

# Public Document Pack

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 23RD SEPTEMBER, 2021

### 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 - 10)

Any Items referred from other committees will be circulated as soon as they are available.

Please find attached three referrals from other committees:

8a. Referral from FAR: Financial Regulations Review

8b. Referral from Cabinet: Medium Term Financial Strategy

8c. Referral from Cabinet: Council Plan 2022-2027

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# Agenda Item 8

## REFERRALS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES:

8a. Referral from FAR – Financial Regulations

8b. Referral from Cabinet – Medium Term Financial Strategy

8c. Referral from Cabinet – Council Plan 2022-2027

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## 8a REFERRAL FROM FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE: FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:** The proposed changes should be adopted.

**REASONS FOR DECISIONS:** The constitution requires that the Financial Regulations are kept under review. Minor changes can be approved by the Chief Financial Officer, but more significant changes are approved by Council.

The Service Director – Resources presented a report entitled Financial Regulations Review and advised:

- There have been no fundamental changes. This report highlighted those changes and all the changes, with reasons, were outlined in Appendix A.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Adam Compton
- Councillor Clare Billing

In response to questions asked the Service Director – Resources advised:

- There has been a combination of goods receipting and invoice payment without a purchase order. Move towards the purchase order, goods receipting and invoice payment system.
- Budgets are sometimes allocated to one code and later spread across other budget codes; therefore, it would not be appropriate to block requests over budgets, but this could be looked at in more detail.
- The SIAS powers are mirrored for council employees.

Following a vote, it was:

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:** The proposed changes should be adopted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** The constitution requires that the Financial Regulations are kept under review. Minor changes can be approved by the Chief Financial Officer, but more significant changes are approved by Council.

*N.B You can find the report considered by Finance, Audit and Risk Committee at and any background papers at Item 12 here: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MId=2599&Ver=4>*

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## 8b REFERRAL FROM CABINET 21 SEPTEMBER 2021 – MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

### **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**

That Full Council adopt the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-27 as attached at Appendix B in the supplementary agenda to this item.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:** Adoption of a MTFS and communication of its contents will assist in the process of forward planning the use of Council resources and in budget setting for 2022/2023 to 2026/2027, culminating in the setting of the Council Tax precept for 2022/23 in February 2022. This will (alongside the Council Plan) support the Council in setting a budget that is affordable and aligned to Council priorities.

The Executive Member for Finance & IT, Councillor Ian Albert, presented the report entitled Medium Term Financial Strategy along with following appendices:

- Appendix A – MTFS 2022-2027
- Appendix B – MTFS 2022-2027 (updated)

The Executive Member for Finance & IT additionally presented item 6c. Referral from FAR - Medium Term Financial Strategy. His presentation highlighted points including:

- Budget allocations in his strategy were driven by the Council's priorities and were devised in relation to the Council Plan
- The revised design of the strategy made it more readable and accessible and an enhanced form of the visual layout would make the document easily understandable to the public via the website
- The strategy made provision for the continuing impact of COVID-19 and recovery through 2022/23 and 2023/24 though the necessity and length of these provisions would be kept under review
- The strategy estimates provision for a savings total of £1.8 million by the five year mark and set out how to identify and deliver savings to the Council including the role of the budget challenge process and the place of public consultation in financial strategy was also considered by the strategy
- In the context of continual 1-year funding settlements from central government it was difficult for any administration to develop a long term financial strategy
- A more long term and detailed funding settlement and an idea of how new funding formulae work would make the process of long term planning easier.
- He endorsed the strategy and commented that it was a prudent, priority driven document which would help the administration deliver on its plans.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, advised that the strategy was readable and accessible as far as could be achieved with a financial document of this length and that it sat as a daughter document of the Council Plan demonstrating the relationship between policy supported by budget; she also noted that one year funding settlements were a continued difficulty for local governments.

On the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet recommend to Full Council the adoption of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-27 as attached at Appendix B in the supplementary agenda to this item.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** Adoption of a MTFS and communication of its contents will assist in the process of forward planning the use of Council resources and in budget setting for 2022/2023 to 2026/2027, culminating in the setting of the Council Tax precept for 2022/23 in February 2022. This will (alongside the Council Plan) support the Council in setting a budget that is affordable and aligned to Council priorities.

*NB: The report considered by Cabinet can be viewed at Item 12 here:*

<https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=2596&>

**8c REFERRAL FROM CABINET 21 SEPTEMBER 2021 – COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL PRIORITIES 2022-2027**

***RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:***

- (1) That Council approves the Council Plan (Appendix A) with the three new Council Priorities as outlined below:
  - People First
  - Sustainability
  - A Brighter Future Together
- (2) That Council delegates the authority to make any minor changes in relation to the Council Plan to the Managing Director in consultation with Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.

***REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:*** To provide an overarching policy framework document, to guide and influence the use of Council resources; providing a focus for activities, plans and services the Council provide.

The Policy and Community Engagement Manager presented the report entitled Council Plan and Council Priorities 2022-2027 along with the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Council Plan
- Appendix B – Council Plan 2022-2027 (updated)

He drew attention to points including:

- Appendix B was a visual mock-up of the draft plan meant to reflect the new design approach; the substantive content was better reflected in Appendix A
- Cabinet was being asked to review the Plan and make recommendations to Council
- The Plan had been drafted by a working group of Officers and Members with input from the public liaison group, peer authorities and service directors
- The three Council Priorities together formed the overarching vision of the Council Plan as follows: “We put people first and deliver sustainable services, to enable a brighter future together.”
- The new Council Priorities were expanded upon as follows; ‘People first,’ referring to putting residents, staff, councillors and other partners at the heart of everything the Council does; ‘sustainability,’ referring to delivering relevant and sustainable services with environmental responsibility and sound financial planning at their centre; and ‘brighter future together,’ referring to the long term plans to deliver the best outcomes for residents and the economy of the District.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg advised that the design and presentation of the Council Plan in the supplement had been revised and presented to Cabinet to demonstrate the commitment to people-first government, and that the current layout made the Plan more accessible.

The following Members asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Judi Billing

Points raised included:

- The theme and direction of the Plan was determined but the final draft and specific wording was still under review
- The Council Plan was a strategic priorities document which would dovetail with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and other documents and represented policy standing at the forefront of decision making
- The Plan set clear project and timeframes for delivery of those
- The public consultation around the future of Charnwood House was a success and the issue of potential refurbishment was a consideration for the Council in future
- The Customer Service Strategy was one of those daughter documents beneath the Council Plan.

The Monitoring Officer advised that if Cabinet recommended approval of a document to Council the document should be in its final form as the issue could not be revisited within 6 months of its presentation to Council.

The Managing Director advised that an additional recommendation be made to Council to delegate the finalising of the text of the Plan to the Leader and Managing Director.

Councillor Judi Billing highlighted that it would be preferable that such a recommendation would be to delegate the finalising of the text of the Plan to the Leader, Deputy Leader, and Managing Director.

On the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That Cabinet reviews and recommends the approval of the Council Plan (Appendix A) to Full Council with the three new Council Priorities as outlined below:
  - People First
  - Sustainability
  - A Brighter Future Together
- (2) That Cabinet recommends to Council to delegate authority to make any minor changes in relation to the Council Plan to the Managing Director in consultation with Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To provide an overarching policy framework document, to guide and influence the use of Council resources; providing a focus for activities, plans and services the Council provide.

*NB: The report considered by Cabinet can be viewed at Item 8 here:*

<https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=133&MIId=2596&>