

Council
19 November 2018

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL held on Monday 19 November 2018 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors B.Fitzsimon (Mayor)
R.Trigg (Deputy Mayor)

D.Bell, J.Boulton, S.Boulton, H.Bower, J.Broach,
A.Chesterman, L.Chesterman, M.Cook, M.Cowan,
J.Cragg, S.Elam, J.Fitzpatrick, C.Gillett, S.Glick,
G.Hayes, P.Hebden, M.Holloway, T.Jackson-Mynott,
S.Kasumu, T.Kingsbury, M.Larkins, R.Lass, TM.Lyons,
P.Mabbott, S.Markiewicz, G.Michaelides, T.Mitchinson,
L.Musk, N.Pace, S.Roberts, A.Rohale, B.Sarson, P.Shah,
JP.Skoczylas, F.Thomson, K.Thorpe, S.Thusu, J.Weston,
S.Wrenn, P.Zukowskyj

OFFICIALS Chief Executive (R.Bridge)
PRESENT: Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) (K.Ng)
Corporate Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) (N.Long)
Corporate Director (Housing and Communities) (S.Russell)
Monitoring Officer (M.Martinus)
Head of Property Services (P.Gray)
Governance Services Manager (G.R.Seal)
Governance Services Officer (M.Lowe)
Senior Communications Officer (L.Bertram)

36. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M.Birleson, H.Bromley, J.Caliskan, K.Holman and H.Quenet.

37. MINUTES

The Minutes of the special Council meeting held on 23 October 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

38. APPOINTMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET

38.1. Appointment of the Leader of the Council

The Mayor called for nominations for the appointment of the Leader of the Council.

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Councillors S.Glick and D.Bell moved and seconded the appointment of Councillor T.Kingsbury as Leader of the Council.

There were no other nominations.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor T.Kingsbury be appointed as Leader of the Council.

38.2. Appointment of the Cabinet

The Mayor congratulated Councillor T.Kingsbury on his appointment and invited him to say a few words and introduce his Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of the Cabinet by the Leader as set out below be noted.

D.Bell (Deputy Leader and Executive Member, Resources)
S.Boulton (Executive Member, Environment and Planning)
T.Mitchinson (Executive Member, Leisure, Culture and Communications)
N.Pace (Executive Member, Housing and Community)
B.Sarson (Executive Member, Regeneration, Economic, Development and Partnerships)
F.Thomson (Executive Member, Governance and Public Health)

39. PETITIONS

The Mayor received a petition about the Lawn Cemetery in Southway, Hatfield which was presented by Miss Jade Doherty on behalf of the family of the late Simey Doherty who was buried in Hatfield Lawn Cemetery in May 2018.

The petition sought to make two exceptions to the Council's Lawn Cemetery guidelines for the Simey Doherty burial plot:

- to allow a variety of memorials to remain on the Simey Doherty plot prior to permanent memorials being arranged;
- to permit larger permanent memorials to fit with their cultural traditions.

As the petition contained more than 1500 signatures it was discussed by the Council in accordance with the Petition Scheme.

The report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) helped the Council to decide how to respond.

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The Cabinet had agreed in August 2018 to expand the remit of the Cross Party Crematorium Procurement Group to consider and make recommendations to it on the way forward for grave clearance at the Lawn Cemetery. Given that the recommendation of the Cross Party group would be considered by the Cabinet at a future meeting, it was suggested that the Council refer this to the Cabinet to then ask the Cross Party Crematorium Procurement Group to discuss the issues raised in the petition and recommend the way forward back to the Cabinet.

Having listened to the presentation of the petition and following discussion the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be recommended to consult the views of the Cross Party Crematorium Procurement Group on the issues raised in the petition before making a decision on the way forward for grave clearance at the Lawn Cemetery.

40. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

The Mayor called on Councillors T.Kingsbury and D.Bell to move and second the appointments of Members to Committees, as set out in Appendix "A" to the Agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the appointments of Members to Committees, as set out in Appendix "A" to the Agenda, be approved.

41. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

41.1. Question from Adam Robertson

"My record shows a progressing decline in help and now I'm potentially facing homelessness. I'm currently signed from work and pending treatment due to no fault of my own. Over this time I have proven I've been miss calculated in benefits after much pursuing. I have on record the very people in place to help and advice, insulting and abusing their position. During meetings with benefits officers I've been told its just a job to them and they don't have to agree with the system. I've had to clarify definitions of words that have led to misguidance and misinformation.

Does the council have a structured policy which officers follow and could this be shared with affected residents?"

Answer

The question was answered by the Councillor D.Bell, Deputy Leader:-

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“Thank you for your question Mr Robertson, and thank you for taking the time to attend this meeting in person. As this is a public meeting, I am sure you will appreciate that I am unable to go into detail on individual cases.

Nonetheless the Council will always try to offer as much assistance as possible and I understand that a number of meetings have been held between the benefits team and yourself to discuss your circumstances. A further response was sent to you last week, which indicates that assistance would also be available from Citizens Advice.

I can assure you that the Council does have guidelines for officers to follow and I will ask for a copy of these to be sent to you.

I hope this is helpful. Thank you once again for taking the time to come to this meeting.”

41.2. Question from Rosie Newbigging

“As Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Welwyn Hatfield, I have been talking to local residents and seen the shocking state of local Council/social housing in the borough. I have seen evidence of damp, mould, sub standard living conditions and health and fire safety at risk. Specifically when will the Council deliver the very urgent action plan negotiated with tenant representatives for essential upgrading at Queensway House? This includes the fitting of life saving fire sprinklers in the tower block. 18 months after the tragedy of Grenfell Tower, does the Council agree with me that it is an outrage that these sprinklers have not yet been fitted?”

Answer

The question was answered by Councillor T.Kingsbury, Leader:-

“Thank you for raising the question.

I disagree that the housing stock is in a “shocking state” and categorically deny that here is “health and fire safety at risk”. Any reports of damp / mould are investigated and where appropriate, remedial work is carried out and advice given to residents regarding ventilation and heating. A programme of Fire Risk Assessments is regularly carried out and any necessary work arranged. If any resident has a specific concern I would ask that this is reported to the Repairs Service Centre for it to be followed up.

With regards to Queensway House, residents and Members have been fully briefed on many occasions – in person, by letter and public meeting – regarding progress on the enhanced fire protection work following the Grenfell tragedy. The work to the block has involved complex design challenges, engagement with third parties such as the Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Building Control, and the procurement of a ventilation and retro-fitted sprinkler system. All of this work had to comply with Government advice.

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Residents have been individually consulted regarding any particular concerns and council officers have worked closely with residents to address their concerns, and minimise any disruption.

There were elements of work – such as the infilling of the bathroom windows – that were required immediately at the request of the Fire & Rescue Service. Programming of the enhanced measures will aim to keep any disruption and inconvenience to a minimum and residents will continue to be consulted and advised.”

41.3. Question from Philip Burrows

“We want to know that despite having a secure tenancy with Notting Hill/Genesis based on your Development Management Committee meeting last month are we going to be allowed to stay, because we have just been ignored by the Council and our Landlord.”

The Leader asked Councillor S.Boulton, Executive Member (Environment and Planning) to answer:-

Answer

“The Development Management Committee on 11 October 2018 considered a variation-of-condition application relating to Stanborough Close, which concerned the age of people who could live in the units. The item was ultimately deferred by the committee. The matter arose because there are currently a number of tenants in the units who are below the statutory retirement age and therefore in technical breach of the planning condition.

The Council will very soon write to Notting Hill Genesis to confirm that the planning service will not enforce against any non-compliance in relation to any person or persons who currently living in the units, as it is not in the public interest. The letter will also advise that Notting Hill Genesis should not nominate any future residents who would breach the condition by virtue of their age.”

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillors S.Boulton, L.Chesterman and P.Zukowskyj declared non-pecuniary interests in items on the Agenda as appropriate as Members of Hertfordshire County Council.

43. ANNOUNCEMENTS

43.1. Councillor Margaret Birleson

The Council joined the Mayor in expressing their condolences and sympathies to Margaret and her family on the recent sad loss of her husband Mick.

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43.2. Awards to the Council

The Chief Executive was pleased to announce that firstly, the Council had made the shortlist for two awards. The Local Government Chronicle Awards recognised excellence in local government and the Council was shortlisted alongside eight other authorities for the 'Driving Growth' category, for the renewal and regeneration work in Hatfield. Stuart Pearson, the Council's Head of Housing Operations, had also been shortlisted in the Rising Star category.

Secondly, RollerCity at Campus West was a regional finalist in the Day Out With The Kids Family Favourite Awards. Day Out With The Kids was one of the leading and most trusted websites for family activities in the UK, with over 6,500 attractions listed. RollerCity was the only purpose-built roller-skating rink in Hertfordshire.

43.3. Charity Wine Tasting

The Mayor invited Councillors to join her for a tutored fine wines tasting evening in the Terrace Suite at Campus West on Monday 17 December from 7.00pm.

Tickets costing £20.00 each were available from the Mayor's Office.

The Mayor was also pleased to report that her Indian curry night on 13 November raised £600 for her charity the Riding for the Disabled Association, Digswell Place Group and she thanked Councillors for their support.

44. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Notice of the following questions by Members had been received:-

44.1. Question to the Executive Member (Housing) from Councillor Rebecca Lass

"You recently mentioned at Special Council that we had received an award and a subsequent letter regarding it. Could more details be provided and an update on what the future holds for our Affordable Housing Programme?"

Answer

The question was answered by the Leader, Councillor T.Kingsbury:-

"Thank you for your question.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council recently won the Hertfordshire Building Futures Award 2018 in the 'Design Excellence' category for our new affordable housing developments in Garden Avenue and Furzen Crescent, South Hatfield. The new Lime Tree Court and Lilac Close developments are the first direct builds for the council in more than 25 years. Not only have we provided 29 extra homes for local people in housing need, but in doing so we re-used the land

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which used to accommodate two under-utilised garage sites. The garage sites were an eye-sore and had become a magnet for anti-social behaviour.

The award judges commended the quality of design, saying that the homes “set a precedent for council development”.

We subsequently received a letter of congratulations from the Housing Minister and the innovation and design style of the two developments also led to the schemes being featured as Inside Housing’s ‘Development of the week’.

In recognising the continuing and increasing housing need in the borough the council intends to build on its success and develop more homes for local people. There are currently a number of projects in the pipeline which could result in hundreds of extra homes. These schemes are a combination of new development schemes, building on more garage sites, and regenerating sheltered housing. Our aim is always to provide more modern, affordable homes in a safe and attractive living environment. We are also seeking to increase the provision of temporary accommodation and we are looking at a number of ways to do this, including remodelling existing temporary accommodation and building or acquiring additional units.

The added benefit of building our own housing is that we can recycle right to buy receipts - 30% of the development cost can be met through existing right to buy receipts.

The government recently announced that the housing revenue account borrowing cap has been removed. This means that councils may borrow from the public works loan board if they wish to develop more affordable housing, providing they will generate sufficient rents from the council housing to re-pay the debt. This is very encouraging for councils because it means that there are now real opportunities to build more housing and control the type and quality of housing which is available to local people.

We continue to seek new opportunities to provide more housing and an exercise is under way to identify where there is any spare housing land to build on. So far the exercise seems positive and more information will be shared with Members when the project is complete. Members have also been provided with information on the council’s ‘Spot the Plot’ scheme, whereby they and officers are asked to come forward with any suggestions for redeveloping existing housing land, or adding in more homes to existing schemes.

We will of course continue to work with housing associations so that as many social rented homes as possible will be built, for the benefit of the people who live in our communities.

In addition to providing more social rented housing through the housing revenue account, the council is looking at how it can develop other types of housing so that it meets the needs of more people in the borough. We are seeing more and more people at risk of homelessness due to their private sector tenancies

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coming to an end. This includes families with children. We have commissioned a report which has found that thousands of households in the borough cannot afford full market housing but neither will they qualify to go on our housing needs register for social rented housing. There are other options which could be made available to them. For example a more secure model of market rent housing, giving households reassurance and quality, so that they may put down roots without having to buy. The council could also offer intermediate tenancies, whereby the rents are somewhere in between social and market levels. There are potentially other models available, such as Rent to Buy, which provides local people in housing need with the option to move into a home and when their circumstances improve, gradually buy the same property at a reduced rate, taking into account the amount of rent they have paid so far. In this way, there will be less need for a deposit.

We believe the options and opportunities going forward are exciting and will genuinely help provide much-needed homes for residents in our borough.”

44.2. Question to the Leader from Councillor James Broach

“Members will be aware that new HMO regulations came in to force on the 1 October, bringing in a requirement for a property with 5 or more unrelated occupants to be licenced. Could the relevant Executive Member please confirm how many new HMO’s were licenced between the 1 April and 1 October 2018, and how many licence HMO’s currently exist in Welwyn Hatfield?”

Answer

“Thank you for your question.

Between 1 April and 1 October I can report that we have issued 75 HMO Licences, 6 of which have been “new” - the rest renewals of previous licenses.

We currently have 355 properties with an HMO licence on our Public Register. All of these are properties that required a license under the old regime.

Since 1 October we have received 181 new licence applications. All licences are checked to see if they are valid in that the application form has been fully completed and that all the requisite certification has been submitted and is in order. The property is then inspected and consultation takes place with other relevant Council teams as part of the ‘fit and proper person’ checks.

Once the property has been inspected a draft licence is issued to the applicant incorporating the proposed standard and any bespoke licence conditions to which there is a 21 day period for representation. If there are no representations the final licence is issued which will usually run for five years. We would aim for the licence to be issued within four months of receiving a valid application.

In preparation for the extended HMO licensing, we undertook some analysis to predict the likely number of additional licensable properties that would result from

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the change. Private Sector Housing Stock Modelling that was undertaken by the Building Research Establishment in 2015 calculated that there were in the region of 2400 HMOs in the Borough. We used this and information we have gathered from previous inspections of HMOs to estimate that from the 2000 potentially licensable HMOs, we predicted around 700 additional licensable properties. This will bring the total licensable HMOs in the borough to approximately 1000 in total.

In readiness for the change in the law and the increased number of licenses required, the Private Sector Housing Team has been restructured and resources increased. An HMO licence attracts a fee and the projected additional income will be used to fund the additional resources; this means that we will not only be in a position to effectively administer the increase in licences but also undertake targeted proactive investigations into Landlords who fail to licence their properties and take formal action where appropriate.”

Councillor Broach in a supplementary question said it was good to hear so many landlords were signing up and noting that there were not lots of applications coming through for HMOs on the planning weekly list, asked if the call-in rules for Members had changed?

The Leader did not think so, but would check and let him know.

44.3. Question to the Leader from Councillor Simon Wrenn

“Given that the budget-setting process for 2019/20 has now started, is the Executive Member (Resources) in a position to satisfy members that this Council is on track to meet the budget targets for the current financial year, 2018/19”.

Answer

The Leader, Councillor T.Kingsbury asked the Deputy Leader, Councillor D.Bell to answer:-

“Thank you for your question Councillor Wrenn.

In the original 2018/19 budget, we projected a drawdown £100 thousand from General Fund balances. However, based upon the financial performance for the first 6 months of the year, as reported to Cabinet earlier this month, we now forecast a contribution to balances of £63 thousand, an improvement of £163 thousand. This is as a result of prudent financial management and in-year savings we have been able to make, as well as better than forecast income from our commercial property portfolio. This last point has been factored into next year’s budget setting process and is slightly better than the target for the General Fund.

Within the HRA, we are currently on target to achieve the 2018/19 budget.

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This satisfactory start to the financial year has put us in a sound position to for our 2019/20 budget preparations.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind Members of the forthcoming budget briefing due to take place in this Council Chamber on 28 November at 7:30pm as a first session with a second shortly after on a date to be arranged. This will be an opportunity to discuss some of the key developments in local government finance and to provide an update on our financial position.”

44.4. Question to the Leader from Councillor Lucy Musk

“When I reported a rough sleeper in WGC to the emergency out of hours contact number, I was told that no one could come out to see the person in question as the Council doesn’t routinely go out to find rough sleepers and the homeless person should call themselves. Thankfully after some persistence the young man was found a place to stay. Homelessness like illness does not adhere to the 9 to 5, so what are we doing to provide better access to help, specifically out of hours?”

Answer

“Thank you for your question and I am glad that you were able to help someone.

The council’s housing needs service operates an ‘Out of Hours’ service 365 days per year, 24/7. The team share this responsibility, which is in addition to their contracted working hours, on a rota basis, covering the service and providing advice and assistance. Where someone is homeless and it is established that the council may have a duty to house them, accommodation is provided. This will be based on contact either directly with the person who is homeless or with a statutory organisation such as the police or social services.

The council does provide a specialist outreach service (Resolve) to help rough sleepers. Staff from Resolve will attend site where someone is reported to be rough sleeping. If the report is made outside office hours, Resolve will be contacted and will attend the next working day (they do operate every other Saturday between 9AM and 3PM).

Resolve seek to engage with the person sleeping rough and where possible, the aim is to find them suitable accommodation as soon as possible. However there are a number of people who will not engage, either initially (until trust has been established) or in the longer term. Resolve and, where appropriate, the housing options team will continue to visit the person to find a resolution.

If a report of someone sleeping rough is made to our ‘Out of Hours’ service, the details will be passed to the housing options officer on duty and Resolve will be sent the information in order that they can visit on their next working day; usually, unless we can speak to the individual directly we may only be able to provide general advice; if we speak direct to the individual, then we can fully assess their circumstances and based on this, accommodation may be provided; where

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there is concern for the individual's wellbeing, advice will be given that the police are contacted, in order that a welfare check can be carried out.

As a general point, the council does not have a duty to house all people who are homeless and whilst we will provide as much help and advice as possible, to ensure someone is either prevented from becoming homeless or is directed to suitable accommodation where they are homeless, we don't directly house everyone who comes to us for assistance.

The Council, as well as funding the outreach service and a Housing First project, has recently agreed to provide funding which will support the setting up of a Night Shelter in Hatfield. The council has committed £270,000 to this project, which will provide a safe place for up to 15 people. In addition to this we have made an application to central government for funding to further support this initiative, including funding for specialist 'navigators' who will help support people who are or have been rough sleeping to find long term housing solutions.

The details for the call out service are available on the Council's website and are known to relevant services such as the police and social care; we are also part of a well-publicised national scheme called Streetlink. Any reports made to Streetlink, either through the website or helpline are sent directly to the Housing Options team."

Councillor Musk in a supplementary question said that if someone was found on a Friday night, they might have to wait until Monday or Tuesday and was this leaving a lot to Resolve which is a charity?

The Leader said that there is a partial out of hours service for vulnerable people.

44.5. Question to the Leader from Councillor Peter Hebden

"We have previously been told about problems caused by youth anti-social behaviour and in particular how this has impacted upon particular locations within the Borough, such as Woodhall shops and Welwyn Garden town centre. Could the portfolio holder for community safety please provide an update on the current situation locally and how the Community Safety Partnership to tackling this important issue."

The Leader asked Councillor B.Sarson, Executive Member (Regeneration, Economic Development and Partnerships) to answer:-

Answer

"Thank you very much for your question.

Over the past 18 months the Community Safety Partnership has worked very effectively to address youth related anti-social behaviour. The partnership has been keen to tackle these issues with a long term focus rather than just a quick fix.

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Several initiatives have been put in place such as holding Community Information Days in areas most affected – to provide community reassurance, strengthening of partnership groups, such as MAGPYE (multi agency group for prevention of youth exclusion), delivering educational sessions in local schools and colleges, setting out the risks of getting involved in youth ASB, drugs and gangs and training for professionals, to help them spot the signs of young people who are more at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.

The Partnership has attracted funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner which has paid for an audit of youth services locally and a youth survey - to gain a better understanding of needs and wants. Following 2,500 responses the results are currently being analysed, so we can better understand what and where we can provide more services/projects to suit young people.

PCC funding has been secured for a new project called Positive Pathways. This is open to self-referral or partner referral and helps support and divert young people who are involved or who are at risk of becoming involved in youth related ASB, along a more positive path.

Where appropriate, we continue to undertake home visits to young people in partnership with the police and/or youth worker. These home visits are sometimes the first stage in signing the young person up to an Acceptable Behaviour Contract, which usually lasts for 6 months and is signed by the parent/carer, the young person, a representative from the Council and Police and can stipulate certain sanctions such as a Curfew or areas where they have been asked not to visit except in the company of an adult or for a specific reason;

We continue to invest in positive activities for young people throughout the year. Moonlight Football recently received £10,000 funding from Awards for All, which allows us to continue this project on Friday nights.

Following a multi-agency problem solving approach to tackling ASB in the Woodall area, the CSP has been recognised with two accolades this year, firstly it came runner up in the Constabulary's Mick Fogarty Problem Solving Award and more recently it won a Chief Constable Award for its partnership work and problem solving.

45. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CABINET

The following recommendations from the meeting of the Cabinet on 6 November 2018 were considered:-

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45.1. Adoption of the Welwyn Hatfield Council Statement of Principles Under the Gambling Act 2005

The Cabinet considered the Council's Statement of Principles for a three year period commencing on 31 January 2019 as required by section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005.

Once adopted the Statement of Principles would form part of the decision making process for Council Members and Officers in the determination of applications for premises licences and permits. The Statement of Principles would also be used by the Courts should they be asked to consider an appeal against a Council Committee decision. The Statement of Principles followed the prescribed statutory format and was the subject of a consultation exercise. The draft Statement of Principles was approved for consultation release by the Environment Overview Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 June 2018 (Minute 11 refers).

It was moved by Councillor F.Thomson, seconded by Councillor T.Kingsbury and

RESOLVED:

That the Welwyn Hatfield Council Statement of Principles be adopted as set out in Appendix 1 for the next three years commencing on 31 January 2019.

45.2. Street Trading Policy

The Cabinet considered the new street trading policy detailing current practices and a new system for vacant pitches and town centre pitches.

The draft policy was approved for consultation release by the Environment Overview Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11 June 2018 (Minute 10 refers) and the Cabinet was now asked to recommend that the final policy be approved and recommended to the Council for adoption.

It was moved by Councillor F.Thomson, seconded by Councillor T.Kingsbury and

RESOLVED:

That the Street Trading Policy be adopted.

45.3. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20

The Cabinet considered the continuation of the scheme into 2019/20.

The Council's council tax support scheme replaced council tax benefits from April 2013 and was based on a broad framework agreed as part of a consultation undertaken with Hertfordshire County Council, the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner and other interested parties.

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Much of the old council tax benefits scheme was retained within the local support scheme and the Council had continued to protect pensioners, disabled claimants and claimants with children under five. This was achieved by calculating council tax support on 75% of the council tax liability and not 100% and this was applied to working age claimants.

It was intended in 2019/20 to continue with the same council tax support scheme that the Council rolled out in 2018/19 and consultation had taken place with the County Council responding to say that it was in agreement with this approach.

It was moved by Councillor J.Broach and seconded by Councillor P.Shah that the scheme be amended as follows:-

“That enforcement action for Council Tax arrears will not be taken against those residents who are currently waiting for a Universal Credit application to be processed.”

On being put to the meeting there noted:-

FOR the Amendment – 20
AGAINST the Amendment – 22

And the Amendment was declared LOST

It was then moved by Councillor D.Bell, seconded by Councillor T.Kingsbury and

RESOLVED:
(unanimous)

That the localised council tax support scheme continue in 2019/20 to help people on low/no income to receive a reduction on their council tax.

46. NOTICES OF MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 50

To consider the following notices of motions submitted under Procedure Rule 50:-

46.1. The following motion had been submitted by Councillor Tamsin Jackson-Mynott and was seconded by Councillor Malcolm Cowan:-

“In view of the threat of funding to maintained nursery schools finishing in 2020, this Council will write to Grant Shapps MP requesting that he support the efforts of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Nursery Schools by lobbying the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister for Education, to secure funding for maintained nursery schools beyond 2020.”

Following discussion the Motion was agreed.

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46.2. The following motion had been submitted by Councillor Glyn Hayes and was seconded by Councillor Max Holloway:-

“This Council notes that many Council budgets are now at Breaking Point. Austerity has caused huge damage to communities up and down the UK, with devastating effects on key public services that protect the most defenceless in society – children at risk, disabled adults and vulnerable older people – and the services we all rely on, like clean streets, libraries and children’s centre.

This Council notes that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury Liz Truss – stated on BBC Newsnight on 1 October 2018 that the government is ‘not making cuts to local authorities’.

This Council notes that our funding from Government has been cut by over 50% since 2010. This Council further notes that Prime Minister Theresa May has claimed that ‘austerity is over’ despite further cuts to council budgets appearing within the recent budget.

Given that these examples at the highest level of government show a complete lack of understanding of the effect of austerity to Councils’ like Welwyn Hatfield. This Council resolves to ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out the funding pressures faced by our local Council and calling on the Government to truly end austerity in local government”.

It was then moved by Councillor D.Bell and seconded by Councillor T.Kingsbury that the wording of the third part of the Motion:-

“This Council notes that our funding from Government has been cut by over 50% since 2010. This Council further notes that Prime Minister Theresa May has claimed that ‘austerity is over’ despite further cuts to council budgets appearing within the recent budget.”

be amended to read as follows:-

“This Council notes that our funding from Government has been cut by over 50% since 2010 and resolves to ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out the funding pressures faced by our Council. The letter should also urge that as far as is possible these challenges should be addressed in the forthcoming Spending Review.”

On being put to the meeting there voted:-

FOR the Amendment – 36
AGAINST the Amendment – 6

And the Amendment was declared CARRIED.

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The Motion as amended was then put to the meeting:-

“This Council notes that many Council budgets are now at Breaking Point. Austerity has caused huge damage to communities up and down the UK, with devastating effects on key public services that protect the most defenceless in society – children at risk, disabled adults and vulnerable older people – and the services we all rely on, like clean streets, libraries and children’s centre.

This Council notes that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury Liz Truss – stated on BBC Newsnight on 1 October 2018 that the government is ‘not making cuts to local authorities’.

“This Council notes that our funding from Government has been cut by over 50% since 2010 and resolves to ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out the funding pressures faced by our Council. The letter should also urge that as far as is possible these challenges should be addressed in the forthcoming Spending Review.”

Given that these examples at the highest level of government show a complete lack of understanding of the effect of austerity to Councils’ like Welwyn Hatfield. This Council resolves to ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out the funding pressures faced by our local Council and calling on the Government to truly end austerity in local government”.

And was carried UNANIMOUSLY.

46.3. The following motion had been submitted by Councillor Kieran Thorpe and was seconded by Councillor Glyn Hayes:-

“This Council notes that it has previously debated and passed motions opposing the merger of Police and Fire services within Hertfordshire and moreover, cuts to our emergency services.

This Council wrote to the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council raising these concerns and made clear our opposition to a reduction in our Fire and Rescue Service.

This Council notes the reply received from the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council mentioned performance standards remaining as they are, but did not address future reductions in resources with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

This Council is disappointed to note that only days later, the County Council produced a draft integrated risk management plan (IRMP) setting out a draft of proposals for the next five years such as reducing the size of fire crews and

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removing and replacing fire engines with smaller vans that carry less equipment and people.

This Council notes with concern that the Fire Brigade Union calculate this would lead to the loss of 50 Firefighters in Hertfordshire, on top of the 150 Firefighters already lost in the last round of cutbacks.

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has experienced a 5% increase in call numbers in the last year alone. The number of injuries sustained as a result of fire have nearly doubled in five years and, most tragically of all, three times as many Hertfordshire residents died this past year when compared to the previous year:

This represents the highest number of deaths from fire in Hertfordshire for five years.

This Council resolves to again object in the strongest possible terms these proposals to further cut Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service as outlined in this draft plan.”

It was then moved by Councillor M.Cowan and seconded by Councillor P.Zukowskyj that the fifth part of the Motion be deleted:-

“This Council notes with concern that the Fire Brigade Union calculate this would lead to the loss of 50 Firefighters in Hertfordshire, on top of the 150 Firefighters already lost in the last round of cutbacks.”

and replaced with the following revised wording:-

“Missing information from the IRMP includes community risk profiles based on current and projected demographics and growth, analysis of gaps in the service’s capability to deal with the risks, station profiles, details of current staff and equipment levels, and risks of reduction. We are particularly concerned at the lack of information on the current workforce levels and how the service is impacted by its ageing workforce.”

On being put to the meeting there voted:-

FOR the Amendment – 19
AGAINST the Amendment – 23

And the Amendment was declared LOST.

The original Motion was then put to the meeting and there voted:-

FOR the Motion – 20
AGAINST the Motion – 21
ABSTENTION – 1

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And the Motion was declared LOST.

47. URGENT MATTER

47.1. Increase to Capital Programme Budget and Debt Limits

Report of the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) on the opportunity which had arisen to purchase a large, multi-unit property as part of the Affordable Housing Programme.

It was moved by Councillor D.Bell, seconded by Councillor T.Kingsbury and

RESOLVED:

- (1) That an increase to the Capital Programme budget of £8.955M funded by £2.686M of retained Right to Buy receipts and £6.629M of new borrowing be approved.
- (2) That an increase to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Operational Boundary, as set out in the Treasury Management Strategy, by £6.629M be approved to revise the HRA operational boundary to £251.857M and the overall Council boundary to £264.960M.

(Note: The Mayor agreed that this item could be considered as a matter of urgency in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13 (a) (r) – Order of Business at Ordinary Council meetings).

Meeting ended 10.05pm
GS