

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Annual Meeting of the County Council held at County Hall, Hertford, on Tuesday 18 May 2004.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

N E Agar	R J M Ellis	B J Lamb	D T F Scudder
T I Ambrose	K F Emsall (Chairman)	A Lee	A M R Searing
S A Batson	B C Engel	D B Lloyd	I Simpson
M V Bayes	G D Game	D E Lloyd	E N Singam
D Beatty	S B A Giles-Medhurst	R Mays	R H Smith
D E Billing	J Gipps	D R McManus	W A Storey
N K Brook	P V Goggins	J T Metcalf	I E M Tarry
P T J Channell	R I N Gordon	S J Mills	J Taunton
G R Churchurch	A K Gray	J R Morton	J W A Usher
E M Clarke	M Green	S M P Newton	P A Webb
D Clayton	F Guest	M H O'Neill	C J White
F W Clayton	B N W Hammond	D A A Peek	B A York
R S Clements	D W Hills	S J Pile	
K J Coleman	J A Hobday	J M Pitman	
M D Colne	M J Hobday	S Quilty	
G M Cook	M H T Janes	R Roberts	
R N Copping	S E Jones	D Royall	
A D Dodd	T G M Kent	P A Ruffles	
M Downing	L R Kercher	R Sanderson	
D J Drake	I H Laidlaw-Dickson	H M Saunders	

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Annual Meeting of the County Council held on 18 May 2004, as circulated, action was taken or decisions were reached as follows:-

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

The Chairman, being a candidate for election, left the meeting and the Vice-Chairman, G D Game, took the Chair and called for nominations.

K F Emsall was nominated by R J M Ellis and this was duly seconded.

There being no other nominations, **K F Emsall** was declared ELECTED Chairman of the Council to hold office until the Annual Meeting of the Council next following.

He signed his declaration of acceptance of office, thanked the Council and took the Chair.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

The Chairman called for nominations.

G D Game was nominated by R J M Ellis and this was seconded.

There being no other nominations, **G D Game** was declared ELECTED Vice-Chairman of the Council to hold office until the Annual Meeting of the Council next following.

He signed his declaration of acceptance of office and thanked the Council.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30 March 2004, were confirmed, subject to noting that D R McManus was not present.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

4.1 "Quids for Kids" Award

The Council congratulated the Money Advice Unit on being awarded the February 2004 "quids for kids" project of the month by the LGA.

4.2 Mayor of Hertford

The Council congratulated P A Ruffles on his recent election as the 499th Mayor of Hertford.

5. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES / PROPORTIONALITY

RESOLVED:

That the following four persons be appointed to serve as Parent Governor representatives on the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee until May 2008:

Mary Calvert	(East area)
Pat Cherry	(North area)
Jeanette Shire	(South area)
Rodney Tucker	(West area)

6. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

- (a)** The Chairman called for nominations to be Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees for the ensuing year, and the following members were nominated by R Mays, I Simpson and R J M Ellis respectively and duly seconded:-

	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Lib Dem</u>	<u>Conservative</u>
Adult Care & Health	M Downing	-	-
Audit	-	P V Goggins	H M Saunders
Children, Schools & Families	T G M Kent	-	-
Community Services	J A Hobday	M D Colne	-
Environment	-	C J White	-
Resources	I H Laidlaw-Dickson	-	-

- (b)** The following were APPOINTED:-

Adult Care & Health	M Downing
Audit	H M Saunders
Children, Schools & Families	T G M Kent
Community Services	M D Colne
Environment	C J White
Resources	I H Laidlaw-Dickson

- (c)** The Chairman called for nominations to be Vice-Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees for the ensuing year, and the following members were nominated by R J M Ellis, J A Hobday¹ and M D Colne² respectively, and duly seconded:-

	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Labour</u>	<u>Lib Dem</u>
Adult Care & Health	K H Coleman	-	-
Audit	A D Dodd	R Sanderson ¹	-
Children, Schools & Families	S Quilty	-	-
Community Services	G D Game	J A Hobday ²	-
Environment	M V Bayes	-	-
Resources	W A Storey	-	-

- (d)** The following were APPOINTED:-

Adult Care & Health	K H Coleman
Audit	A D Dodd
Children, Schools & Families	S Quilty
Community Services	G D Game
Environment	M V Bayes
Resources	W A Storey

7. REPRESENTATION ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- (a)** The following members, having been proposed and seconded, were APPOINTED to serve on the Local Government Association General Assembly for the ensuing year:-

R J M Ellis
M H T Janes
A Lee
J M Pitman

- (b)** The following motion proposed by **R J M Ellis**, and duly seconded, was CARRIED:-

“That the ten available votes at the Local Government Association General Assembly be allocated to the Conservative Group representatives.”

8. REPRESENTATIVES ON HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

The following members, having been proposed and seconded, were APPOINTED to serve on the Hertfordshire Police Authority for the ensuing year:-

D E Billing
M D Colne
R J M Ellis
R I N Gordon
I H Laidlaw-Dickson
D B Lloyd
R Sanderson
R H Smith
J Taunton

9. QUESTIONS: HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY – STANDING ORDER 7 (6)

None were notified.

10. PUBLIC QUESTIONS – STANDING ORDER 7 (10)

None were notified.

11. PUBLIC PETITIONS – STANDING ORDER 14

The following persons presented petitions and addressed the Council: Bill Jones from Watford regarding a safety crossing at Five Ways Junction, Watford; and David Balmer on behalf of parents concerned about the lack of places at a Catholic Secondary School for children from Waltham Cross.

The first petition was referred to the Director of Environment for consideration and report to the local member and Environment Group Spokesmen; the second was referred to the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee.

12. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN (2004 – 2005)

The following motion proposed by **D Beatty**, and duly seconded, was CARRIED:-

“That the draft Best Value Performance Plan be approved, subject to:-

- (i) The amendment of Promise 19 by the replacement of 'getting' with 'becoming' so that it reads, 'give the public value for money by becoming more cost efficient every year.'*
- (ii) Further changes to the draft Best Value Performance Plan being agreed by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member, the Leader of the Council and the Opposition Group Leaders, before the Plan is published on 30 June 2004.*
- (iii) Reference being made to the work of the Money Advice Unit in the text supporting Promise 17.”*

13. MINERALS LOCAL PLAN REVIEW 2002 – 2006. DRAFT PROPOSED PRE-INQUIRY CHANGES FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The following motion proposed by **R J M Ellis** and duly seconded was CARRIED:-

- “(1) That the responses to the representations made to the Second Deposit Draft as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.*
- (2) That the Pre-Inquiry Changes document as set out in Appendix C to the report be approved.*
- (3) That the proposed consultation on the Pre-Inquiry Changes as set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report be approved.”*

14. HERTS TOGETHER – THE COUNTYWIDE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- (a) The following motion proposed by **M H T Janes** and duly seconded was CARRIED:-

“That the Hertfordshire Community Strategy be adopted, subject to the the Chief Executive being authorised, in consultation with the Executive Member, to agree the final version, and that the Council records its thanks and appreciation of the work of all partners for their contributions to the strategy.”

- (b) The following motion was proposed by **J T Metcalf**, and duly seconded:-

“That the Council welcomes the objectives in Herts Together to:

- *help those on low incomes access good quality affordable housing (p9)*
- *increase the proportion of affordable housing in new developments (p9)*
- *reduce the need to travel wherever possible (p9)*
- *increase the numbers of children walking or cycling to school (p9)*
- *increase the number of smoke-free environments (p12)*
- *increase the levels of physical activity (p12)*
- *address gaps in provision (of holiday and out of school places) in areas of disadvantage (p17)*
- *further develop diversionary and community-based activities to prevent anti-social behaviour (p18)*

and asks the Executive Member to report back to an early meeting of the Council, or appropriate Council Panels or Committees, as to how these will be achieved.”

- (c) The following amendment to (b), proposed by **M H T Janes**, and duly seconded, was CARRIED:-

“That the motion be amended to read:

‘That the Council asks that the Executive Member report to the Council or to the appropriate Panel or Committee on progress on the action plans to deliver the aims and objectives of the strategy, as set out on page 22 of the draft’.”

- (d) The substantive motion, as set out in (c) was then CARRIED.

- (e) The following motion proposed by **D E Billing**, and duly seconded, was LOST:-

“That the next review of the Countywide Community Strategy should take the opportunity to strengthen considerably the commitment to, and objectives and priorities for, social inclusion, and also to include references to the East of England Social Strategy.”

15. REPORT OF THE CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17 MARCH 2004

Presented by S Quilty, Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

15.1 A Review of Schools’ Performance from 2001 to 2003

- (a) The following motion was proposed by **D E Billing** and duly seconded:-

“That the Council notes that the comparative data now available reveals that the average performance of Hertfordshire schools, in value added terms, is around average for the country. Therefore, the Council resolves to learn from those councils and schools which add value above the average, so that all our learners identify, aspire to, and reach their full potential.”

- (b) The following amendment to (a) proposed by **R I N Gordon**, and duly seconded, was CARRIED:-

“That the motion be amended to read:-

‘That the Council

- (1) notes that overall standards achieved by Hertfordshire schools are high, with headline results consistently above average in respect of all key stages*
- (2) notes that the comparative data now available reveals that average performance of Hertfordshire schools, in value added terms as assessed by the DfES model, is around the average for the country*
- (3) recognises the deficiencies in the DfES model particularly in assessing value added between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4*
- (4) invites the Scrutiny Committee also to consider the more sophisticated added value data available through the Fischer Family Trust as this becomes available*

- (5) *endorses the initiatives of the Administration to refocus the Council's strategies for monitoring, challenge, support and intervention in schools, including the strategy for school improvement*
- (6) *resolves to learn from those councils and schools which add value above the average, so that all our learners identify, aspire to and reach their full potential'."*

(c) The substantive motion as set out in (b) was then CARRIED.

16. REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 22 MARCH 2004

Presented by J A Hobday, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Report of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee dated 22 March 2004 was received.

17. REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 MARCH 2004

Presented by C J White, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Report of the Environment Scrutiny Committee dated 23 March 2004 was received.

18. REPORT OF THE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 MARCH 2004

Presented by I H Laidlaw-Dickson, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee.

18.1 Local Public Service Agreement – Progress Report

(a) The following motion was proposed by **I H Laidlaw-Dickson** and duly seconded:-

"That the Cabinet arrange a workshop for all members to shape the content of the second local public service agreement."

(b) The following amendment to (a) proposed by **D Beatty**, and duly seconded, was CARRIED:-

"That the motion be amended to read:

'That since LPSA2 will involve District, Police, Health and possibly other major partners, the Cabinet be asked to arrange a workshop for representative Hertfordshire County Council members together with nominated members from partner organisations to shape the content of the second LPSA (probably sometime in 2005) as details of the project (and government mandated elements of it) become clearer'."

(c) The substantive motion, as set out in (b) was then CARRIED:-

18.2 The Report of the Resources Scrutiny Committee dated 25 March 2004 was received.

19. **KEY DECISIONS / FORWARD PLAN**

The following motion proposed by **R J M Ellis**, and duly seconded, was CARRIED:-

“That the position of Key Decisions in the decision-making process, shown in the current edition of the Forward Plan, be noted.”

20. **SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES – CABINET PANEL CHAIRMEN**

The following motion proposed by **R J M Ellis** and duly seconded, was CARRIED:-

“That in 2004/5 Special Responsibility Allowances (equivalent to £6458 p.a.) be paid to the Chairmen of the CSF, Children Services and Education Cabinet Panels, in place of those currently paid to the Chairmen of the Achievement, Schools' Resources and Children and Families Panels.”

21. **REPORT FROM THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
- 12 MARCH 2004**

Report received.

22. **ITEMS OF BUSINESS REQUESTED BY MEMBERS UNDER
STANDING ORDER 6 (2) (1)**

None were notified.

23. **NOTICES OF MOTION - STANDING ORDER 8 (5)**

None were notified.

24. **QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 7(1)**

* NOTE: The Executive Member for Environment was not present and the Leader of the Council, R J M Ellis, answered questions on his behalf.

24.1 **M D Colne** asked the Executive Member for Education:-

“Regarding recycling at school premises:

(a) *what are the arrangements for encouraging schools and schoolchildren to take part in waste recycling?*

- (b) *how does the Authority co-ordinate waste collection arrangements at school premises with the District and Borough Councils?*
- (c) *are we satisfied that these arrangements are adequate throughout the County?*
- (d) *a primary school in Hertsmere was recently turned away from one of our Household Waste sites. Will we ensure that all sites will in future accept material brought in from our schools?*
- (e) *what steps are in place to ensure that all schools in the County maximise their recycling efforts?*
- (f) *are all schools provided with containers to ensure effective, efficient and safe collections?"*

24.2

R I N Gordon replied:-

- “(a) *A key part of Hertfordshire’s Municipal Waste Strategy, endorsed by all 11 local authorities, is the WasteAware campaign. The campaign targets all age groups through a wide range of initiatives including promoting the theme of waste and recycling in the curriculum in primary, secondary and special schools. Information has been made available to teachers on topics such as paper and metal can recycling schemes that can be readily introduced to schools. A substantial waste education pack, tailored in two versions for primary and secondary school, is also nearing completion and will be distributed to all Hertfordshire schools in the autumn term. Subject to external funding the key-stage 2 pack will be promoted in primary schools by two full time education officers from 2004-5.*
- (b) *The Hertfordshire Waste Partnership investigated this recently and has agreed a common approach across the county. Recycling is being encouraged and collections from schools’ premises managed as part of district council collection arrangements.*
- (c) *I am not yet satisfied. Monitoring through the partnership is highlighting the actions necessary to achieve satisfactory arrangements.*
- (d) *No. the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) are provided by the County Council in accordance with Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as places where ‘persons resident in its area may deposit their household waste’. They are not provided for the disposal or recycling of any other waste, including schools waste.*
- (e) *I refer Mr Colne to my answer to his sub-question (a).*

- (f) *No. Currently services vary from district to district. Some district councils, such as North Herts, have offered schools containers as part of their recycling schemes. Other districts provide them on request and some are piloting recycling collections in other areas. WasteAware will be presenting a report on each council's recycling provision to schools at the next Hertfordshire Waste Partnership meeting in July.*

24.3 M D Colne then asked the following supplementary question:-

"I am particularly concerned about schools not being allowed to dispose of waste at household waste sites. Would the Executive Member agree that there should be an immediate review of this particular policy, so that preferably schools should be allowed to go to our recycling points?"

24.4 R I N Gordon replied:-

"I shall give you a written reply to that question."

24.5 S B A Giles-Medhurst asked the Executive Member for Environment:-

"Would the Executive Member agree with me that it is totally disgraceful that local residents are having to wait for six months for the connection of nearly 60 new street light columns across Watford that have been installed and paid for out of the Discretionary Budget, and could he inform me what further action he intends to take with EDF about this appalling service?"

24.6 R J M Ellis* replied:-

"Yes. Despite general improvements in EDF's performance over recent months they have failed to deliver for Hertfordshire on these lights. EDF have given programme dates for the remaining 50 unconnected lights to have been connected by the end of May. Officers will be monitoring progress against EDF's programme through the weekly progress meetings that now occur."

24.7 S B A Giles-Medhurst asked the Executive Member for Environment:-

"Does the Executive Member agree with the recent statement by Theresa May that the use of speed cameras has fallen into disrepute and that they should be removed?"

24.8 R J M Ellis* replied:-

"If Theresa May had said what Mr Giles-Medhurst says she said, then no, but she didn't."

I would not agree that the use of speed cameras has fallen into disrepute and should be removed.

Research has consistently shown that speed cameras have a major impact in reducing casualties. A two-year DfT study found a 35% reduction in people killed and seriously injured at camera sites and repeats the results of previous studies both in the UK and overseas. The benefits were also seen across a wider geographical area with casualty levels dropping by around 4%.

Hertfordshire's Safety Camera Partnership went live during 2003 and cameras will have contributed to the large reduction in fatal, serious and slight casualties recorded in the county last year. Public support for safety cameras in the county continues with 71.5% of local residents saying that the use of safety cameras should be supported as a method of reducing casualties, in a recent public attitude survey carried out by the Partnership.

Drivers have no need to fear safety cameras if they drive within the speed limits."

24.9 S B A Giles-Medhurst then asked the following supplementary question:-

"The statement by Theresa May referred to in my question was quoted in a publication issued by the Conservative Party. In his answer he has stated that Theresa May did not make such a statement. In light of this will he now repudiate the publication?"

24.10 R J M Ellis* replied:-

"No."

24.11 S B A Giles-Medhurst asked the Executive Member for Environment:-

"Will the Executive Member take steps to ensure that all future Section 106 agreements signed by the County Council that make provision for bus stops also cover bus shelters provided at cost by the developer? As he will be aware this was not done with the building of Aerodrome Way in Leavesden that services over 300 homes and four large scale office blocks (at present), and that so far the County has refused to fund the bus shelters needed to protect residents and workers and encourage the use of public transport."

24.12 R J M Ellis* replied:-

"Yes, when and where appropriate depending on the nature and scale of the development.

In this case shelters were not included as the level of development did not warrant it. Phase 2 of the development has generated a contribution for bus infrastructure that may be used for bus shelters on Aerodrome Way."

24.13 S B A Giles-Medhurst then asked the following supplementary question:-

“Would the Executive Member like to re-think that policy and ask officers to review arrangements for future S106 agreements, so that this does not occur again?”

24.14 R J M Ellis* replied:-

“Yes.”

24.15 S B A Giles-Medhurst asked the Executive Member for Community Services:-

“Could the Executive Member please state what action she is taking in relation to Watford Central Library and the requirement to meet the Disability Discrimination Act, and in particular will she note the ongoing concern of local residents at the constant removal of reference books from this library which can now only be accessed on request and payment of a fee from Hertford. Would she not agree that this is discrimination against Watford residents who would like access to such publications?”

24.16 I E M Tarry replied:-

“The ground floor of Watford Central Library is accessible by a ramp to automatic front doors. A costed feasibility study for the provision of a lift has already been undertaken for incorporation into the capital programme. Alternative ICT stations and study spaces are available downstairs as is an enquiry desk. Staff will fetch stock from the upper floor on request.

Generally throughout the publishing world there has been an increase in the provision of electronic information resources and a decrease in the printed formats published. This has enabled us to provide wider access to information for example Oxford Reference on-line is now available in all 51 libraries in the County (previously we could only afford to provide the printed reference books in our largest libraries). In cases where we have retained just one printed copy of a reference book this has usually been located at the Central Resources Library in Hatfield as this is geographically centrally located with a car park and serves as the reference library for the County.

The draft MORI BVPI General Survey Report conducted on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council shows a significant increase in satisfaction with libraries over the last three years with 87% satisfied compared with 70% in 2000/01. In particular residents in Watford are more satisfied (98%) with library provision than elsewhere in the county.”

24.17 **S B A Giles-Medhurst** then asked the following supplementary question:-

“Not everyone is computer literate or skilled and additional assistance may be required on certain occasions. If that assistance is not forthcoming they might require a written version as their first preference. Would the Executive Member agree that requesting payment of fees in those cases is discriminatory?”

24.18 **I E M Tarry** replied:-

“That is your opinion, not mine. I have already given you a full answer. Every assistance is given when reference books are requested. I do not consider the example you quote to be discriminatory; fees are charged at a rate to make the service viable.”

24.19 **P V Goggins** asked the Executive Member for Environment:-

“Could the Executive Member please explain the inordinate delay in completing remedial action to stop the flooding in Abbots Langley High Street by the pedestrian crossing. Is he aware that it is two years since the fault was first reported to Hertfordshire Highways and, despite several reminders by me and other local members, no remedy has yet been found. Does he appreciate that such flooding presents a safety hazard, especially for children walking to and from school?”

24.20 **R J M Ellis*** replied:-

“Two drainage problems in this area have been addressed on a number of occasions, after which the problems appeared to have been resolved. Most recently a jetting operation has shown that the highway drains appear to have been blocked by cooking fat. Local restaurant owners have been spoken to.

More localised flooding on the footway has also been attended by Herts Highways. It would appear that despite occasional clearing of the drain resolving the problem in the short term, a more permanent solution is required and this is being designed.”

24.21 **P V Goggins** then asked the following supplementary question:-

“Would the Executive Member like to hazard a guess as to why it took two years to find out about this matter, and is it just a coincidence that after two years action has now been taken, three days after I tabled this question?”

24.22 **R J M Ellis*** replied:-

“I would be mildly surprised if cause and effect had anything to do with this.”

24.23 **S B A Giles-Medhurst** asked the Executive Member for Environment:-

“Will the Executive Member please issue a full public apology to the residents of Watford and South West Herts who found themselves in a total gridlock of Watford recently caused by the poor planning of road closures for road improvement works? Will he note that officers were warned in advance that reducing road capacity on the ring road at Watford by 50 % in peak times would cause this sort of problem and thus had to change the road closure scheme within 24 hours of its original implementation because the congestion was totally unacceptable causing traffic to queue back to the motorway network? In so accepting this and noting that in some aspects of these changes have eased some of the congestion more is still being caused in other parts of the town such as the Hempstead Road and thus can I have his personal assurance, as the top person responsible for this area of work, that staff from Herts Highways and the contractors will be working seven days a week from 7 a.m. till the mid evening to complete these works as quickly as possible and complete them before the impending road closures along the St Albans Road?”

24.24 **R J M Ellis*** replied:-

“The disruption to traffic in Watford is regrettable. This has been caused by the necessary traffic management required to install the works – some of which was requested by yourself- in a safe manner. Local members have been consulted and kept fully informed of the proposals and advised that disruption would occur. Working hours have been extended to keep the period of works to a minimum.

The traffic management was originally agreed with the police and was adjusted to reduce the traffic delays after a period of operation once it had been seen how it operated and could be amended slightly to improve traffic flows without compromising safety.”

24.25 **S B A Giles-Medhurst** then asked the following supplementary question:-

“The Executive Member does not seem to have answered that part of my question about the hours which the contractors are working. Whilst the works are essential, would he agree that better planning, taking on board the comments of local members including myself, might have lessened the impact on residents and the commercial centre of Watford?”

24.26 **R J M Ellis*** replied:-

“I shall give you a written answer about the hours that the contractors are working. On your other point I am more inclined in this case to look at cause and effect. If you did not cry wolf so often, on occasions where you really were being constructive more notice might be taken.”

24.27 **E M Clarke** asked the Executive Member for Resources:-

“Will the Executive Member please clarify the situation regarding the sale of the Waste Disposal site at Hunton Bridge, bearing in mind the long-standing use of the canal side landing stage at the site by the South West Narrow Boat Project?”

24.28 **D Beatty** replied:-

“This is a complex issue and has become more so during the course of the sale process. Arising from the decision of Cabinet to relocate the Household Waste Recycling Centre to a brand-new facility at Waterdale – which is currently projected to open in the early part of next month – the County Council’s retained property consultants, as part of the preparation for marketing, examined the County’s title document and compared it to what is ‘on the ground’ today. They reported that as well as the Household Waste Recycling Centre, a yard leased to a commercial firm and an electricity sub-station there was an area apparently used by what we now know to be the South West Herts Narrowboat Project (‘the Project’).

Because the County’s records contained no documents covering the Project’s use of the land the property consultants made direct enquiries as to why the Project was on County-owned land. The response from the Project was that they were unsure – it had all been started off by the original chairman who is now dead.

The property consultants recommended that the County Council should seek to dispose of its entire property-holding in one overall sale – and it is being marketed accordingly.

No attempt was made by the County Council to disturb the status quo.

The Sales Particulars state ‘A strip of land between the former Highways Depot and the electricity sub-station is used to gain access to the riverbank by the South West Herts Narrow Boat Project’. This arrangement is believed to have commenced in 1987 and is informal.

Offers were received from a number of interested parties for the County’s entire property-holding – and, in the normal way, the highest was accepted.

Part of the way through the conveyancing process the Project lodged papers with the Stevenage District Land Registry claiming title to an area of the County’s land by virtue of ‘squatters rights’. In some ways this may be viewed as a hostile act – perhaps even aimed at sabotaging the County’s prospective sale. It needs to be remembered that this sale is an important component of the funding package for the new, soon-to-be-opened, facility at Waterdale.

As a result of the Project's action British Waterways Board presented documents to the Stevenage District Land Registry indicating that they might have a claim, too, to title to some of the land that appears to be within the County's title.

Another complicating factor arose when it came to light that the Highways Agency might have a claim to title to a part of the land which adjoins the A41.

I am advised that the County's prospective buyers have agreed to continue with the transaction on a "warts and all" footing (but on no other).

In my view it is in the overall best financial interests of the County Council to continue with sale of the property on the currently-agreed basis."

24.29 **E M Clarke** then asked the following supplementary question:-

"Can the Executive Member ensure that County Council Officers meet with representatives of the Narrowboat Project to seek an outcome which will enable the Project to continue its excellent work?"

24.30 **D Beatty** replied:-

"Yes, but meanwhile the County Council will continue with the sale of the land and the new purchaser will have to deal with the situation as they find it."

24.31 **N E Agar** asked the Executive Member for Community Services:-

"The recent Coates Report on the future of libraries suggested that unless matters improved, public libraries would be a thing of the past in twenty years.

How is the Council responding to the decline in library use and what is the Council doing to reverse the trend?"

24.32 **I E M Tarry** replied:-

"The library service has over the last few years stemmed the decline in library usage in Hertfordshire by responding to customer feedback and concentrating on providing what people want:-

- More opening hours – better more cost effective employment of staffing resources has been made in order to increase opening hours. Since 1998 an extra 60+ hours per week across the county has been achieved within existing resources.*

- *More books – better more cost-effective use of the materials fund has been made by taking a leading role in the Central Buying Consortium (CBC). More books are now purchased than ever before for the same money. The new contracts that were put in place on 1st April 2004 will enable us to purchase an additional 10,000 items of stock per annum. The rate of decline in issues has slowed down consistently from -8% in 2001/02 down to -3% in 2003/04.*
- *Better buildings and facilities –refurbishments and improvements have been made to many of our buildings such as the installation of ICT suites and DDA requirements e.g. installation of lifts and ramps where appropriate. For example since Berkhamsted was refurbished by having a lift installed, new counters, an ICT suite and a new children’s area, visits have increased (over a full year) by +12%, issues by +1% and enquiries by +28%.*
- *The level of visits to Hertfordshire libraries has remained fairly constant. This reflects visits to libraries to use new services e.g. electronic information. It also reflects the traditional use made of libraries which does not involve borrowing books e.g. studying, reading newspapers, homework clubs, story times etc.”*

24.33 **N E Agar** then asked the following supplementary question:-

“Large Booksellers, online companies and book clubs seem to get better terms from suppliers than Libraries. What is the Executive Member doing to redress the balance in favour of the public interest?”

24.34 **I E M Tarry** replied:-

“I am not sure that the report was accurate as far as Hertfordshire was concerned, but I will nonetheless give you a written reply.”

ANDREW LAYCOCK
County Secretary

Executive Member Environment

Michael Colne
1 Chiltern Close
Bushey
WD23 4PZ

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25th May 2004

Dear Michael

County Council, 18th May 2004 Supplementary Question

You asked a question at County Council regarding recycling at school premises and Robert Gordon responded.

You then asked a supplementary question:

"I am particularly concerned about schools not being allowed to dispose of waste at household waste sites. Would the Executive Member agree that there should be an immediate review of this particular policy, so that preferably schools should be allowed to go to our recycling points?"

I now respond to that supplementary question, as follows:

The Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) are provided by the County Council in accordance with Section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as places where persons resident in its area may deposit their household waste. They are not provided for the disposal or recycling of any other waste whether classified as 'household', 'industrial' or 'commercial' waste, including schools waste. Whilst most waste from a school is classified as 'household' waste under Section 75 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA 90) and Controlled Waste Regulations 1992, this is simply to ensure that the Waste Collection Authority (WCA) is made responsible for collection and the Waste Disposal Authority for disposal of the waste that they collect. Schools waste is also waste for which WCA's may make a charge for collection and many do so.

Although householders are exempt from certain Duty of Care requirements, especially with regard to transporting waste, schools are not. The legislation controlling waste movements in the UK puts a requirement on organisations transporting waste to be registered as waste carriers and to initiate a chain of paperwork that runs through to the point of final disposal. Our HWRCs neither have the capacity or procedures in place to receive additional waste from sources other than householders themselves. Any decision to accept schools waste would also set an awkward precedent that would give rise to challenges from charities, societies and residential homes to bring waste to the already stretched facilities.

The issue of recycling and disposal of schools waste is being dealt with through the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership and a programme of regular monitoring to improve the current situation through partnerships with the district councils. In view of this current situation, I feel that a review of current policy would be inappropriate at this time.

In practical terms, the WasteAware campaign is providing a range of activities this year and into next, specifically designed to encourage greater engagement of Schools in recycling. Past examples of these initiatives included annual poster and poetry competitions, run since 1999, to introduce the theme of waste and recycling into the curriculum in primary, secondary and special schools.

In March 2004 the WasteAware campaign used funds from Defra to give free can bank crushers to Hertfordshire schools to set them up in a can recycling scheme. In addition, the County Council has recently offered all schools the opportunity of obtaining a free composter for use in schools, through the promotion scheme run in conjunction with Blackwall. This offer will be repeated next spring as part of a poster competition. In the meantime, schools can buy a composter at the subsidised price of £12 from Blackwall. These initiatives have been supported by information to teachers on topics such as paper and metal can recycling schemes that can be readily introduced to schools. Set out below are examples of other activities planned for this financial year.

- June 2004 - Secondary Arts Competition
- September 2004 - Countywide Cans Recycling Competition in Schools - following on from the can crusher initiative
- March 2005 - Composter Competition to complement compost bin offer
- A substantial waste education pack, tailored in two versions for primary and secondary schools, is nearing completion and will be distributed to all Hertfordshire schools in the Autumn term. Subject to external funding, the key-stage two pack will be promoted in primary schools by two full time education officers from 2004-5.
- Ongoing updates to the dedicated page on the WasteAware website (<http://www.wasteaware.org.uk/infopacks.cfm>)

All of the competitions are aimed at teaching children about the importance of waste reduction and recycling and have been devised to encourage children and schools to set up and participate in recycling schemes.

In July, WasteAware will be presenting an updated report on each district council's recycling provision to schools at the next Hertfordshire Waste Partnership meeting. It is worth noting that since the original report was published in January, a number of district councils such as Hertsmere and East Herts have improved their recycling service provision to schools. We are also planning to take steps to identify how much readily recyclable material such as paper is being thrown away by schools and investigate ways to improve the current situation with the availability and take up of recycling services by schools.

Yours sincerely

Derrick Ashley

Executive Member Community Services

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cc. All County Councillors

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25th May 2004

Dear Nigel

County Council 18th May 2004 Supplementary Question

At the County Council on the 18th May you asked the following supplementary question:

“Large booksellers, online companies and book clubs seem to get better terms from suppliers than libraries. What is the Executive Member doing to redress the balance in favour of the public interest?”

I am now responding, as follows:

Hertfordshire County Council seeks best value in the purchase of books by being a leading member of the Central Buying Consortium (CBC) which, with 23 participating authorities, is the largest public library book buying consortium in the UK. This places the CBC in a strong position in the market place with the result that we are able to obtain good terms from suppliers who are keen to win and keep our business. This is the best method for book purchasing available to library authorities. The CBC regularly examines ways to increase its buying power.

The CBC cannot obtain the sort of discounts that, for example, a large supermarket gets because they are buying a very limited number of titles in enormous quantities which enables them to undercut bookshops and bookclubs. Our arrangements allow us to obtain high discounts across the whole range of titles that libraries provide for their users.

Yours sincerely
IRIS TARRY

Executive Member Environment

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24th May 2004

Dear Stephen

County Council 18th May 2004

You asked a question at County Council regarding road closures for road improvement works in Watford and traffic delays. Mr Ellis responded on my behalf.

You then asked a supplementary question:

“The Executive Member does not seem to have answered that part of my question about the hours which the contractors are working. Whilst the works are essential, would he agree that better planning, taking on board the comments of local members including myself, might have lessened the impact on residents and the commercial centre of Watford?”

Below is my response to your supplementary question:

“Whilst a window of working hours of 7 am to 7 pm have been agreed for every day of the week, it may not always be practical or constructive to work the full extent of the hours available.

Staff from Hertfordshire Highways will plan their resources and activities to maximise the opportunity of working the extended hours available to complete these works as quickly as possible. The works on Beechen Grove are planned to be complete before the road closures along St Albans Road associated with the Transco works are implemented.

However, I would emphasise again that we are always seeking to find ways of minimising inconvenience to residents.”

Yours sincerely

Derrick Ashley

Copied: All County Councillors