HATFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
HERTFORDSHIRE

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on Wednesday 23rd September 2026 at 7pm in the Sportsman Meeting Room, Birchwood Leisure Centre, Longmead, Hatfield.

PRESENT: Councillor Nike Fakoya (Chair)
Councillor Peter Costello (Vice Chair)

Councillor Gareth Aicken
Councillor Shirley Asare
Councillor Sandreni Bonfante
Councillor Eames-Petersen
Councillor Cathy Watson
Councillor Nigel Upson (from 7.26pm)
Councillor Stan Tunstall (from 7.27pm)
Councillor Simon Freeman
Councillor Mick Wise
Councillor Tim Rowse
Councillor Helena Goldwater
Councillor Daisy Jerobon

OFFICERS: Tracy Cowan (Chief Executive & Town Clerk)
Sam Frake (Managing Director and Responsible Finance Officer
Jane Anderson (Civic Manager)
Alastair Ogilvie (Head of Estates)
Sam Frake (MD)

24. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from **Cllr Crofton**.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Members noted the Declarations made by **Cllrs Bonfante**, **Asare** and **Watson** as Members of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

26. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Mayor** welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Tracy Cowan as the new Chief Executive and Town Clerk. She then invited the **Deputy Mayor Cllr Costello** to give an update on any events or meetings he had attended. **Cllr Costello** spoke about his visit to the Green Lanes Allotment Open day. The **Mayor** updated about her visits to St Phillip Howard School Summer Fete and St Ethelreda Church.

The **Mayor** then invited the new Town Clerk to speak. The Town Clerk gave a short speech about her priorities and the warm welcome she had received from all.

27. MINUTES

The Minutes of the 17th June 2026 were unanimously approved by all attendees from the last meeting. Abstentions from **Cllr Rowse** and **Cllr Goldwater** as they did not attend the previous meeting.

28. QUESTION TIME

A Member of the Public (MoP) requested an update on the Leisure and Community Hall Strategic Plan. The MoP was advised that the Strategy had been approved at the previous Full Council meeting. **Cllr Eames Peterson** commented that the public had not seen the strategy and asked what it contained. The Mayor referred to Section 21 of the previous meeting minutes. The MoP was also advised that the strategy was now on the website for public viewing.

The MoP also asked for an update regarding the heating issues at Howe Dell Hall. The Chief Executive advised that the matter remains under consideration and that no further update could be provided at this time. It was agreed that the Chief Executive would write to the Member of the Public following the meeting.

29. UPDATES AND RECOMMENDATION FROM COMMITTEES, TASK AND FINISH GROUPS AND EXTERNAL BODIES

a) COMMUNITY DAY – 20TH JUNE 2026 REVIEW

Members received an update from **Cllr Asare** on the Community Day held on 20 June 2026.

It was reported that the approved budget for the event was £27,000, with total expenditure of £25,313.

Cllr Jerobon asked whether vendors were paid to attend the event. Sam Frake confirmed that vendors were not charged. **Cllr Jerobon** requested a full breakdown of the event expenditure.

b) COMMUNITY DAY 2027

Members considered initial proposals for Community Day 2027, scheduled to take place on 19 June 2027.

It was reported that a provisional budget of £28,000 is proposed for the event. A full proposal will be presented to a future meeting of Full Council for consideration.

Cllr Upson arrived at 7.26 pm.

Cllr Tunstall arrived at 7.27 pm.

The Chief Executive advised that the Council is seeking to develop further partnership working opportunities to support future community events.

A Member of the Public raised a question regarding events organised by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. The Chair advised that the matter was not relevant to the business of the meeting and moved proceedings on.

Chair expressed thanks to the team and the task and and finish group for an excellent event. Members also expressed their thanks and appreciation to Jane and the team for their work in delivering the event.

c) AGAR

Members received the recommendation of the Finance and Compliance Committee regarding the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), which was presented to Full Council for ratification.

Cllr Eames-Peterson queried the absence of Howe Dell Hall from the AGAR. The Chief Executive explained that Howe Dell Hall is not a Council asset and is therefore not included within the AGAR. **Cllr Aitken** further explained that the variance statement within the AGAR provided explanations for significant year-on-year differences and movements in the Council's accounts. **Cllr Eames-Peterson** was invited to submit any further detailed questions to the Town Clerk outside the meeting.

The recommendations contained within the report were proposed by **Cllr Tunstall** and seconded by **Cllr Bonfante**.

RESOLVED: That Full Council ratifies the recommendation of the Finance and Compliance Committee and approves the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

Voting: 13 in favour, 0 against, 1 abstention (Cllr Eames-Peterson).

30. **HATFIELD VILLAGE SIGN**

Members received a presentation from **Cllr Freeman** regarding proposals for a new Hatfield Village Sign, following previous consideration of the matter by the Planning, Environment and Community Committee. Three design options were presented for Members' consideration.

During discussion:

- **Cllr Asare** welcomed the proposal and expressed support for the project, commenting that it would be a positive addition for the town.
- **Cllr Rowse** considered the options to be good and suggested that, should the project proceed, the preferred design be agreed by the Policy and Environment Committee before obtaining firm costings.
- **Cllr Nike Fakoya** noted the importance of ensuring that any proposal represented good value for money and was financially sustainable.
- **Cllr Aitken** reminded Members that planning permission may be required.
- **Cllr Eames-Peterson** suggested that the sign should incorporate an element of the Town Council's history.

- **CllrTunstall** commended **Cllr Freeman** for the considerable work undertaken in developing the proposal.
- **Cllr Bonfante** commented that the design should reflect Hatfield's wider heritage, including both its Tudor history and aviation heritage, and should represent Hatfield as a whole rather than solely the Town Council. She expressed support for the proposal in principle.
- **Cllr Goldwater** described the proposal as an excellent idea and highlighted the need to consider future maintenance costs.

A Member of the Public, expressed support for the proposal, describing it as an excellent idea and suggesting that more than one sign could be considered in the future possibly at all entrances/exits into Hatfield Town. She thanked **Cllr Freeman** for his work on the project.

Following discussion, it was proposed by **Cllr Tunstall** and seconded by **Cllr Rowse** that **Option A** be approved and that the remaining budget allocation of **£5,000** be utilised towards the project.

RESOLVED: That **Option A** be approved.
Voting: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned for a five-minute comfort break at **7.51 pm**.

31. The **Mayor** read the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) statement and reminded Members that the AGAR and supporting documents would be subject to the statutory period of public inspection and consultation in accordance with the relevant regulations.

32. BIRCHWOOD CAR PARK EXTENSION UPDATE

Members received an update from the Head of Estates, Alastair Ogilvie, regarding the Birchwood Car Park Extension project. It was noted that Full Council had requested scoping work in June to explore options for extending the car park. The Head of Estates presented proposals for Area 1 as identified on the site plan and outlined three potential options for Members' consideration.

During discussion:

- **Cllr Aitken** queried the Council's VAT position and potential funding sources, including whether funds previously earmarked for a play area could be utilised. He also sought clarification on the remaining budget requirements and whether these would be met through the precept.
- **Cllr Rowse** reminded Members that the Council had previously discussed allocating £30,000 per annum over a ten-year period towards the project and expressed support in principle for the Gold Option.
- **Cllr Nike Fakoya** commented that the site serves as the Town Council headquarters and noted increasing parking pressures. She considered that a permanent solution would benefit both residents and neighbouring properties.
- **Cllr Eames-Peterson** queried the anticipated level of usage, noting the provision of parking associated with football activities. She also expressed support for the grass matting option.

- **Cllr Nike Fakoya** clarified that the parking provision for the football ground was not envisaged as equivalent to the proposed extension.
- **Cllr Costello** stated that the project should be undertaken properly and indicated support for the Gold Option only.
- **Cllr Watson** expressed support for the Gold Option, subject to the inclusion of appropriate drainage measures.

The recommendation was read to Members by **Cllr Nike Fakoya**, namely that the Council proceed with the Gold Option, subject to planning and detailed design considerations.

The recommendation was proposed by **Cllr Goldwater** and seconded by **Cllr Rowse**.

RESOLVED: That the Council proceed with the **Gold Option** for the Birchwood Car Park Extension, subject to planning approval and detailed design work.

Voting: Unanimous.

33. ELLENBROOK BASKETBALL HOOP UPDATE

Members considered a report presented by Cllr Tunstall regarding the potential reinstatement of the basketball hoop at Ellenbrook. Cllr Tunstall provided an overview of the report and the background to the proposal.

The Chief Executive advised that, should Members wish to proceed, the Council would first need to establish the costs associated with reinstatement and any associated works.

During discussion:

Sue Meehan (Member of the Public), speaking on behalf of the Ellenbrook Residents' Association (ERA), advised that the two principal concerns raised by residents were safety and noise generated by the basketball bouncing.

- **Cllr Tunstall** responded that the concerns regarding noise could be tested and assessed further.
- **Cllr Wise** asked whether an improved playing surface could be provided.
- **Cllr Eames-Peterson** expressed the view that the facility offered limited basketball activity and suggested users could instead make use of facilities at Birchwood.
- The Chief Executive advised **Cllr Eames-Peterson** that the Basketball facility at Birchwood is not free and is an indoor court unlike the current facility at Ellenbrook.
- **Cllr Asare** commented on the availability of alternative facilities.
- **Cllr Goldwater** noted that feedback from a small number of residents may not be representative of the wider community and suggested that additional engagement with Ellenbrook residents should be undertaken.
- **Cllr Jerobon** queried how many local residents currently play basketball and would be likely to use the facility.

- **Cllr Rowse** commented that it is not possible to satisfy all views but considered that further work should be undertaken to enable a decision to be made. He stated that his personal view was that the basketball hoop should be reinstated.

In her final comments, Sue Meehan emphasised the importance of ensuring that the views of residents living closest to the proposed location of the basketball hoop were fully considered.

The Chief Executive advised that officers would undertake further consultation with the Ellenbrook Residents' Association and other relevant stakeholders and bring a further report to the next meeting of Full Council for consideration.

34. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC

The Council considered the exclusion of the Press and Public.

RESOLVED: That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that their presence would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

Proposed by **Cllr Bonfante** and seconded by **Cllr Rowse.**

Voting: Majority in favour.

The meeting was adjourned whilst those not entitled to remain for the confidential business departed.

35. FOOTBALL TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE (CONFIDENTIAL)

Cllr Rowse advised Members that an amended report had been circulated and provided an update on the work of the Football Task and Finish Group. The update included 3 options for consideration.

Members were informed that pre-application planning feedback had been generally negative, with concerns raised regarding the scale and design of the proposals, including fencing, buildings and the impact on the surrounding community and residents. The need to demonstrate enhanced community benefits was also highlighted.

The Chief Executive advised that a letter was being drafted by Cllr Asare and would be issued to schools and that a meeting with the Council's planning consultant was scheduled for the following week. Members were also advised that a meeting had been arranged with the Assistant Director (Planning) and the Principal Planning Officer from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Planning.

During discussion:

Cllr Aitken queried whether additional Council approval would be required should further expenditure be needed.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the current budget allocation covered the next stage of pre-planning work, but that a further report would be required before any full planning application expenditure could be committed.

Cllr Asare asked whether she should attend the meeting with planning officers. The Chief Executive advised that the meeting was intended as a general introductory meeting rather than one solely focused on the football project.

Cllr Eames-Peterson asked whether questions could be submitted for consideration. The Chief Executive confirmed that questions could be provided, although it may not be possible to raise all matters during the meeting.

Following discussion, **Option 3** contained within the report was proposed by **Cllr Aitken** and seconded by **Cllr Costello**.

RESOLVED: That **Option 3** be approved.

Voting: Unanimous.

36. EXTENSION OF MEETING

In accordance with Standing Order 10(a), Members agreed to extend the meeting until 9.30 pm.

37. BUDGET PLANNING 2027/2028

Members held an initial discussion regarding priorities for the 2027/28 budget-setting process.

Potential areas for consideration included:

- Reinvestment Fund priorities
- A sensory area within the Fun Zone
- Roe Hill public toilets
- Elections
- Councillor training and workshops

During discussion:

Cllr Rowse requested that officers bring forward information regarding the Council's reinvestment fund as part of the budget-setting process.

Members were invited to submit budget suggestions and proposals by 16 October 2026.

Cllr Watson requested a comprehensive list of potential projects and priorities for consideration.

Cllr Aitken suggested that, alongside expenditure proposals, consideration should be given to income generation opportunities and external funding sources, including grants and engagement with the Chamber of Commerce.

Cllr Eames-Peterson requested information on the Council's reserves, including any earmarked and ring-fenced reserves.

The Responsible Financial Officer advised that detailed budget papers would be circulated to Members within the next two weeks.

38. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next Full Council meeting was scheduled to take place on **Wednesday 18th November 2026**.

Closure: 21.10.