

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNOH
ROAD, LETCHWORTH
ON TUESDAY, 22ND MARCH, 2022 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

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

In Attendance: *James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Nigel Smith (Strategic Planning Manager), Chloe Hipwood (Shared Service Manager – Waste & Recycling), Sarah Kingsley (Service Director - Place) and Andrew Mills (Service Manager - Greenspace)*

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

75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 7 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gary Grindal.

Councillor Sam Collins was absent.

76 MINUTES - 25 JANUARY 2022

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 33 seconds

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

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 25 January 2022 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

77 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 13 seconds

There was no other business notified.

78 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 17 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded.
- (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.

79 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 3 seconds

There was no public participation.

80 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 4 minutes 9 seconds

6a. Referral from Hitchin Area Committee – 1 March 2022 – Potential Town Twinning – Ayensuako, Ghana

Councillor Ian Albert presented the referral and updated Members including:

- This proposal was to begin exploring a further twinning opportunity between Hitchin and Ayensuako in Ghana.
- There were already links between Hitchin and Ayensuako, through the work Humanitas have been doing in schools in the area. A primary school visit was due to take place, but this was delayed due to Covid.
- This was to seek Cabinet's authority for the new twinning scheme, but it would be good to find the original twinning agreements and for these to be publicised.
- This would demonstrate Hitchin, and North Herts, as an outward looking location, especially with Brexit and the situation in Ukraine.
- This work can be improved and extended elsewhere and there could be further benefits to other towns and communities across the district.
- Lots of Twinning committees have aging membership and this could help to develop the Hitchin Town Twinning Association.

Councillor Judi Billing supported the proposals and the comments made that this could help the district be more outward looking. When Hitchin twinned with German towns and regions, these were important emotional links following the war, but these intentions have been lost a little. This is the prime moment to move forward with this and these links and friendships can help stop further division across the continent and the world.

Councillor Ruth Brown agreed with previous comments and the proposals. As part of the Royston Town Twinning Association she had been to all the twinned towns. There is a great benefit from twinning, especially for young people, and helps to promote global understanding.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Judi Billing seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: To authorise further work to be done involving Members, Officers, the local community, and the Hitchin Town Twinning Association.

REASON FOR DECISION: To explore the possibility of twinning Hitchin Town with Ayensuako, Ghana.

6b. Referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15 March 2022 and Finance, Audit and Risk Committee – 16 March 2022 – Performance Management Measures 2022-23 – Council Delivery Plan

The Chair advised this referral would be taken with Item 7.

6c. Referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15 March 2022 – Shared Waste Service Governance

The Chair advised this referral would be taken with Item 12.

6d. Referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15 March 2022 – Greenspace Management Strategy 2022-27

The Chair advised this referral would be taken with Item 10.

81 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT MEASURES 22-23 - COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN

Audio recording – 13 minutes 18 seconds

The Service Director – Resources presented the report entitled 'Performance Management Measures 2022-23 – Council Delivery Plan' and gave updates, including:

- Previous reports have detailed what was hoped to be achieved by the Council Delivery Plan and this was the first of the new reports, with comments from other Committees.
- It details the aims for the coming year and the milestones of projects, especially where projects span more than one year.
- Each project has details of the risks, risk mitigations and performance indicators, which provides the picture in one place as opposed to three separate reports as previously.
- There was a need to keep this report concise, so some of the detail which had previously been provided had been lost.
- Risks which were previously monitored, but no longer will be, are detailed in Appendix B. These would now be monitored at service level.

Councillor Ian Albert commented that he supported the change but it was important for Cabinet to not just rely on the Overview and Scrutiny making referrals on this report, but rather Cabinet take an active role in monitoring the Council Delivery Plan report.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg requested that the report be brought to Cabinet on a quarterly basis, as well as to Overview and Scrutiny, to ensure awareness and scrutiny across all levels.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet considered and formally approved the Council Delivery Plan and any associated target, to be monitored throughout 2022/2023 by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION: An approved Council Delivery Plan provides the Cabinet with assurance that progress against achievement of the Council Plan objective, will be monitored throughout 2022/23.

82 THIRD QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2021/22

Audio recording – 18 minutes 12 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert presented the report entitled 'Third Quarter Investment Strategy' and updated Members including the following:

- Some capital projects would not be delivered by the 31 March 2022 and the requests to move some budget into 2022/23 were detailed in the report.
- There had been a breach of the investment strategy during the quarter, which was caused by an IT issue and was resolved quickly, but details of this are in the report.
- Treasury returns remain low.
- Starting to see some increases in interest payments on money held, but this is still less than inflation rates.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Judi Billing seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted the forecast expenditure of £2.424M in 2021/22 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.3 refers.
- (2) That Cabinet approved the adjustments to the capital programme for 2021/22 onwards, as a result of the revised timetable of schemes detailed in table 2 and 3, increasing the estimated spend in 2022/23 by £0.821M.
- (3) That Cabinet noted the position of the availability of capital resources, as detailed in table 4 paragraph 8.6 and the requirement to keep the capital programme under review for affordability.
- (4) That Cabinet noted the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of December 2021.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

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

83 THIRD QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING 2021/22

Audio recording – 20 minutes 42 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert presented the report entitled 'Third Quarter Revenue Monitoring 2021/22' and updated Members including:

- Table 3 in the report detailed the main budget variances.
- The forecast impact of Covid 19 was £1.5million, which was after deduction of government sales fees and charges contribution. The un-ringfenced Covid 19 contribution took the overall net impact down to around £1million.
- Regular meetings had been held with Stevenage Leisure Limited and a good partnership had been developed to the benefit of the services.
- There was a forecast increase on the General Fund balance from £8.9 million to around £10 million.
- Officers were working hard to deliver the £150 Council Tax rebate in Bands A to D. The aim was to make these payments in early April where direct debit details are held.
- Communications would be going out regarding this, as well as to inform those without a direct debit set up as to how they access this rebate.

- More detail on the rebate scheme would be given further into April.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Judi Billing seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted this report.
- (2) That Cabinet approved the changes to the 2021/22 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a £510k decrease in net expenditure.
- (3) That Cabinet approved the changes to the 2022/23 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a total £238k increase in net expenditure.

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

84 GREENSPACE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022-27

Audio recording – 24 minutes 41 seconds

Councillor Steve Jarvis presented the report entitled ' Greenspace Management Strategy 2022-27' and updated Members including:

- This strategy makes several changes to previous versions and there is more emphasis on environmental objectives.
- This strategy detailed the changes which would be made to the management of play areas, where a year by year assessment would take place and significant issues would be addressed, rather than planning works 5 years in advance.
- This strategy sets out how to deal with new greenspaces that will come from new developments. Contributions would be sought from developers for the management of these spaces and agreements would be in place for this to prevent issues occurring again.
- There were a number of associated documents and a series of detailed documents, covering areas such as climate change, biodiversity, allotments and play areas, amongst others.
- An extensive public consultation had taken place, with the responses detailed in the report, and a public document would be collated and presented in a more formal way.
- There was an error on recommendation 2.1, which should refer to Paragraph 7.4, not 7.5.

Councillor Judi Billing requested that when considering new greenspaces local members were consulted by the Service Director and Greenspace Manager.

Councillor Jarvis advised that this would be possible and noted that this had happened with the playground developments in Royston where Members had been consulted. Sometimes this will require more formal consultation with local Members, but often informing them of action would suffice.

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet adopted the Vision, Objectives and Aims for managing Greenspace as detailed at 7.5 below.

- (2) That Cabinet reviewed and adopted the Greenspace Management Strategy 2022-27 at Appendix A.
- (3) That Cabinet agreed the delegation for creating an Action Plan arising from the GSMS and an annual review of the Action Plan to the Greenspace Manager in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure and the Service Director – Place.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) These recommendations are put forward to ensure there is an ongoing proactive and pragmatic approach for the future management and maintenance of Greenspace within North Herts for the period April 2022 – March 2027.
- (2) Additionally, the GSMS 2022 – 2027 provides the strategic link between the previous Greenspace strategies and the future demands placed upon North Herts Council, specifically; managing the environment and biodiversity, finance and planning while delivering high quality greenspace services to our existing and newly developed infrastructure.

85 KNEBWORTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Audio recording – 31 minutes

Councillor Ruth Brown presented the report entitled 'Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan' and updated Members including:

- This report was looking to progress the Neighbourhood Plan in Knebworth to a referendum.
- Consultations had taken place with the Parish Council.
- The examiner had given permission to move to referendum with amendments and some of these were wider ranging than expected.
- This would give a framework for decision making and would put Knebworth in a better position without a Local Plan.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed and Councillor Judi Billing seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Examiner's report for the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan was noted.
- (2) That following the inclusion of the Examiner's proposed modifications to the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan, as set out in Appendix B, it was approved to proceed to a referendum.
- (3) That the Counting Officer was instructed to conduct a referendum on the Knebworth Parish Neighbourhood Plan.
- (4) That the decision to "make" the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan was delegated to the Service Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, as previously agreed by Cabinet in July 2018 (Minute 21).

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

86 SHARED WASTE SERVICE GOVERNANCE

Audio recording – 32 minutes 52 seconds

Councillor Amy Allen presented the report entitled 'Shared Waste Service Governance' and updated Members including:

- The recommendations in the report are to help shape the shared service, to set up a cross-party working group and to look at alternative governance structures.
- This work was to position the service best for the expected changes in coming years to waste collection services.
- There was a change to recommendation 2.3 proposed, which should read 'that the Cabinet agreed to explore all options for the future governance of the Shared Waste Service, with a further report to Cabinet in due course to consider any proposals'.

Councillor Ian Albert commented that in setting up the working group it would enable a wider group of Members to become involved in discussions around the waste service and this would be cross party.

Councillor Amy Allen proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) The Cabinet agreed to the new overarching aim of the shared services and principles outlined in 8.10 and 8.12.
- (2) That the Cabinet endorsed the formation of a joint cross party working group. The terms of reference for which are outlined in Appendix A and the outline work programme described in 8.19.
- (3) That the Cabinet agreed to explore all options for the future governance of the Shared Waste Service, with a further report to Cabinet in due course to consider any proposals.
- (4) To establish the Joint Cross Party Working Group prior to the start of the new contract negotiations.
- (5) To ensure that relevant Governance and scrutiny processes are in place prior to the start of new contract negotiations.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) Waste services are one of the largest services provided to residents in both Councils, a "one service" approach promotes resilience and flexibility ensuring residents and customers receive a high-quality service. The recommendations are being made to enable the further alignment of services, through joint decision making, and consequently the long term efficient and optimal management of the services.
- (2) A new aligned governance structure would promote a unified, stable and long-term strategic vision for the shared service and ensures:
 - a service that is agile and responsive to changes.
 - reduction in customer confusion.
 - better engagement/ use of skills/talent and retention of staff and therefore service delivered to customers.
 - continuous improvement within the services.
 - improved resource visibility and flexibility.

- aligned timeframes and increased speed for decision making.
 - greater consistency and stability leading to greater interest and competitiveness from the market.
- (3) To identify areas where there may be difficulties or issues faced with the merging of the services in East and North Herts.

87 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

Audio recording – 36 minutes 28 seconds

Councillor Ruth Brown presented the report entitled 'Strategic Planning Matters' and updated Members including:

- The Local Plan was still outstanding and a letter had been written to the inspectorate by the Executive Member to try and unblock the situation.
- Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan had been agreed at the referendum held on the 3 March 2022.
- There were further consultations taking place on Luton Airport expansion plans and there was a couple of weeks remaining to comment on the second round of consultation.
- The Secretary of State had called in the decision to increase passenger numbers at Luton Airport.
- There was a request to endorse the interim approach of the First Homes scheme.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed and Councillor Amy Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report on strategic planning matters was noted.
- (2) That the correspondence and information in Appendices A to C were noted and endorsed by Cabinet.
- (3) That the interim approach to First Homes set out in paragraphs 8.31 to 8.35 was endorsed.

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

The meeting closed at 8.12 pm

Chair