

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



07/01/21

Our Ref Council/20/01/21
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To: The Chair and Members of North Hertfordshire District Council

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

to be held in the

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY**

on

THURSDAY, 20 JANUARY 2022

at

7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Thompson
Service Director – Legal and Community

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

Agenda

Part I

Item		Page
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2.	MINUTES - 11 NOVEMBER 2021, 7 DECEMBER 2021, 7 DECEMBER 2021 To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 11 November 2021, 7 December 2021 and 7 December 2021.	5 - 18
3.	NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chair 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 Chair will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.	
4.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS <u>Climate Emergency</u> The Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to achieving a target of zero carbon emissions by 2030 and helping local people and businesses to reduce their own carbon emissions. A Cabinet Panel on the Environment has been established to engage with local people on matters relating to the climate emergency and advise the council on how to achieve these climate change objectives. A Climate Change Implementation group of councillors and council officers meets regularly to produce plans and monitor progress. Actions taken or currently underway include switching to green energy, incentives for low emission taxis, expanding tree planting and working to cut food waste. In addition the council is a member of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, working with other councils across Hertfordshire to reduce the county's carbon emissions and climate impact. The Council's dedicated webpage on Climate Change includes details of the council's climate change strategy, the work of the Cabinet Panel on the Environment and a monthly briefing on progress. <u>Declarations of Interest</u> 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 Chair 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 including:

- A petition to extend the opening periods of Hitchin and Letchworth Outdoor Pools which can be found here:

[Petition - Extend the opening periods of Hitchin and Letchworth Outdoor Pools - Change.org](#)

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

To consider any questions submitted by Members of the Council, in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11 (b).

7. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

To consider any motions, due notice of which have been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12.

8. COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND ('LGBCE') 19 - 52

To agree the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on Council Size.

9. ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES 53 - 62

Any Items referred from other committees will be circulated as soon as they are available.

10. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT 63 - 68

To consider proposals for integrated performance, project monitoring and risk procedures.

11. SECOND QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2021/22 69 - 80

To notes the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2021.

12. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS FOR 2023/24 TO 2027/28 81 - 86

To consider the appointment of External Auditors for 2023/24 to 2027/28.

13. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME - 2022/2023 87 - 94

To approve the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for North Hertfordshire for 2022/2023

14. REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 95 - 116

To agree the Member's Allowances Scheme 2022/2023 having taken into account the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

15. ELECTORAL SERVICES - SCALE OF FEES 2022/23 117 - 124

To agree the Scale of Fees for electoral events held during 2022/23

- | | | |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 16. | APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER, SUBSTITUTE AND CHAIR TO THE PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE
To appoint a new member, substitute and chair to the Planning Control Committee for the remainder of this civic year. | 125 -
128 |
| 17. | EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC
To consider passing the following resolution:

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). | |
| 18. | POTENTIAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION
The purpose of this report is to provide councillors with an update on a potential acquisition and to seek approval of this potential purchase. | 129 -
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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Letchworth Garden City
on Thursday, 11th November, 2021 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Councillor Val Bryant (Chair), Councillor Terry Tyler (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, David Barnard, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, Paul Clark, Adam Compton, Juan Cowell, George Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Morgan Derbyshire, Sarah Dingley, Faye Frost, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Jim McNally, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Sam North, Sean Prendergast, Mike Rice, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Carol Stanier, Claire Strong, Mandi Tandi, Richard Thake and Tom Tyson

IN ATTENDANCE: Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)

ALSO PRESENT: At the commencement of the meeting no members of the public were present.

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2:02

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michael Weeks, John Bishop, Gary Grindal, Sam Collins, Lisa Nash, Kay Tart and Jean Green.

54 MINUTES - 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

Audio Recording – 2:36

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

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 23 September 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

55 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3:27

There was no other business notified.

56 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3:28

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded and live streamed to the Council's 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) 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;
- (4) Members were reminded that the normal rules of debate and speaking times would apply;
- (5) Members were reminded that a special meeting of Council was to be called for 7 December to discuss the results of the public consultation on the Electoral Cycle.

57 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 5:16

There was no public participation at this meeting.

58 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Audio recording – 5:22

There were no motions on notice.

59 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Audio recording – 5:34

There were two questions from Members presented at this meeting.

1) Councillor David Levett to Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg:

"North Hertfordshire has a long standing tradition of involvement with the organisation of the Remembrance Day Services in Letchworth Garden City and other North Hertfordshire towns which have shown increased attendance from the community in recent years.

Could the Leader of the Council please confirm what involvement NHDC has had with the organisation of the Remembrance Day Services this year? In particular any liaison with the Royal British Legion to ensure that these services that are much valued by the community take place."

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg responded as follows:

"I'm sure that members will be aware given the amount of information that's been sent out through our weekly Members Information Service Bulletins, what's been done around Remembrance Day. This year's process actually commenced way back in August, and Officers were in contact with the previous year's organizers for each town and village which usually holds a Remembrance Day parade or service, just the same as they do every year in order to remind them of the processes that are involved.

As the organizers started to put their applications together, some contacted us and let us know that there were issues with things like insurance cover, because the Royal British Legion's insurance could no longer be used for this particular purpose. Some were able to use things like the Parish Council insurance or Guides' Association insurance instead. Some did say that they had been told that it was a civic duty, and therefore everything should be organized by the Council because other councils locally do that.

In addition to the having the necessary level of insurance, road closures can only be enforced by an accredited traffic management company or by the police and organizers were contacted again during the process to let them know. So before issuing the closure, North Herts Council has to ensure that road closures are done safely, and I think the majority of the organizers do appreciate this. However, we do know that clearly, communities are going to be disappointed if Remembrance Sunday events don't take place due to the high cost of accredited traffic management companies. Officers at this council have discussed with the police their availability to install and enforce road closures and the majority of proposed events are now able to be supported in this way, which I think actually does also include Letchworth - which if you've got specific follow on questions perhaps around the Letchworth events Councillor Levett I've got further events specific info on that. I can also email it over to you.

Members have, as I said at the beginning, already been informed through the MIS bulletins what's been going on. I've got information from the police about what the police have done and their commitments as well. But I think to cut a really long rambling answer to a quite pertinent question short; this Council has been liaising with community groups and doing everything we can to make sure that these events can take place this year since the summer."

Members have already been informed through MIS what has been going on, info from police commitments, this Council has been liaising with community groups to ensure that events can take place this year since the summer."

Councillor David Levett asked a supplementary question:

"Thank you for the information on that and yes, I would be interested in a bit more about the Letchworth event in particular by email because I believe the Heritage Foundation actually paid for the road closures and the insurance in that case because the Council couldn't.

Thank you for that information, but bearing all that in mind. Why did you as Leader of the Council, hang up the phone on the Chairman of the Letchworth branch of the Royal British Legion when he was trying to discuss this with you?"

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg responded as follows:

"I don't recall hanging up the phone to any particular member when I've spoken to them and had my conduct ever been out of kilter with what would be expected from a Councillor I would expect any member of the public to follow the usual Council complaints process."

2) Councillor Mike Hughson to Councillor Ian Albert:

"Following the UK Chancellor's spending review statement on local authority funding, can the executive member for Finance and IT explain how this will impact upon North Herts Council, more especially residents and business in the district?"

Councillor Ian Albert responded as follows:

They're all welcome points in the Spending Review, but what hasn't been addressed is the serious underfunding of Local Government. Looking back to our 2010/11 budget, we had £9.8 million of council tax funding and £8 million of Government support, a total of £17.8 million with 55% funded by council tax payers.

The 2021 budget - we effectively had no government support: £11 million of council tax funding, £2 million of retained Business Rates, some New Homes Bonus, a total of £15.2 million, which was around just under 40% less than we received in real terms in 2010/11, and effectively 77% had to be funded by council taxpayers, and most of those years are under Conservative administrations at national and district level.

The Chancellor announced new grant funding of £1.6 billion a year. We don't know yet whether this will just mainly go to fund social care. Government has promised it will fund the employer burdens on local authorities for increasing national insurance, it is expected that this will need to come out of that grant funding I just mentioned; the retail hospitality and leisure relief will be extended 50% for 22/23. That's welcome.

There was no announcement, though, on whether there'll be an extension of additional funding to support authorities with the increased cost of localized Council Tax Support, and it's unclear whether there'll be business rates reset this year; a reset would remove any historic growth in the business rates base for local authorities. It's unclear if and when there'll be a new local government funding formula. There was no news or any additional funding for the continuing impact of COVID-19. We've set aside money in the coming years for that, but that is a detriment to our overall reserves. There was no news on New Homes Bonus and its longer term future. And I set out in our medium term financial strategy, we will assume that there will not be a funding formula in place for the next financial year, and that negative RSG will not be applied until confirmed otherwise; we will see where any new funding formula would have a similar redistributed effect to that.

So therefore, at this stage, we cannot expect to receive any additional General Grant funding beyond that, which reimburses us for additional costs incurred for our residents. That means we have to continue on the basis of potentially finding next next year savings of £200,000 and up to £1.8 million over the next four years.

Now we will continue to look at ways of generating income and delivering transformation savings - we will recognize we have to consider that there will be difficult choices ahead for all district councils across Hertfordshire. It's very likely that any increases in funding will come from increases in the Council Tax and Business Rates paid by residents and businesses. Government - and I want to be very clear about this - has built into its funding assumptions that all Councils will increase their Council Tax. But despite the challenges that faces this joint administration, we will continue to protect the services that our residents value; green spaces, leisure services, our community and housing outreach, and so much more. And we will continue to fix the mess left behind by the last Conservative administration who cut services to unacceptable levels."

Councillor Mike Hughson asked a supplementary question:

"It's obviously clear that government has forced local authorities into increase into council tax by starving them of funds, perhaps for the record Cllr Albert, could you also explain how the Council has provided additional support to residents with their Council Tax payments over the last year?"

Councillor Ian Albert responded as follows:

"I'm really proud of the work done by the staff of this Council to support our residents most in need, especially those through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, and also the work done to pay out quickly millions of pounds of grants to businesses during the lockdown periods.

Under the leadership of this joint administration, we have developed and implemented with partners like Citizens Advice, and the Money Advice Trust, our Fair Collection Policy, which is an exemplar for what all Local Authorities should do. This means we work with our customers to help them with long term payment arrangements when they're in difficulty. But over and above this, the money received for Council Tax debt support; we designed a scheme whereby

every working age claimant on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme received £150 deduction in their liability. Nearly 4,500 individuals and families overall benefited from that hardship support, and we're now looking to make a further credit of up to £100 to every working age claimant with a residual council tax balance; this could benefit up to nearly 3000 people across our district on our current caseload. That's how this joint administration will continue to run North Herts: taxing fairly and spending wisely."

60 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 17:01

8(a) Referral from Licensing and Regulation Committee: Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles 2022-2025.

The Chair advised that referral 8(a) would be taken with agenda item 9.

61 STATEMENT OF GAMBLING LICENSING PRINCIPLES

Audio Recording – 17:26

Councillor Daniel Allen presented the referral 8a from the Licensing and Regulation Committee: Draft Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles and moved the recommendations as in the referral.

Councillor Allen thanked the Licensing Team and the Licensing Manager for their efficiency, hard work and support in putting this report and policy together.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed, Councillor Paul Clark seconded and on the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Council adopts the Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles 2022-2025 as attached at Appendix A.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) Licensing authorities are required to publish a policy every three years by virtue of section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 ("the Act").
- (2) A new policy must be published by 3 January 2022 to comply with this statutory requirement.
- (3) The Policy builds on the effectiveness of the existing policy with minor amendments to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, consultation responses and an updated local area profile.

(4)

62 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Audio Recording – 19:47

The Service Director – Legal & Community and Monitoring Officer presented the report entitled Constitutional Amendments along with Appendices A and B detailing the proposed changes to the constitution, along with an additional amendment as follows:

- "in relation to the revenues and benefits manager" to read "in relation to the revenues manager"

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed, Councillor Paul Clark seconded and on the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Approves the changes made under Delegated Decision 21 October 2021 (subject to title of Revenues Manager being amended); and
- (2) Approves the further amendments set out in section 7 and 8.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the Constitution remains up to date, and continues to improve its working practices where legally possible.

63 INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

Audio Recording – 21:38

Councillor Keith Hoskins presented the report entitled Independent Person on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and proposed the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Clare Billing seconded the motion.

The following Members asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Keith Hoskins

In response to questions the Service Director – Resources advised that the Council would look to adopt similar recruitment practices used by other Local Authorities – comparable to Stevenage and HCC – in line with the Council's usual recruitment policies."

On the vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Council agrees to there being an independent person on the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee.
- (2) That Council instructs the Service Director: Legal and Community to make the required changes to the constitution.
- (3) That the Service Director: Resources is instructed to recruit to the position, in consultation with the Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.
- (4) That the IRP be asked to consider an appropriate allowance for this role as part of their consideration of Members Allowances.

REASON FOR DECISION: To allow the Council to conform to best practice.

64 USE OF URGENCY IN RELATION TO CALL-IN FOR DECISION ON BUSINESS RATE POOLING

Audio Recording – 25:46

The Service Director – Resources presented the report entitled Use of Urgency in Relation to Call-In for Decision on Business Rate Pooling.

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

Thursday, 11th November, 2021

RESOLVED: That Council notes the use of urgency provisions in relation to the Business Rate Pooling decision made by Cabinet on 8 October 2021.

The meeting closed at 7.58 pm

Chair

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY

ON TUESDAY, 7TH DECEMBER, 2021 AT 7.00 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Val Bryant (Chair) Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Judi Billing, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, Adam Compton, Juan Cowell, George Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Morgan Derbyshire, Sarah Dingley, Gary Grindal, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Mike Hughson, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Jim McNally, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Sam North, Mike Rice, Claire Strong, Mandi Tandi, Richard Thake and Michael Weeks*

In Attendance: *Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Louis Mutter (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer).*

Also Present: *There were approximately 2 members of the public present.*

65 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2:00

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Bishop, Jean Green, Kay Tart, Keith Hoskins, Sean Prendergast, David Barnard, Faye Frost, Carol Stanier, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Paul Clark, Terry Tyler and Lisa Nash.

66 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio Recording – 2:51

- (1) It was with great sadness that the Chair announced that former Councillor Bill Davidson had passed away earlier this month. Councillor Davidson was a long standing member of the Royston Committee, an executive Member from 2003-2006 and left the Council last year.

A minutes silence was held in his memory.

Councillor Claire Strong paid tribute to former Councillor Bill Davidson and thanked him for all the support he had given to the Council. She said that as a councillor he spoke infrequently but with impact and that his broad Scottish accent will be fondly remembered.

Councillor Tony Hunter paid tribute to former Councillor Bill Davidson and noted that it was with great shock and sadness that he had learnt of his passing. Former Councillor Bill Davidson decided last May not to stand for re-election and moved away to a retirement village in Leamington Spa with his family, where he had missed his garage

and shed where he had spent a great deal of time. Councillor Hunter advised that he and a number of other members would be attending his funeral on 6 January in Leamington Spa and would pass on the Council's sympathy to his family and wife Lindsey.

- (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 of the rules in respect to debate and speaking times;
- (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.

67 RESOLUTION TO EXTEND THE 6 MONTH RULE – SECTION 85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Audio Recording – 8:30

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report entitled 'Resolution to Extend the 6 Month Rule – Section 85 Local Government Act 1972' and highlighted the following:

- Councillor John Bishop had been unable to attend meetings due to ill health and the last meeting he attended was Planning Control Committee on 15 July 2021.
- The 6 month period would expire on 15th January 2022; unless an extension was approved the scheduled Council meeting on 28 January would be too late to consider the extension.
- The Council was requested to approve the extension.
- If the extension was not approved and Councillor Bishop did not attend a meeting, the subsequent vacancy would be held open until the ordinary election of Councillors in May 2022.
- The report acknowledges that should Councillor John Bishop wish to stand for re-election and was elected but continued to remain unwell the extension would continue until 15 July 2022; the extension relates to the individual not the seat.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Sam North
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
- Councillor Judi Billing
- Councillor Richard Thake

Councillor Claire Strong proposed, Councillor Sam North seconded and on the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Council approves an extension of the six-month rule for Councillor John Bishop, on ill-health grounds, for an additional six-month period, until 15 July 2022, subject to re-election in May 2022.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that *'if a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a*

Tuesday, 7th December, 2021

member of the authority'. Despite attempts for this to be changed (the Local Government Association previously lobbied for this to be dealt with potentially under the Coronavirus Bill 2020), this remains the current situation.

- (2) To enable Cllr Bishop to continue to serve as a District Councillor.

The meeting closed at 7.21 pm

Chair

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Letchworth Garden City
on Tuesday, 7th December, 2021 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Councillor Val Bryant (Chair), Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, Adam Compton, Juan Cowell, George Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Morgan Derbyshire, Sarah Dingley, Gary Grindal, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Mike Hughson, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Jim McNally, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Sam North, Mike Rice, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Claire Strong, Mandi Tandi, Richard Thake, Tom Tyson and Michael Weeks

IN ATTENDANCE: Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director – Legal & Community), Ian Couper (Service Director – Resources), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), William Edwards (CMSM), James Lovegrove (CMSO), Louis Mutter (CMSO), Richard Beasley (Consultant)

At the commencement of the meeting approximately 1 member of the public, including registered speakers.

68 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1:42

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Bishop, David Barnard, Jean Green, Kay Tart, Keith Hoskins, Sean Prendergast, Faye Frost, Carol Stanier, Paul Clark, Terry Tyler, Lisa Nash and Sam Collins.

69 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2:11

- (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.
- (4) Members were reminded that Richard Beasley, the consultant assisting the Council with the Boundary Review process was present via Zoom and available to answer questions.

70 ELECTORAL CYCLE

Audio Recording – 4:08

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report on the Electoral Cycle along with Appendix A – Electoral Review Timetable and Appendix B - Consultation Responses to 'How should Councillors for North Hertfordshire District Council be elected?'

The following Members asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Simon Harwood
- Councillor Morgan Derbyshire
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Michael Muir
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Ian Mantle
- Councillor Judi Billing
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
- Councillor George Davies

In response to questions Richard Beasley, Consultant advised that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England will not change the Council's electoral cycle and only look at Council Size and warding arrangements, which are impacted by the decision to be made at this meeting.

In response to questions the Service Director – Legal & Community advised that conducting an additional Community Governance Review would have resource implications and would require consideration outside of this meeting.

Councillor Richard Thake proposed, Councillor Morgan Derbyshire seconded and on the vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Council notes the outcome and responses from the public consultation, along with the points raised in the report;
- (2) That Council resolves to change the electoral cycle to all-out elections from 2024.

REASONS FOR DECISION: To determine the Council's electoral cycle in preparation for a submission on Council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in line with the agreed timetable.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm

Chair

COUNCIL
20 January 2022

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

**TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT
BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND ('LGBCE')**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF COUNCIL/COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT COUNCIL /
BUILD THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

2022-2027 PEOPLE FIRST; SUSTAINABILITY AND A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The first stage of the Electoral Review of North Herts Council by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is determination of Council Size (number of Councillors) to represent North Herts Council from May 2024.
- 1.2 The Council needs to agree the submission to the LGBCE by the required deadline of **21 January 2022**. Failure to agree the submission will result in the LGBCE imposing a council size.
- 1.3 Having discussed Council Size at the Boundary Review Project Board, Group Leaders suggested a Council Size of 50 Members given the projected growth in the Local Plan; and the nature of the district with its mix of more densely populated towns and sparsely populated large rural areas that need to be a manageable size geographically for the rural ward councillors. It is also believed that reducing the number of Members (thereby increasing workload for others) could deter or discourage individuals from standing as a Councillor, thereby further impacting on diversity of representation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Council approves the document on Council Size, attached as Appendix A, for submission to the LGBCE, noting the deadline for submission is 21 January 2022 (suggested Council Size of 50).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The LGBCE undertakes periodic reviews of local boundaries. This has not been undertaken for this District since 2006 and following a number of requests to undertake

this review, a [timetable](#) for doing so has been agreed with the Council. As part of this process the LGBCE require information on Council size (number of Councillors).

- 3.2. The LGBCE invite submissions from a range of stakeholders through a public consultation. This includes the Council, elected representatives, political parties, parish councils, and the public. As such, if this Council does not make a submission, or fails to make a coherent case, the LGBCE will base its recommendation for the future size of this Council on other submissions they receive.
- 3.3. A Council Size of 50 Members has been proposed following discussion amongst Group Leaders at the Project Board, given the projected growth in the Local Plan; and the nature of the district with its mix of more densely populated towns and sparsely populated large rural areas that need to be a manageable size geographically for the rural ward councillors. It is also believed that reducing the number of Members (thereby increasing workload for others) could deter or discourage individuals from standing as a Councillor, thereby further impacting on diversity of representation.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 This Council should make a submission to the LGBCE regarding council size. There are no other alternative options.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Preliminary meetings with various Officers and Members have been held with the LGBCE, concluding with the presentation to Members by the LGBCE on 14 July 2021.
- 5.2. A Boundary Review Project Board was established and relevant senior officers, and the Consultant meet on a monthly basis with the Group Leaders, most recently meeting on 5 January 2022 to consider the relevant issues relating to the review, prior to reports being submitted to Council.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The LGBCE is responsible for conducting reviews of local authority electoral arrangements. This is through an 'electoral review'. The LGBCE completed its last review of North Hertfordshire in May 2006.
- 7.2. The Commission has intervention criteria – one of the criterions being if 30% of all wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% of the average ratio of electors to Councillors for the Authority. Another being where one or more wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 30% of the average ratio for the Authority. In North Herts, 33% of wards now have a variance outside the 10% threshold and the electoral district is therefore overdue a review.
- 7.3. A timetable has been agreed with the LGBCE for the Review – when key pieces of work must be submitted. The first key piece of work is to develop a 'council size' proposal

which includes the resolution of Council to change its electoral cycle from elections by thirds to whole council elections as of May 2024, and also to decide the appropriate number of Councillors for the authority. **The submission on Council size must be submitted to the LGBCE by 21 January 2022.** Ward boundaries will not be considered until this phase of the process is complete.

- 7.4. The LGBCE ultimately make a judgement on Council size based on three broad areas:
- a. The governance arrangements of the Council and how it takes decisions.
 - b. The Council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and its responsibilities to outside bodies.
 - c. The representational role of Councillors in the local community.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 There is no limit to the number of Councillors that can be elected to represent a ward or division. However, the Commission would not usually accept a proposal for more than three Councillors to represent a ward.
- 8.2 Following the Council meeting of 7 December 2021, the Authority resolved to move to all-out/whole council elections as of May 2024. As such, a mixture of single, two and three member wards can be considered in this review by the Commission.
- 8.3 Attached at Appendix A is the proposed submission on council size. Members are invited to read, note and agree to this submission. The submission is that the Council Size should be 50.
- 8.4 As part of the overall review process, officers are required to provide detailed forecasts for the number of local government electors, looking ahead to 2027. This is based on current electorates (provided by Electoral Services) and planning projections (from Planning Services), both assessed at a local level. The methodology (attached for information at Appendix B) has been reviewed by the Project Board and since agreed by the LGBCE, and the calculated Electorate Forecast by ward (Appendix C) has also been accepted in principle by the LGBCE. These documents will accompany the Council Size submission.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Section 55 – 59 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 gives the Commission the power to review the electoral arrangements of all, or any, principal councils in England.
- 9.2 The legislation states that 'the total number of members of the council' forms part of an authority's electoral arrangements. The Commission refers to this as 'council size'. The legislation does not set out how many Councillors each authority should have. It is the Commission's responsibility to determine the appropriate number of Councillors for each authority.
- 9.3 The Commission will recommend a council size that, in its judgement, enables the council to take its decisions effectively, to discharge the business and responsibilities of the council successfully, and to provide for effective community leadership and representation.

- 9.4 Legislation places several obligations on the Commission in conducting the review and it also places a requirement on the Authority to, if requested by the LGBCE, provide any information as they may reasonably require.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There could be savings if the overall number of members were reduced. For example, if there were to be a reduction of Members by approximately 10%, to 44, it would generate a saving of £25.5K (*based on the 2021/22 scheme of basic allowance of £5,100 per annum per Member*). There could also be savings in other costs, such as the provision of IT equipment/licenses and subsistence. The reverse of this being that an increase in the overall number of members will cost the Council more and there would be no opportunity to generate savings.
- 10.2 Based on the 2021/22 scheme an increase of one Councillor will increase the members allowance budget by £5,100 which does not account for any subsistence, mileage, childcare or dependent carers allowance. There is also a Members Training Budget which will need to be increased by £233. To provide IT equipment and relevant licence for one additional Member will be circa £2,000 (including a laptop, one monitor, docking station, headset, licence, tablet, case and keyboard and data sim card).

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The starting point for an Electoral Review is to decide the appropriate number of Councillors for the authority. Whilst the final decision is for the LGBCE, the Commissions preference is where an authority actively engages with the process. Council size submissions can be made by a range of stakeholders through a public consultation by the Commission. This includes the Council, elected representatives, political parties, parish councils, and the public. As such, if this Council either do not make a submission, or fail to make a coherent case, the LGBCE will base its recommendation for the future size of this council on other submissions they receive.

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. The Council size submission will not impact on the requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty. However, the Electoral Review will support the LGBCE who are obligated under law to deliver electoral equality, reflect community interests and identities and promote effective and convenient local government.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report as this is not a procurement exercise or contract.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The appointment of the Consultant to undertake the Boundary Review has assisted to alleviate some of the pressure within the Democratic Services Team whilst it is significantly under resourced.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Council Size Submission
- 16.2 Appendix B – Electorate Forecast Methodology
- 16.3 Appendix C – Electorate Forecast to ward level

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Presentation by the LGBCE to Members on 14 July and the accompanying LGBCE 'Electoral Review of North Hertfordshire – A Guide for Councillors' circulated to all Members on 14 July.
- 18.2 Council – 23 September 2021 – Electoral Cycle Consultation – Minute No. 52 refers
<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2614>

- 18.3 Council - 7 December 2021 - [Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 7th December, 2021, 7.30 pm - North Hertfordshire District Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)
- 18.4 Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Council Size Guidance – A guide to making a strong submission [Council Size Guidance](#)
- 18.5 [Electoral Review Timetable](#) as agreed with the LGBCE (included within the briefing documents provided to Members on 14 July 2021).

Electoral Review of North Hertfordshire District Council

NHDC: Council Size submission

December 2021

About this document

1. This document is submitted as evidence from North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) as part of the electoral review currently taking place. This is the Authority's submission on Council size.
2. This document has been prepared and collated by Officers using a range of information available, for consideration by Elected Members of the Council

Executive Summary

3. At present, NHDC is served by 49 Councillors, representing 24 wards. Councillors are elected by thirds, each serving a four year term of office.
4. Following a debate at a specially convened meeting of Council in December 2021, NHDC resolved to move to all-out elections. As a result, the total number of Councillors does not need to be divisible by three.
5. It should be noted that the Submission should be considered in its entirety, rather than as a series of smaller sections.

Introduction

6. The most recent electoral review of North Hertfordshire District Council was held in 2006. Due to residential development and the growth of the local population, there are electoral imbalances between wards.
7. As a result, this current Review is being conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to resolve the imbalances and provide greater electoral equality.
8. The initial stage of an Electoral Review is to identify and confirm the preferred Council Size. This is the number of elected Councillors who will serve on the Council, and should be the number required to deliver effective and convenient local government (the number of members to enable the council and individual councillors to perform most effectively).
9. The final size of the council will determine the average number of electors per councillor, and this is then used to determine warding patterns. As such, it is important that the figure agreed is correct and reflects the needs of the authority and of the community, although it should be noted that the LGBCE may amend the agreed figure if necessary in order to allow for a better representation of electors and as a result of consultation.
10. Within the review process, the LGBCE do not have an initial view on whether there should be an increase, decrease or no change in the size of the Council. However, all submissions must be evidence-led and justifiable.

Guidance on calculating Council Size

11. The LGBCE has provided guidance that highlights the areas that should be considered when developing a proposal for Council Size; these are considered in detail in the pages that follow:
 - a. The governance arrangements of the Council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities.
 - b. The Council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and the Council's responsibilities to outside bodies.
 - c. The representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the Council on local partner organisations

Local electorate

12. The number of registered local government electors, as of 1 August 2021, was 98,824. It is projected to increase to around 112,728 by the year 2028. That growth will not be evenly spread, but would lead to greater electoral inequality without this review. The table below provides the current (2021) and projected (2028) electorates by ward, assuming no changes in electoral boundaries or arrangements. The expectation, through this review led by the LGBCE, is that all wards will have a variance of less than 10%.

Name of ward	Number of Councillors	Electorate 2021	Variance 2021	Electorate 2028	Variance 2028
Arbury	1	2,191	9%	3,702	61%
Baldock East	1	2,304	14%	2,400	4%
Baldock Town	3	5,654	-7%	5,758	-17%
Cadwell	1	1,845	-9%	2,390	4%
Chesfield	2	5,164	28%	6,803	48%
Codicote	1	2,074	3%	2,612	14%
Ermine	1	2,120	5%	2,441	6%
Hitchin Bearton	3	6,300	4%	6,378	-8%
Hitchin Highbury	3	6,190	2%	6,320	-8%
Hitchin Oughton	2	3,636	-10%	3,637	-21%
Hitchin Priory	2	3,753	-7%	3,982	-13%
Hitchin Walsworth	3	6,171	2%	7,027	2%
Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	3	5,866	-3%	8,100	17%
Kimpton	1	1,795	-11%	1,810	-21%
Knebworth	2	4,132	2%	4,835	5%
Letchworth East	2	4,360	8%	4,906	7%
Letchworth Grange	3	5,532	-9%	6,147	-11%
Letchworth South East	3	5,284	-13%	5,520	-20%
Letchworth South West	3	5,957	-2%	6,139	-11%
Letchworth Wilbury	2	3,949	-2%	3,949	-14%
Royston Heath	2	4,413	9%	4,901	7%
Royston Meridian	2	4,187	4%	5,328	16%
Royston Palace	2	4,281	6%	4,535	-1%
Weston and Sandon	1	1,666	-17%	3,108	35%
Overall	49	98,824		112,728	

Council Vision & Priorities

13. The Council has a clear vision for the area, which is making North Hertfordshire a district in which everyone who lives, works or visits is able to flourish. It is clear that the Council must work with its partners, businesses, and urban and rural communities to achieve this vision.
14. There are three priorities for the Council for 2022-2027, which are:
 - a. **People First.** People make North Herts work. We value all our residents, businesses, staff, contractors, councillors, and other partners, and place them at the heart of everything we do.
 - b. **Sustainability.** We recognise the challenges our towns and district as a whole face and are committed to delivering services which are relevant and sustainable. In doing so we will place our environmental responsibilities, as well as sound financial planning, at the centre of our policy making.
 - c. **A Brighter Future Together.** We are far-sighted and plan for the long term to secure the best outcomes for our people, towns and villages, and the local economy, ensuring North Herts continues to thrive.
15. Within those three priorities are a series of themes
 - a. Our Environment.
 - b. Our Local Economy.
 - c. Our Places.
 - d. Our Services.

Managing the business of the Council

16. NHDC has adopted the 'Leader and Cabinet' model of local governance. At present, a joint administration of two political parties lead the Council and form the cabinet. The model comprises:
 - a. Full Council of 49 Members, who approve and adopt the budget and key policies within which Cabinet decisions are taken. Council appoints members of committees and holds them and the Cabinet to account for the decisions they take.
 - b. Cabinet comprises 8 Members and 7 Deputy Executive Members. They are responsible for most day-to-day decisions. Members have particular responsibility for specific service areas.
 - c. Councillors' overriding duty is to the whole community, but they are democratically accountable to all the residents of their ward. Their role is to represent the residents of their ward, share in the policy and budgetary decisions of the Full Council, suggest policy improvements, and scrutinise the Cabinet's policy proposals and their implementation.

Member allowances

17. During the financial year 2020/21, the total sum of allowances paid to District Councillors was £324,041 (including subsistence and expenses). Every member is paid a basic allowance of £5100 and those with a Special Responsibility get an additional sum to reflect their additional responsibility; members can have more than 1 such Special Responsibility. Members may also claim for mileage and expenses.

Roles and responsibilities of Councillors

Separation of Roles

18. The Constitution of NHDC formalises the separation of roles for Councillors. These include specifications as to which Committees members of the Cabinet may be members of, and how many Cabinet members may be part of those other bodies.
19. Whilst this separation of roles is crucial in the fair, effective and transparent running of the Council, it does impact on the number of available Councillors for certain bodies and in doing so, increase the requirement of those members in terms of the number of bodies they must join and attend.
20. The Committee Structure tables, below, lists current committees and their remit.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

FULL COUNCIL: The Council comprises all 49 elected Members. It is the decision-making body for the Authority and determines the overall strategy and policy of the Council.

CABINET	STANDARDS COMMITTEE	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE	PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE
The Cabinet takes decisions on service and management matters, except statutory matters reserved to Council. Many decisions are made by Cabinet on behalf of Full Council. There are also two Cabinet Sub-Committees for 'Council Charities' and for 'Local Authority Trading Companies' Shareholder'.	The Standards Committee deals with matters relating to the conduct and probity of councillors. The Chair and Vice-Chair are District Councillors. The Committee also deals with the conduct of Parish Councillors. An "Independent Person" is appointed to act in an advisory role, supported by two "Reserve Independent Persons".	The Overview and Scrutiny Committee examines and reports to Cabinet on service delivery of both Council services and other agencies. The Committee sets its own Work Programme and deals with matters under the Council's call-in procedure. It holds the Cabinet to account for its decisions and reviews and considers existing and new policies.	The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee monitors and reviews the Council's financial situation, as well as assisting the Council in its development and review of policy in respect of the Audit and Risk functions. It has the statutory role of approving the Council's Accounts and Annual Governance Statement.	The Planning Control Committee determines planning applications submitted to the Council which are not determined by delegated decision.
AREA COMMITTEES	COUNCIL TAX SETTING COMMITTEE	LICENSING & REGULATION COMMITTEE	EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE	JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
There are five Area Committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baldock & District Hitchin Committee Letchworth Committee Royston & District Southern Rural Committee Area Committees are the means by which closer links are established with the community. All elected Members are entitled to sit on their local Area Committee. They have the power to consider and report to Cabinet/Council on any matter affecting their area.	The Council Tax Setting Committee sets the Council Tax Base and the Council Tax for the District, as well as approves the Non-Domestic Rating Income Return.	The Licensing and Regulation Committee deals with a range of licensing matters, including applications under the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005. There are two sub-committees which sit under the Licensing & Regulation Committee to handle licensing applications: The Licensing Sub-Committee and the Licensing and Regulation Sub-Committee.	The Employment Committee is responsible for making appointments to Chief Officer posts and deals with disciplinary matters relating to these officers.	The Joint Staff Consultative Committee, comprising elected councillors and staff representatives (including the Trade Unions), is the regular corporate interface with employees to discuss employee relations and human resource issues.

CABINET PANELS	THE DISTRICT WIDE GRANTS PANEL	HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD (HGB)	HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
<p>There are three Cabinet Panels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Panel on Community • Cabinet Panel on Place • Cabinet Panel on the Environment. <p>Each has Terms of Reference that guide the discussion.</p> <p>Referrals can be made to Cabinet or to other Committees/officers.</p> <p>Other Committees can refer subjects to these Panels for discussion.</p> <p>The Panels are an advisory body with no decision-making powers and have an informal style to promote community engagement within the respective Panel themes.</p>	<p>Acts as an advisory panel to the Executive Member for Community Engagement, in approving grants in consultation with the Service Director Legal and Community made under the Community Facilities Capital Grant Funding Scheme and district wide community grants.</p>	<p>Established by Hertfordshire County Council and the Hertfordshire District and Borough Councils. It is responsible for exercising the strategic direction, monitoring, delivery and co-ordination of current and future Growth Board strategy, programmes and implementation of any Growth Deal Project. It has oversight, accountability for and prioritisation of the Growth Board Growth fund.</p>	<p>Established to advise the HGB with regard to achieving the objectives in the HGB Terms of Reference. Acts as a forum for discussion with a wider range of members and stakeholders across the Hertfordshire area, so that the HGB benefits from a wider range of expertise in making its decisions</p>

Full Council

21. The Council currently has 49 Councillors, elected by thirds for a four year term of office. From 2024, NHDC will move to all-out elections, with all Councillors elected in the same scheduled elections every four years, serving for a four-year term of office.
22. All Councillors are members of Full Council, which is responsible for approving and adopting the budget and key policies within which Cabinet decisions are taken. Council appoints members to committees and holds them and the Cabinet to account for the decisions they take.
23. The Council normally has around 6-8 meetings per year, plus additional special meetings that are held as necessary.

Cabinet

24. NHDC is currently led by a joint administration. As a result, the Cabinet includes Members from both parties, bringing a breadth of experience. The Cabinet comprises 8 Executive Members and 7 Deputy Executive Members. Whilst each member has a responsibility for a particular service area, when major or key decisions are to be discussed or made, they are taken collectively by the whole Cabinet. The Cabinet meets around 6-7 times per year. In addition to attending Cabinet meetings, each Cabinet member has regular meetings with relevant directors and other senior officers.
25. The current Cabinet member's portfolios are set out in Section 14 of the Constitution.

Delegations to Officers

26. NHDC has a comprehensive Scheme of Delegation to Officers (as set out in the Constitution) which clearly sets out where the responsibility and extent of delegation lies.
27. These delegations to officers have helped to reduce the burden on Members.

Regulatory Committees

28. Under the terms of the Constitution, a number of regulatory and other Committees have been established. These have delegated authority to carry out and/or oversee specific duties and functions of the Council. The table below gives an overview of these committees.

Committee	Number of Members	Meetings/year
Licensing and Regulation Committee	14	1
Planning Control Committee	12	12
Standards Committee	12	2

Other committees and panels

29. NHDC uses Cabinet Panels as advisory groups to Cabinet, alongside other committees with specific responsibility.

Committee	Number of Members	Meetings/year
Employment Committee	5	4
Finance, Audit and Risk Committee	7	6
Joint Staff Consultative Committee	5	4
Cabinet Panel on Community	9	4
Cabinet Panel on Place	9	4
Cabinet Panel on the Environment	9	4
Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel	1 (external appointment)	3-4
CCTV Partnership Joint Executive	3	2
Council tax setting committee	5	2
District Wide Grants Panel	9	As required (4 since inaugural meeting in Sept 2021)

Area committees

30. NHDC uses Area Committees to ensure local representation on local matters. Area Committees are the means by which closer links are established with the community. All elected Members are entitled to sit on their local Area Committee. They have the power to consider and report to Cabinet/Council on any matter affecting their area.

Committee	Number of Members	Meetings/year
Baldock and District Committee	6	4
Hitchin Committee	13	4
Letchworth Committee	13	4
Royston and District Committee	7	4
Southern Rural Committee	10	4

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

31. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee examines and reports to Cabinet on service delivery of both Council services and other agencies. The Committee sets its own Work Programme and deals with matters under the Council's call-in procedure.
32. The Committee has 12 members and meets 6 times per year.

Summary of appointments

33. The table below summarises the information from the above sections.

Committee	Number of Members	Meetings/year	Members x meetings
Council	49	6	294
Cabinet	8	6	48
Licensing and Regulation Committee	14	1	14
Planning Control Committee	12	12	144
Standards Committee	12	2	24
Employment Committee *	5	4	20
Finance, Audit and Risk Committee	7	6	42
Joint Staff Consultative Committee	5	4	20
Cabinet Panel on Community	9	4	36
Cabinet Panel on Place	9	4	36
Cabinet Panel on the Environment	9	4	36
CCTV Partnership Joint Executive	3	2	6
Council tax setting committee	5	2	10
District wide Grants Panel	9	As required	
Baldock and District Committee	6	4	24
Hitchin Committee	13	4	52
Letchworth Committee	13	4	52
Royston and District Committee	7	4	28
Southern Rural Committee	10	4	40
Overview & Scrutiny	12	6	72
Total			998
N Councillors			49
Average meetings per Councillor			20

* Employment Committee meets as required, and met 4 times in 2020, and once in 2021/22, depending on Chief Officer vacancies.

34. In total, there are at least 998 attendances scheduled each year, which equates to an average of 20 per Councillor. Most meetings are open for Members to attend as observers, and many Councillors do take advantage of this scheme to ensure they keep up-to-date with matters of interest to their communities. In addition, there are ad-hoc or special meetings convened as required.

Cancellations

35. Over the past 18 months, a number of meetings have been postponed, cancelled or moved to virtual online events due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst we remain hopeful that legislation is brought forward to allow online meetings to resume in the near future, NHDC are returning to face-to-face in person meetings as appropriate. The number of meetings cancelled for reasons other than COVID-19 is small.

Attendance of Members

36. In addition to looking at the extent to which cancellations have taken place, it is also important to look at the levels of attendance in order to gain an appreciation of how the Council currently functions. During 2020/21, Councillors attended an average of 87% of the meetings they were expected to; this is an increase from 83% the previous year, and 81% the year before. Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, this is a high attendance rate although does highlight an absence rate of over 10%

Outside Bodies

37. The Council nominates Members to external bodies to represent the authority and local people to a range of different groups. These all meet 'as required', but the commitment of being a member of the external body includes preparing for and attending meetings, representing the views of the authority and its residents to the body, and feeding information back to the authority.

38. In total, 40 Members sit on outside bodies. The number of appointments varies from 1 to 12 (including reserve roles). There are a total of 97 appointments to external bodies.

Body	Number of Cllrs appointed
Baldock Community Forum (Community Interest Company)	1
Baldock Town Twinning Association	2
Baldock United Almshouses Charities	3
Baldock Youth and Community Association	3
Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board	1
British Schools Museum - Hitchin	1
Charles Collison Trust	1
Chilterns Conservation Board	1
Citizens Advice North Herts	3
E A Lucas Technical School Foundation	1
East of England Leaders Group	1
Grange Fellowship Community Association	3
Groundwork Hertfordshire	1
Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board	1
Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust	1
Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny Committee	0
The Hertfordshire Growth Board	1

Body	Number of Cllrs appointed
The Hertfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Committee	1
Hertfordshire Waste Partnership	1
Herts Leaders Group	1
Hitchin BID	1
Hitchin Charity School Endowment	1
Hitchin Cow Common Trust	1
Hitchin Educational Foundation	5
Hitchin Initiative	1
Hitchin Senior Citizens' Welfare Committee	3
Hitchin Town Band Committee	2
Hitchin Town Twinning	2
Hitchin United Charities	4
Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre	3
Jackmans Community Association	3
King George V Playing Fields User Group	3
Knebworth House Education and Preservation Trust	1
Knebworth Twinning Association	1
Knebworth Village Trust	2
Letchworth Civic Trust	2
Letchworth Garden City Business Improvement District (BID)	1
Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation	1
Letchworth Garden City Town Twinning Association	1
Letchworth Sustainability Forum	1
London Luton Airport Consultative Committee	1
North Hertfordshire Council for Voluntary Service	2
North Herts Local Strategic Partnership *	3
North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum	1
Police and Crime Panel	1
Rands Educational Foundation	1
Royston and District Community Transport Scheme	1
Royston and District Sports Council	1
Royston Community Association	3
Royston First Advisory Council (BID)	1
Royston Old People's Day Centre Committee	1
Royston Town Twinning Association	2
Sport North Herts	5
St Michaels Mount Community Centre, Hitchin - Management Committee	3
Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA)	1
Walsworth Community Association	3
Westmill Community Centre, Hitchin - Management Committee	1
Total	98

* Cabinet resolved in December 2021 to dissolve the North Herts Local Strategic Partnership.

Other responsibilities

39. In addition to attending meetings, Councillors play a key role as advocates and representatives of their local communities. Outside of the COVID-19 pandemic era, many hosted meetings and events for their residents. They attend local community events, representing the Council to residents and engaging with residents to identify matters of concern to them. They also receive letter, emails and telephone calls from local residents seeking information, advice and support in their interactions with both the Council and broader democratic and governmental processes, as well as communicating with residents through social media.
40. Councillors were invited to complete a short form to give a clearer understanding of their current workloads and other commitments. Of 49 Councillors, 14 responded (29%). Not all questions were relevant to all Councillors, so figures below are based on the actual responses received. Obviously Councillors who did respond may differ from those that did not, so these may be overestimates.
- a. Due to the varying nature of their roles and responsibilities, time in service, and other commitments, the amount of time spent on District Council duties varies considerably. For example, a Councillor in opposition without additional responsibilities will have fewer meetings and formal engagements than members of the Executive.
 - b. The amount of time spent preparing for meetings varies, depending on the type of meeting and the level of interaction required with colleagues, members of the public, or other stakeholders in advance of the meeting. For individual Councillors, the amount of time preparing for formal meetings also depends on the number of meetings they are expected to attend. In a typical month, respondents told us the amount of preparation time varied but averaged 16 hours (range between 6 and 30 hours). In addition, follow-up actions and activities are required for many.
 - c. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected workloads in different ways. Some Councillors reported the number of formal meetings decreased, and travel time decreased due to the use of digital meeting technologies. Others reported that caseloads have increased owing to more people working from home and noticing issues in the local community more readily.
 - d. District Councillors spend considerable amounts of time in other meetings and engaging in other business of the Council. Whilst project meetings, discussions with Officers, Portfolio briefings and informal meetings don't apply to all Councillors, for those for whom it does it takes around 20 hours per month. For specific projects, this can be considerably longer and may involve site visits and extended engagements.
 - e. The amount of time required for external appointments, where the Councillor represents the Council to another body, also varies with an average of 9 hours per month.
 - f. Some district council wards are served by several parish councils, and district Councillors often attend most parish council meetings in their area where possible.

This leads some to attend 6 meetings per month, each taking an evening for the meeting and preparation time.

- g. The volume of case work (representing and responding to the needs and concerns of local residents) also varies considerably between councillors and over time, averaging around 35 hours per month. Some Councillors, busy with other commitments, delegate some of their casework to ward colleagues, although single-member ward councillors cannot do that. Councillors reported receiving emails, phone calls and in-person conversations from residents asking for support, and spend time liaising with officers and other organisations to seek resolution. Some councillors also hold surgeries or ward walks on a regular basis.
- h. In addition to their formal duties and casework, councillors undertake training to help make them as effective as possible in their roles. This includes general training and support, as well as specialised training (such as housing, planning and licensing).
- i. Half of responding Councillors also work (either part-time or full-time, including both paid roles and voluntary roles). In addition 36% have caring responsibilities.
- j. The timing and location of meetings has an impact on how effective Councillors can be, owing to travel commitments and overlap of other responsibilities.

41. In summary, a 'typical' or average district Councillor that responded:

- a. Spends 16 hours per month preparing for formal District Council meetings.
- b. Attends 2 District Council meetings per month as a delegate.
- c. Spends time on follow-up actions after meetings.
- d. Spends 20 hours per month in other meetings and projects.
- e. Spends 9 hours per month representing the Council in external appointments.
- f. Attends parish council meetings in their ward, up to 6 evenings per month.
- g. Undertakes around 35 hours of case work per month.
- h. Attends ongoing training.
- i. Half of Councillors work full- or part-time.
- j. One-third have caring responsibilities

42. Whilst an increase in the number of electors that each Councillor would represent will not increase the number of meetings, it could increase the caseload work. Any reduction in the number of Councillors would need to be accompanied by changes to the Council's governance arrangements to reduce the meeting requirements (either by reducing the number of meetings, or reducing the number of Councillors attending). However, in the absence of any such planned changes, a reduction in the size of Council would result in an increase in the number of meetings individuals are expected to attend. This may result in some existing Councillors being unable to continue in their current roles and deter new candidates from standing for election in future.

Changes since the last Review

43. During the 2020/21 financial year, NHDC had an annual spend of £15.12m. This is a reduction from £16.86m in 2006/07, a reduction of over 10%.
44. In April 2014, the number of full time equivalent staff (FTE) was 309.6; in 2020/21 this had increased to 311.8 (an increase of around 1%), with a reduction in headcount of 4% over the past ten years.

Further Anticipated Changes

45. In addition to the above information, it is worth also highlighting that the day-to-day role of a councillor has changed substantially in recent years, and will no doubt continue to do so into the future. In addition to there now being fewer council meetings to attend, and less duplication within remaining meetings, the technological changes at the Council have also provided councillors with an opportunity to communicate across IT platforms that greatly increase efficiency, and allow more time for face-to-face contact with residents who do not have access to the internet.
46. The impact of the covid-19 pandemic has increased the rate of change considerably, and the use of technology has now become very much a key part of the role of both officers and councillors as an effective means of communicating within the existing restrictions. This is something that is likely to continue even once these restrictions are eased.

Comparison to other authorities

47. The LGBCE offer a chart showing the council size of the authorities in the CIPFA nearest neighbours model. Using publicly available information, the table below shows comparisons in the number of electors per councillor (using 2019 electorate figures and current number of district councillors).

Authority *	Local government electorate**	Cllrs	Electors per councillor	Last LGBCE review
Braintree	114,587	49	2,339	2014
Dacorum	113,191	51	2,219	2006
Basingstoke and Deane	137,269	54	2,542	2019
Epping Forest	103,154	58	1,779	2000
Chelmsford	135,909	57	2,384	2000
Test Valley	98,538	43	2,292	2018
Tonbridge and Malling	98,280	54	1,820	Ongoing – see below
Ashford	97,341	47	2,071	2017
Maidstone	127,013	55	2,309	2001
Huntingdonshire	134,726	52	2,591	2017
Tunbridge Wells	84,917	48	1,769	2000
Rugby	80,584	42	1,919	2012
Stroud	96,375	51	1,890	2015
Stafford	102,108	40	2,553	2015
East Hertfordshire	110,104	50	2,202	2012
North Hertfordshire	101,791	49	2,077	Ongoing

* Based on CIPFA nearest neighbours model as reported by LGA Inform (<https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/lga-research-cohesion-and-integration?mod-area=E07000099>)

** Electorate as of 1 December 2019 register publication, as published by the Office for National Statistics.

Cells highlighted RED have an electorate per councillor ratio greater than NHDC.

48. Below are three examples of current reviews in progress by the LGBCE. Whilst not yet complete, they give an idea of current proposals for council size and electorate ratios:

Authority	Pre-review			Post-review	
	Current Cllrs	Electors / Cllr	Electors/Cllr based on 6-year projection	New Cllrs	Electors/Cllr based on 6-year projection
Tonbridge & Malling, Kent ongoing	54	1,821	1,978	43	2,484
Amber Valley, Derbyshire ongoing	45	2,244	2,367	42	2,536
East Staffordshire, ongoing	39	2,225	2,343	37	2,470

49. Four Hertfordshire authorities have had relatively recent reviews:

Authority	Pre-review			Post-review	
	Original Cllrs	Electors / Cllr	Electors/Cllr based on 6-year projection	New Cllrs	Electors/Cllr based on 6-year projection
St Albans, Herts 2021	58	1,890	1,958	57	1,993
Hertsmere, Herts 2018	39	1,949	2,142	39	2,142
Watford, Herts 2016	36	1,981	2,165	36	2,165
Welwyn Hatfield, Herts 2016	48	1,643	1,734	48	1,734

50. NHDC currently has 2,016 electors per councillor; if it retains 49 Councillors the electorate ratio will be 2,301 in six years' time. Whilst this is higher than the other Hertfordshire authorities above, it is less than the three ongoing LGBCE reviews of authorities within the same CIPFA group of most-similar local authority areas.

51. The table below shows the three CIPFA group authorities, with the change between pre-review numbers of Councillors and elector-councillor ratios and post-review numbers.

Authority	Electors / Cllr post-review	Reduction in Councillors (%)	Increase in elector:councillor ratio (%)
Tonbridge & Malling, Kent ongoing	2,484	20%	36%
Amber Valley, Derbyshire ongoing	2,536	7%	13%
East Staffordshire, ongoing	2,470	5%	11%

52. To bring the ratio in line with those three authorities, the number of Councillors on NHDC would need to reduce to 44-46 Members. Although the driving force of the review is to achieve equality, a reduction in the number of Councillors would generate a budget saving of £5100 basic allowance per Member (based on the current Members' Allowances Scheme).

Number of Councillors	Elector:Councillor ratio (in 2028)	Reduction in Councillors (%)	Increase in elector:councillor ratio (%)
44	2562	10%	27%
45	2505	8%	24%
46	2451	6%	22%
47	2398	4%	19%
48	2349	2%	16%
49 (current Council Size)	2301	0%	14%
50	2255	-2%	12%

53. It should be noted that directly copying or mimicking another authority may not be helpful, as each authority has its own ways of working, different communities to serve, and different challenges to face. However, it is important to recognise that the three current LGBCE reviews of NHDC's CIPFA group members all show a reduction in Council Size and higher elector-to-Councillor ratios than this area if no changes are made.

Council Size Submission

- (1) Taking into account the details of this report, which outline the workload of NHDC councillors in terms of both meetings and casework, the current financial climate, future methods of working, changes in the structure and service delivery of the authority over recent years, and recognising the changing role of Councillors moving forwards, NHDC has discussed the following and there **is #cross-party agreement#** to this being the formal NHDC Council Size submission to the LGBCE as part of the current Review.
- (2) NHDC recognise that all current wards will be reviewed and are likely to change in the next stage of the Review, and a separate submission will be made to the LGBCE to support that process.
- (3) NHDC submit that the future council size for this authority should be **50**.

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NHDC: Electorate projections methodology

Introduction

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is currently reviewing the warding arrangements for North Herts District Council (NHDC). The intention of the review is to deliver electoral equality, whilst reflecting community interests and identities and promoting effective and convenient local government across the district.

This document provides details of the methodology used to estimate electorate projections. These are shown at a District, Ward and Polling District level. The exact location of many of the new developments is known, and that information can be used in future stages of the review in determining ward boundaries.

Definitions and terms

- Polling district

A geographical area, used in the administration of elections. These are the smallest building blocks of the register of electors, and hold details of all residential dwellings and all registered electors in that area.
- Electors

Registered electors are individuals who are entitled to register to vote and who have registered to vote within the district. Their registration is linked to their address. For the purposes of this review, no names or personal identifiable information is used – only aggregated anonymous counts of electors in a given area.

Methodology

The separate steps followed to generate the electorate projections are below. Within each step is an extract of the data to show how it is created and used.

Step 1. Details from the Register of Electors is extracted, using the 1 August 2021 register. This includes the number of residential properties and the number of electors in each polling district. The information held also records the ward, parish ward, parish, county division and parliamentary constituency.

Polling District	Property	Elector	Parish Ward	Parish	District ward	County division	Parliamentary
AAA - Baldock Town	680	1,290	<None>	<None>	Baldock Town	Baldock and Letchworth East	North East Hertfordshire
AAB - Baldock Town	2,780	4,364	<None>	<None>	Baldock Town	Baldock and Letchworth East	North East Hertfordshire
ABA - Baldock East	1,142	1,971	<None>	<None>	Baldock East	Baldock and Letchworth East	North East Hertfordshire
ABB - Baldock East	183	333	<None>	<None>	Baldock East	Baldock and Letchworth East	North East Hertfordshire
BAA - Hitchin Oughton	2,267	3,636	<None>	<None>	Hitchin Oughton	Hitchin Rural	Hitchin and Harpenden
BBA - Hitchin Bearton	1,000	2,000	<None>	<None>	Hitchin Bearton	Hitchin North	Hitchin and Harpenden

Step 2. The current electorate by ward is presented. The number of electors to councillors overall is calculated (2016 electors per councillor), and from that the variance in each ward can be calculated.
Variance measures how different the ratio of electors per councillor is in each ward compared to the district average.
 As of 1 August 2021, six of the twenty-four wards have a variance of at least 10%; the greatest variance is 28%.

District	Elector	N Cllrs	Variance	Note: These differ from the LGBCE initial report, as these are based on the August 2021 register and not the December 2019 register of electors
Arbury	2,191	1	9%	
Baldock East	2,304	1	14%	
Baldock Town	5,654	3	-7%	
Cadwell	1,845	1	-8%	
Chesfield	5,164	2	28%	
Codicote	2,074	1	3%	
Ermine	2,120	1	5%	
Hitchin Bearton	6,300	3	4%	
Hitchin Highbury	6,190	3	2%	
Hitchin Oughton	3,636	2	-10%	
Hitchin Priory	3,753	2	-7%	
Hitchin Walsworth	6,171	3	2%	
Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	5,866	3	-3%	
Kimpton	1,795	1	-11%	
Knebworth	4,132	2	2%	
Letchworth East	4,360	2	8%	
Letchworth Grange	5,532	3	-9%	
Letchworth South East	5,284	3	-13%	
Letchworth South West	5,957	3	-2%	
Letchworth Wilbury	3,949	2	-2%	
Royston Heath	4,413	2	9%	
Royston Meridian	4,187	2	4%	
Royston Palace	4,281	2	6%	
Weston and Sandon	1,666	1	-17%	
Total	98,824	49		
Total (previous step)	98,824			
Difference	0			
Cllr : Elector ratio		2016		

Step 3.	<p>Using the number of residential properties and number of electors per polling district, the number of electors per property for each polling district can be calculated. This is because we assume new dwellings in an area will have broadly the same average number of electors per property as existing properties, and different polling districts will have different ratios.</p> <p><i>Number of electors per property = number of properties / number of electors.</i></p>
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PD Code	Polling District	District ward	Property	Elector	Electors/Property
AAA	AAA - Baldock Town	Baldock Town	680	1,290	1.897
AAB	AAB - Baldock Town	Baldock Town	2,780	4,364	1.570
ABA	ABA - Baldock East	Baldock East	1,142	1,971	1.726
ABB	ABB - Baldock East	Baldock East	183	333	1.820
BAA	BAA - Hitchin Oughton	Hitchin Oughton	2,267	3,636	1.604
BRA	BRA - Hitchin Bearton	Hitchin Bearton	1,989	2,906	1.461

Step 4.	<p>The number of planned residential dwellings for each expected development site, from 2021 to 2028, has been provided by planning services at NHDC. For sites listed as 'small sites' within the planning forecast, details have been provided by planning services for 'commitments' (developments that have planning permission but are not yet completed).</p>
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Plan ref	Address	Town / parish	Ward	Area (ha)	Homes	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2028	2029	2030	2031	Total to 2031	Total to 2028
	Completions 1 April 2011 - 31 March 2020	Unspecified			2814													2,814	
	Permissions at 1 April 2020																		
RY10	Land south of Newmarket Road	Royston	Royston Meridian		325		20	50	55	55	50	50	45					325	325
RY1	Land west of Royston and north of Baldock Road	Royston	Royston Heath		279	20	55	55	60	55	34							279	279
LS1	Land at Ramerick	Lower Standon (Ickleford)	Cadwell		144	40	50	50	14									144	144

Step 5.	<p>Each of these development sites has then been linked to their polling district, using the forward plan maps and GIS systems.</p> <p>Note that, based on planning projections, there are a total of 439 properties for which no address or location is yet known. This includes 20 in Letchworth Town Centre, 290 in smaller sites across the district, and 129 in large sites across the district. Using the district average elector-to-property ratio, this equates to 752 new electors spread across the district. However, the approximate location of electors is required in order to achieve electoral equality accurately. Given these electors will be spread throughout the district, it is unlikely that a significant number would be concentrated in one site and therefore they are unlikely to skew electoral equality. For the purposes of electorate projections, these electors are omitted.</p>
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Plan ref	Address	Town / parish	Ward	Total to 2028	PD
RY10	Land south of Newmarket Road	Royston	Royston Meridian	325	DAB
RY1	Land west of Royston and north of Baldock Road	Royston	Royston Heath	279	DBA
LS1	Land at Ramerick	Lower Standon (Ickleford)	Cadwell	144	FK

Step 6.	<p>For each polling district, the total number of new properties is calculated, by adding the figures by polling district in the previous step.</p>
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PD Code	Polling District	District ward	Properties (Current)	New properties
AAA	AAA - Baldock Town	Baldock Town	680	0
AAB	AAB - Baldock Town	Baldock Town	2,780	40
ABA	ABA - Baldock East	Baldock East	1,142	50
ABB	ABB - Baldock East	Baldock East	183	0
BAA	BAA - Hitchin Oughton	Hitchin Oughton	2,267	0

Step 7.	Using the information from the previous steps, the number of electors per property in each polling district is multiplied by the number of new properties in that polling district to give the expected number of electors by 2028. The integer of this figure is used (as you cannot have only part of an elector). This, added to the number of electors now, gives the total number of electors per polling district projected to 2028. An additional validation step has been included, in which the elector:councillor ratios for all polling districts with large numbers of new residential properties have been checked to ensure they are not dissimilar, and in line with planning expectations.
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PD Code	Polling District	District ward	Properties (Current)	Elector	Electors/Property	New properties	Total properties, 2028	Total electors, 2028
AAA	AAA - Baldock Town	Baldock Town	680	1,290	1.897	5	685	1,299
AAB	AAB - Baldock Town	Baldock Town	2,780	4,364	1.570	61	2,841	4,459
ABA	ABA - Baldock East	Baldock East	1,142	1,971	1.726	50	1,192	2,057
ABB	ABB - Baldock East	Baldock East	183	333	1.820	6	189	343
BAA	BAA - Hitchin Oughton	Hitchin Oughton	2,267	3,636	1.604	1	2,268	3,637
RR4	RR4 - Hitchin Bearton	Hitchin Bearton	1,080	2,006	1.861	24	1,104	2,041

Step 8.	The final step is to calculate the ward variances using the projected 2028 electorate. This shows the total electorate by ward, and variance against the district-wide elector:councillor ratio, if no ward changes take place.
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District	Electors, 2028	N Cllrs	Variance
Arbury	3,702	1	61%
Baldock East	2,400	1	4%
Baldock Town	5,758	3	-17%
Cadwell	2,390	1	4%
Chesfield	6,803	2	48%
Codicote	2,612	1	14%
Ermine	2,441	1	6%
Hitchin Bearton	6,378	3	-8%
Hitchin Highbury	6,320	3	-8%
Hitchin Oughton	3,637	2	-21%
Hitchin Priory	3,982	2	-13%
Hitchin Walsworth	7,027	3	2%
Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	8,100	3	17%
Kimpton	1,810	1	-21%
Knebworth	4,835	2	5%
Letchworth East	4,906	2	7%
Letchworth Grange	6,147	3	-11%
Letchworth South East	5,520	3	-20%
Letchworth South West	6,139	3	-11%
Letchworth Wilbury	3,949	2	-14%
Royston Heath	4,901	2	7%
Royston Meridian	5,328	2	16%
Royston Palace	4,535	2	-1%
Weston and Sandon	3,108	1	35%
Total	112,728	49	
Total (previous step)	112,728		
Difference	0		
Cllr : Elector ratio		2300	

Conclusion

By 2028 the expected number of electors is likely to increase from 98,824 to 112,728; an increase of 14%. This increase will not be spread evenly throughout the district, increasing the variances of some wards.

Due to the number of new residential developments, which are not equally distributed across the district, the number of wards expected to show a variance of at least 10% is likely to increase from 6 to 14; the greatest variance will increase from 28% now to 61% in 2028.

The totals by polling district based on this methodology are provided to the LGBCE as part of the ward review.

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Electoral data

North Herts District Council

Using this sheet:

Fill in the cells for each polling district. Please make sure that the names of each parish, parish ward and borough ward are correct and consistent. Check your data in the cells to the right.

Scroll right to see the second table

What is the polling district code?	Is there any other description you use for this area?	Is this polling district contained in a parish? If not, leave this cell blank.	Is this polling district contained in a parish ward? If not, leave this cell blank.	Is this polling district contained in a group of parishes with a joint parish council? If not, leave this cell blank.	What ward is this polling district in?	What is the current electorate?	What is the predicted electorate?
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Polling district	Description of area	Parish	Parish ward	Grouped parish council	Existing ward	Electorate 2021	Electorate 2028
EX1	Example 1	Little Example		Little and Even Littler	Example	480	502
EX2	Example 2	Even Littler Example		Little and Even Littler	Example	67	68
EX3	Example 3	Medium Example			Example	893	897
EX4	Example 4	Big Example	Big Example East		Example	759	780
EX5	Example 5	Big Example	Big Example West		Example	803	824

AAA	AAA - Baldock Tr	<None>	<None>		Baldock Town	1290	1299
AAB	AAB - Baldock Tr	<None>	<None>		Baldock Town	4364	4459
ABA	ABA - Baldock E	<None>	<None>		Baldock East	1971	2057
ABB	ABB - Baldock E	<None>	<None>		Baldock East	333	343
BAA	BAA - Hitchin Ou	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Oughton	3636	3637
BBA	BBA - Hitchin Be	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Bearton	2906	2941
BBB	BBB - Hitchin Be	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Bearton	2362	2403
BBC	BBC - Hitchin Be	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Bearton	710	710
BBD	BBD - Hitchin Be	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Bearton	322	324
BCA	BCA - Hitchin Pri	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Priory	2125	2337
BCB	BCB - Hitchin Pri	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Priory	899	904
BDA	BDA - Hitchin W	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Walsworth	2468	3323
BDB	BDB - Hitchin W	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Walsworth	1905	1905
BDC	BDC - Hitchin W	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Walsworth	1341	1342
BDD	BDD - Hitchin W	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Walsworth	457	457
BEA	BEA - Hitchin Hig	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Highbury	1648	1662
BEB	BEB - Hitchin Hig	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Highbury	3368	3400
BEC	BEC - Hitchin Hig	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Highbury	1114	1198
BED	BED - Hitchin Hig	<None>	<None>		Hitchin Highbury	60	60
CAA	CAA - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth Grange	809	953
CAB	CAB - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth Grange	4112	4583
CAC	CAC - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth Grange	611	611
CBA	CBA - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth East	2174	2536
CBB	CBB - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth East	2186	2370
CCA	CCA - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth South East	1029	1088
CCB	CCB - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth South East	1924	2101
CCC	CCC - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth South East	1733	1733
CCD	CCD - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth South East	186	186
CCF	CCF - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth South East	412	412
CCG	CCG - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth South East	0	0
CDA	CDA - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth Wilbury	3887	3887
CDB	CDB - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth Wilbury	62	62
CEA	CEA - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth South West	3707	3880
CEB	CEB - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth South West	1835	1835
CEC	CEC - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth South West	271	271
CED	CED - Letchworth	<None>	<None>		Letchworth South West	144	153
DAA	DAA - Royston M Royston Town		Royston Town Meridian		Royston Meridian	2820	3310
DAB	DAB - Royston M Royston Town		Royston Town Meridian		Royston Meridian	1362	2012
DAB2	DAB2 - Royston I Royston Town		Royston Town Palace		Royston Meridian	5	6
DBA	DBA - Royston H Royston Town		Royston Town West		Royston Heath	2617	3075
DBB	DBB - Royston H Royston Town		Royston Town South		Royston Heath	1064	1093
DBB2	DBB2 - Royston I Royston Town		Royston Town Palace		Royston Heath	1	1
DBC	DBC - Royston H Royston Town		Royston Town South		Royston Heath	83	83
DBD	DBD - Royston H Royston Town		Royston Town Palace		Royston Heath	15	15
DBE	DBE - Royston H Royston Town		Royston Town West		Royston Heath	633	634
DCA	DCA - Royston P Royston Town		Royston Town Palace		Royston Palace	2495	2633
DCB	DCB - Royston P Royston Town		Royston Town Palace		Royston Palace	1785	1841
DCC	DCC - Royston P Royston Town		Royston Town West		Royston Palace	1	61
FA	FA - Arbury Ashwell		<None>		Arbury	1525	1608
FAA	FAA - Weston an Sandon		<None>		Weston and Sandon	406	418
FB1	FB1 - Ermine Barkway		<None>		Ermine	650	928
FB2	FB2 - Ermine Nuthampstead		<None>		Ermine	114	116
FBB	FBB - Ermine Therfield		<None>		Ermine	433	440
FC	FC - Ermine Barley		<None>		Ermine	532	555
FCC	FCC - Weston ar Wallington		<None>		Weston and Sandon	118	118
FD	FD - Arbury Bygrave		<None>		Arbury	223	1650
FDD	FDD - Weston ar Weston		<None>		Weston and Sandon	797	1515

Check your data	2021	2027
Number of councillors:	49	49
Overall electorate:	98,824	112,728
Average electorate per cllr:	2,017	2,301

Scroll left to see the first table

Fill in the name of each ward once	Fill in the number of councillors per ward	These cells will show you the electorate and variance. They change depending what you enter in the table to the left.
------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Name of ward	Number of cllrs per ward	Electorate 2021	Variance 2021	Electorate 2028	Variance 2028
Arbury	1	2,191	9%	3,702	61%
Baldock East	1	2,304	14%	2,400	4%
Baldock Town	3	5,654	-7%	5,758	-17%
Cadwell	1	1,845	-9%	2,390	4%
Chesfield	2	5,164	28%	6,803	48%
Codicote	1	2,074	3%	2,612	14%
Ermine	1	2,120	5%	2,441	6%
Hitchin Bearton	3	6,300	4%	6,378	-8%
Hitchin Highbury	3	6,190	2%	6,320	-8%
Hitchin Oughton	2	3,636	-10%	3,637	-21%
Hitchin Priory	2	3,753	-7%	3,982	-13%
Hitchin Walsworth	3	6,171	2%	7,027	2%
Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	3	5,866	-3%	8,100	17%
Kimpton	1	1,795	-11%	1,810	-21%
Knebworth	2	4,132	2%	4,835	5%
Letchworth East	2	4,360	8%	4,906	7%
Letchworth Grange	3	5,532	-9%	6,147	-11%
Letchworth South East	3	5,284	-13%	5,520	-20%
Letchworth South West	3	5,957	-2%	6,139	-11%
Letchworth Wilbury	2	3,949	-2%	3,949	-14%
Royston Heath	2	4,413	9%	4,901	7%
Royston Meridian	2	4,187	4%	5,328	16%
Royston Palace	2	4,281	6%	4,535	-1%
Weston and Sandon	1	1,666	-17%	3,108	35%

FDD1	FDD1 - Weston & Great Ashby	<None>	Weston and Sandon	13	13
FE	FE - Weston and Clothall	<None>	Weston and Sandon	124	834
FEEA	FEEA - Chesfield Wymondley	Great Wymondley	Chesfield	129	129
FEEB	FEEB - Chesfield Wymondley	Little Wymondley	Chesfield	652	1031
FEEC	FEEC - Chesfield Wymondley	Todds Green	Chesfield	113	115
FFA	FFA - Codicote Codicote	Codicote Village	Codicote	2074	2612
FFB	FFB - Knebworth Codicote	Codicote East	Knebworth	640	660
FGA	FGA - Chesfield Graveley	<None>	Chesfield	351	1014
FGB	FGB - Chesfield Great Ashby	<None>	Chesfield	3919	4514
FH	FH - Hitchwood, Hitchwood, Hexton	<None>	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	99	102
FI	FI - Arbury Hinxworth	<None>	Arbury	256	257
FJ	FJ - Cadwell Holwell	<None>	Cadwell	328	354
FK	FK - Cadwell Ickleford	<None>	Cadwell	1517	2036
FLA	FLA - Hitchwood, St. Ippolyts	St. Ippolyts South	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	833	1105
FLB	FLB - Hitchin Priory St. Ippolyts	St. Ippolyts North	Hitchin Priory	729	741
FM	FM - Ermine Kelshall	<None>	Ermine	127	128
FM1	FM1 - Ermine Kelshall	<None>	Ermine	3	12
FN	FN - Kimpton Kimpton	<None>	Kimpton	1795	1810
FOA	FOA - Hitchwood Kings Walden	Kings Walden	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	179	180
FOB	FOB - Hitchwood Kings Walden	Breachwood Green	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	602	619
FPA	FPA - Knebworth Knebworth	<None>	Knebworth	286	308
FPB	FPB - Knebworth Knebworth	<None>	Knebworth	3206	3867
FQ	FQ - Hitchwood, Langley	<None>	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	137	138
FR	FR - Hitchwood, Lilley	<None>	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	296	308
FS1	FS1 - Arbury Caldecote	<None>	Arbury	11	11
FS2	FS2 - Arbury Newnham	<None>	Arbury	68	68
FTA	FTA - Hitchwood, Offley	Offley	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	842	864
FTB	FTB - Hitchwood, Offley	Cockernhoe	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	403	2041
FU	FU - Hitchwood, St. Paul's Walden	<None>	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	1035	1116
FV	FV - Hitchwood, Pirton	<None>	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	1124	1262
FW	FW - Hitchwood, Preston	<None>	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	314	363
FW1	FW1 - Hitchwood Preston	<None>	Hitchwood, Offa & Hoo	2	2
FX	FX - Arbury Radwell	<None>	Arbury	108	108
FYA	FYA - Ermine Reed	<None>	Ermine	261	262
FZ	FZ - Weston and Rushden	<None>	Weston and Sandon	208	210

REFERRALS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES – AS AT 07/01/21

The following referrals from other Committees are enclosed below.

9A. REFERRAL FROM CABINET: 21 DECEMBER 2021 – INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

9B. REFERRAL FROM CABINET: 21 DECEMBER 2021 – SECOND QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2021-22

9C. REFERRAL FROM FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE: 15 DECEMBER 2021 – APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

9D. REFERRAL FROM CABINET: 21 DECEMBER 2021 – COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME – YEAR 10

Any further referrals will be published as a supplementary agenda when they are available.

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9A. REFERRAL FROM CABINET: 21 DECEMBER 2021 – INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That Council approves the changes to the Constitution as detailed in Section 9.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve the current processes that are in place which do not seem to be well integrated with each other or the Council Plan.

7d. Referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 14 December 2021 and Finance, Audit and Risk Committee – 15 December 2021 – Integrated Performance Management

The Service Director – Resources presented report entitled Integrated Performance Management which was referred from the Finance, Audit and Risk and Overview and Scrutiny Committees and highlighted:

- This was a proposal to change the way Performance Indicators, projects and risks are dealt with and reported on, to ensure they are more closely aligned to each other and the Council Plan.
- Section 7 details the processes and reports that are sent to both the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Section 8 details the proposed changes.

Councillor Ian Albert advised that he was supportive of this move and the idea followed from seminars attended by Members and Officers. The move to an Integrated Performance Management report will allow a role for Cabinet within the processes. He noted that there was cross party support for this move and thanked the Officers involved for their work in getting proposals put together.

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

RESOLVED: That the proposals set out in the report were approved which relate to the relation and monitoring of an Integrated Council Delivery Plan.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That Council approves the changes to the Constitution as detailed in Section 9.

REASON FOR DECISION: To improve the current processes that are in place which do not seem to be well integrated with each other or the Council Plan.

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 21st December, 2021, 7.30 pm - North Hertfordshire District Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/agenda)

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9B. REFERRAL FROM CABINET: 21 DECEMBER 2021 – SECOND QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2021-22

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL: That Council note the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 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.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Second Quarter Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Review 2021-22, along with referral 7c from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and drew attention to points including:

- Table 3, paragraph 8.5 detailed the capital spend removed from the Capital Programme relating to the property development strategy providing housing at market rents.
- This does not mean no opportunities will be explored in the future, but that none are in the pipeline at this stage.
- Investment returns were still low and there was a high balance of government money held, which would need to be paid back.
- Bank and building societies are generally at capacity and the excess balances are placed with the DMO, sometimes requiring investments at negative interest rates.
- Bank of England base rate has been raised to 0.25% and this may have some positive effect on future investments.

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

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted the forecast expenditure of £3.045million 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, decreasing the estimated spend in 2022/23 by £2.661million.
- (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.

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL: That Council note the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 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.

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 21st December, 2021, 7.30 pm - North Hertfordshire District Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](http://north-herts.gov.uk)

9C. REFERRAL FROM FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE: 15 DECEMBER 2021 – APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the Council opts in to the appointing person arrangements made by the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors, for a period of five years from the 2023/24 audit.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: The Council is required to appoint an External Auditor, and an appointment through PSAA offers the only realistically viable option.

The Service Director – Resources presented the report entitled Appointment of External Auditors for 2023/24 to 2027/28 and highlighted points including:

- Under the relevant regulations it was for Council to make a decision on the appointment of external auditors, but the views of this Committee were important in relation to these recommendations:
- The Council had been with Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd for five years (ending with the audits for 2023/24, noting that the years of work in which those audits are conducted would be different).
- PSAA Ltd was in his view the only viable option;
- In the current market procuring an audit board alone would be impossible and in terms of joint auditing arrangements in Hertfordshire and other neighbouring authorities there was none, and PSAA Ltd was used by most authorities nearby.
- PSAA Ltd provided a negotiating service with external auditors which allowed for feedback as well as independence and managed the process for requests for fee variances.
- There was an error in the report at paragraph 7.6 – following new information it was likely that the estimate for the increase in fees in 2020/21 would be higher, in the region of £20,000 in additional fees;
- The report covered the introduction of a pot of funding announced to cover the increase in base audit fee that would balance out increased costs in the medium term, though this would not cover the increase in audit fees resulting from additional risks arising out of COVID and similar risks in the period.

On the vote it was:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the Council opts in to the appointing person arrangements made by the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors, for a period of five years from the 2023/24 audit.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: The Council is required to appoint an External Auditor, and an appointment through PSAA offers the only realistically viable option.

NB: The report considered by Finance, Audit and Risk Committee at the meeting held on 15 December 2021 can be viewed at Minute 29 here:

[Agenda for Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on Wednesday, 15th December, 2021, 7.30 pm - North Hertfordshire District Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

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9D. REFERRAL FROM CABINET: 21 DECEMBER 2021 – COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME – YEAR 10

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (1) That Council notes the CTRS position relating to this and previous financial years.
- (2) That Council notes that a full review of the CTRS had commenced and has been postponed due to the consequences on the scheme of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- (3) That the funding allocated for distribution to Parish, Town & Community Councils in relation to CTRS in 2022/2023 is unchanged from 2021/2022.
- (4) That no changes to the CTRS be made for 2022/2023.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To update Cabinet on how the Scheme is working and to note that the full review planned to take place was postponed due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and this remains the case. However, work is planned to start in January 2022.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/2023 and highlighted:

- This is the annual report to refer onto Council regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- Council Tax reduction changed in 2013 with local schemes introduced, which allowed the Council to establish means tested system with a standard percentage reduction being offered – currently 25%.
- A full review of the Scheme was started in 2019 but this was delayed due to the pandemic, with the administration of Covid related grants taking up a significant portion of Officers time.
- The pandemic has lasted longer than expected and so it is hoped the review can start again in early 2022.
- It was agreed no changes to the Council Tax Scheme for 2022-23 and a light touch consultation took place on this in November 2021 and no comments were received.
- The number and categories of claimants were detailed within the report.
- The amount of funding proposed to Parish Councils was detailed within the report.

Councillor Ian Albert wished to express his thanks to the staff involved in this scheme and the support they had offered to residents was exemplary. This was agreed with by Councillors Amy Allen and Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg.

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

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (1) That Council notes the CTRS position relating to this and previous financial years.
- (2) That Council notes that a full review of the CTRS had commenced and has been postponed due to the consequences on the scheme of the COVID-19 pandemic.

(3) That the funding allocated for distribution to Parish, Town & Community Councils in relation to CTRS in 2022/2023 is unchanged from 2021/2022.

(4) That no changes to the CTRS be made for 2022/2023.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To update Cabinet on how the Scheme is working and to note that the full review planned to take place was postponed due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and this remains the case. However, work is planned to start in January 2022.

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 21st December, 2021, 7.30 pm - North Hertfordshire District Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](http://north-herts.gov.uk)

CABINET December 2021

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE, PROJECT MONITORING AND RISK

REPORT OF: Service Director: Resources

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL / *FINANCE AND IT*

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report recommends that the Council changes the way that it approaches the following:

- The setting, and monitoring of, Performance Indicators (PIs).
- The setting, and monitoring of, key Council projects
- The identification process in relation to risks and oversight of risks
- The setting, and publication of, the Service Delivery Plan and Service Action Plans

The intention of the changes is to ensure:

- All the above are better aligned to the Council Plan
- That there is better ownership by Cabinet and improved oversight by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- That the results are contained within one document, which is more accessible to Councillors, residents and other stakeholders

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the proposals set out in this report be approved, which relate to the creation and monitoring of an Integrated Council Delivery Plan.
- 2.2. That Council be recommended to approve the changes to the Constitution as detailed in section 9.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. *To improve the current processes that are in place which do not seem to be well integrated with each other or the Council Plan.*

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. *To continue with the current arrangements. This has been rejected due to the likely benefits from changing the approach.*

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. *The Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) and the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee have been informally consulted on these proposals. This report has also been added to the agenda to both Committees so that they can formally provide their views on the proposals.*

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The current overall process has the following elements to it:
- 7.2. **Council Projects:** In March each year, O&S receive a report proposing key Council Projects to be monitored during the following year. O&S then receive a quarterly report on performance against those indicators. The projects are often taken from the capital programme and it is not always clear how well they relate to the achievement of the Council Plan.
- 7.3. **Performance Indicators:** In March each year, Cabinet and O&S receive a report (separate to the projects report) proposing Performance Indicators for the following year. O&S then receive a quarterly report on performance against those indicators. The indicators that are measured do not tend to change much between years, can be quite narrowly focused and do not tend to reflect the objectives contained within the Council Plan.
- 7.4. **Risk.** Corporate risks are formally monitored by Cabinet, with oversight by FAR. There tends to be very few changes to corporate risks over time. The corporate risks identified are generally very important to the Council, but do not tend to link well to the potential impacts on achievement of the Council Plan. The discussions about risk at FAR consider the achievement of service delivery, and therefore cross over into the role of O&S. As this report goes to a separate Committee there is no consideration of the connections with Council Projects and Performance Indicators, meaning neither committee gets to see the full picture.
- 7.5. **Service Delivery Plan (published on the Council's website).** This is a summary of the more important actions from the Service Action Plans. But this is still a long list and does not provide explicit linkages as to how they relate to the Council Plan and objectives.
- 7.6. The plan also includes:
- The Council's priorities and values
 - A description of the services that the Council provides
 - A financial overview
 - A staffing overview
 - An overview of key risks
 - Approach to communication and consultation
 - Review of issues in relation to assurance and governance

- 7.7. **Service Action Plans (published on the Council's website).** These are currently set around March, in advance of the new financial year (which runs from April to March). They list all the projects that the service plans to deliver over the coming year. In general, these plans are far too detailed to be useful to the public. Whilst they match the actions against the Council Plan priorities, they do not detail the relative importance of each project.
- 7.8. **Risk Management Group.** This group is made up of the Executive Member for Finance and IT (as Member Risk Champion) and key Officers in relation to risk (including key Service Directors, Risk Officers, Internal Audit, Insurance and Health and Safety). There is also a standing invite to Members of FAR. It provides an opportunity to discuss risk (and related topics) in detail. It is not a public meeting, but the key issues are likely to form part of risk reporting to FAR.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. This report details changes that seek to provide integrated performance, project monitoring and risk processes. The integration is with each other, and also with the Council Plan. It also aims to improve reporting to O&S and Cabinet, and seeks to make the information that is published on the website more relevant. The proposed changes to each of the elements described in section 7 are detailed below:
- 8.2. **Council Projects (corporate/ strategic):** The focus of this will be on those projects that are either detailed in the Council Plan or are clearly linked to the Council Plan priorities and themes. The Council will carry out other projects, such as actions that are linked to a statutory duty or support the delivery of Council functions. These other projects will be included if they are very significant in terms of impact (e.g. in relation to staff or financial resources), but the focus will be on what contributes towards delivering the Council Plan. For longer term projects, milestones will be used to monitor progress achieved during the year.
- 8.3. **Performance Indicators (corporate/ strategic):** The focus of setting the Indicators will be what shows how well we are doing at achieving the priorities within the Council Plan, including measures linked to the projects detailed above.
- 8.4. **Risk (corporate/ strategic):** The focus will be determining risks that could impact on the delivery of the Council Plan or the Council Projects linked to the Council Plan. This will continue to use the adopted risk management framework and therefore will consider the level of likelihood and impact.
- 8.5. **Council Delivery Plan (setting).** The actions described above will take place during December to March, alongside the setting of the budget for the following year. They will be combined into a single document to be approved by Cabinet in March, with oversight from O&S and FAR. Executive Members will be consulted on the elements that relate to their areas of responsibility.
- 8.6. **Council Delivery Plan (monitoring).** The Council Delivery Plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis by O&S (as per the current timescales for the Projects and Indicators reports). O&S will be able to refer any comments or recommendations on to Cabinet. It is hoped that the new content and structure will encourage more referrals, which in turn will promote the role of O&S and strengthen the ownership by Cabinet.

- 8.7. It is envisaged that the overall Projects and Performance Indicators will remain as they are throughout the year (i.e. new ones will not be added and projects will only be removed if they are fully completed), although there would be scope to make changes in the light of significant events. It is expected that the risk reporting will be more fluid and reflect the changing environment that the Council operates in. Therefore new risks will be added as they emerge, and risks will be removed as they become irrelevant or insignificant.
- 8.8. This proposal requires a slight change to the role of FAR as the Committee would no longer receive regular reports on specific risks. The Committee would still receive reports in relation to the effective development and operation of risk management. These would be considered biannually. As well as giving FAR a more strategic oversight of risk, this would also remove an area of overlap between FAR and O&S. In reviewing specific risk entries, there is a natural tendency for FAR to consider issues in relation to current service delivery. This type of discussion more naturally falls under the remit of O&S.
- 8.9. In setting the Performance Indicators, it is possible that that some will be financial in nature. FAR and O&S could determine that these specific Indicators would be best monitored by FAR. If agreed, they would be incorporated in to quarterly financial reporting.
- 8.10. **Risk Management Group.** With the change to the way that risks are reported (i.e. to O&S), it is proposed that the Chairs of O&S and FAR are encouraged to attend each meeting. The standing invite to FAR members would be continued, and extended to O&S members as well. The current members of the group have been consulted and support this proposed change.
- 8.11. **Service Projects (Action Plans).** Service Directorates will continue to compile a list of projects that they plan to achieve in the forthcoming year. This will be done in consultation with Executive Members and other Service Directors (e.g. to highlight areas of cross-over or where support services are required). These will continue to reinforce the link between service level activities and the Council Plan priorities. Staff will then see how their work links in to what the Council is aiming to achieve, through the Regular Performance Review process. The majority of the content of the plans will be set by the start of April, but there will be some scope to amend them during the year (subject to available financial and people resources). These plans will not be published on the website.
- 8.12. **Performance Indicators (Service level).** The focus of setting the Indicators will be what shows how well the service is doing at achieving its projects and/ or how well it is performing overall (e.g. how well statutory services are being delivered). The indicators will generally be used within Service Directorates but will also be shared with the relevant Executive Member.
- 8.13. **Risks (Service level).** The focus will be determining risks that could impact on the delivery of service objectives and projects. This will continue to use the adopted risk management framework and therefore will consider the level of likelihood and impact. The risk monitoring will generally be used within Service Directorates but will also be shared with the relevant Executive Member.
- 8.14. **Service Delivery Plan.** Some of the elements of this (projects and risks) will be naturally subsumed in to the Council Delivery Plan. The Council Delivery Plan will also provide

some context in relation to Council priorities and an overview of staffing and money. As a result it is proposed that the Service Delivery Plan is no longer produced as a separate document.

- 8.15. The review of assurance and governance issues will still take place and any actions will form part of the Council Delivery Plan or the Service Action Plans. The outputs will also be considered as part of the Annual Governance Statement.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The terms of reference for Cabinet includes ““to prepare and agree to implement policies and strategies other than those reserved to Council” (Constitution paragraph 5.6.1). The proposals in this report are not reserved to Council and therefore the decision on whether they are adopted rests with Cabinet. However, in the following paragraphs some changes to the Council’s Constitution are considered and these changes require approval by Council (Constitution paragraph 2.6.1).
- 9.2. The Constitution does not explicitly detail Cabinet’s role in managing performance and risk. It is proposed to add the following text in bold at the end of paragraph 5.6.3 so that it would read “To take decisions on resources and priorities, together with other stakeholders and partners in the local community, to deliver and implement the budget and policies decided by the Full Council. **To monitor performance and risk in respect of the delivery of those policies and priorities**”.
- 9.3. These proposals extend the role of O&S in relation to risk monitoring. To make this change clear it is proposed to add the following text in bold to paragraph 6.2.7 (s) “To review performance against the Council’s agreed objectives/ priorities and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/ or service area. **To consider risks to the achievement of those objectives/ priorities. To make recommendations to Cabinet**”.
- 9.4. Whilst the proposals in this report change what is currently reported to FAR, the current terms of reference are still considered to be appropriate. As no change to paragraph 10.1.5 (u) is required, so will continue to read “to monitor the effective development and operation of risk management and corporate governance, agree actions (where appropriate) and make recommendations to Cabinet”.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The alignment between the Council Plan and the budget will be maintained, which helps to ensure that the Council can afford to deliver against its priorities. Financial risks will still be considered as part of the budget setting process and monitored on a quarterly basis. These will continue to be reported to Cabinet and FAR.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The aim of these proposals is to strengthen the link between performance and risk and make risks more current. This should provide an improved perspective of the risks that the Council faces. It should also help Service Managers to get value from the risk monitoring processes and be a useful component of service management.

- 11.2. The proposals will also allow FAR to take on an oversight role in relation to risk, which should add value to the overall risk management process.

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 equalities implications arising from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to *this report*

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There will continue to be a need to align Council and Service objectives with available people resources to be able to achieve them. It is expected that these changes will help to make that link clearer.
- 15.2 Budget constraints have meant that, over time, the Council has generally reduced its head count. This limits what the Council is able to achieve.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 *None.*

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 *None.*

CABINET 21 December 2021

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: SECOND QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2021/22

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: FINANCE AND I.T.

COUNCIL PRIORITY: ENABLE AN ENTERPRISING AND CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMY

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on progress with delivering the capital and treasury strategy for 2021/22, as at the end of September 2021.
- 1.2 To update Cabinet on the impact upon the approved capital programme for 2021/22 – 2030/31. The current estimate is a decrease in spend in 2021/22 of £13.124million and a decrease in spend in future years of £10.661million. The most significant change is the removal from the capital programme of the Acquisition of Property Investments capital scheme, for reasons detailed in table 2 and paragraph 8.11. A total of £20m had been earmarked in the programme (£8m in 2021/22 and £4m in each of the next three financial years). The £2.649M Provide Housing at Market Rents scheme is also being removed from the capital programme, while the £1.193M Museum Storage Solution is being withdrawn and replaced with a new capital bid in 2022/23.
- 1.3 To inform Cabinet of the Treasury Management activities in the first six months of 2021/22. The current forecast is that the amount of investment interest expected to be generated during the year is £0.050million. This is an increase of £0.010million on the working estimate reported at 1st quarter.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the forecast expenditure of £3.045million in 2021/22 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.3 refers.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves 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, decreasing the estimated spend in 2022/23 by £2.661million.
- 2.3 That Cabinet notes 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.

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.4 | That Cabinet recommends to Council that it notes the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2021. |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded.
- 3.2 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.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Options for capital investment are considered as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.
- 4.2 The primary principles governing the Council's investment criteria are the security of its investments (ensuring that it gets the capital invested back) and liquidity of investments (being able to get the funds back when needed). After this the return (or yield) is then considered, which provides an income source for the Council. In relation to this the Council could take a different view on its appetite for risk, which would be reflected in the Investment Strategy. In general, greater returns can be achieved by taking on greater risk. Once the Strategy has been set for the year, there is limited scope for alternative options as Officers will seek the best return that is in accordance with the Investment Strategy.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Consultation on the capital expenditure report is not required. Members will be aware that consultation is incorporated into project plans of individual capital schemes as they are progressed.
- 5.2 There are quarterly updates with the Authority's Cash Manager, Tradition and regular meetings with Treasury advisors (Link).

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 20th August 2021.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 In February 2021, Council approved the Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2021/22 to 2030/31. To be consistent with the strategy, the monitoring reports for Capital and Treasury are also integrated.

- 7.2 The Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2021 to 2026 confirmed that the Council will seek opportunities to utilise capital funding (including set aside receipts) for 'invest to save' schemes and proposals that generate higher rates of return than standard treasury investments. This is one way the Council will allocate resources to support organisational transformation that will reduce revenue expenditure.
- 7.3 Link Asset Services Ltd were first contracted to provide Treasury advice for the financial year 2012/13 and this arrangement has been extended until 2022/23. The service includes:
- Regular updates on economic and political changes which may impact on the Council's borrowing and investment strategies
 - Information on investment counterparty creditworthiness
 - Technical updates
 - Access to a Technical Advisory Group.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Council has £129.0 million of capital assets that it currently owns. The Investment Strategy set out the reasons for owning assets that are not for service delivery, including an assessment of Security, Liquidity, Yield and Fair Value. There have been no significant changes in relation to these since the Strategy was set.

Capital Programme 2021/22

- 8.2 The full capital programme is detailed in Appendix A and shows the revised costs to date, together with the expected spend from 2021/22 to 2030/31 and the funding source for each capital scheme.
- 8.3 Capital expenditure for 2021/22 is estimated to be **£3.045million**. This is a reduction of **£13.124million** on the forecast in the 1st quarter report (reported to Cabinet on 21st September 2021). The decrease in spend in 2021/22 is largely due to removing projects from the Capital Programme (see paragraph 8.11). Table 1 below details changes to capital programme.

Table 1- Current Capital Estimates

	2021/22 £M	2022/23 £M	2023/24 to 2030/31 £M
Original Estimates approved by Full Council February 2021	14.718	7.919	21.114
Changes approved by Cabinet in 3rd Qrt 2020/21	1.102	0.537	0
Changes approved by Cabinet in 2020/21 Capital Outturn report	0.473	0	0
Revised Capital estimates at start of 2021/22	16.293	8.456	21.114
Executive Member – Finance and I.T. approved additional Expenditure – Financial System upgrade	0.082	0	0

	2021/22 £M	2022/23 £M	2023/24 to 2030/31 £M
Executive Member – Finance and I.T. approved additional Expenditure – Installation of high-definition cameras in the Council Chamber	0.018	0	0
Changes at Q1	-0.224	0.312	0
Executive Member – Finance and I.T. approved additional Expenditure on Careline Servers	0.015	0	0
Changes at Q2	-13.139	-2.661	-8.000
Current Capital Estimates	3.045	6.107	13.114

- 8.4 Table 2 lists the schemes in the 2021/22 Capital Programme that will start or continue in 2022/23:

Table 2: Scheme Timetable Revision:

(Key: - = reduction in capital expenditure, + = increase in capital expenditure)

Scheme	2021/22 Working Budget £'000	2021/22 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2022/23 onwards £'000
Resurface Lairage Car Park	350	0	-350	Due to delays in agreeing the specification there has been a delay in the procurement process	350
Cycle Strategy Implementation	278	0	-278	Currently working in partnership with HCC in preparing a Local Cycling Walking & Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) due for completion in Jan 2022, which will then need to go through our Cabinet process for adoption in March. The LCWIP should identify possible schemes that could be part funded from this budget, but these are not likely to occur until 2022/23	278
Transport Plans Implementation	250	0	-250	This is subject to the Local Plan being adopted and the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents.	250

Scheme	2021/22 Working Budget £'000	2021/22 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2022/23 onwards £'000
Green Infrastructure Improvements	185	0	-185	This is subject to the Local Plan being adopted and the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents.	185
Letch Multi-Storey Parapet / Soffit / Decoration	129	0	-129	Due to delays in procurement and forming a contract the works have been delayed to commence in summer when the weather is better	129
Thomas Bellamy House Structure	65	0	-65	Project delayed whilst some unexpected preliminary works and investigations at the property are carried out. Completion of these works is necessary before embarking on the planned works. Completion is not expected until around June 2022.	65
Newark Close Road Replacement	65	0	-65	The road has recently undergone some essential repairs. The wholesale replacement is therefore to be deferred until 22/23.	65
Other minor changes			-17		17
Total Revision to Budget Profile			-1,339		1,339

8.5 There are also changes to the overall costs of schemes in 2021/22. These changes total a net decrease of £11.8million and are detailed in Table 3

Table 3: Changes to Capital Schemes Commencing in 2021/22:

(Key: - = reduction in capital expenditure, + = increase in capital expenditure)

Scheme	2021/22 Working Budget £'000	2021/22 Forecast Spend £'000	Difference £'000	Comments
Acquisition of Property Investments	8,000	0	-8,000	No suitable property acquisitions have been identified. This reflects the general economic conditions, as well as changes to Public Works Loan Board borrowing, and expected changes to the CIPFA prudential code. Both of these require that the primary reason for the investment is not a financial return. This therefore implies that the acquisition should be within the District and involve something like regeneration or

Scheme	2021/22 Working Budget £'000	2021/22 Forecast Spend £'000	Difference £'000	Comments
				service delivery. Whilst we will continue to look for opportunities, the budget has been removed from the capital programme for treasury management reasons (see paragraph 8.11).
Provide Housing at Market Rents	2,752	103	-2,649	The forecast spend against this budget is the works to complete the conversion of Harkness Court. As per the description above, the opportunities for further spend have been limited by the expected changes to the CIPFA prudential code. This would preclude the purchase of existing residential property, as generally that would be seen as primarily being purchased for a financial return (unless there was a clear redevelopment plan). Whilst we will continue to look for opportunities the budget will be removed at this stage.
Museum Storage Solution	1,193	0	-1,193	Further investigation with developers has indicated that the cost would be in excess of the available budget. As a result, a new capital proposal with a revised capital estimate is included in the proposed capital programme for 2022 - 2032. The existing budget can therefore be removed from the programme.
S106 Projects	30	75	+45	To date, a total of £75k of S106 funds have been released for community schemes.
Other minor changes			-3	
Total revision to scheme spend			-11,800	

8.6 Table 4 below shows how the Council will fund the 2020/21 capital programme.

Table 4: Funding the Capital Programme:

	2021/22 Balance at start of year £M	2021/22 Forecast Additions £M	2021/22 Forecast Funding Used £M	2021/22 Balance at end of year £M
Useable Capital Receipts and Set-aside Receipts	6.229	4.973	(2.750)	8.452
S106 receipts			(0.075)	
Other third party grants and contributions			(0.185)	
IT Reserve			(0.035)	
Planned Borrowing			0	
Total			(3.045)	

- 8.7 The availability of third party contributions and grants to fund capital investment is continuously sought in order to reduce pressure on the Council's available capital receipts and allow for further investment. Additional capital receipts are dependent on selling surplus land and buildings. Ensuring that the Council gets best value from the disposal of land and buildings can take a long time and therefore the amounts that might be received could be subject to change. This will be kept under review throughout the year.
- 8.8 The Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) at 31st March 2021 was negative £5.18 million. Based on current forecasts it will remain negative during 2021/22

Treasury Management 2020/21

- 8.9 The Council invests its surplus cash in accordance with the Investment Strategy (see paragraph 4.2). This surplus cash is made up of capital funding balances, revenue general fund balance, revenue reserve and provisions balances and variations in cash due to the timing of receipts and payments. During the first six months, the Council had an average investment balance of £57.9 million and invested this in accordance with the treasury and prudential indicators as set out in the Integrated Capital and Treasury Management Strategy and in compliance with the Treasury Management Practices.
- 8.10 During the quarter the Council has had higher than usual cash balances due to the various grant funding that it has been given by Government to pass on to businesses. Even though every effort has been made to pass the money on to businesses as quickly as possible, there has inevitably been a delay between receipt and payment. There have also been tranches of grant where the amount received has exceeded the amounts eligible for payment. Balances have also been higher due to the delays in capital spend in 2020/21. These have both been partially off-set by revenue costs and reduced income related to Covid-19. It has been necessary to keep the business grant funding very liquid, and therefore the level in short-term investments with the Debt Management Office has remained high.
- 8.11 The Council generated £0.024M of interest during the first six months of 2021/22. The average interest rate on all outstanding investments at the 30th September was 0.10%. Interest rates have continued to remain low so consequently any new investments are yielding significantly less than the average interest rate on all outstanding investments at the 31st March which was 0.41%. Based on current investments and forecasts of interest rates and cash balances for the remainder of the year, it is forecast that the Council will generate £0.050 million of interest over the whole of 2021/22. The investment strategy allows for investments in a Property Fund and Multi-Asset Fund. In July, Cabinet approved the use of a procurement waiver in relation to the selection of these funds. This selection process has subsequently been paused due to the changes that are expected in relation to the CIPFA prudential code. The current code effectively allows Council's to treat their revenue cash balances and capital borrowing requirement separately. This meant that a Council could borrow for capital (as long as it has a positive Capital Financing Requirement) even if it had revenue cash balances. It could choose to internalise that borrowing (i.e. borrow against revenue cash balances) or obtain external cash. The Council had planned to follow this approach and determined an investment strategy that invested some of its revenue cash balances on a longer-term basis (i.e. in a Property Fund and Multi-asset Fund). This would give the Council the potential benefit

of getting the improved returns from longer term investments, whilst maintaining its capital programme - even though elements of that programme are very uncertain. The revised CIPFA prudential code requires that Councils view their balances overall and only borrow externally when they have no cash remaining (subject to maintaining a buffer for cashflow purposes). The implication of this is that the Council should not embark on longer-term investments if during the expected period of that investment (i.e. 5 years+) the overall remaining cash balances would mean that the level of longer term investments would be imprudent. As a result we have been reviewing the capital forecasts for this year and future years (as part of the Corporate Business Planning process) to determine future cash balances, and whether it would be prudent to undertake longer-term investments. This has included removing capital budgets where there is not a specific plan in place (i.e. the acquisition of property investments and providing housing at market rents). These opportunities will still be investigated and if an opportunity is identified then approval will be sought from Council to add it in to the Capital Programme, and implications on the investment strategy will also be considered. Those implications could include a managed exit from any longer-term investments but ensuring that the exit point was at a time that was beneficial to the Council.

- 8.12 As at 30 September 2021 the split of investments was as shown in the table below. There were no investments with non-UK banks during the quarter due to the high Country rating that we have set for international investments.

Banks	18%
Building Societies	19%
Government	32%
Local Authorities	26%
Money Market Fund (MMF)	5%

- 8.13 The level of risk of any investment will be affected by the riskiness of the institution where it is invested and the period that it is invested for. Where an institution has a credit rating this can be used to measure its riskiness. This can be combined with the period remaining on the investment to give a historic risk of default percentage measure. The table below shows the Historic Risk of Default for outstanding investments at 30 September 2021. The most risky investment has a historic risk of default of 0.109%. It should also be noted that in general the interest rate received is correlated to the risk, so the interest income received would be less if it took on less risk.

Borrower	Principal Invested £M	Interest Rate %	Credit Rating	Days to Maturity at 30 Sept	Historic Risk of Default %
Bank of Scotland	2.0	0.03	A+	Call	0.004
Lloyds	3.0	0.05	A+	Call	0.012
Public Sector Deposit Fund (MMF)	3.0	0.03	AAmmf	Call	0
DMO (Government)	11.0	0.01	AA-	5	0
DMO (Government)	7.0	0.01	AA-	7	0
Leeds Building Society	2.0	0.03	A-	18	0.002
Coventry Building Society	2.0	0.02	A-	19	0.002

Borrower	Principal Invested £M	Interest Rate %	Credit Rating	Days to Maturity at 30 Sept	Historic Risk of Default %
Santander UK	1.0	0.09	A+	29	0.004
Nationwide Building Society	2.0	0.07	A	47	0.006
Ashford Borough Council	3.0	0.04	AA-	55	0.004
Leeds Building Society	1.0	0.1	A-	61	0.008
Blackpool Council	2.0	0.32	AA-	74	0.005
North Lanarkshire Council	2.0	0.03	AA-	111	0.007
Nationwide Building Society	1.0	0.07	A	111	0.014
Santander UK	1.0	0.08	A+	139	0.018
Santander UK	1.0	0.08	A+	144	0.019
Barclays	2.0	0.02	A+	144	0.019
Newcastle Building Society	1.0	0.11	*	151	0.058
Slough Borough Council	2.0	0.1	AA-	152	0.001
Slough Borough Council	1.0	0.1	AA-	152	0.001
West Dunbartonshire Council	5.0	0.05	AA-	260	0.017
Marsden Building Society	1.5	0.25	*	284	0.109
	56.5	0.10			

* Unrated Building Societies Historic Risk of Default is based on a Fitch (a credit rating agency) rating of BBB.

DMO and Local Authority credit ratings are the UK credit rating.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet's terms of reference under 5.6.7 specifically includes "to monitor expenditure on the capital programme and agree adjustments within the overall budgetary framework". The Cabinet also has a responsibility to keep under review the budget of the Council and any other matter having substantial implications for the financial resources of the Council. By considering monitoring reports throughout the financial year Cabinet is able to make informed recommendations on the budget to Council. The Council is under a duty to maintain a balanced budget.
- 9.2 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that:
"every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs."
- 9.3 Asset disposals must be handled in accordance with the Council's Contract Procurement Rules.
- 9.4 The Prudential Indicators comply with the Local Government Act 2003.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The main financial implications are covered in section 8 of the report.
- 10.2 The Authority operates a tolerance limit on capital projects that depends on the value of the scheme and on this basis over the next ten-year programme it should be anticipated

that the total spend over the period could be around £3 million higher than the budgeted £22 million.

- 10.3 The capital programme will need to remain under close review due to the limited availability of capital resources and the affordability in the general fund of the cost of using the Council's capital receipts. When capital receipts are used and not replaced the availability of cash for investment reduces. Consequently interest income from investments reduces. £1.0million currently earns the Authority approximately £1k per year in interest. The general fund estimates are routinely updated to reflect the reduced income from investments. When the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) reaches zero the Council will need to start charging a minimum revenue provision to the general fund for the cost of capital and will need to consider external borrowing for further capital spend. The CFR at the 31 March 2021 was negative £5.18million.
- 10.4 The Council also aims to ensure that the level of planned capital spending in any one year matches the capacity of the organisation to deliver the schemes to ensure that the impact on the revenue budget of loss of cash-flow investment income is minimised.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The inherent risks in undertaking a capital project are managed by the project manager of each individual scheme. These are recorded on a project risk log which will be considered by the Project Board (if applicable). The key risks arising from the project may be recorded on Pentana (the Council's Performance & Risk management software). Some of the major capital projects have been included in the Council's Corporate Risks (such as the new North Hertfordshire Museum). The Corporate Risks are monitored by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and Cabinet.
- 11.2 Risks associated with treasury management and procedures to minimise risk are outlined in the Treasury Management Practices document, TMP1, which was adopted by Cabinet in July 2003 and is revisited annually as part of the Treasury Strategy review. The risk on the General Fund of a fall of investment interest below the budgeted level is dependent on banks and building societies need for borrowing.

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 equalities implications directly arising from the adoption of the Capital Programme for 2020/21 onwards. For any individual new capital investment proposal of £50k or more, or affecting more than two wards, an equality analysis is required to be carried out. This will take place following agreement of the investment proposal.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to recommendations of this report. The projects at section 8.4 may have impacts that contribute to an adverse impact. As these projects go forward, an assessment will be made where necessary.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no direct human resource implications.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A, Capital Programme Detail including Funding 2021/22 onwards.
16.2 Appendix B, Treasury Management Update.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy)
<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/b8344/Items%20Referred%20from%20Other%20Committees%20-%206b%20-%20Investment%20Strategy%20Capital%20and%20Treasury%2011th-Feb-202.pdf?T=9>

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FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE DECEMBER 2021

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS FOR 2023/24 TO 2027/28

REPORT OF: *Service Director: Resources*

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: *Non-Executive*

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT COUNCIL

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council is required to appoint an auditor for the period from 2023/24 onwards, when the current arrangement with Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) come to an end. It is considered that continuing with PSAA provides the only realistically viable option.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee recommends to Council:

- 2.1. That the Council opts in to the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors, for a period of 5 years from the 2023/24 audit.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. *The Council is required to appoint an External Auditor, and an appointment through PSAA offers the only realistically viable option.*

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The state of the audit market and changes to audit requirements for Local Authorities mean that it is a very complex procurement. The chances of a successful procurement for the Council alone are very low, and there would be extremely high uncertainty on price.
- 4.2. No other Hertfordshire Councils are looking at an opportunity to do a joint procurement (and we are not aware of any others more widely). All are seeking approval to use the PSAA route.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Views from the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee are being sought in advance of a decision by Full Council.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 For audits from 2018/19, local authorities have been required to make their own arrangements for the external audit of their accounts. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government specified PSAA as an appointing person under the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015. This means that PSAA can make auditor appointments for audits of local authorities. Following a Council decision in November 2016, the Council opted in to the PSAA arrangements for the period from 2018/19 to 2022/23. Our current auditors are Ernst and Young LLP.
- 7.2 The years referenced are the accounting years that are being audited. The auditor needs to be appointed prior to the start of the year that is being audited, but they carry out most of their work following the end of that year.
- 7.3 The PSAA prospectus (see background papers) provides a detailed assessment of the factors that have impacted on the audit sector since the decision on appointing through PSAA was made in 2016. The first of these were in 2018 with high profile financial crises and failures in the private sector. This led to several reviews that sought to strengthen the role of auditors. This resulted in:
- More auditor time being required for private sector audits, in a sector with limited capacity.
 - Increased auditor time (and cost) for Local Government audits, as the new requirements placed on the private sector also generally apply to Local Government as well..
- 7.4 2018 also saw the issues at Northamptonshire County Council emerge. It has been questioned as to whether a different role of audit would have meant that the issues would have emerged and been addressed earlier.
- 7.5 For the audit of the 2018/19 accounts, there were over 200 delayed audit opinions. The audit issues have been further exacerbated by the impact of Covid-19. Even with an extension of statutory audit deadlines (with audits to be completed by 30th September rather than 31st July) for 2020/21, only 9% of Local Government audits were completed on time.

7.6 The impact on North Herts has been as follows:

Audit year	Accounts approved	Additional audit fees for main audit work (excluding Housing Benefit)
2018/19	29 th July 2019- On time	None- scale fee of £40,068
2019/20	30 th November- On time (given extended deadline). Approved by FAR in September with delegation to the Chair in relation to unresolved audit matters,	PSAA approved an increased fee of £19,962. This was made up of £7,000 in relation to additional Covid-19 work, and £12,962 for additional work in relation to changing audit requirements.
2020/21	Expected to be approved in January. The deadline was 30 th September.	The outline audit plan (presented to FAR in March 2021) detailed areas where EY may seek a higher fee, of those three had estimates provided totalling £6k-£11.5k.

7.7 Earlier this year, Government consulted on allocating £15million of additional funding to Local Government (from 2021/22) to support the additional costs of audit. This would help cover an increase in the Council's scale fee. There has not yet been an announcement on how much each Council will receive or when it will be paid. There has also been a consultation on a new Local Audit Framework, that includes the creation of the Audit Reporting and Governance Authority (ARGA) to oversee those firms carrying out audits in Local Government. It would not affect the auditor appointment process.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. The Council has three options in relation to appointing an auditor, as required by the regulations.

- Appoint via the PSAA, as a national collective scheme
- Appoint an auditor directly ourselves having gone through a procurement exercise
- Appoint as part of a group of Councils.

8.2 The only potential advantage of procuring directly ourselves would be in having a greater input in to how auditors are appointed. However, the appointment would be the decision of an auditor panel. This panel must have at least three members, a majority of whom are independent of the Council and must have an independent Chair. So the first disadvantage of this approach would be the time and cost involved in putting a panel in place. The second disadvantage is that the state of the audit market means that there could be no interest from audit firms in bidding for a contract for a single District Council.

8.3 A third disadvantage relates to determining fee variations. It is possible that the scope of audit may have settled down by 2023/24, but if it has not then requests for fee variations would be inevitable. There would need to be a way for dealing with such requests that maintains the independence of the External Auditor, does not jeopardise the working relationship between the Auditor and the Council, and is a fair process in line with contractual provisions.

8.4 Some of the above issues may be mitigated by appointing as part of a group of Councils. There are however no other Councils known to be seeking to take this approach.

- 8.5 In effect that leaves PSAA as the only viable option. In their prospectus the PSAA highlight a number of advantages that they offer. These include:
- A transparent and independent process
 - Able to offer larger contracts which are expected to be more attractive to audit firms
 - Management of any independence issues
 - Provide arbitration in relation to increased fee requests
 - Distribute any surpluses to opted in bodies
 - Engagement with consultations and proposals to audit requirements
 - Market engagement to encourage firms to invest in public sector audit
- 8.6 The PSAA have set a deadline for Councils to opt-in of 11 March 2022. Following this they will carry out the procurement of audit firms and then allocating these firms to each opted-in organisation. This will be completed by 31 December 2022, in advance of the 2023/24 accounting year.
- 8.7 If the Council decided to appoint an auditor independently then it would have until 31 December to complete the procurement and selection process.
- 8.8 As well as the main audit of our financial statements, our auditors also currently undertake certification work. This certification work covers grants and claims, with the main one being the housing benefit subsidy claim. The PSAA do not have any power to appoint auditors for this purpose. The grant paying body will set the requirements that need to be met, and the Council will need to appoint an auditor to comply with these requirements. This could be the same auditor used for the financial statements, but would be subject to a separate agreement between the Council and that audit firm. The Council could also appoint a different auditor, and this would not be subject to the auditor panel requirements required for the financial statement audit. To date, the Council has appointed Ernst and Young to undertake the work using a procurement waiver. This reflects the significant benefits of an auditor that already understands our systems and processes carrying out the work.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Council Constitution Terms of Reference states the following at 10.1.5 (q): “To appoint (when this requirement arises) the Council’s external Local Auditor, having consulted and taken into account the advice of the Council’s Auditor Panel.”
- 9.2. The Local Audit and Accountability Act (“the Act”) requires that local authorities (as relevant authorities under the act) must have their accounts audited and that this is carried out by an auditor that is appointed in accordance with the Act.
- 9.3. Part 3 of the act sets out the process for appointing an auditor, including the timescales and the role of the audit panel. It also determines that a failure to appoint an auditor will be referred to the Secretary of State, who would make an appointment on behalf of that authority.
- 9.4. Section 17 of the Act allows for the Secretary of State to determine an appointing person. This person can appoint auditors on behalf of relevant authorities. Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) have been determined to be an appointing person under the act.

- 9.5. Regulation 19 of the Act determines that an authority will need to make the decision to opt in to using an appointing person at full council.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The fees paid by the Council in the final year before the PSAA appointment arrangements commenced (i.e. for the 2017/18 accounts) was £44k. The Council's current base fee (known as a scale fee) is just under £41k. As detailed in paragraph 7.6 the Council should expect to pay more than this scale fee for 2021/22 and 2022/23, and should expect a higher scale fee to apply under the new contract. As detailed in paragraph 7.7 the Council should expect to receive additional government funding to cover some (or possibly all) of this increase.
- 10.2. As detailed in section 8 and section 11, the fee that the Council will end up paying under the PSAA arrangements is unknown. It is however considered likely that the fee under this arrangement would be lower than the fee from an individual procurement.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The proposal to use the PSAA appointment arrangements is considered to be the lowest risk options as it provides mitigation against the following risks:
- The risk of not being able to appoint an auditor is fully taken on by PSAA.
 - The price risk is shared amongst all Councils through the setting of scale fees.
 - The issues of managing fee variations and independence is managed by PSAA.

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 equalities implications arising from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. As the recommendations in the report relate to a contract that could be below £50,000 the "go local" policy has been considered but has not been applied. This could only be achieved through an individual procurement and this route has been rejected for the reasons set out in section 8. Also, the Local Audit and Accountability Act sets out the requirements to be met to be able to act as a Local Auditor and these are unlikely to be met by local providers.
- 13.2. The recommended process is to use the PSAA appointment process. In their procurement strategy (see background papers), PSAA detail that they will consider social value as part of their auditor procurement. 5% of the contract score will be awarded based on social value. Bidders will be asked how "they will deliver from the contract, which could include the creation of audit apprenticeships and meaningful training opportunities. Bidders will also be asked to describe how their delivery of social value will be measured and evidenced".

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The recommended approach minimises the impact on Officers in relation to the auditor appointment process.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 *None*

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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- 17.4 Reuben Ayavoo Policy and Communities Manager:
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- 17.5 Isabelle Alajooz, Legal Commercial Team Manager
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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 *PSAA Prospectus: The national scheme for local auditor appointments*
<https://www.psaa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Prospectus-2023-and-beyond-FINAL.pdf>
- 18.2 PSAA Audit services procurement strategy 2022 <https://www.psaa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Procurement-Strategy-2022-FINAL.pdf>

Council 20 January 2022

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2022/2023

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR - CUSTOMERS

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE & IT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE & EFFICIENT COUNCIL

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To approve the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for North Hertfordshire for 2022/2023

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That Council note the CTRS position relating to this and previous financial years.
- 2.2. That Council note that a full review of the CTRS had commenced and has been postponed due to the consequences on the scheme of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.3 That Council agree that the funding allocated for distribution to Parish, Town & Community Councils in relation to CTRS in 2022/2023 is unchanged from 2021/2022.
- 2.4 That no changes to the CTRS be made for 2022/2023.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To update Council on how the Scheme is working and to note that the full review planned to take place was postponed due to the impact of the COVID-9 pandemic and this remains the case. However, work is planned to start in January 2022.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The purpose of this report is to consider whether the Scheme as it stands meets the needs of providing support where required and is affordable. Other options can be considered as part of this process.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 For reasons which will be explained in the report, no changes are recommended to the Scheme for 2022/2023. Any changes would be the subject of consultation with Hertfordshire County Council, the Police & Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, and the public. As no changes are being recommended, this consultation was carried out with a light touch approach by simply asking for comments if any consultee does not agree. No comments on the proposal were received from Hertfordshire County Council, the Police & Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire, or the public.

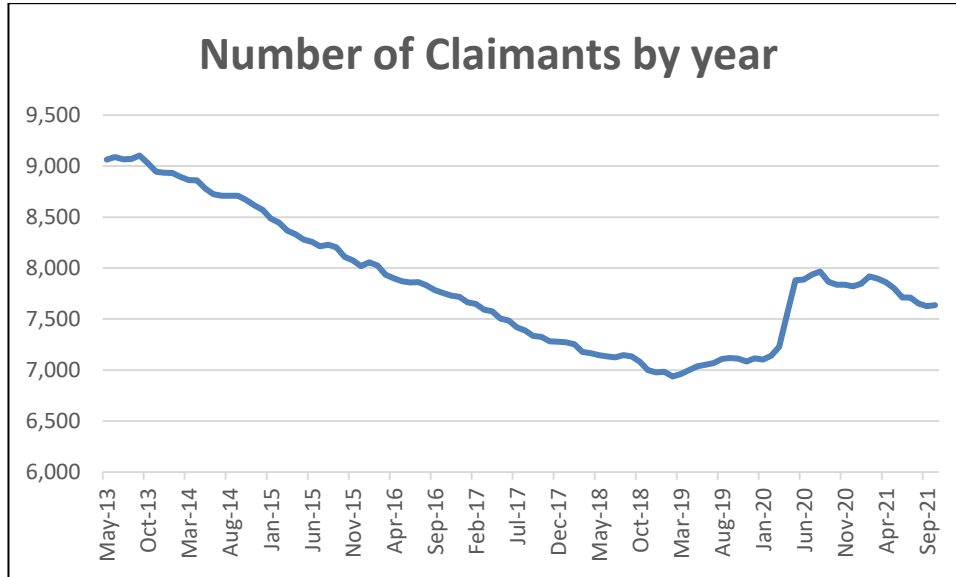
6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

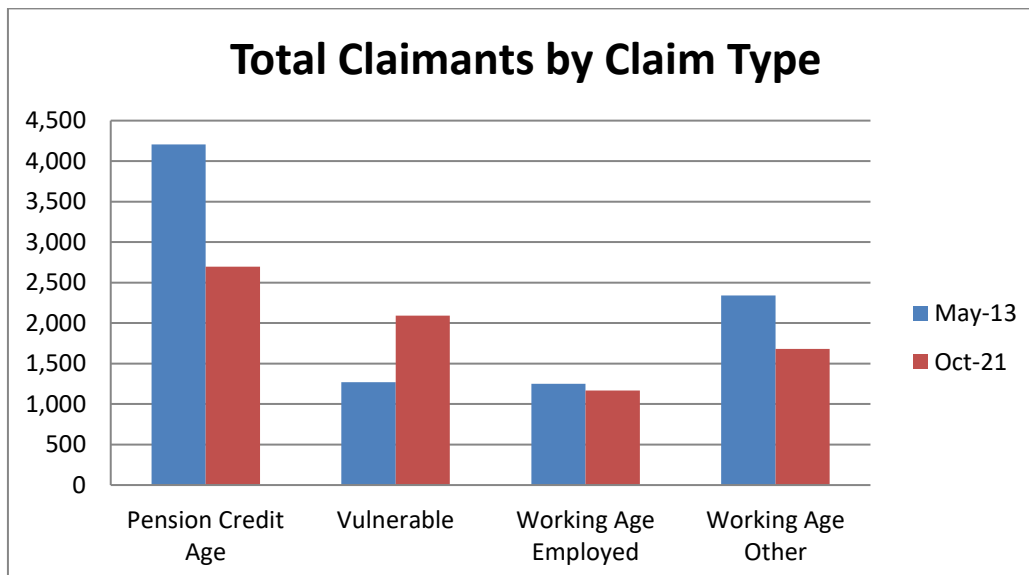
- 7.1 Council Tax Benefit was abolished on 1 April 2013 and was replaced by locally defined Council Tax Reduction Schemes. 2022/2023 is the tenth year of the Scheme, which is now fully embedded.
- 7.2 The Council's Scheme is based on the old Council Tax Benefit Scheme and is therefore means-tested with a standard percentage reduction being made to the final award. This reduction was 33.13% for the first two years of the Scheme and has been reduced to 25% for the subsequent years.
- 7.3 The Scheme has been generally accepted within North Hertfordshire. The Council has received very little feedback on the Scheme and collection rates have been well maintained considering the recent period of austerity and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and this remains the case.
- 7.4 The Scheme continues to cost less than originally anticipated due in the main to the reduction in the number of claimants. This has been a steady year-on-year reduction until the early part of 2018/2019, when the claimant numbers plateaued out and then fell slightly. The numbers rose steadily during 2019/2020 with a sharp rise in March 2020 followed by a significant increase in claims in 2020/2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The steady reduction in numbers meant that the Scheme costs did not escalate even though Council Tax levels increased. With claimant numbers now increasing significantly, and the tendency for all Major Preceptors to apply the maximum increase in Council Tax without triggering a local referendum, the value of awards is increasing. There could still be some significant increases following the end of the furlough scheme, although this is not apparent as yet. Further, maximum expected increases in Council Tax for 2022/2023, eliminates any scope available to make the Scheme more generous.
- 7.5 Chart 1 below shows how claimant numbers had been steadily reduced since the Scheme was introduced.

Chart 1



7.6 Chart 2 below shows the difference in number of claimants by claimant type from May 2013 (the earliest data we have) to October 2021. There has been a significant reduction in the number of Pension Credit Age claimants with 1,508 less or 35.9%. The number of Working Age claimants not working is 660 less or 28.2% and this gap has reduced in the last year as expected because of the pandemic. The number of Working Age claimants in work has remained fairly constant with 82 less or 6.6%, however the number of Vulnerable claimants, i.e. those in receipt of a Disability Premium has increased significantly with 821 more or 64.6%.

Chart 2



8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Changes to Housing Benefit and should these be reflected in the CTRS?

- 8.1 In previous years, Cabinet has considered and recommended on to Council whether any changes to the Housing Benefit Regulations should be reflected within the Council's CTRS Scheme
- 8.2 Where it has been recommended to make any changes to the Scheme, these must be the subject of public consultation before a final recommendation is made to the Council for adoption or not into the Scheme.
- 8.3 There have been no changes to the Housing Benefit Regulations, which require adoption within the Council's CTRS for 2022/2023.

Other Considerations

- 8.4 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government announced a Council Tax Hardship Scheme which provided up to an additional £150 for every working age CTRS claimant during 2020/2021. There is some residual funding of £230,800 remaining which will be distributed as an additional amount of up to £100 to every eligible working age CTRS claimant by 31 March 2022.
- 8.5 The Council Tax Hardship Scheme is for one year only and is funded from a Section 31 Grant payable by the Government and does not form part of the Council's CTRS.
- 8.6 At its meeting on 17 December 2019, Cabinet resolved *"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 2020 for implementation in 2021/2022"*.
- 8.7 Work commenced on this review in the autumn of 2019 and good progress was being made, however work was halted when the Covid-19 pandemic started.
- 8.8 The intention of the review is to make the Scheme as simple as possible and to retain its fairness and financial viability.
- 8.9 One of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it has made financial modelling of any changes to the Scheme impossible because the present very high number of claimants and high cost of the Scheme has distorted the data beyond reasonable use under "normal" circumstances.
- 8.10 It has therefore been agreed with the Executive and Deputy Executive Members for Finance & IT that the review should be delayed until more normal circumstances return and work on modelling a new scheme is therefore expected to start in early 2022.

Amount to be distributed to Parish, Town & Community Councils

- 8.11 When CTRS was introduced in 2013, the Government provided funding to each Billing Authority to compensate for the reduction in their Tax Bases as CTRS was to be treated as a Discount and was no longer reimbursed on a pound for pound basis through subsidy arrangements. Each Billing Authority was also given a sum of money to distribute amongst its Parish, Town & Community Councils to compensate for their reduction in the Tax Base. For the first year of the CTRS (2013/2014) this amount was £90,850.
- 8.12 This funding is no longer separately identifiable within the Council's financial settlement from the Government and the principle that has been adopted each year is that the

amount of money distributed by the Council will reduce in line with its own reduction in Government support.

- 8.13 By 2017/2018, this amount had reduced to £38,885 and it has remained at that level since then, as the Council no longer receives any Revenue Support Grant (RSG). It had been expected that the next reduction would take place when negative RSG was imposed on the Council. However, this has not happened yet and is not expected to happen until at least 2023/2024.
- 8.14 Whilst the decision on how much funding to provide to Parish, Town and Community Councils is not related to the CTRS scheme, and is essentially a budget decision, the Parish, Town and Community Councils do reflect how much CTRS money that they are getting in calculating their precept. It is therefore beneficial for it to be determined earlier than the Council meeting in February. Cabinet were therefore asked to recommend to Council that the funding allocated for CTRS related payments to Parish, Town and Community Councils remain at the same level for 2022/2023 and will be reviewed again as part of the 2023/2024 Medium Term Financial Strategy/ Budget process. This reflects that the Council will not see a reduction in RSG related funding from Government.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

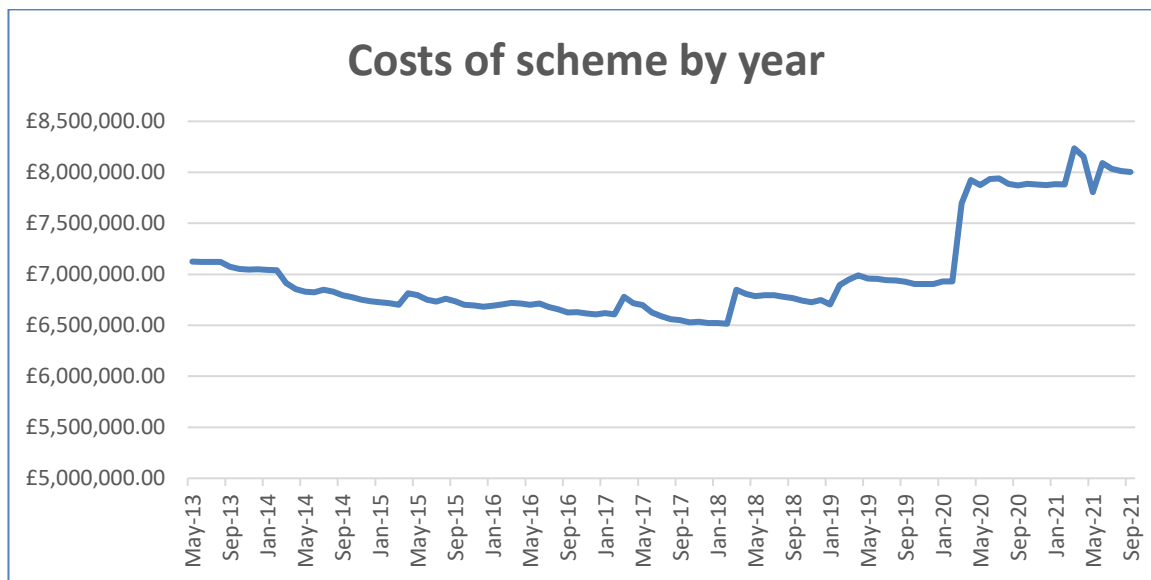
- 9.1 The Council is required to maintain and annually review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with Section 13A and Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012). Section 5(2) of Schedule 4 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012, which inserts Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to set its Council Tax Reduction Scheme by 31 January preceding the start of the financial year in which it is to apply. This has been further amended by Regulation 2 of The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2017 to 11 March.
- 9.2 Full Council's terms of reference include at 4.4.1 (z) "approving the Council Tax Reduction Scheme". Cabinet's terms of reference include at 5.6.44 recommending to Full Council "The Council Tax Reduction Scheme". Cabinet made this recommendation to Council at its meeting of 21 December 2021.
- 9.3 Section 3(1) of Schedule 4 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012, which inserts Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to consult on any changes to its scheme as follows:
- Consult any Major Precepting Authority which has power to issue a precept to it
 - Publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit
 - Consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme
- 9.4 For the original scheme implemented for 2013/2014, it was necessary to carry out comprehensive consultation to ensure that the Council complied with the legal requirement to consult and did not leave itself open to challenge. Very minor changes were made to the Scheme in year two and a restricted consultation exercise was carried out inviting members of the public to comment on the Council's web site. Only minor changes have been made in subsequent years, with the resulting restricted consultation. As no changes are being recommended for 2022/2023, consultation has taken the form outlined at 5.1 above

- 9.5 Council should note that changes to the Scheme cannot be made later in the financial year due to the need to consult before any changes can be implemented.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 For the first six years of this Scheme, the costs reduced steadily despite increases in Council Tax levels. This was due to the gradual reduction in claimant numbers.
- 10.2 The costs of the Scheme started to increase during the fourth quarter of 2018/2019 and remained fairly constant however, following the pandemic there has been a significant increase in spend, which should start to decrease as the economy starts to recover.
- 10.3 Chart 3 shows the costs of the Scheme in terms of Council Tax Support awarded year-on-year.

Chart 3



- 10.4 The cost of the scheme at the end of October 2021 is just over £8million compared with just under £7.9million at this time last year, and just over £6.9million in early 2020 (pre Covid-19).
- 10.5 Although the costs of the Scheme can be monitored through their monetary value, the Scheme is applied by the award of a Council Tax Discount, which means that there is a subsequent reduction in the Council Tax Base. The higher the value of CTRS awards, there is a subsequent reduction in the Council Tax Base. This changed in 2013 with the introduction of CTRS as the previous Council Tax Benefit Scheme was funded directly by DWP through the Council Tax Benefit Subsidy Scheme, which reimbursed Councils on a pound for pound basis for the amount of Council Tax Benefit it awarded.
- 10.6 Any reduction in the Council Tax Base inhibits the precepting authorities from raising revenue through Council Tax.
- 10.7 The current estimate is that the Council Tax Base for 2022/2023 has increased by about 1.35% this follows a reduction in the 2021/2022 Council Tax Base of 1.17%.

- 10.8 Claimant numbers are still increasing at this present time and a crucial time is just ahead as the furlough scheme unwinds with the potential of further job losses in the economy. This will continue to have a detrimental effect on the Council Tax Base if claimant numbers increase.
- 10.9 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) assumes that the Council Tax Base (in terms of number of band D equivalent properties) in 2022/2023 will be in line with 2021/2022. That is on the assumption that any further decline in the base number due to increased CTRS eligibility will be offset by property growth. For 2023/2024 onwards an annual growth of 0.5% is assumed.). The previous assumption had been that there would be a net 1% growth and therefore this revised assumption affects the future funding of the Council.
- 10.10 The impact of increasing costs of CTRS and therefore a potential deficit on the Collection Fund is split between North Herts District Council, Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner in proportion to their rates of Council Tax. Therefore, the impact of a £1M cost would roughly be split as follows: NHDC £127k, HCC £766k, PCC £107k. As this is administered through the Collection Fund any shortfall in 2022/2023 won't have an impact until 2023/2024.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The only way to mitigate the risk of increasing numbers of CTRS claimants is to make the Scheme less generous. This in turn will mean increases in the amount of Council Tax to be collected, which may prove counter-productive and move the problem into increased bad debts.
- 11.2 It is still difficult to know when the economy can expect to see a reasonable recovery. There have been some signs of that starting to happen but has been countered by the further waves of COVID-19 and the consequences of the furlough scheme coming to an end.
- 11.3 On balance and taking into consideration that any decision to reduce the level of awards will disadvantage the most vulnerable of our customers, make collection of Council Tax more difficult and it is unknown what the situation will be in April 2022, it is not considered that this is an approach that the Council should take at this time.

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 By conducting extensive consultation when the scheme was first implemented, the Council sought to collect information from those who may be potentially affected by these proposals. The public consultation showed broad support for the scheme. By substantially retaining the same scheme since 2013/2014, the Council continues to meet its obligations under the Equality Act. The proposed review will eventually identify any adverse impacts and an equality impact analysis may be required to capture these.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no Human Resources implications in this report.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 None

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1. None

**COUNCIL
20 JANUARY 2022**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Allowances - Non-Executive function.
(Democratic Services: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT)

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COUNCIL/BUILD
THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

2022-2027 PEOPLE FIRST; SUSTAINABILITY AND A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To agree the Member's Allowances Scheme 2022/2023 having taken into account the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel ('IRP').

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council:

- 2.1. Considers the report and recommendations of the IRP, as attached as Appendix A of the submitted report.
- 2.2. Agrees the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2022/2023 as set out in Appendix B¹ of the submitted report (based on the pay settlement being agreed at 1.75% as per 4.10 of Appendix A) or based on the pay award settlement for a specific Grade.
- 2.3. Agrees the increase to the Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons allowances as detailed in 4.8 of Appendix A and 8.9 of this report (based on the pay settlement being agreed at 1.75%) or based on the pay award settlement for a specific Grade.
- 2.4. Agrees the allowance to the Independent Person on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee as detailed in Appendix A and 8.12 of this report and should this figure not attract any suitable candidates that the Service Director in consultation with the Executive Member of Finance and IT be authorised to increase this to a maximum of £1500 per annum.

¹ Amended as per the tracked changes.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure that the Council meets its statutory requirements of an annual review and adoption of the scheme.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. None, as the Council is required to undertake an annual review prior to the beginning of the financial year and approve a Scheme of basic and other prescribed allowances for Members. In making or amending a Scheme the Council shall have regard to the recommendations made by the Panel. The Council can amend the Scheme as per the IRP recommendations either partly or wholly or to retain the current Scheme.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Panel invited the Leader of the Council and Group Leaders to respond to a series of questions. The questions and a summary of the responses made are detailed as an Annex to this report.
- 5.2. The Group Leaders were invited to discuss the responses further with the IRP at a meeting on 19 October 2021.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The Council is required under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) to agree on an annual basis a Scheme of Allowances payable to Members' for the following financial year. Under the Regulations, when making or amending a Scheme, the Council 'shall have regard to the recommendations' of an IRP (Regulation 19). The Regulations state that before the beginning of each year the authority shall make a Scheme for the allowances for that year. The Members Allowance Scheme is comprehensive and includes Basic Allowances ('BA'), Special Responsibility Allowances ('SRA') (for posts which carry specific responsibilities) and other allowances and expenses that may be claimed.
- 7.2. A Scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to an indexation which can be used for up to four years before another review of allowances is required.
- 7.3. The Scheme was last approved by Council in January 2021. The current IRP was appointed as notified by delegated decision on 5 February 2019. The following people formed the IRP:

Dr Hazel Bentall
Christopher Clark
Stephen Vinall

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

IRP considerations:

- 8.1 As per paragraph 4.2 of their report, the IRP acknowledged that Members were very aware of the costs of the Scheme and that a preference to linking any inflationary rises to the officers pay award had been made. The IRP considered that any increase in allowances for Members should not exceed that negotiated by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services for Council Officers' pay or the annual rate of CPIH for the 12 months as measured by the rate published in October (whichever is the lowest). [As the headline CPI rate was actually CPIH (including owner occupiers housing costs), this was the preferred rate].
- 8.2 The LGA settlement is not normally available for the forthcoming year in time for the Council's budget setting, so the current year's settlement is used for calculating the forthcoming year. However, the National Employers group and the National Joint Council (representing Unison, Unite and GMB unions) have not been able to agree a pay settlement to date for 2021/22. The pay offer which has been made would provide an increase of 2.75% for Grade 1 staff, 1.75% for Grades 2 -12 and 1.5% for Chief Officers and Chief Executives (grades 14-16).
- 8.3 The Panel noted that when their recommendations for the financial year 2021/2022 were considered Council decided to retain the previous (2020/2021) allowance scheme (subject to the inclusion of the allowance for the Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons of the Standards Committee) rather than accept the IRP's recommendations for a number of increased allowances. These increases were intended to compensate for recent inflation in the costs of living. The IRP considered that it is preferable for small annual incremental increases rather than irregular large increases.
- 8.4 The IRP Panel noted the Council's preference to pay multiple SRAs, accepted that this should continue for 2021/2022 but considered it should be reviewed in detail for the 2022 /2023 financial year. The Panel have also noted the Shared Internal Audit Service report '*North Herts District Council Members' Allowances Benchmarking 2019/2020*' giving local comparators and confirming that council comparators do not pay more than one SRA. The IRP recommends that in addition to the Basic Allowance Councillors are paid only one Special Responsibility Allowance, as per 3.4 of the Panel's report.
- 8.3 That SRAs should continue to be expressed as a multiplier of the BA for clarity and ease of calculation.
- 8.4 A basic allowance of £5,100 should be increased by the lower of either:
- the annual rate of CPIH for the 12 months as measured by the rate published in October 2020 to 30 September 2021 (3.8%); or
 - the NJC for Local Government Services for Council Officers' pay for 2021/2022

and should be paid to each Councillor (x49) for the financial year 2022/2023.

On the basis that the pay settlement is agreed at 1.75% would mean that the BA would therefore equate to £5,189 (rounded to nearest pound). Or should Members opt to increase BA in line with Chief Officers and Chief Executives pay award this would equate to £5,176 (rounded to nearest pound).

- 8.5 In considering the SRA the IRP considered the changes to the recommendations made by the IRP during the last review. Any justifications offered by the IRP are included in section 4 of their report.

- 8.6 For each year an SRA in the amounts indicated below shall be paid to those Councillors who hold the following special responsibilities (the amount provided are based if the pay settlement is agreed at 1.75%):

Role	BA multiplier	Amount (£) (rounded to nearest pound)
Leader of the Council	BA x 2.8	14,530
Deputy Leader of the Council	BA x 0.5	2,595
Cabinet Executive Members (x7)	BA x 1.2	6,227
Chair - Area Committees (x 5)	BA x 0.2	1,038
Chair - Finance, Audit and Risk Committee	BA x 0.7	3,632
Chair - Overview and Scrutiny Committee	BA x 0.7	3,632
Chair - Planning Control Committee	BA x 1.2	6,227
Chair - Licensing and Appeals Committee	BA x 0.3	1,557
Leader of each Opposition Group	BA x 0.5	2,595* (*Subject to a minimum of 3 members)

- 8.7 **Childcare and Dependent Carers' Allowance:** This was previously increased in line with the London Weighted Real Living Wage to reflect the actual cost of childcare, to encourage diversity in the composition of the Council and to be more reflective of the actual costs for using a suitably qualified and competent carer.

It is recommended that this continues to be increased in line with the London Weighted Real Living Wage 2020/2021 to £11.05.

All other aspects in relation to this part of the Scheme remain unchanged.

- 8.8 **Chair and Vice Chair Allowances:** The allowances for the Chair and Vice Chair of Council are covered by Sections 3(5) and 5(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are not a matter which the IRP are obliged to make recommendations on. Historically, the Chair and Vice Chair of Council have received an allowance which is expected to recompense for the additional costs associated with these roles. It is not clear how the current allowance of £5,500 for the Chair and £1,060 for the Vice Chair was agreed. However, for transparency the allowances were incorporated into the 2020/21 Scheme as a recommendation by the IRP.

The IRP Panel recommends no change to these Allowances having not been made aware of any reason why these allowances should be increased, noting the reduced demand for attendance at engagements due to the pandemic during the last civic year as well as the Shared Internal Audit Service Report on '*North Herts District Council Members' Allowances Benchmarking 2019/2020*' which included an audit of the Chairs Allowances.

- 8.9 **Independent Person (IP) and Reserve Independent Person:** The allowance of the Independent Person (IP) and the Reserve Independent Persons of the Standards Committee was not within the remit of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. However, the allowance had not been assessed since 2012 and the role had also expanded to include potentially sitting on a Panel to consider complaints against statutory officers. Therefore, last year the IRP agreed to consider this allowance, where they met with the IP and considered both written and verbal

representations regarding the role and the responsibilities, as well as noting that the payment had not been changed since 2012. The IRP were also provided with comparative data of what neighbouring authorities paid to the IP and the Reserve IP.

The IRP recommends that the allowance is increased in line with the same inflation as Basic Allowance. On the basis that the pay settlement is agreed at 1.75% would mean (rounded to the nearest pound):

Independent Person	£2544
Reserve Independent Person	£611 per Reserve IP

[The current allowance was £2500 and £600 respectively.]

- 8.10 **Frequency of Reviews and future considerations:** The IRP were informed that the Council would prefer a Scheme that made provision for an annual adjustment by reference to an index. However, the IRP considered that an annual review was required given the current economic climate, on-going pandemic and potential changes Council structure, operating procedures and meeting arrangements. Therefore, the IRP recommendations only apply to the 2022/2023 financial year.
- 8.11 **Travel and Subsistence Allowances:** No changes were proposed to these allowances and the IRP agreed that these should be linked directly to the payment of staff claims (at the rate set and from time to time amended by the HMRC).
- 8.12 Other considerations:

Independent Person on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee – The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) set the standards that local authorities should follow in relation to finance, accountancy, and related matters. CIPFA have issued guidance that it is best practice to have an independent (non-political) person on the audit committee. Council at its meeting on 11 November 2021 approved the appointment of this role as of the 2022/2023 civic year. The IRP were requested to consider the appropriate allowance for this role, which is included within 4.6 of the Panel's report.

In considering the function of the role, number of meetings per year and allowance by other councils, the IRP recommend an allowance of £1,000pa plus travel expenses. It was noted that this was a new role and not all councils have yet recruited/appointed the Independent Person. Therefore should this figure not attract any suitable candidates the IRP suggest that the Service Director in consultation with the Executive Member of Finance and IT be authorised to increase this to a maximum of £1500 per annum.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003/1021 (as amended) make provisions regarding the setting of Members Allowances.
- 9.2. Regulation 10(1)-(2) provides that before the beginning of each year, an authority shall make the Scheme required for payment of basic and other allowances.
- 9.3. Regulation 19 requires that before an authority makes or amends a scheme it must have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by the IRP.
- 9.4. The function of making any Scheme authorised or required by regulations under section 18 (Schemes for basic, attendance and special responsibility allowances for local

authority members) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, or of amending, revoking or replacing any such Scheme, is a Full Council responsibility, by virtue of The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000/2853. This is therefore detailed as a function and reserved to Full Council under section 4.4.1(i) of the Council's Constitution '*considering recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel and adopting an allowances scheme or assessing, revoking or replacing the whole or part of any such scheme*'.

- 9.5. The adopted Scheme must be published in at least one or more newspapers circulating in the District area under Regulation 16.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Should the proposed Members' Allowances Scheme be approved, based on the pay settlement being agreed at 1.75%, and including £1,000 for the Independent Person on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, the financial implications would be as follows:

	Current Allowances 2021/22			Proposed Allowances 2022/23			
	No of roles	Annual Allowance	Total Allowance	No of roles	Annual Allowance	Total Allowances	Increase
Members Allowance		£	£				
Basic Allowance	49	5,100	249,900	49	5,189	254,261	4,361
Special Responsibility Allowances							
Leader	1	14,280	14,280	1	14,530	14,530	250
Deputy Leader	1	2,550	2,550	1	2,595	2,595	45
Cabinet Exec Members	7	6,120	42,840	7	6,227	43,589	749
Chair - Area Committees	5	1,020	5,100	5	1,038	5,190	90
Chair - Finance, Audit & Risk Committee	1	3,570	3,570	1	3,632	3,632	62
Chair - Overview & Scrutiny Committee	1	3,570	3,570	1	3,632	3,632	62
Chair - Planning & Control Committee	1	6,120	6,120	1	6,227	6,227	107
Chair - Licensing & Appeals Committee	1	1,530	1,530	1	1,557	1,557	27
Leader of the largest opposition group*	1	2,550	2,550	1	2,595	2,595	45
Total			332,010			337,808	5,798
Independents							
IP	1	2,500	2,500	1	2,544	2,544	44
Reserve IP	2	600	1,200	2	611	1,221	21
Finance Audit and Risk Committee IP - NEW	0	0	0	1	1,000	1,000	1,000
Total			3,700			4,765	1,065
TOTAL			335,710			342,573	6,863
Budget			335,800				6,800

*Assumes one opposition group but could be more in the future (subject to a minimum of 3 Members in each group). Budget would be adjusted accordingly.

Excludes provision for Childcare and Dependent Carers' Allowances for which there is a separate budget of £500.

- 10.2 As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 to enable the conduct of remote meetings there had been a reduced demand for the childcare and dependent carers' allowance and travel and subsistence allowance. However, the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 ceased on 7 May 2021 and therefore decisions cannot be made virtually meaning that the demand for childcare and dependent carers' allowance and travel and subsistence allowance has increased.
- 10.3 The financial implication to the budget regarding this allowance is difficult to calculate as there are variables that will affect this i.e. the number of new Members elected in May who will need to make use of the allowance, number of meetings scheduled and personal circumstances as to whether it is required, also whether there will be any further changes to legislation to enable meetings via a hybrid model.
- 10.5 There is a requirement to advertise the Scheme in one or more local papers. The cost to advertise the Scheme following the last review in both the Royston Crow and The Comet was £841.54.
- 10.6 The amounts in the Members' Allowances Scheme are currently cumulative – it is possible for Members to be entitled to more than one SRA in addition to the BA.
- 10.7 As referenced in 8.2 of this report the Members Allowance Scheme inflation is based on either:
- the annual rate of CPIH for the 12 months as measured by the rate published in October 2020 to 30 September 2021 (3.8%); or
 - the NJC for Local Government Services for Council Officers' pay for 2021/2022.

The LGA pay settlement for 2021/2022 has not yet been agreed. Once it is and if members approve an increase in allowances, the allowances will be backdated.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. None contained within this report.

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. The inclusion of the dependent carers and childcare allowance continues to aid Councillors' to fulfil their responsibilities and provide recompense to them as noted at 8.7. Although the demand for this allowance reduced during the pandemic, there may be greater demand in the future to avoid disadvantaging those with commitments.

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.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 Members allowances are paid by the payroll provider Liberata via the iTrent system and any changes need to be notified to the provider to ensure the correct rates are paid. As of 1 April 2020 the payroll provider changed and Members are now required to submit expenses via the self-service online portal. The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Team provide advice where needed and the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager reviews and approves the Councillors' allowance claims.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1. Appendix A Report and Recommendations by the IRP on the Members' Allowances Scheme 2022/2023.
- 16.2. Appendix B Proposed Members' Allowances Scheme 2021/2022 with tracked changes (2022/2023 with proposed Scheme highlighted, should the pay settlement be agreed at 1.75%).

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2003/1021/introduction/made>
- 17.2 Councillors' Allowance Council webpage [Councillors' allowances | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](http://north-herts.gov.uk)
- 17.3 Delegated Decision – Appointment of IRP – 5 February 2019 [Delegated Decisions in 2019 | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](http://north-herts.gov.uk)

- 17.4 Council – 21 January 2021 [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 21st January, 2021, 7.30 pm - North Hertfordshire District Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](http://north-herts.gov.uk)
- 17.5 Council – 11 November 2021 [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 11th November, 2021, 7.30 pm - North Hertfordshire District Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](http://north-herts.gov.uk)

Questions emailed to Group Leaders on behalf of the IRP:

At the Council meeting in January 21, the Council resolved to increase the Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons allowances; and not to agree the Scheme of Allowances as recommended by the IRP, instead retaining the Members' Allowances Scheme 2020/21. Prior to us making recommendations regarding the 2022/23 Scheme, please can you explain any areas of the Scheme that you would like the IRP to focus on? For instance are there any aspects of the Members' Allowance Scheme that you think should be increased, decreased or amended in any way?

Indexation - At the last review the indexation suggested was that the basic allowance should be increased by the lower of either:

- the annual rate of CPIH for the 12 months as measured by the rate published in October; or
- the NJC Local Government Services increase for council officers' pay.

What do you think of this as a formula for indexation and what would you suggest?

If the Scheme provided for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such an index, the next review could be in four years, if no other amendments were required. What is your view on the frequency of reviews, particularly given that the Council is currently going through a boundary review and may resolve to change its electoral cycle.

Special Responsibility Allowance

The IRP notes that the Council has previously not accepted the IRP recommendation that Councillors are paid only one Special Responsibility Allowance. The Shared Internal Audit Service report 'North Herts District Council Members' Allowances Benchmarking 2019/2020' provided local comparators and confirmed that council comparators do not pay more than one SRA. The Council's preference is to pay multiple SRAs, and although it was accepted by the IRP last year that multiple SRA's continue to be paid, it did express that this should be reviewed in detail the following financial year. Therefore in the opinion of your group, what would you consider to be the rationale for the continuation of more than one SRA to be allowed?

Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Summary of responses to questions to Group Leaders by the IRP:

Role of Deputy Leader of the Council not properly recognised. The business of the Council needs both sides of the administration to agree and therefore adds workload to the Deputy Leader. While as a member of the Cabinet the Deputy also has a portfolio (allowance payable) that requires time and effort involved in that on its own.

Other Councils recognise the role of Deputy Leader more favourably, such as East Herts who allow £12,226, Welwyn & Hatfield £11,114 and Broxbourne £7,661. North Herts allow £2,550 for the Deputy which with a portfolio allowance of £6,120 = £8,670. It is then comparable but the two allowances should be made into one. Someone acting as a Deputy has to deputise, hold a portfolio and should be paid the joint amount.

A Deputy Leader in a joint administration tends to be the respective Group Leader and is expected to carry out the duties associated with that role and the time and effort that requires at present is a separate payment that is not taken due to a joint administration.

Deputy Executive Member - due to the nature of the joint administration deputise when the Executive Member is away or ill and need to commit time and effort, so should be recognised.

Limiting special allowances to only one additional responsibility per member could enable funding to be more evenly spread across all councillors and so increase the basic allowance without increasing the cost of the budget.

Finance is a barrier to younger people becoming councillors and can prevent them taking on roles with additional responsibility. It also negatively impacts parents and women. Greater recognition required of the employment sacrifices people make (loss of income, reduced pension contributions etc.) if local government is going to be representative of the communities we serve.

There is an argument that deputies within the current administration should receive a special allowance given the additional work some undertake. This could be funded by only one special responsibility allowance. It should not be financed by reducing the basic or existing special allowance bands for roles as doing so could result in financial hardship for some councillors.

Matching officer pay feels fairer.

Reviews may be fixed at four yearly, with the option for early review if felt necessary. It is not prudent to coincide these with all out elections given the risk of broad change across the council, so suggest they run after the first full year of each council period in that circumstance which allows new members to upskill, and also live as a councillor and understand their needs.

The payment of more than one SRA recognises the additional work done by members, but limiting to one SRA is more cost effective and could result in fairer remuneration to all across the board so is a preferable option.

North Herts Council remains one of the lowest remunerated councils in the country. Being leader of this council is very much a full time job and it should not be the preserve of the already comfortably off or retired. Worry that failure to compensate members for their time and sacrifice will soon result in a loss of talent. We already face a lack of diversity. Money should not ever be the reason someone chooses to be a councillor, but if we are to create a professional council which has a clear vision, values, and can deliver its mission we must find more ways to empower and support those people within our communities entering into local government.

Overall the scheme recognises that councillors who take on additional responsibilities like leader / cabinet / committee chairs etc are given additional allowances and that these are comparable to other authorities.

Allowances should be indexed linked with senior officers pay (if officers get a pay freeze then councillors do too) and reviewed annually as committees can change or number in the cabinet could change.

Continue to pay multiple SRAs. It is up to the group leaders to appoint members to the roles and if a member agrees to take on extra only fair they receive the SRA that goes with that responsibility.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BY THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL (IRP)

ON THE

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2022 / 2023

Dr Hazel Bentall
Christopher Clark
Stephen Vinall

November 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The report presents the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to Council for its consideration and approval.
- 1.2 The current Panel was appointed under the delegated authority of the Service Director, Legal and Community as reported as a delegated decision on 5 February 2019. This is the third review of Members' Allowances that the Panel has undertaken for the Authority.
- 1.3 The following people form the IRP:

Dr Hazel Bentall
Christopher Clark
Stephen Vinall

- 1.4 Support was provided to the Panel by the Democratic Services Manager, PA to the Service Director – Legal and Community and Democratic Services Apprentice.
- 1.5 The Panel convened virtually on 29th September 2021, and 19th October 2021 plus communicated independently outside of the meetings.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1 The Panel must work within the legislative constraints of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 and associated Government Guidance on regulation for Local Authority Allowances.
- 2.2 These Regulations/Guidance require the IRP to make recommendations on:
- The amount of Basic Allowance payable to Councillors;
 - The responsibilities and duties that lead to payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) and the amounts of such allowances;
 - Backdating of allowances;
 - The amounts and duties for which travelling and subsistence allowances can be paid;
 - Allowances for Co-opted Members;
 - Whether the Scheme should include an allowance for the expenses of arranging care for children and dependents and, if so, the amount of allowance;
 - Whether annual adjustments should be made to allowance levels by means of an index and, if so, for how long such a measure should last, up to a maximum period of 4 years;
 - Whether the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) should be pensionable and which Members should be entitled to pensions (no longer applicable as Government announced that Councillors who are not existing members of the Local Government Pension Scheme on 1 April 2014 may not join the scheme after that date).

3. Review of Members' Allowances

- 3.1 Following their recruitment in 2019 the Panel were provided with a comprehensive information pack relating to the existing allowances scheme and general information on North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC). This information pack also contained comparative data for the Members' Allowances Schemes of other Councils of a similar size and nature to NHDC locally.

Additional information was provided for the 2021/2022 review.

For the 2022/ 2023 review the IRP were also asked to consider the allowance for the Appointment of an Independent Non-Voting Member to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (INV FARC).

- 3.2 The IRP invited Group Leaders/Deputy Group Leaders to meet to discuss the Members' Allowances Scheme at its meeting in October 2021. Prior to this Group Leaders/Deputy Group Leaders were sent a number of questions, and the IRP were provided with emails / notes from:

- Cllr Paul Clark
- Cllr Claire Strong
- Cllr Dennis-Harburg

At the meeting Cllr Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg and Cllr Claire Strong presented their views on the levels of Members allowances. Apologies were received from Cllr Paul Clark / Cllr Brown who were unable to attend. The IRP however considered that the email from Cllr Clark provided sufficient information.

Subsequent to the meeting the IRP were provided with additional information.

- 3.3 The IRP noted that the recommendations of the Panel for the financial year 2021 / 2022 were considered at the Council meeting held on the 21 January 2021 and that the Council decided to retain the previous (2020 / 2021) allowance scheme (subject to the inclusion of the allowance for the Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons of the Standards Committee) rather than accept the IRP's recommendations for a number of increased allowances. These increases were intended to compensate for recent inflation in the costs of living. The IRP noted that their report had been prepared during the Covid 19 pandemic and that the Council meeting was during lockdown.

The IRP considered that it is preferable for small annual incremental increases rather than irregular large increases.

- 3.4 The issue of multiple SRAs was considered in the 2019 IRP Review and subsequently debated and voted on at Full Council. The Council voted to continue to be able to pay multiple SRAs.

The IRP Panel noted the Council's preference to pay multiple SRAs and previously accepted that this should continue for 2021/2022 but considered it should be reviewed in detail for the 2022 / 2023 financial year.

The Panel noted the Shared Internal Audit Service report '*North Herts District Council Members' Allowances Benchmarking 2019/2020*' giving local comparators and confirming that council comparators do not pay more than one SRA.

The IRP noted that there are two councillors currently claiming more than one SRA.

The IRP considered the issue again, heard the views of Councillors and took into account the practice of other local authorities who predominantly only award single SRAs. The

IRP consider that paying a single SRA will act as a deterrent to individual Councillors taking on too much responsibility and help to ensure the workload is spread across Members. The IRP therefore recommend that NHDC only award a single SRA in addition to the basic allowance.

The IRP agreed that any increase in allowances should not exceed the Local Government Officer pay award or CPIH (The Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs - CPIH), whichever is the lower. It was decided that any increase should be based on current allowances and that there was no requirement to consider a further increase to take into account that allowances were not increased for 2021 / 2022.

It was also noted that Members could decide to forgo all or part of the increase/allowance.

4. IRP Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.1 The IRP has considered carefully a wide variety of relevant information, including last year's Panel report, contributions from Members and officers, and comparators with adjoining and similar councils.
- 4.2 It notes that North Hertfordshire District Council Members are very aware of the costs of the Scheme.
- 4.3 In principle, the IRP considers that any increase in allowances for Members should not exceed that agreed by the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services for council officers' pay. It was noted that for 2021/2022 the offer was set at 2.75% and that the pay award is still to be agreed.

The LGA settlement is not normally available for the current year in time for the Council's budget setting, so the previous year's settlement will be used for calculating the current year.

- 4.3 The Panel recommends that SRAs continue to be expressed as a multiplier of Basic Allowance (BA) for clarity and ease of calculation.
- 4.4 The IRP recommend that in addition to the Basic Allowance Councillors are paid only one Special Responsibility Allowance.
- 4.5 The Panel considered the appropriateness of the levels of Executive Member SRA and recommend they remain unchanged as detailed in the table below. For each year a Special Responsibility Allowance shall be paid to those Councillors who hold the following special responsibilities:

Role	BA multiplier
Leader of the Council	BA x 2.8
Deputy Leader of the Council	BA x 0.5
Cabinet Executive Members (x7)	BA x 1.2

Chair - Area Committees (x 5)	BA x 0.2
Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee	BA x 0.7
Chair – Overview and Scrutiny Committee	BA x 0.7
Chair - Planning Control Committee	BA x 1.2
Chair of Licensing and Appeals Committee	BA x 0.3
Leader of each Opposition Group (Subject to a minimum of 3 members)	BA x 0.5

- 4.6 Independent Non-Voting Member to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (INV FARC) is a new role that will involve a minimum of 6 meetings a year and will require understanding and review of financial information prior to the meetings. Ideally the person appointed will have an audit / accountancy / financial background.

The IRP considered information regarding other councils' proposed allowances for the INV FARC and the Hertfordshire County Council allowance of £1,000pa. It was also noted that not all councils have yet recruited / appointed INV FARC.

The IRP recommend an allowance of £1,000pa plus travel expenses. However should this figure not attract any suitable candidates the IRP suggest that the Service Director in consultation with the Executive Member of Finance and IT be authorised to increase this to a maximum of £1500 per annum.

- 4.7 **Childcare Allowance** – this was previously increased in line with the London Weighted Real Living Wage in order to reflect the actual cost of childcare, to encourage diversity in the composition of the Council and to be more reflective of the actual costs for using a suitably qualified and competent carer.

It is recommended that this is increased in line with the London Weighted Real Living Wage to £11.05.

https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage?qclid=EAlalQobChMIqPTgm8X08wIVAu3tCh0akwBFEEAYAiAAEgKTy_D_BwE

Childcare and dependent carers allowance is recoverable at the amount actually paid up to the limit specified.

- 4.8 **Independent Person and Reserve Independent Person**

The IRP recommend this is increased at the same rate as Members allowances.

- 4.9 **Frequency of Reviews**

In the current economic climate, on-going pandemic and potential changes Council structure, operating procedures and meeting arrangements, the IRP consider that an annual review is required and therefore the recommendations in this report only apply to the 2022/2023 financial year.

- 4.10 **Basic Allowance**

As of 21 March 2017, the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) became the principal inflation index and the most comprehensive measure of inflation as it includes owner occupiers' housing costs and Council Tax, which are excluded from the CPI. Therefore it is recommended that:

The basic allowance of £5,100 should be increased by the lower of either:

- the annual rate of CPIH for the 12 months from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021; or
- the LGA (Local Government Association) increase for council officers' pay (grades 2-12) for 2021/2022.

and should be paid to each Councillor (x49) for the financial year 2022/2023.

The CPIH rate for the twelve month period from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021 was 3.8% (data released on 17 November 2021). <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/october2021#main-points>

The LGA Council Officers' pay award for 2021/2022 has not yet been agreed. It is noted that the pay offer which has been made would provide an increase of 2.75% for Grade 1 staff, 1.75% for Grades 2 -12 and 1.5% for Chief Officers and Chief Executives (grades 14-16).

- 4.11 **Chair and Vice Chair Allowance** - For the 2022/2023 year the Panel recommends no change.

Having reviewed the allowance last year, where the number of engagements attended by the Chair and Vice Chair of Council during the previous civic year were considered, the Panel were not made aware of any reason why these allowances should be increased, particularly given that the number of engagements had decreased as a result of the pandemic Covid.

The Panel also notes that the '*North Herts District Council Members' Allowances Benchmarking 2019/2020*' included an audit of the Chairs Allowances.

- 4.12 **Travel and Subsistence Allowances**

The travel and subsistence allowance should be linked directly to the council officers scheme rates for the year 2022 /2023.

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2022/23

1. Definitions

In this scheme:

"Council" means North Hertfordshire District Council;

"Councillor" means a Member of the Council who is a Councillor;

"year" means the 12 months ended 31 March;

2. Commencement and Duration

This scheme shall have effect for the year commencing 1 April 2022 and for subsequent years, save that the Council may amend the scheme at any time subject to the provisions of paragraph 9 hereunder.

3. Basic Allowance

Subject to paragraph 9, a basic allowance of £5,189 shall be paid to each Councillor (x49) for each year.

4. Special Responsibility Allowance

For each year a special responsibility allowance in the amounts indicated below shall be paid to those Councillors who hold the following special responsibilities:-

Leader of the Council	£14,530
Deputy Leader of the Council	£2,595
Cabinet Executive Members (x7)	£6,227
Chair - Area Committees (x 5)	£1,038
Chair - Finance, Audit and Risk Committee	£3,632
Chair – Overview and Scrutiny Committee	£3,632
Chair - Planning Control Committee	£6,227
Chair of Licensing and Appeals Committee	£1,557
Leader of each Opposition Group	£2,595*

* Subject to a minimum of 3 Members.

Such allowances shall be subject to the requirements of Paragraph 9 hereunder.

5. Chair and Vice Chair of Council Allowance

Chair of Council	£5,500
Vice Chair of Council	£1,060

6. Travelling and Subsistence Allowances

Travelling and subsistence allowances are payable at the recommended HMRC approved amounts of 45 pence per mile for cars for the first 10,000 miles and 25 pence per mile thereafter, whilst undertaking duties as listed in (a) – (i), replacing the following National Joint Council recommended rates for local government staff.

<u>Cyclists</u>	20.0p
<u>Motorcycle</u>	24.0p

Car Sharing

An additional allowance of 5p (HMRC approved amount) per passenger per mile be paid when a Member takes other Members whilst carrying out approved duties and in the following circumstances

- (a) the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council when engaged on official Council business;
- (b) the Chair and Vice-Chair of any Committee or Sub-Committee for attending pre-agenda and briefing meetings and opening tenders;
- (c) Cabinet Portfolio Members for attending meetings with officers in connection with their official duties as Spokesperson;
- (d) attendance by Councillors at a meeting of the Council or any Committee or Sub Committee appointed thereby in accordance with the provisions of Section 102(1)(a) and (c) of the Local Government Act 1972 (including informal meetings of such bodies which have been arranged at the behest of the appropriate Chair and to which all Members therefore have been invited to attend), of which they are a Member, or has been specifically requested to attend by the Chair and such is recorded in the minutes of the meeting;
- (e) attendance by Councillors at a meeting of any Working Party or Panel to which they have been appointed by any of the bodies referred to in (d) above and comprising representatives of more than one political group;
- (f) attendance by Councillors at Seminars and other similar meetings arranged formally for the purpose of informing and/or training to which representatives of more than one political group have been invited;
- (g) attendance at meetings of external bodies to which the Councillor claiming is the Council's appointed representative;
- (h) attendance by Councillors at conferences, courses, seminars, etc;
- (i) attendance by Councillors at Town or Parish Council meetings within their ward to explain District Council business.

(No such allowance shall be payable in respect of attendance at any conference or meeting in relation to which the Councillor is entitled to a payment in the nature of an allowance under Section 175 of the Local Government Act 1972.

No such allowance shall be payable if such a payment would be contrary to a provision made by or under any enactment.)

Subsistence Allowances

The same as those used for the payment of staff claims for meals taken away from home, to be paid at the rate set and from time to time amended by the HMRC.

Amount that can be claimed per meal

Breakfast	5.00
Lunch	10.00
Tea	5.00
Evening meal	10.00

Subject to a maximum that is based on time away from home or usual place of work

5 hours	5.00
10 hours	10.00
15 hours/ per day	25.00

7. Renunciation

A Councillor may by notice in writing given to the Democratic Services Manager elect to forego any part of his/her entitlement to an allowance under this scheme.

8. Childcare and dependent Carers' Allowance

A care allowance will be paid to any Member who incurs expenditure on the care of young children and or dependent relatives in order to perform their duties as a Councillor, subject to:

- (a) the duty being one for which Travelling and Subsistence Allowance is payable under this Scheme of Members' Allowances; and
- (b) that each individual claim shall not exceed the actual sum paid or £11.05(London Weighted Real Living Wage) per hour, which ever is the lesser.
- (c) Consideration being given to an additional allowance for specialist care for a dependent, where this is known to be more expensive.

9. Part-Year Entitlements

If during the course of the year the Council amends the amounts payable in respect of basic or special responsibility allowance, then the entitlement to such allowance shall be adjusted pro-rata to the proportion of the year that such allowance is payable.

Where a Councillor (a) is not a Councillor for the whole of the year; or (b) during the course of the year takes up or relinquishes a position in respect of which a special responsibility allowance is payable, then the entitlement to basic or special responsibility allowance shall be adjusted pro-rata to the proportion of the year during which they were a Councillor or held such position.

10. Claims

A claim for travelling and/or subsistence allowance under this Scheme shall:

- a) be made via the iTrent self-service online portal within three months of the end of the month in which the meeting/activity in respect of which the entitlement to the allowances arises (or by 30 April if incurred between January and end of March);

APPENDIX B

- b) include a statement on the online claim form confirming the Councillor claiming the allowance that they are not entitled to receive remuneration in respect of the matter to which the claim relates otherwise than under the Scheme;
- c) be accompanied by receipts itemising VAT as appropriate.

Claims submitted later than three months after the relevant date, and/or one month after 31 March shall be paid only in such exceptional circumstances following approval by the Service Director: Resources in accordance with the Financial Regulations.

11. **Payments**

Subject to the provisions of paragraph 9 payments of basic and special responsibility allowances shall be made in monthly instalments.

Payments in respect of travelling and subsistence allowance shall be made as soon as is practicable after submission of a claim.

12. **External Conferences, Seminars, etc.**

Travelling and subsistence Allowance at the same rate as that applying under the Members' Allowances Scheme are payable to those Members attending conferences, seminars, courses, etc., falling within the criteria specified in Section 175 of the Local Government Act, 1972 where such attendance has been previously approved by the Council.

13. **Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons of Standards Committee**

Independent Person	£2500
Reserve Independent Person	£600 per Reserve IP

14. **Independent Person on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee** £1000

**COUNCIL
20 JANUARY 2022**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: ELECTORAL SERVICES – SCALE OF FEES 2022/23

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Scale of Fees - Non-Executive function.
(Electoral Services: Community Engagement)

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COUNCIL

2022-2027 PEOPLE FIRST; SUSTAINABILITY AND A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To agree the Scale of Fees for electoral events held during 2022/23.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Council be recommended to agree the Scale of Fees for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix A.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To enable the Council to remunerate the Returning Officer and the staff employed to carry out tasks during electoral events and to be open and transparent regarding other payments.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. For the scales of fees to remain at the 2021/22 rates or to increase some areas to reflect other local/national rates.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Electoral Services teams within the Hertfordshire local authorities form a Hertfordshire County Group and an informal consultation exercise was recently undertaken in respect of the fees paid by each, as all neighbouring authorities are considered to be competitors when recruiting staff.
- 5.2. The fees paid by the four Hertfordshire authorities that directly border North Herts Council are referenced in paragraph 8 (the names of the respective authorities have not been provided).

- 5.3. There being no county agreement as to the scale of fees for local elections, an informal consultation was undertaken with neighbouring local authorities prior to the agreement of the 2022/2023 Scale of Fees. The suggestion of a county agreement has been mooted. However, as some authorities would need to lower or raise their fees as well as those authorities closer to London needing to pay more to compete with the London authorities (whereas North Herts Council doesn't need to pay the London inflation), there has been no appetite between the authorities to proceed with a county agreement.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Each Local Authority is required to appoint one of its officers as Returning Officer (RO). The RO is appointed in an independent capacity by the Council to organise and run elections free from the political structure of the authority. Councils must provide their RO with the resources they need to run elections. This includes the cost of recruiting and paying staff to act as Presiding Officer and Poll Clerk, along with any other ancillary staff necessary for the success of a poll.
- 7.2. For national polls the government issue a Fees and Charges schedule which identifies for each authority a "maximum recoverable amount" along with a fee which may be claimed by the appointed RO for the rendering of their services. The RO will pay their appointed staff from the monies provided by government and will account for their expenditure by way of a return to the Election Claims Unit at the Cabinet Office.
- 7.3. No such formal structure exists for local elections, which is why a local scale of election fees is required to cover staff costs associated with the administration of elections and other electoral events, e.g., Neighbourhood Planning Referendums or Town/Parish Poll.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The RO appoints circa 300 temporary staff for local elections and will need to do so for the elections to be held in May 2022. The informal 'consultations' and research has indicated that the fees are at the lower end when compared with most neighbouring authorities, particularly in relation to polling station staff and therefore there has been a moderate increase to these roles.
- 8.2 In previous years there has tended to be a minimal percentage increase or an increase aligned with the National Joint Council Local Government Services pay agreement. However, the National Employers group and the National Joint Council (representing Unison, Unite and GMB unions) have not been able to agree a pay settlement to date for the 2021/22 pay award. The pay offer which has been made would provide an increase of 2.75% for Grade 1 staff, 1.75% for Grades 2 -12 and 1.5% for Chief Officers and Chief Executives (grades 14-16).
- 8.3 Where there is no comparable role from the research or it is felt that the fee is competitive there has been either no increase, or an increase made in line with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services pay agreement for 2021/22 based on the proposed 1.75% increase for Grades 2-12 (rounded up to the nearest pound).

- 8.4 A greater than inflation rise has been applied to the following fees: Poll Clerk (for both ordinary elections and parish/town polls) and the Clerical Assistant/Ballot Box Prep role. The table below shows how the proposed 2022/23 fees compare to the current fees for neighbouring Hertfordshire Authorities. Where fees are already in line with (or above) comparator Authorities then the amount has been frozen. This applies to the Postal Vote Supervisor and assistant roles, that are also shown in the table below. It is very difficult to provide a meaningful comparison for most of the other roles, as other Authorities set them on a different basis (e.g. hourly amount versus fixed amount). Another factor in proposing an increase to polling station staff fees is that they are expected to be on the polling stations for a minimum of 16 hours, allowing for setting up and dismantling of the polling station. In addition, retaining a fee of £150 for a Poll Clerk would not meet the minimum wage of £9.50 from April 2022 for those ages 23 years and over.

Authority	Poll Station Inspector (total)	Presiding Officer (total)	Poll Clerk (total)	Postal Votes Supervisor (per hour)	Postal Votes Assistant (per hour)
North Herts Council (2021/22 rate)	250	250	150	25	12.5
North Herts Council (proposed 2022/23)	255 + mileage	255	160	25	12.5
Comparator A (2020/21 rate)	269.03 + mileage	269.03	163.59	16.24	10.82
Comparator B (2020/21 rate)	300	270	165	12.50	10
Comparator C (2020/21 rate)	£18/station	225	160	? previously was £15	10
Comparator D (2020/21 rate)	£65	244.10	132.64	? previously was £20	10

- 8.5 The Scale of Fees incorporates a new role 'Elections Porter' which can then be used for tasks such as the delivery of polling booths and other equipment. Currently we use a removal company to deliver and collect the polling booths and other equipment. Incorporating this role will allow us the option to potentially explore alternative methods that may be more cost effective.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Democratic Services Manager has been appointed as RO as per section 14.6.13 of the Constitution.
- 9.2. Section 36 of The Representation of The People Act 1983 (RPA) provides that [at (4), (5), (5A)] all expenditure properly incurred by a Returning Officer in relation to the holding of a district, parish or community election be paid by that council, or parish or community council for which the election is held.
- 9.3. A RO is entitled to recover charges in respect of services rendered or expenses incurred for elections, as per section 29 RPA.
- 9.4 There is no specific delegation to set fees for elections. The RO has responsibility for elections, although setting their own fees is not recommended. An officer may under 14.6.2(e) of the Constitution "...always refer a delegated decision to the Cabinet or

Council or any of their respective Committees rather than make the decision"; section 14.5.1 further provides *"All those functions relating to elections"* falls to the Council as an effective default.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The fees for elections are considered in the budget setting process. In the case of Parish elections, each Parish is charged for its election.
- 10.2. To provide an indication of the financial impact of the proposals – each Polling Station requires a Presiding Officer and there are 78 Polling Stations (to cover the entire district). On the basis that we do not share a Presiding Officer over two stations (which is only done out of necessity rather than preference) this would result in an additional £390 being identified within the budget.
- 10.3. The Electoral Commission recommends ratios when allocating electors and staff to Polling Stations which dictates that a Presiding Officer must be accompanied by either 1, 2 or 3 Poll Clerks. To cover the entire district the RO would need to employ circa 114 Poll Clerks – this would result in an additional £1,140 being identified within the budget. This however does not account for the extra Poll Clerks that were required to accommodate operating Polling Stations in Covid conditions, the busier stations had one additional Poll Clerk each.
- 10.4. The Electoral Commission also recommends the appointment of Polling Station Inspectors who visit and inspect Polling Stations on behalf of the RO. There are usually ten recruited which would result in an additional £50 being required within the budget (not accounting for mileage).
- 10.5. In terms of the costs of elections, these are generally met by the body or bodies whose representatives have been elected. For example, the UK Government pays for UK Parliamentary elections and North Herts Council pays for the cost of local elections to the District Council. Where elections are combined, for example, a local election and a Police Crime Commissioner Election, most of the costs are shared.
- 10.6. Given that the elections in May 2022 are local elections there will not be any opportunity to share the costs (other than potentially one by-election for the County/ District vacancy). Although the forthcoming elections will cost more due to the high probability that we will need to operate in Covid-19 conditions i.e. the Count will take longer as there will be less staff allowed within the venue to maintain social distancing, the postal opening and verification process will take longer for the same reasons, there is surplus PPE stock that can be reused, as can many of the screens for the polling stations and count.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The Council needs to ensure it complies with statutory requirements one element of this is to ensure that it has sufficient staff required to operate an election. The last elections were very difficult to staff due to the additional staff required and having to operate within a pandemic. If the Council does not pay a competitive rate it could become increasingly difficult to staff elections on the basis of fees.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. There are no equalities implications - 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.

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.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no human resource implications, other than those set out.
- 15.2 The Council previously used the services of Selima for its electoral payroll system. Since the Council moved to a new payroll provider - Liberata UK Ltd to provide its payroll service, the electoral services payroll has also been absorbed into this contract. Staff used to resource elections are required to submit claims via the self-service online portal.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A Electoral Services Scale of Fees 2022/2023.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None.

APPENDIX A

ELECTORAL SERVICES - SCALE OF FEES 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023		2021/2022	2022/23
Duty		Fee £	Fee (£)
1. Polling staff (set fee)			
Presiding Officer		*250.00	*255.00
Presiding Officer (covering two stations – additional payment to *)		125.00	127.50
For combined polls, additional payment of (P.O.'s)		30.00	30.53
Poll Clerk		150.00	160.00
For combined polls, additional payment of (P.C.'s)		20.00	20.35
Presiding Officer (Parish/Town Poll only)		95.30	95.63
Poll Clerk (Parish/Town Poll only)		53.40	60.00
2. Counting staff			
Senior Count Supervisor per hour		43.90	43.90
Count supervisor per hour		38.50	38.50
Counting Assistant per hour		18.80	18.80
3. Postal voting staff			
Postal Vote Supervisor – per hour		25.00	25.00
Postal Votes Assistant - per hour		12.50	12.50
Postal Vote Quality Control (set fee)		227.90	227.90
Postal Vote Driver		18.80	18.80
Car Parking fees for Garden Square Multi Storey		As per parking charges	As per parking charges
4. Polling Station Inspector staff			
Senior Polling Station Inspector (set fee)		327.90	327.90
Polling Station Inspector (set fee)		250.00	255.00
5. Councillor Liaison/Reception Duty per hour		18.80	18.80
6. Clerical Assistance/Ballot Box Preparation			
Administration per hour		9.00	9.50
7. Returning Officer's fees			
(a) For each contested ward/parish:			
Up to 1000 electors		89.50	89.50
For each additional 1000 electors or part thereof		43.70	43.70
(b) For each un-contested ward/parish		33.30	33.30
(c) Where polls are combined		32.30	32.30
8. Training			
Presiding Officer		29.60	29.60
Poll Clerk		29.60	29.60
Senior/Polling Station Inspector		29.60	29.60

9. Travel for Polling Station Inspectors/Canvassers (Returns) /Postal Vote Issue/Postal Vote Driver		
Mileage payable at the recommended HMRC approved amount of 45 pence per mile for cars for the first 10,000 miles and 25 pence per mile thereafter.		
10. Canvasser – Canvass Forms and Invitation to Register Forms (RETURNS)		
Rural – Form Left at Property	0.75	0.75
Rural – Form returned from property	2.00	2.00
Urban – Form left at property	0.50	0.50
Urban – Form returned from property	1.50	1.50
11. Poll Card Delivery and Canvass Form Delivery		
Poll Card Delivery (per card)	20 pence	20 pence
Canvass Form Delivery (per form)	20 pence	20 pence
12. Elections Porter – per hour	-	12.50

**COUNCIL
20 JANUARY 2022**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

**TITLE OF REPORT: APPOINTMENT OF REPLACEMENT MEMBER AND CHAIR TO THE PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE
(& NOTING APPOINTMENT OF NEW EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND DEPUTY LEADER)**

REPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST/SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT/BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to confirm the appointment of a new / replacement Member to the Planning Control Committee, substitute Member and new Chair of the Committee.
- 1.2 This follows the appointment of Councillor Ruth Brown, the current Chair of the Committee, to the position of Executive Member for Planning, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and Deputy Leader of Council, who shall resign from the Committee as at this meeting date (and prior to the decision being taken below).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That for the remainder of the civic year 2021/22 Member and Substitute be appointed to the Planning Control Committee, namely:
- Councillor Carol Stanier to become a Member of the Committee
 - Councillor Sam North to become a substitute Member of the Committee
- 2.2 That Councillor Tom Tyson be appointed as Chair of the Planning Control Committee for the remainder of the civic year 2021/22.
- 2.3 That the appointment of Councillor Ruth Brown be noted as the Executive Member for Planning, and Deputy Leader for the remainder of the civic year 2021/22.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To comply with the provisions of 4.8.1 (a) (vii), (viii) and (ix) of the Council's Constitution following Councillor Brown resigning from the Committee/ position of Chair of Planning Control Committee as of this Council meeting, following the Executive appointments.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 That the Planning Control Committee operates without a Chair and the Vice Chair presides at each meeting, if present, and if not a Member of the Committee is elected as Chair for that meeting only.
- 4.2 This option is not recommended as the efficient conduct of the Planning Control Committee requires significant co-ordination between Officers and the Chair and it would not be possible to adequately prepare for meetings in the absence of a consistent elected Chair.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Leaders of the Administration have been consulted. The Service Director and Democratic Services Manager have been informed by the relevant Group Leader(s) of the proposed changes. Executive appointments are a matter for the Leader of Council.

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 Following the sudden demise of Councillor Paul Clark, Councillor Ruth Brown, the current Chair of the Committee, has been appointed to the position of Executive Member for Planning, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and Deputy Leader of Council. Councillor Brown has confirmed that she will be resigning from the position of Chair of Planning Control Committee and from the Planning Control Committee itself as of this Council meeting (to take effect as at the commencement of the meeting).
- 7.2 Under Standing Order 4.8.1(a) (vii), (viii) and (ix) of the Council's Constitution the following applies:
 - (vii) note the number of Members to be appointed to the Cabinet and the appointment those Members;
 - (viii) appoint the..... Planning Control Committee..;
 - (ix) appoint the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees, with the exception of the Area Committees, subject to any requirements of this Constitution concerning who may be appointed to such positions.
- 7.3 Section 4.4.1 (g) outlines that determining the composition of and appointments to Committees is a function of Full Council.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Service Director, and Democratic Services Manager by way of sub delegation can make in year changes to the membership of Committees (not Chair or Vice Chair). However, for completeness the changes to the membership, substitution and Chairing of the Planning Control Committee have been contained within this report.
- 8.2 The Planning Control Committee itself only has the power to elect a Chair from its membership for the duration of a single meeting.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The legal and constitutional requirements are set out in the main body of this report.
- 9.1. 14.6.8 (a) Delegation of Authority – Service Director: Legal and Community of the Constitution states:

(xx) To make appointments (or where relevant nominate) Councillors or Substitutes to Committees, Sub-Committees, panels, boards and outside bodies, in consultation with Group Leaders during the civic year in respect of the appointments that have previously been made at Annual Council.

- 9.2 Sub delegation to Democratic Services Manager under 1.14.1 of officer's delegations:

e) The appointment, nomination or revocation of appointment of any individual to any office/ body other than to Full Council in the event of vacation of office, in consultation with Group Leaders in respect of elected Councillors (In accordance with any requirements under the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, or any legislation replacing the same under section 14.5.1 of the Constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 A vacancy on a Committees, Sub-Committees or Panel could result in the respective political party not being fully represented at a particular meeting.
- 11.2 The efficient conduct of the Planning Control Committee requires significant co-ordination between Officers and the Chair and it would not be possible to adequately prepare for meetings in the absence of a consistent elected Chair.

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 equalities implications arising from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

15.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are no human resource implications.

15. APPENDICES

15.1 None.

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 None.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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