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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 23RD JANUARY, 2025

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Please find attached supplementary papers relating to the above meeting, as follows:

Agenda No Item

8. **ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES (Pages 3 - 12)**

To consider any items referred from other Committees. Any items referred to this meeting will be published as a supplementary document.

8a) Cabinet – Council Tax Reduction Scheme – **to be considered with Item 11.**

8b) Cabinet – Second Quarter Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Review 2024/25 – **to be considered with Item 12.**

8c) Cabinet – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman’s report of failings in the investigation of statutory noise nuisance by North Hertfordshire District Council (ref: 23 104 065) – **to be considered with Item 14.**

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Item No	Referred from:	Cabinet
8a	Date:	14 January 2025
	Title of item:	Council Tax Reduction Scheme
To be considered alongside agenda item:		Agenda Item 11

The report considered by Cabinet at the meeting held on 14 January 2025 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 14th January, 2025, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council](#)

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the continuation of the banded scheme for working age applicants which remains largely unchanged for 2025/2026, a small adjustment to the income bands to reflect CPI has been incorporated to ensure the scheme continues to support those most in need.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure that the Council has a Council Tax Reduction Scheme that continues to:

- Provide the greatest support to the lowest income households.
- Reduce the administrative burden that has been placed on the Council since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC).
- Be simple to understand, meaning that customers will be able to calculate entitlement and assess the impact of potential changes in circumstances.

Audio recording 54 minutes 32 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report entitled 'Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26' and advised that:

- The Council was required to review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) every financial year.
- The introduction of a banded scheme in 2023/24 was now in its second year.
- The CTRS scheme had been reviewed and no significant changes were required.
- A small adjustment had been made to reflect the Consumer Price Index (CPI), to ensure the scheme continued to support those residents in most need.
- There was a recommendation for an increase in bands in the coming financial year to align with the CPI for 2025/26 This increase would be 2.7% for three bands and 1.7% for all others.
- The CTRS was divided into two schemes, one for pension age applicants and one for working age applicants.
- The CTRS cost of 9.18 million was shared between Hertfordshire County Council, North Herts District Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- The Discretionary Hardship Scheme was used to support cases of exceptional need when required.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Noted the cost of the scheme was currently £9.18m noting that this is not an actual cost but a reduction of the amount of council tax collected.
- (2) Noted that the Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Scheme, previously agreed to provide additional transitional support would continue to be used to support cases of exceptional hardship.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the continuation of the banded scheme for working age applicants which remains largely unchanged for 2025/2026, a small adjustment to the income bands to reflect CPI has been incorporated to ensure the scheme continues to support those most in need.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure that the Council has a Council Tax Reduction Scheme that continues to:

- Provide the greatest support to the lowest income households.
- Reduce the administrative burden that has been placed on the Council since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC).
- Be simple to understand, meaning that customers will be able to calculate entitlement and assess the impact of potential changes in circumstances.

Item No	Referred from:	Cabinet
8b	Date:	14 January 2025
	Title of item:	Second Quarter Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Review 2024/25
To be considered alongside agenda item:		Agenda Item 12

The report considered by Cabinet at the meeting held on 14 January 2025 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 14th January, 2025, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council](#)

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That it:

- (1) Notes the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2024.
- (2) Approves capital budget in 2025/26 for a new flume (£300k) and a refurbishment of the pool changing rooms (£330k) at North Herts Leisure Centre, subject to the revised assessments following the decision by Cabinet regarding Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme on 14 January 2025.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- (1) Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded.
- (2) To ensure the Council's continued compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management and the Local Government Act 2003 and that the Council manages its exposure to interest and capital risk.
- (3) The proposal to approve the 2025/26 capital budgets at North Herts Leisure Centre in January (rather than in the usual budget report at the end of February) means that the works can take place at the same time as the decarbonisation works, and therefore not require two periods where the pool cannot be used. It also provides a more obvious benefit to users of the facility.

Audio recording 2 hours 2 minutes 8 seconds

The Chair invited Councillor Sean Nolan, as Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, to present the referral on this item. Councillor Nolan advised that there had been discussion around:

- Linking the moving of funding for the upgrade to the North Herts Leisure Centre to take part at the same time as the Decarbonisation of the Leisure Centre works.
- The importance of the museum storage item as this was a major facility that the Council required not only for its own items, but to be able to assist other areas and Councils with storage of their items.
- Looking at funds in the future and the risks around ensuring resources were in the right place.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report entitled 'Second Quarter Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Review 2024/25' and advised that:

- The focus of the capital review at Quarter 2 had been challenging what was expected to be spent this year.
- This review provided the Council with more certainty over balances available for investment at the end of the financial year.
- There had been a slippage and changes to the capital programme of £14 million.
- Details of further budgets had changes required or could be removed from the capital programme were set out in Table 3.
- An alternative site had been identified for the museum storage option and was being investigated. A reduction in the slippage to £650K from the budget was recommended to allow funds to be available to purchase this property before the end of March if required.
- The approval of funds was required from the capital budget to enable works at the North Herts Leisure Centre to happen at the same time as the decarbonisation works.
- The previous estimate for the refurbishment of the changing rooms at North Herts Leisure Centre of £250k was too low and the recommendation needed be changed to £330K.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Mick Debenham

In response to questions, the Service Director – Place advised a timescale for works to commence at the Norton Common Bowls Pavilion was not yet possible, but now that staffing was at fully capacity, it would be attempted to move this project forward in the next financial year.

In response to questions, the Service Director – Resources advised that slippage referred to when a capital scheme was not delivered in the current year and the funds were deferred to another year.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed as amended and Councillor Amy Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Noted the forecast expenditure of £16.999M in 2024/25 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.3 refers as amended by the decision to reduce the slippage on museum storage.
- (2) Noted the position of the availability of capital resources, as detailed in table 4 paragraph 8.6 and the requirement to keep the capital programme under review for affordability.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That it:

- (1) Notes the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2024.
- (2) Approves capital budget in 2025/26 for a new flume (£300k) and a refurbishment of the pool changing rooms (£330k) at North Herts Leisure Centre, subject to the revised assessments following the decision by Cabinet regarding Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme on 14 January 2025.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- (1) Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded.
- (2) To ensure the Council's continued compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management and the Local Government Act 2003 and that the Council manages its exposure to interest and capital risk.
- (3) The proposal to approve the 2025/26 capital budgets at North Herts Leisure Centre in January (rather than in the usual budget report at the end of February) means that the works can take place at the same time as the decarbonisation works, and therefore not require two periods where the pool cannot be used. It also provides a more obvious benefit to users of the facility.

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Item No	Referred from:	Cabinet
8c	Date:	14 January 2025
	Title of item:	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's report of failings in the investigation of statutory noise nuisance by North Hertfordshire District Council (ref. no.: 23 014 065)
To be considered alongside agenda item:		Agenda Item 14

The report considered by Cabinet at the meeting held on 14 January 2025 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 14th January, 2025, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council](#)

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: The revisions to section 14 of the Constitution relating to LGO decisions and payments, as detailed under section 8.5 of this report [extract as follows deletion/amendment underlined]

8.5 In terms of recommendation 2.5, the proposed wording to amend section 14.6.5/ 14.6.13 of the Constitution, would assist with ensuring that this matter is discussed between the three statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Section 151 and Monitoring Officers), with the removal of the settlement limit to reflect the increasing awards now being made by the LGO. It should be noted that at the time the compensation payment of £3,000 was made, this was not in line with the original delegation (albeit under the Managing Director's general delegation to make such a payment above £2,000, on urgency grounds, under section 14.6.5(a)(iv)). **The proposed amended wording would be:**

14.6.5(a)(xiii) Managing Director's delegation, to be amended (as underlined):
"(xiii) To consider any report of the Local Government Ombudsman and to settle any compensation payments up to £2000 (in conjunction with the section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer)"

14.6.13 Proper Officers Schedule to be amended as (as underlined):
"Local Government Act 1974 S.30(5) To give notice and that copies of an Ombudsman's report, in draft and final are available to the Managing Director, and Monitoring Officer (where maladministration identified)"

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- (1) Recommendation 2.5 is to recognise the wider involvement of the statutory officers in such matters and specifically in relation to the issue of compensation, to increase notification and flexibility.

Audio recording 32 minutes 26 seconds

The Monitoring Officer presented the report entitled 'Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Report of Failings in the Investigation of Statutory Noise Nuisance by North Hertfordshire District Council (Ref No: 23 014 065)' and advised that:

- The Monitoring Officer was required to present this report as detailed in the legal implications section of the report.
- The full LGO report was set out at Appendix A.
- The recommendations made by the LGO were set out in paragraphs 7.2 and 7.3 of the report.
- The compliance information was detailed in paragraph 7.3.
- A review of the Comments, Compliments and Complaints policy of the Council would commence in March or April this year and would then be presented at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and/or Cabinet in June or July depending on the schedule of meetings.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Dave Winstanley
- Councillor Mick Debenham

Points raised during the debate included:

- Members accepted the findings in the report.
- Lessons had been learnt and this would be of benefit to the Council in the future.

Councillor Val Bryant proposed and Councillor Dave Winstanley seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Considered the LGO report.
- (2) Noted the LGO recommended action compliance information as in para 7.2 – 7.3 below.
- (3) Considered the measures that the Environmental Health Service has put / will put in place to prevent the recurrence of the failings.
- (4) Noted that the Council's Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure will be reviewed in 2025, to potentially include remedies, and supporting guidance will be issued for Officers.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: The revisions to section 14 of the Constitution relating to LGO decisions and payments, as detailed under section 8.5 of this report [extract as follows deletion/amendment underlined]

8.5 In terms of recommendation 2.5, the proposed wording to amend section 14.6.5/ 14.6.13 of the Constitution, would assist with ensuring that this matter is discussed between the three statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Section 151 and Monitoring Officers), with the removal of the settlement limit to reflect the increasing awards now being made by the LGO. It should be noted that at the time the compensation payment of £3,000 was made, this was not in line with the original delegation (albeit under the Managing Director's

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REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- (1) Recommendation 2.5 is to recognise the wider involvement of the statutory officers in such matters and specifically in relation to the issue of compensation, to increase notification and flexibility.

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