

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



18 October 2019

Our Ref HD/Cabinet/31.10.19
Your Ref.
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To: Members of the Cabinet:

Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn, Leader of the Council (Chairman)
Councillor Paul Clark, Deputy Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Planning and Transport (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance and IT
Councillor Judi Billing MBE, Executive Member for Community Engagement
Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management
Councillor Gary Grindal, Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health
Councillor Keith Hoskins MBE, Executive Member for Enterprise and Co-Operative Development
Councillor Steve Jarvis, Executive Member for Environment and Leisure

Deputy Executive Members: Councillors Ruth Brown, Ian Mantle, Sam North, Helen Oliver, Sean Prendergast, Carol Stanier and Kay Tart

You are invited to attend a

MEETING OF THE CABINET

to be held in the

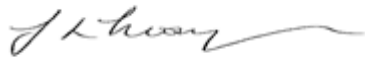
**COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON
ROAD, LETCHWORTH**

on

THURSDAY, 31ST OCTOBER, 2019 AT 7.30 PM

****MEMBERS PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU DOWNLOAD ALL
AGENDAS AND REPORTS VIA THE MOD.GOV APPLICATION
ON YOUR TABLET BEFORE ATTENDING THE MEETING****

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Thompson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeanette Thompson
Service Director – Legal and Community

Agenda

Part I

Item		Page
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2.	MINUTES - 24 SEPTEMBER 2019 To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 24 September 2019.	(Pages 5 - 14)
3.	NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed 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.	
4.	CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS 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, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.	
5.	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.	
6.	ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES Any Items referred from other committees will be circulated as soon as they are available.	
7.	STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – REGULATORY To provide an update on planning matters affecting the District.	(Pages 15 - 40)
8.	COUNCIL PLAN 2020-2025 AND COUNCIL OBJECTIVES 2020-2025 REPORT OF THE POLICY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER To review and approve the Council Plan and Objectives for 2020-2025; approve the proposed actions and achievements of the Council	(Pages 41 - 58)

- 9. THE GOVERNMENT'S REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SCHEME** (Pages
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - REGULATORY 59 - 64)

The Government has announced arrangements for extending its refugee resettlement programme beyond 2020, when its three largest current resettlement schemes are due to conclude. It is seeking pledges from local authorities to participate in the first year of this new global resettlement scheme.

- 10. LAND AT WINDMILL CLOSE, BARKWAY** (Pages
REPORT OF THE INTERIM PROPERTY CONSULTANT 65 - 82)

To seek approval for the declaration as surplus to Council requirements approximately 2.23 acres of land at Windmill Close, Barkway.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY

ON TUESDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER, 2019 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb (Chairman), Councillor Paul Clark (Vice-Chairman), Ian Albert, Keith Hoskins, Steve Jarvis, Ruth Brown, Ian Mantle and Carol Stanier*

In Attendance: *David Scholes (Chief Executive), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Ian Fullstone (Service Director - Regulatory), Howard Crompton (Service Director - Customers), Nigel Smith (Strategic Planning Manager), Geraldine Goodwin (Revenues Manager) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting 3 members of the public.*

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 10 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Judi Billing, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Gary Grindal, Sam North, Helen Oliver, Sean Prendergast and Kay Tart.

Jeanette Thompson, Service Director – Legal and Community sent her apologies that she was unable to attend.

38 MINUTES - 30 JULY 2019

Audio Recording – 35 seconds

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb, seconded by Councillor Paul Clark and:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 30 July 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

39 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 58 seconds

The Chairman advised that the Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (in the absence of the Chairman of the Committee) had agreed for an urgent item to be heard. This item was listed on the agenda as Business Rate Pooling 2020/21 (Minute 48 refers).

40 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 1 minute 18 seconds

- (1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) 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.

41 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 2 minutes 39 seconds

There were no presentations by members of the public.

42 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Audio recording – 2 minutes 42 seconds

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.10(c), Mr Philip Devonald had presented a question for Councillor Steve Jarvis (Executive Member for Environment and Leisure) as follows:

"What progress has the Council made in addressing the climate emergency declared at the Annual Meeting in May?"

The Executive Member for Environment and Leisure provided the following response:

"There will be some similarities in the answer received at Council.

The Council recognises that responding to the climate emergency requires it both to address its own carbon emissions but, as these only represent a small proportion of the carbon footprint of the District, it's important that, if we are to make progress, we need to play a role in enabling residents and businesses to cut their emissions, where the Council can influence this directly, and also encourage residents and businesses to do this more widely, which is perhaps where the greatest dividends will result. We need to make progress in all of these areas if we are to make the biggest contribution toward a net zero contribution by the Council by 2030 and net zero contribution for Britain by 2040.

Clearly there are some very significant changes that can be made to meet those objectives, but it is important that we don't overlook the contributions of small changes that can be made as well and we need to encourage and persuade people to do what they can and recognise their achievements rather than criticise them for not achieving more, if we are going to build a community commitment.

I am committed that we need to do this by looking at ways to move forward by enabling people to live their lives in smarter ways to reduce the carbon impact of what they do such as travel by using renewables and lower energy transport, and it is important that we do that again takes the community with us.

As well as reducing emissions it is important that we look into ways of increasing the world's capability to deal with emissions that are either difficult or impossible to remove or eliminate.

Clearly our scope in North Herts is relatively limited, but there is scope for planting trees and we must maximise the amount we do on Council land, and also find ways to encourage both the public sector and private citizens to do what they can in terms of tree planting and that could be significantly larger.

Since May we have taken a number of steps towards these goals, there are some things that it is possible to do quickly and some that take a little longer.

We have set up a Cabinet Panel to gather the views of interested and informed local groups to help the Council identify the things it can do most effectively. In the three areas of cutting its own emissions, enabling others to do so and encouraging them to do so and at the meeting we had a very worthwhile discussion on that evening, with some very valuable inputs. As a result the Panel has decided that it should address issues in a number of specific areas and that at the next meeting we should address the issue of planning and transport, on the basis that there are some quite significant areas in which the Council's policies can impact how effective we are at enabling citizens to achieve a reduction in carbon impact. I hope we will have a similarly productive meeting in October to go through that area in some detail.

We have started assessing what the Council's carbon output is and, to the extent that we can what the District's is. It is much easier to identify the Council's than it is for that of the District. Although this doesn't save anything directly, it is important that we know where we are and where we are starting from.

We have begun the process of switching the Council's energy supplies to renewable sources, this will be done very quickly for electricity, although gas will take a little longer, but is in the process of being done.

We are working on the process of investigating what we can do about panels on Council buildings, the capability for this is from building to building, but what can be achieved is being investigated.

In terms of Leisure Centres, we are looking beyond that and considering what we can do in terms of overall energy consumption, particularly of the swimming pools. Keeping a large volume of water at a comfortable swimming temperature uses a considerable amount of energy and we need to look at what we can do to minimise that, whilst recognising that actually we do need to heat the pools.

As mentioned, there is a whole series of issues around planning policies and their impact on, not so much the Council's emissions, but those of the rest of the community. We need to start looking at energy performance and what we can do in terms of specified energy performance of new homes and other buildings, particularly where we can go beyond the statutory requirements bar and the extent to which we can require renewable energy technology to be installed.

The other area to look at regarding the planning system is to consider what we can do to ensure that the developments that result from the Local Plan and otherwise, are as sustainable as possible and there are some challenges in terms of how we do that and there are some challenges in how the framework in which the Council has to operate helps, or doesn't help that.

We are working on a scheme to introduce more electric vehicle charging points both on street and in Council car parks and part of the development plan proposals need to consider what we can do to ensure there is sufficient electric vehicle charging points in new developments.

We have tried to engage with the Woodland Trust, we are now looking at some alternative ways in which we might promote some tree planting, I still hope we might manage to engage with them but it has not proved as easy or as quick as I hoped it would be. We are looking at ways that we can encourage residents in the District to plant trees where they are able to. Separately we are looking at where there is scope for that on Council land and various other things that relate to wilding bits of Council land, unfortunately they are all relatively small, but they will make a small contribution. Doing this sort of thing encourages others to do likewise.

We have a new policy that new Council vehicles will be ultra low emission, subject to ensuring they are still capable of performing their role and we going to engage with the contractors for grounds maintenance and recycling of waste about how we can move that forward in the future. There is no carbon benefit, let alone any financial benefit in throwing away on year old refuse freighters in order to replace them with ones that would probably struggle to do the job whereas if we keep them to the end of their lifecycle, we will probably be able to replace them with vehicles that can do the job on an ultra low emissions basis.

We have provided an incentive for taxi operators to use hybrid vehicles by offering lower cost licenced for those.

We have done quite a lot in terms of supporting plastic free groups in Letchworth and Hitchin and that is now starting to extend elsewhere to reduce the use of single use plastics, promoting water bottle refilling schemes and we have 4 water fountains and others in leisure centres, to encourage people not to use single use water bottles.

Those are the steps that we have taken at the moment. We are working to put together a comprehensive climate change strategy and implementation plan during the course of the autumn and engaging with the groups that participate in the Cabinet Panel is an important part of that.

What I don't want to do is to give people the impression that we have already decided that their contribution is not valued because they have some interesting ideas. That potentially may make it take a little bit longer, but I think that is a price worth paying to ensure that we get the best ideas on board.

The next meeting of the Cabinet Panel is on 15 October 2019 and will deal with the Council's planning and transport policies."

Mr Devonald thanked Councillor Jarvis for his response and the officers for working hard on this issue and asked the following supplementary question:

"I appreciate that specific things are being done and am grateful for the actions that have been taken. In respect of the approach being taken, it looks piecemeal from the outside, it looks as if you are dealing with things in the margins.

The next report on the agenda regarding Strategic Planning Matters doesn't mention climate change or the environment. My argument would be that everything in this Council should be about climate change and the environment. It should run through every officer's report like a stick of Blackpool rock. It doesn't seem to inform the fundamental ways in which you operate.

Ticking things off individually is laudable, but this won't get the baby washed. I think you need a fundamentally different approach. I am not sure that your officers are on board.

Where is the letter to the Inspector telling him you are going to withdraw your Local Plan?

Why are you saying to taxi drivers that you can have a discount if you've got an electric car instead of saying in seven years time nobody will be allowed to have an internal combustion engine?

You have the power to do that and if you don't do it now you can't enforce it in 7 years time.

Why are you pussyfooting around with little minute efforts of giving a discount. Tell taxi drivers so that they can plan their future, that they won't be able to have an internal combustion powered car in 7 years time.

You need to take a more radical fundamental approach that is right across every service and I'm not seeing it.

I don't want to be antagonistic, Planet Earth, the legal environmental charity, have issued letters before action to a number of local authorities. You are not one of them because you are working with us and I have said to them to leave you off the list.

We are grateful for what you do but can you please review, with your officers, the fundamental nature of where you are looking at. Please go for root and branch not changing things in the margins."

Councillor Stears-Handscomb responded that this is obviously an issue we are working on, however we have heard what you say. He stated that he was inspired to meet the climate strike people last week.

Councillor Jarvis responded as follows:

"Some of the points you make are perfectly valid and there is an intention to ensure that all reports consider environmental impact.

The whole position around the Local Plan is one that has a number of difficulties. There are some challenges about how we get from where we are to where we would like to be.

The specific issue regarding taxis was something that it was possible to do very quickly. We are not saying that they are not going to be ultra low emissions, but it happened to be possible within the timeframe to do something almost immediately that was a step in the right direction. It is not considered as job done, but it is important to take steps you can whilst recognising you need to take the bigger steps.

Making a significant change and making changes rapidly can be a challenge in local government."

Upon the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Paul Clark, Executive Member for Planning and Transport, advised:

- That officers took the climate emergency extremely seriously;
- The Strategic Planning Document was a monitoring and updating document;
- That in October one of the changes would be to consider environmental impacts of developments in planning reports;
- That additional funding had been requested from Government to increase expertise in the area;
- That they wanted to take actions, but those actions must be right.

43 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 20 minutes 25 seconds

(A) Item Referred From Finance, Audit And Risk Committee: 16 September 2019 – Fraud Policy Review

RESOLVED: That the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee regarding the Fraud Policy Review be considered with the item on the agenda entitled Fraud Prevention Policy (Minute 45 refers)..

44 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

Audio recording – 20 minutes 38 seconds

The Executive Member for Planning and Transport presented the report entitled Strategic Planning Matters together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Letter from NHDC to Local Plan Inspector;
- Appendix B – Letter from Local Plan Inspector to NHDC.

He drew attention to the following:

- Other Plans and Examinations;
- NHDC would respond to the Inspector regarding the Local Plan on 29 November 2019;
- Actions, letters and responses regarding the Local Plan would be reported to the Project Board, which included Members from all parties, those Members would then feedback to the wider membership;
- CIL and S106 SPD would likely be considered by Cabinet in December 2019.
- In response to Councillor Thake's question at Full Council, Councillor Clark reported that Members of the Committee would be informed and would be able to feedback via the Local Plan Project Board on which all groups are represented.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

In response to questions the Executive Member for Planning and Transport advised:

- That the public would be kept informed of progress with the Local Plan through the Strategic Planning Matters report, Members Information Service and the response to the Inspector would be posted on the NHDC website.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report on strategic planning matters be noted;
- (2) That the letter in Appendix A be noted and endorsed;
- (3) That the Local Plan Inspector's letter at Appendix B be noted.

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

45 FRAUD PREVENTION POLICY

Audio recording – 26 minutes 27 seconds

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Fraud Prevention Policy together with the following appendix:

- Appendix A- Fraud Prevention Policy.

He drew attention to the essential nature of training for Members regarding anti bribery, fraud etc and the low take up rates and suggested that Group Leaders encourage Members to undertake the relevant e-learning modules.

Cabinet considered the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 16 September 2019 which contained the following recommendation to Cabinet:

That the Fraud Prevention Policy attached at Appendix A be approved with the following amendment:

The first line of Paragraph 6 in Section 2 entitled Reporting, 'that are reported' be removed from the Fraud Prevention Policy so that it read:

"The Council will investigate all suspicions, and where deemed appropriate the matter raised may be:"

The Executive Member for Finance and IT was happy that the recommendation from the Finance Audit and Risk Committee be accepted.

Councillor Ruth Brown suggested that the Learning and Development Champions be requested to consider how to advertise e-learning modules and encourage Members to undertake essential learning.

It was proposed by Councillor Ian Albert, seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb and

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Fraud Prevention Policy attached at Appendix A be approved with the following amendment:

The first line of Paragraph 6 in Section 2 entitled Reporting, 'that are reported' be removed from the Fraud Prevention Policy so that it read:

"The Council will investigate all suspicions, and where deemed appropriate the matter raised may be:"

- (2) That the Learning and Development Champions be requested to consider how e-learning modules can be better advertised to Members and how Members can be encouraged to undertake essential training such as anti bribery and fraud prevention.

REASON FOR DECISION: The new policy provides all the information in relation to fraud and similar offences. This makes it more accessible, especially as the total length of documentation is shorter. By making it easier to read and understand policies, it should aid compliance.

46 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2020/21

Audio recording – 33 minutes 6 seconds

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21.

It was proposed by Councillor Ian Albert and:

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 September 2020 for implementation in 2021/2022:
- (3) That amount to be distributed to Parish, Town & Community Councils be continued and maintained at £38,885:
- (4) That the following proposed changes to the CTRS for 2020/2021 be subject to consultation:
 - A) That a deminimis amount of £2.50 per week be introduced for reductions in entitlement, with no deminimis amount for increases in entitlement;
 - B) That any payments made under the Windrush Compensation Scheme be disregarded for the purposes of CTRS;
- (5) That a further report on the outcome of the consultation be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 17 December 2019.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To decide on whether any changes are proposed to the CTRS for 2020/2021 and enable the required consultation to be carried out.

47 REVIEW OF COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Audio recording – 40 minutes 20 seconds

The Leader of the Council presented the report entitled Review of Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy together with the following appendix:

- Appendix A – Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy.

He advised that the Policy had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that the report under consideration had been amended to take into account comments from that Committee.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Carol Stanier;
- Councillor Paul Clark;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

Comments included that there should be a mechanism for complaints to be made by Councillors on behalf of residents and that there should be a shortened version of the Policy that is easier to access by the public.

The Service Director – Customers advised that Councillors could act as advocates, however it was important that customers made the complaint rather than Councillors.

The document had become longer due to the many ways that people now communicated with the Council and a flow chart could be provided to make navigation of the document easier.

The Chief Executive advised that the vast majority of people accessed information through the website or through the Customer Service Centre, where relevant information is given. It was useful to have the full document available for those whose complaints are more complex.

RESOLVED: That the updated Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy, as contained in Appendix A, be approved with the following amendments:

- (i) The addition of a flow chart to help customers navigate the document;
- (ii) That a short version of the Policy be made available describing how to make a simple comment, compliment or complaint.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that the NHDC Policy for Comments, Compliments and Complaints is up to date and clear and easy for customers and our staff to understand.

48 BUSINESS RATE POOLING 2020/21

Audio recording – 48 minutes 10 seconds

The Chairman reminded Members that the Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed for this item to be considered as an urgent item.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Business Rate Pooling 2020/21.

He proposed that Recommendation 2 be amended to read:

“That, if it is proposed that Council is part of an optimum pool, that the authorisation for the final agreement be delegated to the Service Director- Resources in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT.”

It was proposed by Councillor Ian Albert, seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb and

RESOLVED:

- (1) That it be approved in principle that the Council is part of a Hertfordshire Business Rates pool in 2020/21;
- (2) That, if it is proposed that Council is part of an optimum pool, that the authorisation for the final agreement be delegated to the Service Director- Resources in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: It is recommended that NHDC joins a Business Rates pool due to the expected financial benefits. The delegation is necessary due to the deadline imposed by the MHCLG.

The meeting closed at 8.21 pm

Chairman

**CABINET
31 OCTOBER 2019**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - REGULATORY

EXECUTIVE MEMBER : EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING & TRANSPORT

COUNCIL PRIORITY : ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING / PROSPER AND PROTECT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report identifies the latest position on key planning issues affecting the District

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the report on strategic planning matters be noted.

2.2 That the submissions in Appendices A, B and C be noted and endorsed by Cabinet.

2.3 That Cabinet endorse the use of Conservation Area Character Statements for Charlton, Gosmore, Great Offley, Preston and St Ippolyts as listed in paragraph 8.4.3 of this report as material considerations in decision making for planning applications and in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

2.4 That Cabinet considers and supports the proposed Memorandum of Understanding relating to the Hertfordshire Growth Board, attached as Appendix D, and determines whether it wishes to recommend to Council the signing of the agreement.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To keep Cabinet informed of recent development on strategic planning matters and progress on the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 The Executive Member for Planning and Transport and deputy have been briefed on the matters set out above. The Local Plan Project Board is regularly consulted and updated upon matters affecting the Examination.

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 Members will be aware of, and familiar with, many of the issues surrounding the strategic planning matters referred to in paragraph 1.1 above. This report is intended to provide Members with the current positions on these matters. As with previous reports, only those matters where there has been substantive new information or change are reported upon.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Other Plans and Examinations

- 8.1.1 **Central Bedfordshire** – The Council have advised that, following the Examination in Public hearing sessions in the Summer, they have received a letter from the Planning Inspectorate in relation to the Plan. Central Bedfordshire state on their website that the correspondence:

gives us confidence that the Inspectors are content with a number of critical points of policy. However, the letter also raises a number of questions, some of which relate to correspondence which this Authority has not seen. In this context, we are seeking urgent clarification from the Inspectors about information they seem to be drawing on and why this has not been shared. Until we have received clarification on these important points, our legal advice is that the Inspectors' letter should not be published

- 8.1.2 At this stage, it is not possible to say whether the Inspectorate's letter makes reference to any of the issues raised by NHDC in relation to Central Bedfordshire's plan or to other matters which might impact upon the examination of our own plan (such as how unmet housing needs from Luton are addressed). An update will be reported verbally at the Cabinet meeting if any further information is made available.
- 8.1.3 **South Cambridgeshire** – Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are working together to prepare a joint Local Plan for the Greater Cambridge area. One of the first stages of the new joint Local Plan is an Issues and Options consultation. This is due to begin on 25 November and run through until the New Year.
- 8.1.4 It is presently anticipated that this Plan will cover a period to (at least) the late 2030s. This will take it well beyond the proposed time horizon for our own emerging Plan of 2031. It will therefore be necessary for this Council to begin considering how it might wish to begin engaging with South Cambridgeshire under the statutory Duty to Co-operate on planning issues for the period after 2031. This potentially includes East-West rail, the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, the Cambridge Local Transport Plan and any potential for new settlements in either authority.
- 8.1.5 Further information is available on South Cambridgeshire's website. An update on the content of the consultation will be included in December's Strategic Planning Matters report.

8.1.6 **Welwyn Hatfield** – A short technical consultation has begun on a number of documents submitted to the Examination. This includes analysis of important ‘Green Gaps’ between settlements. This includes consideration of how Woolmer Green and Welwyn interact with Knebworth and Codicote respectively. This consultation runs until 4th November.

8.1.7 North Hertfordshire’s last response to Welwyn Hatfield set out the view that this Council would reserve judgement until such time as any revised development strategy for the Borough was put forward for consideration. This is still considered the most appropriate course of action and it is not proposed that this Council formally responds.

8.2 North Hertfordshire Local Plan

8.2.1 As verbally reported at the last Cabinet meeting, the Council responded to the Inspector’s letters at the end of September. This sets out the Council’s intention to respond to all of his queries by Friday 29 November at the latest. A copy of that letter is attached at Appendix A. Officers, in consultation with the Local Plan Project Board, continue to work on proposed responses to the various requests that have been made.

8.3 Neighbourhood Plans

8.3.1 The Wymondley Neighbourhood Development Plan was made on 26 September 2019. It now forms part of the statutory Development Plan for North Hertfordshire and will be used in determining relevant planning applications within the Parish.

8.4 Conservation Area Character Statements

8.4.1 Local planning authorities have a statutory requirement to review their Conservation Areas from time to time. At the beginning of 2019, North Hertfordshire District Council commissioned consultants to prepare Character Statements for the 33 out of 44 existing Conservation Areas that do not have them. Due to the number of Conservation Area Character Statements required, each of the 33 is a ‘high-level’ statement, focusing on the key elements of the character and appearance of the area. These are essentially statements of fact which will assist the Development Management and Planning Policy teams in their statutory duty to preserve or enhance the special architectural or historic interest of Conservation Areas and provide valuable information for householders and applicants. They will also contribute towards the evidence base for neighbourhood plans.

8.4.2 A separate summary report will be produced by the consultants at the end of the commission setting out any recommendations for particular Conservation Areas that the Council should consider with regard to more detailed work.

8.4.3 Work on the 33 Conservation Area Character Statements is being carried out in 8 phases. This report relates to the first phase, and Cabinet is therefore asked to note that the Conservation Area Character Statements for Charlton, Gosmore, Great Offley, Preston and St Ippolyts have been completed and to endorse their use as material considerations in decision making and neighbourhood planning. These statements are available to view on the Council’s website at: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/conservation-and-heritage/conservation-areas/conservation-areas-villages>

8.4.5 As other phases are completed these will be reported to future Cabinet meetings.

8.5 Government Announcements

8.5.1 The Government updated its Planning Practice Guidance on design on 1 October. This includes reference to a new National Design Guide. It also introduces the concept of Local design guides which may be produced by local planning authorities and neighbourhood planning groups. This guidance principally relates to matters of layout and appearance. Existing guidance is clear that non-statutory planning documents cannot be used to introduce new policy requirements on new developments.

8.5.2 The Government has also announced its intention to pursue further relaxation of planning rules by expanding permitted development rights to include upwards extensions of residential properties and the demolition of commercial buildings to make way for new homes. Officers continue to monitor relevant announcements and will also consider whether the proposed Article 4 directions for the District's employment areas, agreed in principle by the Cabinet earlier in 2019, should be amended.

8.5.3 An update to the Government's Indices of Deprivation was published on 26 September 2019. These provide statistics on relative deprivation for small areas of the District. The last statistics were released in 2015. Officers are reviewing this new information and any relevant update will be included in the next report in December.

8.5.4 Finally, consultation has been launched on a proposed Future Homes Standards. This principally relates to the delivery of energy efficiency measures through Building Regulations. However it does ask whether, as part of this, local authorities should be restricted from setting higher energy efficiency standards for new homes through their planning policies. This consultation is open until January 2020. Officers will review in consultation with the Cabinet Member and Deputy to determine whether a response should be produced.

8.6 London Luton Airport

8.6.1 Statutory consultation is expected to commence on 16 October 2019 for eight weeks ahead of formal submission of a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the proposed expansion of the airport to the Planning Inspectorate in 2020. Any update will be reported verbally at Cabinet.

8.6.2 London Luton Airport Limited has written to a number of residents and other stakeholders seeking to identify all those with a legal interest in:

- Property or land that may be required for a proposed development; or
- Property or land which is not required for the development itself, but is in an area which may be affected by the proposed development.

The purpose of this exercise, known as 'Land Referencing', is to identify those parties who will be statutory consultees, and those who LLAL will write to as part of their statutory consultation.

8.7 Other transport, planning and infrastructure matters

- 8.7.1 A505 Transport Corridor Joint Study** – As previously reported, officers from North Hertfordshire together with Luton, Central Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire County Council have agreed to proceed with Stage 2 of the study. This stage comprises the evidence analysis to better understand transport related challenges in the current and future situation in the context of growth impacting on the A505 corridor, and will identify gaps in the modelling evidence to be addressed in later stages of the study. The next stage of the study will be to use the evidence analysis to agree the overarching strategy and priorities for the corridor, and to develop prioritised packages of interventions, bringing together work undertaken on other transport strategies and studies across the four authorities, as well as new thinking. The draft Stage 2 is currently being considered by officers.
- 8.7.2 Hertfordshire Intalink Enhanced Partnership and Bus Strategy Consultation** – The County Council and the majority of Bus Operators in Hertfordshire have been members of a voluntary quality partnership, Intalink, for a number of years. Following new powers introduced by the 2000 Act (as amended by the 2017 Act), the County Council considers the extension of the partnership into an Enhanced Partnership could offer benefits to the travelling public and wider community which could not be achieved with a voluntary arrangement. The principal objectives will be those contained in the County Council's draft Intalink Bus Strategy, in support of its Local Transport Plan 4 which includes:
- Prioritising bus and coach services in traffic
 - Improving the image of bus travel
 - Upgrading bus infrastructure
 - Closer integration of the bus network
 - Smarter use of data and information.
- 8.7.3** The Intalink Enhanced Partnership will supersede the existing voluntary partnership and acquire substantially greater legal status. Benefits include the enhancement of quality standards and access to funding for investment in public transport-related projects and activities which might not otherwise be available.
- 8.7.4** HCC are currently consulting on the draft Intalink Bus Strategy and the Intalink Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme from 16 September to 10 November 2019. These documents can be viewed on the HCC website at:
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/consultations/transport-and-highways/intalink-enhanced-partnership-public-consultation.aspx>
- 8.7.5** Officers are in the process of preparing a response in consultation with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport . A copy of our response will be appended to a future Cabinet report.

- 8.7.6 **Hertfordshire Local Industrial Strategy** - The Hertfordshire LEP have produced a draft Local Industrial Strategy in accordance with the government's Industrial white Paper published in November 2017. The overarching aims of the White Paper are to: improve the UK's overall productivity performance; and ensure that future economic growth is more inclusive. The draft Hertfordshire Local industrial Strategy brings together a well-informed evidence base about the Hertfordshire economy and seeks to outline a long-term set of priorities that capitalises on existing opportunities and addresses weaknesses across the county. The draft Strategy has been the subject of public consultation over the last month and can be viewed on the Hertfordshire LEP website at: <https://www.hertfordshirelep.com/news-events/news/lep-publishes-local-industrial-strategy-for-consultation/>
- 8.7.7 A response has been prepared in consultation with the Executive Member for Enterprise and Co-operative Development and is attached at Appendix B.
- 8.7.8 **Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Draft Developer Contributions Guide** – The County Council held a consultation on their planning obligations 'toolkit' between 29 July and 20 September 2019. This sets out how HCC will seek and negotiate contributions from new developments towards the infrastructure they are responsible for such as schools and sustainable transport measures. This followed an informal consultation with officers from the district councils earlier in the year.
- 8.7.9 A response was prepared and submitted in consultation with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport. This is attached at Appendix C. Concerns have been raised over the relationship between the 'toolkit' and the requests for infrastructure made by HCC through the Local Plan examination process. Further, detailed technical comments were submitted in a joint officer response submitted by seven of the district authorities. HCC are currently considering responses to the consultation. An update on the next steps is expected towards the end of the year.
- 8.7.10 In previous Strategic Planning Reports reference has been made to the formation and development of the Hertfordshire Growth Board and the work that it has been undertaking in looking at the future development and infrastructure needs of the County with a focus on the period after the current round of Local Plans. Much of that work has focussed on the development of a place narrative for Hertfordshire and the range of issues which Hertfordshire wishes to raise with Central Government as the basis for a Hertfordshire Growth deal.
- 8.7.11 In early conversations with Government officials it has become clear that, as a grouping of Local Authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership, there needs to be some form of more formal working arrangement documented to demonstrate our commitment to work together in formulating and delivering a growth deal for Hertfordshire. It is proposed that the working arrangements are encapsulated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that all of the Councils and the LEP sign up to.
- 8.7.12 The draft MOU was most recently discussed and agreed as a working draft at the Growth Board on the 15th October for each Authority to consider and hopefully sign up to. The draft MOU is attached as Appendix D to this report. The key points in the MOU are that:
- The 12 partners agree to work together in pursuing a growth deal for Hertfordshire;

- The MOU does not alter any Local Authority's power or responsibility;
- Decisions of the Growth Board are reached by consensus;
- Any partner can decide that they wish to leave the partnership.

8.7.13 In essence the MOU sets out in one document how the Growth Board arrangements have been working over the recent year in order that this can be demonstrated to outside bodies and Central Government.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Under the Terms of Reference for Cabinet, the Constitution states that it may exercise the Council's functions as Local Planning Authority and receive reports on strategic planning matters, applications for, approval/designation, consultation/referendums revocations (or recommend revocation) of neighbourhood plans and orders, (except to the extent that those functions are by law the responsibility of the Council or delegated to the Service Director: Regulatory).
- 9.2 The preparation of statutory plans is guided by a range of acts and associated regulations including the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Localism Act 2011. All local planning authorities are bound by a statutory Duty to Co-operate on cross-border planner matters.
- 9.3 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation) Act 1990 sets out statutory requirements for the designation and review of Conservation Areas.
- 9.4 Agreeing the proposed MOU relating to the Hertfordshire Growth Board falls within the scope of Cabinet's Terms of Reference as set out at 9.1 above. However, any future agreement to prepare one or more joint development plan documents would, as per Regulation 4(4C) of the 2000/2853 Regulations, be a function that is not to be sole responsibility of the Cabinet and could be referred to Council for agreement. Cabinet are requested to consider whether this issue should be referred on to Full Council to apprise it of matters potentially informing a decision it may be asked to make in the future.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no new financial implications arising from this report. The costs of preparing the Local Plan and running the examination are reviewed on a regular basis, and are reported through the quarterly revenue monitoring reports to Cabinet.
- 10.2 The general costs of preparing Supplementary Planning Documents, responding to consultations on neighbouring authorities' Plans, neighbourhood plans and Government consultations and the other activities identified in this report are met through existing revenue budgets or benefit from external funding or other arrangements to recover costs.
- 10.3 The Government has confirmed for 2019/20 that funding is available for local planning authorities (LPAs) in respect of neighbourhood planning. LPAs can claim £20,000 once a date has been set for a referendum following a successful examination. Area designation funding has not been available for the last years to the Council as it has already designated more than 5 areas.

10.4 The financial risks associated with planning were reviewed and updated as part of the budget-setting cycle for 2019/20. Risks are identified in relation to potential additional costs associated with progressing the Plan or any future challenge to it.

10.5 The Conservation Area work identified in Section 8.4 above is funded through an existing, approved revenue budget. Any bids to support future work, including any consequential Conservation Area Reviews (or similar) recommended by the appointed consultant, will be considered through the budget-setting process for 2020/21 (and beyond). Any formal Conservation Area reviews would be subject to public consultation.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Sustainable Development of the District and the Local Plan are both Cabinet Top Risks. The Sustainable Development of the District has a sub-risk that covers the risks arising from the duty to co-operate with neighbouring authorities.

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 not considered to be any direct equality issues arising from this report. Future individual schemes or considerations may well be subject to appropriate review to ensure they comply with latest equality legislative need. Any risks and opportunities identified will also be subject to assessment for impact on those that share a protected characteristic.

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 new human resource implications arising from the contents of this report. Workload and vacancies are monitored on an on-going basis. Following recruitment of a graduate planning policy officer there is currently one vacancy within the Strategic Planning team and one officer on maternity leave

15. APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix A – Letter from NHDC to Local Plan Inspector

15.2 Appendix B – Consultation response to Hertfordshire Local Industrial Strategy

15.3 Appendix C – Consultation response to HCC Draft Developer Contributions Guide

15.4 Appendix D – Hertfordshire Growth Board MoU

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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24 September 2019

Mr Simon Berkeley

c/o Ms. Louise St John Howe

By email only

Contact Officer:

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Dear Mr Berkeley,

Examination of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

Thank you for your letter dated 9 August 2019. This outlined a number of further questions and queries in addition to the five issues raised in your previous letter of 9 July 2019.

As requested, I am writing to advise of the Council's timetable to address these questions. The Council presently intends to respond in full to all of the queries raised across both of your letters by **Friday 29 November 2019** at the latest.

The Council acknowledges that this is some time from the date of your original letter. You will equally appreciate that your two letters ask for the Council's views on a wide range of issues that have necessitated a significant amount of additional work.

This includes a request for an 'appropriate and robust' review of Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) in light of the 2016-based population projections. This work has been commissioned from external consultants and is currently ongoing.

Work on the remaining issues and queries is generally well progressed. This involves on-going liaison with other parties as required including, but not necessarily limited to, Hertfordshire County Council in their role as education authority.

We anticipate having provisional answers to each of the individual queries during October. However, it will then be necessary to review these holistically to inform the Council's position in the round. This will include taking advice from Counsel to the extent considered appropriate.

Political control of the Council changed in May 2019 and we have a new joint administration between the Labour & Co-operative and Liberal Democratic parties. This followed a long-period of Conservative control of the Council throughout the Local Plan examination / process to that point.

We remain in something of a transitional period where it has been necessary to bring Members who did not have direct or in-depth involvement in earlier stages of the Plan rapidly 'up to speed'. They are determined to gain a full understanding of the issues and timetables associated with key projects they have inherited from the previous administration and to ensure they address the priorities they have identified as best they can.

It is therefore necessary to allow sufficient time for appropriate briefing on and consideration of the provisional answers identified above. In turn this will assist with obtaining the political clearance that is required for any response to be submitted for your consideration.

Finally we have allowed for a small margin of flexibility. In particular this allows for the fact that wider (political) events may impact upon the availability of the Council's senior leadership and / or key officers to consider these matters during October and November 2019.

In the context above we have sought to identify a realistic but pragmatic deadline for responding. We are acutely aware that to provide you with a target date and then miss it could adversely impact your programming of this and other examinations in which you are involved.

I would like to assure you that this work is viewed corporately as a high priority. If the Council is in a position to submit its full response ahead of the date above it will make every effort to do so.

Equally, the outcomes of this additional work remain unknown at this stage. We will update you at the earliest opportunity if:

- i. the work necessitated by your various requests raises any issues that require further consideration prior to submitting a response; and / or
- ii. there are any other currently unforeseen circumstances or delays that would substantively affect the timetable above.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Paul Clark
Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Planning & Transport
North Hertfordshire District Council



4th October 2019

Hertfordshire LEP
One Garden City
Broadway
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 3BF

By email

Our Ref: Herts LIS Response

Your Ref:

Contact Officer : Andrew Figgis

Direct Line : 01462 474477

E-mail : andrew.figgis@north-herts.gov.uk

Dear Sirs,

Hertfordshire Local Industrial Strategy: Draft for consultation: September 2019

Thank you for providing North Hertfordshire District Council the opportunity to comment on the Draft Hertfordshire Local Industrial Strategy. We note that you have requested comments via your on-line survey to specific questions. Given that we also have a number of general comments on the draft strategy, we also wish to submit our response as set out in this letter.

General comments

North Hertfordshire District Council welcomes the new Local Industrial strategy and is broadly in agreement with its themes and priorities. There are some areas, however, where we feel a different emphasis or clarification is required.

In general, the Strategy pre and post 2031 refers to incremental growth focused on existing settlements. To date, we have seen little activity from the LEP in North Hertfordshire and feel that considerable scope exists in our area to develop up to and beyond 2031, taking advantage of North Hertfordshire's strategic position in relation to London, Cambridge, the Oxford Cambridge Arc and the A1/A505 corridors, both incrementally and in development of new carefully selected areas.

In relation to skills, the strategy contains great aspirations for upskilling those at the higher end of the academic ladder, but little reference is made to those lower skilled and less able-to-be-skilled people who require still jobs. Although North Hertfordshire 'imports' lower skilled workers, many are resident in our community. Finding a solution to the second major challenge identified in the Strategy is key to reducing the inequalities in our communities. We are not convinced that the Strategy goes far enough in this respect.

Outlined below are our specific comments in relation to the consultation questions.

Question1 – Productivity & Inclusive Growth:

We agree that productivity (or more precisely the lack of commercial investment) in Hertfordshire is a serious challenge to economic growth and wellbeing. It felt that the sustainability of our towns in Hertfordshire as commercial, cultural and social centres are of equal importance for consideration.

We also agree that that disparity in the prosperity of different communities is a serious and worsening problem and that this also needs to be addressed.

North Hertfordshire District Council, Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 3JF

Question 2 – Challenges & Growth Scenarios:

Much of Hertfordshire is bounded by the London Green Belt. This limits the areas for commercial or residential expansion to the existing town areas or non-green belt areas largely in the north and north-east of the county.

To date residential requirements have been favoured over commercial use in towns, not least by the use of PDRs by the private sector. This undermines the economic fabric of the towns which in turn endangers their social fabric as falling footfall and out commuting render the town centres redundant in terms of retail commerce.

The most desirable scenario is undoubtedly the first. The challenges of scenario 1 are firstly to locate and develop sites in strategic areas of Hertfordshire which are going to meet the needs of larger companies and more importantly growing local companies, and secondly to retain those areas of commercial land within towns and to encourage through sympathetic planning, the development of sustainable employment areas. This will allow local services to grow locally, encourage footfall in the town centres allowing the town centre businesses to adapt to the needs of the 21st century. This will allow each town centre to retain and adapt an identity of its own in the post retail world.

The challenge of the second scenario is to provide the infrastructure to cope with the out commuting and inflow of services and is in effect the mirror image of the first. That said the development of strategic sites must be undertaken with an eye for sustainable transport of both people and goods and liaison with national bodies to ensure that the correct transport provisions are in place to accompany the developments.

The Strategy makes little reference to the location of some of the key knowledge based industries such as Johnson Matthey and Sartorius in North Hertfordshire and opportunities that northern Hertfordshire can play in terms of its location in relation to the Oxford- Cambridge Arc, and links with the Luton enterprise zone.

Question 3 – Strategic Themes:

We feel that the strategic themes are the right ones to consider, going forward, in particular Theme 5 relating to the development and redevelopment of commercial space and Theme 2, the revitalisation of our towns. Letchworth Garden City suffers the worst disparities in community wellbeing of any of the Hertfordshire towns. Reference should also be given to the potential opportunity of planning for further new settlements within Hertfordshire, as there is a limit to how much further the existing towns can continue to grow incrementally.

In terms of Theme 3 We feel that the development of sustainable clusters should be encourage with reference to the **rail** system (rather than just A1 corridor), to encourage sustainable commuting and transport.

We welcome the reference to the east- west growth corridors in Theme 4, and the opportunity to improve such connectivity. However we express concern about the lack of reference to a northern corridor along the A505 and the opportunity this link provides in terms of working with neighbouring authorities in linking with the London Luton Airport Enterprise Zone to west and Stanstead Airport to the east and northwards towards Bedford and Cambridge.

Question 4 – Ideas Foundation:

The key priority for Hertfordshire is to create the environment to encourage a critical mass of businesses involved in R & D to locate in the County. The key commodity of these companies is the expertise of their staff. The environment needs to be attractive to their employees not only

in terms of ease of access (perhaps from London, Cambridge or further afield), but also the working environment and environs with a suitably academic campus atmosphere to attract the top talent.

Whilst the A1 corridor may look to 'major' in aerospace and bioscience, the A505 corridor and railway line towards Cambridge is already emerging as the location for high technology engineering and bioscience, with Johnson Matthey, Sartorius and Mettler Toledo in Royston and the Melbourn Science Park home to TTP and Astra Zeneca etc. al. We feel that the strategy should show aspirations towards supporting the area from Hitchin to Royston as a key part of the local and regional economy.

Question 5 - People:

The linkage between Higher Education, universities, industry and schools is paramount in upskilling the population and almost as importantly, instilling the ambition in people to follow a career path to higher skilled, high productivity jobs. The key to inclusive growth, one of the main challenges of this paper, is access for all to the means of raising skills levels. This strategy should not only address the high end top research area, but even more importantly address the relative skills deficit of some of the lower earning parts of the community.

Therefore, for example the 'university outposts' themes could be extended to Anglia Ruskin University in the East to provide facilities in the south and east of the county as well as with the local colleges.

Outreach from beacons such as the Stevenage Biotech, the Rothamstead research establishment, Public Health England, Stansted and Luton Airports, MMC facilities in Hemel Hempstead and Gilston and the aerospace engineering industry in Stevenage should be made to schools to instil the ambition in young people to follow a high value career path.

Employment and Skills Programmes attached to major construction projects should be coordinated to provide a continuous learning experience for apprentices. Likewise, the promotion of apprenticeships addressed particularly at those who do not wish to go to university should be encouraged as a part of an overall programme to raise the skills levels of the less well-off and address the issue of inclusive growth which is one of the two main challenges of this strategy.

Question 6 – Infrastructure:

We recognise the value of the specific projects mentioned in the strategy and all have merit. However, there needs to be some recognition of how these will contribute to the long term goals of reduced emissions, increased long term growth and improvement in the quality of life. Reference should also be made to the strategic aims and objectives of the Hertfordshire LTP4.

Given the amount of house building proposed in Hertfordshire in the period to 2032 and beyond, the answer is not necessarily to build more roads, but to change behaviours and modes of transport. Indeed, the sustainability of some developments is predicated on the use of sustainable transport and investment should be focused towards making provision for such infrastructure to encourage modal shift.

The themes of digital connectivity and local power supply must be explored and the advancement of 5G should be extended as far as practically feasible to all domestic and commercial areas of Hertfordshire.

Effort should also be focused on raising Hertfordshire's profile with the National Grid and other key infrastructure providers to ensure that new developments include advanced local power generation and battery storage facilities. Efforts should also be made to provide funding to

'pump-prime' the National Grid's upgrading of local power substations to enable domestic vehicle charging facilities for new and existing premises to be viable.

Question 7- Business Environment:

As local authorities, the requirement most persistently cited as a problem by business is lack of suitable business premises for either for establishment or expansion. Hertfordshire including North Herts has suffered chronic underinvestment in its commercial stock. The advent of the new MEES regulations in 2024 will render many places unrentable, although owners are happy to landbank premises in the hope of eventual residential development. Much of the commercial space in Hertfordshire is also sited where it is for historic reasons and this is not necessarily ideal for modern uses, an example being Wilbury Way in Hitchin, where accessibility problems have become a major constraint on growth and investment.

Local authorities need to work with the LEP and other bodies to identify land suitable for redevelopment and development as modern commercial space, both for expanding and incoming companies. Without these high growth companies, the second and third tier suppliers who are often the commercial lifeblood of the local economy will suffer and could turn into decline. We therefore consider the first priority in this section to be the most important.

Question 8 - Place:

Much of the strategy is geared towards revitalisation of the New Towns of Hertfordshire and we strongly support the third priority that Letchworth needs to develop a new focus, in partnership with the Heritage Foundation.

However, there is also a key priority for Hertfordshire's older towns to retain their positions and functions as the economic, social and cultural hubs of our communities. Each has its own unique character and local residents and businesses should be enabled to develop funded strategies to re-orientate and re-energise their town post retail dominance and prepare for the future. We therefore consider that the sixth priority, re-energising the high streets with the help of town councils, BIDs and other local stakeholders, is the most important priority.

Question 9 – Next Steps:

Although we understand that no resource is as yet available to Hertfordshire, we would hope that in the fullness of time some central funding may become available. North Hertfordshire will consider the synergies with the LEP Industrial Strategy when preparing our own strategies and setting our budgets, will and work with public and private sector investors to maximise leveraged funding possibilities. We will also consider committing staff time to specific projects and working positively with the LEP and other partners and stakeholders to maximise benefits.

North Hertfordshire look forward to a constructive and proactive working relationship with the LEP as it progresses the Local Industrial Strategy.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Keith Hoskins

Executive Member for Enterprise and Co-operative Development
North Hertfordshire District Council



20 September 2019

Sarah McLaughlin
Head of Growth & Infrastructure Unit
Hertfordshire County Council

Contact Officer: Nigel Smith
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By email only

Dear Sarah,

Re: Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Planning Obligations Toolkit

Thank-you for providing the opportunity to comment on the proposed update to your planning obligations toolkit. This guidance is welcomed and supported in principle.

Officers were informally consulted upon the emerging toolkit earlier this year. Although some changes have been made to the documents in the meantime, our substantive concerns remain. Our earlier comments are appended to this letter and we ask again that they be taken into consideration as appropriate. In doing so, we recognise that the anticipated adoption of our Local Plan has since slipped and that there have been some revisions to the proposed charges in the latest iteration of the toolkit.

We are also considering a joint response with the other Hertfordshire local planning authorities which identifies a number of detailed, technical concerns. This will be provided separately if and when agreed.

In addition to and building upon the above, we make a small number of further comments.

Paragraph 2.2.1, which recognises that infrastructure requirements should be properly tested through the local plan process is welcomed. We similarly support the statements at paragraph 1.2.2 that the responsibility of attributing weight to the toolkit and the requests for contributions arising from it rests with the local planning authorities.

We anticipate that the County Council will approach negotiations to individual applications in a way which reflects these words. This should include a genuine willingness to compromise and agree solutions where this will facilitate sustainable growth. We aim to produce a draft of our Developer Contributions SPD by the end of the year. This will provide further guidance on the District Council's proposed approach.

Our recently published Housing Delivery Test Action Plan recognises that the process of completing legal agreements is a key constraint to determining planning applications and delivering homes. We trust that the County Council has or will put in place appropriate resources to ensure that contributions arising from the toolkit can be efficiently identified, negotiated and agreed and then translated into completed legal agreements.

As previously, we remain committed to an effective working relationship between our authorities that delivers genuinely sustainable development in the District. We welcome the opportunity for an ongoing dialogue on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Paul Clark
Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Planning and Transport
North Hertfordshire District Council

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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3 April 2019

Sarah McLaughlin
Head of Growth & Infrastructure Unit
Hertfordshire County Council

Contact Officer: Nigel Smith
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By email only

Dear Sarah,

Re: Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Planning Obligations Toolkit

Thank-you for providing the opportunity to informally comment on the proposed toolkit documents at this early stage in their development. We will provide any detailed comments on their content at the formal consultation stage. At this point, we would like to raise our significant concerns as officers over the County Council's overall approach to this matter.

We are particularly concerned by the scale of the proposed charges in the toolkit. We have examined an indicative scheme of 100 homes. This suggests the new toolkit will result in requested contributions more than quadrupling compared to the original 2008 toolkit. This appears to be borne out in recent HCC responses to current planning applications. The proposed revised charges are also significantly in excess of the rates examined through the viability study for our emerging Local Plan.

Our own Local Plan policies must be produced within the framework established by relevant legislation and guidance. They are subject to extensive scrutiny through the examination process before being adopted. Once adopted, and whilst they remain up-to-date, our Development Management team should approve applications that accord with the plan without delay (as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 11).

The NPPF further requires that plans should set out the contributions expected from development (paragraph 34) while planning applications that comply with up-to-date policies should be assumed to be viable (paragraph 56).

This advice is reinforced by the technical Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which is clear that documents other than the Plan should not be used to set rates or charges which have not been established through development plan policy.

Our new plan for the period to 2031 is being examined. Specific hearing sessions have been held on housing, infrastructure and viability matters. At the point of writing, there has been no HCC objection to our proposed affordable housing targets or the assumptions underpinning our viability evidence. Similarly, there has been no request by HCC for any alternate schedule or scale of (potential) charges on new development to be examined.

Given the above context, we cannot support the imposition of the proposed new charges as *de facto* planning policy by HCC outside of this ongoing process; either as a general matter

of principle or, in particular, where they have the potential to adversely impact upon proposals and concepts which have been fairly and transparently examined and upon which applicants have a reasonable expectation that we will base our s106 requests.

District Councils are subject to various Government performance measures. These relate to the determination of planning applications as well as measures of housing delivery. We are required to identify measures to speed-up housing delivery and will be adversely judged if these are not effective. Potential sanctions include being placed in special measures, or having to apply a more liberal approach to the determination of planning applications.

The negotiation of s106 legal agreements involving HCC (and other parties) is already a significant cause of delay in the system. We are taking steps to address this in consultation with your officers and we anticipate that a number of relevant measures will be reflected in our forthcoming Housing Delivery Test Action Plan.

We consider that, if implemented, the new charging schedule will have a significant adverse impact upon our efforts to speed housing delivery. We anticipate a substantial increase in site-specific viability appraisals and developer challenges to s106 requests if the toolkit has not been subject to appropriate viability testing or independent, public scrutiny. These delays will be compounded if HCC adopts an intractable negotiating position seeking toolkit requirements in full and / or insists upon affording weight or status to the toolkit that does not reflect the factors outlined above.

We hope to progress our new Plan to adoption during 2019. In accordance with the statutory framework for determining planning applications and Government guidance, we will have to give precedence to properly tested requirements in future negotiations.

Our viability study indicates there may be 'headroom' to realise developer contributions over and above the baseline assumptions referred to above, particularly on greenfield sites. However, we will not compromise the provision of affordable housing, or undermine the properly tested principles upon which the Council has proposed removing land from the Green Belt, where untested HCC requests for contributions adversely impact upon the viability or deliverability of schemes.

Your toolkit and responses to individual planning applications will remain a material consideration in their determination and afforded appropriate weight but we can give no guarantee that this Council will insist upon your demands being met in full. In this context we welcome, from the recent PAS workshops, the recognition of the importance of affordable housing and the potential to utilise alternate funding sources to deliver infrastructure.

We remain committed to an effective working relationship between our authorities that delivers genuinely sustainable development in the District. We welcome the opportunity for an ongoing dialogue on this matter. In particular we wish to better understand the additional or alternate sources of infrastructure funding that are available to HCC to fill any future shortfalls, and to determine how we may assist you in accessing these.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Smith
Strategic Planning Manager

Simon Ellis
Development & Conservation Manager

HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD

Memorandum of Understanding

October 2019



Memorandum of Understanding

Between

Broxbourne Borough Council
Dacorum Borough Council
East Herts District Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Hertsmere Borough Council
North Hertfordshire District Council
St Albans City and District Council
Stevenage Borough Council
Three Rivers District Council
Watford Borough Council
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

The local authorities listed above comprising of county council, district councils and borough councils are together referred to as “Local Authorities”. The Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership is referred to as the “LEP”. The Local Authorities and the LEP are collectively referred to in this Memorandum of Understanding as the “Partners”. A list of the Partners and their principal addresses are listed at Schedule 1 “the Partners”.

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is for the Partners to:

- Raise awareness of their joint working intent to Hertfordshire residents, partners, businesses and central government;
- commit to continued collaborative place-based working across Hertfordshire;
- set out the joint working intention between the Partners; and
- demonstrate how they will work together as equal stakeholders with different roles to manage future growth in Hertfordshire.

2. Background

2.1. Since September 2018, the Partners have been working collaboratively through the Hertfordshire Growth Board – an alliance consisting of the Leaders of all of the Local Authorities and the Chair of the LEP. Together, the Partners are responding to the place leadership and growth challenges that face Hertfordshire now and in the future and are committed to ensuring that the Partners work in a proactive, positive and inclusive way.

2.2. To date, the Partners have identified the following growth challenges:

- demand for residential homes of a variety of types and tenures;
- need for infrastructure and local services serving both new and existing residents;
- securing jobs and inward business investment within Hertfordshire;
- responding to growth pressures from outside Hertfordshire in a considered and appropriate way;

- pressure on green belt and providing a sustainable and high-quality environment, and
- the threat climate change poses to the county and its residents.

Through the exploration of the joint place-based ambitions that the Partners have been developing, working together to achieve this challenge will result in positive benefits for Hertfordshire, now and in the future.

- 2.3. The Partners are keen to ensure that growth delivers for both current and future Hertfordshire residents and supports a thriving county. The three pillars of the Hertfordshire Growth Board will be people, place and prosperity. People means enabling happy, healthy, diverse communities who feel they belong in Hertfordshire and can benefit from its successes. Place means making places contribute to people's health, happiness, and wellbeing without compromising the future or our environment. Prosperity means delivering Hertfordshire's contribution to the UK and national economy while maintaining and further developing a sustainable local economy that creates value for Hertfordshire residents.
- 2.4. Hertfordshire is a net contributor to the UK economy, and good growth is key to ensuring that the Partners continue to build on that while locally providing good quality jobs, skills, and opportunities for all Hertfordshire residents. Hertfordshire's location between London and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and its unique 'offer' make the Partners perfectly placed to work with government and co-create ideas and solutions to meet the challenges and maintain the momentum and growth of UK plc that benefits all of Hertfordshire. However, in parts of Hertfordshire our productivity is falling behind the national average, and without change, we risk not being able to deliver on local and national economic objectives.
- 2.5. This Memorandum of Understanding builds on a history of successful partnership working in Hertfordshire on issues like property, infrastructure and planning as well as the two emerging joint strategic spatial planning partnerships in North East Central Herts and South West Herts.
- 2.6. This Memorandum of Understanding sets out:
 - the core objectives and aims of the Hertfordshire Growth Board; and
 - the principles of collaboration for Hertfordshire
 subject to the terms and conditions set out within this Memorandum of Understanding.

3. Core Objectives and Aims

- 3.1. The core objective of the Hertfordshire Growth Board is to respond to the key growth challenges facing Hertfordshire. The Partners have agreed a set of place-based ambitions and agreed to work together on delivering those ambitions through the future work programme:
 - Strategic planning and positioning – the need to raise Hertfordshire's profile and secure central government support for scaled and accelerated delivery, helping to overcome the challenges faced by the local plan system, and growing strategic employment and housing corridors within Hertfordshire;

- Homes – the need to overcome market failure to deliver the housing Hertfordshire needs. This includes more social and affordable housing; good and inclusive growth that delivers sustainable communities, housing, and places into the future; and accommodating housing and economic growth with sustainable construction and excellent design that does not compromise the attractiveness of our existing places;
- Infrastructure – the need to access sufficient forward funding to put ‘infrastructure in first’ ahead of development delivery, reduce our carbon footprint, and plan for active and sustainable travel; and
- Economy – the need to further unlock the potential of our key sectors, stimulate new sectors, and create quality local jobs growth, in alignment with the emerging Local Industrial Strategy.

3.2. The Hertfordshire Growth Board will support the Partners to lead on, facilitate and support each other to collectively fulfil this core objective.

3.3. The Hertfordshire Growth Board, through its future work programme commitments aims to:

- Set out the shared vision for place and growth in Hertfordshire and the strategic priorities that will guide how the Partners collectively respond to demographic, economic and social challenges and work together for the continued success of a thriving Hertfordshire;
- Identify investment opportunities and potential sources of funding, including from central government, from private sources and locally, and where appropriate agree investment locally for the benefit of Hertfordshire;
- Speak with one voice to central government, academia, delivery partners, business and Hertfordshire residents, taking advantage of its place narrative and the scale of twelve Partners coming together;
- Agree and deliver on Partners’ shared priorities for infrastructure investment and development now and in the future;
- Lead on developing and securing the emerging agreement with central government to support infrastructure and housing, engaging with central government to secure buy-in, and acting as the accountable body for governance and delivery;
- Support the North East Central Herts and South West Herts planning partnerships and help facilitate strategic alignment of the joint planning work undertaken with each other and adjacent Local Planning Authorities.

4. Principles of Partnership

4.1. The Partners recognise the following benefits of stronger partnership working on place-based working in Hertfordshire:

- Building on the strengths of the two-tier system of local government, delivering at a local level while solving problems at a larger scale;
- Identifying and delivering local needs in collaboration with other strategic partners such as NHS, Police Constabulary and local businesses;

- Responding to challenges that extend beyond local authority boundaries such as strategic infrastructure delivery, traffic congestion, air quality, carbon reduction and affordable housing;
- Providing leadership of place at a county wide scale, helping to deliver joined up strategic and spatial planning appropriate for Hertfordshire's villages, towns, and cathedral city;
- Delivering at scale, with greater impact (the sum of what the Partners deliver together being greater than the sum of each individual authority's part) and with a single voice and message that commands the attention of government, investors and residents.

4.2. The Partners agree to the following principles to achieve the core objectives and aims set out in paragraph 3 above:

- The shared growth agenda – the Partners will individually work towards the Partners' shared growth challenges and ambitions, and in alignment with a collective coherent growth programme. The Partners may take advantage of their collective scale to maximise impact and shall endeavour to work across departments, authorities and boundaries;
- Strategic alignment – the Partners will seek strategic alignment with the emerging Hertfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, the emerging North East Central Herts and South West Herts Joint Strategic Spatial Plans, other groups and forums within Hertfordshire, regional bodies and neighbouring areas;
- Governance – the Partners will collectively secure the right governance, scrutiny, and transparency arrangements for the Hertfordshire Growth Board and underlying programmes, mindful of our local political environment and two-tier system of government. Local identity is one of Hertfordshire's strengths and the Partners will ensure that local identities and voices are not lost, and that pragmatic and flexible policies reflect local need;
- Designed around places – the Partners will support the development of Joint Strategic Spatial Plans and adopt a place-based delivery approach that addresses our shared challenges – connectivity, affordable homes, inclusive economic growth, protecting the environment, tackling climate change, and building healthy, safe communities;
- Collaboration – the Partners will ensure that they use and support existing successful examples of joint working across Hertfordshire where appropriate and will share and build on the substantial best practice and expertise that has been developed by each individual Partner. Each Partner will work effectively with its stakeholders, including residents, the private sector and academia; and
- Programme governance approach – the Partners will adopt robust project and programme management disciplines to bring pace, momentum and manage progress in achieving growth outcomes; and
- Resourcing – Partners will work together and with Government to put the resources that are necessary in place to deliver the core ambitions of the programme.

5. Scope of Memorandum of Understanding

- 5.1. The Partners intend to work together to enable good growth in Hertfordshire, subject to each individual Partner making decisions in accordance with its own decision-making process and the right to exercise its powers accordingly. Nothing in this Memorandum of Understanding shall affect the sovereignty of any individual Partner.
- 5.2. Each individual Partner agrees that the following shall remain in the domain of each individual Partner:
- decisions regarding housing and employment numbers, targets, and sites shall remain the responsibility of each Local Authority;
 - development management shall remain the responsibility of each Local Authority; and
 - discharging any function currently the responsibility of any Partner will remain the responsibility of that partner exercising that function.
- 5.3. The Growth Board will operate in accordance with its agreed Terms of Reference.

6. Term and Termination

- 6.1. This Memorandum of Understanding shall commence on the date of the final signature of the Partners;
- 6.2. This Memorandum of Understanding shall wholly terminate if the Hertfordshire Growth Board is dissolved by a majority vote.
- 6.3. Any individual Partner may withdraw from this Memorandum of Understanding by giving 30 days written notice to the Hertfordshire Growth Board. The future of any projects and work streams that the individual Partner is involved in at the date of withdrawal shall be agreed by the Hertfordshire Growth Board and any individual Partner agrees that involvement may continue (financial or otherwise) until the end of the project or work stream unless agreed otherwise.

7. Variation

- 7.1. This Memorandum of Understanding may be varied by written agreement of all of the Partners.
- 7.2. The Partners shall review this Memorandum of Understanding on an annual basis.

8. Charges and Liabilities

- 8.1. Unless expressly agreed by the Hertfordshire Growth Board, each Partner shall bear their own costs and expenses incurred in complying with their obligations under this Memorandum of Understanding.

9. Status

- 9.1. This Memorandum of Understanding is not intended to be legally binding and no legal obligations or legal rights shall arise between the parties from this Memorandum of Understanding.
- 9.2. This Memorandum of Understanding cannot override the statutory duties and powers of the Partners.

- 9.3. Nothing in this Memorandum of Understanding shall constitute a partnership or joint venture between any of the Partners.
- 9.4. Notwithstanding paragraph 9.1 above, each Partner covenants with the other Partners that they shall act in good faith towards the others and agrees to work together in accordance with this Memorandum of Understanding.

Signed by:

Local Authority	Leader	Chief Executive	Date
Broxbourne Borough Council			
Dacorum Borough Council			
East Herts District Council			
Hertfordshire County Council			
Hertsmere Borough Council			
North Hertfordshire District Council			
St Albans District Council			
Stevenage Borough Council			
Three Rivers District Council			
Watford Borough Council			
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council			
Local Enterprise Partnership	Chair	Chief Executive	Date
Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership			

Schedule 1 – The Partners

BROXBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL whose principal address is: Bishops College, Churchgate, Cheshunt EN8 9XG

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL whose principal address is: The Forum, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead HP1 1HH

EAST HERTS DISTRICT COUNCIL whose principal address is: Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford SG13 8EQ

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL whose principal address is at County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford SG13 8DE

HERTSMERE BOROUGH COUNCIL whose principal address is: Civic Offices, Elstree Way, Borehamwood WD6 1WN

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL whose principal address is: Council Offices, Gernon Rd, Letchworth Garden City SG6 3JF

ST ALBANS CITY & DISTRICT COUNCIL whose principal address is: Civic Centre, St Peter's St, St Albans AL1 3JE

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL whose principal address is: Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage SG1 1HN

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL whose principal address is: Three Rivers House, Northway, Rickmansworth WD3 1RL

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL whose principal address is: Town Hall, Watford WD17 3EX

WELYWN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL whose principal address is: The Campus, Welwyn Garden City AL8 6AE

HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP whose principal address is: One Garden City, Broadway, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3BF

**CABINET
31 OCTOBER 2019**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL PLAN 2020 - 2025 AND COUNCIL OBJECTIVES FOR 2020-2025

REPORT OF THE POLICY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report proposed a refreshed Council Plan and process for finalising the Plan.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet reviews and approves the draft complete Council Plan; which provides a summary of objectives and of activity to support the progression of the following Council Objectives:

- Be a more welcoming and inclusive **council**,
- Build a thriving and resilient **communities**,
- Respond to challenges to the **environment**,
- Enable an enterprising and co-operative **economy**,
- Support the delivery of good quality and affordable **homes**.

2.2 That Cabinet review and approves the following documents -

- Appendix A - Council Plan 2020-2025,
- Appendix B – Proposed Actions and
- Appendix C – Achievements

2.3 That Cabinet recommends to Full Council the adoption of the following:

- Appendix A – Council Plan 2020 -2025,
- Appendix B – Proposed Actions and
- Appendix C – Achievements

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council plan is a key element of the corporate business planning process, as a high level strategic document it sets out the Council's priorities for the next year. As an overarching policy framework document it guides and influences the use of Council resources; providing a focus for activities, plans and services the Council provide.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. The new administration has considered and proposed some draft Objectives, which will be reviewed and approved by this Cabinet, following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consideration of 16 July 2019. Executive Members have now considered the proposed priorities with the Senior Leadership team. A Member workshop took place on 18 September 2019 to consult and agree on the proposed actions for each of the objective priority areas. The final draft of the Council Plan will be recommended to Full Council.

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 27 June 2019.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The Corporate Business planning process dictates the Council's high level objectives are determined alongside consideration of budget position (Medium Term Financial Strategy) of the authority. At the meeting of the 30 July 2019, Cabinet agreed to amend the Council's objectives.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Council Plan attached as Appendix A provides a basic overview of objectives. The finalised draft of the Plan will need to identify the actions the Council will carry out to ensure the Council Plan is being delivered. Budgets must then be allocated to enable 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.
- 8.2 The Council Plan therefore 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 whilst statutory requirements placed on the authority have continued to rise.

- Financial constraints – work on the future funding of Local Authorities through a Fair Funding Formula and 75% retention of Business rates has not progressed in line with the original timetable. Alongside the delay to Central Government carrying out a 4 year Spending Review, this means that there is significant uncertainty over funding over the medium term. This is covered in more detail in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, but means that the Council has to prudently plan what it can afford to deliver until there is greater certainty. The emphasis for Council spend remains the day to day service delivery. Firstly of those which the Council has a statutory duty to provide and secondly those that are determined as a Council priority to be funded.
- 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.
- Patterns and location of deprivation have changed in the past five years (evidenced by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation) so we should ensure that our services, and how they may be delivered, respond accordingly to these; in times of increased financial constraint it is all the more important that limited resources, both those of the Council and its partner agencies working in the local community, are directed to areas of greater need.

The Council Plan will therefore need to highlight key issues and aims of the district. The Plans will need to set out the context in which the local authority operates, its ambitions and the links to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The format of the Plan has been reviewed to provide an easy summary of Objectives. The priorities once finalised shall provide the key information. The Council Plan will inform the subsequent agreement of the Service Plan prepared by Senior Management Team and subsequent Directorate Action Plans.

8.3 Having liaised with the administration prior to finalising the report the following Council Objectives for 2020-2025 are proposed:

- Be a more welcoming and inclusive **council**,
- Build a thriving and resilient **communities**,
- Respond to challenges to the **environment**,
- Enable an enterprising and co-operative **economy**,
- Support the delivery of good quality and affordable **homes**.

8.4 Subject to Cabinet's consideration, the Council Plan and proposed actions was further developed at the member workshop, and will be referred to Council for adoption on 21 November 2019. All projects included in the Council Plan should be subject to the provision of sound business cases with specific targets established as they are introduced. The Council's performance against these will be monitored and reported on a regular basis.

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." The Council Plan 2020-2025 at Appendix A represents the objectives and priority areas of work.
- 9.3 The council objectives agreed for 2020-2025 onward will provide high level reference points that will assist the Council making clear and effective decisions

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 A number of the proposed actions detailed in Appendix B will require additional resource and costs to achieve. As part of the budget planning process it will be necessary to determine the ways that the actions can be achieved and the costs involved, There is likely to be a need to prioritise the actions, in terms of the extent to which they can be delivered and the timing of delivery, to ensure that the overall programme is affordable within the resources that the Council has available. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set a target for the delivery of net savings of £300k for 2020/21 (and a cumulative £900k per year by 2023/24), As this is a net target, this does allow for additional costs relating to new priorities but does require that these will increase the gross savings (efficiencies, income generation or service changes) that need to be delivered. As negative Revenue Support Grant will not be applied in 2020/21 this increases the funding available in that year. However it is still assumed that there will be a similar reduction in funding in the years thereafter. The forecast position in later years has been made worse by greater clarity over the expected withdrawal of New Homes Bonus funding.
- 10.2 The Council will continue to face difficult spending decisions in view of the current economic climate and the expected continuing reduction in government support in future years. The availability of funding will impact on the services that can be delivered. Individual projects will be costed to enable decisions to be made on the overall programme of activity that the Council can deliver.
- 10.3 The Council received significant capital funding from the housing stock transfer to settle (formerly 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 particularly in view of the fact that capital spend is also required to maintain existing service provision.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The adoption of the Council Plan and within it the Council's Objectives for 2020 - 2025 is a significant part of the Council's Business Planning processes for the next financial year. A robust Corporate Business Planning process that links the Council Plan with the Medium Term Financing Plan is key to managing the Council's identified Corporate 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 Council Plan 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 other than the capacity issue raised at paragraph 8.4. The resources needed to deliver services are considered and addressed through the Corporate Business Planning process. Once these objectives are agreed for retention, then these will be cascaded to staff with several reminders via Insight, the SCF and the intranet.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A - Draft Council Plan 2020-2025
- 15.2 Appendix B – Proposed actions for 2020-2025
- 15.3 Appendix C – Achievements of the Council in 2018/19

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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- 16.5 Tim Everitt, Performance & Risk Officer 01462 474646
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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 None.

DRAFT Council Plan

Working with our communities, it's Your Council

Foreword by the Leader

In May 2019 a new administration was formed bringing together Labour and Co-operative councillors and Liberal Democrat councillors. In this plan we are demonstrating how we are keeping the promises we made to you, our residents in the recent election.

In putting the plan together we have sought to use the skills and insights of all 49 councillors working with the professional advice of our officers. We trust you will find the plan readable and find in it a clear understanding of our vision and priorities as we ensure your Council provides the best services we can within the constraints of continuing government cuts to our resources.

Martin Stears-Handscomb

Leader of the Council

Introduction by the Chief Executive

The Council Plan and the Objectives are the cornerstone for how we organise and undertake our business. The Plan provides the policy context for our budget setting, shapes the services that we provide and how those services are delivered. Our Service Delivery Plan is the next layer of detail and gives specific details about what we are going to achieve and these feed through to detailed actions for the teams working to deliver services for our local community. The Plan is ambitious and at the same time needs to be realistic so that we can deliver what we promise.

David Scholes

North Hertfordshire District Council's Chief Executive

DRAFT Council Plan



Our Values

We will operate in line with the principles of a co-operative council. The Council will be one that builds the co-operative values of mutual support, accountability, fairness and responsibility into everything it does.

New organisational values have recently been adopted. These are expected to be demonstrated by staff and these values are embedded in our appraisal system to ensure our plan is delivered in a co-operative manner. The values ("We are") are matched with corresponding behaviours for staff ("I am"). The values and behaviours are:-

DRAFT Council Plan

Purpose of the plan

The Council plan lays out how North Hertfordshire District Council will achieve its aims for the district. The plan sets out the priorities that the Council will address over the next five years. Appendix A sets out the administration's proposed actions and these will be supported by the more detailed Service Delivery Plan and supporting Action Plans on how these Objectives and actions will be delivered by the individual service areas. Appendix B also sets out the achievements of the Council in 2018/19

Vision

To make North Hertfordshire a district in which everyone who lives, works or visits is able to flourish.

Objectives

- **Be a more welcoming and inclusive council,**
- **Build a thriving and resilient communities,**
- **Respond to challenges to the environment,**
- **Enable an enterprising and co-operative economy,**
- **Support the delivery of good quality and affordable homes.**

DRAFT Council Plan

Objectives

Objective One - Be a more welcoming and inclusive council:

This means:

We will engage with and welcome the contributions of residents, community groups and businesses; working collaboratively with local people.

Objective Two - Build thriving and resilient communities:

This means:

We will work on frequent and regular opportunities to improve the partnership and relationship that it has with local citizens. Some of this will be achieved by change in culture, tone and communications but more will be done through direct measurable activity, intervention and consultation.

We will develop a range of innovative ways in which local communities, including streets, neighbourhoods, villages, towns and communities of interest can be encouraged to become more involved in supporting, planning, improving and maintaining local environments.

This work stream will focus particularly on engaging with young residents and those who are disadvantaged or in any way socially excluded, in their schools and neighbourhoods to ensure such innovation are fit for the future and imaginative in concept and delivery.

Objective Three – Respond to challenges to the environment:

This means:

We will seek to provide a clean and safe environment, in consultation and partnership with local people. We will engage local people and organisations as we progress towards our target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030, whilst taking action to enable and encourage residents to minimise their own carbon impact. We will protect the natural and built environment through our planning policies and an effective green spaces strategy. We will take action against environmental crime and ensure that our approach to waste and recycling promotes the hierarchy of reduce, re-use, recycle. We will complete the elimination of single use plastics from the council and support reductions in their use across the district. We will work to improve the monitoring and management of air quality across the district, prioritising those areas where air quality is most in need of improvement.

Objective Four: Enable an enterprising and co-operative economy

This means:

We will aim to become an increasingly innovative and inclusive Council, committed to generating community wealth, by seeking commercial and investment opportunities and through proactive engagement with a wider range of small and medium sized businesses to build a sustainable local economy. Also engaging with residents, staff and Councillors to continue to embrace modern working practices through the use of IT and a commitment to working towards a paperless Council; to increase the efficiency of services and access to them by residents.

DRAFT Council Plan

Objective Five - Support the delivery of good quality and affordable homes.

This means:

We will enable and support the delivery of good quality and affordable housing in the district, ensuring both new and existing housing is fit for purpose, including a commitment to consultation and ensuring communities have the infrastructure they need; building more effective relationships with local housing associations and recognise our role in the fight against homelessness; supporting Parishes with Neighbourhood plans.

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Objective One - Be a more welcoming and inclusive council:

- Ensure that individuals and community groups presenting petitions, grant applications, opinions or objections to Committees, Cabinet and Council are treated as welcome guests at all times and that Chairs are encouraged to take a flexible and enabling approach to their participation.
- Creating a programme of regular engagement and survey activities which will enable us to measure progress in how the Council's work with residents and community groups is perceived, and how it encourages new ideas for improvement.
- Keep the Council's Complaints Policy under review to ensure its fitness for purpose as a useable and accessible tool, including its website version and the publishing of results and statistics.
- The expansion of use and promotion of Town Talks and Councillors' Surgeries with particular focus on developing links with groups that have not traditionally engaged with these activities.
- Implement a "customer account" for customers to access specific information relating to them and to enable them to transact with the Council from a single log-on. To speed up processes for customers with the use of Artificial Intelligence.
- Ensure that the Council's website encourages public use and engagement, particularly in relation to the planning portal and other areas.

Objective Two - Building thriving and resilient communities

- Create a programme of regular engagement and survey activities which will enable us to measure progress in how the Council's work with residents and community groups is perceived, and how it encourages new ideas for improvement.
- To re-establish a programme of work with schools and local youth groups – especially for Local Democracy Week - to establish productive and active engagement with young people across the District.
- To work with the Licensing team, the Police and the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) to explore and resolve some of the issues of extreme caution relating to Community events.
- The Community Safety team to assist Councillors in re-establishing regular communications with police and other community safety partners.

Objective Three - Responding to challenges to the environment

- Exploring a range of ways in which local communities, including streets and neighbourhoods, can be encouraged to take some responsibility in supporting, improving and maintaining their local environment.
- Return to a 'business as usual' waste collection regime
- Increase recycling tonnages – target 60% for 2019/2020.
- Carry out waste composition analysis to understand waste streams better and enable a realistic food waste collection target for 2020/2021.
- Work with Urbaser to deliver service improvements to residents.
- Be a listening and engaging Waste and Recycling service.
- Identify the council's current carbon foot print.
- Consult with the public and with interest groups of strategies for achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- Identify the district carbon foot print and in consultation with the public identify means by which the council can assist the residents and businesses on North Herts achieve the target of net zero emissions across the district by 2030.

Council Plan: Proposed actions

- Work with cycling groups to produce a cycling plan to promote cycling, including the use of electric bicycles, as a means of transport and identify simple to remove barriers.
- Purchase of energy from renewable sources.
- It will consider all future operational vehicles leased or purchased by the council are Ultra Low Emission Vehicles and encourage contractors to adopt similar measures.
- Explore the mechanism for tree planting on the Council's land and to encourage private landowners to do so.
- Installing additional electric vehicle charging points in council car parks to ensure that every car park has charging points in at least 5% of spaces, with a minimum of two spaces per car park.
- Installation of on street electric vehicle charging points in on street parking bays in town centres (in agreement with the County Council).
- Install PV panels on council buildings where this is practical and economically viable.
- Maintain the provision of indoor leisure facilities as both a community service and a source of income to the council at present or better levels.
- End the program of removal of equipment from play areas with the exception of any locations where there is local support for removal.
- Investigate the potential for installing informal play items (beams, logs, etc.) in larger play areas where equipment has already been removed.
- Ensure that the local plan or supplementary planning guidance leads to the provision of sustainable and suitable play provision as part of all larger housing developments in the district.
- Explore opportunities to enhance the community use of the Fearnhill Sports Centre.
- Produce a plan identifying the specific indoor and outdoor leisure facility needs resulting from the projected developments in the local plan, including preparing proposals to a point where they can be used to secure appropriate developer funding when planning applications are submitted.
- Identify solutions to existing issues of capacity at Royston Leisure Centre and parking/access at Hitchin Swimming Centre.
- Agree a plan with Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) to eliminate single use plastics from Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools.
- Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Events 2-3 events per year.
- Discounts on garden waste charge for vulnerable residents.
- Greater utilisation of Herts Waste Partnership (HWP).
- Air Pollution: Review what we currently do and how we might be able to take steps to improve air quality, and take action to stop car/bus/taxi idling (particularly at schools)
- Council led environmental health action days (surrounding dog fouling, fly tipping, dumping of waste).

Objective Four - Enabling an enterprising and co-operative economy

- Ensure that the Council's income generating activities should never look to disadvantage non-profit or charitable community groups out of principle.
- We will encourage the development of co-operative businesses and enterprises within the District by providing or signposting advice services.
- Community Interest Companies (CIC), Social Enterprise and Cooperative opportunities should also be considered alongside the conventional Ltd. Company structure.
- Support development of CIC, Social Enterprise and Cooperative opportunities in the community.

Council Plan: Proposed actions

- Value should be attached to the benefits to the local community when establishing a commercial interest.

Objective Five - Supporting the delivery of good quality and affordable housing.

- Identify opportunities for requiring better than building regulation thermal performance from new building in the district, including the potential for zero carbon houses.
- Support in every way possible the achievement of the climate change and particularly carbon reduction targets. This means above all designing new developments to discourage car use and to encourage alternatives such as walking, cycling and using public transport.
- It also means looking at existing infrastructure to make it more ecologically friendly.
- Ensure that the local plan or supplementary planning guidance leads to the provision of sustainable and suitable play provision as part of all larger housing developments in the district.
- Seek local partnership with all Registered Social Landlords (RSL) to build more social homes.
- Support delivery of homeless accommodation scheme in Letchworth.
- Prevention of homelessness through early intervention/role with local RSL's
- Support development John Barker Place.
- Ensure new developments be designed to integrate them into existing communities, and must ensure that their infrastructure is appropriate.
- Developments must provide a full range of housing, private, self-build, and social rented, for families and single people, for young and old.
- Review of the Planning Code of Good Conduct.

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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 disadvantaged people are supported.

ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

WELCOMING DIVERSITY

SUPPORTING DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE

- Refurbished the Bancroft Gardens play area. The £75k project resulted in the installation of a new adventure climbing structure with a slide and a pendulum swing. In addition, a standing stone circle and boulders have been added to encourage more imaginative play.
- Opened a new skate park at Norton Common. The £140k project has resulted in the installation of a completely revamped skate park. It offers riders of all ages a range of ramps, ledges and banks, together with an exciting new bowl section.
- Completed the redevelopment of North Herts Leisure Centre to provide a new café, learner pool, wet changing areas and fitness studio.

OBJECTIVE 2: Prosper and Protect

To promote sustainable growth both within and where it affects our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITES

CULTURAL AND PHYSICAL HERITAGE

- Submitted a Local Plan to the Planning Inspector for the period 2011-2031 that identifies areas in the District suitable for future sustainable development.
- Improvements to internal waste management system:
 - We redesigned our recycling bins and revised the labelling to reduce the amount of contamination in recycling bins
 - We removed single use plastic water cups from our water fountains, replacing them with glasses and ceramic mugs, and encouraged staff to use their own water bottles and travel mugs where possible.
 - Made food recycling available in our offices
- Two Council motions were passed in July 2018 – on working towards eliminating single-use plastics and on supporting Plastic Free Letchworth.
- Plastic Free North Herts Campaign
 - Refill...

- We have installed several new drinking fountains at:
 - Avenue Park, Baldock
 - Priory Memorial Gardens, Royston
 - Bancroft Park, Hitchin
 - Hitchin Outdoor Swimming Pool
 - Letchworth Outdoor Swimming Pool
- Declared a Climate Change Emergency; Instituted a Cabinet Panel on Climate Change, the Panel's Terms of Reference are to consider a range of climate and environmental issues, and to consult with the public and with interest groups of strategies for achieving zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- Improved the energy efficiency of DCO and HTH
- Budget announcement 2019/20 - Electrical Vehicle Charging Points - £15k has been added to the budget to allow the Council to consider options for expanding the electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the district. A key part of this work will be looking at options for providing on-street charging points.
- North Hertfordshire Transport Users Forum – a sum of £50k was approved to enable a forum for public transport users to be set up, following the extensive problems experienced by train users last year. This would help to better co-ordinate the approach to public transport (including buses) and allow our communities to better engage with providers.
- The continued upkeep of district green spaces in the district seeks to maintain the biodiversity within the area.
- Our green spaces are maintained to a high standard. This is reflected on the recent award of the Green Flag award to a number of areas including Ivel Springs, Baldock. This area has received this for the fifth year running.

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.

RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

A RESPONSIVE COUNCIL

COMMERICALISATION

- Launched a new service to keep people independent when they're out and about. Complementary to the Council's Careline service for inside the home, Herts Bernie is a portable pendant and GPS locator that can summon help from wherever you are.
- Achieved 100% satisfaction for its Herts Careline service in a customer survey.
- Made improvements to our online benefit claims and payments process to better serve those most in need.
- Greater use of Social Media to engage with community
- Creation of a 'Special' Town Talk to engage residents and businesses on a specific issue

**CABINET
31 OCTOBER 2019**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OD REPORT: THE GOVERNMENT’S REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - REGULATORY

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR GARY GRINDAL

COUNCIL PRIORITY: RESPONSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Government has announced arrangements for extending its refugee resettlement programme beyond 2020, when its three largest current resettlement schemes are due to conclude. It is seeking pledges from local authorities to participate in the first year of this new global resettlement scheme.
- 1.2 The Council participated in the current resettlement programme and has successfully fulfilled its commitment to resettle 50 vulnerable Syrian refugees in the district. The full cost of resettlement was met by the Home Office.
- 1.3 The Refugee Council has been appointed by the Council to provide specialist support for refugees resettled under the current programme. Should Cabinet agree the proposals in this report, new commissioning arrangements would need to be initiated to ensure there is adequate support for new arrivals.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That, subject to the successful appointment of a specialist refugee support provider:

- 2.1. Cabinet resolves to support the Government’s extended refugee resettlement programme; and
- 2.2. Cabinet agrees to resettling ten Syrian refugees in North Hertfordshire in the first year of the new global resettlement scheme and authorises officers to make the necessary arrangements to deliver this commitment.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To enable the Council to continue to support the Government’s refugee resettlement programme.
- 3.2. The Council successfully resettled 50 Syrian refugees over a four year period under the current resettlement programme. Committing to resettling ten refugees in the first year of the new global resettlement scheme will represent a similar level of undertaking.

- 3.3. Although the new scheme has an extended global focus, the Council will request Syrian nationals as there is already an established support network to facilitate integration in to the local community.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The Cabinet could decide against participating in the new global resettlement scheme, or to assist a smaller, or larger, number of refugees. However, by resettling ten Syrian refugees in the first year of the new scheme, it has positively met the Government's request for assistance at a similar annual rate of the previous scheme.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Councillor Gary Grindal, the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, has been consulted and is supportive of the proposals contained in this report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 6th September 2019.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The first and largest of the Government's refugee resettlement schemes, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), was launched in January 2014 in response to the civil war in Syria and the resulting humanitarian crisis. The Scheme provides a route for the most vulnerable Syrian refugees to come to the UK, prioritising survivors of violence and torture, people requiring urgent medical treatment and women and children at risk. The scheme was expanded in September 2015, with a commitment to resettle up to 20,000 refugees from the Syrian region over a five year period. Priority for inclusion in the scheme was also broadened to include children. An accompanying Community Sponsorship Scheme was launched to enable community groups to play a role, if they wished, in welcoming and supporting newly settled refugee families.
- 7.2 The Government has been working closely with local authorities, regional Strategic Migration Partnerships and the voluntary sector to implement its resettlement programme. Local authority participation is on a voluntary basis. At its meeting on 15th December 2015, Cabinet resolved that the Council should participate in the VPRS and undertake to resettle 50 Syrian refugees in North Hertfordshire. Seven other Hertfordshire local authorities also undertook to participate in the scheme.
- 7.3 The Council recently fulfilled its commitment under the VPRS. Ten Syrian families (totalling 50 individuals) have been successfully resettled in affordable housing properties provided by settle (formerly North Hertfordshire Homes), Howard Cottage Housing Association and Clarion Housing. All ten families have been housed in Letchworth or Hitchin. The full cost of the resettlement has been met by the Home Office. In addition, the Council has also supported St Mary's Church, Baldock in housing a Syrian family via the Community Sponsorship Scheme.

- 7.4 Under the VPRS, resettled refugees are granted refugee status, meaning that they have five years leave to remain in the UK, the right to work and access public funds and the possibility of applying for family reunion. It is expected that at the end of the five year period, resettled refugees will be eligible to apply for permanent settlement in the UK.
- 7.5 The ten families resettled under the VPRS have integrated well into their local communities and the resettlement process has largely run smoothly. The Council's commitment has been delivered in partnership with many agencies including Hertfordshire County Council, the Health Service, the Refugee Council and Herts Welcomes Refugees (formerly known as Herts Welcomes Syrian Families).

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The VPRS and the other resettlement schemes will be concluding in 2020. In June 2019, the Government announced its ongoing commitment to the resettlement of vulnerable refugees and its intention to consolidate these existing resettlement schemes into a new global resettlement scheme. The Government has written to all local authorities in England to seek their participation. As previously, participation is on a voluntary basis.
- 8.2. Under the new global resettlement scheme, the Government's priority will continue to be to resettle the most vulnerable refugees, identified and referred by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The geographical focus however will be broadened beyond the Middle East and North Africa region and there will be greater flexibility to swiftly respond to international crises.
- 8.3 In the first year of the new scheme, the UK will aim to resettle in the region of 5,000 of the world's most vulnerable refugees using the same approach of working closely with local authorities, regional Strategic Migration Partnerships and other partners. The first arrivals are expected in Spring 2020.
- 8.4 The Community Sponsorship scheme, which enables community groups to directly welcome and support refugees in the UK, will continue. Refugees resettled under this community-led scheme will be in addition to the Government commitment.
- 8.5 The Home Office have committed to retaining existing funding rates for refugees arriving in the first year of the scheme, meaning a participating local authority will continue to receive the five-year tariff of £20,520 for each refugee with a top-up (for year 1 only) for children aged 3-18 years. Funding and resettlement targets for further years will be determined through future spending rounds.
- 8.6 Following its successful participation in the VPRS, it is proposed that the Council continues to play a role in the resettlement of vulnerable refugees by further participating in the new resettlement scheme. It is proposed that the Council pledges to resettle ten individuals - most probably two families - in the district in the first year of the scheme. This will be on a similar scale to the assistance provided under the VPRS. It is also recommended that Syrian refugees are requested as local support services are already in place.

- 8.7 The Council's commitment under the VPRS was fully delivered within the funding providing by the Home Office. Given that existing funding rates will be retained and that the scale of assistance will be similar, it is anticipated that the cost of the proposed new commitment will also be fully met by the Home Office.
- 8.8 In order to meet its VPRS commitment, the Council sourced housing from registered providers of affordable housing as it was considered to be the most sustainable option for families resettled under the scheme. All ten families settled through the VPRS were housed in three bedroomed properties, which are in relatively lower demand locally compared to properties of other sizes (currently only 11% of households on the Common Housing Register are in need of a three bedroom property). In the three full years since the first of the ten households was accommodated, there have been 261 three bedroom vacancies and the impact on supply is not considered significant. The private rented sector also remains an option although it is potentially less viable for benefit reliant households due to the high levels of local rents.
- 8.9 The Refugee Council are contracted to provide daily support for resettled refugees and were commissioned by the Council via a Hertfordshire wide Framework Agreement. However, this only covers the current resettlement scheme; should Cabinet agree the proposals in this report, an extension to this arrangement would be sought.
- 8.10 A further report will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration once information has been released about the operation and funding of the new resettlement scheme beyond its first year.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Council has a general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals generally may do. It has power to do so "otherwise than for, the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area", which this scheme would be.
- 9.2 Within its terms of reference, Cabinet has remit under 5.6.14 to carry out the Council's responsibilities for the general power of competence; under 5.6.19 it may oversee the authority's policy on the voluntary and community sector and under 5.6.28 it may make decision where a policy or strategy does not exist (and it is not otherwise reserved to Council).
- 9.3 The Refugee Council have been appointed by the Council via a Hertfordshire wide Framework Agreement, initiated by Watford BC. In order to ensure the availability of a support service for new arrivals officers will seek to extend this arrangement, or engage a new service provider, in accordance with the Council's Contract Procurement Rules (January 2019).
- 9.4 The Council's adopted Common Housing Allocation Scheme allows for direct offers of affordable housing to be made in exceptional or urgent circumstances.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. It is expected the costs of participating in the first year of the new global resettlement scheme will be fully met by the Home Office.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The Refugee Council have responded positively to initial discussions regarding the extension of their support service for arrivals under the new scheme. However, they are awaiting confirmation of expected arrivals across Hertfordshire in order to understand the scale and viability of the county wide proposal before confirming their position. The Refugee Council may therefore be unable to participate in the new scheme. Although every effort will be made to find an alternative support provider, due to the specialist nature of the role, there are a limited number of alternative options. As the availability of a specialist support service is vital to the resettlement of refugees, its potential absence leads to the (albeit fairly low) risk that the Council is unable to participate in the new resettlement scheme.

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 this report. Consideration of both the needs of any individual refugees/families and the wider community will be required to ensure effective integration

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. From the Council perspective, the resettlement process itself includes sourcing and equipping properties for the refugees, ensuring contractual arrangements are in place (and monitored) for the day-to-day support service and also claiming the stage payments from the Government for each resettled individual. As this report proposes the resettlement of ten Syrian individuals, at a similar rate to recent years, it is anticipated these tasks can be undertaken within existing staff resources.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1. None.

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 16.1 Ian Fullstone, ext 4480
Service Director - Regulatory
ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk
- 16.2 Martin Lawrence, ext 4250
Strategic Housing Manager
martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk

16.3 Antonio Ciampa, ext 4566
Accountancy Manager
Antonio.ciampa@north-herts.gov.uk

16.4 Isabelle Alajooz, ext 4346
Contracts and Property Solicitor
Isabelle.alajooz@north-herts.gov.uk

16.5 Reuben Ayavoo, ext 4212
Policy and Community Engagement Manager
reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk

17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 The Council's Common Housing Allocation Scheme can be viewed at the following webpage:
<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/housing/find-home/apply-social-housing>

CABINET 31 OCTOBER 2019
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PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: LAND OFF WINDMILL CLOSE, BARKWAY

REPORT OF THE INTERIM PROPERTY CONSULTANT

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR KEITH HOSKINS AND COUNCILLOR IAN ALBERT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ATTRACTIVE AND THRIVING

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's approval for the declaration as surplus to District Council requirements approximately 2.23 acres of land off Windmill Close, Barkway as shown edged blue (excluding the hatched area) on the plan at Appendix A.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the land 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.
- 2.2 Following receipt of offers for the 2.23 acres of land identified at Appendix A, the decision to accept an offer is delegated to the Service Director for Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Keeping the land as it is. The land is currently used for informal open space. The District Council has no operational requirements for the land. Local residents had expressed the need to continue with the current use as open space. However, 0.54 acres of the site is now leased to the Parish Council as community open space for use by local residents and registered as Village Green to fulfil this need.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Consultation on the principle to dispose of the land has been made with Cllr Gerald Morris, Ermine Ward. Concern was expressed by him on the appropriateness of the timing of any disposal as the Local Plan was not yet adopted policy. Please refer to Appendix D for email correspondence from Cllr Morris.
- 5.2 Barkway Parish Council was advised via the Parish Clerk on 5th September 2019 of these proposals and their comments are in line with those of Cllr Morris. Please refer to Appendix E for email from the Parish Clerk.
- 5.3 Royston and District Area Committee: Cllr Ben Lewis, Cllr Bill Davidson, Cllr Carol Stanier, Cllr Gerald Morris, Cllr Jean Green, Cllr Ruth Brown and Cllr Tony Hunter were consulted on 4th September 2019.
- 5.4 The District Council's intentions for disposal of this land were advertised (see Appendix B) in accordance with section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 in the Royston Crow newspaper on 5th and 12th September 2019. No representations were received from any members of the public.

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 15th August 2019.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Cabinet first approved the sale of the southern section of the site of 1.2 acres at Cabinet in March 2013 (Agenda Item 150).

Resolved:

- (1) That, subject to the Royston and District Committee raising no substantive objections to the proposals, the 1.2 acre site at Windmill Close, Barkway be offered for sale on the open market for development, subject to the normal approvals (e.g.) planning, which may include provisions such as affordable housing and amenity space; and*
 - (2) That, following receipt of the offers for the site and after consultation with the Local Ward Councillor, the decision on which one to accept be delegated to the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT.*
- 7.2 Cabinet subsequently approved an amendment to the above decision by removing the area which was to be leased to Barkway Parish Council for a term of 99 years (see Appendix A - land shown hatched). The lease was completed on 9th November 2017. This part is now also registered as a Village Green. The amended site area approved as surplus was the remaining southern portion of approximately 0.53 acres. This decision was taken at Cabinet in June 2014 (Agenda item 20).

Resolved:

- (1) That the terms for disposal of 1.2 acres of land at Windmill Close, Barkway be amended to include authority being delegated to the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT, to grant a long lease of a minimum of 50 years to Barkway Parish Council of part of the site for use as open space, subject to the requirement that once the lease is granted the village green application ref VG052 will be immediately withdrawn, to allow marketing for development of the remainder of the 1.2 acre site; and*
- (2) That, following receipt of the offers for the development site, being part but not all of the 1.2 acre site, the decision on which one to accept be delegated to the Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT.*

7.3 This report now recommends the northern part of the site as shown in the plan at Appendix A is marketed together with the remaining 0.53 acre southern section of the site

7.4 The northern part of the site (1.7 acres) is allocated in the emerging Local Plan as suitable for housing. The site is known as site BK2 in the emerging Local Plan and originally was proposed as the whole of the District Council's landholding. However, during the Local Plan process it is understood that BK2 has been reduced to be just the northern part of the site. The original allocation for the whole site was for 20 houses; this number is unlikely to be achieved on the reduced site area. The southern area of 0.53 acres is within the village settlement boundary and so would be considered as a windfall site within current planning policy. Please see Appendix C for a site plan of BK2.

7.5 Upon any sale of the land it is required that a right of way is provided for grounds maintenance vehicles and pedestrians to access the recreation ground (leased to the Parish Council) from the public highway at the end of Windmill Close.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Following resolution of the provision and protection of open space with the grant to Barkway Parish Council of a lease of 0.54 acres of land as shown hatched on the plan at Appendix A, and its registration as a Village Green, the issues raised through previous local consultation have now been resolved.

8.2 With the progression of the Local Plan, and likely timescales to its adoption, it would be appropriate to market and dispose of all surplus land in this holding in one transaction to achieve maximum financial benefit.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Cabinet in exercising its functions have powers to dispose of land or buildings where the consideration is between £250,000 and £2,500,000.

9.2 There may be specific legal implications relevant to the sale of the property e.g. covenants on title, easements, third party rights. However preliminary title investigations do not reveal any issues that would frustrate the proposed development.

9.3 The Contract Procurement Rules and specifically Appendix I apply to the sales of land or property. If Cabinet were to sell this land the Officers seeking to market and dispose of the land would be required to do so within the remit of the Contract Procurement Rules.

9.4 Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 allows a Council to dispose of land in any manner it wishes provided that the consideration is the best that can be reasonably obtained unless the Secretary of State consent to the disposal for less than best value.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The sale will generate a capital receipt to assist in funding the Council's capital investment programme.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The sale of assets reduces the risk to the District Council arising from the duties under the Occupiers Liability Act 1957 and 1984.

11.2 There are no risks relevant to the consideration of this decision. The declaration of the land as surplus to the District Council's requirements will allow the property to be openly marketed and sold at best value. Risks may exist as to the sale price achieved due to current planning policy; however this will be managed and timed appropriately in order to maximise the sale price.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5th April 2011. There is a General duty, described in 12.2, that public bodies must meet, underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.

12.2 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.

12.3 Central Government and national groups have expressed the continued importance of public Green Space in the health and well-being of communities. From April 2013 local authorities at county level are required to take on the statutory duty to improve the health of their communities as required by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and with it, to acquire many of the public health services currently the responsibility of the NHS. The use of open spaces, parks, playgrounds and relevant leisure facilities are promoted in terms of reducing the impact of obesity on long term health, the importance in the management of wellbeing and in aiding relaxation, as well as 'sensory' enjoyment. Therefore the report's recommendation works well in conjunction with central government guidance and local authority responses to the guidance.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 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.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no Human resource implications from this report.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A - Location Plan of Land to be Declared Surplus
- 15.2 Appendix B – S.123 Local Press Advertisement
- 15.3 Appendix C – Amended BK2 Local Plan Allocation
- 15.4 Appendix D – Correspondence from Councilor Morris
- 15.5 Appendix E – Correspondence from Barkway Parish Council

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 16.1 Chris Robson, Senior Estates Surveyor, christopher.robson@north-herts.gov.uk
Ext: 4752
- 16.2 Peter Lapham, Interim Property Consultant, peter.lapham@north-herts.gov.uk
Ext 4612

17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 Cabinet meeting Minutes March 2011: Minute 124
- 17.2 Cabinet meeting Minutes March 2013: Minute 150
- 17.3 Cabinet meeting Minutes June 2014: Minute 20

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**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth Garden City, Herts, SG6 3JF**



Section 123 Local Government Act 1972

Notice is hereby given that North Hertfordshire District Council intends to dispose of open land extending to some 2.23 acres at the northern end of Windmill Close, Barkway, Herts. forming part of the registered freehold title HD498175.

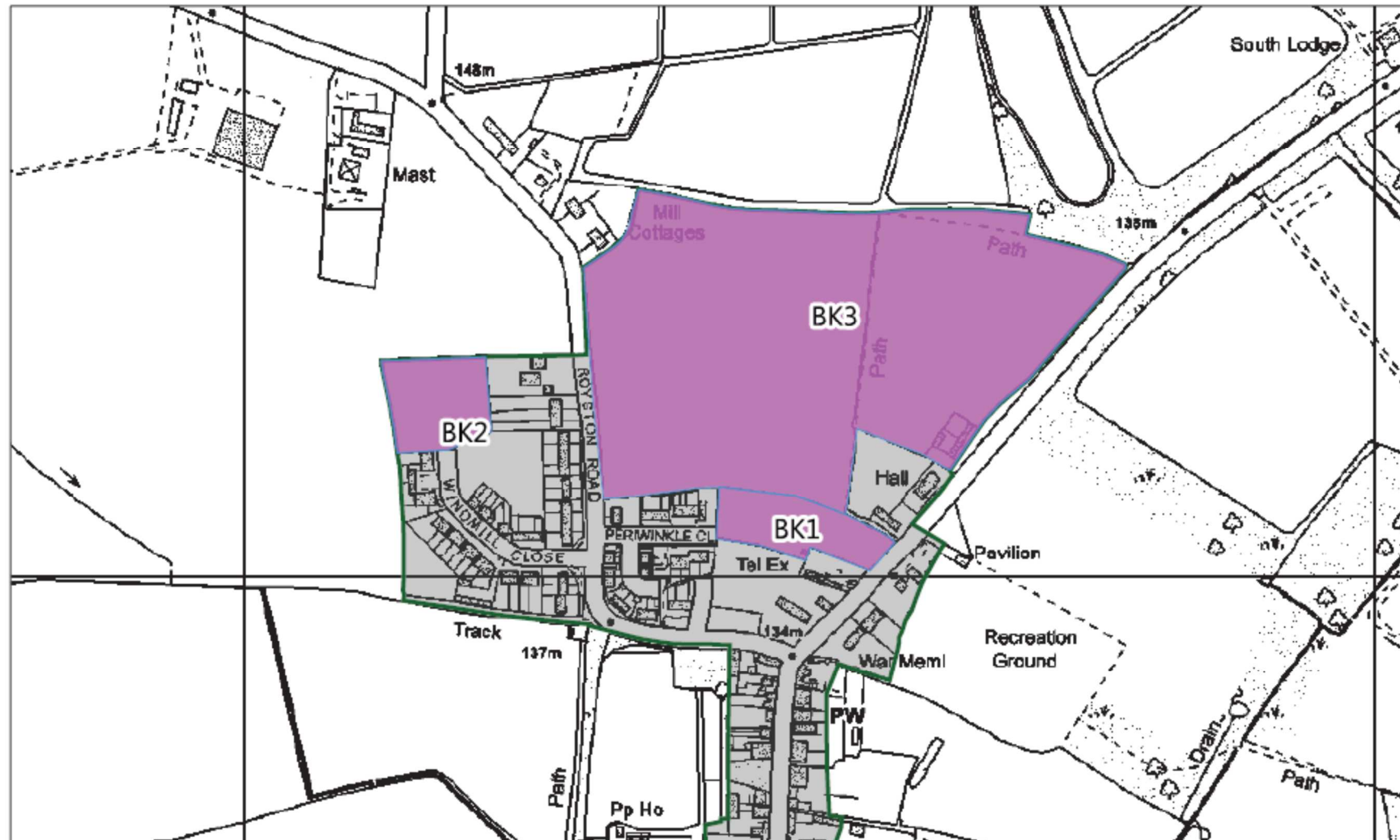
Any comments or objections should be made in writing to Property Services, North Hertfordshire District Council, Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 3JF by 12.00 noon 3rd October 2019.

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



MM388 & MM389: Amend boundary of housing allocation BK2 & BK3 (after)



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Appendix D - Comments from Councillor Morris

Redacted to protect personal data

From: Gerald Morris [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 October 2019 17:18
To: Peter Lapham
[REDACTED]
Subject: Appendix D Response from Cllr Morris

Okay,

I also omitted to include that the proposed land, whilst an ELP selected site is currently outside the village boundary. Therefore, in my view, until the plan is adopted, it is effectively little more than rural beyond greenbelt. Would you kindly also include this comment.

Regards,

Gerald Morris,
District Councillor, Ermine Ward,

[REDACTED]

On 15 Oct 2019, at 17:07, Peter Lapham <Peter.Lapham@north-herts.gov.uk> wrote:

I was just wanting to update consultation responses for Cabinet on 31st, so obviously as soon as possible, however as final reports are in tomorrow any further response will need to be appended prior to the meeting

Regards

Peter Lapham

Interim Property Consultant

Mobile Tel: 07702 166161

Direct Dial: 01462 474612

Estates and Asset Management

North Hertfordshire District Council

Council Offices, Gernon Road

Letchworth Garden City

Hertfordshire

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From: Gerald Morris [<mailto:gemorris@btinternet.com>]

Sent: 15 October 2019 16:45

To: Peter Lapham

Subject: Re: Proposed Sale of Land at Windmill Close Barkway Cabinet Report

Dear Peter, thank you for your email.

I have been in touch with the clerk of the Parish Council. Unfortunately [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I am therefore not able to obtain the minutes of the Parish Council meeting or any relevant comments.
Will it wait until then please?

Regards,

Gerald Morris,
District Councillor, Ermine Ward,

[REDACTED]

On 15 Oct 2019, at 14:45, Peter Lapham <Peter.Lapham@north-herts.gov.uk> wrote:

Cllr Morris

Thank you for your comments below, and as requested I will append a copy of this email to the Part 1 Report to Cabinet.

For the sake of completeness are you able to advise if you have had any feedback from Barkway Parish Council, as I have to date not had any communication from them.

Regards

Peter Lapham

Interim Property Consultant

Mobile Tel: 07702 166161

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From: Gerald Morris [<mailto:gemorris@btinternet.com>]

Sent: 04 October 2019 17:33

To: Peter Lapham

[REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Proposed Sale of Land at Windmill Close Barkway Cabinet Report

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your email.

Barkway Parish Council meet next week, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

However, no doubt they will make their own comments.

As you know, I have reservations in respect of timing, in that your proposal conflicts with the Inspector's comments.

Whilst I assume that NHDC do you not have to follow the Inspector's guidance. I do feel that it is not the best timing to market the site prior to adoption of the Local Plan.

As you also know, the Inspector has requested further public hearings, which includes discussions in respect of Barkway. It would have been better and more democratic to have waited for the outcome of the public hearings and Inspectors report; rather than market a site which has a large question mark over it.

In addition, as I have already pointed out, post adoption of the Local Plan; NHDC would have had clarity in respect of the site and have been able to obtain far better value than marketing it now. By attempting to market the site now, NHDC, I believe, will not be obtaining the highest price.

Should the site have an existing tenant? I assume that marketing the site would be in accordance with their tenancy agreement.

Would you kindly include my comments as part of your submission to The Cabinet

Regards,

Gerald Morris,
District Councillor, Ermine Ward,



On 4 Oct 2019, at 16:45, Peter Lapham <Peter.Lapham@north-herts.gov.uk> wrote:

Cllr Morris

Please find attached the final draft report for cabinet as requested, which I trust you will find informative.

Thank you for your input on this matter

regards

Peter Lapham

Interim Property Consultant

Mobile Tel: 07702 166161

Direct Dial: 01462 474612

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From: Gerald Morris <mailto:gemorris@btinternet.com>

Sent: 18 September 2019 13:59

To: Peter Lapham

Cc: 

Subject: Re: Proposed Sale of Land at Windmill Close Barkway

Dear Peter, thanks

The next Barkway Parish Council meeting is on 8th October, so as before I will take guidance from them after that.

Regards,

Gerald Morris,
District Councillor, Ermine Ward,



On 18 Sep 2019, at 13:46, Peter Lapham <Peter.Lapham@north-herts.gov.uk> wrote:
Cllr Morris

The intention had been, as per the forward plan, to submit to September Cabinet, however it was then realised that the previous approval had been subject to consultation just on the southern half, hence it was withdrawn prior to the agenda being circulated in order that full consultation and advertisement could take place, it is therefore intended to submit to the October Cabinet, following this consultation.

As this matter is to declare the land surplus to the council's requirements, my understanding is that this approval can only be given at the Cabinet meeting. I will provide the report once it is completed in respect of consultation.

If and when the land is approved as surplus, then consideration will be given to the planning backdrop at that time in terms of timing any disposal.

I hope this clarifies matters

regards

Peter Lapham

Interim Property Consultant

Mobile Tel: 07702 166161

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From: Gerald Morris [<mailto:gemorris@btinternet.com>]

Sent: 18 September 2019 10:07

To: Peter Lapham



Subject: Re: Proposed Sale of Land at Windmill Close Barkway

Dear Peter,

As a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. I attended a meeting last night.

I noticed during the meeting that it is planned to bring this matter to Cabinet on 24th September. <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s7311/Appendix%20B%20-%20Forward%20Plan%20for%2015%20August%202019.pdf>

However, looking at the agenda for this meeting, it appears not to be included.

<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MIId=2197&Ver=4>

I note in your previous email that you do not intend to bring this matter to a Planning Control Committee meeting and assume the Cabinet route is an alternative.

Would you kindly clarify this and let me have your report and recommendation.

As I have mentioned before, I think that it is probably premature to be marketing any Council owned land in Barkway, prior to the Inspector's public hearing and the his own report and recommendation. This must currently add uncertainty to the land's future, which will have a negative effect on any offers.

No doubt you have read the Inspector's letters; however these are attached. Particularly Paragraph 30 letter 9th July. Paragraph 3 letter 9th August.

Regards,

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Appendix E - Comment from Barkway Parish Council

Redacted to protect personal data

-----Original Message-----

From: Parish Clerk [mailto:parishclerk@barkway-village.co.uk]

Sent: 16 October 2019 12:16

To: Peter Lapham

[REDACTED]

Subject: Appendix E Parish Council comment Land off Windmill Close

Dear Peter

Barkway Parish Council discussed the proposal to declare land at Windmill Close surplus to requirements at its meetings of 10 September and 8 October. The Council has asked that you are advised that we take the same view as Cllr Gerald Morris that decisions relating to this land should not be taken prior to the Planning Inspector's planned further hearings concerning Barkway. This is because he has questioned both whether Barkway should be a settlement village as part of the LDP and the scale of the numbers of new households that should be allocated. If the land is not in the end allocated as part of the LDP this would clearly limit any purchaser's ability to secure planning consent. Given this uncertainty, the Council is not in a position to achieve best value if the land were to be marketed ahead of the LDP issues being settled.

For these reasons we would urge the Cabinet not to market this land at least until after the Planning Inspector has reported on the outcome of the further hearings he proposes in relation to Barkway.

Yours sincerely

Catharine Toms

Clerk to Barkway Parish Council

01763 848716

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