

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISION SHEET

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The were no apologies for absence received.

2 MINUTES - 13 SEPTEMBER, 25 OCTOBER AND 2 NOVEMBER 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 13 September 2022, 25 October 2022 and 2 November 2022 were approved as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (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) A comfort break would be taken at a suitable time in proceedings, if required.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

6 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

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

7 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2023/2024

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- (1) Noted that a full review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme had taken place and that consultation with the public and Major Precepting Authorities had taken place.
- (2) Noted the aim of the review had been to introduce a new scheme that will:
 - a. enable us to increase the overall level of support for the lowest income households;

Tuesday, 13th December, 2022

- b. reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council following the introduction of Universal Credit and;
- c. make the scheme easier for our customers to understand and calculate entitlement.

(3) Noted that 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 Council's share is expected to be around 12.5%.

REFERRED TO COUNCIL: That Cabinet

- (1) Recommended to Council that a new banded scheme for working age applicants is adopted from 01 April 2023.
- (2) Recommended to Council the use of the Council Tax Hardship Grant to fund a discretionary scheme to provide additional transitional support where appropriate and that decisions regarding Discretionary support are delegated to the Service Director Customers in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT.

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

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

8 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2022-2027

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- (1) Adopted the following documents, taking into consideration the additional actions proposed under each priority area:
 - Appendix 1 Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027
 - Appendix A Proposed Actions
 - Appendix B Achievements
- (2) Reflects on the Climate Change Strategy for contracted services when considering the revision of the Procurement Policy.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: In 2019, the Council passed a motion to declare a Climate Emergency. In this motion the Council pledged their commitment to do everything within their power to become carbon neutral by 2030. This iteration of the Strategy has been revised to reflect the latest legislation, research, and best practice; and includes additional proposed actions under each priority area to respond to gaps we have identified. Appendix B Achievements lays out progress against each action.

9 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2022-27

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- (1) Approved the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027 as attached at Appendix A, with the removal of the Glossary document attached as Appendix C in the report.
- (2) Approved the Equality objectives as set out below:

Tuesday, 13th December, 2022

1. Work with young people through youth engagement to make it easier for them to have their voices heard in local decision-making and democracy.
2. Improve our engagement with marginalised, seldom heard, and new communities to make it easier for them to participate in local decision-making and democracy, and to have their views and experiences heard by the council.
3. Improve our understanding of broader EDI issues and their impacts, such as neurodiversity and economic disadvantage; as well as the intersections between inequalities, using our Inclusion Group as a channel.
4. Achieve consistency in measuring the likely equality impacts of our emerging policies and services.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The previous Corporate Equality Strategy (2017) was revised to ensure consistency with the latest public sector equality legislation and obligations. The refresh of the Strategy reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to fulfil our legal obligations as set out in the Equality Act and to set out the new equality objectives.

10 ALLOCATION OF DLUHC HOMELESSNESS GRANT

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

(1) Approved the allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant funding (2022/23) as follows:

- a) Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (in principle, up to 73k, with the Cabinet being asked to consider the details of the scheme at the appropriate time);
- b) To offset Department of Work and Pensions Housing Benefit subsidy loss incurred between April 2022 and the end of January 2023 (and officers be asked to return to the Cabinet on 31 January 2023 to confirm this amount and the options for the management of subsidy loss going forward);
- c) To secure hotel provision over the winter months (£36k).

(2) Approved the allocation of Rough Sleeping Initiative funding for the financial years 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 as follows:

- a) Haven First (£78k, £77.4k and £68.2k);
- b) Keystage Housing (£86.2k, £85.6k and £75.4k).

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) There is an urgent need for high quality accommodation-based support services for single homeless people in the district. Adopting the recommendations at 2.1 – 2.2 would secure the provision of these services for the next few years, which is in line with the priorities set out in the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, contained within the Council's Housing Strategy 2019-2024.
- (2) The support services outlined in this report are crucial to enable single homeless people with complex needs to have the opportunity to live independent lives and ending the cycle of repeated homelessness.

11 INFORMATION NOTE - UPDATE ON REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

The Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health presented the Information Note entitled 'Update of Refugee Resettlements'.

12 NORTH HERTS MUSEUM STRATEGY 2022-2026

RESOLVED:

(1) That the current draft of the Museum Strategy 2022 - 2026 was approved.

- (2) That Cabinet adopted the strategy for the years 2022 – 2026.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The previous Arts, Museums and Heritage Strategy expired some years ago and a new strategy will guide the ambitions of the museum service in the years ahead.

13 HALF YEARLY REPORT ON RISK MANAGEMENT

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- (1) Noted the update and any recommendations from FARC on the Half Yearly Risk Management update.
- (2) Approved the changes and any associated recommendations from FARC on the review of the Risk Management Framework.
- (3) Commented on and noted recommendations from FARC on the type of Risk Management Training they would like to see going forward.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The responsibility for ensuring the management of risks is that of Cabinet.
- (2) This Committee has responsibility to monitor the effective development and operation of Risk Management.

14 DRAFT BUDGET 2023/24

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- (1) Noted the latest funding forecasts for 2023/24 onwards and the significant uncertainty that still remains.
- (2) Confirmed that it is necessary to increase Council Tax by 3% (the maximum amount now allowed without a local referendum) as this is what will be assumed by Government in determining the Business Rates that the Council can retain.
- (3) Confirmed that the Council should be part of a Business Rate pool in 2023/24, but delegates to the Service Director: Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT, authority to withdraw from the pooling arrangement if there are significant changes that would make it likely that the Council would suffer a financial loss from pooling.
- (4) Noted the comments made at the budget workshops, and comment on the inclusion of the revenue savings and investments in the budget to be brought back for consideration in January, for referral on to Council in February.
- (5) Noted the comments made at the budget workshops, and comment on the inclusion of the capital investments in the Investment Strategy to be brought back for consideration in January, for referral on to Council in February.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that all relevant factors are considered in arriving at a proposed budget, Investment Strategy and Council Tax level for 2023/24, to be considered by Full Council on 23 February 2022.

15 COMPLIANCE CONTRACT - COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- (1) Agreed that the Council will stop providing the monthly property compliance tasks (as detailed in paragraph 8.1) to community groups/ buildings (as detailed in paragraph 8.3).
- (2) Agreed that the Council should continue to fund low value repairs in such a way so that community groups/ buildings do not lose out from changes to the way that the compliance contract is expected to operate from February 2023.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The decision helps the Council keep under control the cost of providing property compliance contract. It also leads to reduced vehicle travel and associated environmental benefits. It also reflects that the Council will focus its support (and resources) on providing those property compliance services that require specialist knowledge and training.

16 COMPLIANCE CONTRACT - SINGLE TENDER

RESOLVED: That Cabinet agrees to the use of a single tender (under the Council's Contract Procurement Rules) for the award of a contract to HTS Property and Environmental Limited Ltd, for a property compliance contract.

REASONS FOR DECISION: It is expected that working with HTS will deliver the following benefits:

- The proposal is to form a collaborative working partnership that is focused on excellent service delivery and cost control, whilst ensuring the arrangement is sustainable for both parties over the longer term. This should avoid a repeat of the contract failures that have been what has transpired over the last two contracts.
- HTS have a large directly employed workforce of trade operatives, administration and management staff, who have the skills, knowledge and ability to deliver the works, and already provide similar services to Harlow Council.
- Elements of the way that the contract is delivered can be developed collaboratively by both parties to ensure the most efficient and cost effective approach.
- HTS have a supply chain with access to both materials and sub-contractors to support delivery.
- Whilst not a local North Herts based supplier, HTS' values are aligned to the North Herts Council's values, as demonstrated by their social and environmental activities. (see sections 13 and 14 below).
- Being wholly owned by Harlow Council, any profits that HTS generate are ultimately fed back into providing public services.

17 CCTV CAMERA LOCATION REVIEW

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- (1) Noted that Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation are looking to withdraw from the funding of CCTV cameras in Letchworth. That Cabinet agree in principle to the taking on of Letchworth cameras (and the costs involved), but seek a continuing contribution from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.
- (2) Agreed to the retention, removal and addition of CCTV cameras as set out in Table 1 of this report.
- (3) Delegated to the Service Director: Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT, a decision on the number of new mobile CCTV cameras that can be

afforded within the existing overall revenue budget (making an allowance for monitoring costs and the costs of moving cameras).

- (4) Noted that additional capital investment in CCTV cameras will be needed and that this will be added to the capital budget for 2023/24 (subject to agreement by Full Council in February).

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The Council has chosen to provide CCTV cameras to help make the District a safer place to live and work. It also supports the Council's Community Safety role, although the primary role sits with the police. This report therefore considers the optimum location for CCTV cameras based on evidence and professional knowledge.

18 SECOND QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2022/23

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Noted the forecast expenditure of £9.815M in 2022/23 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.3 refers.
- (2) 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 £0.861M and £2.0M in 2024/25.
- (3) 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.

REFERRAL TO COUNCIL: That Cabinet recommended to Council that it notes the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 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.

19 Q2 UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- (1) Noted the progress against Council projects as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A) including changes to milestone dates and risks.
- (2) Noted the completion of the Local Plan milestones for this year.

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.

20 SECOND QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2022/23

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- (1) Noted this report.

Tuesday, 13th December, 2022

- (2) Approved the changes to the 2022/23 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a £270k decrease in net expenditure.
- (3) Noted the changes to the 2023/24 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a total £69k increase in net expenditure. These will be incorporated in the draft revenue budget for 2023/24.
- (4) Approved the debt write-offs detailed in table 8.

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.

21 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).

22 CARELINE - IN-HOUSE PROVISION FOR COMPLEX INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE - 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.

23 CARELINE - IN-HOUSE PROVISION FOR COMPLEX INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE - PART 1

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the addition of complex installations and maintenance to Carelines in-house service from 01 April 2023.