

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth, SG6 3JF
on Thursday, 22nd September, 2022 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Councillor Daniel Allen (Chair), Ian Albert, David Barnard, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, Sam Collins, Adam Compton, Juan Cowell, George Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, James Denselow, Faye Frost, Jean Green, Chris Hinchliff, Keith Hoskins, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Chris Lucas, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Ralph Muncer, Michael Muir, Sean Nolan, Tom Plater, Carol Stanier, Claire Strong, Mandi Tandi, Kay Tart, Richard Thake, Tamsin Thomas, Tom Tyson, Phil Weeder, Michael Weeks, Alistair Willoughby and Val Bryant

IN ATTENDANCE: Anthony Roche (Managing Director) Jeanette Thompson (Service Director – Legal & Community) Ian Couper (Service Director – Resources) Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager) William Edwards (Committee, Member & Scrutiny Manager) Abigail Hamilton (Committee, Member & Scrutiny Officer) Louis Mutter (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)

ALSO PRESENT: At the commencement of the meeting approximately 0 members of the public, including registered speakers.

DEATH OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Audio Recording – 0:00

Prior to the commencement of formal business the Chair paid tribute following the death of Her Majesty the Queen and held a minute's silence in her honour.

At 7:32pm Councillor Nigel Mason entered the Council Chamber.

138 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 3:55

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sam North, Sean Prendergast, Morgan Derbyshire, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Amy Allen, Gerald Morris, Terry Tyler, Terry Hone, Ian Moody, Raj Bhakar and Lisa Nash.

139 MINUTES - 14 JULY 2022

Audio Recording – 4:45

Councillor Daniel Allen as Chair proposed and Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and following a vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 14 July 2022 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

140 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 6:45

There was no other business notified.

141 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 6:50

- (1) 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.
- (2) 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 on question.
- (3) The Chair reminded Members that the normal rules of debate and times to speak applied.
- (4) The Chair bade farewell to the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager, William Edwards, who is leaving North Herts Council in October. The Chair thanked him for all of his hard work over the past 2 years.
- (5) The Chair made a statement regarding the death of former Councillor Nigel Agar and gave his best wishes to Councillor Agar's family; he then held a minute's silence in his memory.
- (6) The Chair informed the meeting that he planned to have a comfort break at a suitable time around 8:30.

142 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 11:58

There was no public participation at this meeting.

143 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Audio recording – 12:01

There were none.

144 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Audio recording – 12:06

There was none.

145 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio Recording - 12:08

8A. REFERRAL FROM SOUTHERN RURAL AREA COMMITTEE: 30 JUNE 2022- CLOSURE OF KIMPTON SURGERY

The Chair of the Southern Rural Area Committee, Councillor George Davies commented that this was an item brought up during the Ward Matters section so he felt Councillor Ralph Muncer would be the best person to present this referral.

Councillor Ralph Muncer presented the referral from the Southern Rural Area Committee and highlighted the following points:

- The issue of the closure of Kimpton Surgery was discussed three months ago at the Area Committee;
- Councillor Muncer thanked Members of Southern Rural for their interest on this topic to residents in Kimpton;
- Kimpton Surgery has since closed its doors on the 31st August and that residents are still able to access NHS services in Harpenden, Wheathampstead, Whitwell and Welwyn;
- Councillor Muncer is working alongside County Councillor Richard Thake to push for enhanced public transport provision in Kimpton.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
- Councillor Sam Collins
- Councillor Tony Hunter
- Councillor Judi Billing

Councillor Val Bryant commented that she was the representative of North Herts Council on the Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny Committee and that she had been approached for items to be included in future meetings. Councillor Bryant offered to pass on the issue of the closure of rural GPs the next time she was asked for meeting items.

Councillor Val Bryant proposed and Councillor Judi Billing seconded and, following a vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Val Bryant, as representative of North Herts Council on the Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny Board, would take the issue of the closure of rural GP surgeries and raise it as an item to be discussed at the next Health Scrutiny Committee Meeting.

8B. REFERRAL FROM CABINET: 13 SEPTEMBER 2022 – MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Was considered as Agenda Item 9

8C. REFERRAL FROM CABINET: 13 SEPTEMBER 2022 – SOFT PLAY INVESTMENT AT NORTH HERTS LEISURE CENTRE

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg recommended that, as Councillor Steve Jarvis was the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure, he should be presenting this referral.

Councillor Steve Jarvis presented the referral from Cabinet and highlighted the following key points:

- The current report proposes to replace 2 of the 4 squash courts and some changing rooms with a soft play area; providing a facility that will provide a benefit to parents and children; allowing parents to use other facilities;
- There is a satisfactory rate of return as a part of the leisure centre that is currently being use very little is now beneficial to more people;
- As a result there needs to be two changes to the capital programme; making an addition of £150k, and moving capital allocation towards the refurbishment of the dry-side changing rooms and reallocate it to the soft play project.

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed and Councillor Phil Weeder seconded.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Faye Frost
- Councillor Adam Compton
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Tony Hunter
- Councillor Claire Strong

Following a vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- (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.

146 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Audio Recording - 33:25

Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance & IT presented the report and referral 8(b) from Cabinet entitled Medium Term Financial Strategy and highlighted the following key points:

- Appendix A sets out the impacts of COVID and the calculations of when the budget will return to pre Covid-19 levels; setting aside an amount in 23/24 to continue that recovery;
- Short stay car-park & leisure income is coming back to pre-covid levels but long-stay and season tickets are not;
- Parking and garden waste charges are forecasted to increase by 2% per year.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded.

At 8:07pm Councillor Carol Stanier entered the Council Chamber.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Tony Hunter
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Adam Compton
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Keith Hoskins
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Tom Plater
- Councillor Judi Billing
- Councillor Sam Collins
- Councillor Ian Albert

Following the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Full Council adopts the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-28 as attached at Appendix A

REASON FOR DECISION: Adoption of an MTFS and communication of its contents will assist in the process of forward planning and 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.

147 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2021/22

Audio Recording - 1:26:30

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor David Levett presented the report entitled Annual Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2021/22 and provided the following updates:

- Para 5.3 should extend its thanks to Councillor Ian Albert for attending a number of O&S meetings;
- Para 9.2 since the report was written the scope has been set for the communications task & finish group and set provisional dates;
- The waste contracts are being discussed at an extraordinary meeting of the O&S committee on the 28th of September;

Councillor David Levett proposed and Councillor Val Bryant seconded and, following a vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2021/2022 as attached as Appendix A be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable Council to consider the report of the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the work of that Committee in the 2020/2021 Civic Year.

148 ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Audio Recording - 1:29:05

The Chair of the Standards Committee, Councillor Judi Billing presented the report entitled Annual Report for the Standards Committee.

Councillor Judi Billing thanked Jeanette and the legal team for their hard work this year.

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

RESOLVED: That Council receives and notes the Annual Report

REASON FOR DECISION: In line with recommended good governance practice to report the work of Standards Committee to the full Membership, to promote and maintain high standards of conduct and to demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical values.

149 **CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT / PANEL APPROVAL & APPOINTMENT REPORT - PART 1**

Audio Recording - 1:31:58

The Monitoring Officer presented the report entitled Constitutional Amendment, Panel Approval & Appointment Report and highlighted the following points of clarification:

- In appendix A any references to 'Commercial' should be 'Enterprise';
- Any reference to the Procedure Rule should be 4.8.23(a)

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed and Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded and, following a vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Full Council:

(1) Approves the amendments detailed in Appendix A, and the Transport Panel's Terms of Reference Appendix B.

(2) Approves the Member appointments (and Co-Chairs to the extent necessary) to the Transport Panel, as detailed in 8.3-8.4

(3) Having taken the part 2 report and Mr Peter Oldham KC's advice into account, instructs the Service Director – Legal & Community to draft an amendment to the Constitution, in consultation with Group Leaders, regarding the removal of Council Procedure 4.8.23 (a) with the exception of Regulatory and Disciplinary Committees as well as certain statutory matters of Full Council, and present that wording to the next Full Council meeting on 10 November 2022.

REASON FOR DECISION: To reflect good decision making practice, reflect changes to Service Director's responsibilities and the review of the Panel arrangements to keep them up to date.

150 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Audio Recording - 1:34:40

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed and Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and following the vote it was:

Thursday, 22nd September, 2022

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 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Section 200A(4) of the said Act (as amended).

151 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT / PANEL APPROVAL & APPOINTMENT REPORT - PART 2

Details of this item are restricted due to the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 5 Part 1 of Schedule 12 of Section 200A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The meeting closed at 9.51 pm

Chair