

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth Garden City
on Thursday, 23rd September, 2021 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Councillor Val Bryant (Chair), Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, David Barnard, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Morgan Derbyshire, Sarah Dingley, Jean Green, Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Michael Muir, Lisa Nash, Sam North, Sean Prendergast, Mike Rice, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Carol Stanier, Claire Strong, Mandi Tandi, Kay Tart, Richard Thake, Tom Tyson and Michael Weeks

IN ATTENDANCE: Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Jeanette Thompson (Monitoring Officer), Ian Couper (Service Director – Resources), Nigel Smith (Strategic Planning Manager), Reuben Ayavoo (Policy & Community Engagement Manager), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)

ALSO PRESENT: At the commencement of the meeting 2 member of the public, including registered speakers.

35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 21 seconds.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Bishop, Paul Clark, Adam Compton, George Davies, Faye Frost, Gary Grindal, Simon Harwood, Keith Hoskins, Jim McNally, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Sue Ngwala and Terry Tyler.

Councillor Juan Cowell was absent.

36 MINUTES OF MEETING ON 8 JULY 2021

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 55 seconds.

Councillor Val Bryant proposed, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 8 July 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

37 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 50 seconds.

There was no other business notified.

38 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 51 seconds.

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) 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.
- (4) 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.
- (5) The Chair advised that a comfort break would not be taken unless Members requested one at a suitable juncture after 9pm.

39 PRESENTATION OF A GIFT TO PAST CHAIRS OF COUNCIL

The past Chair of Council for the civic year 2019/20 Councillor Jean Green was presented with a gift in recognition of her service.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg paid tribute to Councillor Green's welcoming attitude and words of wisdom and thanked her for her work.

Councillor Claire Strong thanked Councillor Green for her hard work as Chair in particular her successful fundraising efforts for her chosen charities.

Councillor Val Bryant proposed, Councillor Claire Strong seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Council place on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Councillor Jean Green for services as Chair of the Council during the 2019/2020 civic year.

40 PRESENTATION OF A GIFT TO CHAIR'S SECRETARY

The Chair announced that she would be arranging for flowers to be delivered to Penny Copestake, Chair's Secretary, in recognition and thanks for her hard work and support.

The Chair paid tribute to Penny Copestake for her valuable work and assistance as Chair's Secretary and for always being available to offer information and advice.

Councillor Val Bryant proposed, Councillor Jean Green seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: that the Council place on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Penny Copestake for her hard work and dedication as the Chair's Secretary.

41 ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHAIR'S CHARITIES

The Chair announced that the charities she had chosen to support this civic year were Tilehouse Counselling and Garden House Hospice.

Tilehouse Counselling provided mental health support to adults and young people in Hitchin and across North Herfordshire.

The Garden House Hospice offered palliative care and respite across the District and was supported by the Chair's fellow councillors in Bearton.

Councillor Richard Thake made a donation to the Chair's charity fund.

42 RETIREMENT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR PLACE

The Chair announced the retirement of Vaughan Watson, Service Director – Place, after 31 years of work for the authority.

Vaughan joined the Authority in 1990 from a London Borough, his first role was as a Recreation Officer. Vaughan then had the following roles –

- Market and Halls Officer
- Recreation and Markets Officer
- Chief Leisure Officer
- Assistant Director – Leisure
- Head of Leisure and Environmental Services

His career culminating in a promotion to Service Director Place in 2018.

The Chair paid tribute to Vaughan and remarked that he was a popular and well-regarded member of the Leadership team and made an enormous contribution to the Council through his vital work on green space and waste operations. She further noted Vaughan's ability to build strong relationships with contractual partners and wished him a long and happy retirement.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg paid tribute to Vaughan for his enthusiasm and his support over her years of work as a Councillor where he offered advice and information with patience and a friendly but firm manner.

Councillor Claire Strong thanked Vaughan for his work and his willingness to give his time and to explain issues to Members, and for his achievements particularly in leisure services regarding the Royston Leisure Centre.

Councillor David Barnard remarked that he first met Vaughan 25 years ago, and found him to be a supportive and friendly colleague with a fair and gentlemanly manner, with a can-do attitude that was a credit to the authority.

Councillor Steve Jarvis thanked Vaughan for his work and paid credit to his depth of knowledge and passion for his area and the policies he helped to develop and implement, in particular rewilding of green spaces.

Councillor Amy Allen thanked Vaughan for his patience and guidance in answering questions and his encouragement to her as a new executive member.

Councillor Val Bryant proposed, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Council place on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Vaughan Watson for the valuable service to both this Authority and to Local Government.

43 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 23 minutes.

There was no public participation or questions from the public at this meeting.

44 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Audio recording – 23 minutes 1 second.

There were 2 motions on notice submitted in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12.

45 MOTION ON THE PLANNING SYSTEM

Audio Recording – 23 minutes 34 seconds.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed the motion as follows:

“That the Council notes:

Local resident concerns about their reduced ability to object to building works under the changes to Permitted Development Rights which have been made under this Government.

Widespread concerns and condemnation of the Planning White Paper proposals across Local Government, The Planning and Architecture Sector, and organisations concerned with protecting green spaces and heritage.

That the Council is concerned that:

Government proposals to change the planning system will remove the rights of residents to influence or object to inappropriate development within the District.

If implemented, the Government's proposals will undermine the character of our district and give carte blanche to developers to build what they please across large 'zones' without having to make proper contribution to the community.

That the Council believes that:

Planning works best when developers and the local community work together to shape local areas and deliver necessary new homes as part of coherent communities, with a full range of facilities.

Residents' rights to have a say over developments that will change the area must be protected.

Local councils, in consultation with their businesses and residents are best placed to understand the issues in their area and respond with a spatial strategy tailored to that area.

That Council calls for the Government to protect the right of communities to be involved in individual planning applications by scrapping its Planning White Paper and instead:

- Undertake a wholesale review of the Planning system, including Permitted Development Rights, in consultation with all those involved.
- Make the Planning appeal system properly accountable to local people
- Reduce the ability of Ministers to influence planning decisions, especially where they have an undeclared interest.”

Councillor Ruth Brown seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

The following Members participated in debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Ian Mantle
- Councillor Sam Collins
- Councillor Ruth Brown

On the vote it was:

RESOLVED:

That the Council notes:

Local resident concerns about their reduced ability to object to building works under the changes to Permitted Development Rights which have been made under this Government.

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- Reduce the ability of Ministers to influence planning decisions, especially where they have an undeclared interest.

46 MOTION ON THE CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY BILL

Audio Recording – 34 minutes 27 seconds.

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed the motion as follows:

“Council notes that:

Many local authorities are playing an important role in the UK taking action to achieve net zero carbon emissions, and to protect and revitalise local wildlife and natural habitats.

Parliament in May 2019 declared an Environment and Climate Emergency and this Council has already declared a Climate Emergency.

There is a Bill before Parliament—the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill (published as the “Climate and Ecology Bill”), which, if it became law, would require the government to develop a strategy to address the emergency that would ensure:

the ecological emergency is tackled shoulder to shoulder with the climate crisis in a joined-up approach;

the Paris Agreement is enshrined into law to ensure that UK does its real fair share to limit global temperature rise to the most stringent end of the Paris agreement -1.5°C;

the Leaders Pledge for Nature is enshrined into law to ensure that the UK’s ecosystems are protected and restored with a focus on biodiversity, soils and natural carbon sinks;

the UK takes full responsibility for our entire greenhouse gas footprint (i.e. consumption emissions plus shipping, flights and land-based transport) by accounting for all of the emissions that take place overseas to manufacture, transport and dispose of the goods and services we import and consume;

the UK takes full responsibility for our ecological footprint so that we protect health and resilience of ecosystems along both domestic and our global supply chains; and

an independent, temporary Climate and Nature Assembly is set-up, representative of the UK’s population, to engage with the UK Parliament and UK Government to help develop the emergency strategy.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill;
- Inform the local media of this decision;
- Write an open letter to all North Hertfordshire MPs (shared with our residents through local and social media) urging them to sign up to support the Bill, or thanking them for doing so; and
- Write to the CEE Bill Alliance, the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, expressing its support.”

Councillor Adem Ruggiero-Cakir seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

The following Members participated in the debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Michael Muir
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Adem Ruggiero-Cakir

On the vote it was:

RESOLVED:

Council notes that:

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- Write to the CEE Bill Alliance, the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, expressing its support.

47 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Audio recording – 46 minutes 30 seconds.

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b) three questions had been submitted by the deadline date for questions set out in the constitution.

(A) Local Plan Modifications

Councillor David Levett to Councillor Paul Clark (Executive Member for Planning):

“Following the public consultation on the Local Plan modifications, could the Executive Members say when those responses were submitted to the Inspector, when the Inspector will be submitting his final report, and more importantly, when Council will be asked to adopt the local plan?”

In the absence of Councillor Paul Clark, Councillor Ian Mantle (Deputy Executive Member for Planning) gave a response as follows:

“The responses were sent to the Inspector at the end of July. Unfortunately, something went wrong with the mail sorting centre; A few of the representations were not sent until September when this error had been pointed out. They were sent from the Council, but they got lost somewhere in the system. The Inspector originally said he will be reporting to the Council in autumn, whatever that means. We've recently had a letter saying that that's been pushed back and it will now be sometime in November. Whether that will move again is anybody's guess because it's totally in the hands of the Inspector. The Council will convene a special meeting to approve the Local Plan as soon as practical after we do finally receive the answer from the inspector.”

Councillor David Levett asked a supplementary question:

“Bearing in mind the importance of having a local plan in place and being able to control our development; We've had problems with his inspector right from the very beginning, being very tardy with the way he's responded to anything; Not following his own guidelines, not following his own procedures. And bear in mind how important it is we have a local plan in place. Does the administration have any intention of actually putting some form of complaint in now and finally getting this moved on and get the local plan in place?”

Councillor Ian Mantle responded:

“I totally agree with what Councillor Levett said about the dilatory and very slow process that has been adopted by the Inspector that was landed on us. We did consider at an earlier stage whether it would be appropriate. There's very limited amount where we can actually do to object by the way, and it was decided at that stage that probably on balance, it would be better to wait until we've actually got the Inspectors report and then consider what action we should take to make representations to the appropriate authorities about how we've been treated in this particular regard. But I totally sympathise with what Councillor Levett said.”

(B) NHDC providing help and support for those affected by crisis in Afghanistan

Councillors Judi Billing and Ruth Brown to Councillor Gary Grindal (Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health):

“We're all aware of the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, that the world has witnessed in recent weeks, we're thankful that a large number of civilians and members of our armed forces were rescued, and able to flee the country before all troops were removed. However, we also know that many were not so fortunate. And we're greatly concerned for the safety of those that remain, and particularly fear from the future of women's rights under the rule of the Taliban. And certainly the reports were getting suggest we're right to be concerned about that. We thank the Executive and Deputy Executive Members for Housing and Environmental Health for their recent briefing in our Councillor's information bulletin, in relation to our position at that time on the

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Government's resettlement scheme, but we're aware that the situation can change and does change daily.

Therefore, as we have quite a lot of members present at Full Council, I wonder whether the Deputy Executive member could please provide any further updates on the support that North Herts District Council is intending to provide as we prepare to help in any way that we can?"

In the absence of Councillor Gary Grindal, Councillor Sean Prendergast (Deputy Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health) gave a response:

"I'm sure colleagues across the chamber will have along with the rest of the country sat and watched in horror at the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan as the US and UK troops left the country at the end of August. It is of course reassuring to see how quickly community groups have come together to offer help where they can along with local authorities, including North Herts District Council, and we as an authority are committed to helping refugees secure safe and permanent housing where we can and we remain on standby to help those families that come into the UK. That position has not changed. However, like many Local Authorities without a housing stock, the help we can offer in terms of housing is somewhat limited, and very much dependent on the support of our local social housing providers. I am therefore pleased to report that due to the excellent partnerships we have with our local providers, this support is in place. The announcement of the Afghan Citizens resettlement scheme was made on the 13th of September, in which the government declared that UK will expect to provide housing for up to 5000 refugees in the first year and up to 20,000 in subsequent years. Importantly, this scheme also provided details of the funding that would be available to provide the additional support that the families being resettled require and I am therefore happy to report that NHDC has responded to the call for help and has offered two three bedroom homes in support of the scheme this year. Whilst I appreciate this is a small offer, this is in addition to homes already provided in support of the Syrian refugee scheme. This council should be incredibly proud of the support, along with our housing support partners, which is given to providing a new safe life to families who have been forced to flee their home countries in fear of their lives. Sadly, this is not just limited to Afghanistan. This country faces a number of refugees. And we as a Council remain committed to helping all refugees where we can and therefore are pleased that we've been able to provide safe homes in the past and will continue to do so in the future despite our limited resources. I'd like to place on record the sincere thanks of this Council to the housing team at North Herts District Council who continue to find ways of providing homes for those in desperate need.

"I do feel it's important to mention that members may have seen a recent article in one local online newspaper stating that NHDC had not offered support to the recent Afghan relocation assistance policy. This scheme was in support of the Afghan interpreters and we took this difficult decision after we had already been asked to provide temporary accommodation for up to 50 refugees for 12 months as part of another government scheme, and it was clear that we had no capacity to meet at short notice this additional demand due to our limited resources.

One final important point, if I may, whilst we remain on standby to help all refugees where we can it is important that Councillors do not lose sight of the housing crisis we face here in North Herts, and indeed across the country. It is right and proper that we help refugees. But we must also remember the demands of our housing team face on a daily basis in addressing those in temporary or unsuitable accommodation, those rough sleeping, and the 2800 households on our current housing waiting list. These too are a priority for this Council. This government must as a matter of urgency provide adequate funding to enable local authorities to build more affordable homes so we can meet all of those needs. Thank you."

Councillor Judi Billing asked a supplementary question:

“At the beginning of this crisis there was an overwhelming desire by residents across the county, and in North Herts just as much to help in many different ways, some of which were not always the most useful. So I would ask him what his advice is to local residents and groups who would like to give the most appropriate and targeted help that will do the most to help the refugees who we want to help to settle in the country as best they can?”

Councillor Sean Prendergast responded:

“If members of the Council and community groups or members of the public want to help, can I please emphasise recent charity announcements that cash donations are what is desperately needed; at Justgiving.com Herts Refugees, where you can make those donations if you if you want to. This is following charities becoming overwhelmed with other donations such as clothes and household items. So money is what is really needed.”

(C) Waste Service Disruption

Councillor George Davies to Councillor Amy Allen (Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management)

In the absence of Councillor George Davies, Councillor Claire Strong asked the question:

“As members will be aware, we are currently experiencing disruption to our waste collection services. Could the Executive Member councillor Amy Allen provide an update on measures to alleviate these issues and restore normal service?”

Councillor Amy Allen responded:

“I'd like to actually open with firstly sending a thank you to the crews at Urbaser all of whom have been working above and beyond and without whom we would not function. They are doing an amazing job and we appreciate everything they do. Regarding the question specifically, the impact of the national drivers shortage has indeed been affecting collections across Hertfordshire and our contract is not alone. We are also experienced a wider staff shortage on some days with supermarket wages being attractive to some staff. Other Councils have had to suspend their garden waste, they are now having to suspend food waste collections; some residual waste has not been collected for several weeks and has been shown in an article in The Guardian.

We have been working through to keep our general services running as normal as possible. The service area has been updating members of our current business continuity position via MIS and today our preferred solution is in general rolling catch up. This means that rather than suspend collections in their entirety staff have been working overtime and weekends to catch up collections which are running behind their scheduled day.

Due to additional levels of sickness absence last week we were unable to resource a rolling catch up plan, but during August, it's worth noting that 97.6% of collections occurred on a scheduled day, with the remaining 2.4 occurring on the next day, the next working day, and sometimes including Saturdays.

This specifically is a national crisis. We as a Council are limited in our ability to alleviate these problems. However, the Herts Waste Partnership has been involved in a joint letter to the Environment Services Association Government regarding situation; we've got a swift response response, but no immediate help to alleviate driver shortages. We

have committed to paying for the training of two new drivers whose training will begin as soon as backlogs at the DVLA has been managed. We're also supporting one of the client officers to refresh their CPD to allow them to drive for Urbaser when services are pressured. Driver vacancies are now also advertised on our own website.

Inevitably, whilst we continue to juggle resources over the coming months, there will be glitches but the staff are pulling out all the stops to get the work done. We have supervisors and the contract manager Urbaser regularly donning gloves and high vis and out driving or loading bins to support the crews. It has been an exceptional show of resilience, and I want to thank them again for all their hard work and their dedication. However, I'm sure you can agree with me that this is not sustainable.

A valid point I will include; we were warned, the government was warned that the majority of lost drivers were EU drivers. They were a large proportion of our driving workforce, and they are no longer present."

Councillor Claire Strong asked a supplementary question:

"With all these plans that we have so that which will alleviate the problem; When exactly do we think that service will be back to normal as it was? Are we talking one month, two months three months or six months?"

Councillor Amy Allen responded:

"The industry is concerned that the run up to Christmas is going to see more instances of staff being poached and therefore less resources and more disrupted services.

We are continuing to do our garden waste collections and food waste collections and offer the opportunity to have them mixed in with the garden waste where necessary should we miss them.

We hope that with regards to the backlogs at the DVLA being managed and people actually getting their licences that they're waiting to receive so they can go out and drive will alleviate the issues. But as I said before, this is a national crisis.

We are actually doing a lot better than some other Councils. Some are really struggling. Just nearby at Bedford they've had to suspend their garden waste; now they have suspended their food collection waste to bring back the garden waste. We aren't at that position yet. We asked residents to leave their bins out if they've been missed. And if they get missed for more than two days they can report it or they can be reported immediately, they can ring, they can report online.

And I'm sure everyone to be delighted actually that the website is being upgraded next month to make it a lot easier to log missed bins and to make the service less disrupted."

48 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 1 hour 4 minutes and 16 seconds.

8(a). Referral from Finance, Audit and Risk on 15 September 2021 – Financial Regulations

Councillor Clare Billing presented referral 8a from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee regarding the Financial Regulations and moved the recommendations; Councillor Ian Albert seconded.

On the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the proposed changes to the Financial Regulations be adopted as attached as Appendix B to the report.

REASONS FOR DECISION: The constitution requires that the Financial Regulations are kept under review. Minor changes can be approved by the Chief Financial Officer, but more significant changes are approved by Council.

8(b). Referral from Cabinet on 21 September 2021 – Medium Term Financial Strategy

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

8(c). Referral from Cabinet on 21 September 2021 – Council Plan 2022-27 and Council Objective 2022-2027

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

49 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Audio Recording – 1 hour 7 minutes 35 seconds.

Councillor Ian Albert presented the report entitled Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-2027 along with the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Appendix B – MTFFS 2022-2027 updated

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, Councillor Sam North seconded and on the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Council adopt the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-27 as attached at Appendix B.

REASON FOR DECISION: Adoption of a MTFFS and communication of its contents will assist in the process of forward planning the use of Council resources and in budget setting for 2022/2023 to 2026/2027, culminating in the setting of the Council Tax precept for 2022/23 in February 2022. This will (alongside the Council Plan) support the Council in setting a budget that is affordable and aligned to Council priorities.

50 COUNCIL PLAN 2022-2027 AND COUNCIL OBJECTIVES FOR 2022-2027

Audio Recording – 1 hour 14 minutes and 42 seconds.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg presented the report entitled Council Plan and Priorities 2022-2027 along with the appendices:

- Appendix A - Council Plan 2022-2027
- Appendix A - Council Plan 2022-2027

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed the recommendations in the report. Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and reserved her right to speak.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Ruth Brown

On the vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Council approves the Council Plan (Appendix A) with the three new Council Priorities as outlined below:
 - People First
 - Sustainability
 - A Brighter Future Together
- (2) That Council delegates the authority to make any minor changes in relation to the Council Plan to the Managing Director in consultation with Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.

REASON FOR DECISION: 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. There is a need to provide closer links between the Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

51 COUNCILLORS PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY REPORT

Audio Recording – 1 hour 22 minutes 57 seconds.

Councillor Judi Billing presented the report entitled Councillors Parental Leave Policy along with Appendix A – Councillors Parent Leave Policy and moved the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and reserved her right to speak.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Sarah Dingley
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Ruth Brown

On the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Council approves the Policy at Appendix A.

REASON FOR DECISION: There is presently no legal right to Parental (maternity, paternity or adoption) leave for Councillors. Councils may approach this issue individually and this is one step that can be taken by this Council to demonstrate it is welcoming to all and be as inclusive / family friendly for Councillors as possible.

52 ELECTORAL CYCLE CONSULTATION

Audio Recording – 1 hour 31 minutes 37 seconds.

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report entitled Electoral Cycle Consultation along with the following Appendices:

- Appendix A – Electoral Review Timetable
- Appendix B – Consultation Doc v1

The Democratic Services Manager drew attention to points including:

- A timetable for the electoral review of District Ward boundaries by the local Government Boundary Commission for England had been agreed with the Council;
- Prior to the submission on council size, there needed to be a decision on whether to retain the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds or to move to holding 'all out,' elections as this will impact on the number of Councillors the authority recommend within this submission to the commission;
- The council cannot pass a resolution to change its electoral cycle unless it has taken reasonable steps to consult; attached to the report at Appendix A is the proposed consultation document intended to consult via Survey Monkey or a paper based version which can be made available on request;
- The consultation question concentrated on the existing arrangements or whole council elections; there are very few authorities that elect by halves, the majority of councils do elect as a whole Council, and in 2004 the Electoral Commission advocated that all local authorities should move to all council elections, rather than electing by thirds or half stating that this will provide clear and easy to understand electoral process that would best serve the interests of the local government electors;
- The consultation would be for a four week period and results presented to a special meeting of Council to allow members to consider and determine any changes to the electoral cycle.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg moved the recommendations as in the report. Councillor Ruth Brown seconded.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Carol Stanier
- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Morgan Derbyshire

The Democratic Services Manager advised that officer workload and staffing issues would make extending the timeframe of the consultation difficult and impact the analysis of any results from the consultation.

Richard Beesley, Consultant from the AEA, advised that the timeframe of the next round of consultations was determined by the Local Government Boundary Review Commission for England and therefore could not be altered. The outcome of this consultation needed to feed into the Council Size submission and the timescales were tight.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded the following amendment:

- 1) That the consultation period end date be extended from 1 November to 8 November and;
- 2) that the questions '- elect all of our Councillors every four years?; or - elect one third of our Councillors every year' be amended to stipulate 'District Councillors,' in both instances, as well as more reference to District Council throughout.

Following the vote the amendment was carried.

Following the vote on the motion as amended it was:

RESOLVED:

That Council:

- (1) Approves public consultation of the following question for four weeks starting on 4 October 2021 until 8 November 2021:

Do you think we should (select one only):

- elect all of our District Councillors every four years?; or
- elect one third of our District Councillors every year

- (2) Agrees that a Special Meeting of Council be convened following the consultation in order for Council to consider the results of the consultation and determine proposals for any change in its electoral cycle arrangements.

REASON FOR DECISION: To undertake public consultation in preparation for a decision on the Council's electoral cycle.

The meeting closed at 9.23 pm

Chair