

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF HERTFORD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE ROBIN ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD ON
MONDAY, 16 JANUARY 2012**

Present:

The Worshipful the Mayor of Hertford
Councillor Mrs S Newton

Councillors

P Boyle, Miss C Geall, Mrs B Haddock, Mrs B Mansfield, P Moore,
M McCormick, D Poole, Dr L E Radford, P Ruffles, Miss J Sartin,
Miss I Sigmatic, R Willis and N Wilson

Officers

Town Clerk – Mrs N James
Civic Administration Manager – Ms T Carpenter

In attendance

4 Members of the public

Prayers – The Rev'd Gerry Booker (Mayor's Chaplain) led the Council in the opening prayers.

PRESENTATION: Mr John Findlay, Chief Executive Officer of the National Association of Local Councils, provided the Council with information concerning the work of, and the value to the Council, of membership of the Association.

Mr Findlay advised the Council that the NALC provided both services and representation to Parish and Town Councils. Its services included legal services, training and information publications of changes in law affecting Town and Parish Councils. Additionally it provided a quarterly magazine and fortnightly bulletins.

The Association, he stated, represented the sector with the Government and other agencies and had worked for 12 to 15 years to get the sector back onto the political agenda. The current Government was particularly interested in recognising the worth of Parish and Town Councils and their work within local communities. The Localism Act and Big Society would have a dramatic impact on the Town and Parish Council sector, with many new powers being afforded to the sector, these included the Power of General Competence and Power to identify Community Assets, as well as dramatic new planning powers. The National Association was at the forefront of negotiating substantial funding to assist in the implementation of training for Councils and he considered it vital the Hertford Town Council continued its membership of the NALC.

Following a brief question and answer session, Mr Findlay was thanked for his attendance and presentation.

365. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Ruffles	Personal	Agenda item 10, Community Safety Review: Is a member of the East Herts Council Task and Finish Group for Community Safety
Cllr Ruffles	Prejudicial	Any discussions regarding Museum funding: Museum Trustee
The Mayor	Personal	Agenda item 10, Community Safety Review: A Police Authority member for Community Safety
Town Clerk	Prejudicial	Any discussion regarding the Personnel Sub Committee.

366. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor advised the Council of some of the many engagements she had attended in recent months:

The Vintage Tea Party and Home Alone at Christmas had both been great successes.

The Mayor expressed her gratitude to Sele School for the use of the school hall for the recent Quiz night. The Mayor also thanked Councillor Miss Geall for

acting as question master and the staff for their work on the night. The event was hugely successful, with 200 people present it raised over £2000.

The Mayor also wished to thank Mr Peter Keenan of Hertford in Bloom, who had recently replanted the two planters at the lawn doors with winter bedding. He would replace these free of charge with summer bedding in the spring.

The Mayor reminded Councillors of the Civic Service on 12 February and the Civic Dinner on 10 March. The dinner would feature a Jubilee Community Awards ceremony with the categories for nominations being Citizen and Young Citizen of the Year, Employee of the Year, Carer of the Year and Emergency Services employee of the Year.

367. THE MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The minutes of the Full Town Council meeting held on 17 October 2011 be approved as a correct record and the Mayor be authorised to sign the same.

368. QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

369. COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillor M McCormick moved the report of the Community Services Committee meeting held on held on 14 November 2011. The Chairman stated that there would be a proposal for amendments to the minutes at the next Community Services meeting.

Min 277, Cemetery and Closed Churchyards: Statistics

A question was raised regarding the number of years left for burial within the Cemetery, and given the scarcity of available land in Hertford, whether the Committee had given any thought to how it would address burial needs once the Cemetery was full. The Chairman confirmed that there was approximately 30 years worth of available space within the current Cemetery but confirmed that the Committee would give consideration to future provision of burial land in due course.

Min 280 Holy Trinity and St Leonard's Garden Maintenance

The authority for the building of the Physic Garden at Holy Trinity was again questioned. The Chairman advised that whilst authority had been given in part, further work was carried out without permission. A review of the gardening maintenance contract was currently underway.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report of the Community Services Committee held on 14 November 2011 be received.

370. DEVELOPMENT AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Councillor Miss J Sartin moved the report of the Development and Leisure Committee meeting held on 28 November 2011 (including the relevant reports of the Planning Sub-Committee meetings of 5 September, 19 September, 3 October, 17 October and 31 October 2011)

Min 304 Carnival

The Chairman confirmed that preparations for the Carnival were going well and members were requested to encourage local organisations to enter floats into the parade.

Planning Sub Committee

Councillor Miss Geall wished to commend the members of the Planning Sub Committee for achieving the policy change regarding naming of developments of over ten properties, and also working to persuade East Herts Council to take action over the refurbishment of the fountain at Old Cross.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The report of the Development and Leisure Committee meeting held on 28 November 2011 (including the relevant reports of the Planning Sub-Committee meetings of 5 September, 19 September, 3 October, 17 October and 31 October 2011) be received.

370. FINANCE, POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

Councillor Miss C Geall moved the report of the meeting of Finance, Policy and Administration Committee held on 19 December 2011 (including the relevant report of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 21 November 2011)

Min 341 Community Network Lunch

A question was raised regarding the Council's involvement in the proposed Community Network Lunches. The Chairman confirmed that the Council would be supporting the initiative and participating, but was not involved in its organisation. A room at the Castle would be available free of charge for the meetings and the Council would also supply the lunch for the first meeting, after which lunches would take the form of a bring and share lunch.

Min 334 Internal Audit Report

The Chairman advised members of the reason for the recommendation to alter the Council's Financial Regulations. The newly appointed Internal Auditor had commended the Council on the wealth of policies and procedures it held in addition to the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations but considered that within the Financial Regulations both the tender level and the requirement to obtain three quotations needed to be set at the more realistic levels of £25000 and £5000 respectively. The previous levels both set at £2500 were considered inadequate although it was noted that the £2500 tender level had in fact been a typing error. A further amendment included the addition of the Regulations

concerning EU procurement rules on contracts over the threshold specified by the Office of Government Commerce.

Despite the increased level in the requirement to seek three quotations, officers would nevertheless continue to be mindful of best value issues when seeking quotations for work of less than £5000.

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It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The revised Financial Regulations be adopted.
- (ii) The report of the Finance Policy and Administration Committee held on 19th December 2011 be received.

371. PRECEPT

Councillor Miss C Geall introduced the precept report for 2012/13 and was pleased to report that, following detailed work by the Finance Manager, other Officers and the Chairman and Vice Chairman, the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee, was able to recommend a 0% increase in the precept for the Town Council's portion of the Council Tax for 2012/13 for the third year running, which had been achieved without any reduction in services.

It was noted that membership subscriptions for NALC had not been included in the proposed budget, but this matter would be discussed at the next meeting of the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee, following the receipt of the new information from the Chief Executive of NALC. The Chairman however confirmed that should the Council decide to continue in Membership, savings would need to be found elsewhere in the budget, because she would not be mindful to recommend an increase in the precept.

Members wished to record their appreciation to Officers and the Chairman of the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee for their work in achieving the 0% increase in the precept for the third year running.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Council approve a precept demand of £1,059,555 for 2012/13 as recommended by the Finance, Policy and Administration Committee and:
- b) The Council authorise the Mayor, two other Councillors (to include the Chairman of Finance, Policy and Administration Committee) and the Town Clerk to sign the formal precept demand.

372. BUSINESS MOTION

The following Business Motion had been proposed by Cllr Miss J Sartin in accordance with Standing Order 2.1 (1.10) and seconded by Cllr N Wilson.

'Hertford Town Council recognises the vital role that parking provision plays in supporting our town centre, particularly during these troubled economic times.

It urges East Herts Council to be mindful of this in the preparation of its budget for 2012/13, and urges the Council not to proceed with plans to increase parking charges, or to implement new charges'.

At a recent meeting of the East Herts Executive, a report was considered which set out a proposal for a 2.5% increase in parking charges. At the meeting the Executive agreed to put on hold any increase in April, but to review the matter in September. It was made clear by the Leader of the Council that an increase could well come into force at that point. Whilst it was welcomed that increased charges would not come into effect in April, nevertheless, in the current turbulent economic period, town centres required all the support local councils could offer and the possibility remained of an increase in parking charges in September.

Additionally, the District Council was currently running an on-line public consultation on elements of their 2012/13 budget. The public was invited to identify the level of savings to be made or income generated in 10 service areas. It was of concern that 3 of those related to car parking charges, including an increase in parking charges by 7.5%, introduction of charging on Sundays and Bank Holidays and the introduction of a flat rate of 50p for 30 minutes on street car parking.

It was recognised that Hertford's 30 minutes free on-street parking made the town centre an attractive destination for quick shopping trips and allowed those residents less able to walk long distances into town to make short trips to use services such as the Post Office, chemist or newsagent easily without being financially penalised. Such trips would reduce if on-street charging was implemented, with people more likely to travel to use services where free parking was available

A further area of concern in relation to the introduction of on-street charging was the detrimental impact it would have on the appearance of the historic county town. In order to charge for on-street parking it would be necessary to install ticketing machines on some of the most visually interesting areas of the town, including Fore Street, Parliament Square, Bull Plain and St Andrew Street.

Whilst it was appreciated that East Herts Council was having to take difficult decisions to balance its budget, Hertford Town Council was under similar budgetary pressures, but had chosen in recent years to increase the money it put into supporting the town centre, and undertake activities which it had not previously carried out.

Car parking was considered vital for encouraging people to spend time and money in the town centre, thereby supporting its continuation as the vibrant heart to the town.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Motion be carried

372. EAST HERTS COMMUNITY SAFETY REVIEW

The Council had been circulated with a copy of a letter from the Community Safety Partnership in which funding was requested towards Taxi Marshalling and PCSO's. It was noted that a decision was required on future funding prior to the scheduled date of the next Finance, Policy and Administrative Committee. However no formal decision had yet been taken by the Community Safety Partnership as to where the cuts would fall, therefore, until the Police

recommendation was known it was recommended that any consideration for funding by the Council be deferred for a future meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

A meeting of the Town Council be convened once the Community Safety Partnership had provided a clear indication of any funding requirements for PCSO's and Taxi Marshalling.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.55pm.