

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISION SHEET

**Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices,
Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City
on Tuesday, 17th December, 2019 at 7.30 pm**

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Helen Oliver, Carol Stanier and Kay Tart.

2 MINUTES - 31 OCTOBER 2019

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting;
- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Chairman reminded those present that the Council had declared a Climate Emergency. This was a serious decision and meant that, as this was an emergency, all of us, officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.
- (4) 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;
- (5) The Chairman asked that Officers announce their name and their designation to the meeting when invited to speak;
- (6) The Chairman advised that he was changing the order of items and would be taking Item 13 - Introduction of Charges for Use of Greenspaces at the end of the agenda.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Review of Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum

Ms Jackie McDonald thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address Cabinet and gave a verbal presentation regarding the review of Hitchin Town Hall.

The Chairman thanked Ms McDonald for her presentation.

The Local Plan

Mr Roger Lovegrove thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address Cabinet and gave a verbal presentation regarding the Local Plan.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lovegrove for his presentation.

The Chairman advised that two further members of the public had registered to speak regarding the Review of Hitchin Town Hall, but had subsequently advised that they were unable to attend.

6 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

A – Item Referred from Overview and Scrutiny: 23 October 2019 - Review of Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Report of the Hitchin Town Hall Review Panel, (Appendix A) be noted and the recommendations, as contained in part D of the report, be accepted;
- (2) That the following recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be accepted:
 - (i) That the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, particularly the way in which the Council works with Community Groups/Partners be noted;
 - (ii) That a robust system of mediation be established;
 - (iii) That an effective intervention process that results in suitable progressive remedial action following any mediation be put into place;
 - (iv) That dedicated Project Management that is adequately resourced, as recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be put into place;
 - (v) That a summarised version of the recommendations, (Part D of the Report) be incorporated into all large briefing documents to enable the production of a Code of Conduct which could inform any future projects;
 - (vi) That a clear Intervention Protocol be written and adopted within a reasonable timescale, and included within the Terms of Reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (a separate stand alone paragraph that the Committee will understand to be the process followed when it is deemed necessary for a decision regarding a project is “called in”); and
 - (vii) That the Council’s Procurement Procedures be reviewed as part of the review of the Constitution and continue to be followed and updated regularly to ensure it is adequately robust.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To enable Cabinet to comment on and consider the recommendations regarding the review into Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project.

B – Item Referred from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee: 5 December 2019 - Draft Budget 2020/21

RESOLVED: That the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 December 2019 regarding the Draft Budget 2020/21 be considered with Item 9.

C – Item Referred from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee: 5 December 2019 - Second Quarter Revenue Monitoring 2019/20

RESOLVED: That the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 December 2019 regarding Second Quarter Revenue Monitoring 2019/20 be considered with Item 10.

D – Item Referred from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee: 5 December 2019 - Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Mid-Year Review 2019/20

RESOLVED: That the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 December 2019 regarding Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Mid-Year Review 2019/20 be considered with Item 11.

7 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report on strategic planning matters be noted;
- (2) That the submission in Appendix A be noted:
- (3) That the use of Conservation Area Character Statements for Ashwell, Barkway, Barley, Bendish, Codicote, Croft Lane, Ickleford, Norton, Reed, Roe Green, Rushden, Sandon, Southern Green, Wallington, Whitwell and Therfield, as listed in paragraph 8.4.2 of this report as material considerations in decision making for planning applications and in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans be endorsed;
- (4) That the Strategic Director – Regulatory, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport, be requested to respond to the consultation regarding the expansion of London Luton Airport on behalf of the Council stating that NHDC objects to the proposals for expansion.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To keep Cabinet informed of recent development on strategic planning matters and progress on the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

8 PRESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINERS REPORT

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the examiner's report for the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan should be noted;
- (2) That following the inclusion of the Examiner's proposed modifications and one minor modification set out in paragraph 4.2 to the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan, as set out in Appendix B, be approved to proceed to a referendum;
- (3) That the Counting Officer be instructed to conduct a referendum on the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan;
- (4) That the decision to "make" the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan be delegated to the Service Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: To progress the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan, enable a referendum to take place and, if more than 50% of those voting in favour of the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan to "make" the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

9 DRAFT BUDGET 2020/21

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet note the funding forecasts for 2020/21 onwards, and that (especially significant for 2021/22 onwards) these will be subject to change;
- (2) That the comments made at the budget workshops in regard to the draft budget be noted;

- (3) That the comments made at the budget workshops in regard to the inclusion of the capital investments in the draft budget be noted;
- (4) That the risk in relation to the timing of capital receipts and that this might result in a need to borrow for capital purposes, which would result in additional revenue costs to those already reflected be noted;
- (5) That it be noted that Council Tax increases for 2020/21 will be in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (i.e. the maximum amount allowed without the need for a local referendum).
- (6) That it be approved that the funding surplus in 2020/21 be transferred to a funding equalisation reserve. This reserve will then be released in future years to help balance the budget;
- (7) That the need to start budget planning for 2021/22 (and beyond) early in the new financial year (2020/21) and the proposed process be noted;
- (8) That R26 – Additional Community Engagement Officer post be removed from the New Revenue Pressures and Investment Proposals (Appendix B).

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that all relevant factors are taken in to consideration when arriving at a proposed budget for 2020/21, to be considered by Full Council on 6 February 2020;
- (2) To ensure that the medium term impacts of decisions are considered, and how a balanced budget will be set for future years.

10 SECOND QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING 2019/20

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report entitled Second Quarter Monitoring 2019/20 be noted;
- (2) That the changes to the 2019/20 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a £360k decrease in net expenditure be approved;
- (3) That the changes to the 2020/21 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a £188k increase in net expenditure be noted. These will be incorporated in the draft revenue budget for 2020/21;
- (4) That the write-off of the debtor invoice of £130,566.75 raised to CoinCo International PLC in January 2015, as explained in paragraph 8.3 be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: Members are able to monitor, make adjustments within the overall budgetary framework and request appropriate action of Services who do not meet the budget targets set as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.

11 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) MID-YEAR REVIEW 2019/20

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the forecast expenditure of £5.886million in 2019/20 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.2 refers, be noted;

Tuesday, 17th December, 2019

- (2) That the adjustments to the capital programme for 2019/20 onwards as a result of the revised timetable of schemes detailed in table 2, increasing the estimated spend in 2020/21 and beyond by £1.369million be approved;
- (3) That the position of the availability of capital resources, as detailed in table 3 paragraph 8.6 and the requirement to keep the capital programme under review for affordability be noted;

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2019 be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded;
- (2) To ensure the Council's continued compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management and the Local Government Act 2003 and that the Council manages its exposure to interest and capital risk.

12 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME (CTRS) 2020/2021

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the CTRS position relating to this and previous financial years be noted;
- (2) That it be noted that a full review of the CTRS is underway and that further recommendations for changes to the Scheme will be presented to Cabinet in 2020 for implementation in 2021/2022.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (1) The following proposed changes to the CTRS for 2020/2021:
 - A) That a de minimis amount of £2.50 per week be introduced for reductions in entitlement, with no de minimis amount for increases in entitlement;
 - B) That any payments made under the Windrush Compensation Scheme be disregarded for the purposes of CTRS.
- (2) That the level of Scheme funding to be allocated to the Parish, Town and Community Councils will be the same as 2019/2020 (£38,885).

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that the Council complies with the requirement to ensure that a Scheme is in place by 11 March 2020.

13 LAND OFF TEMPLARS LANE, PRESTON

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the land off Templars Lane, Preston be declared surplus to the District Council's requirements and then placed on the open market for sale on a subject to planning basis for residential development;
- (2) Following receipt of offers for the land identified in Appendix A, the decision to accept an offer is delegated to the Service Director for Resources, in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and IT. Offers will be evaluated against alternative development options.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To provide a financial receipt to help fund the District Council's capital programme;
- (2) Marketing the land on the open market will maximise interest from developers and satisfy the requirements to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable.

14 LAND AT THE GREEN, NEWNHAM

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the land at The Green, Newnham be declared surplus to the District Council's requirements and then placed on the open market for sale on a subject to planning or unconditional basis for residential development;
- (2) Following receipt of offers for the land identified in Appendix A, the decision to accept an offer is delegated to the Service Director for Resources, in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and IT. Offers will be evaluated against alternative development options.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To provide a financial receipt to help fund the District Council's capital programme;
- (2) Marketing the land on the open market will maximise interest from developers and satisfy the requirements to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable.

15 INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES FOR THE USE OF GREENSPACES

Prior to the item being considered Councillor Paul Clark declared a declarable interest in that he was one of the Council's representatives to the King George V Playing Fields User Group. He was also the Vice President of the Hitchin Rugby Club that played at the King George V Playing Fields. He advised that he would not take part in the debate or vote and would leave the room for the duration of the item.

Prior to the item being considered Councillor Judi Billing declared a declarable interest in that she was a member of the Cabinet Sub-Committee (Council Charities). She advised that she would not take part in the debate or vote and would leave the room for the duration of the item.

Prior to the item being considered Councillor Steve Jarvis declared a declarable interest in that he was a member of the Cabinet Sub-Committee (Council Charities). He advised that he would not take part in the debate or vote and would leave the room for the duration of the item.

Prior to the item being considered Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg declared a declarable interest in that she was a member of the Cabinet Sub-Committee (Council Charities). She advised that she would not take part in the debate or vote and would leave the room for the duration of the item.

Prior to the item being considered Councillor Ian Albert declared a declarable interest in that he was one of the Council's representatives to the King George V Playing Fields User Group. He advised that he would remain in the room and take part in the debate and vote.

Councillors Billing, Clark, Dennis-Harburg and Jarvis left the room.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the introduction of charges for the hire of multi use games areas and for the use of public open spaces for events at weekends and after 6pm on weekdays be approved as detailed in paragraphs:
 - 10.2a One off public events in parks and open spaces;
 - 10.2b Hire of Multi Use Games Areas;
 - 10.2c Fitness Groups use of parks and open spaces;
- (2) The introduction of Fees and Charges for the hire of the Muga at King George V Recreation Ground at weekends and after 6pm on weekdays will only be adopted upon the approval of the Cabinet Sub - Committee (Council Charities).

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The introduction of charges for the use of Muga's will help manage demand and off set the ongoing running costs especially in relation to the use of the flood lights;
- (2) The charging for events that use our public open spaces will help offset the administrative costs of issuing a Land Licence for each event and contribute towards ongoing maintenance costs of each location;
- (3) Many of our open spaces are used for private businesses for their own commercial purposes such as fitness groups and dog walking companies. These businesses are using the open spaces free of charge and are not currently contributing towards the maintenance of the public open spaces that they use.