

Public Document Pack

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER, 2025

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

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

Agenda No	Item
-----------	------

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 12. | <u>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME</u> (Pages 3 - 6) |
|-----|--|

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2025-26 civic year. It also includes items that have not yet been assigned to a specific meeting of the Committee.

Included in this pack are the reasons for deferral of items scheduled on the Work Programme, including North Herts Town Centres Strategy and Museum Storage.

This page is intentionally left blank

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 9 September 2025

Note: Regarding Deferral of North Herts Town Centres Strategy

- Officers presented an overview of the Town Centres Strategy to the Strategic Planning Project Board on 15 July 2025. The Board received a presentation from officers and their consultants, Lichfields, on the status of the project and an overview of the interim Draft Strategy. This presentation included a detailed discussion of Section 3: Individual Town Centre Strategies within the Draft Strategy, which provides per town centre a vision statement, summary of key priorities including development opportunities for larger parcels of land and how these could be taken forward through partnership working. The discussion also revolved around the requirements for a further section (Section 4) outlining next steps to identify various funding and delivery opportunities to support the future vitality and viability of the town centres. The Board members acknowledged receipt of the presentations and the comprehensive work undertaken by officers and their consultants.
- The proposed timeline for delivery of the Draft Strategy for September Cabinet was agreed with the Board, officers, and their consultants, with intentional consideration for time to review further redrafts and respective holidays. However, due to the number of comments received and the detailed amount of work associated with Section 3 to review the priorities for the individual town centres, including drafting a further section (Section 4: Funding and Delivery), the consultants have taken longer than anticipated. This extra time and effort towards the project have allowed for re-reviewing the evidence base and cross-checking/linking across the various sections of the Draft Strategy.
- Officers had hoped to receive a copy of the completed Draft Strategy from our consultants in time for review prior to submission to O&S and to Cabinet in September, unfortunately this has not been the case for reasons outlined above.
- For officers, the Executive Member for Place and Project Board Members to have sufficient time to review the completed Draft Strategy it has been agreed to defer the Draft Strategy to the November Cabinet meeting. This will result in a more robust and comprehensive document to be presented to Cabinet for public consultation in December and January. This revised programme will also afford wider public engagement with the Area Forums during the consultation period, in addition to consulting with key stakeholders, local businesses and members of the public registered on the council's Local Plan data base. The Draft Strategy can also be presented to O&S at its meeting in November prior to Cabinet.

Note Prepared by:

Louise Symes, Strategic Infrastructure & Projects Manager and Anna Bradley, Senior Town Centre Project Officer in consultation with Cllr Donna Wright, Exec Member for Place. 3/09/2025

This page is intentionally left blank

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 9 September 2025

Note: Regarding Deferral of Museum Storage Update

- Approval to acquire Unit was made on 18th March and Legal Services were instructed shortly thereafter. The acquisition completed on 4th July 2025.
- Primarily, the delay was as a result of Legal taking longer than expected. There have been capacity issues in Legal Services and the Property Solicitor was also Interim Legal Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer covering for a member of staff on Maternity leave.
- Further delays were due to holidays on both the vendor's and purchaser's side.
- The purchase required dealing with the immediate landlord, City Electrical Factors, to obtain consent for the assignment of the long lease being acquired from Certs Assured Holdings Ltd, who were in administration. Corresponding with the immediate landlord (City Electrical Factors) took longer to ascertain the right person to contact and once that was achieved delays in them instructing their solicitors to issue a Licence to Assign.
- A further delay was caused due to problems with Certs Assured Holdings Ltd option to tax. Unit 2 City Park was the first property they acquired. When they subsequently purchased Unit 1 in 2021, they also opted to tax this unit under the same VAT number. However, the Option to Tax Unit 1 had not been completed properly. The subtenant, Citysprint, had been charged VAT on the rent and Certs Assured Holdings Ltd had been submitting this HMRC. The matter was discussed with HMRC, and they accepted that it was an administrative error, and the administrator of Certs Assured Holdings Ltd were then invited to resubmit an application to rectify the situation. Confirmation from HMRC was then needed that everything was in order. This was important as the acquisition was dealt with as a Transfer of a Going Concern which meant that the Council did not have to pay VAT on the sale price and more importantly stamp duty on the VAT element. There was also a charge on the property in favour of Lloyds Bank which needed to be removed on completion of the transaction.
- The final delay, which took 2-3 weeks, was from errors in the completion statement by the vendor's solicitor.
- By the time the acquisition went through, the school summer holidays were then upon us and both forming and then scheduling the initial board meeting amongst everyone's individual availability was not possible until September.

This page is intentionally left blank