

# Public Document Pack

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To: Members of the Committee: Councillor Cathryn Henry (Chairman), Councillor Steve Hemingway (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Ian Albert, Councillor Clare Billing, Councillor John Booth, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, Councillor Steve Jarvis, Councillor Michael Muir, Councillor Janine Paterson, Councillor Frank Radcliffe, Councillor Valentine Shanley, Councillor Bill Davidson, Councillor Steve Deakin-Davies, Councillor Jean Green, Councillor Ben Lewis and Councillor Gerald Morris

Substitutes: Councillor John Bishop, Councillor Paul Clark, Councillor Simon Harwood, Councillor Terry Hone, Councillor Paul Marment, Councillor Mike Rice, Councillor Adrian Smith and Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn

You are invited to attend a

## **MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

to be held in the

**FOUNDATION HOUSE, ICKNIELD WAY, LETCHWORTH  
GARDEN CITY SG6 1GD**

On

**TUESDAY, 6TH JUNE, 2017 AT 7.30 PM**

Yours sincerely,



David Miley  
Democratic Services Manager

## **Agenda** **Part I**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>	
<b>2. MINUTES - 21 MARCH</b> To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on the 21 March 2017	(Pages 1 - 20)
<b>3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS</b> Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed by the Committee at the end of either Part I or Part II business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency.  The Chairman will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.	
<b>4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b> Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest which requires they leave the room under Paragraph 7.4 of the Code of Conduct, can speak on the item, but must leave the room before the debate and vote.	
<b>5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</b> To receive petitions, comments and questions from members of the public including:  1. Management of Larger Projects – Mr Robin Dartington.  Public participation requests received within the agreed time will be notified to Members as soon as practicable.  Members of the public who have contributed to Task and Finish groups are invited to attend the meeting at which the report is presented.	
<b>6. URGENT/GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS</b> The Chairman to report on any urgent or general exception items which required his agreement. At the time of printing the agenda, the Chairman had not agreed any urgent or general exception items.	

- 7. CALLED-IN ITEMS**  
To consider any matters referred to the Committee for a decision in relation to a call-in of a decision. At the time of printing the agenda, no items of business had been called-in.
- 8. PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**  
To receive a presentation from Mr David Scholes, the Chief Executive.
- 9. INFORMATION NOTE - REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT** (Pages 21 - 22)  
**INFORMATION NOTE OF THE CORPORATE LEGAL MANAGER**  
  
To receive the quarterly update regarding the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act.
- 10. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES 2018/23** (Pages 23 - 28)  
**REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**  
  
To consider the Corporate Objective 2018/23 prior to consideration by Cabinet.
- 11. YEAR END PERFORMANCE INDICATORS MONITORING REPORT 2016/17** (Pages 29 - 32)  
**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**  
  
To consider the Performance Indicator Monitoring Report for the end of year 2016/17.
- 12. 4TH QUARTER MONITORING REPORT ON KEY PROJECTS FOR 2016/17** (Pages 33 - 48)  
**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**  
  
To consider the 4th quarter report regarding projects identified in the Corporate Plan.
- 13. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**  
To receive and respond to any questions from Members either set out in the agenda or tabled at the meeting.
- 14. TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON THE COUNCIL'S MANAGEMENT OF LARGER PROJECTS** (Pages 49 - 92)  
**REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER**  
  
To consider the report of the Task and Finish Group on the Council's Management of Larger Projects.

- 15. RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER (Pages  
93 - 104)
- To consider the outcome of Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolutions.
- 16. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**  
REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER (Pages  
105 -  
124)
- To consider the issues that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee plans to review at future meetings and the activities of its sub-groups.

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting held at Foundation House, Icknield Way, Letchworth Garden City  
on Tuesday, 21 March 2017 at 7.30 p.m.

#### MINUTES

**PRESENT:** Councillors Cathryn Henry (Chairman), Steve Hemingway (Vice-Chairman), Ian Albert, Steve Deakin-Davies, Elizabeth Dennis, Jean Green, Steve Jarvis, Ben Lewis, Paul Marment, Gerald Morris, M.R.M. Muir, Janine Paterson, Frank Radcliffe and Valentine Shanley.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Lynda Needham (Leader of the Council), Councillor Julian Cunningham (Executive Member for Policy, Transport and Green Issues), David Scholes (Chief Executive), Ian Fullstone (Head of Development and Building Control), Louise Symes (Strategic Planning and Projects Manager), Andrew Mills (Service Manager - Grounds), Gavin Ramtohal (Contracts Solicitor), Stuart Izzard (Communities Manager), Rachel Cooper (Controls, Risk and Performance Manager), Brendan Sullivan (Scrutiny Officer) and Hilary Dineen (Committee and Member Services Officer).

**ALSO PRESENT:** At the commencement of the meeting 9 members of the public.

**93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clare Billing and Bill Davidson.

**94. MINUTES – 17 JANUARY 2017**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 January 2017 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**95. MINUTES – 15 FEBRUARY 2017**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 February 2017 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

**96. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was submitted for consideration by the Committee.

**97. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- (1) The Chairman reminded those present that, in line with Council policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (2) The Chairman informed Members that there was no sound amplification and asked Members to speak loudly and clearly;
- (3) The Chairman welcomed Councillor Lynda Needham (Leader of the Council) to the meeting;
- (4) The Chairman advised Members that, in respect of the reports entitled Proposed Crematorium at Wilbury Hills Cemetery – Interim Report on Business Case, it would be necessary to consider the Part 2 report prior to the Part 1 report (Minutes 113 and 115 refer);
- (5) The Chairman drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

## 98. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

### North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility at Hitchin Town Hall

Ms Jacqueline McDonald thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation outlining her concerns and questions regarding the North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility at Hitchin Town Hall.

Ms McDonald advised that she had been asked to address the Committee regarding the ongoing saga of the museum by concerned members of the Hitchin and North Herts community.

An on-line petition, signed by 520 people, calling for an independent public enquiry into the project, had been delivered to Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley MP on 3 March 2017, who had promised to explore the possibility of such an enquiry.

The questions that she had been asked by the public to put to the Committee were:

- (1) How much was the project likely to cost.  
Consultant's estimates had started at £2.34 million, which was now expected to be £7 million when and if completed.
- (2) Why had there been no financial report to the public since July 2015, when the main contractor finished.
- (3) Who gave authority for Section 106 monies from approximately 20 planning applications to be used.  
Of this £45,250 was allocated and £29,250 was spent on a youth facility at Hitchin Town Hall, but where is this facility.  
Had any Section 106 money been used on the District Museum.
- (4) Why had the Lucas Room been advertised for hire when it was not DDA compliant.
- (5) How long was the North Herts District Council Leader going to maintain legal silence on 14/15 Brand Street and what were the external legal costs so far.
- (6) When were the tax payers of North Herts going to see the proposed £30,000 per year savings.
- (7) Councillor Hone had stated that the Council did not need the former 14/15 Brand Street in order to operate the new Museum and Town Hall facility. If this was so, then what were the cost implications to the tax payers for the possible demolition of the building constructed on land that the Council did not own.

Ms McDonald concluded by stating that the public should have these questions answered and that she had made the presentation on behalf of the Future of Hitchin Town Hall Social Media Campaign Group and the public.

Members asked who the members of the campaign group were and what they did.

Ms McDonald advised that the group was a social media pressure group created by her and that there were many members of the group including a current Councillor.

The Chairman thanked Ms McDonald for her presentation.

The Chairman advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were unable to answer the questions put by Ms McDonald, but the Committee did have the authority to ask these questions internally.

Members felt that the questions should be referred to the Executive Member for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs for any answers that could be given at this point.

They acknowledged that confidential negotiations were being undertaken at the moment, but felt an update to this Committee should take place. They noted that a review of the project would be undertaken and that discussion would be needed to determine how this would be undertaken.

The Chairman clarified that a review of the project would be undertaken by this Committee but that it was absolutely crucial that the review did not start until the project was fully complete.

It was important for this Committee to scrutinise and to hold the Executive to account, but the Committee must never hinder progress. The project was at a crucial moment and therefore this Committee should tread carefully regarding any actions taken at this time,

She advised that she had previously informed Ms McDonald that the Minutes of this meeting would be raised at the point when the review was undertaken and that she would be invited to talk to the review about the questions raised.

The Chairman had also encouraged Ms McDonald that to register to speak at Cabinet.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Scrutiny Officer be requested to retain the Minute of this item for presentation to the review of the North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility at Hitchin Town Hall, which would be undertaken at the completion of the project;
- (2) That the Executive Member for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs be requested to consider the questions posed in the above presentation and provide answers, wherever this is possible without causing detriment to the completion of the project, to this Committee and Ms McDonald.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review of North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility, due to be held on the completion of the project, to consider all aspects of representations offered.

**99. URGENT/GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS**

No urgent or general exception items were received.

**100. CALLED-IN ITEMS**

Since the last meeting of this Committee, the decision regarding the Review of the Green Space Management Strategy had been called-in and considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 February 2017.

**101. PRESENTATION BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Councillor Lynda Needham, Leader of the Council, thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation regarding the plans made for 2016/17 and the outcomes, aims for 2017/18 and how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could assist in developing policy as follows:

Plans for 2016/17

Councillor Needham noted that the Committee had kept the projects identified in the Corporate Plan under review on a regular basis including receiving a report at this meeting and therefore would not repeat too much about what was in that report.

The Council had kept the same three Corporate Objectives being:

- Attractive and thriving;
- Responsive and efficient;
- Prosper and protect.

Significant progress had been made in the 2016/17 financial year regarding the projects identified in the Corporate Plan 2016 – 2021.

Completed projects included:

- Works at Bancroft Recreation Ground;
- Revisions to the Grant Funding Policy;
- Employment of a corporate Economic Development Officer;
- Conclusion of the innovative Building Control Service with six other Hertfordshire Authorities;
- Implementation of a new shared service focussed on Insurance and Risk Management with Hertfordshire County Council.

Many of the projects in the Corporate Plan span a number of years and had complexity in their implementation and the Plan to date was focussed on new projects being delivered in the District rather than areas of work undertaken on a day-to-day basis.

Given the financial constraints that all councils faced, it may be helpful to focus on those areas as well as articulate the work the District Council did for a small percentage of the North Hertfordshire Council Tax levy.

There were a number of projects identified in the Corporate Plan that were in progress and would complete in future years including:

- Bancroft Gardens play area and footpaths;
- Wheel sport provision at Norton Common;
- Play area renovation in Royston.

There were a number of important corporate schemes that were being worked on and were coming to a conclusion in the near future including:

- Renewal of the waste and street cleansing contract, the largest single contract that NHDC held;
- Progression of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

Councillor Needham was pleased to advise that, in relation to the waste and street cleansing contract, NHDC was the first local authority in the County to move forward with a shared service with one of neighbours, East Hertfordshire. This was seen as being ground breaking and had been the subject of much interest at the Hertfordshire County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Working in partnership with another organisation often caused you to challenge your own beliefs, assumptions and ways of working and she was of the opinion that the end product, in terms of the contract and financial agreement for NHDC would be a significant benefit to the Council Tax payers.

The Overview and Scrutiny debate and discussion in relation to the outline business case and specifications for the waste and street cleansing contract had been extremely helpful and made a significant contribution.

The contract documentation had now been developed and would be going to tender later this month, with a timescale to award the contract in early summer 2017 and the contract commencing in May 2018. The period between awarding the contract and implementation was essential to ensure smooth mobilisation arrangements were in place.



Not only were NHDC joining with East Hertfordshire in the contract side of waste and street cleansing, but would also be moving forward with a shared client team which NHDC would host.

This was a very exciting project of critical importance to the residents of North Herts, although one measure of success would be how little the new contract implementation was noticed by our residents.

In respect of the year to date, Councillor Needham concluded by referring to the Local Plan. This was a key piece of work and one of the most controversial it has had to undertake for decades, as demonstrated by the considerable debate and public interest. The identification of sites to meet the objectively assessed need for housing had not been easy and making provision for 15,800 dwellings within the District in the period to 2031 had understandably caused many concerns.

One of the challenges for the Leader of the Council was to think about an overview for the whole District and meeting its needs. It was clear that meeting the housing need arising from our resident population was one of the most fundamental issues that could not be avoided.

It was important to remember that, whilst housing related land allocations caused much of the debate and concern, the Local Plan put in place robust arrangements to ensure that infrastructure was delivered with that housing, be it schools, roads or community facilities as well as making sufficient provision for affordable housing in the schemes which were coming forward. With a difficult set of circumstances it seemed that many of the early concerns had been allayed.

Full Council would receive a report in April 2017 which recommends the submission of the Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate for progression to an independent examination. The outcome of the examination process would shape the District for the next 15 years, which emphasised its critical importance.

#### Aims for 2017/18

On the assumption that Council agrees, in April, to submit the Local Plan to the inspectorate, completing the examination into the North Hertfordshire Local Plan would form a key part of the aims for 2017/18.

Another key aim was the progression of the new waste and street cleansing contract, which would come into effect at the end of the next Civic Year.

The continued implementation of the Green Space Management Strategy would ensure that the District was attractive and thriving.

Councillor Needham urged community groups seeking to protect play areas that could no longer be maintained by the Council, to engage with officers and the Executive Member to move them into community ownership.

The North Herts Leisure Centre was undergoing an extensive redevelopment and refurbishment scheme which would complete in 2017/18. This would not only bring improved leisure facilities for the residents of the District, but would provide additional income for the Council.

Councillor Needham stated that she was also hopeful that matters relating to Hitchin Town Hall and the District Museum could be brought to a conclusion in 2017/18. Negotiations regarding this were in progress although NHDC had been asked to keep the detail of those negotiations confidential. She hoped there would be a positive outcome to that dialogue and welcomed the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's interest in the scheme and their agreement to undertake a review once the project was complete.

The Corporate Business Planning process for 2017/18 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy identified the key challenges that the Council faced in terms of delivering services over the next five years.

The updated Medium Term Financial Strategy provided the financial background to the Corporate Business Planning process for 2017/18 and beyond. In common with recent years, the report concluded that it may be necessary to revisit the MTFs on an annual basis

Financial modelling undertaken for the MTFs and Corporate Business Planning process projected that the overall budget gap for the four year period 2017/18 to 2020/21 was £3.5 million. This assumed that Council Tax would be increased by the higher of £5.00 or 1.9 percent each year and a managed use of reserves.

It would be necessary to use approximately £3.5 million of reserves to bridge the budget gap over the period of the MTFs, which would mean the total sum needed to enable the Council to reach a balanced budget in each of these years would be in excess of £7 million.

#### Ways in Which Overview and Scrutiny Can Help

Councillor Needham had already mentioned how helpful the debate and discussion regarding the outline business case for the waste and street cleansing contract were.

Members noted that the Local Plan allowed for 15,800 dwellings, which would mean 15,800 new families many with children, living in the District. Included in the Green Space Strategy was a proposal to close a number of play areas. Some of these play grounds could remain in play to serve the existing communities as well as the new families and asked how NHDC would meet its objectives in relation to children and families if these services were not available.

Councillor Needham advised that no play areas would be closed. Equipment would be removed from some of the play areas, but the area itself would remain available for young people to use. There was also an opportunity for local groups to come forward and work with officers to move ownership of some of the play areas into public ownership.

Members asked what plans were in place to lobby the Government regarding the plans to cut funding to this Council.

Councillor Needham advised that she had lobbied the Government for the last three years regarding this. She had written to the MPs and visited Ministers over that time. Some of the MPs had raised the difficulties faced by this Council on the floor of the House and one of our MPs writes to Ministers on a regular basis on our behalf and sends us all of that correspondence.

A Member representing a rural area commented that play areas in his area were maintained by Parish Councils rather than by the District Council and there was nothing to stop local communities joining together to take on play areas.

Members noted the importance of the MTFs in these difficult times and asked whether there was a risk that the focus on the budget was unduly influenced the policies pursued.

Councillor Needham acknowledged that there was a risk of this happening. The Council operated policy led budgeting rather than budget led policy making. The Council did consider budgets when making policies, but did everything they could to avoid this being the main driver.

In respect of Commercialisation of Council businesses and the employment of an Economic Development Officer, Members asked whether consideration had been given to how much money could be brought into the Council by this post.

Councillor Needham advised that it was hoped that the Commercialisation Board and the Economic Development Officer would generate funds for the Council, but it was too early to identify the level of income that might be generated.

Members noted that there were a number of pubs, the life blood of many communities, across the District that were faced with closure and asked what the Leader of the Council could do to support businesses such as pubs to remain open.

Councillor Needham reminded Members of the practice of giving 80 percent rate relief to the last pub in a village, however pubs in urban areas did not have this benefit and the question of remaining open was purely about the public using them.

A Member commented that pubs could be registered as an asset of community value, which allowed for local communities to consider whether they would wish to purchase it.

Councillor Needham confirmed that many pubs in the District had been registered as assets of community value

In response to a question Councillor Needham advised that whether or not she would be taking increased Members Allowances did not form part of the presentation given this evening.

Members noted that communication with residents was not always a strong point and asked whether NHDC should proactively inform residents of the joint waste contract.

Councillor Needham advised that residents of both North Herts and East Herts would be advised that the waste contract was a joint project. It was however hoped that the majority of residents would see no change to the service given. There may be a small percentage of residents whose bin emptying days would change, but that should be the only noticeable difference.

In respect of branding, this level of detail had not yet been discussed.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Needham for her presentation.

**102. INFORMATION NOTE – REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT UPDATE**

The Committee received an information note entitled Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Update.

**103. REVIEW OF NHDC MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDINGS (ANNUAL GRANT AWARDS) – CITIZENS ADVICE NORTH HERTS, NORTH HERTS CENTRE FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICES & NORTH HERTS MINORITY ETHNIC FORUM**

The Communities Manager presented the report of the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance entitled Review of NHDC Memorandum of Understandings (Annual Grant Awards) – Citizens Advice North Herts, North Herts Centre for Voluntary Services & North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum as follows:

Citizens Advice North Herts, North Herts Centre for Voluntary Services and North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum were the three main organisations that the Council had funded for many years.

Each of these groups had Councillors sitting on their Boards.

Funding provided was to support core services and helped these organisations to achieve funding from other sources.

In 2011 the MOUs were reduced significantly.

This process started in June 2015 with the revision of the grants policy and it was deemed that the two main groups would be funded for three years from April 2017 and that two further organisations would be reviewed.

Late last year the minor MOUs were reviewed.

The Communities Manager drew attention to the background documents and advised that information was received every six months from each of the groups detailing their financial position and the services that they offered.

The Communities Manager advised that communities engaged through these groups that were funded by NHDC and that it was important to recognise the support, advice and help that these organisations gave to the community.

He drew attention to the sample grant agreement, at Appendix 4 of the report, and explained that details of the services offered would be listed in the agreement, some of which would be specific work on behalf of NHDC. These contracts would be regularly reviewed as would the provision of services.

The key objective was to work with these groups to help them provide the services needed for the District's growing communities.

Members asked whether Citizens Advice North Herts could provide figures to demonstrate that the work they undertook saved NHDC money for instance help with payment of Council Tax.

The Communities Manager advised that details could be found on page 23 of the report and that for every pound spent approximately £13 was saved either by this Council or by the State.

Members asked whether consideration had been given to the amount of work undertaken and the number of people supported when the minor MOUs were reviewed.

The Communities Manager advised that funding for small MOUs were transferred to the Area Committees and these groups could still apply for grant funding through that route.

Members asked what plans there were to work with black and minority ethnic communities to address some of the issues faced by these communities.

The Communities Manager advised that officers would work with the groups to combine services and the Minority Ethnic Forum offered services such as translation services and form filling to clients of Citizens Advice.

In response to a question regarding what would happen to these groups when the funding agreements came to an end in April 2020 he informed Members that the authority had come a long way and continued to offer services that many other councils no longer provided. There was a will to support these groups, but there was no way of knowing what would happen in 3 years time.

Members asked where Citizens Advice North Herts got the rest of their funding from.

The Communities Manager advised that funding for Citizens Advice North Herts was mainly through grants from Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and the County Council as well as donations. It should be noted that Citizens Advice Bureaux in other Districts had closed as the support was not available, but the Citizens Advice Bureau in this area was second to none.

Members noted that funding was received from other organisations but commented that this other funding was mainly through grant funding as opposed to core funding and therefore could cease at quite short notice.

They noted that Citizens Advice North Herts had a wealth of information and queried whether any of this information was or could be used to support the work of the Council such as Housing Benefit.

The Communities Manager advised that this was exactly the type of issue that was part of the contracts with these organisations.

Members felt that Housing Associations should also contribute financially to the work of North Herts Citizens Advice.

The Chairman asked that the detail of the services provided by organisations was scrutinised and it was checked that those services could not be funded from other funding sources.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the recommendations contained in the report entitled Review of NHDC Memorandum of Understandings (Annual Grant Awards) – Citizens Advice North Herts, North Herts Centre For Voluntary Services & North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum be supported;
- (2) That the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance be requested to attend the next meeting of this Committee, due to be held on 6 June 2017, to advise the Committee of the amounts of grant funding awarded to Citizens Advice North Herts and from which organisations these grants were awarded;
- (3) That the Communities Manager be requested to scrutinise the detail of the services provided by each organisation and check whether any of those services could be funded from other funding sources.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the report entitled Review of NHDC Memorandum of Understandings (Annual Grant Awards) – Citizens Advice North Herts, North Herts Centre for Voluntary Services & North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum prior to consideration by Cabinet on 28 February 2017.

**104. PROPOSED OFF-STREET CAR PARKING TARIFFS**

The Strategic Planning and Projects Manager presented the report of the Head of Development and Building Control entitled Proposed Off-Street Car Parking Tariffs.

The Strategic Planning and Projects Manager advised that this report would be considered by Cabinet. The report aimed to seek the approval of Cabinet for the proposed changes to the 2017/18 off street car parking tariffs in accordance with the Council's agreed Fees and Charging Policy as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The report also sought approval of the proposed increases to the season ticket prices in line with the same Policy.

The agreed budget estimates included the expectation that income would be generated from car park and this was estimated to be £49,000 from tariffs and £8,000 from season tickets.

This report was not about increased Sunday, evening or bank holiday charges, this was part of further work being undertaken and consultation regarding this would take place with local Members and key stakeholders, with a further report being presented.

It was suggested that there were no increases to the resident parking scheme fees.

In previous years the Council sought to limit increases to particular price bands within certain car parks so as not to have an impact on the vitality of the Town Centres.

At the request of the Executive Member, a two phased full review of the existing Parking Strategy had been undertaken.

The first phase was to consider parking tariffs and the proposed tariff increases were backed by evidence which was available on the Council's website.

The proposal was to increase tariffs within Hitchin and Royston and increase the turnover during peak times in the short stay car parks in Hitchin whilst also trying to encourage people to stay longer during the afternoon periods. In Royston the aim was to prioritise the short stay car parking and bring them in line with each other whilst retaining the "Free after Three" subsidised scheme which was funded by the Royston and District Committee, County Councillor Locality Budget and Royston BID.

This approach sought to improve turnover and usage during the day, whilst supporting town centres.

Informal consultation had been undertaken with the Royston and Hitchin town centre managers who had given positive feedback and were supportive of the proposals.

It was not proposed to increase tariffs in Baldock or Letchworth.

A Member commented that certain car parks were more popular than others for a reason, such as being close to amenities and expressed concern that the policy to increase tariffs in some car parks whilst reducing them in others may not achieve the desired effect of redirecting people to under used car parks, but could be unduly punitive. She queried how much thought had been out into the geography of the area and whether the desired effects would be achieved.

The Strategic Planning and projects Manager advised that extensive survey work had been undertaken including user and number plate recognition surveys that yielded a lot of understanding about how the car parks were being used. This had shown that the short stay car parks, which were closest to retail areas, were the most utilised and were most used during the peak period in the morning, but were under utilised in the afternoons.

Discussions with the town centre managers had highlighted to wish to encourage people to stay in the town centres and visit after the afternoon school run. Taking this approach would hopefully stimulate the afternoon economy, however it was difficult to predict visitor behaviour.

When tariffs had been increased in the past, income had dropped slightly in the short term, but had increased as people got used to the new charges. This was a very different approach, which would be monitored and one example of this was that people using car parks in Royston during the Free after Three period would now be required to take a ticket, which would enable close monitoring of usage.

Members asked whether any research had been undertaken regarding using charging as a method of changing behaviour and the resulting outcome.

Councillor Cunningham advised that the background report included a lot of information on the elasticity of demand. It also gave details of the significant amount of work undertaken to analyse the effects of changing tariffs in NHDC car parks over the last seven years. The result of all of this research was the proposals contained in the report.

Members queried whether consideration had been given to operating a "money off purchases" scheme that may encourage people into the town centre and help encourage a change in parking behaviour.

The Head of Development and Building Control advised that one of the first actions when starting the process was to hold a workshop with the town centre manager and the key stakeholders at which all issues were discussed. Examples of the outcome of this workshop included that Royston BID decided to continue to fund the Free after Three scheme, but Hitchin BID decided to monitor the effect of these proposals before

making a decision regarding a similar scheme and Royston BID were considering whether to introduce and part fund a season ticket for lower paid workers. There were a number of schemes an initiatives being looked at and considered by the business community and NHDC would consider any funded scheme suggested.

Members were expressed some concern that these proposals were being implemented without Members having had the opportunity to study the full background report and without having a completely reviewed Parking Strategy in place and knowledge of the recommendations from phase two of the process.

A Member expressed concern that the Free after Three scheme in Royston was part funded by a County Councillor Locality Budget, which could not be guaranteed long term funding.

Councillor Cunningham acknowledged this concern and advised that if a particular funding stream for this scheme ceased then the position would have to be reviewed and the potential risks had been discussed with the current funders.

The Chief Executive informed Members that an indicative tariff had been included in Appendix B to the report for just this reason.

A Member commented that a number of residents had been unable to park at the Lairage car park, Hitchin as users of Archers Gym were able to use that facility for free when their own car park was full yet the report indicated that the Lairage was underutilised.

Councillor Cunningham advised that Stevenage Leisure Limited paid the Council a contribution towards the costs of the free car parking for Archers members.

Members asked when the outcomes regarding the hoped for changes in parking behaviour would be reviewed.

Councillor Cunningham advised that the evidence was that the Free after Three scheme had been and continued to be successful in changing behaviour and the Hitchin town centre manager had indicated that he was happy with the proposals. The schemes would be reviewed next year.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the recommendations contained in the report entitled Proposed Off-Street Car Parking Charges be supported;
- (2) That Officers be commended for the work undertaken in support of the review of off-street car parking charges.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the report entitled Proposed Off-Street Car Parking Tariffs prior to consideration by Cabinet on 28 February 2017.

**105. 3RD QUARTER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS MONITORING REPORT 2016/17**

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager presented the report entitled 3rd Quarter Performance Indicators Monitoring Report 2016/17.

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that the exception report had been circulated to Members on 22 February 2017 and drew attention to the following:

BV6 – Percentage of Invoices Paid on Time

Performance had been dropping recently although this equated to only 19 invoices being paid late out of the 3,711 invoices processed to date.

#### BV10 – Percentage of NNDR Collected in Year

Although this was showing as amber for December, this was now back on track. The Revenues Manager had advised that as more businesses were opting to pay over 12 monthly instalments, collection rates fluctuated more.

#### BV12a- Working Days Lost due to Short Term Sickness Absence per FTE employee

This was still an area of under performance and projections suggested that it may be difficult to meet the target by the end of the year.

#### LI034 – Percentage of Housing and Public Protection Service Programmes Inspections Completed

This target fell behind in quarter one due to a vacancy in the team. The team had made good inroad into the backlog with the indicator moving from red to amber in this quarter. The team was hopeful that the target could be met by the year end.

#### NI192 – Percentage of Household Waste Sent for Reuse, Recycling and Composting

The figure in the report had not been adjusted for the street sweeping figures. These figures had now been received and the figure had increased to 60.92 percent, although this had not changed the status.

In response to a comment the Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that LG Benchmarking Data showed that Nationally top quartile figures were between 58.21 percent and 68.29 percent and that NHDC figures were within this range and were ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of 55 authorities.

The Chief Executive informed Members that a lot of the items that were recycled, although bulky were lighter in weight.

Members praised the high level of recycling achieved in North Herts.

#### Future Reports

Members considered that it would be more useful for reports to highlight any issues and asked for them to be re-ordered into status order, from red to green, rather than by Executive Member.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the report entitled 3rd Quarter Performance Indicators Monitoring Report 2016/17 be noted;
- (2) That the Controls, Risk and Performance Manager be requested to reorder entries on future reports from red to green rather than the current Executive Member based report.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to monitor performance against targets.

#### **106. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 2017/18**

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager presented the report of the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance entitled Performance Management Measures for 2017/18.

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that, as agreed the Performance Workshop for Members was no longer taking place and targets were now set by Heads of Service in conjunction with the Executive Members.

She drew attention to Table 1 of the report, which laid out the proposed changes for 2017/18 as follows:



NI157ai – Percentage of Major Planning Applications Determined within the Relevant Statutory or Agreed Time Periods

The target was proposed to increase to 80 percent. Although the current performance was higher than this, the target took into account the anticipated increase in workload as the Local Plan was progressed.

MI LI015 – Number of Visits to Leisure Facilities

The target had been increased by 5.4 percent in anticipation of the new facilities being opened.

Other Performance Measures

Table 2 of the report detailed all of the other performance measures, which would remain unaltered and there were no additional performance measures or deletions for 2017/18.

Members asked several questions as follows:

NI192- Percentage of Household Waste Sent for Reuse, Recycling and Composting

Members had noted that the target in the previous report was 61 percent and asked for clarification.

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that the monitoring report included profiled percentages, which in the case of this target had to achieve an increased figure in Q3 in order to meet the year end target of 60 percent.

BV9 – Percentage of Council Tax Collected in Year

Members asked what happened when Council Tax was not successfully collected.

The Chief Executive advised that this was a target that considered collection with the year. There were other issues that meant that Council Tax may be collected post year end or payment plans that spread over a number of years.

Members asked for clarification of the actual collection rate and the procedures in place to collect outstanding amounts.

MI LI015 – Number of Visits to Leisure Facilities

Members asked how pertinent this was in respect of whether this Council could have any impact on the result, given that the leisure facilities were operated by third parties.

The Chief Executive advised that patronage of the leisure centres was very important in terms of public health, but also in terms of the contract element.

Contract meetings were held regularly and NHDC liked to be proactive in looking at performance and exploring ways in which footfall could be increased either with small amounts of investment or by considering programme changes.

Other Issues

Members noted that the proposed indicators were very similar to the existing indicators and asked whether this was realistic when two senior managers had left the organisation.

The Chief Executive advised that a lot of the indicators had a lot of history to refer to for instance benchmarking data. Performance Indicators were reported to the Senior Management Team on a regular basis. The capacity of the teams was always a challenge, as was the financial circumstances of all local authorities.

It was clear that over the years performance levels had improved despite reduced resources, demonstrating that the Council was being more effective in the use of resources and more effective in ways of working.

The Chairman clarified that the Performance Targets were now set by Heads of Service in conjunction with the Executive Members. In previous years Performance Workshops had been organised for Members to attend, at which attendance by Members had been abysmally low.

This was a particular process that this Committee had been asked to be involved with at an early stage, but Members did not take up the opportunity to do so.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the recommendations contained in the report entitled Performance Management Measures for 2017/18 be supported;
- (2) That the Chief Executive be requested to advise Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the exact percentage of Council Tax collected in year (BV9) and the procedures used to collect outstanding amounts.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the report entitled Performance Management Measures for 2017/18 prior to consideration by Cabinet on 28 February 2017.

**107. 2016/17 REPORTING AGAINST PROJECTS IDENTIFIED IN THE CORPORATE PLAN**

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager presented the report entitled 2016/17 Reporting against Projects Identified in the Corporate Plan and drew attention to the following:

Status Summary

One project had been completed being grant funding organisations sharing in the delivery of our objectives.

Three projects had moved to amber status and, as agreed, John Barker Place had now been removed from monitoring.

Walsworth Common Pavilion

This project had been moved to the 2020/21 capital programme to allow time to secure further Section 106 contributions.

Walsworth Common Pitch Improvements

This project was fully dependent on Section 106 contributions. The developer had delayed the scheme and therefore funds would not now be available until 2018/19.

Replacement of Walsworth Common Access Bridge

This project was underway, but the completion date had been moved to May 2017. Therefore the project would not be completed within timescales.

Multi Use Games Area Bancroft Recreation Ground

This project was fully dependent on securing external grant funding. Sport England closed its grant scheme in 2016 with the new scheme not being open to Local Authorities. Further funding sources were being investigated.

Redeveloping and Improving the North Herts Leisure Centre

There had been a delay to the completion of this scheme and the completion date was now shown as June 2017.

Redevelopment of the Council's Office Accommodation

Substantially more asbestos than had been expected had been found and removal of this would extend the completion date, which was now set at February 2018.

### Community Centre Leases

Agreement had now been reached with Coombes Community Centre and the lease agreements were being drawn up ready for signature.

Walsworth Community Centre and St Michael's Mount Community Association were being supported to prepare bids to the Community Facilities Capital Fund. If the bids were successful both associations would be prepared to sign full repairing leases.

Members commented that the status indicators were not consistent for the various projects, with projects marked amber being either delayed by a month or two or delayed with an unknown completion date. They felt that the status indicators should be more in line with the expectation that a project would complete within a reasonable timescale.

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager explained that currently red status only applied to those projects that would definitely not continue. Amber status indicated that a project was either behind schedule or would continue at some future date. It was possible to change the use of the status indicators for instance record projects that were unable to continue at this present time as red.

Members felt that the report should be made more transparent and this could be achieved by using amber for projects that were delayed, but had a reasonable new completion dates, whilst projects that had halted, with no indication of when they might restart should be marked as red.

The Chief Executive advised that the detail and important information was included in the commentary for each project.

Members agreed that future reports should be reordered from red to green.

Members queried why projects from previous years that had not yet been completed were not included in the report for example the District Museum and Community Facility at Hitchin Town Hall.

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that this report only contained projects listed in the current Corporate Plan.

Councillor Cunningham advised that, over the years, this Corporate Plan had been refined from an overlong list of projects and it now listed the high level projects. This report included projects included in the strategies referenced in the Corporate Plan was intended as the means to monitor all of the projects.

Members noted that the issues regarding the Community Centre Leases were continuing and that they were being supported to bid for Community Facilities Capital Funding. They queried whether they were also being supported to apply for Section 106 funding.

The Chief Executive advised that the Communities Team were supporting the groups through the process of bidding for Community Facilities funding they were also supporting them to look at other ways to move forward. They were working towards a sustainable solution.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the report entitled 2016/17 Reporting against Projects Identified in the Corporate Plan be noted;
- (2) That the Controls, Risk and Performance Manager be requested to reorder entries on future reports from red to green rather than the current Executive Member based report;

- (3) That the Controls, Risk and Performance Manager be requested to mark projects that have been halted or were unlikely to progress further as red;
- (4) That the Controls, Risk and Performance Manager be requested to include details of projects from previous years that have not yet been completed in future reports.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to monitor delivery of key projects against targets.

#### **108. KEY PROJECTS FOR 2017/18**

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager presented the report of the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance entitled Key Projects for 2017/18.

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager advised that this report detailed the key projects to support the Corporate Plan for 2017/18 and would form the basis of the monitoring report that would be considered by this Committee on a quarterly basis.

The majority of the projects were a continuation of those contained in the previous Corporate Plan with the additional projects being agreed through the Capital Programme.

Appendix A of the report detailed the projects and the key milestones for reporting which would remain unchanged.

Where the project spanned more than one year the project milestones would only reflect those actions due to be achieved during 2017/18 reporting year.

Some of the projects had been identified as top risk to the Council and would also be monitored quarterly by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and these were:

- The Local Plan;
- Office Accommodation;
- Asset Management;
- The Waste and Street Cleansing Contract.

Members requested that projects from previous years, that had not yet been completed, be included in the monitoring report.

Councillor Cunningham noted that Members were being asked to consider which projects to monitor without having considered the Corporate Plan.

Members noted the action, included under the heading Investigating a Range of Options to Improve use of Council Assets, to set up a property company, but then no other actions and queried whether this was the only action being considered.

Members also noted that the renovation of Jackmans Play area had no milestones and queried how this could be monitored.

They were concerned that when objectives were set, they included objectives and milestones for the whole year.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the key projects, subject to capacity, that will be the key focus for the Council in 2017/18 be noted:
- (2) That outstanding key projects from previous years be monitored alongside those projects identified in (1) above.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to monitor delivery of key projects.

**109. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

No questions had been submitted.

**110. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report entitled Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that this was a draft version of the report that would be submitted to Council and drew attention to the following:

Paragraph 5.2 of the Report

Listed a number of details that had not yet been completed. These would be completed following the meeting of Cabinet due to be held on 28 March 2017.

There would not be another meeting of this Committee before Annual Council, when this report would be considered and therefore the Committee was asked to authorise the Chairman to approve the final version of the report.

Paragraph 5.5 of the Report

There had only been two Task and Finish Groups this year due to difficulties arranging meetings. The Committee had agreed at a previous meeting that, in future, Task and Finish Groups would be held on fixed dates.

Paragraph 5.6 of the Report

The Committee had revised the Task and Finish Protocol in May 2016 after having established a small working group to come up with recommendations.

It was probably time to review the Protocol and he suggested that a survey of Members was the best way forward.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That, subject to (2) below, the draft Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be agreed;
- (2) That the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be authorised to approve the final version of the Annual Report prior to consideration by Council;

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Committee to comment on the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2016/17 prior to consideration by Council.

**111. RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report entitled Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and drew attention to the following:

Minute 50 – September 2015 – Task and Finish Group on the Commercialisation of Council Services & Minute 103 – March 2016 – Task and Finish Group on the Quality of Council Reports

The expected follow up reports had not yet been received and Members may wish to consider having an agenda item at future meetings regarding feedback on Task and Finish Groups.

The Chairman agreed to look into the issue of actions taken following Task and Finish Groups and report back to the Committee.

The Chief Executive advised that a report regarding commercialisation would be considered by Cabinet on 28 March 2017.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the actions resulting from the resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (2) That Chairman be authorised to look into the issue of actions taken following Task and Finish Groups and report back to this Committee on her conclusions.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and monitor the progress of resolutions made.

**112. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report entitled Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme, the following issues were discussed:

Executive Member Comments and Suggestions

Councillor Cunningham commented that one of the issues to consider was the distinction between Overview and Scrutiny.

The Corporate Plan was due to be considered in June 2017 and there were several issues to confront regarding the tightening of finances.

A large proportion of the work of the Council was what could be clarified as “business as usual”, this was work that nobody noticed until there was a problem or the Council stopped doing it, such as collection of waste.

The ideal measure of the success of “business as usual” was that nobody noticed any changes and the complaint levels did not increase, although this was not the most sensible way to consider issues from the Council’s point of view.

He was thinking carefully about how the Corporate Plan would be presented and considered that the highlights of “business as usual” matters should be included in the next version.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee could then take a more comprehensive view of the contents of the Corporate Plan and offered to organise a Corporate Plan Workshop to discuss what should be included and the sorts of issues that this Committee would be keen to monitor and therefore what performance measures were relevant to ensure that a project delivers what was expected.

It was important that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were involved in the early stages as well as monitoring outcomes.

It should be noted that the Council was policy led, but had to maintain a keen eye on the finances and the Corporate Plan should detail the realistic aims of the Council and enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to effectively hold the Administration to account.

Members were supportive of including a wider range of Council activities in the Corporate Plan and that more “business as usual” items should be included.

There was some concern expressed at the comment that residents shouldn’t notice the difference in terms of implementation of the waste contract as the aspiration should be to look at ways to improve services.

Members commented that the major criticisms made about the Council were in regard to the timeliness of the completion of projects and that the Council needed to consider why so many projects were not completed on time and queried whether staff reductions meant that there were now insufficient staff to enable timely delivery. They asked whether these problems would continue if staff levels continued to reduce.

The Chairman agreed to have further discussions with Councillor Cunningham to refine the prospective future process and that Members should make all efforts to attend and take part in any workshops offered.

Councillor Cunningham asked Members to let him know what background information they would require to support the proposed workshops.

#### Review of the District Museum and Community Facility at Hitchin Town Hall

A Member suggested that this was undertaken as a single item meeting of this Committee and that the meeting start earlier to allow maximum time for the review.

The Chairman advised that the review would likely be held over a number of meetings as it was a large piece of work.

#### Input into Policy

The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that they had been keen to investigate ways in which they could have an earlier input into policy changes and suggested that the Committee consider whether they wish to look at the following documents:

- Service Plans;
- Key Projects Monitoring Report;
- Capital Programme Monitoring Report;
- Corporate Plan;
- Forward Plan;
- Risk Register.

The Committee could look at all of these documents or ask someone to review them on the Committee's behalf in order to identify the topics that would likely come to fruition in that Civic Year and therefore consider the actions being taken at an earlier stage.

Members were supportive of trialling a system by which future decisions could be identified at an earlier stage and agreed that the Scrutiny Officer, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Committee, should be tasked with reviewing the above documents and bringing a shortlist of items to the Committee as soon as possible in the process.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted;
- (2) That Members of this Committee be requested to consider what background information they would require to support a proposed workshop on the Corporate Plan and send their suggestions to the Scrutiny Officer;
- (3) That the Scrutiny Officer, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be requested to review the documents listed above and bring a shortlist of items for the Committee to consider as soon as possible in the development stage.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to plan and carry out its workload efficiently and effectively.

#### **113. PROPOSED CREMATORIUM AT WILBURY HILLS CEMETERY – INTERIM REPORT ON BUSINESS CASE**

This item was considered after the Part 2 item (Minute 115 refers).

The Committee considered the report entitled Proposed Crematorium at Wilbury Hills Cemetery – Interim Report on Business Case.

Members expressed concern that Cabinet very seriously consider and review the latest Business Case and financial information before deciding whether or not to proceed and that the cost officer time spent on this project, both to date and moving forward be included in the business case in order to reflect the full costs.

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:**

- (1) That, subject to (2) and (3) below, the recommendations contained in the report entitled Proposed Crematorium at Wilbury Hills Cemetery – Interim Report on Business Case be supported;
- (2) That the cost of Officer time spent on this project both to date and moving forward be included in the Business Case;
- (3) That Cabinet be requested to seriously consider and review the latest Business Case and financial information, including (2) above before deciding whether to proceed with this project.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on the report entitled Proposed Crematorium at Wilbury Hills Cemetery – Interim Report on Business Case prior to consideration by Cabinet.

**114. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following report will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

**115. PROPOSED CREMATORIUM AT WILBURY HILLS CEMETERY – INTERIM REPORT ON BUSINESS CASE**

This item was considered prior to the Part 1 item (Minute 113 refers).

The Service Manager – Grounds presented the report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services entitled Proposed Crematorium at Wilbury Hills Cemetery – Interim Report on Business Case.

**RESOLVED:** That the contents of the report entitled Proposed Crematorium at Wilbury Hills Cemetery – Interim Report on Business Case be noted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on the report entitled Proposed Crematorium at Wilbury Hills Cemetery – Interim Report on Business Case prior to consideration by Cabinet.

The meeting ended at 10.40 p.m.

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Chairman



<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 6 JUNE 2017</b>
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<b>*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No.</b>
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	<b>9</b>
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**TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT UPDATE**

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE CORPORATE LEGAL MANAGER

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This Report updates on the Council's current use of RIPA in accordance with best practice and the Committee's Terms of Reference

**2. FORWARD PLAN**

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Members are referred to previous Reports of the Corporate Legal Manager. Members will recall that the Codes of Practice state that elected Members should review the local authority's use of RIPA.

**4. ISSUES**

**Council's Use of RIPA**

- 4.1 Members may recall that it was considered that the quarterly report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee should continue even though RIPA is not currently being used, as this provides a useful mechanism to ensure that the issue of RIPA remains in the consciousness of Members (and Officers).
- 4.2 There have been no further RIPA authorisations since the last Report to the Committee. There are currently no ongoing RIPA authorisations.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference and Council's Constitution at paragraph 6.2.7(r) states that it shall be entitled to consider reports relating to the authority's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000) (RIPA).

## **6. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 It is important that the Council continues to operate in accordance with RIPA to ensure that it is able to effectively manage its reputational risk whilst also exercising its legitimate evidence gathering powers in connection with enforcement activity.

## **7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011. There is a General duty, described in 8.2, that public bodies must meet, underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.
- 7.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 7.3 The contents of this report do not directly impact on equality, in that it is not making proposals that will have a direct impact on equality of access or outcomes for diverse groups. The commencement of improvements arising from the 'Protections of Freedoms Act' strengthens existing Human Rights Legislation, protecting individuals from inappropriate levels of covert surveillance, such as that used by some authorities, featured in the national media, regarding the enforcement of school catchment areas.

## **8. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at paragraphs 12.

## **9. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The officer involvement required to comply with these statutory obligations are factored into service plans and work plans.

## **10. CONTACT OFFICERS**

- 10.1 Anthony Roche, Corporate Legal Manager and Monitoring Officer.  
Telephone 01462 474588. E-mail address [anthony.roche@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:anthony.roche@north-herts.gov.uk)
- 10.2 James Ellis, Advisory and Litigation Solicitor, Telephone 01462 474319. E-Mail address [james.ellis@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:james.ellis@north-herts.gov.uk)

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
6 JUNE 2017**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM No.**

**10**

**TITLE OF REPORT: CORPORATE OBJECTIVES FOR 2018-2023**

REPORT OF: STRATEGIC DIRECTOR FOR FINANCE, POLICY & GOVERNANCE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER : POLICY, TRANSPORT & GREEN ISSUES

COUNCIL PRIORITY : ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING / PROSPER AND PROTECT /  
RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report recommends Corporate Objectives for 2018/23 to guide and inform the 2018/19 Corporate Business Planning Process.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That Cabinet recommends to Full Council the continuation of the Corporate Objectives below for 2018 to 2023;

1. **To work with our partners to provide an attractive and safe environment for our residents, where diversity is welcomed and the disadvantaged are supported;**
2. **To promote sustainable growth within our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities, whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage;**
3. **To ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints.**

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 To allow Cabinet and Council to consider the Corporate Objectives which will guide the corporate business planning process for 2018/19 through to 2023.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

4.1 The option to change the Objectives from those used for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 Corporate Business Planning process was considered but discounted since the aspects which informed their original adoption in 2015 remain valid for the foreseeable future.

## **5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- 5.1 No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. Members will, however, be aware that consultation is an integral part of the Corporate Business Planning process, and consultation on the individual actions and projects planned to support the Objectives will be carried out in accordance with the Corporate Business Planning Timetable. Wherever it is available, use will be made of valid opinion research data and, where applicable, outcomes of the Districtwide Survey.
- 5.2 As in previous years, Member workshops will be held in regard to corporate business planning proposals, in addition to seeking the views of the Finance Audit and Risk Committee, the North Hertfordshire Partnership (LSP), parish, town and community councils, panel of residents, statutory partners and business ratepayers views as appropriate

## **6. FORWARD PLAN**

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 1st March 2017.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 Before considering the detailed budget position for the authority, the Corporate Business Planning Process requires that the Council's objectives are determined. Budgets must then be allocated to ensure their achievement; this is known as 'policy led' budgeting and enables the authority to best reflect not only services it must deliver by statute, but those over which it has a degree of discretion.
- 7.2 The Council's budget and its objectives are inextricably linked. There is no point in having a service or key project that cannot be funded and no point in spending limited resources (including staff resources) if they are not achieving the objectives that have been set. This aligns the agreed Policy of the Council with the finances which will deliver it. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) five year plan which informs the Council's budgetary position is reviewed annually as part of the Corporate Business Planning process, to ensure policy and budget, especially at times of increasing financial constraint, are properly aligned.
- 7.3 North Hertfordshire District Council published its first 'Corporate Plan' in 2005; this high level strategic document set out the Council's ambitions and aspirations for the district. The activities to deliver the priorities within the plan are revised annually to reflect the changing environment within which the Council, as other local authorities, has to operate.

## **8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1 The Corporate Plan describes in narrative how each of the high level objectives are delivered and any individual activities that will be completed through the next and subsequent years to ensure those objectives are met.
- 8.2 The ongoing financial constraints make it increasingly likely that the emphasis for Council spend will be on the day to day service delivery, firstly of those services that the Council has a statutory duty to provide and secondly of those which the Council has determined are a priority to be funded.

- 8.3 In determining its objectives, the Council needs to reflect any recent changes in:
- Legislation, which may require changes to existing services, or delivery of new services
  - Capacity, since the authority has reduced headcount over recent years
  - Financial constraints – work on future funding of local Authority Services through 100% retention of Business rates has been halted as a result of the General Election and it is unclear when and if it will restart. This will add greater uncertainty into financial forecasting.
  - Population – the need to plan for an ageing population which requires health, social care and Council service providers to consider how necessary support can be provided together.
- 8.4 Having considered the relevant factors, the three objectives proposed to inform the Council’s Corporate Budget Setting 2017/21 therefore remain;
- 1. To work with our partners to provide an attractive and safe environment for our residents, where diversity is welcomed and the disadvantaged are supported**
  - 2. To promote sustainable growth within our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities, whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage**
  - 3. To ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints.**

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Cabinet’s terms of reference include at 5.6.35 the power, by recommendation “to advise the Council in the formulation of those policies within the Council’s terms of reference”.
- 9.2 Full Council’s terms of reference provide “approving or adopting the policy framework which at 4.2.1 (f) include “Priorities/ Objectives for the District.”
- 9.3 The corporate objectives agreed for 2018/23 onward will provide high level reference points that will assist the Council making clear and effective decisions.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no specific revenue implications from adoption of the objectives although there will be both revenue and capital implications from the provision of services to support the objectives and these will be agreed as part of the corporate business planning process which will culminate in February 2018 with the setting of the budget for 2018/19.
- 10.2 It is clear that the Council will continue to face difficult spending decisions in view of the current economic climate and the continuing reduction in government support in future years and that the availability of funding will impact on the services that can be delivered. Individual projects will be costed to ensure that the overall programme of activity across the Council can be achieved within the agreed budget assigned.

- 10.3 The Council received significant capital funding from the housing stock transfer to North Herts Homes (set-aside receipts). It has supplemented this with the receipts from the sale of surplus land and buildings (capital receipts). The strategy adopted by the Council has been to concentrate capital funding on those schemes that reduce revenue costs or generate income. Over the next five years it is forecast that the set-aside receipts will all be used, and therefore capital funding will have to come from capital receipts or borrowing. The availability of assets that can be sold to generate capital receipts is also reducing. It is therefore important that any agreed capital projects reflect corporate priorities, to ensure effective use of diminishing capital resources.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Agreeing the Council's objectives for 2018/23 commences the Council's Business Planning processes for the next financial year. A robust Corporate Business Planning process is key to managing the Council's top risk of "Managing the Council's Finances".

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 In setting its Corporate Objectives, the council is seeking to address equality implications in the services it provides and through the remainder of the Corporate Business Planning Process will carry out Equalities Impact Assessments for those Efficiency or Investment options that are taken forward.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to this report.

## **14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 There are no additional human resource requirements arising from this report. The resources needed to deliver services are considered and addressed through the Corporate Business Planning process and staff are reminded of the objectives once agreed.

## **15. APPENDICES**

None

## **16. CONTACT OFFICERS**

- 16.1 Norma Atlay, Strategic Director, Finance Policy & Governance  
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## **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

17.1 Corporate Plan 2017/21 and background reports.

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## 2016/17 Year-End PI Data

In 2016/17, NHDC reported **27** corporate performance indicators.

This report presents the **red and amber** performance indicators only and displays the latest month or quarter that officers have updated and activated on Covalent. The full report can be found on the intranet at the following location.

<http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/finance-and-procurement/performance-and-risk-management/performance-management>

Generally, performance indicator data is cumulative and represents performance between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017. The report will indicate if any performance indicator data relates to a different reporting period.





### Key for the Report



Page 29

Status	
	Data value has met or exceeded the target figure
	Data value has not achieved the target figure but it is within the agreed tolerance range
	Data value has not achieved the target figure and it is outside the agreed tolerance range
	Data value is for information only and a traffic light status is not applicable

Direction of Travel	
	Data value has improved compared with the same time last year
	Data value has deteriorated compared with the same time last year
	Data value has not changed compared with the same time last year

Status Summary		Direction of Travel Summary	
	10		15
	3		10
	0		1
	13		

Row No.	PI Code	Title	Last Update	Data Value	Target	Status	Direction of Travel	Commentary
<b><u>Executive Member for Finance and IT</u></b>								
1	BV 8	Percentage of invoices paid on time	March 2017	99.4%	99.6%		 March 16 99.94%	<p>From 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, 5343 invoices out of 5379 were paid on time. This performance indicator is affected by a small number of invoices. The indicator has been close to the target value across the year. Even where payment is not within agreed payment terms, it is generally only a few days late. Targeted messages will continue to be used to remind staff of the importance of having processes in place for invoice approval, particularly during holiday periods. The forthcoming upgrade to the accounting system will allow electronic invoice approval, which will enable better tracking of any blockages.</p>
<b><u>Leader of the Council</u></b>								
6	BV 12a	Working days lost due to short-term sickness absence per FTE employee	March 2017	3.61	3.50		 March 16 3.17	<p>1,003.10 FTE short-term sickness days            277.75 average FTEs</p> <p>There are robust procedures in place for the management of short-term absence, with monthly monitoring of absence levels. Managers have received training in how to manage absence and Business Partners provide support in cases where absence is above acceptable levels. The annual data is slightly above target, but this is largely due to one month, October 2016, when absence was higher than expected. The overall annual figure for short-term absence is still significantly below the levels seen some years ago.</p>

Row No.	PI Code	Title	Last Update	Data Value	Target	Status	Direction of Travel	Commentary						
<b>Executive Member for Waste Management, Recycling and Environment</b>														
15	NI 192	Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	March 2017	59.02%	60%		 March 16 57.83%	<b>LG Inform Benchmarking Data:</b> Latest Quarter - Three-Month Period Sample - Participating English district local authorities <table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>Period</b></td> <td><b>NHDC</b></td> <td><b>Top Quartile</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 2016/17</td> <td>57.16%</td> <td>53.78% to 60.82%</td> </tr> </table> NHDC ranked 6th out of 51	<b>Period</b>	<b>NHDC</b>	<b>Top Quartile</b>	Q3 2016/17	57.16%	53.78% to 60.82%
<b>Period</b>	<b>NHDC</b>	<b>Top Quartile</b>												
Q3 2016/17	57.16%	53.78% to 60.82%												

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<b>OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b> <b>6 JUNE 2017</b>
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<b>*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No.</b>  <b>12</b>
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**TITLE OF REPORT: 4TH QUARTER MONITORING REPORT ON KEY PROJECTS FOR 2016/17**

REPORT OF: THE HEAD OF FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR JULIAN CUNNINGHAM

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING / PROSPER AND PROTECT / RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This monitoring report provides a final update on the delivery of the key projects for 16/17 identified to the Committee in March 2016.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That delivery against the key projects for 16/17 be noted and commented on by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 To enable achievements against the key projects for 2016/17 to be considered.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

4.1 There are not alternative options as this is a monitoring report.

**5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**





5.1 No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report as it is a monitoring report. Members will, however, be aware that a report setting out the key projects was brought to this Committee on 22 March 2016.

**6. FORWARD PLAN**

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

## 7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 This report provides details on the status of the key projects for 16/17. It does not include any projects initiated after the document was agreed and is not a full report on all the projects that the Council is undertaking.
- 7.2 This report summarises the status of each of the key projects. Overall, where the delivery has been solely down to the Council good progress has been made. The following symbols have been used to summarise progress.

Status key	
	Project Halted / funding not available.
	Project behind original due date/ unlikely to hit original due date.
	Project not due for completion in 2016/17 or has not reached due date
	Project Completed.

## 8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 At the Overview & Scrutiny committee meeting in July 2016, it was agreed that monitoring progress against key projects would take place on a more frequent basis and be reported quarterly.
- 8.2 The 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter monitoring report against key projects for 2016/17 is included in Appendix A.
- 8.3 Appendix A includes the original milestones for reporting progress which were reported to this Committee in March 2016 and progress made against those actions. In addition, updates may have been provided to Executive Members and where relevant through the Members Information Service. Progress against some, will also have been monitored through the Capital monitoring reports to the Finance Audit and Risk Committee and to Cabinet.
- 8.4 At the Overview & Scrutiny committee meeting in March 2017 it was agreed that the report should be re-ordered to reflect the project status and that the Hitchin Town Hall and Museum Project should be included in future monitoring reports until marked as complete. It was also agreed that projects which were unable to complete due to a lack of funding should be marked as status Red.

## 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 No direct legal implications arise from this report. Legal implications for the projects listed in Appendix A are considered as part of those projects and will include (but are not limited to ) governance, property, planning and contractual issues. Under the Local Government Act 2000 there is a legal requirement for Councils operating Executive arrangements to appoint an overview and scrutiny committee with remit to review decisions and other action

9.2 Overview and Scrutiny's terms of reference include at paragraph 6.2.7(s) of the Constitution "to review performance against the Council's agreed priorities and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or service areas". This report gives the Committee an opportunity to comment on progress made against the projects that have been identified for delivery against the Council's objectives.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no specific revenue implications.

10.2 The actions identified were resourced through the corporate business planning process cycle for 2016/17 that was undertaken in 2015/16. A number of these projects formed part of the Council's capital programme for 2016/17.

10.3 The Council continues to face difficult spending decisions in view of the reduction in government support in future years and the availability of funding continues to impact on the projects that can be undertaken.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The Lead Officer for each project is responsible for identifying any risks to the successful delivery of the Project.

11.2 Some of these major projects have been identified as Top Risks for the Council and these are monitored quarterly by the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee. These include:

- Local Plan
- Hitchin Town Hall
- Office Accommodation
- Asset Management
- Waste and Street Cleansing Contract Renewal

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.2 By reporting delivery against the key projects for 2016/17 this provides a means to monitor whether the council are meeting the stated outcomes of the district priorities, its targets or delivering accessible and appropriate services to the community to meet different people's needs. This assists the Council to fulfil a number of its obligations arising from the Public Sector Equality Duty.

### **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

### **14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 There are no additional human resource implications arising from this monitoring report. The resources needed to deliver projects should be considered through the Corporate Business Planning process.

### **15. APPENDICES**

15.1 Appendix A – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Monitoring against Key Projects for 2016/2017

### **16. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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16.4 Ian Fullstone, Head of Development & Building Control, Tel, 474480, email [ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk)

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16.6 Vaughan Watson, Head of Leisure & Environmental Services, Tel 474641 email [Vaughan.watson@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:Vaughan.watson@north-herts.gov.uk)

16.7 Anthony Roche, Corporate Legal Manager. Contact Tel 474588 [Anthony.roche@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:Anthony.roche@north-herts.gov.uk)

### **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

17.1 None







NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL










**2016/2017 reporting against Projects identified in the Corporate Plan – last updated 05/05/2017**

For Q4 2016/2017 North Hertfordshire District Council is reporting against 24 Projects identified in the Corporate Plan 2016 - 21.




**Key for the Report**

Status key	
	Project Halted / funding not available.
	Project behind original due date/ unlikely to hit original due date.
	Project not due for completion in 2016/17 or has not reached due date
	Project Completed.





Status Summary			
Status	Qtr4	Qtr3	Summary of Movement
	3	0	Walsworth Common Pavilion / Walsworth Common Pitch Improvements / MUGA Bancroft
	9	7	
	5	11	
	7	5	Careline expansion / Serby Avenue Play area
Total	24	23	Hitchin Town Hall and Museum added into report

Description in Corporate Plan	Corporate Objective	Portfolio	Milestones	Due Date	Status	Comments
<b>Status – RED - 3</b>						
Delivering identified projects from the adopted Green Space Strategy	Attractive & Thriving	Leisure	Walsworth Common Pavilion contribution to scheme £300,000	Throughout 2016/17		Cabinet report re Green Space Strategy (Jan 17) recommended that project be moved to 2020/21 capital programme to allow time to secure further s106 contributions.
			Walsworth Common pitch improvements £103,000			Pitch Improvements were originally planned to start in 1617, however fully dependent on S106 contributions. Developer has delayed start on scheme so funds will not be available until 18/19.
			Multi Use Games Area, Bancroft Recreation Ground, Hitchin £170,000			Project managed by Groundwork Hertfordshire. Dependant on securing £80K external grant. Sport England closed its grant scheme in 2016. New scheme is not open to Local Authorities. Further funding sources are currently being investigated.

APPENDIX A



Status – AMBER - 9						
<p>Redeveloping and improving the North Herts Leisure Centre to ensure it is fit for purpose and offers greater opportunities to meet latent customer demand</p>	<p>Responsive &amp; Efficient</p>	<p>Leisure</p>	<p>Full Council Approval for Scheme</p> <p>Contractor to commence on site</p> <p>Commence Car park improvements</p> <p>Teaching pool completion</p>	<p>Jan 16</p> <p>April/May 16</p> <p>Apr/May 16</p> <p>Feb 17</p>		<p>Car Park improvements completed June 2016</p> <p>There has been a delay to the completion date and the current project plan shows that the new facilities are due to be open in June 2017. The key elements of the delay are associated with data cabling and drainage, which were not identified on drawings or assessed prior to work commencing on site. The changing rooms and the new sports hall are now complete and open for use. All other works are progressing well and the new Café is due to open on the 29 May.</p>
<p>Complete the fit out and open the North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility</p>	<p>Prosper &amp; Protect</p>	<p>Leisure</p>		<p>Original due date 30 September 2015</p>		<p>The Fit Out of the Museum on Councils land is near completion. The project team are currently working with the contractors to finalise a programme to complete the work on 14 and 15 Brand Street which will progress once the Council has purchased this land. The Town Hall has been open for nearly a year with many different types of events and bookings taking place</p>
<p>Delivering identified projects from the adopted Green Space Strategy</p>	<p>Attractive &amp; Thriving</p>	<p>Leisure</p>	<p>Replacement of Walsworth Common Access Bridge £175,000</p>	<p>2016/2017</p>		<p>Quotation Process has taken place and Structural Engineer has been appointed. Site survey took place Nov 16. Engineer has produced draft program for the works. Tender process has been delayed as an environmental protection application had to be made, which is a 10 week process. Report received back at the end of April confirmed that no further tests need to be carried out. Estimated completion date is 31 Aug 2017.</p>


APPENDIX A

Delivering identified projects from the adopted Green Space Strategy	Attractive & Thriving	Leisure	Bancroft Gardens Play Area £ 75,000	Throughout 2016/17		Commenced project May 2016, Public Consultation took place Sep/Oct. Contract awarded. Playground equipment has been ordered. Completion date estimated as end of May.
Delivering identified projects from the adopted Green Space Strategy	Attractive & Thriving	Leisure	Renew pathways, Bancroft Recreation Ground, Hitchin £50,000	Throughout 2016/17		First phase of works completed. Contact awarded for second phase. Second phase of project managed by Groundwork Hertfordshire Final stage will be deferred until works to install new play area is completed.
Delivering identified projects from the adopted Green Space Strategy	Attractive & Thriving	Leisure	Norton Common wheeled sports provision improvements £154,000	Throughout 2016/17		A consultation event with stakeholders took place on the 5 <sup>th</sup> December following which the contractor was appointed. At first quarter project value increased to £170K, all funded by section 106 contributions. Final design agreed after further consultation and order placed with the supplier. Currently awaiting start date with project to be completed by the summer.
Ensuring that the Council's office accommodation is redeveloped to increase financial and resource efficiency and making best use of green initiatives	Prosper & Protect	Finance & IT	Commence decant to Town Lodge  Works to commence at DCO	September 16  November 16		Final prices received from the Framework Contractor week commencing 16 Jan 2017. Contracts provided to NHDC on 7 Feb 2017 and signed off on 17 Feb 2017. Construction work began on 6 March 2017. Cellular office removal and asbestos removal currently taking place. Some windows already removed to accommodate scaffolding. Estimated handover date 30 Jan 2018 with staff being moved back into the building Feb 2018.



Page 40

APPENDIX A



<p>Implementing outcomes from our energy audits of Council assets</p>	<p>Responsive &amp; Efficient</p>	<p>Finance &amp; IT</p>	<p>Outcomes from energy audit to be reviewed in light of solar panels not being viable. Office Accommodation project outcomes may overlap. Report to Asset management group</p>	<p>Apr 2016</p>		<p>To be a focus during 2017/18 with specific resources identified to carry out the work. Potential projects to be reviewed as to whether they will provide financial returns on the up-front capital investment required. To contract those works where there is clear benefit from them being undertaken.</p>
<p>Optimising use and management of the Council's assets, including consideration of long term lease 'transfer' or similar to increase community involvement in the provision of community and social opportunities</p>	<p>Responsive &amp; Efficient</p>	<p>Various</p>	<p>Implement the two recommendations arising from the SIAS audit of Community halls;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Report to Cabinet, reporting that officers have failed to reach agreement (and therefore implement agreed CH policy) in regard to renewal of two CA leases and seek agreement how to progress</li> </ul>	<p>June 2016</p>		<p>Coombes Community Centre - Terms agreed, lease drawn up by legal and sent to the Community Centre. They are getting their solicitor to review. We are currently chasing them to complete final sign off.</p> <p>St Michael's' Mount – Have made application to community capital fund. Agreement to lease will be linked to this. Recommendation from the Capital Grants Panel on the 24<sup>th</sup> May, with the final decision to follow. Work on the lease will then follow this, as required.</p> <p>Walsworth Community Association – Have made application to community capital fund. Agreement to lease will be linked to this. Recommendation from the Capital Grants Panel on the 24<sup>th</sup> May, with the final decision to follow. Work on the lease will then follow this, as required.</p> <p>Grange - The lease is to be completed simultaneously with a lease of adjacent land from North Hertfordshire Homes to the</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 22</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review members representation on outside bodies, which lacks clarity in regard to membership of community centre management groups</li> <li>-</li> </ul>		<p>community group. Completion had been delayed whilst NHH obtained the relevant consents to proceed. In preparing for completion it has come to light that one clause within the lease requires amendment, and the parties are working to agree the wording of that clause. Completion is now anticipated prior to the end of June 2017</p> <p>Original due date was 30 June 2016. The milestone was completed in June 2016. The guidance is available on the intranet and a MIS note had been produced to advise Members.</p>
<p><b>Status – GREEN - 5</b></p>					
<p>Renewing our waste and street cleansing contracts, continuing to provide an efficient and effective service</p>	<p>Attractive &amp; Thriving</p>	<p>Waste, Recycling &amp; Env</p>	<p>Outline Business case to Cabinet</p> <p>Developing Contract Documentation</p> <p>Inter Authority Agreement (IAA)</p> <p>OJEU Invitation to Tender</p> <p>Award Contract</p> <p>Contract Commencement</p>	<p>June 2016</p> <p>Spring/Summer</p> <p>Summer</p> <p>Summer/Autumn</p> <p>Spring/Summer 17</p> <p>May 2018</p>	<p></p> <p>Cabinet approved project specification outline June 2016.</p> <p>PQQ was sent April 2017 and the returns are currently being evaluated. ITT to be issued once evaluation has taken place. The current project plan shows slippage to the original milestones. This will not affect the contract commencement date which remains as May 2018; however, the amendments may have implications for the contract award date and encroach into the contract mobilisation period post tender award.</p>

APPENDIX A




<p>Exploring further the potential for development of a Crematorium in North Hertfordshire</p>	<p>Prosper &amp; Protect</p>	<p>Waste, Recycling &amp; Env</p>	<p>The previously completed Business Case will be reviewed in light of the planning application for a similar facility at Holwell by a private sector provider. The outcome of this work will determine if the development of a Crematorium is a viable option for North Herts to develop in the future.</p>	<p>Spring 2016</p>		<p>Milestones for 1617 year completed. The previously completed Business Case was reviewed, and alongside additional consultation with the market place, it was determined that the development of a crematorium facility at Wilbury Hills Cemetery was still a viable option. On 27 Sept 2016 Cabinet recommended that officers should investigate options for collaboration with a private sector provider, develop and conclude an appropriate selection process for the delivery of the project. A further report was presented on 27 March 2017 and Cabinet agreed for officers to work with a private sector partner to deliver a business case to develop a crematorium and to finalise the details of appropriate Heads of Terms, including the financial implications. As part of this, officers are to seek outline planning permission with Central Bedfordshire. The first meeting with the proposed partner took place on 12 April 2017 and it is anticipated that a project board will be established to manage the project. The project will continue into the 2017/2018 year.</p>
<p>Preparing and submitting a Local Plan which passes inspection and establishes areas in which sustainable development may take place in future</p>	<p>Prosper &amp; Protect</p>	<p>Planning &amp; Enterprise</p>	<p>Local Development Scheme (timetable for local Plan) approved by Full Council on 21 January 2016.</p> <p>Draft Local plan approved by Full Council</p> <p>Project Board instigated</p>	<p>July 2016</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>20 July 2016</p>		<p>Consultation on the proposed submission Local Plan took place from 19 October 2016, until 30 November 2016.</p> <p>Representations and consultation with key Duty to Co-operate partners remains ongoing. Report seeking a resolution to submit to the Secretary of State was approved by Full Council on 11 April 2017. Submission will follow as soon as is practicable, with May</p>

APPENDIX A


			Strategic direction of Local Plan endorsed by Full Council  Cabinet resolution to undertake public consultation	26 September 2016		2017 being the planned date. Milestone dates post submission are out of NHDC's control, as they are subject to the Planning Inspectorate's timetable. Therefore, the relevant due dates might change.
Progressing development opportunities in our town centres	Prosper & Protect	Planning & Enterprise	Strategic view of the town centres to be part of the Local Plan. Town Centre strategies to be updated following adoption of the local Plan	Post 2018		Strategic view of the town centres is part of the Local Plan. Town centre strategies to be updated following adoption of the Local Plan (post-2018).
Working with health partners to optimise opportunities for older people to remain living independently but well supported at home, and for children/young people to be offered opportunity to increase activity to prevent longer term ill-health	Responsive & Efficient	Housing & Env Health	Contribute to the update of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing strategy as appropriate.  Deliver and report progress against projects agreed for funding under the 'District Offer' Deliver and report progress against projects agreed for funding under Community Sport Activation Fund	April 2016  March 2017		Milestone complete.  All progress reports completed on time. Programme spans more than one financial year.  <b><u>District Offer</u></b> £200k of funding for public health projects, provided to NHDC by HCC. NHDC and local partners deliver projects, which have been approved by the North Herts Health and Wellbeing Partnership. Progress against the 11 projects running between April 15 and March 18 is monitored and reported quarterly to Public Health at HCC. <b><u>Community Sport Activation Fund (Get Active North Herts)</u></b> £250k grant from Sport England to support a £690k three-year 'Get Active North Herts'






**APPENDIX A**

						programme. Programme runs from January 2016 to December 2018 and NHDC and local partners deliver the projects. All 13 projects are ongoing for the three-year period and NHDC reports progress to Sport England every six months (June and December).
<b>Status – COMPLETE - 7</b>						
Grant funding organisations sharing in the delivery of our objectives	Attractive & Thriving	Community Engagement & Rural Affairs	Gain agreement of Cabinet of revised scheme  Make relevant changes to enable delivery Implement scheme	Dec 2016  April 2017		Cabinet approval June 2016 The new scheme is now live and it is available on the NHDC website. The Council has published a press release, which provides details of the scheme including the relevant qualification criteria. Membership of the panel has been finalised.
Implementing an Economic Development Strategy for the district, working closely in partnership to increase inward investment and business development opportunities	Prosper & Protect	Planning & Enterprise	Economic Development Officer (EDO) recruitment opportunities to be investigated. Currently this is being undertaken through a shared service arrangement with East Hertfordshire District Council  Economic Development Officer appointed 01 December 2016  Action Plan for delivery by EDO approved by Cabinet and actions commenced.	April 2016      On-going from 2016		Decision taken to recruit internally. Post holder already undertaking duties.    Delivery of the action plan is monitored via Portfolio Holder/Shadow Portfolio Holder briefings
Extending the Council's Careline	Responsive & Efficient	Housing & Env Health	Integration of the Hertfordshire Equipment Service (HES)	April 2016 for first range of		Product range has been increased. Mapping exercise and

**APPENDIX A**

<p>Service to ensure greater ability to remain living at home independently</p>			<p>assistive technology functions into Careline so as to significantly expand the range of telecare and telehealth services provided by the Council</p>	<p>new services</p>		<p>Systems review of the service completed by external consultant and signed off by HCC and NHDC on 11 July 2016 The Council now has an established relationship with the University of Hertfordshire. Collaboration has resulted in a number of joint bids for research funding for Assistive Technology, Disabled Facilities Grants and community support for dementia patients. Further development of the Careline service will be continued in 2017-18 as part of business as usual.</p>
<p>Progressing the delivery of competitive Building Control Services with six other Hertfordshire authorities following agreement of the business case</p>	<p>Responsive &amp; Efficient</p>	<p>Planning &amp; Enterprise</p>	<p>Current timescales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directors and shareholder representatives being discussed anticipated to be selected in March 2016;</li> <li>• Companies to be incorporated;</li> <li>• Initial communication to staff identifies 01 April 2016 as a probable TUPE date. TUPE process anticipated to commence in March 2016;</li> <li>• Staff TUPE process completed</li> <li>• IT procurement</li> </ul>	<p>April 2016</p> <p>15 August 2016</p> <p>January 2017</p>	<p></p>	<p>The migration of the seven individual building control databases into a new single IT system has commenced is required prior to the staff operating from two new hubs based in Hertsmere and Welwyn Hatfield council offices. Any further actions are solely the responsibility of the new company, although NHDC will be monitoring progress as an equal shareholder with the six other Hertfordshire local authorities.</p>

APPENDIX A

			<p>commencing 01 Feb, 01 April anticipated as appointment date for IT;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodation and support service providers identified.</li> <li>IT migration for first authority completed</li> </ul>			
<p>Exploring alternative options for effective and more efficient options for service delivery wherever possible, including through partnership, joint working or other models</p>	Responsive & Efficient	Various	Insurance & Risk Management shared service to be established with HCC	June 2016		Agreement reached on what elements will be delivered by HCC and what we will do in-house. This reflects available capacity, and the balance between on-the-ground knowledge and specialist expertise. We will continue to review with HCC how they provide the service to us (e.g. more efficient processes), to try and manage costs and also provide resilience.
<p>Delivering identified projects from the adopted Green Space Strategy</p>	Attractive & Thriving	Leisure	Serby Avenue Play area renovation £75,000, Royston	Throughout 2016/2017		Project Completed March 2017.
<p>Delivering identified projects from the adopted Green Space Strategy</p>	Attractive & Thriving	Leisure	Demolish 4 disused tennis courts and landscape to grass and planted area at Bancroft Recreation Ground, Hitchin £30,000	Throughout 2016/2017		Project Completed May 2016.

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
6 JUNE 2017**

**PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM No.**

**14**

**TITLE OF REPORT: TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S  
MANAGEMENT OF LARGER PROJECTS**

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The report of the Task and Finish Group on the Council's Handling of Larger Projects is attached for the Committee's consideration.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
- comment on and approve the Task and Finish Group's report and its recommendations at Appendix A; and
  - refer the report to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 25 July 2017.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To enable the Committee and Cabinet to consider the report of the Task and Finish Group.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The Task and Finish Group discussed the evidence it heard and reached the conclusions set out in the report.

**5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- 5.1 There was no formal consultation about the report. Five members of the public took part in the Task and Finish Group and their contributions have been included as part of the evidence.

## 6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

## 7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The Committee established this Task and Finish Group to consider how the Council manages its larger projects. The Task and Finish Group is obliged to report back to the Committee before the report can be sent to Cabinet.

## 8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the report of the Task and Finish Group which is attached at **Appendix A**. Its conclusions and recommendations are in section 1 of the report. The recommendations are reproduced in paragraph 8.2 below.

### 8.2 Recommendations

1. The Council needs to be more decisive about what it wants from larger projects and once it decides, it needs to get on with them.
  2. The Council should not introduce unnecessary complexity into its tenders because it is unclear about its preferred outcome. It should decide what it wants and then tender for it.
  3. The Council's financial information should be comprehensive and presented in the form of accounts so the extent of profits and losses can be easily understood.
  4. When exception reports are produced by project boards, they should be circulated to all members of Council through the Members' Information Service or by e mail.
  5. Projects are constrained by the resources that the Council has available. Planning a substantial project on the basis that part of it will be done in a member of staff's spare time allows no contingency. The Council should ensure that large projects are properly resourced.
  6. The Council needs to have clear, documented objectives before it embarks on projects.
  7. Large scale projects should have a champion to drive them forwards.
  8. The Council should be more flexible about membership of project boards
  9. The Council should improve its consultation and engagement with the public.
  10. The Council should not use the Competitive Dialogue process in future projects.
- 8.3 The report will be considered by the next but one meeting of Cabinet on 25 July because the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group will be away for its next meeting on 13 June.

- 8.4 The Committee decided some time ago that it will consider task and finish group reports without the Senior Management Team's comments. These will, however, accompany the final report to Cabinet.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Section 6.2.7 (u) of the Constitution allows the Committee "to appoint time limited task and finish Topic Groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet."

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no capital, revenue or other financial implications arising directly from this report. Proper resourcing of projects (Recommendation 5) could lead to some extra up front costs but these would likely be offset by avoiding the costs associated with overrunning projects.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There are no risk implications arising from the report.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to this report.

## **14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 There will be no impact on staff time as a result of this report.

## **15. APPENDICES**

- 15.1 Appendix A – Task and Finish Group Report on the Council's Management of Larger Projects

## **16. CONTACT OFFICERS**

- 16.1 Brendan Sullivan, Scrutiny Officer, 01462 474612;  
[Brendan.Sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:Brendan.Sullivan@north-herts.gov.uk)

## **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 17.1 None

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**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Task and Finish Group Report**

**THE COUNCIL'S MANAGEMENT OF LARGER PROJECTS**

**May 2017**

Cllr Michael Weeks (Chair)  
Cllr Judi Billing  
Cllr Steve Jarvis  
Cllr Paul Marment  
Cllr Gerald Morris

**Contents**

1.	<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b>
2	Project Management in NHDC
3.	Churchgate
4.	Herts 7 Building Control
5.	District Council Offices Refurbishment
6.	Hitchin Swimming Centre
7.	North Herts Leisure Centre
8.	Baldock Town Centre Enhancement
9.	Fish Hill Square Royston Enhancement
10.	Public Participation
11.	Acknowledgements
Annex 1.	Scope

## 1. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 The Task and Finish Group's terms of reference were to review the effectiveness of the Council's management of its larger projects; and to suggest improvements for ongoing and future projects. The Group looked at seven projects of different types in a variety of locations. It was also briefed on the Council's project management arrangements.

1.2 This review did not consider the Hitchin Town Hall and Museum Project. This will be the subject of a separate task and finish group once the project is complete.

1.3 Some projects were clearly well managed and successful, namely the Baldock and Royston Town Centre Enhancement Projects and the Herts 7 Building Control Project. Others were successful in some ways but less so in others for the reasons discussed below.

1.4 Despite the Council's best efforts, not every venture may succeed and even those that do may have to travel a bumpy road to do so. There is no doubt that these projects were well intentioned and everyone concerned worked hard to make them a success. Many of the Council's senior officers worked evenings and weekends to make this happen. The suggested improvements below are not a criticism of their efforts, only some constructive pointers for the future.

### **Baldock Town Centre Enhancement**

1.5 This was a very successful project which originated from a time when town centres were a priority for the Council and it had funds available to improve them. The project was managed by Louise Symes and finished on time and within its £3.2 million budget. The scheme was successful in winning the Horticultural Landscape and Amenity Award 2009 under the Category Best Commercial Project.

1.6 There was much to admire about the project. It was very well planned, and the community engagement carried out by the designers BDP was excellent. An unattractive public space was transformed with commercial and community benefits. The materials used were of high quality obviating the need for lots of ongoing maintenance.

1.7 The project met all of its objectives except its desire to enhance the link between Tesco through the Memorial Gardens to the town. The Council had included this as a condition of Tesco's planning application for expanding the store but the scheme was subsequently dropped by Tesco. Although a relatively minor point in this project, the Group considered it was important the Council set objectives that were achievable and avoided those which we're not. This will be referred to again below.

### **Enhancement of Fish Hill Square in Royston**

1.8 This was a similar project in many ways to the Baldock Town Centre Enhancement, albeit on a smaller scale. Once again it was successfully managed by Louise Symes in conjunction with BDP and was completed on time and on budget. It did not cost the Council anything (except officer time) as its initial budget of £450,000 was funded entirely from the Government's Growth Area Fund. Hertfordshire County Council contributed a further £45,000 for additional drainage works to ameliorate the flooding problem in Church Lane.

1.9 Once again the Council and the designers BDP did an excellent job in planning the project and in consulting and engaging with the community. They were creative in getting local school students involved in the design of the sculpture; and engaging with local residents and businesses in the naming the square.

### District Council Offices (DCO) Refurbishment

1.10 This project is the latest part of a wider project to rationalise the Council's accommodation. The first phase was vacating Town Lodge in February 2011 with attendant revenue savings of £70,000. The next phase was the Council's purchase of the building itself for £3.6 million in December 2013 which generated a net revenue saving of £128,000 which is a return on investment of 3.5%.

1.11 With the purchase of the DCO complete, the Council needed to progress the next stage of the project. However, there followed a pause between the end of December 2013 through to the summer of 2015 when the Council seemed to be undecided about what to do next and the project lacked leadership. It clearly needed to do some essential maintenance which was outstanding from its time as a lessee but was uncertain whether to do just the bare minimum, or, if more than that, how much more. The project was drifting. The Council had not learnt its lesson from Churchgate and other projects. The longer a project is in the incubation stage and the more it overruns, the more likely it is to suffer from increased costs and other unforeseen problems.

1.12 The Council appointed Howard Crompton, Head of Revenues, Benefits and IT to get the project back on track. Howard has rescued and revitalised the project by first establishing and then clearly setting out the Council's options along with the costs and benefits of each. The Council made its choice but the delays and extra project specifications have added an extra £2.4 million to the budget which now stand at £5.9 million, including contingencies. It is less clear whether the return on investment (around 1.6%) for this phase of the project is adequate, although this has to be considered alongside the other, non financial benefits to the Council.

1.13 There are two lessons here. First, large projects need leaders throughout the entire term of the project to drive them forward, which will be discussed further below. Second, it is important that the Council makes decisions and gets on with implementing them. Construction industry inflation and mission creep can add significantly to allocated budgets. Long delays can result in the Council needing to find significantly more capital than it has planned for.

**Recommendation 1: The Council needs to be more decisive about what it wants from larger projects and once it decides, it needs to get on with them.**

1.14 The tender exercise gave construction companies the opportunity to bid for the work but ultimately the complexity of the tender package and specialist nature of parts of the renovation meant there were no bidders. This caused a short delay to the work but did allow the Council to employ a local firm which will have many benefits to the local area. While it is inevitable some tenders will be complex, the Council should not include more options in its tenders than are necessary simply because it is unclear about its preferred outcome. Doing so increases the tenderers' costs (which will be reflected in the price) and can dissuade companies from submitting a bid. The group made a similar observation on the Churchgate project.

**Recommendation 2: The Council should not introduce unnecessary complexity into its tenders because it is unclear about its preferred outcome. It should decide what it wants and then tender for it.**

### Hitchin Swimming Centre

1.15 Leisure facilities are one of the Council's successes. This project involved providing multi functional rooms required for classes to meet rising demand and replacing the aging indoor pool changing rooms with a changing village. The Council succeeded in its objective of updating and expanding an existing facility to meet local demand. The final spend was £1.859 million coming in under the final agreed budget of £1.91 million.

1.16 The project's financial and membership benefits were less clear cut, and the Group considered that these may have been overstated. The Group did not believe the increase in membership claimed by the Council could be attributed solely to the project as membership had risen to 2755 even before work began. Membership has continued to rise since the project's completion but it is not clear how much of this is due to the extra capacity and improved facilities as opposed to the growing fitness and gym market.

1.17 The same is true for the financial benefits. The project and the related contract extensions improved the Council's annual payment position with the operator Stevenage Leisure Ltd (SLL) by £163,000 annually. However the Council does not explain that it had a significantly adverse effect on the Council's income from its profit sharing scheme with SLL which was £110,000 in 2013/4, making the overall return on investment much smaller than stated.

1.18 The Council has a tendency to be selective about the financial information it presents and tends to present it as a narrative, with or without supporting tables. It would be better if complex financial information was presented in the form of accounts so that readers can see all of the relevant spending and income associated with projects.

**Recommendation 3: The Council's financial information should be comprehensive and presented in the form of accounts so the extent of profits and losses can be easily understood.**

### North Herts Leisure Centre

1.19 The Council agreed a capital budget of £3.136 million to improve the aging leisure centre in a number of ways including a new teaching pool, a new cafeteria, refurbishment of the sports hall and leisure pool changing rooms and more. There was a good financial case for doing so. Once the facility had been completed the Council would receive an extra £18,398 a month (£220,776 a year) from Stevenage Leisure Ltd which runs the facility on behalf of the Council.

1.20 The project was originally scheduled to finish in April 2016 but is now scheduled to finish in June 2017 due to delays in starting work and unexpected problems during the construction. The delay in opening of 15.5 months has cost the Council £285,000 in lost revenue. Capital costs have overrun by £445,000 to date consisting of £317,300 pre-commencement costs and £128,000 after work started due to unidentified drainage and cabling work.

1.21 The Group heard that projects such as these have milestones and tolerances which are closely monitored by the project manager and the project board, with Cabinet receiving exception reports. It is important that all members of the Council are aware at an early stage if there are problems with projects and it would be useful if exception reports had a wider distribution.

**Recommendation 4: When exception reports are produced by project boards, they should be circulated to all members of Council through the Members' Information Service or by e mail.**

1.22 There was also an underlying sense that officers' time was stretched between this and other areas of work and that this may have contributed to the delays. Evening and weekend working was a feature of many of the projects seen by the Group. It is not satisfactory for the officer leading a major project in an area outside their main job responsibilities to be required to do in the evenings and at weekends.

**Recommendation 5: Projects are constrained by the resources that the Council has available. Planning a substantial project on the basis that part of it will be done in a member of staff's spare time allows no contingency. The Council should ensure that large projects are properly resourced.**

### **Herts 7 Building Control Project**

1.23 This project was a collaborative arrangement combining the building control departments of NHDC and six other Hertfordshire Councils into a new company. The new arrangement is intended to bring improved services and commercial benefits to the authorities. The review only examined the first phase of the project which was the establishment of the new company.

1.24 This was a successful project managed by Ian Fullstone, Head of Development and Building Control. This project demonstrates that projects can be managed and led in house where the project manager has the knowledge, skills and time to do so. The Group was impressed by the quality of the business case which enabled the Council to take a decision to proceed with a high degree of confidence. The project's management has been particularly impressive given the need to coordinate seven different local authorities and get the agreement of their political leaders.

### **Churchgate**

1.25 The Churchgate project developed from the Council's Hitchin Town Centre Strategy. Like the Baldock and Royston projects, it was conceived in an era when town centres were a priority for the Council. Unlike these projects, it was conceived on a much larger scale with the aim of redeveloping an area of the town centre and bringing significant investment into Hitchin.

1.26 Despite preliminary expenditure of more than £1 million and the best efforts of officers and members alike over many years, it was never realised due to a combination of factors which include bad timing, lack of commercial viability, local opposition and more. While acknowledging that external factors played a central role in the project's demise, there are some areas where the Group considered the Council could have handled the project better.

1.27 First, the Group considered that the Council was never clear about its objectives for Churchgate. The Council produced a planning brief which set out some broad outcomes without giving specifics. It hoped to attract developers who would use their expertise to produce a scheme for them. This was also a feature of the DCO refurbishment project where the Council produced a complex tender that attracted no bidders.

**Recommendation 6: The Council needs to have clear, documented objectives before it embarks on projects.**

OSC (06.06.17)

1.28 Churchgate was a large, complex project which affected many conservation, community and business groups as well as the current lease holder. Such projects need strong leadership in order to drive them forward in the face of the inevitable obstacles which accompany any large scale redevelopment. There was a sense that the Churchgate project lacked both vision and leadership at times, and progressed as a series of bureaucratic exercises conducted by a Council more focused on processes rather than outcomes.

1.29 The Council has limited funds so employing outsiders is not always feasible, nor is it necessary if the right person is available in house. But for projects on this scale a champion, either internal or external, is needed.

**Recommendation 7: Large scale projects should have a champion to drive them forwards.**

1.30 Project Boards need to have the right mix of skills with an appropriate number of members. The Churchgate Project Board's membership was rather top heavy with senior Cabinet members and it could have benefited from wider, backbench experience.

**Recommendation 8: The Council should be more flexible about membership of project boards**

1.31 The Churchgate project's progress was slow. It is hard to pinpoint when the preliminary work on the project actually began. Timing and momentum can be important factors in projects. The project's slow progress meant that it missed its best window of opportunity and got caught up in the fallout from the Roanne legal case in 2007 and the economic downturn in 2008. The latter, in particular, reduced its chances of success. As has been pointed out earlier, it is important for the Council to be decisive about what it wants and then get on with it.

1.32 The project was criticised at every stage of the process by the public, conservation groups and other stakeholders. The Council did make genuine efforts at consultation, but officers themselves acknowledged that their efforts had not been successful. Those members of the public who spoke about Churchgate were clear that this was a shortcoming. However, this does not always have to be the case. The Baldock and Royston town centre enhancement projects were both excellent and creative examples of public engagement and consultation by the Council and its designers BDP, and the Council would do well to examine the features of these projects and learn from them.

**Recommendation 9: The Council should improve its consultation and engagement with the public.**

1.33 The Council's decision to use a confidential competitive dialogue tender process was costly to the Council and developers alike, and fuelled suspicion about the Council's motives. It was unsuitable for a sensitive development like Churchgate should not be used again.

**Recommendation 10: The Council should not use the Competitive Dialogue process in future projects.**

## 2. PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN NHDC

2.1 Ian Couper, Head of Finance, Performance and Asset Management, explained the basis of the Council's approach to project management.

2.2 The Council used a framework called PRINCE2 (Projects in a Controlled Environment version 2) which was the industry standard. The Council had a number of PRINCE2 qualified officers listed on the intranet to manage projects and were available for advice for those project managers who were not PRINCE2 qualified.

2.3 PRINCE2 was used flexibly depending on the size of the project, with the Council using a simpler version for smaller projects. The aim of the framework was to try and ensure that NHDC makes best use of available project management resources and also is aware of its capacity to deliver projects. Learning from experience is a key component at both the start and end of each project. The framework takes account of the additional complexity that partnership working adds to project management. The six stages of the project management process are set out below.

### Stage1: Trigger

2.4 The Project Mandate is a request to provide a solution to a business need. A weighted scoring grid is used to determine categorisation and includes factors such as the projects' expected costs, timescales, risks, interested parties, proposed project team and contribution to corporate priorities. Projects are categorised as Major, Medium or Small; and this categorisation determines how the project will be managed.

### Stage 2: Start up

- 2.5 The project's personnel are fully determined at this stage. The project roles are:
- **Project Manager** - Responsible for day-to-day delivery and reporting (as appropriate) to Project Board. The allocation of this role will need to reflect experience and capacity.
  - **Project Executive** - The Project Executive is ultimately responsible for the project and every project must have one. They 'own' the business case. This person must have appropriate responsibility and ability to make decisions and commit funding. Therefore they will generally be a Head of Service or above. They are appointed by Corporate Board, and could involve a recommendation to Cabinet.
  - **The Project Board** provides overall management and direction, as well as making decisions. The Project Executive is involved in determining membership of the Project Board which should contain the skills required for the project and reflect any cross-service involvement. This should include Senior Users and Senior Suppliers.
    - Senior Users - represent the final users of the project. They ensure that the project is planned and delivered so that it delivers quality, functionality and ease of use.
    - Senior Suppliers – are responsible for the quality of the products delivered and represent the interests of those designing, developing, procuring, implementing and operating/maintaining the project products.

2.6 The Project Board is responsible for delivering the Project Mandate. It does this by approving the completion of key project stages, authorising the start of subsequent stages, authorises any major deviations from agreed plans, is responsible for disseminating information about the project and is ultimately responsible for Project Assurance. Councillors



may be appointed to a Project Board, subject to agreement by the Leader of the Council, for projects that are high risk or have a high profile, usually in the role of Senior Users.

2.7 Project Assurance is about making sure the project sticks to the Business Case; remains viable and stays within scope; remains focused on the business need; and that the project and its anticipated benefits remain in line with the Council's priorities. It makes sure the right people are involved throughout the life of the project and provides independent assurance to the Project Board on the integrity of the project.

2.8 The Project Board is accountable for it. It can be delegated, but not to the Project Manager. Existing corporate groups can carry out Project Assurance roles, such as the Asset Management Group and Risk Management Group as well as committees and individual officers with PRINCE2 training.

2.9 The Project Manager should review the lessons learned generally and from similar projects. These should then be built in to subsequent documents e.g. the Draft Business Case.

2.10 The Project Brief is made up of the Product Description and Draft Business Case. It draws out the importance of knowing what you want to achieve, considering the balance between benefits and cost/ effort/ risk. It needs to try and be realistic, but this can be very difficult at such an early stage. This is why the ongoing role of the Project Board is important. The Project Board approves the Brief to move it on to the next stage.

### Stage 3: Initiation

2.11 The Project Initiation Document is produced at this stage, which seeks approval from the Project Board to commence delivery. The Project Initiation Document is made up of a number of elements set out below.

2.12 The first of these is **understanding the project's communication requirements**. The Project Manager should discuss with the Project Board what information they require, and when; and what information other stakeholders need, and agree content, frequency and method. The aim is to avoid misunderstandings at a later stage. The project categorisation needs to be reflected, especially for small projects where the level of communication should remain proportionate.

2.13 There should be a **Benefits Review Plan**. This is about planning how you will know if the project has been a success. The plan should consider

- Identifying the benefits and relevant objective measures of achievement
- Establishing baseline data, against which it will compare improvements
- Deciding how and when it will measure benefits, including who will be responsible for doing this (usually the customer/user for post-project reviews). It is likely that reviews will fall after the project is complete. It should therefore be separate from the Business Case so that it remains live after completion.

2.14 **Project Tolerances** are necessary in order for the Project Board to manage by exception effectively, it does not want the Project Manager reporting every minor deviation from the Project Plan. Equally, the Project Board does not want the project to overspend or overrun significantly without warning. The margins relating to the size of deviation from the Project Plan that are acceptable without the need for a Project Board decision are known as project tolerances. The two main elements of project tolerance are **cost and time**. In addition, there are a further four elements that may apply to any specific project: benefits, quality, risk and scope. The Project Board should agree relevant tolerance levels at this

stage, and may wish to revisit them later on depending on the balance of information they are getting.

2.15 **Change control** covers proposed modifications to a project product's baseline specification. Changes are inevitable during the life of the project. If there is no control over these changes, it greatly reduces the chances of completing the project on schedule and within budget and to the customer's expectations. The Project Board should establish who is responsible for approving or rejecting requests for change during Project Initiation. The level of authority required may vary depending on the nature and scale of the change, as it is important to protect the Project Board from having to make decisions on minor matters and to reduce the need for formal documentation as much as possible. The Project Team should not implement any changes outside of the agreed authorisation regime.

2.16 **Risk** is assessed using the Council's standard risk assessment which is:

- Identification. Thinking through what the risks could be.
- Assessment- the impact that they will have if they were to happen. This can reflect levels of personal injury, reputation, financial loss, service delivery, delays to projects. Categorised as Low, Medium or High.
- Probability- what are the chances that it will happen. From unlikely to happen even once to could happen a number of times. Categorised as Low, Medium or High.

These are combined to map the risk on a risk matrix. If the impact or probability is high, risk mitigation needs to be considered.

#### Stage 4: Delivery

2.17 There are a number of tools to help ensure the project is on track.

- **Highlight reports**, which will include issues and risk log updates.
- **Exception Report.** If the Project Manager forecasts that any part of the Project Plan will end outside of the agreed tolerance margins, they must produce an Exception Report and present it to the Project Board immediately. The Project Manager should not wait for the project to exceed these tolerances before taking action, but should forecast whether this is going to be the case. This allows the Project Board time to react and potentially prevent or reduce the exception. The Exception Report should detail the problem and its cause, the consequences of the deviation, the options available and provide a recommendation on how to proceed.
- **Project Tolerances** Throughout the life of the project, the Project Board should confirm tolerance levels for individual stages, based on the content of Highlight Reports and as part of its authority to proceed. For larger projects, the Project Manager may wish to negotiate appropriate tolerances for detailed activities with members of the Project Team, based on the margins agreed for the overall project.

2.18 Requests for change are likely to come from entries on the Issues Log. If after conducting an impact analysis, the change needs to be authorised by the Project Board, the Project Manager should complete a Change Control Report. If the Project Manager or a Project Team member is able to authorise the change, the Project Manager should record the decision on the Issues Log and report it to the Project Board as part of the next Highlight Report. The Change Control Report should set out details of the change and request a decision from the Project Board on how to proceed. The Project Manager should subsequently record details of the Project Board decision at the end of the report and summarise these details on the Issues Log, prior to implementation.

A good audit trail of decision-making and accountability is vital to successful project management and the Project Manager should ensure that they maintain evidence of the Change Control process.

Stage 5: Closure

2.19 When the project is completed, the Project Executive needs to sign it off the **End Project Report** on behalf of the Project Board and release the Project Team from their responsibilities. This requires the Project Manager to produce an End Project Report, as part of Project Closure, which they present to the Project Board. The End Project Report sets out how the project performed against the original Project Initiation Documentation. It should answer the following questions:

- How effectively were the needs that led to the project understood?
- How effective was the project scope?
- Has the project delivered all required products?
- What benefits have been achieved already?
- What benefits are due to be achieved post implementation?
- How effective was the Project Team's performance?
- How realistic was the original Project Plan, in terms of budget, resources and timescales?
- Did any unexpected risks or opportunities become known during the project?
- What key lessons were learned that might benefit other projects?
- The Project Manager should derive the content of the End Project Report from the various documents that were completed at each stage.

2.20 The Project Manager should retain the completed and signed off End Project Report in the project file. They should also forward a copy to the Performance and Risk Management Team, who will collate this in to a log of unexpected risks and Lessons Learned across all NHDC projects. This is published on the Intranet.

Stage 6: Evaluation

2.21 This happens after the project as may take time to fully see the impact. The Project Manager schedules a Post Implementation Review. The review should use the Benefits Review Plan, which was created for this purpose. The Project Manager should choose a timescale relevant to the project's products and at this time, arrange to meet again with the Project Team, the Project Board and the appropriate end users to review the project. The main purpose is to review the project's products in operational use and identify further Lessons Learned, both of which may be useful for future projects.

**3. CHURCHGATE**

3.1 Norma Atlay, Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance made a presentation to the Group on the project.

**Project Background**

3.2 Norma said the Churchgate was a series of related sub-projects consisting of NHDC's Town Centre Strategy for Hitchin; the Council's Planning Brief which was developed as a consequence of that; a procurement exercise; a Development Agreement with Simons; and associated work with Hammersmatch who were the owners of Churchgate.

3.3 Anthony Roche, now the Council's Corporate Legal Manager and Monitoring Officer but then a solicitor, was the Project Manager for the procurement stages. Louise Symes, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager became the project manager once Simons were appointed.

3.4 The history of the Churchgate project was reported in detail to Council in January 2013. The main stages are set out below.

June 79	Council opted not to acquire the head lease of the Churchgate Centre
Nov 86	The Council instigated a review of town centre policies in its Local Plan
July 1993	Local Plan No.2 was adopted identifying that for Biggin Lane, Churchgate, Market, St Mary's and Portmill Lane East car park "an opportunity exists for the development of the whole area ...to provide for mixed retail, commercial and other town centre uses..."
April 2000	Churchgate Area Working Party (CAWP) established
June 2000	"It was agreed that although there was an emphasis on moving quickly they did not want to rush into any agreement too quickly if it proved not to be in the best interests of the townspeople of Hitchin." CAWP
2001	Hammersmatch became the owner of Churchgate

3.5 Norma said it took four years to agree the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy. The draft planning brief included all 5 areas for possible development. Following pressure from local Hitchin Groups, the brief was changed to immediate development of sites A1 to A3 with recognition that sites A4 and A5 would be developed "within the next 15 years"

November 2004	The Hitchin Town Centre Strategy was adopted and this led to a project to develop the planning brief for the area
November 2005	The planning brief for Churchgate development area was adopted. £400k of costs had been incurred by NHDC in its capacity as landlord/owner and planning authority.
December 2006	Hammersmatch queries the viability of only developing sites A1 to A3
2007	Council sought expert external commercial advice from DTZ on Hammersmatch's view
Spring/Summer 2007	Threat from a local developer of judicial review of any Council decision to enter into a transaction with Hammersmatch without an open competition
Sept 2007	Decision to invite prospective developers to submit proposals for the redevelopment of the Churchgate shopping centre and surrounding area

3.6 The Roanne case led to a ruling by the European Court of Justice in 2007 that a deal signed between the municipal council of Roanne and a developer for urban development, as far as the authority's requirements went, was a public works contract and should have followed European public procurement rules.

3.7 The ruling meant the Council's marketing exercise had to be halted and other Councils were similarly affected. The Council sought external legal advice from Eversheds on its procurement options resulting in the Council adopting a competitive dialogue process for Churchgate. This was thought, by the external professional advisers, to be the best

method to progress such a complex development as it allowed developers who were the experts in the field to suggest a solution.

3.8 In seeking a developer, the Council set out its key objectives for the project under five headings: quality and design; viability; financial return; commerciality and delivery programme. The Council set high level objectives to allow developers to use their expertise to produce best design for the area.

May 2008	The competitive dialogue process commenced with the publication of the OJEU notice
Feb 2010	The contract awarded to Simons Developments (Recorded vote 31 for, 2 Against, 1 Abstention)
	Costs incurred during the procurement process £588K with the largest elements being Legal property & Procurement advice - £289k Specialist property development advice -£292k
Feb 2010	Future governance arrangements for the project agreed by Council and the Churchgate Project Board; and the Churchgate Liaison Forum established
March 2010	Development Agreement with Simons signed. It required regular updates on financial viability. The first cut off date was 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2013
June 2010	DTZ produced Post implementation review of procurement process

3.9 In January 2013, Simons requested additional time to produce a proposal. They said the economic climate following the economic downturn between 2008 and 2013 had affected the project's viability and there was a funding gap in the project. Council considered Simons' request and passed a resolution to reject it. In March 2013, the Council sent Simons a letter formally terminating the Development Agreement.

3.10 In July 2013, Hammersmatch made a presentation to Council suggesting that they could deliver a scheme in the short term which could be completed and open for business around Christmas 2015. Council decided to continue its dialogue with Hammersmatch and other interested developers; and await the outcome of the Local Plan before re-considering its approach.

July 2014	Council received a report on discussions with interested parties
July 2015	Hammersmatch granted exclusivity in order to give them confidence to invest resources to progress their ideas for a scheme. Ultimately Hammersmatch concluded their scheme was not viable.
January 2016	Council decides that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work on the Churchgate Project should cease; and</li> <li>• the possibility of acquiring the Churchgate Centre be explored, subject to further consideration of the commercial case for so doing at a future meeting of the Council.</li> </ul>

3.11 The TFG had raised a number of issues in advance of the meeting and Norma Atlay addressed these in turn.

#### **Was this project a wise choice?**

3.12 Norma questioned whether Churchgate really was a single project. In her view there were a number of different strands combined under the heading of “the Churchgate project”:

- Regeneration - the project was more akin to a regeneration scheme in which the Council had a role in what would ultimately become a partner’s project.
- Asset Management – this was a development opportunity for which a high level outcome was being sought rather than a project fully specified by the Council.
- Planning brief – the original flexibility in the draft planning brief to cover all areas A1-A5 was curtailed.
- Procurement – Members recognised the need to build flexibility in to the development opportunity following advice from DTZ

#### **Were reports to Members objective?**

3.13 Norma said they were. Officers sought to provide the pros and cons of options in an objective manner. They sought independent professional advice as appropriate, bearing in mind the cost of doing so. They endured public criticism for being negative when they sought to provide a context for their comments and advice.

#### **Spending Priorities**

3.14 Norma said the key point was that the project was a regeneration opportunity born from the Town Centre Strategy and the then Council priority of Town Centres. It was almost incidental that the Council was the land-owner. It was not designed as a project to generate income for the Council although it did seek to protect the Council’s current income, and incidental benefits would have arisen from car parking income, business rates income and new homes bonus.

#### **Staff Time**

3.15 Norma said Council projects are factored into officer workloads as part of the service planning process. Officers have to balance the many conflicting demands on their time. The time required may, however, increase where there is significant public and Member interest. The timescale for this project coincided with publicity around Localism Act which meant that a vocal public minority was seeking to change a Council decision.

#### **Interactions with other projects**

3.16 Norma said the Council had an ambitious programme which was prioritised against a backdrop of reducing staff resources. Buying in external expertise can help although experts would require management and support from the Council. Officers continually manage time across a range of projects so there was no direct impact on either the Local Plan or the shared services project.

#### **Value for Money**

3.17 Norma said the use of experts was subject to a tender exercise. The deal with Simons was based on an external expert’s view of what the market required at that stage. The terms offered were consistent with other schemes at that time. The timing of the scheme, which coincided with the banking and funding crisis, was a key consideration.

#### **Accountability**

3.18 Norma said clear reporting lines were established at the outset. Delivery against decisions was reported back to Council. Project documentation was available on website with as few redactions as possible. The Churchgate Liaison Forum was established to provide public input into the development of Simons’ proposal.

### Information and Visibility

3.19 Norma said a flaw of the Competitive Dialogue Procurement process was that it required all discussion leading to the award of contract to be totally confidential. Once those discussions were complete, everything was put in the public domain. The Council needed to have the time and space to discuss things confidentially and then to make decisions. The public sought a level of transparency that would mean that the Council was trying to negotiate with all its cards on the table. There was something of a culture clash between the commercial approach and the usual Council service approach.

### Lessons Learned: DTZ Review

3.20 In June 2010, Cabinet received a report from DTZ which had conducted a post implementation review of the procurement process. It concluded:

*“The prime objective of the procurement process was to appoint a development partner. Clearly this objective has been met”*

*“The process was undertaken during unprecedented times in the development market and followed a previous process for the town centre that had to be cancelled due to the infamous “Roanne” ruling. A large number of other projects have either stalled or effectively been “shelved” due to these issues and in that context the award of the contract should be seen in a very positive light as one of very few schemes to reach this point in the current cycle”*

### Lessons Learned by the Council

3.21 Norma said that the Council had a post-project protocol to review and record the lessons learnt under a number of headings. This had been circulated to the TFG and included:

- Project team continuity and increased knowledge of participants
- Procurement lessons
- Need for policy flexibility to cope with changing external/internal influences
- Reports identifying the options and outcomes
- Taking tough decisions
- Clarity on what the Council defines as a “Council Project”
- Development of a policy to manage internal conflicts of interest

### Discussion

3.22 Members said that secrecy was one of the main criticisms directed at the Council. Cllr Steve Jarvis said the competitive dialogue process with its confidentiality requirements was not an appropriate one for a local authority and officers acknowledged this disadvantage. Anthony Roche said the Council took external expert legal and development advice in 2008 and that the competitive dialogue process was recommended as the most suitable one for the circumstances. In practice it was costly, time-consuming, proved unpopular with developers and its confidentiality was unpopular with the public. With hindsight, the Council probably wouldn't use it again. By 2011 the same external experts were giving different advice as to the process to use for such opportunities and the Council hasn't used the competitive dialogue process since.

3.23 Cllr Jarvis said it was not clear what the Council was ever trying to achieve with the Churchgate project. There was not a clear enough set of objectives. The brief set out the broad outcomes without giving specifics, which would be expensive for bidders. The Council could have decided what it wanted and then tendered for it.

3.24 Anthony Roche said the Council could have been either more or less prescriptive about its requirements. He said the planning brief was so tightly drawn it provided little flexibility. Other options had been explored such as a joint venture and the Council reaching its own view of what was needed. This could have included selling the land. Anthony said there were many points when different decisions could have been made which might have led to different outcomes. This is of course viewed with the benefit of hindsight, as the decisions were taken by Members with the best of intentions at the time.

3.25 The planning brief was in some ways too specific and sought too many things such as a walkway by the River Hiz, car parking and other things which would be costly to implement without necessarily generating much income.

3.26 In terms of the cost of the process the Council checked that Simons was still giving value for money throughout the process. There was also another bidder deep in the process. Cllr Jarvis said this second bidder must have doubted whether the project was viable. He said the Council could have put the project on hold for a year or so to decrease costs.

3.27 Anthony Roche said that the downturn was very severe after the banking crisis hit. The Council had already spent £588,000 on external advice and other necessary preliminary work. These costs were inflated by a longer than expected competitive dialogue process which lasted 20 months instead of 12 months. This increased the costs of external advisors. The bidders sought to minimise their costs which meant that Eversheds ended up doing most of the drafting of agreements which the Council ultimately paid for. The second bidder did not leave the process over viability concerns. The bidders, and the Council's professional advisers, viewed positives in planning developments during a downturn which could then be delivered as the economy improved. The issue was the downturn was more severe and lasted longer than anyone predicted.

3.28 Cllr Judi Billing asked whether the decision to keep going was affected by involvement of Councillors at the project board or working party level. The working party was, in effect, the whole of Hitchin Committee. There was a danger that Members represented the views of their area not necessarily that of the Council as a whole. Anthony said the decision to award a contract was a political one (meaning one made by Councillors) and was made nearly unanimously by full Council.

3.29 Asked about his prior experience of project management, Anthony said this had been his first project and he had learnt a great deal from it. Louise Symes said she had been involved in the project since 2000 in the development of the planning briefs. She had also been involved in delivering the Baldock and Royston town centre enhancement projects. She was PRINCE2 trained and had experience in a different range of projects. Norma said she was involved in the town centre strategy work from the finance and asset management perspectives.

3.30 Anthony said he worked alongside DTZ who also had a Project Management function. The DTZ role was liaising with the developers and running the competitive dialogue. His role was coordinating activities and making sure that things happened. He monitored things on a daily basis to ensure compliance with the procurement requirements and to keep the project moving forward. This was possible because he didn't have an active caseload as a lawyer, having only just joined the Council at the time. Norma Atlay said she made a deliberate decision to use Anthony on the project because there was an opportunity to develop expertise in this area in the legal team and she was conscious of the Council shortage of expertise in this area. Anthony said he had spent more than 1,000 hours on the competitive dialogue process saving a considerable amount in external fees and other expenses.



3.31 Cllr Jarvis asked who decided if changes to the project plan were outside the project board's remit and asked about the process for deciding who should go back to Council if things went wrong. Norma said the Development Agreement set out the Council's requirements and it had milestones which the Council and its partner were managing against.

3.32 Cllr Jarvis said members didn't find out about the problems with Churchgate until late in the day. He asked when the Council needed to report exceptions. Anthony Roche said in future this might be an area the Council need to define better at the outset. Louise Symes said the risk log identified the risks.

3.33 The Scrutiny Officer Brendan Sullivan said there had been a task and finish group on project boards a few years previously which recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive exception reports. Cabinet had rejected the recommendation. Norma said that was because Cabinet and Council already received exception reports and there was no need to change this arrangement and add in an extra layer of reporting.

3.34 Anthony Roche said there had been a DTZ review of the procurement process. Members said it would have had more value if it had been conducted later on. Anthony said the Council had been criticised weekly for its handling of Churchgate and this had generated a lot of work for officers. In 2013 there were lots of press comments and criticism of the Council. Norma Atlay was mentioned in Private Eye and Anthony had been threatened with being reported to the Law Society. Simons held an exhibition as a means of engagement with the local community. Anthony said that of those who attended, there were more people against the project than in favour of it. The Council was conscious of community feeling.

3.35 Anthony said the Council had decided to deliver its town centre strategy. If Churchgate was being developed by private developer, they would still have to contend with this sort of environment. Cllr Gerald Morris said a private developer would make sure one person would be entrusted with the responsibility of the project, the budget, selling the project to the community and sticking to the timetable. The Council's over-reliance on systems seemed to deliver results by accident.

3.36 Officers noted that the approach the Council decided to take, in appointing a development partner, was that the developer had this lead role to deliver a development

3.37 Cllr Judi Billing said the Council should have been responsible for driving every aspect of the project instead of leaving it to external consultants to come up with a detailed proposal. The Council set up control points but still didn't have full control of the project or personnel. The planning briefs restricted creativity and prevented people from putting forward imaginative solutions, making it more difficult to find the best way forward. The Council didn't have the expertise for this type of project on this scale. There was friction with the local community.

3.38 Cllr Billing said the Council needed to show better leadership. She said the Council was a political organisation and the political leadership determines its success or failure. 20 years ago people were wary about changes to car parking in Hitchin Market Place but the governing Conservative group implemented those changes under the leadership of Geoff Woods and made it a success.

3.39 Norma said that members gave the policy direction at a time when town centres were a Council priority. It was not clear at the time which type of scheme had the greatest chance of success. Cllr Jarvis said the Council need to be clearer when things weren't going to work and call a halt to them much faster. Cllr Morris said if the project was not completed by 2008

before the crash, the Council should have halted the scheme. Anthony said a small scheme might have succeeded, but the adopted planning process was not flexible enough.

3.40 Norma said the scheme was not designed to generate income for the Council. It was meant to regenerate Hitchin town centre and bring in more than £50 million of investment to Hitchin. The Council also wanted to protect its existing income streams. In terms of staff time Norma said lots of staff time have been spent on the project but staff were accustomed to juggling their work priorities. Cllr Morris said a scheme of this size needed a proper project manager. Every large development has difficulties, but the difference is that successful ones have a champion driving them. Norma said employing an outside project manager was a luxury and the Council instead chose to identify a dedicated team of staff.

3.41 Members said there had been a lot of publicity about localism. When negotiations are confidential, how does the council report on them; and balance the need for confidentiality with the need for transparency and accountability? Anthony said the Churchgate Liaison Forum didn't work as intended. Simons met with local representatives and it turned into a public meeting with lots of heckling. It was set up with the best of intentions although it didn't work well for the Churchgate Project.

3.42 Members said the Council needed a way to explain the process to the community. Some people don't trust the council. Cllr Billing asked why there was so little trust between the Council and some people in Hitchin. Cllr Morris said this was a general problem with local government. As for the lessons learnt, Norma said the Council had gained a lot of knowledge, particularly the small group of officers who were involved in the project.

3.43 In terms of project management capacity, Norma said the Council conducted a maximum of four major projects at any one time, along with a number of smaller ones. Members questioned whether this was still viable for an organisation of this size with its current level of resources.

3.44 As for lessons learnt, the Council now had an internal Conflict of Interest Policy. This would cover situations like, for example, when the Council needed planning advice from its planning department but a project might also need a planning decision from the same department.

#### **4. HERTS 7 BUILDING CONTROL PROJECT**

4.1 Ian Fullstone, Head of Development and Building Control spoke to the briefing which had been circulated only to members of the Task and Finish Group as it contained confidential material of a commercially sensitive nature.

4.2 Ian said that building control was a statutory function for local authorities which had been opened up to private sector competition since the mid 1990s. Local authority building control departments could only operate fully within their administrative boundaries. Competition from the private sector on service delivery was around their ability to work Countrywide with no administrative boundaries, the private sector was also able to offer better pay and reward packages making recruitment and retention of local authority staff very difficult. Neither was competition on a level playing field as private operators were not required to publish their fee structure and could therefore offer their service by undercutting a council's published fees, anecdotal evidence suggested this would be by about 10%.

4.3 The key points of building control services in Hertfordshire were:

- The majority of Hertfordshire's Building Control Services were are run at a cost to their General Funds;

osc (06.06.17)

- As a result of recruitment and retention problems Councils find it difficult to market their services and attract commercial clients and are struggling to maintain their client base in competition with private operators;
- It was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and maintain qualified and experienced staff. Most Hertfordshire authorities had small, ageing building control teams which lacked resilience;
- It was increasingly difficult to run services effectively with current resources and overheads;
- Despite their difficulties, Hertfordshire's local authority building control was still attracting a healthy fee income and were trusted by their local population.

4.4 Ian said he was the Project Manager for the Herts 7 Building Control Project. This was a collaborative arrangement involving seven councils: NHDC, Stevenage, Welwyn Hatfield, Broxbourne, Three Rivers, East Hertfordshire and Hertsmere.

4.5 The project was first considered by the Chief Executives Group in 2013, progressed with East of England Local Government Association support in 2014, to a point where in August 2016, NHDC's staff were transferred to the new company.

4.6 The new arrangement for delivering building control services was made up of three wholly owned local authority companies limited by shares. Each authority has an equal share and equal voting rights through shareholder representatives, directors and contract managers. The companies are:

- Broste Rivers Ltd which is the parent holding company;
- Broste Rivers LA7 Ltd, now trading as Hertfordshire Building Control, which will undertake the not for profit statutory building control work on behalf of the 7 LAs. This includes fee earning (application based) and non-fee earning (dangerous structures, demolitions etc.) work;
- Broste Rivers H7 Ltd, to be known as Rapport will undertake commercial (for profit) building control related functions within and outside of the administrative boundary of the 7 LAs.

4.7 The potential service benefits from the collaborative arrangement were identified as:

- Improved service resilience;
- Improved economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- Improved customer service;
- Increased ability to retain, develop and recruit staff and thus improve service quality;
- Provision of a broader service offer to customers.

4.8 The potential commercial benefits of collaboration were:

- Councils using existing skills and expertise to access new fee earning work in both new and existing areas to increase financial benefits;
- Collective investment in enabling technologies and business development capacity which would not be possible on an individual basis;
- The opportunity to stem the long term decline of building control services and share the resulting efficiency gains; and for H7 to trade commercially and return profits to local authorities who were the share holders.

4.9 The Company's staff will initially be based in two hubs: one in Hertsmere, the other in Welwyn Garden City. Two hubs were chosen as a result of staff feedback. Most support staff were local, tended to be lower paid and travelling long distances to work would not have been easy for them. The specialist support services e.g. payroll, legal, IT etc. for the company would initially be provided by individual local authorities. After two years of operation, the company can review the position and choose different providers if it wishes to.

osc (06.06.17)

4.10 Hertfordshire Building Control would employ around 37 staff, and Ian was one of the company directors. A managing director would be appointed who will be recruited through an outside recruitment agency. Since the T&F Group the MD has been appointed and the new company is migrating the seven building control databases onto its new single IT system, this is expected to be completed by May 2017.

4.11 Councillor Morris asked whether the company could go bust and Ian said theoretically it could if there was insufficient funds in its accounts. However, the business model identified significant growth opportunities and the seven local authorities had undertaken too provide a loan to enable the company to start up.. If the company was wound up, given the statutory duty the staff would return to their parent local authorities.

4.12 As for the other options, the council could have shared its building control service with another authority or tried to carry on alone, but these would not have overcome the over-arching resilience issues The collaboration had been a very challenging process. Ian had written the business plan which was accepted by all seven councils with only a few questions on the financial model from the group accountants. All seven councils adopted the business plan, and the Project Board was supported by an external consultant. The project board was made up of the seven chief executives or their deputies along with a representative from the East of England LGA.

4.13 The project had led to Ian working evenings and weekends. At the same time the day job needed to continue. While officers were best place to start the process, they needed the time and capacity to do so. Ian said that the project could have gone ahead with only 4 or 5 local authorities and been completed faster but it was decided by the Project Board to spend longer to ensure all 7 went forward . There had been some interruption to the continuity of the project for example when there were Executive Member changes at Welwyn Hatfield District Council which meant that parts of the process had to be revisited.

4.14 As for his experience running projects, Ian said NHDC's Building Control Service was already commercially orientated due to the private sector competition and Local Authority building control work having to secure sufficient work to break even at the end of the year. Asked about problems, Ian said that there were seven local authorities with their own staff, each had their own personal and professional concerns that needed to be considered as part of the TUPE process. For some staff if they were local to the existing offices the challenges were practical concerns like picking up children. For other staff it was concerns around a new way of working, some staff though saw this is an opportunity to access new areas of work and develop themselves.

4.15 The seven Hertfordshire authorities were the first to form a company limited by shares to undertake the building control function. Whilst expert legal advice was engaged, it was appropriate for officers with experience of building control to get the project off the ground.

4.16 Asked about whether Council should employ professional project managers, Ian said that in his opinion NHDC officers had the necessary expertise to begin projects such as this with the necessary expert advice sought as required. Steve Jarvis asked whether the seven were clear about the objectives, as each authority had its own priority which might be more resilience, more income or something else. Ian said that each authority had entered into the partnership for its own reasons but they would work to common objectives, this was all identified within the business plan.

4.17 As for doing anything differently, Ian said he wouldn't work weekends and evenings. He would find a way of doing the project while delegating more of the day job. He also said  
osc (06.06.17)

staff engagement could have been handled better. The council should have been more proactive with staff by giving them key messages much earlier.

4.18 Members said the project had been completed comparatively quickly, especially given the involvement of so many councils. There had been consultation with the public, but perhaps more would have been desirable in an ideal world. The quality of business case meant the Council could take a decision and stick to it, rather than the project proceeding through a series of small decisions and increments.

## 5. DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES (DCO) REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

5.1 Howard Crompton, the Head of Revenues, Benefits and IT said he had been in local government for more than 40 years. In 1988 he managed a major housing benefit change when all claims had to be recalculated using completely new rules. In 1989 there was more change with the implementation of the Community Charge and three years later, the Council Tax. Then there were all the welfare benefit changes that have taken place over the intervening years. In those days there was no such thing as PRINCE2, although projects were managed in a similar way with good will and good planning.

5.2 Howard said he was registered as a PRINCE2 practitioner in 2005. He first used it in an IT infrastructure change, working in a collaborative partnership with the supplier to change the way customers accessed services. In 2010 he became the project manager for the rationalisation of Council accommodation which required promoting home working to allow the Council to vacate Town Lodge. This brought the beginnings of a change in culture and working practices at the Council with more home working and hot desking. This part of the project was delivered on time and on budget although it had all been done on a shoestring and relied on great cooperation from all staff. The Council saved £70,000 moving from Town Lodge. When the lease on Town Lodge expires there will be more savings because NHDC will no longer have to make the building weather tight, pay insurance and other fixed costs. As for the DCO, the Council had a full repairing lease on it so it would have had to spend a significant amount bringing it up to standard even if it hadn't purchased it.

5.3 The main features and milestones were:

- 15/12/2009 Cabinet sets up a Project Board to firstly move all staff to the DCO from Town Lodge and then develop and implement a longer term plan for Office Accommodation
- Project Team began work in February 2010
- Required culture change to implement more home working
- Virtually no budget – had to be funded from existing budgets
- Lease extended from December 2011 to December 2016
- Town Lodge vacated February 2011 – Revenue saving £70K
- Andy Cavanagh took over as Project Manager for phase 2
- December 2013 Council agrees to purchase DCO

5.4 There have been changes to the designs leading up to an open tender process in the summer of 2016. However no bids had been submitted probably due to the complexity of the tender, which contained a number of options. The council then decided use a Scape framework agreement. Howard became involved again in March 2016 after Andy Cavanagh, the previous project manager had left. The Scape framework agreement promotes the use of local contractors as much as possible which has many benefits for the local economy. Willmott Dixon is the principal contractor.

5.5 The key milestones for the next phase were:

- December 2013 DCO purchased
- 2014 – Design phase Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) appointed as architects
- Planning Permission granted August 2015
- Planning and other enhancements included in the spec
- Summer 2016 - Open tender
- July 2016 Council agrees scope and budget
- July 2016 Decision taken to go with SCAPE Framework Agreement

5.6 The DCO was classified as a major project because it scored maximum points on the scoring matrix. Howard summarised the main features of the scheme and this can be found in the background papers. The project was being managed using Prince 2 methodology, but applied sensibly and proportionately. Howard said it was more cost effective for officers to manage the project rather than hire outsiders. They understood the organisation, and knew how to unlock problems.

5.7 The Project Executive is the Strategic Director Norma Atlay. The Senior User is the Executive Member for Finance and IT, Cllr Terry Hone. The Project Manager had been the Head of Finance, Performance & Asset Management, Andy Cavanagh until his departure, but was now Howard Crompton. The Project Board and Project Team were in place. The trigger, start up and initiation stages had been completed, and the project was now in the delivery stage.

### **State of Play in October 2016**

5.8 The project was now at the delivery stage. Following the Council meeting on 14 July 2016, there was now clarity about the scheme to be implemented and the budget the Council needed to deliver it. On 20 July 2016, the Project Board decided to enter into a SCAPE Framework Agreement.

5.9 Local contractors were being used, so money would filter back into the local economy. There was an open book process to ensure value for money. The decant of staff to Town Lodge would take place over five weekends beginning on 5/6 November. The contractors Willmott Dixon had completed the Feasibility Study. Willmott Dixon and NHDC had held a workshop to determine the exact requirements of the project. Willmott Dixon were tendering work packages at the moment (as at October 2016).

### **Future Work and timescales**

5.10 Howard said NHDC, Willmott Dixon and the suppliers would meet from November to January to agree prices within the allocated budget. Willmott Dixon would begin surveys and other preparatory work in early December. Strip out contractors would remove asbestos starting in January. The final price for the project would be agreed by end of January, and construction work would begin by March, and last for 35 weeks construction. The estimated return date to the DCO was November 2017.

### **Culture change**

5.11 Howard said the construction work was only one challenge. The refurbishment would require a significant culture change to enable a successful move to Town Lodge, with more home working and hot desking. It would take a good deal of co-operation from staff to make it happen. Further cultural changes would be needed when staff returned to the DCO, with fewer offices available and a more open plan work space, with informal break out areas. Staff would need to have more discipline around room bookings, clear desks and more; and there was an expectation of sharing the DCO with other organisations.

5.12 Once complete, the project would provide a modern, multi-functional building which would provide a wider range of services to the public, secure the value of the building as an asset, provide an income stream for the Council, secure Letchworth as a civic centre for the future and be a comfortable place to work in and visit, in a building providing some civic pride.

### Discussion

5.13 Howard said that Stevenage Borough Council were the Architects who had done the original design which went for planning permission. NHDC's planners wanted things added so the building had a more civic feel, and there had been a number of staff suggestions which were good and reasonable and so were included. When the Council went out to open tender it didn't have the authority to spend all the money required, and the tenders were very complex. There was a possible base scheme: and there were other options which might or might not be included. The package was unacceptable to contractors due to its complexity. It would have been a messy contract, with most contractors preferring to build a new building. Howard said replacing the curtain walling was difficult and there were now very few suppliers. Willmott Dixon will sub-contract the work and will remain in overall charge of the project. Howard said the budget was fixed, and the project had a 35 week timescale.

5.14 Cllr Jarvis said the Council had taken a long time to decide on the final project and there seemed to have been considerable mission creep. He asked about the difficulty in progressing it after the purchase of the DCO had been completed. Howard said it was difficult to comment as he hadn't been involved at the time. He wasn't sure how much pressure there was at the time but with hindsight it would have been better for the Council to have had a projected end date in mind. There was a pause in progress between the end of December 2013 through to the summer of 2015. When asked about whether the business case was up to date Howard said when he needed to update it he submitted a revised business case to the project board for approval. Asked about the visibility of project boards and transparency, Howard said there had been a number of reports to Cabinet and Council.

5.15 Cllr Ian Albert, substituting for Cllr Judi Billing, said that Willmott Dixon had worked on a school in Hitchin and had done a good job. Howard said the Council's own building surveyors were heavily involved. The Council also had other expertise like planning and building control involved. There was a Gantt chart produced by the surveyors and Willmott Dixon had done the same thing for the construction phase. Howard said the reality of being a senior officer in a small District Council was that you didn't work a 37 hour week. If the council employed a project manager at the cost £100,000 there would be £100,000 less to spend on construction. Furthermore the council already had the expertise to do the project in house.

5.16 The group asked whether the project would be successfully concluded on time. The Council was a small organisation with little backup and little resilience, and a lot depending on individuals. Outside help was very expensive. Howard said inside knowledge was sufficient. The Council's senior officers had the authority and knowledge to unblock problems with projects.

5.17 Cllr Jarvis asked how the projected benefits and culture change was planned. Howard said he would run a series of exercises to make people aware. Staff would also have a taste of the new arrangements when they moved to Town Lodge where there would be less space available and more hot desking. Asked how the council would manage people in Town Lodge and keep them motivated, Howard said conditions were less than perfect but he was pushing the advantages of flexible working. Furthermore many staff liked and valued it. Howard had some staff who lived miles away and home working suited them, and it also

enabled them to work around their children's needs. The turnover of staff was not high in the Council.

5.18 Howard said the open tender stage was transparent and everyone had had the opportunity to bid for the contract, but it had ultimately resulted in a month's delay. He confirmed that the council have been indemnified by Willmott Dixon for errors and problems with the construction. This didn't guarantee that contractors won't go bust. As for lessons learnt or things done differently, Howard said he was very fortunate with the people we have here. We will move back into a nice a working environment, and staff had been very cooperative. A specific timetable would be helpful for the middle stage of the project.

#### **Update since the meeting:**

5.19 On 17 February, Howard reported that the final contract with Willmott Dixon Construction (WDC) was signed and so now WDC can proceed and place all the orders for the components and all the ancillary equipment required to start the construction phase of the project, which is due to begin on Monday 6 March 2017. Because the amount of asbestos in the building which had to be removed and was more than originally thought, a further month has been added to the duration of the contract and so the end date is now 30 January 2018 and this date is now firmly set in the contract.

5.20 The contract value was £5,386,777.33 plus an additional £246,605.77 for the removal of the asbestos, making a total of **£5,633,383**. There have been are some minor changes to the scheme but it will still deliver what the Council expected.

## **6. THE HITCHIN SWIMMING CENTRE PROJECT**

6.1 Vaughan Watson, Head of Leisure and Environmental Service said the council ran two outdoor pools, both at a financial loss. One of the Council's policies was to invest to save by spending to reduce operating costs. Investment in leisure facilities had proved effective in reducing running costs and /or boosting income for the Council. Since the development of Archers Gym in 2000, the demand for classes, in particular from women has increased substantially and outstripped the available supply. At the same time, although membership had achieved by 1,600 members, there was a risk term that competitors would enter the market and have a negative impact on Archers.

6.2 In February 2012, Council approved a feasibility study to expand and refurbish the centre. An architect and quantity surveyor were appointed to look at the design and costs of providing the multi functional rooms required for classes and the replacement of the aging indoor pool changing rooms with a changing village. The Swim Centre had traditional changing rooms, but the trend was towards a changing village which gave users more space and more flexible for families.

6.3 Stevenage Leisure Ltd (SLL), which operates the centre on behalf of NHDC, commissioned a study to determine latent demand of approximately 1,000 extra customers of this catchment area.

6.4 SLL put forward a proposal to NHDC that they would be willing to fund between £720,000 and £1.1 million of a project to develop multi functional room at Archers provided the contracts for Royston and Hitchin were extended to 2024. This was reported and agreed by Cabinet in March 2013.

6.5 As a result, SLL agreed to make an additional payment of £163,000 per annum starting from April 2014 for a period of ten years providing a total of over £1.63m pounds to  
osc (06.06.17)



the general fund. The reported final outturn for the development of the multi functional rooms was £1.035m, showing a financial surplus of about £600,000 over the ten years for the original capital cost.

6.6 The Council also provided as part of the works a new indoor changing village and air conditioning that cost a further £810,000. The agreed Capital programme was £1.910m and the final spend came in under budget at £1.859m.

6.7 In 2016 memberships have risen to an all time high of 3,230 members, well exceeding the extra 1,000 member projected. This year there will be profit share that will assist in current and future projects.

6.8 The project had suffered a 10 week delay because of drainage issues, but this was not a major problem. The only part of the project which hasn't gone well was a collapsed drain. They had also been temporary changing facilities which was inconvenient for customers; and the air conditioning for Archers was old and needs replacing.

6.9 Cllr Steve Jarvis said the review was looking at the process of managing projects, including financial objectives and how well the process worked. He asked whether there was a formal review process for financial and other benefits. There seemed to be a lack of formality about this information. Vaughan said the Council had regular meetings with the contractor and received the profit and loss statement. The Council monitored the Centre's performance against the revised business case.

6.10 Cllr Jarvis asked which increases were a result of the project as opposed to the general growth in the leisure market. Vaughan said there were too many factors to untangle to answer that question.

6.11 Judi Billing asked about improvements to car parking at the Swim Centre. The current proposal to build at Butt's Close should have been part of the Swim Centre Project. She asked what the process was for making suggestions and giving feedback. Steve Crowley, the Council's Contracts & Projects Manager said there had been a consultation which would have explored car parking. The Council had introduced a £1 charge to stop commuters and other people parking at the Centre and then walking into town. The charges had now increased in the town centre causing a problem for the swim centre. Asked about SLL's management of the facility, Steve Crowley confirmed there was monitoring of electronic tills and audited accounts.

6.12 Vaughan said he wouldn't do anything different on the project. The Centre was very popular, but there was an issue with car parking. Judi Billing said the demographics in Hitchin were changing with more families and flats and more commuters, and she asked whether this was taken into account.

### **Follow Up**

6.13 After the meeting, there was correspondence from Mr Bernard Eddleston, a member of the public who attended the meeting, and the TFG. He asked that his points be taken into account. His correspondence with the Council is set out below.

#### Mr Eddleston's Initial e mail

6.14 Unfortunately I was not allowed to raise questions on the projects being reviewed last night. I am afraid some inaccurate figures were presented and the full picture was not presented on the Hitchin Archers fitness studios.

- i. Under a FOI request and published on the NHDC website the number of members of Archers at the end of 2012 is stated by NHDC as 2509. Thus the increase in members since then is only 700 (current figure quoted as 3230) and certainly hasn't doubled. The 1,000 increase expected has not occurred.
- ii. The presentation of the return on the investment takes no account of the effect of the agreement on SSL/NHDC of the profit sharing scheme. During 2012/3 the share of profits coming to NHDC was £142,000 and in 2013/4 it was £110,000 (again established by a FOI request on NHDC website) Because of the effect of the renegotiated arrangement with SSL after the studios were completed the profit share coming to NHDC dropped to zero in 2014/5 and 2015/6 although there may be a small element in 2016/17.
- iii. So the improvement in the finances is not the £163,000 presented but only about £53,000 per annum (since the profit share has gone from £110,000 to zero.) Thus over the 10 years NHDC will only recover about £530,000 not the £1.63 million stated, a shortfall of about £1.0M. Not quite the success claimed.
- iv. Although the initial capital cost was about £1.1M, there was to be return on capital of 6% so the amount to be recovered is £1.465M. This was omitted from the report. However since the public were not able to ask questions I'm afraid these facts did not emerge which might have changed the nature of the discussion. Please take the above into account, Regards, Bernard Eddleston

#### Response from Steve Crowley, NHDC

6.15 I would like to thank Mr Eddleston for his contribution at the meeting last night. With regards to the further questions that he has raised, I have provided a response to these:-

- i. Mr Eddleston is correct that as of December 2012 the membership for Archer was 2509 however, the latent demand estimated was completed in January 2012 which demonstrated a total demand for Hitchin Swimming Centre for fitness of 2,981. This was based on the membership that at the time of the report being written was 1,950, therefore leaving a latent demand of 1031. Prior to the work commencing on site the membership had grown to 2755, by February 2015 memberships had increased to 3005 and as of December 2016 the total membership was 3,230, therefore, significantly above the projected latent demand for this facility. The December membership is 8% above the business case projections.
- ii. Mr Eddleston is correct about the profit share figure, however, the return on investment is regarding the change in the leisure management fee and not the profit share. As of 2013/14 the Council paid SLL £110,877 for operating the Hitchin Contract, following the completion to the capital project SLL paid the Council £35,670 (2014/15) a variation in the contract of £146,547 per annum. At the same time the Council negotiated an increase payment for the Royston Contract, as of 2013/14 SLL paid the Council £28,26 for this contract, as of 2014/15 SLL increased their payment to the Council to £44,952, an increase of £16,687. Therefore, £146,547 + £16,687 = £163,234 increased annual payment by SLL to the Council for these contracts, this is an income to the Council of £1,632,340 over the remaining ten years of the contract from 2014/15. The profit share is a totally different item and was not part of the business case.
- iii. I hope this provide a satisfactory response to the questions that Mr Eddleston has raised. Regards, Steve Crowley, Contracts & Projects Manager

Further email from Mr Eddleston

6.16 Thank you for the response to my comments from Steve Crowley which reinforces points made in my presentation quite clearly. I do not want to enter into an extended debate but I must respond to Steve's reply to demonstrate this.

- i. Membership of Archers. It is clear from the figures that the majority of the increase in membership was obtained before the extension to Archers was even begun and if one projected those increases going forward one would have reached the current figure of 3,230 in any case. Therefore one cannot in truth attribute any of the increase in membership to the extension but just a growing fitness and gym market. Just draw yourself a simple graph.
- ii. The response just confirms my view that projects are not looked at from a real business perspective or examined thoroughly before they are agreed. The effect on the profit share is integral to the business case and is not a totally different item. It is no good saying that SSL are going to improve the nett payment situation by £163,000 on the one hand without taking into account the fact that by doing so you are reducing the profit share to NHDC from £110,000 to zero on the other hand. It was evident that by decreasing SSL income (or increasing costs however one wants to present it) by £163,000 the profit would disappear. The effect on the Council is then not £163,000 improvement but only £53,000 and nett income to the Council over the 10 year period will be only £530,000 a shortfall of nearly £1M. This was evident at the time this scheme was being proposed and was pointed out to some Councillors who took no notice. Regards, Bernard Eddleston

- 6.17 Commenting on the exchange, Cllr Gerald Morris made the following observations:
- In reading the emails back and forth it seems to me that depending on who is looking at the financial information, one can come up with different answers.
  - NHDC's leisure facilities are a large part of the council's activities involving substantial sums of money. As such, I think they should be treated as if they were a subsidiary company which is part of a large organisation.
  - It would be clearer and less ambiguous if the figures were presented in an accounts form rather than as a narrative. Similarly because of the size of money involved they should also be independently audited.
  - These accounts could be accompanied by a narrative which may well expand upon particular aspects of the facilities performance, as is normal practice.
  - By presenting the performance of our leisure centres in an accounts form, there would be little room for misinterpretation or ambiguity.
  - I also understand that our leisure facilities are a public service and we can take a view as to whether they should make a financial contribution or not. By presenting figures in the way I have suggested we would at least know clearly the position we are in.

## **7. NORTH HERTS LEISURE CENTRE (NHLC) PROJECT**

7.1 Vaughan Watson said the NHLC had been built in the mid 1980's and was now over 30 years old. It had been very popular and well supported since it was built. Given the success of Hitchin Swim Centre project, the Council had been looking for more invest to save opportunities. SLL had a waiting list of 700 people for swimming lessons which could not be met by NHLC's current facilities. As well as the financial benefits of the project there were also social benefits. Given the centre's age, the Council's options were:

- do nothing
- Demolish and replace the Leisure Centre

- invest in the existing facility and extend its current life

Of these the least risky and most sustainable option was to invest in the existing facility.

7.2 A capital budget was agreed to improve the Centre including:

- A new teaching pool;
- A new cafeteria;
- replacement offices;
- conversion of the old cafeteria to a multi functional room;
- refurbishment of the sports hall including flooring and lighting;
- refurbishment of the leisure pool changing rooms;
- Plant room improvements; and
- Improvements to car parking.

7.3 As well as a much improved facility for the public, the Council would receive an extra **£18,398** a month (**£220,776** a year) from SLL once the facility had been completed. This was originally scheduled to be April 2016 and was now scheduled to be June 2017.

7.4 Cllr Gerald Morris asked whether the Council took account of asset depreciation when calculating its profit and Vaughan said it did not.

7.5 There had been a number of delays to the project. The initial delay of 7.5 months before work began were due to having to secure further funding of £317,000 of capital from Council with £138,000 of income lost as a result. There were then further negotiations with the main contractor, resulting in further delays of 5.5 months and further costs funded from contingencies before work started on site, resulting in a loss of £101,000 of potential income. The initial tender was substantially over budget and the Council pursued a value engineering exercise in order to bring the costs down. This exercise was necessary but time consuming as it involves careful consideration of amendments to design and build in order to reduce cost without any material impact on the usability of the completed works.

7.6 Since work began on site further issues with cabling and drains were identified that resulted in a further 10 week delay on the overall programme costing an extra £127,000 in capital funding and resulting in the loss of £46,000 of expected income.

7.7 The total revenue implications associated with delays in opening the teaching pool is the loss of contractual savings on the Letchworth Leisure Contract, which equates to £18,398 per month. The delay in opening of 15.5 months has resulted in a loss of **£285,000** in expected income.

7.8 The increase in capital costs on the project are £317,300 of additional capital funds agreed by Council before work began and £128,000 after work started due to drains and cabling work not identified prior to commencement of contract, a total of **£445,000**. Cllr Gerald Morris said the normal contingency for such projects was 10%. An estimate is only an estimate, not a quotation.

7.9 Cllr Judi Billing asked if the Council had any data on loss of clientele. Vaughan said there was a loyal customer base and most of them were tolerant of the works provided the Council kept them informed. Males were more disadvantaged than females by the works. Steve Crowley said the Council didn't have data but overall usage for all leisure facilities was up.. Judi Billing said she was not sure communication was great and as a user she wasn't always sure what was going on. A notice board in reception has been dedicated for the project providing updates on key items.

7.10 Cllr Steve Jarvis questioned the use of value engineering and asked whether it saved anything if the cost of it was more than the possible savings available. Steve Crowley said this went to Project Board and then to Cabinet. Steve Jarvis said it was possible to follow a process but not get the desired result. Steve Crowley said the Council invested in project management training and any changes were considered against the business case. Vaughan said the Council was saving a million pounds a year on leisure contracts compared to a few years ago. Steve Jarvis said the Council could have saved more if it had been built on time.

7.11 Cllr Michael Weeks said this was a good example of partnership working but there was not enough parking at the Leisure Centre. Vaughan Watson said the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation lead on parking matters as they owned the land and the rugby club had done the work.

7.12 Steve Crowley said the Council had adopted a design and build model at Royston Leisure Centre; and undertaken a traditional build at the other leisure centres and decided that a design and build was more suitable for the NHLC project. They used a quantity surveyor to determine the budget. As for lessons learnt, Vaughan Watson said it was important that Council delivered projects without too much procrastination. It had more limited resources which meant it needed to manage the risk properly.

7.13 Cllr Steve Jarvis asked if the project included officer time in terms of cost and capacity. Vaughan said time allocations were done over a one year period. Working evenings and weekends was normal for senior officers. The project was still within the revised revenue budget and capital budget.

## **8. BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE ENHANCEMENT SCHEME**

8.1 Louise Symes, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager at NHDC, explained that the Project had been approved by the Cabinet and Full Council in January 2006 with the adoption of the Baldock Town Centre Strategy. Its primary objective was: *'To maintain, regenerate and develop an attractive, safe, accessible, vibrant and lively town centre, based on its historic context, for the local community and visitors to work, live and relax'*.

8.2 A budget was set aside to enhance Baldock town centre. Following completion of the Baldock bypass in March 2006 and the resulting reduction in through traffic, there was an opportunity to improve the physical environment of the town centre. The project ran for 2½ years. In February 2007 BDP were appointed to design the scheme and supervise it through to completion. In 2008 Skanska was appointed as the contractor to undertake the work which was completed in April 2009.

8.3 The objectives of the scheme were to provide:

- a high quality, attractive and robust scheme in terms of design and materials;
- a scheme that improved safety within the town;
- a scheme that benefited all users in terms of function and accessibility;
- a scheme that created a lively setting for the town centre.

### **Issues**

8.4 Louise said that addressing a number of issues was key to the success of the scheme:

- **Parking and traffic** – rationalisation of car parking in the town centre, reducing traffic speed and flows in the town. As a result Herts County Council (HCC) was an integral partner in the design of the scheme. A parking strategy was prepared for the town centre and surrounding residential streets.
- **The market** – creating a dual purpose space for the market to be used for other events and parking at other times.
- **Green and public space** - creating a pedestrian friendly area, suitable for events and activities, which Baldock town centre lacked. Engaging with Baldock's councillors, the Baldock Society, the Baldock Fair, market traders, local businesses and residents in the process was important for their views on how the space could be used.
- **Street furniture** – needed to be robust, sustainable and removable for the annual Fair along the High Street and Whitehorse Street.
- **Tesco** – linking the major supermarket into the town centre through the memorial gardens.

## Project Management

8.5 A partnership agreement was signed between NHDC and HCC which set out the financial terms and risks for the project, the duties and responsibilities of both partners, the project's principles and the decision making process.

8.6 A Project Board was set up which was responsible for driving forward the project and had powers to make all decisions relating to the project other than those in the remit of Cabinet or Council. The Project Board comprised:

- NHDC's Head of Planning and Building Control, David Scholes
- NHDC's Strategic Director of Financial & Regulatory Services, Norma Atlay
- A local Baldock District Councillor, Andrew Young
- HCC's Head of Transport, Programme & Standards, Mike Younghusband
- A core officer team with officers from NHDC and HCC and the design consultants as required.

8.7 The Core Officer Team reported regularly to the Project Board and had the responsibility to put into effect the decisions of the Project Board. The core team were responsible for day to day project management, preparing risk register and budget control.

8.8 Baldock and District Committee was consulted on all decisions about design and materials, including the extent of the scheme, choice of materials, consultation strategy, preliminary design for consultation and final design.

## Budget and Cost

8.9 The initial budget was £2.8 million made up of £2 million from NHDC and £800,000 from HCC. HCC subsequently increased its contribution by £400k to include modification of the Clothall Road and Whitehorse Street junction which also included a design and build of the western gateway with traffic signals at the Weston Way junction. This brought the total cost of the project to **£3.2 million**.

8.10 Of the £3.2million, £1million spent on preliminary investigation, design fees, project management, parking and traffic management and £2.2m on construction. The scheme was completed within budget and on-time.

## Before & After

8.11 The scheme was formally opened on 13 June 2009 with a special event in the town centre. The scheme won the Horticultural Landscape and Amenity Award 2009 for the Best Commercial Project.

8.12 Before the scheme, the town centre was dominated by parking, deliveries and through traffic. After, the space along High Street and Whitehorse Street was made more pedestrian friendly with the creation of a new public open space for the market and other events, areas of green space to enhance the environment, a more efficient parking layout and improved traffic flows. The town centre now enjoys a number of events, a café culture, fewer retail vacancies and an improved visitor experience.

### **Lessons learned**

8.13 The positive features of the project included:

- the importance of a design freeze in securing Project Board agreement and also agreement by the Baldock & District committee;
- having member continuity on the Project Board;
- working within an agreed budget at the outset;
- having a dedicated team working on the project;
- appointing designers who had extensive experience in public engagement; and
- undertaking extensive pre-consultation to understand issues, consulting on scheme design, keeping the public informed regularly throughout the project, and requiring the contractor to appoint a public relations agent to work with businesses.

### **Handover to HCC & On-going Maintenance**

8.14 The scheme was handed over to HCC in January 2013 for future maintenance following completion of all outstanding snagging works. An agreed maintenance and management guide was prepared clearly setting out HCC's and NHDC's responsibilities.

### **Discussion**

8.15 Members said the scheme compared favourably to other town centre refurbishments in North Hertfordshire and most people seemed to like it. There seemed to have been a lot of public participation.

8.16 When asked about public dissatisfaction or opposition, Louise said some people didn't like change and were concerned about the length of the construction period, in particular business owners. The scheme had created a café culture in Baldock where none had previously existed.

8.17 Members doubted whether the re-modelling of the Whitehorse Street Junction had been completely effective. Despite the existence of the bypass, the Whitehorse Junction remains a shortcut road used by many motorists. Louise said traffic flow and congestion is a HCC issue, but NHDC has discussed a number of options with HCC including night limits, banning HGVs and better signage to divert traffic.

8.18 Mention was made about the quality of the materials used. Louise said one reason for using robust materials was to accommodate the Baldock Fair and the need for removable posts and materials that could withstand heavy loads, hence the choice of granite. York stone had been chosen as a design feature to delineate the footways in front of the buildings. The designers and contractors had emphasized that the sub-base on which the scheme was built needed proper attention to withstand heavy loads and traffic movements across forecourts. The street furniture was deliberately low maintenance.

8.19 Public consultation and time spent on this had been quite expensive and resource intensive but it had needed to be as there were so many different interests involved including visitors, businesses, residents and others. It had taken a good deal of consultation to understand the issues and really listen to local businesses and residents. BDP was a very good company who had good PR skills, design and construction management experience. Consultation about parking arrangements had been particularly important. Baldock was the only town centre in North Herts with residents' permits, although these were only issued to those with no access to on street parking.

8.20 When asked about writing a brief for the tender, Louise said there been an extensive brief drafted in conjunction with HCC. The scheme was in two parts. The first was a design scheme which involved extensive surveying and preparing the tender papers for the construction phase. BDP were not the cheapest company but their PR expertise was very important for consultation. The second phase was construction which involved another full tender process. The total budget was £3.2 million of which £1 million was on non construction related activities.

8.21 Louise said the scheme needed a lot of essential preliminary work before the construction drawings could be prepared such as the extensive surveys on Baldock's many cellars, parking arrangements and traffic flows. There was also a drainage survey and other preparatory work, along with the cost of a clerk of works on-site along with health and safety officers required to monitor the construction phase of the work.

8.22 Members queried the evidence for the cafe culture. Louise said there was now a wider trend of this taking place as Baldock previously had very narrow payments with cars parking right up the front of shops. The council created the right environment which has enabled the café culture to develop. Louise said more people in Baldock had started refurbishing their own buildings as a result of the improvements in the Baldock town centre.

8.23 Asked about transferable skills and lessons learnt, Louise said the Council was very clear about its aims and objectives for the enhancement of Baldock town centre. There was an advantage in taking a decision and sticking to it. This was particularly in relation to the design freeze on the scheme. It had also taken place in different economic circumstances when councils had the money to enhance their town centres.

8.24 Members said the scheme had been a success. There were some issues and some opposition, particularly about car parking. Louise said the proposal to enhance the link between Tesco and the Memorial Gardens had not worked. Tesco had submitted a planning application for expanding the store and one of the conditions was a better link from Tesco to the town centre but the application had been withdrawn so this element had not proceeded.

8.25 Steve Jarvis asked how the Council could make sure it set objectives that were achievable and avoid those which were not. The appeal of Tesco to visitors was very different to that of Baldock town centre. Louise noted the point and agreed that although the intention had been to open up the street scene and create stronger links between the town centre and Tesco, this may not have worked as one cannot predict people's habits. . The area of the High Street near the Memorial Gardens was still being used well during the year with a motorcycle festival, a music festival and more taking place.

8.26 Robin Dartington, a resident of Hitchin, considered that the scheme had been a success. It was an enhancement scheme which sought to improve things which were already there. It was different and less disruptive from the kind of redevelopment scheme proposed for Churchgate. Refurbishment involves removal of existing structures with nothing in between until the new development was built. He said BDP was an inspired choice.

osc (06.06.17)



Indeed he had appointed BDP many years ago in one of his projects. It was a broad based company with many skills.

## 9. ENHANCEMENT OF FISH HILL SQUARE, ROYSTON

9.1 Louise Symes explained that the Project was approved by the Cabinet and Full Council in June 2008 with the adoption of the Royston Town Centre Strategy. The Strategy identified Fish Hill Square as a key opportunity site and recommended its enhancement.

9.2 The project ran for 18 months. BDP was commissioned in April 2010 following a full tender process to prepare a design for the enhancement of Fish Hill Square and supervise the works through to completion. Maylim Ltd was appointed in 2011 as the contractor to undertake the work which took 3 months to complete and was carried out from July to September 2011.

9.3 The objectives of the scheme were:

- to produce a well-designed, high quality enhancement scheme for Fish Hill Square that enhanced and promoted its historic character and best met the aspirations of the local community in design and implementation; and
- to provide a catalyst for future development within the town centre. An enhanced square should attract new uses and create a new public square to act as a focal point for the town centre.

### Issues

9.4 It was clear from the start that addressing a number of issues was key to the success of the scheme:

- **Flooding** - Addressing the drainage problem that resulted in periodic flooding of the lower section of Fish Hill and Market Hill during periods of very heavy rain. As a result HCC was an integral partner in the design of the scheme.
- **Parking** - Car parking in the square needed rationalising as part of the overall reorganisation of town centre parking.
- **Public Space** - Creating a pedestrian friendly area, suitable for events and activities, which Royston town centre lacked. This meant engaging with Royston Town Council, the town centre manager, local businesses and residents for their views on how the space could be used.

### Project Management

9.5 NHDC led on the project and worked in partnership with HCC as the highways authority. A Project Board was set up and was responsible for delivering the Project and it had the powers to make all the decisions relating to the Project. Its membership was:

- NHDC's Strategic Director of Planning, Housing and Enterprise, David Scholes;
- A local Royston District Councillor, Fiona Hill;
- NHDC's Regional and Strategic Developments Manager, John Ironside;
- NHDC's Group Accountant for Planning Services;
- A core officer team led by Louise Symes with officers from NHDC and HCC and the design consultants as required.

9.6 The core officer team reported regularly to the Project Board and had the responsibility to put into effect the decisions of the Project Board. The core team was

responsible for day to day project management, preparing the risk register and budget control.

9.7 Royston and District Committee was consulted on all decisions including the extent of the scheme, the choice of materials, the consultation strategy, preliminary designs for consultation and the final design.

### **Cost & Budget**

9.8 This was a much smaller scheme than the Baldock one, with a total budget of £450,000 funded from Central Government's Growth Area Fund. HCC contributed a further £45,000 for the planned drainage works to ameliorate the flooding problem in Church Lane bringing the total budget to **£495,000**. The Scheme was completed on time and within budget.

9.9 The scheme was handed over to HCC in October 2013 for future maintenance following completion of all outstanding snagging works. An agreed maintenance and management guide was prepared clearly setting out HCC's and NHDC's responsibilities.

### **Before & After**

9.10 The scheme was formally opened on 19 November 2011 with a special event in the square.

9.11 The area at the northern end of Market Hill and Fish Hill was dominated by parking, deliveries and access for vehicles. Following completion of the works the space is predominately for pedestrians and for activities and events, with the parking and access controlled and resulting in a more efficient use of the space. The number of retail vacancies around the square has decreased and the square is used for small events.

9.12 The Council involved local school students in the design of the sculpture; and involved local residents and businesses in naming the square. Both were important for ownership of the square and its community use.

### **Lessons learned**

9.13 Positive aspects of the scheme were:

- the importance of a design freeze in securing Project Board agreement and also agreement by the Royston & District Area Committee;;
- member continuity on the Project Board;
- working with a limited budget and achieving value in terms of impact and design;
- Having a team dedicated to the project;
- Appointing designers who had extensive experience in public engagement;
- Undertaking extensive pre-consultation to understand issues, consulting on scheme design and keeping the public informed regularly throughout the project;
- gaining local ownership of scheme

### Discussion

9.14 Louise said the Royston project was similar to Baldock one but on a smaller scale. Royston town centre is rather disjointed and the project was about linking pieces of open space. Fish Hill Square was very quiet and the project aimed to stimulate business activity. The Council originally wanted to pedestrianise the whole area but the complete loss of car parking was unacceptable to the people who needed access to Church Lane and other

residential areas. As a result, a small area was pedestrianised with the rest left open to parking. There were no vacant commercial units in this area since the scheme was completed.

9.15 The project was undertaken in two stages, design followed by construction work, and both went well. An extensive consultation exercise took place with businesses, the Town Council, town centre manager and local residents. The project management was led by NHDC.

9.16 The council and BDP involved the local Meridian School art class by asking them to take part in a competition to design a sculpture feature for the new square, with the prize winner spending a day at BDP. There was also a scheme regarding naming of the square. There was a lot of local ownership in the scheme which has meant the area has not suffered from graffiti and vandalism to date. With some further promotional work it might be possible to increase the use of the area. Once again the Council opted for the use of robust and durable materials. It also produced its own maintenance manual which sets out the responsibilities of NHDC and HCC. The Scheme was completed on time and on budget, even though it was a very restricted budget.

9.17 Cllr Morris said it was an unpretentious scheme which improved an awkward part of the town and he had not had any complaints about it. Louise confirmed that a third of the budget had been spent on design fees and preparation, as in Baldock. There were occasional events in the middle of town, but because the area not been fully pedestrianised it was not used as much as originally hoped.

9.18 Members asked why the Council did not use BDP as its designers on more schemes. Louise said they had been appointed to work on the Bancroft Gardens scheme in Hitchin. There was a suggestion they might be used to look at an enhancement (as opposed to a redevelopment) of Churchgate. Louise said they were good firm who had worked on many mixed use developments, and had won other contracts in Hertfordshire on the back of their successes in Baldock and Royston.

9.19 Cllr Jarvis said that even if the Council could not always afford to use BDP, it would be useful to understand how BDP went about things, particularly on public input. As for the lessons learned, the council had expertise but not necessarily the time to dedicate sufficient officer resource to a significant number of projects.

## **10. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **Colin Dunham**

10.1 Mr Dunham attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 December 2016. The Committee referred his comments to the Task and Finish Group and these were considered at its meeting on 10 January 2017,

10.2 With the Council striving to become more business like, Government cuts etc, now is the time for large projects of the future to have safeguards.

10.3 Senior Officers should have time logged to oversee major projects, most firms have systems ie computer based.

10.4 Before the Council approves any large projects, except statutory ones, the Project Team Leader should inform the Portfolio Holder of estimated officer hours, time scales and

ancillary costs such as outside advice so that the whole project could be properly costed. Cabinet would then make a decision whether it should go ahead or not.

10.5 The Risk Officer should produce reports for the Project Team Leader on a weekly basis so that the Project Leader and Portfolio Holder can make a decision to carry on, provide more staff or stop projects as needed.

10.6 At the end of the project, or when a project is stopped, final figures should be produced in order to keep Members informed and the true costs of projects should be subject to the scrutiny of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the public, with questions asked such as “was the project value for money, were the relevant skills available from the start of the project”, with the aim of either praising the work done and/or learning lessons.

### **Bernard Eddleston**

10.7 I would like to put on record level public participation in the workings of this group has been effectively non-existent despite the Council’s own protocol on task and finish groups. Task and finish groups can only be effective if they allow full public participation with the opportunity for the public to question officers. This current task and finish group does not scrutinise existing projects in depth. One can only learn lessons for the future by thoroughly examining past projects.

10.8 This is compounded by limiting this public participation to 3 minutes which is totally inadequate. Despite the above I will bring down some areas that need attention and the limited information.

#### Pre-contract

10.9 Budgets are nearly always too low since no account is made of when the work is to be carried out. I.e. no allowance is made for inflation. Budget process to be improved and account taken of likely inflation costs.

10.10 But it should include the amount of time costs (including overheads) allocated to the project from pre-contract worked right through to contract completion. This would give the real cost of the project and also make it easier to prioritise which project should go ahead.

10.11 No proper public consultation before a scheme project is decided. For most of the public consider the consultation is a waste of time because the Council has already decided what it wants to do and consultation is limited and designed to confirm the predetermined outcome.

10.12 Business case is not robust enough and not enough scrutiny or questioning by councillors. Seems to be more or less rubber stamped everything. Examples are so-called invest to save projects and Council office building project.

10.13 No overall strategy apparent for capital spending.

#### Contract award

10.14 Specifications of what is required and detailed surveys of work to be done is not thorough enough resulting in unexpected costs and thus delays and increases in costs. Need to hold consultants, architects and surveyors to account. I.e. why wasn’t the damp in the town Hall and other works sorted out beforehand, unexpected work on North Herts  
osc (06.06.17)

leisure centre and asbestos in the office refurbishment project not known about and not catered for in the contracts?

10.15 Timescales need to be adhered to with penalty clauses for late delivery. Avoid framework contracts which are a recipe for disaster.

10.16 Investigate potential contractors more thoroughly (two recent contractors have gone into liquidation during or immediately after the contract.

10.17 Rigourously ensure that officers are not too close to contractors.

#### Internal management

10.18 Senior management and project inadequate and project managers not held to account. The Council has overspent by several millions on recent projects. An extensive delays and yet no one is to blame!

10.19 Officer time does not appear to be charged to its projects. Nearly all businesses do it as a matter of course. This would identify to councillors how much project is really costing and help senior management in their management of critical resources.

10.20 The size of the Council is such that they are not the experience project managers in place. Need to consider hiring in a project manager on contract for some major projects.

10.21 Major project boards contain too many officers and councillors. Need at least two independent external members on the board so that objectivity is maintained and their experience could help deliver the project on time and budget.

10.22 The effects the current poor management is threefold. Firstly it allows contractors to claim additional costs and delays due to council failings. Second the Council offices are engaged on managing the project for a lot longer than was expected which gives rise to increased internal project costs. Third because officers are engaged longer they cannot work on other projects and activities which delays these activities and leads to yet further cost increases.

10.23 Senior management and Cabinet do not seem to manage resources at all well and are not looking at the big picture. Thus all the time and effort has been spent in recent weeks on play areas to try and save a few thousand pounds when the North Herts leisure centre project has slipped again with a total loss of revenue now at £285,000 and a further cost increase of £127,000.

#### **Mike Clarke**

10.24 Mr Clark, a resident of Hitchin said he had found the Churchgate briefing very frustrating. Particularly in regard to the information that the Churchgate liaison forum which would not meet again. In future the Council would meet in private. Lots of people had spent a lot of time on the forum. Why was this not a good idea? We should look at the past to think about the future. He would have liked the papers earlier so there was more time to consider them.

#### **Chris Parker**

10.25 Mr Parker a resident of Hitchin who represented Keep Hitchin Special, said there was a lot of ill-feeling about some projects which have been managed for example Hitchin Town Hall. Hitchin Town Hall was advertised as a fitness centre in competition with Archers.

osc (06.06.17)

**Robin Dartington**

10.26 Mr Dartington attended the TFG meeting on 20 February and his comments on the Baldock Town Centre Enhancement Project have been recorded with that item.

**Discussion**

10.27 Members agreed the council have been lacking in communication with the public. Cllr Judi Billing said the liaison forum had been problematic. There were different ways of doing public consultation. Cllr Steve Jarvis said the scrutiny committee should look at how the Council consults with the public and whether it meets the public's expectations. Members agreed the council have been lacking in communication with the public. There were different ways of doing public consultation. Judi Billing said scrutiny in the council need to be mainstreamed. Bernard Eddleston said some external input would have been helpful to the Council in managing projects.

**11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

11.1 The Task and Finish Group would like to thank all those who have taken part.

NHDC Staff

Ian Couper	Head of Finance, Performance and Asset Management
Norma Atlay	Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance
Anthony Roche	Corporate Legal Manager and Monitoring Officer
Louise Symes	Strategic Planning and Projects Manager
Ian Fullstone	Head of Development and Building Control
Howard Crompton	Head of Revenues, Benefits and IT
Vaughan Watson	Head of Leisure and Environmental Service
Steve Crowley	Contracts & Projects Manager

Members of the Public

Colin Dunham  
 Bernard Eddleston  
 Mike Clarke  
 Chris Parker  
 Robin Dartington

**North Hertfordshire District Council  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group**

**The Council's Management of Larger Projects**

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**SCOPE**

**Terms of reference**

To review the effectiveness of the Council's management of its larger projects  
To suggest improvements for ongoing and future projects

**Timeframe**

3-4 months beginning July 2016  
Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee Dec 2016

**Link with Council Objectives**

Attractive and Thriving  
Protect and Prosper  
Responsive and Efficient

**Key Questions**

What is a larger project?  
How are projects chosen?  
Are the Council's projects delivered on time, on budget and to the required standard?  
How well do the Council's project management arrangements work?  
How well has the Council's communication arrangements with members and the public worked?  
Is responsibility for projects clearly defined?

**Key Projects**

Churchgate	Baldock & Royston Town Centre
Hitchin Swim Centre	Enhancements
North Herts Leisure Centre Extension	Herts Building Control Consortium
Office Accommodation	

**Potential Witnesses and Community Engagement**

Lead Officers for each project  
Community groups - to be decided by project  
Others to be confirmed

**Green Issues**

Nothing obvious

**Briefing arrangements**

Briefings by Project Officers  
Remaining briefing arrangements to be decided

**Membership**

Cllr Michael Weeks (Chair)  
Cllr Judi Billing  
Cllr Steve Jarvis  
Cllr Paul Marment  
Cllr Gerald Morris

**Portfolio Holder** - To be confirmed

**Support Officer** - Brendan Sullivan, Scrutiny Officer  
**Lead Officer** – David Scholes, Chief Executive

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**RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 6 JUNE 2017**

**SECTION 1: COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Response/Outcome</b>	<b>State of Play</b>
Min 88 Jan 17	<p><b>Work Programme</b></p> <p>That the following TFG be added to the list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultations, including the demographic make up of the group and formats used.</li> </ul>	Noted by the Scrutiny Officer	In hand
Min 92 Feb 17	<p><b>Call in: Green Space Management Strategy</b></p> <p>That the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services be requested to produce a report detailing the steps taken and the progress made in identifying interested groups and organisations to safely provide facilities and present it to this Committee at the meeting due to be held on 18 July 2017;</p> <p>That the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services be requested to produce a report detailing the steps taken and the progress made in identifying interested groups and organisations to safely provide facilities, together with details of play areas that have not attracted any interested groups and would likely close following the deadline of 1 March 2018 and present it to this Committee at the meeting due to be held in March 2018.</p>	<p>Passed to the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services for action</p> <p>Passed to the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services</p>	<p>Pending</p> <p>Pending</p>

Min 98 Mar 17	<p><b>Hitchin Town Hall/North Herts Museum: Presentation by Jacqueline McDonald</b></p> <p>1) That the Scrutiny Officer retain the Minute of this item for presentation to the review of the North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility at Hitchin Town Hall, which would be undertaken at the completion of the project;</p> <p>(2) That the Executive Member for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs consider the questions posed in the above presentation and provide answers, wherever this is possible without causing detriment to the completion of the project, to this Committee and Ms McDonald.</p>	<p>Noted by the Scrutiny Officer</p> <p>Passed to the Executive Member for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs for action.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Pending</p>
Min 103 Mar 17	<p><b>Memoranda Of Understandings with Citizens Advice North Herts, North Herts Centre For Voluntary Services &amp; North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum</b></p> <p>That the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance be requested to attend the next meeting of this Committee, due to be held on 6 June 2017, to advise the Committee of the amounts of grant funding awarded to Citizens Advice North Herts and from which organisations these grants were awarded;</p> <p>That the Communities Manager be requested to scrutinise the detail of the services provided by each organisation and check whether any of those services could be funded from other funding sources.</p>	<p>Passed to the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance for action.</p> <p>Passed to the Communities Manager for action.</p>	<p>Pending</p> <p>Pending</p>

Min 105 Mar 17	<b>Performance Indicators Monitoring Reports</b> That the Payment and Reconciliations Manager reorder entries on future reports from red to green rather than the current Executive Member based report.	Noted and actioned	Complete
Min 106 Mar 17	<b>Performance Management Measures for 2017/18</b> That the Chief Executive advise Members of the Committee of the exact percentage of Council Tax collected in year (BV9) and the procedures used to collect outstanding amounts	Passed to the Chief Executive David Scholes for action	Pending
Min 107 & 108 Mar 17	<b>Key Projects Monitoring Report</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the Payment and Reconciliations Manager reorder entries on future reports from red to green rather than the current Executive Member based report;</li> <li>• That the Payment and Reconciliations Manager mark projects that have been halted or were unlikely to progress further as red;</li> <li>• That the Payment and Reconciliations Manager include details of projects from previous years that have not yet been completed in future reports.</li> <li>• That outstanding key projects from previous years be monitored alongside projects identified for 17/18.</li> </ul>	The report has been re-ordered by status and any projects which are unable to continue due to lack of funding have been flagged as red. In addition, the latest position on the Hitchin Town Hall and Museums project has been included and will continue to be reported until the project has completed.	Complete
Min 111 Mar 17	<b>Resolutions Report: Task &amp; Finish Groups</b> That Chairman be authorised to look into the issue of actions taken following Task and Finish Groups and report back to this Committee on her conclusions.	The state of play with the last four Task and Finish Groups has been set out in Section 2 of this report	Committee to note

Min 112 Mar 17	<p><b>Work Programme</b></p> <p>That the Scrutiny Officer, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be requested to review the documents listed above and bring a shortlist of items for the Committee to consider as soon as possible in the development stage.</p>	The Scrutiny Officer will speak to this item which is on the Committee's agenda for June	In hand
Min 114 Mar 17	<p><b>Proposed Crematorium at Wilbury Hills Cemetery – Interim Report on Business Case</b></p> <p><i>Recommended to Cabinet:</i></p> <p>(1) That, subject to (2) and (3) below, the recommendations contained in the report entitled Proposed Crematorium at Wilbury Hills Cemetery – Interim Report on Business Case be supported;</p> <p>(2) That the cost of Officer time spent on this project both to date and moving forward be included in the Business Case;</p> <p>(3) That Cabinet be requested to seriously consider and review the latest Business Case and financial information, including (2) above before deciding whether to proceed with this project.</p>	<p><i>Cabinet resolved:</i></p> <p>(1) That officers be authorised to progress and submit an outline planning application for the development of a crematorium at Wilbury Hills, such authorisation to include taking all steps required for a successful grant of permission;</p> <p>(2) That the project be allocated a budget of up to £50,000 to cover external consultants and other costs associated with the planning application;</p> <p>(3) That the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to carry out further negotiations to finalise the structure and detail of any potential agreement with the Proposed Operator, subject to Cabinet providing final approval in due course. In any event, the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services is requested to report back to Cabinet once the outcome of the outline planning application is known; and</p>	Committee to note

		(4) That the cost of Officer time spent on this project moving forward be included in the Business Case, and that the latest Business Case and financial information be reviewed before deciding whether to proceed with this project.	
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## SECTION 2: RECOMMENDATIONS OF TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Ref	Resolution	Response/Outcome	State of Play
Min 26 July 14	<p><b>Task &amp; Finish Group Report on Employment Partnerships in North Herts: Recommendations</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> The Council should seek opportunities to give unemployed people work experience, apprenticeships and traineeships within the Council and within community organisations.</p> <p><b>2:</b> When assessing planning applications for larger projects, when letting contracts to supply Council services, and when allocating grant funding the Council should consider setting developers, contractors and grant recipients a minimum level of local employment as a condition of approval.</p> <p><b>3 (rejected):</b> The Council should develop a programme which offers interviews with both members and officers to unemployed people to improve their interview techniques and their chances of getting a job.</p> <p><b>4:</b> The Council should consider all of its options for employing an economic development officer, including outsourcing the role to North Herts College or other partners; and members should have an input into economic development matters through a members' working group.</p> <p><b>5 (rejected):</b> The Council should consider instituting</p>	<p><b>Cabinet:</b> supported Recommendations 1 and 6;</p> <p>supported Recommendation 2 in principle, but that further work be carried out on this recommendation with, if necessary, the outcome being reported back to Cabinet;</p> <p>rejected recommendations 3, 5, 7 and 11.</p> <p>Recommendations 4, 8, 9 and 10 of the Task and Finish Group were to be encompassed in the emerging NHDC Economic Development Strategy.</p> <p>supported Recommendation 12 in relation to those recommendations which Cabinet supported.</p> <p>Cabinet adopted the Economic Development Strategy in September 2015.</p>	Pending

	<p>community awards to celebrate employment successes for North Herts such as apprentice of the year.</p> <p><b>6:</b> The Council should enhance its understanding of economic trends and activity in the district and share this information with members and partners.</p> <p><b>7 (rejected):</b> The Council should be aware of and promote the employment opportunities the expansion of Luton airport will bring for North Herts.</p> <p><b>8:</b> The Council should consider establishing a North Herts Economic Forum; and aim to have a greater officer and member presence at existing economic fora.</p> <p><b>9:</b> The Council should encourage the Hertfordshire LEP to emulate the success of the Cambridgeshire LEP in working with the voluntary sector.</p> <p><b>10:</b> The Council should act as a broker and facilitator between the private sector and voluntary and other community organisations.</p> <p><b>11(rejected):</b> The Council should consider creating an Enterprise Grant Scheme of the type run by Bassetlaw District Council, which provides grants for capital expenditure of up to £1,500, or £2,500 for businesses seeking to locate, re-locate or expand within North Hertfordshire. This money can be used to support the employment of people with disabilities.</p>		
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	<p><b>12:</b> These recommendations should be implemented within 12 months of the reports consideration by Cabinet.</p>		
<p>Min 100 Mar 15</p>	<p><b>Task and Finish group Report on Parking</b></p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> The Council should review its policies to ensure adequate provision of parking for town centre residents.</p> <p><b>2.</b> The Council should consider outsourcing the management and maintenance of its car parks, or sharing the costs with another authority, provided there is a good business case for doing so.</p> <p><b>3.</b> The Council should consider acquiring land in order to provide new car parks when there is a need and a good business case for doing so.</p> <p><b>4:</b> The Council should keep the problem of verge parking under review.</p> <p><b>5.</b> The Council's Parking Strategy should contain a section on parking for rail commuters.</p> <p><b>6.</b> The Council should review the opening hours of its car parks.</p> <p><b>7.</b> In order to do so, the Council should gather sufficient data about the usage of car parks, particularly at times when there is no charging, so it can make an informed decision about opening hours.</p> <p><b>8.</b> The Council should talk to its local MPs to see if they can</p>	<p><b>Cabinet</b> resolved that that, taking into account the Senior Management Team's comments set out at Paragraph 7.3 of the report, Recommendations 1 to 9 contained in the Report of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Parking be supported and progressed at appropriate times in the future.</p> <p>A parking review is under way.</p>	<p>Pending</p>



	<p>facilitate a dialogue with Network Rail and the train operating companies about provision of more parking around stations in North Herts.</p> <p>9. The Council should review its policy on season tickets, including ways of boosting their sales. This could include better publicity; making sure the process of buying them is as straightforward as possible; using alternative outlets such as shops; and allowing season tickets to be transferable in some circumstances.</p>		
Min 50 Sept 15	<p><b>Task and Finish Group on the Commercialisation of Council Services</b></p> <p>The Task and Finish Group made 9 recommendations which were considered by Cabinet on 10 November 2015. Its recommendations were:</p> <p>1. The Council should appoint a senior commercial manager to lead and coordinate its commercial activities; and to identify and develop new commercial opportunities.</p> <p>2. The Council should appoint a high level commercial board comprised of councillors, officers and others with commercial experience. The board can advise the Cabinet about the feasibility of commercial opportunities and review the performance of existing ones.</p> <p>3. The Council should pursue income generation opportunities where it has the skills, experience and resources to do so. These should be compatible with the</p>	<p>Cabinet considered its recommendations in November 2015 and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accepted recommendations 3 and 6; and</li> <li>• established a Project Board to advise Cabinet on these and the other recommendations.</li> </ul> <p>The Project Board was scheduled to report to Cabinet in June 2016. It has yet to do so. Cabinet did, however, receive a progress report on the work of the Project Board on 28 March 2017. At that meeting Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• endorsed the establishment of a housing company and the progression of proposals to create a new North Hertfordshire Crematorium;</li> <li>• endorsed the establishment of a Cabinet sub-committee to deal with share holder functions</li> </ul>	Pending.

	<p>Council's strategic objectives, and at a level of risk which would not threaten the Council's core services in the event of an enterprise's failure.</p> <p><b>4.</b> The Council should explore the possibilities of property investment as a means of generating revenue.</p> <p><b>5.</b> The Council should use the expertise of its strategic partners to help manage its property portfolio.</p> <p><b>6.</b> The Council should review its assets register to understand whether any of them could be used for property development or other commercial purposes.</p> <p><b>7.</b> Commercial activities should bear the true cost - but no more than that – of any support they receive from the Council.</p> <p><b>8.</b> The Council should review its training programmes for senior and other key staff to include more commercial training, networking and mentoring activities.</p> <p><b>9.</b> The Council should have a scheme that recognises officers who make useful commercialisation proposals or make significant contributions to their success.</p>	<p>relating to both of these as well as commercial activities related to its Building Control, CCTV and North Hertfordshire Homes. This change was subsequently agreed by Council in April; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>supported the development of commercial activities where they contribute to the financial sustainability of the Authority and provided services to the residents of North Hertfordshire.</li> </ul> <p>Cabinet has not yet responded to all of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.</p>	
Min 103 Mar 16	<p><b>Task and Finish Group on the Quality of Council Reports: Recommendations</b></p> <p><b>1:</b> The Council should review its report template and</p>	<p>Cabinet considered the report at its meeting in June</p>	<p>Pending</p>

	<p>consider adopting the features of the alternative report template in Annex 1.</p> <p><b>2:</b> Reports should clearly state their purpose.</p> <p><b>3:</b> Reports should include timelines showing financial and timetable changes for projects.</p> <p><b>4:</b> The Council should be mindful of the burden of producing reports and consider doing so only when decisions are required. Reports should not be used to brief members unless there is a compelling reason for it.</p> <p><b>5:</b> The Council should introduce a document management system to enable proper tracking, management and storage of documents.</p> <p><b>6:</b> There is a need for training to encourage both plainer English and for officers to better understand the purpose of reports.</p> <p><b>7:</b> The Council should trial the introduction of paperless reports with a view to introducing paperless reports for all 49 councillors.</p>	<p>2016 and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accepted recommendations 2, 3, 5 and 6;</li> <li>• accepted recommendation 1 to review the Council’s report template but did not undertake to adopt the features of the template annexed to the TFG report;</li> <li>• accepted recommendation 4 with the caveat that there are circumstances, such as when it is a legal requirement, when it is appropriate to use Council reports to brief members;</li> <li>• accepted recommendation 7 with the caveat that Members still retain an option to receive paper copies of reports.</li> </ul> <p>The Council’s report template and accompanying guide have since been reviewed and amended. The revised report template was introduced from the start of the civic year 2017/18.</p> <p>The Committee is due to receive a report on the implementation of the recommendations at a future meeting</p>	
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<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b> <b>6 JUNE 2017</b>
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<b>PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No.</b>
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	<b>16</b>
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## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2017/18**

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report suggests how the Committee can improve its effectiveness by identifying important issues at an earlier stage. This will allow the Committee to make a more meaningful contribution to policy and service changes. To do so, the Committee must set its agenda more imaginatively by expanding its sources of information so it can decide its priorities better. Having done so, it can ask written questions or request that officers and Executive Members attend the Committee.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- That the Committee adopts the new approach set out in section 8 for 2017/18.
- That the Committee chooses its agenda for July.
- That if other agenda items are suggested after the meeting the Chairman be given the authority to consider them and finalise the agenda.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To allow the Committee to operate more effectively.

### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

4.1 The Committee has varied its approach to overview and scrutiny over the years. For most of this time, its agenda has usually been centred on the Forward Plan, with the remainder set by other means. These have included briefings from Executive Members on their portfolios, presentations from outsiders on particular topics, member's questions and more.

4.2 All of these have merit and can still play a role at times in the new approach. However the Committee wishes to cast its net wider when setting its agenda so it can enter the process of policy development earlier.

## **5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

5.1 The Committee is consulted about its work programme at every meeting. It also held a workshop on 19 April 2017 to discuss the best way forward.

## **6. FORWARD PLAN**

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

7.1 At its meeting in January, the Committee decided that, rather than receive a general briefing from Executive Members, it would focus on particular topics and invite the relevant Cabinet member and officer to attend.

7.2 The Committee also asked the Chairman of the Committee and the Scrutiny Officer to meet the then Executive Member for Policy, Transport and Green Issues, Cllr Cunningham, to discuss ways for the Committee to better influence policy making in the future. A meeting took place on 2 February and the Scrutiny Officer updated the Committee on its outcome at the Committee's meeting in March.

7.3 At its meeting in March, the Committee asked the Scrutiny Officer to bring a report to its meeting in June to set out options for change; and decided to hold a workshop to discuss the best way forward. The workshop was very useful and its outcome is discussed below. Attendees were keen to hold another one in the summer.

## **8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

### The Current Situation

8.1 Presently the Committee examines many issues late in the process when there is limited scope for a meaningful contribution.

- Reports are usually seen the week before Cabinet. The most effective time to influence policy is several months beforehand.
- There are relatively few key decisions, with most decisions being made by other, sometimes less visible means.
- The Council's working definition of a key decision has changed.
- Items can be added to or removed from the Forward Plan at short notice.
- Some important aspects of the Council's routine business have little member oversight.
- Members can be unaware of problems as much of reporting process is mostly concerned with decision making.

8.2 The Committee has asked how it might and contribute more effectively to issues and impending policy changes and some possible ways are set out below. The Scrutiny Officer will talk through some examples of how this might work in practice. These new ways should enable the Committee to identify problems and issues more quickly and enter the process of policy development and decision making earlier.

### Workshop on 19 April

- 8.3 Cllrs Henry, Morris, Paterson, Green, Billing, Radcliffe, Dennis and Albert attended a workshop on 19 April, along with Cllr Cunningham and the Scrutiny Officer. The workshop was arranged to discuss how the Committee can have an earlier and more effective input into policy and other changes.
- 8.4 The workshop heard the Council's aim was to produce a Corporate Plan which better reflected the Council's objectives, with more emphasis on the Council's routine business. This change would provide the Committee with a tool to monitor how the Council was delivering its objectives. This will help the Committee by giving members a clearer idea of the main things the Council plans to do in 2017/18.
- 8.5 Alongside the Corporate Plan, the Committee will look at the individual service plans for 17/18. This will allow the Committee to make sure these align with the Corporate Plan and to enable members to see the main items of work coming up in 17/18. The Chief Executive will give a presentation to the Committee on this elsewhere on the agenda.
- 8.6 The workshop also considered which other sources of information the Committee can use, apart from the Forward Plan, to help inform its agenda. These are set out below. The Scrutiny Officer will speak to each of them, with examples, at the meeting.

### Options for Change

- 8.7 **The Corporate Plan** - This is the high level document setting out the Council's priorities and policy framework, the basis of priority-led budgeting. The Council's aim is to produce a Corporate Plan which better reflected the Council's objectives, with more emphasis on routine business. This would provide the Committee with a tool to monitor how the Council was delivering its objectives and give members a clearer idea of the main things the Council plans to do in 2017/18. A new Corporate Plan will be considered by Cabinet on 25 July. Until then, the existing plan remains in place and is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 8.8 **Service Plans** - Each service area produces a plan summarising its work for the forthcoming civic year. Each service plan should have an action plan setting out the main areas of work for each service area and it is here that members should be able to identify important areas of work at an earlier stage. The Council's service plans are available on the Council's website at <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/corporate-objectives>
- 8.9 **Risk Assessments** - The Council's has a dedicated system called Covalent which lists (among other things) the Council's main corporate risks and grades the risk by likelihood and impact. Covalent also contains the comprehensive Risk Register which identifies and quantifies the risks in each service area. All Members already have access to this system.
- 8.10 **The Revenue Monitoring Report** - A quarterly report to Cabinet detailing major changes in the revenue budget.
- 8.11 **The Capital Programme Monitoring Report** - The Council's Annual Budget setting meeting includes the Capital Programme Report which details the capital projects for current and future years. Cabinet receives quarterly monitoring reports which can be one of the best ways to keep track of how money is - or is not - being spent.

- 8.12 **Key Projects Monitoring Report** - This monitors a selection of the Council's key projects, usually focusing on important, longer and costlier projects. The Committee now receives a quarterly report.
- 8.13 **The Forward Plan** - This document identifies upcoming key decisions. The latest version available at the time of writing is attached at **Appendix B**.
- 8.14 **Members' Questions** - These have featured more in the past and could be a useful tool once again.
- 8.15 Other possible sources of information are:
- SMT's minutes
  - Group Leader and OSC Chair's Briefings
  - Project Boards
  - Asset Management Group
  - Public concern
  - The Members' Information Service

Handling the New Approach

- 8.16 Whatever is decided, there will need to be:
- screening of the extra material - by the Scrutiny Officer and individual members if they choose to; and
  - a longer lead in time to identify issues and make sure they are on the agenda.
- 8.17 Possible steps could include:
- Identify the possible issues via new sources of information / members / public
  - Group Leaders & Chair/Vice Chair OSC to discuss via e mail
  - Scrutiny Officer obtains a briefing on any pertinent issues
  - Decision about which items to put on the agenda
  - Officers produce a report and officers / Executive Members attend the Committee.

**July's Work Programme**

- 8.18 The following topics are already scheduled to be looked at in July:
- an update on play area closures; and
  - the revised Corporate Plan.
- 8.19 Members are asked to suggest additional topics based on the presentation made this evening. They can also suggest other topics after this meeting and before the next one provided they give the Chairman the authority to finalise the agenda.

**Task and Finish Groups**

- 8.20 In January, members prioritised the following topics:
- a) Consultation;
  - b) Impact of the Grants Policy Review;
  - c) Section 106 Funding.
- 8.21 The Committee has already agreed to move to fixed dates for Task and Finish Groups. Given election priorities and the absence of the lead officer on maternity leave, the first of these will begin in **July or August 2017** with **consultation** the first topic.
- 8.22 The Scrutiny Officer will draft a scope and circulate it for comment.



## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Under Section 6.2.5 of the Constitution the Committee is responsible for setting its own Work Programme.
- 9.2 Section 6.2.7 (u) of the Constitution allows the Committee “to appoint time limited task and finish Topic Groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet.”
- 9.3 The legal implications at paragraphs 9.1 and 9.2 reflect that the Committee has some latitude in the Constitution to set its own work programme. However there are three important further considerations to take into account in relation to the content of the report. Firstly, the Committee must retain the capacity to undertake the statutory requirements included within its terms of reference. Secondly, the quarterly revenue and capital monitoring reports are constitutionally the responsibility of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee to review. It would not be an effective use of time to also report on these to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Thirdly, any substantive change to the Committee’s approach which required a change in the Council’s Constitution would require approval by Full Council, as only Full Council can approve substantive changes to the Constitution.
- 9.4 Paragraph 6.2.4 of the Council’s Constitution states that “It is the responsibility of the Head of Paid Service to ensure appropriate officer support for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee” [underlining added for emphasis]. The proposals may require more support than is considered appropriate given the size and capacity of the Council workforce.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The scope of the options presented in section 8 could be quite wide, depending on how they are applied in practise. As detailed in the Human Resources implications (section 14), there could be significant impacts on Officer time in terms of writing reports, analysing information and attending Committee meetings. The number of Officers has reduced over recent years in line with funding pressures, and this makes it unlikely that this could be absorbed within current workloads. Even if it could be absorbed, it would limit the time that Officers could spend on other activities. From a financial perspective this could reduce the amount of time that can be spent on identifying and delivering cost reductions, income generation and project management.
- 10.2 Whilst not significant, for Officers below Senior Management level there is a Committee Attendance Allowance that is payable at £24.20 per Officer per meeting. This is in addition to providing Time of in Lieu.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Effective scrutiny of decisions and processes can help reduce the risk of making an incorrect decision. However this should always be balanced against the potential impacts of over-scrutiny which could lead to decisions not being made, or not being made at the right time.

- 11.2 Members of the Committee will always be reliant on Officers to summarise information so that there is a manageable amount to scrutinise. The proposals require the Scrutiny Officer to screen the additional information suggested in sections 8.7 to 8.15. It may be difficult for the Scrutiny Officer to ensure that this screening is both concise and captures all the relevant information. There is a risk that this could make the scrutiny less effective.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 There are no direct equality implications arising from the report. However the impact on the additional reporting to the committee may affect the ability of officers to discharge their deliver of services to the diverse community of North Hertfordshire.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

## **14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 The change of approach suggested is likely to have a significant impact on Officer time in terms of reprioritisation of projects or their scope or their timetable and resources. Delivery of service plans to achieve the Council’s agreed Corporate plan objectives is the responsibility of the Head of Service. Projects often require significant support service contributions as well. There would also be additional resources for report writing, collecting and analysing information and attending Committee meetings.
- 14.2 The number of Officers actually in employment at the beginning of the financial year has reduced over the years of austerity from an FTE in 2008/9 of 367 to an FTE of 274 in 2017/18 due to the years of acute funding pressures. This makes it unlikely that these proposals could be absorbed within current workloads.

## **15. APPENDICES**

- 15.1 Appendix A – Corporate Plan for 2017-21
- 15.2 Appendix B – Forward Plan for 16 May 2017

## **16. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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## **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

17.1 None.

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



## **CORPORATE PLAN 2017/21**

## Introduction and foreword

### From the Leader of the Council, Cllr Lynda Needham

Local Government faces a period of significant and at times quite rapid change brought about by new or revised legislation, significant changes to how the Council is funded and, for North Hertfordshire, a number of changes within the district, its people and how we work together to maintain the environment so many of us evidently enjoy. It is important that we regularly review the Council's objectives, and its delivery of services to ensure they are still fit for purpose.

We maintain a clear vision for the District, 'Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place for people to live, work and prosper' but we cannot deliver the vision alone; it is clear that we must work with our partners, our businesses, our urban and rural communities in order to achieve this.

This Corporate Plan document itself is one of the many tools we use to keep people informed and increase their awareness of the work to which the Council will commit its resources.

The District's Local Plan, which we anticipate having its final consultation in the Autumn, will inform both the number of homes and location of housing required in North Herts in the longer term. Whilst it will prove challenging, it is important we have sufficient homes in the right places, with adequate infrastructure to support them, for successive generations and for people to work here.

North Hertfordshire District Council continues to deliver high quality, efficient services to residents against a backdrop of reducing budgets, and sustained reduction in central government grant. NHDC will need to continue to significantly increase the level of savings made and, where possible, generate income to sustain other services – this is not unique to North Hertfordshire. The continued strong leadership from both elected members and officers will be paramount in continuing to challenge, monitor and support the Council to deliver these improvements, especially against changing needs and at times, increasing demands for other services.

In order to inform our objectives and ensure we are reflecting the wishes of our residents in both the short and longer term, we will use information gathered in our recent District Wide Survey 2015; full details can be found online <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-services/publications-and-consultations/district-wide-survey>

Comparison with other authorities through that survey shows that 96% of residents are satisfied with North Herts as a place to live, compared with 82% nationally. 83% of North Herts' residents are satisfied with the way the Council runs things, against 67% nationally. 65% of residents feel NHDC keep them well or fairly well informed about the services and benefits it provides, against a national average of 61% for other authorities. This demonstrates very clearly how much our residents value the place in which they live and the services that the Council provides.

## KNOWING OUR COMMUNITIES

In any review of services delivered by the Council, either alone or in partnership, it is important to take account of what we know about how our residents live now, and what changes may need to be taken into account in the short, medium and longer term.

The District of North Hertfordshire has a population of 131,000 (mid term estimate 2014). The area is made up of 23 wards. The population density across North Hertfordshire is 3.40 persons per hectare, well below the 6.94 average for Hertfordshire, but which also demonstrates the contrast of a district with large rural areas surrounding its four main urban settlements.

Official statistics indicate that the population is likely to increase over the next 15 years by just over 24,000 residents (population estimate at 2031 – 153,400) This is due to a combination of factors, including people living longer, changes in social patterns, and the attractiveness of the District as a place to live. This will put considerable pressure not just on our housing numbers but vital social support mechanisms such as schools and GP surgeries as well as our transport infrastructure.

The mean age of the population for North Herts is 40 years, identical to the mean age for the East of England region, and 39 years for All England. The life expectancy at birth for people living in North Hertfordshire is 79.8 years for males, and 82.5 years for females. This compares favourably with the England life expectancy at birth for males at 78.3 years and 82.3 years for females for the same period (2006-10). Within North Hertfordshire, Letchworth Wilbury has the lowest life expectancy at birth for males at 76.4 years. Weston and Sandon has the highest life expectancy at birth for females at 88.0 years.

It is estimated that 19.3% of adults in North Hertfordshire District smoke (2014 data) against the All England estimate of 18%. The number of adults over 40 years seeking help to stop smoking increased between 2009-2013, but the increasing incidence of younger people starting to smoke, and often from an early age, remains a concern.

13.0% of children measured in Year 6 (2014/15) were overweight or obese (161 pupils), comparing very favourably with the All England average of 19%.

62.2% of North Hertfordshire adults are physically active. Between 2011-13, cardiovascular death for under 75s was 74.09 people per 100,000, slightly above the Hertfordshire average. Long term poor health or disability affects 3.9% of population, although this is measured by response to questionnaire so much may lie in the perception of what is a long term health condition or degree to which any disability affects day to day life.

Projected population changes for North Hertfordshire from 2012-2037 shows the impact that higher life expectancy has in regard to the age of the general population, with a higher proportion of our residents living into the following age bands;

70-74 years	81.63% rise
75-95 years	65.91% rise
80-84 years	72.73% rise
85-90 years	123.91% rise
90+ years	246.16 % rise

In real terms, each of these bands represents 2000-3500 residents by 2037, but with such growth also come differing degrees of need for support, not only from the District Council, but also health, social care and colleagues from the voluntary and community sector.

The provision of unpaid care is becoming increasingly common as the population ages, as is the age at which children, spouses or partners, including those approaching or already in retirement themselves, start to or continue to care for their relatives. This makes it an

important social policy issue as it influences and is influenced by the supply of in-home and residential care, but also has implications on employment opportunities, social and leisure activities, and the health status of those providing care.

In North Hertfordshire, 2,343 people said that they provide 50 or more hours of unpaid care per week (PH survey 2013). Within North Hertfordshire, Letchworth Wilbury has the highest percentage of residents saying they provide 50 hours or more of unpaid care at 2.8% per cent. Arbury has the lowest percentage of residents providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care at 1.1% per cent.

The national record, Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015, measures seven factors which impact a household's lifestyle; these include level of income, access to adequate housing, employment, health, education, crime levels and deprivation factors most affecting either the youngest or most elderly members of the community. Of the 32,844 neighbourhoods ranked nationally, those which are in the top 30% are seen as being most deprived; North Hertfordshire has four such areas.

Letchworth South East	5,822 out of 32,844
Oughton	6,681 out of 32,844
Letchworth Wilbury	7,262 out of 32,844
Letchworth Grange	8,368 out of 32,844

The district has significant diversity, with a black and minority ethnic population of 13,359 people. This is 10.5% of the total population, compared with 14.6% for England, and 9.2% for the East of England region.

Overall 15.2% of residents in North Hertfordshire describe themselves as from a non white UK population. This compares with a non white UK population of 14.8% for the East of England region, and 20.3% for England. In North Hertfordshire the non white UK population includes 19,225 people.

It is important for the Council to review and understand changes and trends in its local population; this enables us to prioritise areas where we can work, including with a range of partner agencies, to help to continue to improve the lives of our residents.



## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE – THE DISTRICT AND ITS OBJECTIVES

### OUR VISION:

*Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper*

North Hertfordshire District Council is committed to working with its local communities, to continue delivering good quality services that reflect the local priorities and the resources we, and our delivery partners have available to us. We use a range of information to identify priorities such as consultation with our residents, local businesses and, population data, which not only helps inform the Council's current work, but its planning for the future population too.

There are three objectives for the Council for 2017/21, which are

- **To work with our partners to provide an attractive and safe environment for our residents, where diversity is welcomed and the disadvantaged are supported**
- **To promote sustainable growth within our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities, whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage**
- **To ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints**

We also continue to deliver a wide range of services which we refer to as our 'business as usual' – routine waste collection, recycling, street cleansing, food inspection, collecting Council Tax and Non-domestic (business) rates, finding temporary and permanent homes for residents, etc. When we deliver these services day to day, we are not complacent about their individual cost to residents and we are constantly looking for more economic, efficient and effective ways of delivery; Services may not always be delivered by North Hertfordshire District Council alone, but increasingly in a partnership or alternative delivery model, but always with the impact on service users foremost in our minds. We are also increasingly looking for ways in which we can provide services which could generate an income for re-investment in order to protect the longer term delivery of other Council services.

None of the objectives above can be addressed in isolation, as each of the three necessarily interact and impact another, as described below.

**OBJECTIVE 1: Attractive and Thriving****To work with our partners to provide an attractive and safe environment for our residents, where diversity is welcomed and the disadvantaged are supported**

In the Council's most recent Citizens Panel survey (2014), respondents were asked to rank in order of importance, the three features they most valued about the district; 'low levels of crime' was identified as the most important. We know from working with our community safety partners that North Hertfordshire remains one of the safest places to live in the country.

Our Community Safety Partnership has the fourth lowest crime figures compared to the rest of the county; with 41.9 crimes per 1000 of the population in comparison to 47.3 crimes per 1000 of the population for Hertfordshire. However, we also know that whilst the general trend is for crime in North Herts to continue to fall, the reporting of domestic abuse is on the rise; whilst this could be viewed negatively as a rise in the actual number of incidents, it also demonstrates greater confidence among those who may be victims of abuse that their report will be taken seriously, handled sensitively and appropriate interventions made. We will continue to work closely with our Community Safety Partnership and support providers to ensure this position continues.

The district is generally quite prosperous yet deprivation also exists and there are a number of pockets where deprivation is classified as "most deprived". Whilst efforts to tackle all the related causes of poverty and deprivation must be planned in the longer term, the Council provides access to debt and budget management advice (including through the Citizens Advice service which we continue to fund), and offers apprenticeships and work experience in a range of services to provide a step onto the career ladder.

The demand for housing in the district is high and market cost housing is increasingly out of reach for many households. Those without adequate housing and who cannot afford to buy or rent suitable housing in the open market are said to be in 'housing need'. The Council is committed to meeting this housing need through the provision of affordable housing in the district. We are also committed to working with our health and other partners to identify and address homelessness, recognising the linkages between poor living conditions, rough sleeping and mental and physical health conditions.

North Hertfordshire's already large number of people over the age of seventy as a percentage of overall population is due to rise significantly by 2037. This requires consideration of future services supporting older people to live at home independently; not only the Council's Careline service, but also working with partners to consider how best to support carers and assist in increasing awareness of and support for those living with dementia and other similar conditions; we are already in the early stages of developing a multi agency Dementia Alliance for the district to maintain support longer term.

North Hertfordshire has always had a large number of people who volunteer; this enables a wide range of local projects to progress and being engaged in a worthwhile activity also benefits individuals' long term mental and physical health. In the Citizens Panel survey, 16% of respondents said they would be likely to want to join a community volunteer group which would help maintain and enhance open spaces on the Council's behalf; this would further enhance the work already underway with charitable groups such as Groundwork enhancing and maintaining the appearance of our parks and open spaces.

We are aware of the threat that changing demographics present to our rural communities; we will commit to working with them to ensure appropriate development will allow them to remain attractive and thriving, whilst also continuing to support other rural initiatives throughout the

course of this Plan. We aim to ensure North Hertfordshire is an **attractive and thriving** place to live and we will deliver this objective by;

- Delivering identified improvements to green space, to include
  - road and pathway improvements to the Hitchin (St Johns Road) Cemetery
  - refurbishment of and improvement to vehicular access to the King George V Pavillion, Hitchin and
  - improvements to car parking and bridge access at Walsworth Common, Hitchin
  - commence consultation on options for wheeled sport provision at Newmarket Road, Royston
- Ensuring that our renewed waste and street cleansing contracts, continue to provide as efficient and effective a service as possible, whilst continuing to improve recycling rates,
- Continuing to explore options for joint delivery of waste, street cleansing and recycling services, including the most efficient means of transportation and disposal
- Investigating a range of options to improve use of Council assets
- Grant funding organisations sharing in the delivery of our objectives
- Review use of green space across the district to ensure it is properly aligned to usage

## **OBJECTIVE 2: Prosper and Protect**

**To promote sustainable growth within our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities, whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage**

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) undertaken in the preparation of the district's 'Local Plan' considered the amount of land available for housing development, with particular emphasis on demonstrating that there will be sufficient land available to meet future housing targets. Consultation on a range of potential sites for housing development will take place in Autumn 2016, and will inform the final Local Plan submitted in March 2017 for adoption.

The district has a considerable daily outflow of commuters, to highly skilled employment mainly in central London but also to the high tech and development industries which surround Cambridge. For those who remain within the district each day the retail or hospitality sectors represent our largest employers. We will work with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP), the business sector, three Business Improvement Districts (BID) companies to identify opportunities for inward investment to increase our employment base and encourage new enterprise.

North Hertfordshire has four town centres, three of which have BID companies in place; these have used the additional business rate levy to contribute to a community cinema and tourist information office in Royston, street wardens and trade recycling schemes in Hitchin and food fairs and similar activities in Letchworth. We will continue to support the work of these companies to maintain the footfall in our town centres and to maintain their viability, which will include a review of parking.

We recognise that tensions exist in creating opportunity for growth to sustain the local population, the impact on rail and road networks and the green and open spaces so important to our residents. The Local Plan will identify areas where development may take place (and the scale of such development) and alongside that, we will review both existing and future green space provision.

We will continue to promote schemes, including through working with our partners, to increase energy efficiency of residents' homes and reduce use of water, generate power and increase our sustainability for the longer term.

We aim to ensure North Hertfordshire is a place where people can **prosper** and we **protect** our heritage and will deliver this objective by;

- Submission of a Local Plan for North Herts, to the following timescales;
  - March 2017: Submission of North Hertfordshire's local plan for examination
  - Summer 2017: Examination
  - March 2018: Adoption of the new local plan
- Continue to implement our Economic Development Strategy for the district, including through the provision of an Economic Development Officer, to work closely in partnership, increasing inward investment and business development opportunities
- Complete the redevelopment of the Council's office accommodation and explore opportunities to share that accommodation with other partners, to increase financial and resource efficiency
- Completing the regeneration of John Barker Place in Hitchin to provide new homes and better shops
- Work with BIDs and relevant partners to convene events such as Small Business Saturday, and explore alternative options for vacant premises to enhance the retail offer of our town centres
- Agree projects for delivery of improvements to urban and rural facilities over four years from 2016 through the £1m Capital Enhancement Fund
- Review of the Council's Car Parking Strategy to ensure it supports our corporate objectives

### **OBJECTIVE 3: Responsive and Efficient**

**To ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints**

The results of the Council's 'districtwide survey' 2015 shows that residents perception of the way the Council runs its services remains high (83%); whilst this has dropped marginally since the last survey in 2013 (86%), this remains well above the latest Local Government Association Benchmark for satisfaction of 67%. In 2015, 79% of residents felt that the services provided by NHDC remain of good quality, 67% felt that the Council remains committed to making the area cleaner and greener and that 63% believe we treat all types of people fairly. The lowest level of agreement is made in regard to the statement 'North Hertfordshire District Council makes an effort to find out what local people want' at 48%; the number of residents who felt informed about how to get involved in local decision making (44%) is also low, so we know we need to increase existing levels of engagement with our communities. Changes arising from the Care Act 2014 and confirmation of devolved funding such as under the current Better Care Fund will affect the long term care of the elderly, and we also have a part to play in supporting our ageing community.

Our successful Careline scheme has continued to expand its vital support services across and outside Hertfordshire, to enable older people to live at home longer independently; we also know from our 2015 residents' survey that satisfaction with the service, at 100% of users, remains exceptional. This is one of a range of more 'commercial' activities we will increasingly explore, using opportunities afforded by the Localism Act and Deregulation Act; the importance of reviewing all sources of income to ensure they are at optimum levels to provide greater financial resilience for the future remains a high priority.

The Council acts as custodian of local assets maintaining and managing them, either through rental, operation by external groups, or through long term lease agreements for and on behalf of its residents. The authority will consider how to continue to achieve best consideration from these assets, including through potential transfer to local, viable community organisations; this also reflects the general spirit of the Localism Act 2012, to increase community rights. The recent announcement of 30 hours free childcare for pre-school children of working parents may also offer opportunities for joint working between the Council and care providers to establish sufficient facilities to meet the increased demand for spaces.

The Council's Waste and Street Cleansing contract due for renewal in 2018 will be extended, so we can take a look at the feasibility of partnering with another authority, to bring greater economies of scale, optimise income from recyclates where possible, and reduce unit costs still further.

We will work with our partners in Public Health Hertfordshire to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, by integrating health into the work of all our services, continuing to offer opportunities for physical exercise and use of outside space, and monitoring food hygiene and air quality.

We aim to ensure North Hertfordshire is **responsive** and **efficient** and aim to deliver this objective by;

- Continuing to explore alternative options for effective and more efficient service delivery wherever possible, including through partnership, joint working or more 'commercial' models where they are appropriate
- Working with our partners, Stevenage Leisure Limited, to enable the extended North Herts Leisure Centre to offer an increased range of physical activities
- Continuing to extend the Council's Careline Service 'offer', including use of 'telecare' and similar technology, to ensure elderly or disabled residents have a greater ability to remain living at home safely, but independently;
- Working with health partners to optimise opportunities for older people to remain living independently but well supported at home,
- Working with community and voluntary sector partners to facilitate appropriate, integrated services not only for those being cared for in the community, but all the more importantly, for their carers
- For children/young people to be offered opportunity to increase activity to prevent longer term ill-health, working through our leisure providers, schools and Sport England funded schemes
- Roll out competitive Building Control Services with six other Hertfordshire authorities
- Optimising use, management and profitability of the Council's assets, including consideration of long term lease 'transfer' or similar to sustain community and social opportunities, and for land, consider options to include social or affordable housing
- Reviewing resources to ensure the Council continues to deliver key services cost effectively
- Increase awareness of opportunities for volunteers (formal and informal) and increasing publicity for schemes requiring volunteers, through the Council's Outlook magazine, website, social media and working with partner agencies; this to include latest initiatives such as #teamherts.org.uk
- Review how the Council and its partners can better engage with and build capacity for its communities, and in doing so, increase awareness how to become more engaged with and in the democratic process

### PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REPORTING

All projects will be subject to sound business cases being provided, and specific targets established as they are introduced and the Council's performance against these will be monitored and reported; this will be quarterly through the Council's Senior Management

Team, and to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee twice a year. Any exceptions in regard to delivery of a top risk project are reported on to the Council's Cabinet as necessary under their terms of reference. General project risks are reported via the Council's Risk Management Group and onward to the Finance Audit and Risk Committee. Details of dates, times and agenda for meetings are available on the Council's website [www.north-herts.gov.uk](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk).

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

# Forward Plan of Key Decisions – 16 May 2017

The Forward Plan contains brief details of Key Decisions that the Council is likely to take over the next four month period and beyond. You will also find details of contacts who can provide further information and hear your views. **Please note that the dates of some of the decisions may change from month to month, please check with Committee Services on 01462 474403 before deciding to attend a meeting.**

Decision required	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker	Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested	Confirmation that other documents <u>may</u> be submitted to the Decision Maker	Procedure for requesting details of other documents
Revenue Budget Outturn 2016/17 <b>(3/3/17)</b>	Finance, Audit & Risk Committee	Council (via Cabinet)	19 July 2017 (via 13 June 2017)	Report	Norma Atlay <a href="mailto:norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk">norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474297	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Annual Treasury Management Review 2016/17 <b>(3/3/17)</b>	Finance, Audit & Risk Committee	Council (via Cabinet)	19 July 2017 (via 13 June 2017)	Report	Norma Atlay <a href="mailto:norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk">norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474297	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Capital Programme Outturn 2016/17 <b>(3/3/17)</b>	Finance, Audit & Risk Committee	Council (via Cabinet)	19 July 2017 (via 13 June 2017)	Report	Norma Atlay <a href="mailto:norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk">norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474297	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Corporate Objectives 2018 to 2022 <b>(3/3/17)</b>		Council (via Cabinet)	19 July 2017 (via 13 June 2017)	Report	Norma Atlay <a href="mailto:norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk">norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474297	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Review of the Council's Byelaws <b>(5/5/17)</b>		Council	19 July 2017	Report	Anthony Roche <a href="mailto:anthony.roche@north-herts.gov.uk">anthony.roche@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474588	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Baldock, Bygrave & Clothall neighbourhood area designation <b>(5/5/17)</b>		Cabinet	25 July 2017 (tbc)	Report; Map of proposed area	Clare Skeels <a href="mailto:clare.skeels@north-herts.gov.uk">clare.skeels@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474424	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Review of Supplementary Planning Guidance & Supplementary Planning Documents <b>(5/5/17)</b>		Cabinet	25 July 2017 (tbc)	Report	Laura Allen <a href="mailto:laura.allen@north-herts.gov.uk">laura.allen@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474826	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6

**APPENDIX B**

<b>Decision required</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker</b>	<b>Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested</b>	<b>Confirmation that other documents may be submitted to the Decision Maker</b>	<b>Procedure for requesting details of other documents</b>
Corporate Plan 2018 to 2022 <i>(3/3/17)</i>		Council (via Cabinet)	31 Aug 2017 (via 25 July 2017)	Report	Norma Atlay <a href="mailto:norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk">norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474297	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-2023 <i>(3/3/17)</i>		Council (via Cabinet)	31 Aug 2017 (via 25 July 2017)	Report	Norma Atlay <a href="mailto:norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk">norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474297	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Proposals for deployment of the Flexible Homeless Support Grant <i>(16/5/17)</i>		Cabinet	26 Sep 2017	Report	Martin Lawrence <a href="mailto:martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk">martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474250	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Taxi Licensing Policy 2018 <i>(6/11/15)</i>		Cabinet	19 Dec 2017	Report; Proposed Policy	Steven Cobb <a href="mailto:steven.cobb@north-herts.gov.uk">steven.cobb@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474833	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Street Trading Policy 2018 <i>(5/5/17)</i>		Cabinet	19 Dec 2017	Report; Proposed Policy	Steven Cobb <a href="mailto:steven.cobb@north-herts.gov.uk">steven.cobb@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474833	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Animal Licensing Policy 2018 <i>(5/5/17)</i>		Cabinet	19 Dec 2017	Report; Proposed Policy	Steven Cobb <a href="mailto:steven.cobb@north-herts.gov.uk">steven.cobb@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474833	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Award of Joint Waste and Street Cleansing Contract <i>(5/5/17)</i>		Cabinet	To be advised	Report	Chloe Hipwood <a href="mailto:chloe.hipwood@north-herts.gov.uk">chloe.hipwood@north-herts.gov.uk</a> 01462 474304	Yes	via the Contact Officer named in Column 6