Herts IQ Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting details			
Date	30 September 2026	**Time**	09.30 – 12.00
Location	University of Hertfordshire	**Recorded by**	Sally Stanley

Present		
Board	Neil Rutledge - Chair	Hertfordshire Futures Board
	Cllr Adrian England	Dacorum Borough Council
	Cllr Paul de Kort	St Albans City & District Council
	Cllr Paul Zukowskyj	Hertfordshire County Council
	Cllr Allison Wren	Hertfordshire County Council
Other Attendees	Nicole Sadd	Rothamsted Enterprises
	Diane Southam	Dacorum Borough Council
	Robin Taylor	St Albans City & District Council
	Peter Gooden	University of Hertfordshire
	Neil Paterson	BRE
	Graham Cook	The Crown Estate
	Phillipa Zieba	Hemel Garden Communities
	Colin Haigh	Hertfordshire County Council
	Adam Wood	Herts IQ
	Neil Hayes	Hertfordshire Futures
	Sally Stanley	Hertfordshire Futures (Board support)
	Helen Pollock	Herts IQ
	Vickie Holland	Hertfordshire Futures
	Georgie Sheridan	Hertfordshire County Council
	Emma Midcalf	Hertfordshire County Council
Invited Guest	Simon Littlewood	Estu (agenda item 2)
	Dominic Beecheno	Estu (agenda item 2)
	Graeme Collinge	Genecon (agenda item 3)

Welcome and Declaration of Interests

Apologies:

- Cllr Sally Symington - Dacorum Borough Council
- Melanie Miller - Hertfordshire Futures

- Neil Rutledge welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Board Members were reminded to declare any conflict of interest for relevant agenda items.

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1. University of Hertfordshire Welcome – Peter Gooden

- Peter welcomed the Board to the Enterprise Hub which was part funded by Hertfordshire Futures. Completed in 2020, the facility provides multi-use spaces for business incubation and teaching.

2. Overcoming Workforce Barriers – Simon Littlewood/ Dominic Beecheno

- Estu provided an overview of the Overcoming Workforce Barriers programme which has received Herts IQ funding. Based on MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) research on workforce practices, the programme looks at workforce behaviour data and how that can impact and influence performance. Each business on the programme goes through a detailed diagnostic, their data is aligned with the model from MIT, bespoke interventions are developed to address company specific issues and delivered either by Estu or their delivery partner organisations directly to the company through reports and workshops.
- The initial pilot cohort has focused on the Herts IQ area, and to date, 33 organisations across 12 sectors, including commercial, community and public-facing services, have participated in the programme. Estu worked with Dacorum Borough Council, Maylands Business board, business support programmes as well as attending events to recruit companies onto the programme.
- Estu works with each organisation by looking at their data and producing a report of areas for improvement via bespoke interventions. They have reported that there are recurring patterns emerging and that across the current cohort, productivity is constrained more from how work is organised than from how hard people work. The programme can help a business to remove bad practices as well as introduce new practices and concentrates on the areas of team cohesion, hiring and attrition; employee mix and workstyles; working patterns and time utilisation; and communication and collaboration.
- The pilot has already attracted interest from global leaders in workforce research and those shaping UK Government skills policy and the programme has the potential to develop those relationships with institutions and government even further. The programme could be scaled up should more funding become available, be delivered across a wider area and to more sectors.
- The Board agreed that the initial programme has shown good outcomes and that case studies would help strengthen the business case for the programme for future expansion.

Action

- Circulate copy of the Estu presentation to the Board.

3. East Hemel Hempstead Infrastructure – Graham Cook/ Graeme Collinge

- Project Breakspear is an essential series of infrastructure projects that enable the strategic housing delivery and wider economic growth of The Crown Estate's (TCE) development of East and North Hemel, which aims to deliver 11,000 homes and 4,000 jobs.
- The Project consists of four transport elements, namely A4141 Breakspear junction and Green Lane Works; A414 footbridge; Sustainable Transport Corridor (STC) with M1 bridge roundabout; and STC Prologis to future M1 bridge roundabout. Hertfordshire Futures have contributed financially to the scheme design and TCE have been working with HCC for several years. In 2025, the planning application for East Hemel was submitted to SADC and it is anticipated the planning work should be completed in October 2026, subject to the Section 106 agreement.

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- The current cost estimation for the four transport elements and the required bonds, commuted sums and local authority fees sits at £124m and it is anticipated this could rise further due to inflation. These costs do not include the new bridge over the M1 which sits outside the current Local Plan period and that of Herts IQ, but could cost an additional £100m.
- The section 106 infrastructure ask currently exceeds what the scheme can viably fund by circa £175m due to various factors including the cost of delivering 40% affordable housing on the development, a reduction in office/ R&D capital value and return yield; and the cost inflation over the past 24 months. TCE are asking whether Herts IQ could provide a £40-60m grant to bridge the viability gap and help accelerate Project Breakspear so it could be completed by 2031/32 and therefore maximise the Enterprise Zone business rates income to Herts IQ up to 2042. TCE will also seek to engage with Government and Homes England to explore other funding options, however they are unsure whether they would be able to assist within the required timeframe, which would further impact on business rates income.
- TCE presented the case for market failure and justification for their request for public sector investment, which comprises three elements:
    - Coordination Failure: Coordinated public and private investment is required to secure timely delivery and an equitable allocation of cost.
    - Positive externalities: East Hemel, North Hemel, Maylands, Herts IQ and wider network users benefit from improved capacity, connectivity and sustainable transport infrastructure.
    - Public investment: Funding accelerates the enabling infrastructure for East Hemel and Local Plan growth, while the HGC cost-sharing framework provides for proportional contributions from benefiting development. Project Breakspear would deliver against the aims of the Hertfordshire Economic Strategy 2026- 36 and unlocks delivery of the planned development in Dacorum and St Albans as well as supports the HCC Local Transport Plan objectives. It is anticipated the new employment opportunities will create £72-77k GVA/job, which could total £3.8b over 10 years to the economy, providing excellent VFM. Overall, Project Breakspear unlocks development whilst delivering transport, employment and fiscal benefits across Hemel Garden Communities.
- It was noted that the data on the number and value of jobs created by HGC differed slightly from the report commissioned by Herts IQ from Deyton Bell. It was agreed that the study could be shared with TCE.
- Board members asked a range of questions:
    - Where does CIL fit into the viability discussions? This has been factored in
    - What is the relevance of including affordable housing in the cost/viability figures? It is to illustrate that affordable housing accounts for a very large part of the overall s106 costs
    - What are the other cost-sharing arrangements for other developments? Would/could Herts IQ get funding back? There are different options to address this although it would rely on an organisation stepping in as a banker to get payments back in the future. However, Project Breakspear still needs to be grant funded regardless of this banker role, so any return of funding may need to be treated as windfall rather than certain.
    - HGC are currently looking at a Planning Framework Agreement. They will look at the various triggers in this to determine if/how they relate to Project Breakspear.
    - How do we enforce developer contributions under s106 agreements? We will need to ensure that the s106 agreements are legally watertight. The Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) and its apportionment of costs could be important here as developers are obligated to it.

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- Should Government be supporting this, either directly or through agencies such as Homes England or Highways England/DfT? Harlow Gilston Garden Town received funding from Homes England for a new motorway unction but that was under a 2017 programme that has now ended. TCE will continue to explore other public funding mechanisms but with the proviso that this takes time to secure.
- What role is being asked of Herts IQ (or HCC)? Is it acting as a banker and does the asset or liability sit on HCC's asset register? This will need to be addressed in detailed discussions.
- What is TCE's timescale for delivery? The commercial phase is the first phase to be delivered as this impacts on future income and it paves the way for future housing developments. TCE would like to be on site by the end of this Parliament (summer 2029) as a new Government may have different priorities.
- What impact will a Mayoral Strategic Authority have on this? It is difficult to be certain about the impact but East Hemel is a major growth scheme for Hertfordshire so it would be unlikely that a new mayor would take a different approach to the development. Also TCE may be on site by the time that a new major is elected.
- Could Herts IQ provide the funding requested as a loan rather than grant and once revenue is generated from housing sales and employment site occupancy, then the loan could be repaid? TCE explained this funding model would not be viable and that viability relies on grant funding. It was suggested that TCE could seek to defer some of its S106 transport programmes to address the viability gap, however this could impact the overall delivery of the site.

- There was no precise ask by TCE of the Herts IQ Board at this stage, but Herts IQ are invited to consider and discuss the proposal further. To aid discussion AW will draft a position statement setting out Herts IQ's potential options.

Action

- AW to share Deyton Bell report on GVA/ jobs with TCE
- AW to draft a position statement setting out Herts IQ's potential options

4. Partner Updates – All

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC)

- The DBC Local Plan is being considered by the Planning Inspector, and the six-week stakeholder consultation is currently underway. It is hoped the Local Plan will be approved by late December.
- There is currently a Community Governance Review in Hemel Hempstead, and it will explore the impact of the Local Government Review (LGR) process and the option for a new town council.
- New signage is being installed as part of the Maylands Wayfinding project, and there have been some concerns raised by the public over the design and size of the signs.
- DBC are starting the scoping consultation process for the New Local Plan, which will be followed by a call for potential development sites.
- Work continues on the Hemel Town Centre local regeneration plan.

St Albans City & District Council (SADC)

- The St Albans Local Plan has been adopted and includes up to 8,500 homes (including 6,000 in Hemel Garden Communities), some of which is on grey belt land. Work is now starting on the New Local Plan.

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- SADC have been working with Thames Link to see whether there could be any additional capacity on the rail line through St Albans, however there would be a significant cost to any increase in train frequency.
- SADC are also holding a Community Governance Review and have confirmed that a new Parish Council will be established for St Albans in May 2027. This is separate from the LGR process.

Hemel Garden Communities

- HGC are supporting the Pigeon/Bloor Homes application for Redbourn Road, and they are developing a stewardship business case, which details how development and public space will be funded and managed in the long term.

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)

- The Local Transport Plan policy document is out for consultation; projects will be detailed at a later date and will align with the various Local Plans.
- The HERT (Herts Essex Rapid Transport) Strategy document is due for publication before year end.
- HCC are awaiting further guidance on the timetable from Government on the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) and how they will link to the Local Plans. Once received, HCC will commence the statutory and formal consultation processes.

Hertfordshire Futures

- The Get Enterprising start up business support programme is currently in procurement and will start in April 2027.
- Interviews are in progress for new Hertfordshire Futures Board business representatives.
- The Digital Strategy will be finalised shortly.
- A Data Centre Taskforce has been established and is looking at Section 106 requirements and exploiting the associated benefits for Hertfordshire.

Rothamsted

- Rothamsted are working with BBSRC to ensure marketable science is housed on-site rather than just exploratory sciences.
- The Shape Programme, which is run with the University of Hertfordshire, has been nominated for two awards.

The Crown Estate

- There were no further updates from TCE.

University of Hertfordshire (UH)

- Due to financial pressures for all Universities caused by a reduction in international students, UH has made circa 200 redundancies.
- The new Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Tim Hawley OBE, is now in post.
- The new medical school is now open, and the first cohort of international students has started using the facilities. The new health building is under construction and will be open in 2028.
- UH will be commissioning an impact report to look at the wider benefits of the University for the county.

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- BRE are in conversation with a customer about testing and certification opportunities at the Bricket Wood site, including creating a new facility on site, and work continues on improving the estate and relocating current tenants to improved facilities.
- A BREEAM refurbishment and fit-out scheme was launched last week, which will help supplement the existing BREEAM offer.

Action
- AW to present on the Data Centre Taskforce at a future meeting.

5. Herts IQ Round 2A Growth Investment Fund Programme – Vickie Holland

Rothamsted Innovation Hubs
Declared Conflict of Interest:
Nicole Sadd – Rothamsted Enterprises

- The application was from Rothamsted Enterprise for £2,067,156 grant funding to deliver an Agri-Tech Innovation Hub Programme.
- The programme will deliver accelerator support, innovation vouchers, specialist mentoring, and investor engagement activities. Its aim is to help businesses overcome commercialisation barriers and retain innovation, investment and talent within Hertfordshire.
- The expected outcomes are support for 36 agri-tech businesses; creation of around 50 high-value jobs and leveraging of approximately £9.6 million of private sector investment. The project also benefits from strong external support, with £1.345 million of match funding already secured from BBSRC and additional contributions expected from participating businesses.
- The proposal has been through the full assurance process, including independent appraisal, and demonstrates strong strategic alignment with Herts IQ priorities. Whilst the cost per job is relatively high, the roles created are expected to be specialist, high-skilled positions in a sector that delivers significant economic value. The wider benefits include increased innovation, investment attraction and growth within Hertfordshire's agri-tech ecosystem.
- Overall, officers considered this to be a strong proposal that aligns with Herts IQ objectives, secures significant external funding and offers meaningful long-term economic benefits. The recommendation was therefore to approve the £2.067 million grant request.

The Board Approved:
- £2,067,156 for Rothamsted Enterprises for the Agri-Tech Innovation Hub Programme

Sandridge Gate
Declared Conflict of Interest:
Cllr Paul De Kort – St Albans City & District Council
Robin Taylor - St Albans City & District Council

- The application was from St Albans City & District Council for £417,500 grant funding for the Sandridge Gate project for roof replacement works, installation of solar photovoltaic panels and electric vehicle infrastructure at the business centre.
- The project was previously considered by the Herts IQ Board in June 2026; however, they requested further assurance regarding the project's strategic value, financial return and funding structure. An independent appraisal has been undertaken and it concluded that there is a clear strategic, environmental and economic rationale for investment. It confirms a positive long-term

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financial case, substantial carbon reduction benefits and support for future business growth. Importantly, while project costs have increased, no additional Herts IQ funding is being sought, with SADC meeting all additional costs. Officers therefore recommended approval of the original grant request of £417,500

The Board Approved:

- £417,500 grant funding for Sandridge Gate

Herts IQ Growth Investment Fund

- An update on the projects funded through the Low Carbon Employment & Regeneration Programme and Infrastructure Contingency Fund - Round 1 and 2A was circulated to the Board.
- It was noted that the Nickey Line Project Manager has been appointed, the pre-employment checks are in progress, and the successful candidate will start mid-late October.
- The Skills Bootcamp funding process has changed, and grants will be delivered directly to businesses rather than to the Bootcamp providers.
- Work on the Nickey Line Redbourn Road Crossing Improvements have been paused whilst discussions are ongoing between HCC Highways and the HIQ team around potential delivery options.
- The criteria for the round 2B open call for projects were circulated to the Board. Approval of the funding is required from all four shareholders of Herts IQ and two have confirmed to date with the remaining two to be considered by their respective cabinets shortly.

6. Herts IQ Finance – Adam Wood/ Georgie Sheridan

- The operational budget is currently behind profile, however, is expected to be on target at financial year end.

Action

- To circulate financial report with the minutes

7. Herts IQ Audit 2024- 26 – Adam Wood

- The audit was completed in August 2026 and SIAS awarded Herts IQ overall substantial assurance that there are effective controls in operation. One low-priority recommendation was made, namely that performance reporting on the strategic priorities is undertaken clearly at regular interviews and reported to and discussed by the Herts IQ Board.

8. Governance Update – Adam Wood

- The Herts IQ Terms of Reference and Risk Register have been reviewed, and the proposed changes were circulated to the Board.

The Board Approved

- The changes to the Terms of Reference and Risk Register

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9. Herts IQ Board Quarterly Update and Issues – Adam Wood/ Melanie Miller/ Helen Pollock
• The quarterly update will be circulated separately in due course.

10. Minutes of Last Meeting/ Matters Arising – Adam Wood
• The minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting and there were no matters arising.

11. Any Other Business – All
• There were no additional items for discussion.

12. Date of Next Meeting			
Date	16 December 2026	**Time**	09.30 – 12.00 (lunch 12.00 – 13.00)
Location	Rothamsted Conference Centre		

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