

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON TUESDAY, 25TH JANUARY, 2022 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg (Chair), Ruth Brown (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Judi Billing and Steve Jarvis.*

In Attendance: *Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director – Legal and Community), Ian Couper (Service Director – Resources), Nurainatta Katevu (Legal Regulatory Team Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and Louis Mutter (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting there were no members of the public.*

64 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 41 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Amy Allen, Sam Collins and Gary Grindal.

65 MINUTES - 21 DECEMBER 2021

Audio recording – 2 minutes 55 seconds

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 December 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

66 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 36 seconds

There was no other business notified.

67 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 46 seconds

(1) The Chair advised that the meeting was being audio and video recorded, in line with Council policy.

(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) The Chair 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.

68 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 31 seconds

There was no public participation at this meeting.

69 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 4 minutes 34 seconds

6a. Referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 14 December 2021 – Commercial Update

The Chair advised this referral would be taken with Item 11.

6b. Referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 14 December 2021 – Commercial Update

The Chair advised this referral would be taken with Item 11.

6c. Referral from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee - 17 January 2022 – Revenue Budget 2022/23

The Chair advised this referral would be taken with Item 9.

6d. Referral from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee – 17 January 2022 – Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury)

The Chair advised this referral would be taken with Item 8.

6e. Referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 14 December 2022 – Q2 Performance Indicators

The Chair noted that Councillor David Levett, as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was not in attendance to present to Members. The Chair advised Members that she had received confirmation that Councillor Levett was satisfied with responses received prior to the meeting and that these can be conveyed back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

70 CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT POLICY UPDATE

Audio recording – 6 minutes 08 seconds

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg presented the report entitled Corporate Enforcement Policy Update and updated Members including the following:

- This was last update in December 2018 and needed to be updated following new legislative and enforcement developments.
- Paragraph 8.4 highlighted the changes that had been made to the policy.

- There had been a slight change to parking enforcement and this was shown in Appendix F of the report.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the amended Policy contained at Appendix A (supplied as a supplementary document).

REASON FOR DECISION: To bring the Council's Corporate Enforcement Policy up to date.

71 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (INTEGRATED CAPITAL AND TREASURY)

Audio recording – 8 minutes 05 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert, the Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report entitled Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury) and highlighted:

- There had been a question at Finance, Audit and Risk regarding capitalisation of bin purchases and advised this was being looked into but that it was best to be cautious over the uncertainty of ownership of assets.
- Since the budget meeting in December the Council had become aware that the sauna facility at North Herts Leisure Centre had been closed due to Health and Safety concerns.
- The replacement of this facility was currently in the capital programme for 2023/24 at £250k.
- Following discussions with Stevenage Leisure Limited, work was carried out to look at reducing the size of the sauna, which would free up space for other activities. This would reduce the capital bid to £150k.
- Recommended to reduce the amount budgeted for these works and also bring it forward to the 2022/23 capital programme so work can be progressed as soon as possible.
- The proposals meant that the Council would require to borrow from 2025/26 and the report details a Borrowing and Minimum Revenue Provision policy.

Councillor Steve Jarvis agreed with the processes and steps outlined by the Executive Member. He noted that attendance figures from leisure facilities had been positive up to December 2021 and that getting this work carried out as soon as possible would ensure users did not go elsewhere.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the capital allocation for the North Herts Leisure Centre: Sauna Steam Refurbishment be reduced to £150k and brought forward to 2022/23 in the draft budget report to Council in February.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (1) That Council adopt the Investment Strategy (as attached at Appendix), including the capital programme and prudential indicators.
- (2) That Council adopt of four clauses in relation to the Code of Practice on Treasury Management (as details in paragraphs 8.12 to 8.17).
- (3) That Council approve bringing forward the £150k capital allocation for North Herts Leisure Centre: Sauna Steam Refurbishment forward in to 2021/22.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) To ensure that the capital programme meets the Council's objective and officers can plan the implementation of the approved schemes.
- (2) To ensure the Council's compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management, the Local Government Act 2003, statutory guidance from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the CIPFA Prudential Code. As well as determining and managing the Councils risk appetite in respect of investments.

72 REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23

Audio recording – 14 minutes 18 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report entitled Revenue Budget 2022/23 and gave an update including:

- There had been no specific questions or points from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee referral which had not been addressed at the Committee.
- Medium term funding remains uncertain, but hopeful this will become more certain in the early part of this year.
- Based on current forecasts around £1.5 million of additional net savings will need to be found, but this budget makes significant progress in setting the base of these savings.
- Budget allowance for 2022/23 and 2023/34 had included funds for dealing with the impact of Covid without government support and this could total £2.5 million across the two years.
- CIPFA resilience index had been circulated to Chief Financial Officers and a public version would be available shortly. The Service Director – Resources had advised that there was nothing included which would affect the current estimates in the report. An addendum to the Council report would be provided to include the details of this.
- This administration had stood up for change and this budget would help deliver a progressive Council plan, vital services and Climate Change agenda.
- This budget will help to protect services, such as swimming pools, which had been impacted by Covid.
- Council Tax increase would not be preferred, but it is needed following the lack of government support and the proposed rise is less than those proposed by Herts County Council and the Herts Police and Crime Commissioner.

Councillor Steve Jarvis noted that it was promised at Council that the petition regarding outdoor pools would be considered at this Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Ian Albert advised that he was looking to consider the arguments made by the petitioner and that it would be sensible for him and Cllr Jarvis to progress further discussions with officers. There was unfortunately not enough time to produce something for this Cabinet meeting, but would try to produce something for the budget meeting in February.

Councillor Jarvis advised that he was happy to progress in this way and that impact assessments would need to be carried out and budgets explored to see what was possible.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the decrease in the 2021/22 working budget of £111k, as detailed in Table 5.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (1) That Council note the position on the Collection Fund and how it will be funded.

- (2) That Council note the position relating to the General Fund balance and that due to the risks identified a minimum balance of £3.05 million is recommended.
- (3) That Council approves the savings and investments as detailed in Appendix B.
- (4) That Council approves a net expenditure budget of £18.123m, as detailed in Appendix C.
- (5) That Council approves a Council Tax increase of £5 on a Band D property (other bands with pro-rata increases). This is in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and is equivalent to 2.08%.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To ensure that all relevant factors are considered in arriving at a proposed budget and Council Tax level for 2022/23, to be considered by Full Council on 10 February 2022. To ensure that the budget is aligned to Council priorities for 2022/23 as set out in the Council Plan.

73 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Audio recording – 22 minutes 40 seconds

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

74 COMMERCIAL UPDATE

Councillor Ian Albert presented the report entitled Commercial Update.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Judi Billing
- Councillor Steve Jarvis

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet notes the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's concerns and confirms that the issues raised by the Committee have been considered.

The meeting closed at 8.12 pm

Chair