

APPENDIX 7
Proposals

MEMBERS COMMENTS AT OCTOBER 2012 WORKSHOPS.

Ref	Description of Proposal	Conservative Group Comments	Labour Group Comments	Liberal Democrat Comments
		<p>Some Members have experienced problems accessing papers online when they have been blocked by 'websense'. There needs, at the very least, circulated notification when Committee papers are available, with a link to papers, so Members know when to look for them and where. Also need to make sure files are pdf rather than large word files.</p>	<p>All Members should have the option of either receiving a hard or electronic copy of Cabinet papers.</p> <p>With electronic agendas some members cannot tell how important an item is just by looking at the heading.</p> <p>Group Leaders should automatically be sent a copy of papers. With substitutes it is not essential for them to have a copy but should be able to have access to papers in advance if they need to attend meetings.</p> <p>Members support an efficiency in this area.</p>	<p>Ensure that papers are regularly and easily accessible by circulating a link and improving navigation and presentation. They can be difficult to find on the internet (especially for general public who are unfamiliar with the layout)</p>
Officer comment:				
E2	Chairman's Budget: Reduction in budgets for hospitality, chauffeuring and the annual reception	<p>There is a perception that NHDC already spend less than other Council's on civic activities, although it was acknowledged that other Councils may be looking to reduce spend now too. Some Members have experience of being charged to attend other Council civic events. Suggest the saving is agreed and it is achieved by charging Members for attending the Chairman's reception next year.</p>	Members Support efficiency	Agreed

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E3	Grant Funding: Reduce funding to Herts Young Homeless Group (HYHG) from £16k to £10k pa as regards their housing advice/education services.	This reduction is considered a false economy. The Portfolio Holder supported the work of the group and suggested that while the effect of reducing the funding would not be known until it happened there would be a detrimental impact on homelessness.	The housing pressure for young people is increasing due to unemployment and decreasing benefits. This efficiency is considered a false economy. Due to the above factors more young people will be at risk of being homeless, so cannot support this proposal.	Not supported
		<p>The Portfolio Holder confirmed this funding was no longer required.</p> <p>Officer comment: This post co-ordinates the environmental health functions of 10 local authorities in Herts and 3 in Beds. For example, the co-ordinator is collating a joint response to the Joint Needs Assessment in connection with the Health & Wellbeing Board. This post has also worked to establish training opportunities for student Environmental Health Officers, responded to government consultations on environmental health matters, liaised as regards the adoption of common standards for the rating of food hygiene premises, housing in multiple occupation, etc. This saving proposal arises from the proposed withdrawal of funding from partner local authorities - this will make the continued employment of the co-ordinator unviable and therefore NHDC will no longer have an opportunity to support this joint venture. The consequences of the deletion of this role will not be immediate as it focuses on coordination and refinement of council services that will continue to be provided. However, in the future the local authorities in Herts and Beds are likely to respond individually to changes in environmental health legislation and practice and therefore some synergistic opportunities may be missed.</p>	<p>Members would like to know exactly what this post does, as not clear in the impact column.</p> <p>What would be the consequences of not having the post?</p> <p>Are we the only council that is considering terminating this, or are other councils doing the same?</p>	agreed

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E5	Royston Market: Rationalisation of market provision in Royston	Members were reminded that the Council is currently at a sensitive stage in negotiations and this proposal, along with all the other proposals, needs to remain confidential at this time.	Members support this proposal, subject to the negotiations.	agreed
E6	Hitchin Swimming Centre: Following investment to Hitchin Swim Centre to realise efficiency savings due to facility improvements (see C10)	It was noted this proposal was subject to a business case which will be put forward to Cabinet.	Members had some comments about the capital scheme but if the scheme was to go ahead then supported the revenue efficiency.	Agreed. Request that title of the project is descriptive of the works i.e construction of a dance studio.
			Members would like to know what the likely range of potential savings would be.	agreed
		Officer Comment: The total budget and cost of the current contract is £105k. The range of potential savings will not be known until the tenders are received. A new contract is expected to commence 1 July 2013 and it is not expected we will know the potential savings ahead of setting the budget in February.		
		Members would like to see the figures on how much the Council has paid out in excesses (previously provided to FAR Committee)	Members would like to see the figures on how much the Council has paid out in excesses (previously provided to FAR Committee) Members stressed that this proposal would need looking at by FAR Committee before it is agreed.	agreed
		Officer Comment: Total excesses incurred for public liability, employer liability and property (buildings and content) claims (paid and outstanding) are as follows: 2008/09 £12,820, 2009/10 £26,287, 2010/11 £18,308, 2011/12 £20,300. The majority of claims and excesses paid are with regard to public liability. It is worth noting that in 2008/09 and 2009/10 the value of total public liability claims (paid and outstanding) is greater than the		

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		premium and excesses paid in those years for public liability insurance. i.e. the insurer paid out more than the premium.		
E9	Christmas Trees: cease installation of Christmas trees: 3 in Letchworth, 1 in Hitchin, 1 in Baldock and 1 in Royston.	Members support transferring this function to Area Committees with no additional funding, in order for the Committees to make a decision for their own localities on whether Christmas trees should be funded from discretionary budgets or whether other organisations could take on the task.	Members support transferring this function to Area Committees with decision on whether to fund from discretionary budgets left to the Area Committee .	agreed
E10	Customer Self-Service: Replace existing third party provider of eBilling services with integrated module within the existing Revenues administration software (refers to R4)		Members support this proposal	agreed
E11	Council Tax Leaflet: To stop sending paper information leaflets with the annual Council Tax bills.	Members support this proposal.	Members Support this proposal	agreed
E12	Remote Access: Replacement of Blackberrys with alternative software		Members support the efficiency in principle but would need further information.	Agreed
Income Proposals				
		The Chief Exec provided an update - it is currently expected that Licensing Act amendments will come into force in April 2013.	Agree	Is £274k the net or gross budget?
		Officer Response: The indicated budget of £274k is the budgeted gross income from all licences. The net budgeted cost of the provision of all licensing services is £119k.		
		The Portfolio Holder supports an increase but would like to look at flexing the 'hours' structure rather than a flat increase on charges. The commercial situation of each	Members needed more information before they could support this proposal. Need to know what the councils	How sensitive are car park charges currently with regards to economic conditions. How do N Herts charges compare to Stevenage/mid Beds?

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		<p>individual car park needs to be considered in the investigation. It was acknowledged that considerable capital investment has been made, and continues to be made, to car parks and this needs to be funded.</p> <p>While some Members were supportive of some form of increase to maximise income, some Members believed an increase would be counter-productive for some car parks. Further work to be completed in preparation for the draft budget report.</p>	<p>policy is for car parks. Is the purpose of car parks just to maximise income or are they there to encourage vibrancy of evening economy, attract businesses to the area by giving their customers and staff access to them, encourage public transport etc.</p> <p>Would like the differences in town centres addressed.</p> <p>Cannot support this without this additional information.</p>	<p>Differential pricing should be utilised as there is little point in charging more at empty car parks</p>
<p>Officer Response: Officers are continuing to work on information to provide the Portfolio Holder on this issue.</p>				
			<p>Members support this proposal</p>	<p>Agreed. What would the officer(s) who do this work be doing if not this? Does this work actually make a profit or is it just charged at marginal cost</p>
<p>Officer Response: The Officer concerned is able to accommodate this additional work on NLPG by re-allocating some of his other tasks amongst the remainder of the Team.</p> <p>Many Officers are no longer restrained by the standard 37 hour week and now work much more flexibly to ensure that tasks are completed as required. This becomes even more important as the workforce continues to shrink in size. Many tasks would not be completed without this co-operation from staff and their willingness to work additional hours (at no cost) when the need arises.</p> <p>This particular Officer's hourly rate with on-costs is £15.55 and his time is charged out at £25.00 per hour, returning a good profit for the Council.</p>				

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Revenue Investment				
			Members support this proposal.	Agreed
		Officer Response: An update was provided by Officers that the investment needed has now been negotiated down to £6,750 from the £12k in the papers.		
		While acknowledging the Council has little choice for this investment Members asked if the investment could be phased over multiple years? What is the timeframe to be compliant?	Members wanted to know if there were anymore court cases due. Officers confirmed that were not any at the moment. Members supported this proposal.	Could this be delayed a year
		Officer Response: The asbestos regulations were updated in 2012 (Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012) and basically they changed the arrangements for practically dealing with asbestos. However, the need to risk assess, inspect, remove or manage etc is the same as previous regulations and places an absolute duty on the Council to identify and manage any asbestos in Council premises. As all asbestos risk assessments were completed in 2005 they are certainly due for review to say the least. It's most cost effective to tender in one go for the works so spreading over several years would add to the £40k cost.		
			Members supported proposal	How much money will this proposal save? What will the staff resource saved be doing instead?
		Officer Response: Members will have seen staff reductions coming forward (such as those presented in this year's budget process) which have been achieved by finding more efficient ways of working. Further opportunities for more efficient working are continually sought. This proposal on its own will not produce a direct staff saving but put together with other efficiencies will contribute to future reductions.		
R4	eBilling		Members supported proposal	Agreed, subject to identifying savings
R5	HR Reward schemes - Childcare vouchers, cycle to work and flexible benefits schemes		Members supported proposal	Agreed, subject to identifying savings
		Officer Comment: Members were advised a further investment bid of £80k may be required in order to facilitate a revision in the waste collection service following a report to Cabinet in December.		
C1	Portmill Lane car parks - resurfacing	This was supported as work that	Members wanted to know why	Agreed

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	of two car parks	needed to be done.	this needed resurfacing rather than just signage work. Officer explained that the car park was a trip hazard and the council were at risk of future insurance claims. Members supported this.	
C2	Lairage Multi-Storey Car Park Structural repairs to walls and application of protective coat to levels 1 & 2	Members want to see a business case for the multi-storey car parks in order to decide whether investment is worthwhile and ultimately whether the Council should be in the business of providing multi-storey car parks.	Officers stated that this could possibly slip in the programme and move back a year. Members supported this.	Could this be slipped a year
C3	Cladding of external walls (Avenue Park Pavilion and St Johns Community Centre)	While it is acknowledged that are agreed to be in the capital programme are an indication of spend at this stage and this project in particular could slip into the following year, consideration needs to be given to managing the public's expectations.	Members supported this	Could this be slipped a year
		Confirmation that this is the junior outside pool. Consideration should be given to the cost/benefits of filling in the pool and not completing the repairs.	Members supported this	Agreed
		Officer Response: Making significant changes to the pool would require contract re-negotiation and could entail additional revenue costs. NHDC is contractually obliged to carry out such repairs and the surface would need repairs even if the pool was filled in.		
		Members would like to know what impact this will have on the current investment programme in lighting in the car park? Should we consider disposal?	Members wanted to know how much longer the works to the car park will take? Members also wanted to know how much has been spent so far since works commenced?	Agreed

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		Officer Response: The works does not have an adverse impact on the lighting work. In fact lighting cabling might cause very minor damage to soffits, so the following soffit work would address that. A total of £316k was spent on Letchworth multi-storey car park in 2011/12 and a further £284k is budgeted to be spent in the current financial year, bringing the total to £600k.		
C6	St Mary's car park. Structural repairs to steps		Members supported proposal	Agreed
C7	Town Lodge Various patch repairs to the roof		Members supported proposal	Could this be used for other purposes? Otherwise agreed.
C8	Burymead Road Museums store Structure & cladding repairs		Members supported proposal	Agreed
C9	Energy efficiency measures.		Members supported proposal	Agreed
C10	Hitchin Swim Centre and Dance Studio.		Members needed to know more about the business case before they could support this. The scheme is quite expensive so would we get a return on our investment and how long would the pay back be?	Agreed
C11	Norton Common Pavillion Redevelopment.		Members wanted more detail about this particularly since bowling is reducing nationally. Welcomed that the bowls clubs had been consulted.	Agreed
C12	Upgrade of Customer Relationship Manager software from 6.22 to version 8.		Members supported this	Agreed
		Members would like confirmation the Council offers a reduction on penalty notices for prompt payment and whether this is a discretionary decision. If it is discretionary then there is some support for refusing this reduction if a notice is challenged.	Members supported this	Agreed
		Officer Response: The legislation states that if payment is made within 14 days then a 50% discounted		

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		<p>amount must be accepted -this is not discretionary.</p> <p>The statutory guidance states that if a challenge is received within the 14 day discount period and is subsequently rejected by us then we should consider re-offering the discount for a further 14 days to incentivise payment. The process that we follow is in line with the guidance and we do offer a further 14 days.</p>		
			Members supported this	How much will this save?
		<p>Officer Response: Members will have seen staff reductions coming forward (such as those presented in this year's budget process) which have been achieved by finding more efficient ways of working. Further opportunities for more efficient working are continually sought. This proposal on its own will not produce a direct staff saving but put together with other efficiencies will contribute to future reductions. However, as with all IT Reserve funded schemes this proposal is subject to a business case being agreed by Challenge Board.</p>		
		After the recent announcement on the Shared Services project the wording for this proposal needs to be updated.	Members supported this	Is this for replacement software with the existing supplier or a new supplier?
Further Suggestions		Officer Response:		
		Members support investment in Careline and would like to see proposals come forward in the budget report.	Members support investment in Careline as they value the service, but subject to further information. Would like to see the figures in the VFM review to see when the payback period would be from the community alarm investment and when the service would become profitable as a result of the investment. Also would like to know the impact on individuals if we didn't invest. Would also like to see the VFM figures in the report in December.	We should invest if the business case is viable. Should an external partner be sought in order to assist with external marketing
		Members would like to know if	Equalities impact assessment –	Would wish to see opportunity to

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		<p>there are other business opportunities the Council should be entering and if these are being considered.</p> <p>Officer Response: Currently considering a potential Crematorium at Wilbury Hills, and Members have seen a proposal for Dance Studios at Hitchin Swimming Centre. Officers have finite capacity but are prioritising those areas where revenue savings could be significant.</p>	<p>members would like to see all assessments prior to the December meeting.</p>	<p>further discuss why officers did not proceed with the shared service option with SBC/EHC</p>
			<p>Members wanted more information about the 'other restructures' of £197k. i.e. the number of posts affected, number of vacant posts, impact on front line services. Officer Response: this could be provided in anonymous form following the commencement of consultation</p>	
			<p>Members wanted to know about the Economic Development Officer post that was due to be funded from PDG. Officer confirmed that a Shared Rural Officer was employed but members wanted to know if there were plans for a Shared Urban Officer?</p>	
			<p>Member suggested netbooks and ipads could be distributed to members and that this could be funded out of the member allowances. This would ensure that members would be paperless</p>	

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			and achieve a saving.	