- Put these recommendations to the most relevant committee(s) when produced."

On being put to the meeting the amendment to the motion was voted:

26 FOR the amendment to the motion

13 AGAINST the amendment to the motion

0 ABSENTATIONS amendment to the for the motion

The amendment to the motion was agreed and was considered by the meeting.

On being put to the meeting, the Council voted to:

39 FOR the motion

0 AGAINST the motion

0 ABSTAINATIONS from the motion

The motion was agreed.

36. URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters for discussion.

Meeting ended at 21:30