

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISION SHEET

Meeting of the Council held as a Virtual Meeting
on Thursday, 15th April, 2021 at 7.30 pm

1 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

The Chair welcomed everyone to this virtual Council meeting that was being conducted with Members and Officers at various locations, communicating via audio/video and online. There was also the opportunity for the public and press to listen to and view proceedings.

The Chair invited the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer to explain how proceedings would work and to confirm that Members and Officers were in attendance.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call to ensure that all Members and Officers could hear and be heard and gave advice regarding the following:

The meeting was being streamed live onto You Tube and recorded via Zoom.

Extracts from the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol was included with the agenda and the full version was available on the Council's website which included information regarding:

- Live Streaming;
- Noise Interference;
- Rules of Debate;
- Voting and
- Part 2 Items.

Members were requested to ensure that they were familiar with the Protocol.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that, due to a software update by Zoom, our usual voting procedure had been disrupted and would no longer work as required, therefore all voting would take place using raise hand function.

The Chair of the Council, Councillor Terry Tyler, started the meeting proper.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jim McNally, Helen Oliver and Sean Prendergast.

It was notified that Councillors Keith Hoskin and Simon Harwood would be joining the meeting later.

3 MINUTES - 21 JANUARY 2021 - 11 FEBRUARY 2021

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 January 2021 and 11 February 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair;
- (2) That, with the authorisation of the Chair, their electronic signature and initials be attached to the Minutes approved in (1) above.

4 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair advised that he had agreed to an urgent item of business to be considered in Part 2 regarding the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

5 HRH PRINCE PHILIP, THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Following the announcement that His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, had passed away, Council held a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

6 RICHARD TIFFIN & CHRIS PARKER

Following the sad news that the Principal Planning Officer, Richard Tiffin, had passed away on 20 January 2021, Council held a minute's silence in his memory.

Councillors paid tribute to Richard.

Following the sad news that Chris Parker, a former Councillor, had passed away, Council held a minute's silence in his memory.

Councillors paid tribute to Chris.

7 25 YEAR SERVICE AWARD - KAREN PULHAM

The Chair announced that Karen Pulham, Accounting Technician, had worked for North Herts District Council for 25 Years.

The Leader, Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb, extended his gratitude to Karen for her service to the Council.

It was:

RESOLVED that it be placed on record the Council's sincere thanks and appreciation to Karen Pulham for her long and valuable service to Local Government.

8 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council policy this meeting was being audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recordings would be available to view on Mod.gov and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel.
- (2) Members were reminded that this Council had declared a Climate Emergency. This was a serious decision and meant that, as this was an emergency, all of us, officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.
- (3) Members were reminded to make declarations of interest before an item, the detailed reminder about this and speaking rights was set out under Chair's Announcements on the agenda.
- (4) The Chair reminded Members that the normal procedure rules in respect of debate and times to speak would apply:

No speeches may be made after the mover has moved a proposal and explained the purpose of it until the motion has been seconded.

When seconding a motion or amendment, a Member may reserve their speech until later in the debate.

In accordance with the Constitution please can Members ensure that no speech exceeds five minutes without the consent of the Chair.

- (5) The Chair advised that, if the meeting was still in progress at 9pm, he would call a comfort break at an appropriate place.
- (6) The Chair advised that the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation would be joining the meeting. However, they were unable to join until 8pm. Therefore, the order of business may need to be amended to ensure that the urgent item of business was heard as soon as the Heritage Foundation were available.

9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

10 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the LGA Model Code of Conduct be adopted with the following amendments:
 - (i) Appendix B to include the replacement Table 1, which includes the NHDC definition of DPIs and links to guidance/ statutory instrument;
 - (ii) Replacement of the Appendix C good practice recommendations with Appendix C grounds for a Dispensation;
 - (iii) Definition of 'room' to include a footnote explanation that this includes 'virtual meeting' room and typographical changes to use the words: 'Registrable' and 'behaviours';
- (2) That the Code take effect from the day after the election poll in 2021 (7 May) or such day if the election is postponed, as the case may be;
- (3) That training on the new code be compulsory for all District Councillors during the 2021-2022 municipal year.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure good governance within the Council, which is reflective of a national governance model.

11 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

12 PRESENTATION FROM LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Councillor Terry Hone disclosed a Declarable Interest in that he was on the Board of Trustees at Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. He advised that he would not take part in the item and left the 'virtual' room.

A presentation from Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation was received.

13 LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Councillor Terry Hone disclosed a Declarable Interest in that he was on the Board of Trustees at Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. He advised that he would not take part in the debate or vote and left the 'virtual' room.

RESOLVED: That a member working group consisting of the Group Leader of each political party and the Members of Letchworth Area Committee be delegated the power to consider and agree the Council's response to the proposals of Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure Council is able to respond to the consultation in a timely manner.

14 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b), three questions had been submitted by the deadline date for questions set out in the Council's Constitution.

(A) Union Flag to be flown outside all public buildings

Councillor David Levett to Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb (Leader of the Council).

(B) Percentage increase of the County Council precept

Councillor Sue Ngwala to Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb (Leader of the Council).

(C) Safety of women and girls in our communities

Councillor Clare Billing to Councillor Gary Grindal (Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health) and Councillor Judi Billing (Executive Member for Community Engagement).

15 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

(a) Fly-tipping

A recorded vote was requested by Councillor Claire Strong, in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.16 (e)

Following the recorded vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

That the Council notes:

1. Fly-tipping increased in North Hertfordshire by 100% between 2013 and 2019. In the last year, the monthly average fly tips in our district have increased by an unprecedented 59% compared with 2019/2020. This is a situation mirrored nationally.
2. The new powers the Labour and Liberal Democrat administration implemented in late 2019 to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to those not disposing of their waste responsibly, which have led to a record number of fines being issued by the council for fly tipping.
3. The excellent work of NHDC officers in stepping up the effort to tackle fly-tipping even under the very difficult circumstances of the pandemic.
4. The concerns raised by residents over the closure, and inconsistent operation, of the County Council's waste and recycling centres during the pandemic, and the impact this has had on residents' ability to dispose of household waste responsibly.
5. The impact that fly-tipping has on the environment, and our rural and urban communities.

That the Council resolves:

1. To review its fly-tipping and waste management policies and continue its work with the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP), the Hertfordshire Fly Tipping Group and relevant external stakeholders (such as landowners, contractors, the NFU and the Police & Crime Commissioner) to increase this council's and our district's resilience to this crime through a programme of effective communications and preventive and remedial actions.
2. To conduct a further review of our bulky waste collection service to ensure it is well known by and accessible to the greatest number of residents, serving as an effective incentive against the use of unlicensed or unscrupulous waste collectors.
3. To request that Hertfordshire County Council reaffirm that waste and recycling is an essential service by pledging not to close Household Waste Recycling Centres except where the law requires to do so or the safety of staff and visitors is being compromised
4. The Council welcomes the changes already announced for changes at 3 major HWR sites in Hertfordshire (including Stevenage) and asks Hertfordshire County Council to review the opening hours of the Household Waste Recycling Centres in North Hertfordshire.
5. To continue public information and engagement campaigns on the responsible disposal of waste and deterrence of all fly-tipping, including littering, to support our communities in doing the right thing.
6. To ask Hertfordshire County Council to consider providing an amnesty for private landowners who can take the waste to a Waste and Recycling Centre, on recommendation from district council officers.
7. NHDC promotes the funding available from the Police & Crime Commissioner and the advice and guidance to dealing with fly tipping on private land.

The recorded vote was as follows:

For:

Councillors: Ian Albert, David Barnard, John Bishop, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, George Davies, Morgan Derbyshire, Jean Green, Simon Harwood, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Lisa Nash, Sam North, Mike Rice, Val Shanley, Claire Strong, Richard Thake, Terry Tyler and Tom Tyson.

Total: 23

Against:

Councillors: Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Clare Billing, Val Bryant, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Mike Hughson, Ian Mantle, Sue Ngwala, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir and Kay Tart.

Total: 10

Abstain:

Councillors: Judi Billing, Ruth Brown, Gary Grindal, Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins, Carol Stanier, Martin Stears-Handscorn.

Total: 7

(b) 20mph Speed Limits

A recorded vote was requested by Councillor Sam Collins, in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.16 (e)

Following the recorded vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

That Council:

- (1) Welcomes the work done by North Herts District and County Councillors to develop and introduce 20mph zones in parts of their towns and villages.
- (2) Notes that the United Nations have endorsed the setting of 30kph (20mph) maximum speed limits wherever pedestrians, cyclists or other vulnerable road users mix in a frequent manner with motor vehicles.
- (3) Supports the "20's Plenty" for Hertfordshire campaign and their call for the introduction of a 20mph default speed limit in the residential and central areas of towns and villages.
- (4) Notes research from the UK and abroad that has shown wide-area default speed limits of 20mph/30kph have:
 - Reduced traffic speeds in the first year of operation, with the largest speed reductions on the fastest roads;
 - Reduced road traffic collisions by up to 40% and town and village casualties by 20%;
 - Increased journey times by just 10 seconds per mile;
 - Made streets quieter - a 10mph reduction in speed halves traffic noise;
 - Encouraged walking and cycling, especially for older people and young children;
 - Benefited communities, with residents more likely to stop and talk on footpaths;
 - Been popular, as 75% of residents and motorists feel that, after installation, 20mph limits have benefitted the local community.

- (5) Notes that the Integrated Plan of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) earmarks £7m for the establishment of 20mph zones across the county over a four-year period but recognises that this will be insufficient to introduce widespread 20mph limits if each scheme requires complex traffic calming.
- (6) Further notes that wide-area 20mph limits that make effective use of signage, road markings, technology, and public engagement provide significant budgetary benefits and are more popular with some motorists and some residents than engineered calming methods such as speed humps whilst recognising that additional measures may be required in some locations.
- (7) Believes that the implementation of a wide-area 20mph speed limit in North Herts towns and villages, where appropriate and where desired by residents, combined with a public information campaign, would have beneficial impacts on road safety, active transport and community well-being at substantially lower cost than the County Council's proposals, and would support this Council's climate emergency objectives.
- (8) Resolves that the Leader of the Council should write to HCC proposing the establishment of wide-area 20mph speed limit project across Hertfordshire, involving officers and councillors at both County and District levels.

The recorded vote was as follows:

For:

Councillors: Ian Albert, Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, David Barnard, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, John Bishop, Ruth Brown, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, George Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Morgan Derbyshire, Jean Green, Gary Grindal, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Lisa Nash, Sue Ngwala, Sam North, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Carol Stanier, Martin Stears-Handscorn, Claire Strong, Richard Thake, Terry Tyler and Tom Tyson.

Total: 36

Against:

Total: 0

Abstain:

Total: 0

(c) Hybrid Meetings

It was

RESOLVED that:

This Council is astonished and disappointed that the Government could not find time to amend legislation allowing Councils to continue to carry out meetings using virtual technology where and when they see fit to do so.

It notes that the experience of holding meetings remotely has improved engagement with residents, improving inclusion, diversity and accountability as well as contributing to our response to the climate emergency and reducing the need for officers and members to travel to meetings.

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It further notes the request by the Minister for evidence as to why remote or hybrid meeting should be permitted and instructs officers to respond to the government questionnaire, assembling evidence from our recent experience of the benefits of such meetings, including quantitative data relating to increased engagement and cost savings, within the requested timescale.

This council further calls upon the government to bring forward legislation as a matter of urgency to remove the need for central government to determine how local councils conduct their business at the level of meetings arrangements and allows us to find the most appropriate ways to both conduct essential business and engage with the communities that we represent.