

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL
HELD ON**

3 February 2022

7.30 pm - 10.23pm

PRESENT

COUNCILLORS

Clive Souter (Chair)

David Carter	Andrew Johnson
Simon Carter	Eddie Johnson
Joel Charles	James Leppard
Nick Churchill	Ash Malik
Jean Clark	Colleen Morrison
Mike Danvers	Russell Perrin
Bob Davis	Nicky Purse
Jodi Dunne	Matthew Saggars
Tony Durcan	John Strachan
Tony Edwards	John Steer
Michael Garnett	Dan Swords
Alastair Gunn	Chris Vince
Michael Hardware	Nancy Watson

OFFICERS

Brian Keane, Chief Executive
Lisa Thornett, Corporate
Governance Support Officer
Simon Freeman, Deputy to the
Chief Executive and Director of
Finance
Simon Hill, Director of
Governance and Corporate
Support

69. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eugenie Harvey, Maggie Hulcoop, Shona Johnson, Sue Livings, Mark Wilkinson and Gareth Williams.

70. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mike Danvers declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest as a Trustee of Gibberd Garden Trust.

Councillors Tony Edwards and Chris Vince declared Non-Pecuniary Interests as trustees of Razed Roof.

Councillors Bob Davis, Tony Durcan, Eddie Johnson and Clive Souter declared Pecuniary Interests as Non-Executive Directors of HTS.

71. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2021 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

72. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair advised that he had attended two brewery tours. He was also delighted to meet with Rory Davies, Artistic and Executive Director of the Playhouse, who presented a cheque for just over £4,000 from the pantomime for the Chair's charities.

The Chair reminded the Council of the following upcoming events; a quiz night on 4 March, the Civic Dinner on 1 April and a golf day on 29 April.

73. **PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

74. **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

75. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

76. **MOTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

77. **REFERENCES FROM CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

The Chair asked Full Council to take items 9a-g of the agenda enbloc. As required by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 all votes on these were recorded. Details of these are appended to the minutes.

- a) Referral from Cabinet - Medium Term Financial Strategy
2022/23 - 2024/25

Cabinet recommended to Full Council that:

- i) The Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022/23 to 2024/25 (attached as appendix B to the report) is adopted.
- ii) The planned Council Tax (HDC element) 0 percent increase for 2022/23 as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan be approved.
- iii) That the proposals regarding the Council's Reserves as set out in paragraphs 5(c) and 22 - 35 of the report are agreed resulting in the release of £1,355,000 from reserves in 2022/23 to provide £993,000 funding for the proposed efficiency dividend set out in the General fund budget report elsewhere

on the Cabinet agenda and to create a new Estates Renewal Fund of £363,000.

- iv) That the New Homes Bonus for 2022/23 totalling £1.165 million, is applied to part fund the efficiency dividend (£830,000) and to also increase the Budget Resilience Reserve (£335,000) which in turn will be applied to support the proposals relating to 0 percent council tax increases (HDC element) in 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- v) That subject to recommendations iii and iv being approved an efficiency dividend of £50 per eligible property be approved as a one off arrangement for the 2022/23 financial year.
- vi) That in respect of the Harlow Council element, the MTFS includes plans for a 0 percent council tax increases in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Proposed by Councillor James Leppard (seconded by Councillor Russell Perrin) it was:

RESOLVED that the above recommendations be approved.

b) Referral from Cabinet - General Fund Budget 2022/23

Cabinet recommended to Full Council that:

- i) The General Fund estimates for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix A to the report, are approved.
- ii) The proposed transfers between the General Fund and Earmarked Reserves, referred to within the report and set out in Appendix C to the report, are approved.
- iii) The proposed Fees and Charges, as set out in Appendix E to the report, are approved.
- iv) The Pay Policy Statement, as set out in Appendix G to the report, is approved.
- v) The Council's Band D Council Tax for 2022/23 is set at £288.90 representing a reversal of the proposed 1.99 percent increase as set out in the 2021/2022 MTFS meaning that eligible households will pay £55.75 less than previously forecast in the 2021/22 MTFS.
- vi) That the proposals set out in the report are approved allowing a £50 Efficiency Dividend be made to eligible households in 2022/23.

Councillor Mike Danvers (seconded by Councillor Chris Vince) moved an amendment as set out in supplementary agenda 2.

A recorded vote was taken on the amendment and the amendment was lost.

Councillor James Leppard (seconded by Councillor Russell Perrin) moved that a vote was taken on the substantive motion. As required by law a recorded vote was taken and it was:

RESOLVED that the original recommendations above be approved.

c) Referral from Cabinet - Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2021-2051

Cabinet recommended to Full Council that:

- i) The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, as set out in Appendix A to this report, is approved.
- ii) Authority is delegated to the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to make minor amendments to the Plan, if necessary, following consultation.

Proposed by Councillor James Leppard (seconded by Councillor Russell Perrin) it was:

RESOLVED that the above recommendations be approved.

d) Referral from Cabinet - Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/23

Cabinet recommended to Full Council that it:

- i) Approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) estimates as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- ii) Approve a working balance of £4.563 million for the HRA (set out in paragraph 26 of the report).
- iii) Approve that tenant rents are increased by Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1 per cent (4.1 per cent) with effect from 4 April 2022. This equates to an average weekly rent of £97.49, an increase of £3.87 (set out in paragraph 3 of the report).
- iv) Approve that the rents and personal charges for temporary accommodation are increased with effect from 4 April 2022 as set out in paragraph 4 of the report.

- v) Approve that garage rents within the 'retain and invest' category are increased by 5 per cent with effect from 1 April 2022. This equates to an average weekly rent of £11.76, an increase of £0.56. Also approve the proportionate increases for other garages, car ports and car spaces (set out in paragraph 5 of the report).
- vi) Approve that tenant service charges are increased to recover full cost with effect from 4 April 2022 (see paragraphs 6 to 8 of the report and Appendix 2 attached to the report).
- vii) Approve that other housing related support charges for sheltered accommodation are increased to recover full cost with effect from 4 April 2022 (see paragraphs 9 to 13 of the report and Appendix 2 attached to the report).
- viii) Approve the tenant heating charges with effect from 4 April 2022. These equate to an average weekly heating charge of £10.96, an increase of £1.23. For tenants in sheltered accommodation, this equates to an average weekly charge of £6.75, an increase £1.68 (see paragraphs 14 to 16 of the report and Appendix 2 attached to the report).
- ix) Approve that the leasehold service charges are increased with effect from 1 April 2022 to ensure that all leaseholder costs are recovered (see paragraphs 17 to 21 of the report and Appendix 2 attached to the report).
- x) Approve that all other tenant charges are increased with effect from 4 April 2022 in order to recover cost (see Appendix 2 attached to the report).
- xi) Approve that Harlow's Rent Policy is reviewed during 2022/23 with a view to moving towards the National Social Housing Rents Standard (2019) for when properties become empty and for types of rent to be charged on newly acquired or newly built properties (see paragraphs 42 to 44 of the report).
- xii) Approve the options for tackling homelessness and prevention as outlined in paragraphs 45 to 48 of the report.

Proposed by Councillor James Leppard (seconded by Councillor Russell Perrin) it was:

RESOLVED that the above recommendations be approved.

- e) Referral from Cabinet - Capital Programmes 2021/22 - 2023/24

Cabinet recommended to Full Council that it:

- i) Approve the 2022/23 Housing Capital Programme (HCP) totalling £30.169 million as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- ii) Approve of the inclusion in the Housing Capital Programme of an additional £25.939 million over 6 years for a Housing “Catch up Stock Need” as set out in Table 2 of the report.
- iii) Approve the updated New Build programme as set out in Table 3 of the report, noting the removal of £155,000 expenditure incurred for both the Stackfield and Brenthall Towers schemes which are not proceeding.
- iv) Approve the 2022/23 Non Housing Capital Programme totalling £18.603 million (attached as Appendix 2 to the report), noting the additional £2.19 million investment in response to Business Cases received as detailed in Table 11 of the report.

Proposed by Councillor James Leppard (seconded by Councillor Russell Perrin) it was:

RESOLVED that the above recommendations be approved.

- f) Referral from Cabinet - Capital and Treasury Report 2022

Cabinet recommended to Full Council that:

- i) The following Capital and Treasury Reports be approved:
 - The Capital Strategy Report (attached as Appendix A to the report).
 - The Investment Strategy Report 2022/23 (attached as Appendix D to the report).
 - The Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2022/23 (attached as Appendix E to the report).
- ii) The proposed revised Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23 (attached as Appendix C to the report) be approved for implementation with effect from 1 April 2022.

Proposed by Councillor James Leppard (seconded by Councillor Russell Perrin) it was:

RESOLVED that the above recommendations be approved.

- g) Referral from Cabinet - Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22: Mid-Year Review

Cabinet recommended to Full Council that the Mid-Year Review of the Treasury Management Strategy, attached as Appendix A to the

report, be noted.

Proposed by Councillor James Leppard (seconded by Councillor Russell Perrin) it was:

RESOLVED that the above recommendation be approved.

- h) Referral from Licensing Committee - DFT Standards - Policy required on stretched limousines

The Licensing Committee recommended to Full Council that the amended Licensing Policy as set out in paragraphs 11-14 of the report be adopted.

Proposed by Councillor Nick Churchill (seconded by Councillor David Carter) it was:

RESOLVED that the above recommendation be approved.

- i) Referral from Constitution Panel - Amendments to the Constitution

The Constitution Panel recommended to Full Council that the amended Constitution (attached as Appendix A to the report) be adopted.

It was proposed by Councillor Simon Carter (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) that the following additional recommendations be added:

- B** That the minimum procurement thresholds requiring consultation with a Portfolio Holder remain at £50,000 and £25,000 for consultancy services. The upper limit be increased to £350,000 and £100,000 for consultancy services as recommended in the report; and
- C** That authority be delegated to the Director of Governance and Corporate Services to ensure that any elements of the Contract Standing Orders are consistent with the amended thresholds.

Proposed by Councillor Simon Carter (seconded by Councillor James Leppard) it was:

RESOLVED that the above recommendation be approved subject to the additional recommendations B and C as detailed above.

78. **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS - COUNCIL PROCEDURE
RULE 9.1**

With the consent of the meeting, it was agreed to suspend Council Procedure Rule 9.1 and that the meeting would continue until the remaining business had been considered.

79. **REPORTS FROM OFFICERS**

a) Interim Review of Polling Districts and Places - Netteswell Ward

Full Council received a report on the interim review of polling districts and places for Netteswell Ward.

Proposed by Councillor Colleen Morrison (seconded by Councillor Mike Danvers) it was:

RESOLVED that the following changes to the Polling Districts and Places will take place with effect from 18 February 2022:

- i) Creation of two polling districts and two polling places in the Netteswell ward
 - GA – Netteswell North – Our Lady of Fatima Church Hall to be designated as the polling place for all elections; and
 - GB – Netteswell South – YCT House to be designated as the polling place for all elections.

80. **MINUTES OF CABINET AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings are noted.

- a) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 16 November 2021 of Licensing Committee
- b) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 2 December 2021 of Cabinet
- c) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 7 December 2021 of Scrutiny Committee
- d) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 8 December 2021 of Development Management Committee
- e) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 18 January 2022 of Licensing Committee

- f) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 20 January 2022 of Development Management Committee

81. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

Full Council – 3 February 2022

Questions from the Public

1 Mick Patrick to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

I attended a consultation event at our Lady Fatima Church on 27 November. In a dialogue with one of the team I was informed that council housing was included in the Harlow and Gilston Development.

As a housing campaigner for decades I knew this was not true. After further dialogue I found that because housing association homes are allocated by council the development team are stating that these are council homes.

Council homes are not housing association homes, both are entirely different. Housing association are private companies, some are not even social landlords and can charge up to 80% market rents, a social landlord can charge 60% market rents.

Council homes rent formula sets rent at 40% market rent, and are accountable landlords i.e. local Councillors. This is no accident with this size of development. My question is how has this deception been allowed to happen?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

I am not able to comment on statements that may have been made by a private developer at a consultation event about a housing development that is taking place outside of Harlow's boundaries. Although Harlow Council is a member of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town partnership, the development that Places for People are undertaking at Gilston is in East Hertfordshire and they are the Local Planning Authority for that development.

You are correct however that the affordable housing contributions in private developments are not necessarily Council homes even though the relevant local authority may have the nomination rights. I have asked my officers to make representations through the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town to ensure that developers do not provide misleading information about their developments.

2 Mick Patrick to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

Can the Harlow Council ensure that the terminology of saying council homes are housing association homes in any dialogue or script does not happen in

the future? Housing association homes allocated by the Council should be used as housing association and not council homes.

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

I do not believe that Harlow Council has issued any documentation that misrepresents the differences between Council Housing and Housing Association housing. I am happy to provide an undertaking that this will not happen in the future either.

3 Gary Roberts to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

As I understand it the current council has pledged to regenerate the town with an increase in police officers and local council services, therefore please could you outline your plans to reintroduce neighbourhood policing, neighbourhood council offices and local NHS health services including a doctors' surgery in Potter Street?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

Whilst, Harlow District Council does not have any direct responsibility for Health and Policing, the Council continues to have a proactive approach to engaging with its partners to improve the level of health care provision within our district and the number of police officers that serve our community.

This year, a further 200 officers will be recruited by Essex Police to help prevent crime, tackle violence and improve visible policing in our communities. The extra officers will take the total growth of the force since 2016 to over 900 officers, making it the largest it has ever been. This has meant over 20 more officers on Harlow streets so far.

In a recent visit to Harlow the Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex, Roger Hirst, met with the Deputy Leader of Harlow Council, Cllr Joel Charles, local police officers and the council's community safety team to find out how they are tackling crime in the town.

As part of this partnership working Roger Hirst made a commitment to crime prevention and reducing anti-social behaviour, with more officers, more funding and more powers for the police.

Turning to the point in your question regarding local NHS services, the Council continues to work in partnership with the West Essex CCG to ensure that the delivery of local NHS services meets the needs of local residents. This week, in the Government's Levelling Up White Paper, it has been announced that Harlow's Princess Alexandra Hospital will not receive a refurbishment or indeed receive a new building but that Harlow will receive a

new integrated, high-tech healthcare campus to replace the ageing Princess Alexandra Hospital. This Council continues to work with its neighboring partners and the MP Robert Halfon to ensure that Harlow's new health campus meets the needs of Harlow and surrounding districts.

Finally, on Osler House, I shared the local upset that the CCG decided to close Osler House surgery. However, the Council is working with local residents to deliver a new Potter Street Health and Community Hub. This has been supported by the Council's staff to get this over the line. I am informed refurbishment work will start soon on the site.

Supplementary question from Gary Roberts to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

Firstly let me thank the Leader of the Council for his answer. I am 62 years old and have lived in the Potter Street area for 38 of those years. When I first moved to the Potter Street area and set up the local residents group, the residents told me that they had been forgotten, but then the Council's neighbourhood office came, neighbourhood policing came and a doctors surgery was opened. Now, we don't have a neighbourhood office, closed over a decade ago with the building still empty. We have no neighbourhood policing and no doctors surgery. If you are really wanting to regenerate the town of Potter Street, re-install all of those services otherwise warm words and a money tree budget isn't it.

Supplementary reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

Thank you for that. I share Mr Robert's sadness that at the decline of what I see is many of the estates in this town over a great many number of years and that's why my Administration have set out a comprehensive regeneration plan. There will be a new house building plan coming later on in the March Cabinet and we will be announcing tonight an estate renewal fund to tackle some of the issues that he has mentioned. I would also add that we will be investing a record amount into our environment team to tackle some of the quite sad decline of the state of the environment around the town and we have been working with our partners, HTS, and we have set up at no further cost to the Council an Estate and Environment Task Force to actually tackle some of the decline in the estates which have been seen as part of the pandemic. I would add to that as well that we also will be investing record amounts into our housing stock which you will hear about tonight, £122 million over the five years to try to help the declining standards in the housing stock. We will also be investing £26 million into our council home building programme which as you'll hear later on is one of the biggest Council funded programmes that we have seen in the last thirty years. So, I totally share Mr Robert's frustration at the decline. It was one of the very things that drove me

into local politics because I, like him, saw the decline where I live and I think it's an absolute travesty and that's why Mr Robert's I sit here as our number one priority to set up the regeneration of the town and the town centre will be one of the main focal points for our regeneration as well as the estates which surround it. So I thank you very much for your question and I am very glad that there are people like you are also interested in the state of our town so thank you very much indeed for being here with us this evening, thank you.

4 David Forman to Councillor Alastair Gunn (Portfolio Holder for Governance):

The Local Government Ombudsman upheld a complaint by a local business owner against Harlow Council on 3 December 2021 with a case number of 21-000-231. The complaint related to a failure to adequately investigate allegations of racist comments made by a council officer in a telephone conversation on 27 January 2021.

The Ombudsman stated in paragraph 36:

"However, I am satisfied Miss X was offended by the conversation and her actions in making a complaint the same day support this."

The Ombudsman further stated in paragraph 39:

"I consider the Council should have done more to investigate this part of the complaint. I note there was no recording of the call but also that no notes were made by the officer at the time of the call."

Consequently, I would like to know the following:

- a) Does Harlow Council possess or subscribe to any system to routinely record telephone conversations both inbound and outbound;
- b) If Harlow Council routinely records telephone conversations, why was the conversation in this case on 27 January 2021 not recorded; and
- c) What processes and procedures are in place to ensure that when notes of conversations are taken they cannot later be destroyed to avoid discovery?

Reply from Councillor Alastair Gunn (Portfolio Holder for Governance):

Harlow Council has a continuing commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity within Harlow. The Council celebrates difference and works to tackle inequalities throughout its core business within both the services that it provides to the community and in its role as an employer. The Council

condemns racism in all forms and is proud to serve our diverse communities. The allegations referred to regarding racial discrimination were investigated by the Council at the time and those investigations did not find any grounds to support the claims that had been made. The Council has accepted the Local Government Ombudsman's decision in relation to the case, which were on the basis of ensuring clarity and the covering of all elements of complaints in its responses.

The Council has supported many local businesses through the processing of central government grants over the course of the pandemic and at the start of the year received £516,000 in government funding to pay one-off grants of up to £6,000 to hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses. The Council identified 137 businesses likely to be eligible under the scheme and contacted them directly to help them apply for the funding. We recognise the challenges that local businesses are facing and have faced with the uncertainty due to the recent Omicron wave and moved quickly so those businesses most in need get the support they need.

With regard to the specific questions in relation to the Council's telephony system; the Council commenced with the upgrade of its telephony system in September 2020, with the new system going live on 13 February 2021 which now allows recording of specific call types. The Council has recorded calls inbound and outbound to its Contact Harlow team, and Revenue and Benefits team since the go live date.

The call, which was the subject of the complaint, was not recorded as it predated the telephony upgrade and the Council had no recording facility for calls at that time.

Notes of conversations taken prior to the call recording functionality being in place were entered into the Council's customer and case management systems; these systems all have audit functions that allow any changes or deletions of records to be tracked and reported on. This remains the case and also covers the areas or teams within the council who still do not use the call recording functionality.

As a result of the Councils' response to the recommendations made by the Ombudsman the case has been closed. The Council will ensure that it continues to improve the way it responds to and deals with complaints from its customers, and for those teams whose calls are not currently recorded.

Supplementary question from David Forman to Councillor Alastair Gunn (Portfolio Holder for Governance):

I thank Councillor Gunn for his detailed reply. Why did the complaint regarding an alleged racist comment continue at stage one service manager

level when it came apparent that the service manager was also the subject of the complaint and, therefore, it should have been escalated especially if one considers the following;

- a) The Council's written complaints policy states at paragraph 4 on page 2 "regardless of the point of access, any complaint will be dealt with at the lowest stage possible unless there is good reason to escalate it to the next stage"
- b) Managers should be conversant with ACAS guidance which states "where possible, the employer should get somebody who's not involved in the case to carry out the investigation" and I've included the ACAS link to that
- c) On 28 January 2021, the complainant asked why a complaint made about an officer and her manager was responded to by the manager complained about and asked for the details of a more senior manager? (Please see LGO report paragraphs 25 & 26)

Supplementary reply from Councillor Alastair Gunn (Portfolio Holder for Governance)

Thank you Chair and thank you Mr Forman for the follow up question which I'm aware you've submitted to the Council already in writing and I think you may get a more detailed written response but just to say that the Council's written complaints procedures were followed. The complaint in question was made in respect of a specific officer and in line with the procedures the line manager of that officer completed the stage one response. The Ombudsman found no fault in respect of the decisions taken regarding the officers appointed to investigate the complaint. On the other points, I understand that Mr Forman has submitted the question in writing and will get a detailed response to that email.

5 Hugh Hoad to Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

At the meeting of the Cabinet Policy Development Working Group on 7 October 2021, Councillor Souter stated that a better bus service should be provided. As this is a County Council matter and he is a County Councillor, has he been able to get them to provide this and if so, when?

Reply from Councillor Russell Perrin (Leader of the Council):

I regularly meet with ECC to discuss matters relating to Harlow and the services they provide. I will press ECC in my future meetings to improve our bus services. I will also ask Cllr Souter to respond to you in writing to give you an update on the progress he has made on this matter.

6 Hugh Hoad to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment):

Every year of the last Labour Council there was an increase in Council Tax, but the maintenance of green space has gotten worse. As Council Tax is not being increased this year, can the Portfolio Holder confirm that maintenance of green space will not deteriorate this year?

Reply from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment):

Thank you for your question I can reassure you that you will very much see an improvement of the green space around the town since taking my position as portfolio holder for environment we have put many things into action.

The first being a Covid-19 recovery support team which means that HTS can continue with the winter programme of works.

second ward by ward audits with myself and the management of HTS to make sure the work that has been carried out is to the residents expectations.

Review of the service level agreement which hasn't been reviewed in the last 10 years.

The tree planting programme costing £250,000 and the management of the trees for the next 3 years and a tree policy which will take 3 years to undertake.

I would like to reassure you that I will do my best to restore pride back into our beautiful town.

Supplementary question from Hugh Hoad to Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment):

In Nicky Purse's reply to me, it mentions that there will be an audit after the winter clear up and that was also the case with the question that I raised with Councillor Saggars on 6 December 2021. I happened to speak with the supervisor doing the weekly clear up in Green Hills and pointed out various things that I felt should have been carried out which still haven't been carried out. Is the audit being carried out as there are still points of maintenance such as trees overhanging the footpath? Is this audit going to take place? Because I am fed up with all of our complaints getting the standard complaint not upheld.

Supplementary reply from Councillor Nicky Purse (Portfolio Holder for Environment):

In reply to your supplementary question, currently at the moment the ward by ward audits are being done as each area is being cleared by the winter programme so in terms of areas I haven't been and other officers haven't been to your area because it hasn't been cleared as fully finished and will need an inspection. There will be, going out onto the website, a winter programme which you can see area by area and which you can see has been signed off but they are actually being signed off gradually as the work force goes round. The audits will carry on right through until the end of March.

Full Council – 3 February 2022

Questions from Councillors

1 Councillor Jean Clark to Councillor Alastair Gunn (Portfolio Holder for Governance):

The Labour Council agreed to declare a climate emergency and to adopt a strategy of moving towards net zero emissions. It was agreed that the Council would aim to install electric charging points across its car parks within 5 years. I understand that the Council is looking to install fast charging points.

When will the charging points be installed and can the Council explore the installation of faster charging methods?

Reply from Councillor Alastair Gunn (Portfolio Holder for Governance):

At the September 2021 Cabinet, Harlow Council committed to working with BP Pulse to install Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points in six of its pay and display car park, subject to contract.

The proposal is for multiple charge points rated at up to 7.4kW. These meet the classification of fast charging. They would cater for top-up charging whilst visiting a neighbourhood shopping centre, or an overnight charge for those who do not have access to private off-street parking, for example.

The installation of these charge points would fulfil the commitment set out in the amended Climate Emergency motion proposed by Cllr Perrin and seconded by the late Cllr Tony Hall at the July 2019 Cabinet, which was unanimously supported on a cross-party basis. Minutes from that meeting suggest that the motion made no reference to the speed of the charge points that should be installed.

This contract would be the first phase only of an approach to making public EV charging widely available in Harlow, which is estimated to require. The Council will continue to explore a range of options as part of its approach to supporting residents in making the switch to electric vehicles. These may include among others electric vehicle charging stations, home charging, and the viability of installing rapid EV chargepoint infrastructure.

Officers continue to progress an appropriate legal agreement with BP Pulse to underpin proposed chargepoint installations, and final designs for chargepoint bay locations and sizes, necessary to submit a formal funding bid to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV).

Supplementary question from Councillor Jean Clark to Councillor Alastair Gunn (Portfolio Holder for Governance):

Just a couple of points of relevance the proposal is for 7.4 kilo watts. In fact I've been told reliably by a taxi driver that that equates to three to four hours waiting as opposed to the minimum of the faster charges which are 45 minutes so we are talking about a difference of 3.3 to 4 hours per vehicle as opposed to 45 minutes. It is true that we are fulfilling the commitment of all members, I mean we were all in agreement of the resolution we were committed yes to the climate emergency motion but this is really in a narrow sense a discussion we were actually talking about. My question is being in mind the discussions which we have been having and the exploration that we have been having already and the urgency of the matter, can we be assured that we will adopt the fastest rate of charging even if it is more expensive?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Alastair Gunn (Portfolio Holder for Governance):

Thank you for the follow up question. So there is a distinction between what are described as fast chargers and rapid chargers and what Councillor Clark is asking us to install is rapid chargers. Rapid chargers are considerably more expensive to install, they require huge electrical input and they won't be appropriate for all vehicles and they will be more costly to use for vehicle owners. So there are some good reasons why the current approach for the contract with BP Pulse is going for fast rather than rapid chargers and indeed that also relates to the condition of the funding which we are going to receive from OZEV. There will be a need for rapid charging points, there is I think £150 million off the top of my head being devoted by the Government nationally. Whether that would be appropriate within Harlow is something that will need to be thought through because there will be some big cost implications if we go down the route of rapid charging and it may not be appropriate for all vehicle uses and certainly not for vehicles that are happy to charge their car overnight or to top up and if you are going to the shops it might be that a half hour/45 minute top up charge could be useful and you wouldn't need a rapid charge to be able to do that. There is huge uncertainty here and a lot of it will depend on behaviour of how people go about charging their cars which is obviously a bit of a guessing game at the moment.

2 Councillor David Carter to Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

The council has not built council houses for Harlow families for many years now. I have seen in the Budget that the council has put aside £26 million pounds to build new homes.

I would like to ask if these will be proper council homes for Harlow families who are on our waiting list, and if these will be built on areas that need regeneration or on any of our precious green field sites?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

Tonight we will vote on proposals to spend more money on council house building in Harlow than this council has spent in the last 30 years combined. And that £26 million figure is just the start.

In March, I will announce our full New Build programme which will deliver hundreds of new Harlow homes for Harlow families, of the highest standards and in the right places.

We will be delivering on people's priorities, on a message that we hear loud and clear to build, build, build.

Build to give Harlow families the home they deserve.

Build to restore pride to neglected parts of our town.

Build to deliver on the pledge we made to the people of Harlow.

My commitment to building new Council homes for social rent was displayed with the recent announcement that we have secured £640,000 from Homes England to ensure that the new homes being built at Bushey Croft will be let at the lowest possible social rent levels for Harlow families – as opposed to the previously so-called affordable rent levels that the Labour party had proposed for the site.

It begs the question as to why they never used the £640,000 to do the same thing for which they were eligible.

The New Build Programme will be historic and it will deliver new homes for Harlow families on our waiting lists because for too long this Council has failed to tackle that issue.

It would be beggars belief for the party of Attlee to vote against £26 million for council house building, alas we will see in just a few moments time.

And if they do not vote for this investment, they will only be confirming what the people of Harlow already know – that we are the party of house building.

3 Councillor David Carter to Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

The old Lister House site on which I understand the previous administration spent £750,000 on consultancy fees and plans for new buildings, is still just a building site. It has a fence around it which is now being vandalised, can you tell me when, if ever, work on this valuable piece of land will start?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

The Lister House site is a disgrace. As Cllr Carter highlights, no building work has taken place on the site. It is a shameful failure.

We all have different political views on what value for money may be. But I'm sure we can all agree that spending money on something that never happens, is not value for money.

It is therefore with sadness that I say that Cllr Durcan, when in this role, did draw up a scheme for the site that was not delivered.

That scheme was described by specialists and I quote as "too expensive, too much and a management nightmare."

In fact, not only that, there was not one, but two water mains under the site meaning that the scheme could never have even been built. For reference, that's why the old Lister House building was situated to the North West of the site.

Sadly, the lack of development alone is not the issue, the failure is that £695,733.30 was spent on nothing. No development of that site. That figure alone equates to three years' worth of Council Tax increases.

In fact, it is not only the Perry Road site. The Yorkes, Brenthall Towers, Elm Hatch, Stackfield, the Readings, the list goes on. None of those sites saw any development but they cost the taxpayers of this town.

£1,130,668.78 does that figure sound familiar? It should do. The amount of money spent on projects that never happened.

Never so much as a spade in the ground, or even out of the van, or even a van turning up, or even the van being started, in fact there was no van at all.

£1,130,668.78 of Harlow taxpayers money wasted.

It begs the question as to whether Cllr Durcan is the most expensive Councillor Harlow has ever seen.

So yes, it will be delivered providing value for money, new homes and much needed regeneration.

The full details will be set out in the New Build Programme this March and work will start as soon as possible once the scheme is approved.

4 Councillor Matthew Sagers to Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

As I was elected for the beautiful ward of Mark Hall I promised the residents of my ward that I would 1) cut the cost of this Council's part of the tax which tonight has been achieved but next part of my promise is to regenerate and restore the ward of Mark Hall back to its glory days and to on and move it into the 21st century and make it a jewel in Harlow's crown which it once was.

Great areas like the stow shopping who under the previous administration has been abandon, under this administration had their first Christmas market in a decade and in the last 6 months have tried to shake the bad reputation it has got. its 70th anniversary this area of which the residents and shop owners would like to show what a great area it is with many more celebration days, it would be good to hear that this and may other areas in my ward like that in Edinburgh way will get the much needed TLC they missed in a generation and help to put them back on their true path.

I, like my residents wait to hear more on what is the plan, when will we hear it and hope it will be a great birthday present?

Reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

In March, we will celebrate Harlow's 75th birthday. 75 years of innovation, enterprise, aspiration and community.

Mark Hall has pioneered all of those things. I am reliably informed that it was in Mark Hall that the first fibre optic cable was manufactured which are now sprouting in every country around the globe.

It was Mark Hall in which the first estates of the glorious new town were constructed with the wonderful landscape and architecture.

And it is in Mark Hall that we will kick start our once-in-a-generation programme of estate renewal.

Our Budget this evening shows in no uncertain terms our commitment to regenerating our whole town and Mark Hall will certainly be part of that.

Indeed, I can confirm that the Mark Hall ward will benefit from both the Estate Renewal Fund we are to vote on this evening and further that it will have its very own Estate Renewal Programme to be announced later this year.

Supplementary question from Councillor Matthew Saggors to Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

Once this regeneration gets underway, does he have any plans to help the hospitality and shop owners of areas like Mark Hall and Tanys Dell in highlighting them being there and driving people towards it so it becomes a social hub and not abandoned like it is at the moment?

Supplementary reply from Councillor Dan Swords (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration):

Thank you for that supplementary. Yes, is the short answer in where the Estate Renewal programme for Mark Hall we will set out later in this year will address all of those things. The most incredible thing about Harlow is the context in which the 20 minute neighbourhood was built and that is now being replicated across the world. It's very fashionable these days to have a 20 minute neighbourhood and, as I said, Harlow had that way back when and we are going to rejuvenate that in no uncertain terms we will come onto fantastic things so, yes, they will be very popular places indeed.

Recorded Votes on Items 9a-g

Councillor Name	Labour Group Alternative Budget (Amendment)	Substantive Motion (Resolution)
Councillor Clive Souter	Abstain	Abstain
Councillor David Carter	Against	For
Councillor Simon Carter	Against	For
Councillor Joel Charles	Against	For
Councillor Nick Churchill	Against	For
Councillor Jean Clark	For	Against
Councillor Mike Danvers	For	Against
Councillor Bob Davis	For	Against
Councillor Jodi Dunne	For	Against
Councillor Tony Durcan	For	Against
Councillor Tony Edwards	For	Against
Councillor Michael Garnett	Against	For
Councillor Alastair Gunn	Against	For
Councillor Michael Hardware	Against	For
Councillor Andrew Johnson	Against	For
Councillor Eddie Johnson	Against	For
Councillor James Leppard	Against	For
Councillor Ask Malik	Against	For
Councillor Colleen Morrison	Against	For
Councillor Russell Perrin	Against	For
Councillor Nicky Purse	Against	For
Councillor Matthew Saggars	Against	For
Councillor John Steer	Against	For
Councillor John Strachan	For	Absent
Councillor Dan Swords	Against	For
Councillor Chris Vince	For	Against
Councillor Nancy Watson	For	Against
	Rejected	Carried