

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISION SHEET

Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth, SG6 3JF
on Tuesday, 13th September, 2022 at 7.30 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2 MINUTES - 21 JUNE 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 June 2022 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair made a statement regarding the passing of Her Majesty The Queen and the proclamation of the new King Charles III. The Chair provided Members the chance to give tributes, and held a minute's silence;
- (3) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (4) 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.
- (5) 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.
- (6) The Chair advised of a change to the agenda order and Item 19 would be taken following the conclusion of Item 8.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this meeting.

6 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

The Chair advised that referrals made from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee would be taken with their respective items on the Cabinet agenda.

7 2022 - 27 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION STRATEGY

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the Community Consultation Strategy for the period 2022-27.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) Consultation is critical to demonstrate that the Council is committed to engaging with its community, to help shape the direction of future policies, to inform necessary improvement or refinements to services and to ascertain if current approaches to service delivery are meeting the needs of residents.
- (2) Our most recent District Wide Survey (DWS) highlights a decline in resident views since 2019 on how we consult with them. We need to proactively show that we are a council that listens and wants to engage with our residents by successfully implementing our community-facing strategy.
- (3) Increased forms of digital consultation will enable us to reach a wider audience more frequently

8 DISTRICT WIDE SURVEY 2022

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet commented on and noted the key findings and observations from the District Wide Survey.
- (2) That Cabinet noted the results will be considered by the Leadership Team in conjunction with the Executive Members and an action plan produced.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that Cabinet is aware of the results and any trends from previous surveys and how the results will be used to inform future service delivery.

9 3Cs POLICY UPDATE

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet adopted the Updated 3Cs Policy, Appendix A – Complaint Flow Chart and Appendix B – Unreasonable Complainant (& Contact) Policy.
- (2) That Cabinet agree to delegate any minor changes in relation to the 3Cs policy to the Service Director – Customers in consultation with the Executive Member for the Customer Service Centre.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The recommendations are being made to ensure the 3C's policy stays current and reflects learning since the last review date. The policy continues to remain in line with Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) best practice.
- (2) Some of the specific updates and amendments address matters that have arisen for the first time and therefore adding them now helps to ensure the policy is clear for all going forward.
- (3) The updates ensure the Council has a robust policy to refer to when required, and customers are clear on how the policy works.
- (4) The policies and associated report have been seen by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 06 September 2022.

10 FIRST QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2022/23

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted the forecast expenditure of £12.252M in 2022/23 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.3 refers.
- (2) That Cabinet approved the adjustments to the capital programme for 2022/23 onwards, as a result of the revised timetable of schemes detailed in table 2 and 3, increasing the estimated spend in 2023/24 by £2.048M.
- (3) That Cabinet noted the position of the availability of capital resources, as detailed in table 4 paragraph 8.6 and the requirement to keep the capital programme under review for affordability.
- (4) That Cabinet noted the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of June 2022.

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.

11 FIRST QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2022/23

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted this report.
- (2) That Cabinet approved the changes to the 2022/23 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a £559k decrease in net expenditure.
- (3) That Cabinet noted the changes to the 2023/24 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a total £414k increase in net expenditure. These will be incorporated in the draft revenue budget for 2023/24.
- (4) That Cabinet delegated to the Service Director: Resources (in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT) authority to enter in to a Business Rate Pooling arrangement (if available) if it is estimated that it will be in the financial interests of the Council.

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

12 COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN Q1 UPDATE

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted the progress against Council projects as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A) including changes to milestone dates and risks.
- (2) That Cabinet confirmed the completion of one of the Council projects.

- (3) That Cabinet confirmed the addition of two new Council projects, which are the Shared Propensity Fund and Churchgate.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) monitoring reports provide Cabinet with an opportunity to monitor progress against the key Council projects, and understand any new issues, risks or opportunities.

13 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That Cabinet recommended to Full Council the adoption of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-28 as attached at Appendix A.

REASON FOR REFERRAL: Adoption of a MTFs and communication of its contents will assist in the process of forward planning the use of Council resources and in budget setting for 2023/2024 to 2027/2028, culminating in the setting of the Council Tax precept for 2023/24 in February 2023. This will (alongside the Council Plan) support the Council in setting a budget that is affordable and aligned to Council priorities.

14 PROPOSED INCREASE IN PARKING TARIFFS

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet agreed to adopt the proposed off-street car park tariffs for 2022/23 as set out in Tables 1 to 7 at Appendix A, with the following amendments:
 - a. Princes Mews, Royston car park to be kept at 70p for 1 hour parking, in line with the increased price at other Royston car parks.
 - b. St Martin's Road, Knebworth car park to be 35p for 30 minutes and 70p for 1 hour parking.
 - c. In Hitchin, all Long Stay car parks to be £1.30 after 3pm and all Short Stay car parks to be £1.50 after 3pm.
- (2) That Cabinet agreed not to increase the charges for Season Tickets for each of its long stay car parks or business permits for its car park at St. Martins Road in Knebworth for 2022/23.
- (3) That Cabinet agreed not to increase the charges for resident permits, visitor permits, business permits or visitor tickets for resident permit zones for 2022/23.
- (4) That Cabinet agreed that the proposed tariff changes, as recommended in paragraphs 2.1 as amended above, are implemented as soon as practicable, and that officers in consultation with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport proceed with the implementation as required.
- (5) That Officers proceed with the necessary amendments to the Off- Street Parking Traffic Regulation Orders as required to implement changes recommended above, and that officers in consultation with the Executive Member and Deputy for Planning and Transport proceed with the implementation as required.

REASON FOR DECISION: To implement an increase in car parking tariffs in order to effectively manage their use and in accordance with the Council's fees and charges policy as set out in its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). To set car parking tariffs that support the achievement of modal shift away from private car use and to help support the vitality of town centres.

15 INFORMATION NOTE ON ASYLUM DISPERSAL AND REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES

The Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health presented the 'Information Note on Asylum Dispersal and Refugee Resettlement Schemes' and the Chair led a discussion on this with Members.

16 DRAFT DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SPD

RESOLVED: That the draft Developer Contributions SPD, attached as Appendix A to this report, were endorsed and approved for a five-week public consultation.

REASON FOR DECISION: To allow the Developer Contributions SPD to be progressed so that it may be adopted at the same time as, or shortly after, any future decision to adopt the new Local Plan.

17 PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA AT CHESFIELD

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the draft CAAMP for the proposed conservation area around Chesfield Park was noted.
- (2) That approval was given for public consultation to take place on the draft proposal to designate a conservation area and the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan around Chesfield Park.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that the conservation areas and historic assets within North Hertfordshire are appropriately assessed and designated to inform decision making for planning applications and in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans.

18 ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet endorsed the overall approach to Article 4 Directions set out in the report.
- (2) That Cabinet approved the making of immediate Article 4 Directions for non-listed buildings located within each of the District's town centre's defined primary and secondary shopping frontages (as detailed in Appendix A).
- (3) That each of the immediate Article 4 Directions shall come into force immediately on the day they are served (October 3 2022) and consultation shall take place for a period of 6 weeks beginning on October 10 2022.
- (4) That delegated powers should be granted to the Service Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Enterprise and Transport to confirm the immediate Article 4 Directions following consultation subject to no, or only minor, amendments being necessary.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The new Article 4 Directions relate to change of use from Use Class E (commercial, business and services) to Use Class C3 (dwellinghouses).
- (2) Commercial, business and services in town centres are important as they provide residents with access to important goods and services whilst minimising the need to travel. To safeguard main town centre use2 floorspace, the Council has designated primary and secondary shopping frontages within the District's four town centres and established policies to encourage growth and prevent loss of these uses.

- (3) The making of the Article 4 Directions will support an overarching principle of the emerging Local Plan which seeks to ensure that there is a suitable balance between increased housing development and economic facilities to ensure sustainable development is achieved. The Article 4 Directions will prevent small-scale losses of main town centre use floorspace through change of use schemes to residential under permitted development.
- (4) The Council would apply the Directions to the non-listed buildings located within the primary and secondary shopping frontages as defined by Policy ETC4 and ETC5 in the new Local Plan (as proposed to be modified). By withdrawing this permitted development right (PDR) it means any Use Class E to residential conversions in areas where the Directions are made will require planning permission. This will allow Planning Officers to assess applications against national policy (NPPF) and our emerging Local Plan policies to ensure there is a suitable provision of shops, services and facilities within the town centres.

19 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2023/23

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet noted that a full review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme is well underway and that consultation with the public and Major Precepting Authorities will run for six weeks from 14 September 2022.
- (2) That Cabinet noted the progress made so far on the review and that the intention is to introduce a new banded scheme for working age applicants from 01 April 2023.
- (3) That Cabinet noted the aim of the review is to introduce a new scheme that will:
 - a. enable us to increase the overall level of support for the lowest income households;
 - b. reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council following the introduction of Universal Credit whilst also;
 - c. make the scheme easier for our customers to understand and calculate entitlement.
- (4) That Cabinet noted that modelling the new scheme may increase the costs from those of the current scheme, any increase will be split between the Council and its Major Precepting Authorities. The Councils share will be 12.5%.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that the Council has a fit for purpose Council Tax Reduction Scheme that:

- a. Provides the greatest support to the lowest income households.
- b. Reduces the administrative burden that has been placed on the Council since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC).
- c. Is simple to understand, meaning that customers will be able to calculate entitlement and assess the impact of potential changes in circumstances.

20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

21 SOFT PLAY INVESTMENT AT NORTH HERTS LEISURE CENTRE - PART 2

Details of decisions taken on this item are restricted due to the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of Section 200A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

22 **SOFT PLAY INVESTMENT AT NORTH HERTS LEISURE CENTRE - PART 1**

RESOLVED: That Cabinet considered and agreed the soft play investment proposal.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (1) That Council make the addition of £150k to the Capital programme in 2022/23.
- (2) That Council move the existing capital allocation of £100k in 2023/24 for refurbishment of the dry-side changing rooms to 2022/ 23 and reallocate it to the soft play project.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) Introducing a soft play facility at North Herts Leisure Centre will enhance the range of leisure facilities on offer and provide a dedicated play space for families with toddlers and young children within the local area.
- (2) The new facility will generate additional revenue for the site, aiding the financial recovery of leisure post covid and providing an attractive additional facility for bidders when the new leisure contract is procured in 2024.