

Special Cabinet  
25 July 2022

## WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a special meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL CABINET held on Monday 25 July 2022 at 5.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: Councillors T. Kingsbury (Leader of the Council) (Chairman)  
S. Boulton (Deputy Leader and Executive Member, Resources and Planning)

S. Kasumu (Executive Member, Environment and Climate Change)  
T. Mitchinson (Executive Member, Leisure and Community)

N. Pace (Executive Member, Governance, Public Health and IT)  
B. Sarson (Executive Member, Community Safety and Parking)  
F. Thomson (Executive Member, Housing)

OFFICIALS Chief Executive (K. Ng)  
PRESENT: Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) (R. Baker)  
Assistant Director (Legal and Governance) (M. Martinus)  
Planning & Policy Implementation Manager (S. Tiley)  
Democratic Services Assistant (B. Taylor)  
Principal Planner (M. Wilson)  
Communications & Marketing Manager (M. Sherry)

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### 19. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillors S. Boulton, T. Kingsbury and F. Thomson each declared a non-pecuniary interest in items on the Agenda as Members of Hertfordshire County Council.

### 20. ITEM RELATING TO THE BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL

The following items were considered:-

#### 20.1. Local Plan - Inspector's Letter and Proposed Modifications to the Plan (Forward Plan Reference FP1126)

Report of the Assistant Director (Planning) on the Inspector's Letter and Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan. Members received a presentation

Special Cabinet  
25 July 2022

which set out the Council's January 2022 Strategy and the Inspector's response; the housing requirement, housing supply, the recommendation from Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel and the risks.

In January 2022, Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel considered options to meet the Full Objective Assessment for Housing Need (FOAHN) of 15,200. The panel proposed that the Council's strategy agreed in November 2020 be put forward for consideration by Cabinet and Council.

The strategy had identified a supply of sites for 13,277 dwellings to meet what the Council considered should be the FOAHN OF 13,800.

There were also changes to windfall allowance, updated completions and commitments and amendments to the strategy as a consequence of decisions made by the inspector, this resulted in a distribution of 13,279 dwellings.

This had been presented to Council at a special meeting on 27 January 2022.

The Council wrote a letter to the inspector setting out the strategy and noting that the availability and size of sites resulted in most of the development being delivered in the first ten years post adoption.

The Inspector responded to the Council's letter and had advised that the Local Plan requirement of 15,200 was still appropriate. He had advised an approach based on identifying sites for the year period following adoption could be sound with a commitment to a review, to be undertaken in the context of housing need and national policy.

The Inspector had now found HS24 in Little Heath and SDS6 in Symondshyde unsound. HS29 and HS30 in Cuffley were also not found sound. A fifth site, HS22 has previously been found sound and the Inspector confirmed that the site was still sound.

The inspector advised the Council that the plan can only move forward if the Council identified sufficient sites for the first ten years post adoption and carried out consultation on an agreed set of main modifications. The inspector also required sound evidence to demonstrate that the plan can deliver five years' worth of housing against the plan's housing requirement.

The Inspector had concluded that the housing requirement for the plan period 2016-36 was 15,200 dwellings with an average 760 dwellings per annum. A 20% buffer had to be provided to reflect under delivery resulting in a 10 year target of 7,938.

Completions during the plan period to 31 March 2022 equated to 2,731 dwellings, resulting in a residual requirement for 12,469 dwellings for the plan period, an average of 891 dwellings per annum.

Special Cabinet  
25 July 2022

The Inspector stated that the five years needed to start from April 2023 rather than 2022. Therefore it was necessary to estimate the number of completions for 2022/23 and this resulted an increase in the shortfall from 1,829 to 1,976 dwellings.

It was noted that at the Cabinet Planning and Parking Panel meeting on 21 July 2022 members had rejected both recommendations in the report. Members agreed to recommend the proposed sites agreed at Special Council on 27 January 2022 and their updated dwelling numbers specifically as shown in table 3 of the report and Appendix A Table 1 of the report giving a total updated capacity of 12,775 with 8,517 in the first ten years.

It was noted that the plan had not increased the five year land supply or made full provision for the shortfall. The inspector had already rejected the 13,277 and 13,279 strategies and there was a strong likelihood that the plan will be found unsound.

Cabinet Members thanked officers for their continued hard work on the Council's Local Plan.

Members acknowledged the full debate at CPPP which informed the recommendations made, and agreed that it was for elected Councillors and their communities to take planning decisions which were in the best interest of the residents, businesses and communities of the borough.

Members stated that there were risks involved in whichever decision the Council took with regards to the Local Plan. It was noted that members were not anti-development in the borough.

Members noted it was down to local politicians to make a decision on what is best for the borough.

It was noted that it was a good decision that the numbers at the Wheat Quarter site had been reduced by about 600 and that it was also protecting its heritage in Welwyn Garden City. Members acknowledged that the Green Belt must be protected given the benefits it brings to the borough and the community.

**RESOLVED:**  
**(unanimous)**

Cabinet recommended to Full Council the proposed sites agreed and recommended by the Special Council on 27 January 2022 and their updated dwelling numbers specifically as shown in table 3 of the report and Appendix A Table 1 of the report giving a total updated capacity of 12,775 with 8,517 in the first ten years.

Special Cabinet  
25 July 2022

21. ITEM REQUIRING KEY DECISION

The following item for decision in the current Forward Plan was considered:-

21.1. UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Welwyn Hatfield allocation (Forward Plan Reference FP1131)

Report of the Chief Executive on the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKPSF).

(1) The Decision Taken

**RESOLVED:  
(unanimous)**

(1) Cabinet agreed that delegated authority is given to the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation) and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Executive Member (Planning and Resources), to authorise, submit and amend any subsequent changes to the UKSPF Investment Plan.

(2) Cabinet noted that the Executive Director (Finance and Transformation), in consultation with the Executive Member (Planning and Resources) will adjust the Council's budget once the UKSPF Investment Plan is approved, under his general delegated powers and in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

(2) Reasons for the Decision

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was launched on 13 April 2022. It sits within the Government's Levelling Up agenda. The total value of the fund is £2.6bn, of which Welwyn Hatfield's allocation is £1,468,506. The fund will run until March 2025.

Each local authority is required to prepare and submit an investment plan in order to access the fund. However, the process is being run on quite a short timescale, with a deadline for submissions of 1 August 2022.

The fund can be used for three areas of investment priority, which were intended to complement Levelling Up missions, with an overarching mission of "Building pride in place and increasing life chances: Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills.

There was a requirement for local authorities to convene a local partnership group. To assist swift decision making given the tight

Special Cabinet  
25 July 2022

deadline, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council had formed a focussed Partnership Group, chaired by the Leader of the Council. The members of the group were Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, the University of Hertfordshire, Oaklands College, the Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Partnership Group had met and had decided to support a number of projects for various sums of money. Examples of projects to be included were: Hatfield Market Place Public Realm Regeneration, Anniversary Gardens, Welwyn Garden City, Campus West, Digital Information Screens and Herts Growth Hub.

It was envisaged that the investment plan would be determined by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in around October 2022 and payment will only be made once the plan is approved.

22. APPOINTMENT OF CABINET PANELS, COMMITTEES AND BOARDS 2022-23

To appoint Cabinet Panels, Committees and Boards for 2022/23.

RESOLVED:  
**(unanimous)**

Cabinet agreed the appointment to Cabinet Panels, Committees and Boards for 2022/23.

23. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A)(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting for Agenda items 10 and 11 (Minute 25 refer) on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) and paragraph 3 (private financial or business information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

In resolving to exclude the public in respect of the exempt information, it was considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

24. ITEMS OF AN EXEMPT NATURE REQUIRING KEY DECISION

The following item of an exempt nature for decision was considered:-

Special Cabinet  
25 July 2022

24.1. Private Rented Sector Better Care Fund Grant for Exceptional Circumstances  
(Forward Plan Reference FP1130)

Exempt report of the Chief Executive on the Better Care Grant Funding for Exceptional Circumstances.

**(Note:** a more detailed record of the Cabinet discussion is contained in exempt item 24a).

Meeting ended at 5.34pm  
BT