

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISION SHEET (AMENDED – ADDITIONS UNDERLINED)

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth
on Thursday, 19th January, 2023 at 7.30 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kay Tart, Nigel Mason, Tamsin Thomas, Terry Tyler, Carol Stanier, Ian Moody, Raj Bhakar, Lisa Nash, Juan Cowell, Michael Weeks, Jean Green, David Barnard.

2 MINUTES - 22 SEPTEMBER, 8 NOVEMBER AND 19 DECEMBER 2022

RESOLVED: That the Part 1 Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 22 September, 8 November and 19 December 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 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) The Chair clarified the rules of debate for Members.
- (5) The Chair advised that a comfort break would be taken at a suitable time in the proceedings, if required.
- (6) The Chair noted that the date of this Civic Reception had been moved to Sunday 19 March 2023.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this meeting.

6 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11 two questions had been submitted by the deadline date for questions set out in the Constitution.

- (A) NHDC providing Homelessness Prevention Grant Funding to Keystage Housing

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Councillor Claire Strong to Councillor Sean Prendergast (Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health)

(B) Local Plan Reviews

Councillor Ian Moody to Councillor Ruth Brown (Executive Member for Planning and Transport)

In the absence of Councillor Moody, Councillor David Levett asked the question.

7 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

There were two motions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12.

(A) Motion on Proportional Representation

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Call upon the UK Government to commit to changing electoral law to permit the introduction of a PR system of voting in any reforms to local government presented to Parliament.
- (2) Instruct the Leader of the Council to write to North Hertfordshire District Council's three MPs to ask them to call for a change to electoral law to permit a PR system of voting and promote the matter for debate in Parliament.

(B) Motion on Urgent unlocking the potential of local High Streets

RESOLVED: That Council will:

- (1) Write to the Government to urge it to scrap business rates and replace them with a system which is fit for purpose and which levels the playing field between bricks and mortar businesses and online retail giants.
- (2) Campaign to devolve funds like the Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other national funding pots, to give local communities, councils and regions the ultimate say in how it is spent in their area.
- (3) Continue to take local action to revive our high streets, including:
 - a. Make any data that the Council can lawfully make public on ownership of high street properties public and in an accessible format, so that community groups seeking to buy empty shops through a community share offer have the information they need to do so.
 - b. Proactively contact landlords of vacant premises (and work with Chambers of Commerce, Landlord Associations and BID managers) to explore 'meanwhile use' options and/or encourage alternative rental models (e.g. turnover rather than market rent) to enable new co-operatives, SMEs, social enterprises and 'community owned' businesses to open their doors on the high street.

8 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

8a) Referral from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on 7 December 2022 – Annual Review of the Contract Procurement Rules

RESOLVED: That Council considered and adopted the proposed changes to the Contract Procurement Rules.

REASON FOR DECISION: The Contract Procurement Rules (CPR's) are part of the Constitution (under Section 20) and must be regularly reviewed and updated as part of the Council's governance and procurement review processes, contributing to the Council's system of effective internal control.

8b) Referral from Cabinet on 13 December 2022 – Second Quarter Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Review 2022/23

RESOLVED: That Council noted the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2022.

REASON FOR DECISION: 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.

8c) Referral from Cabinet on 13 December 2022 – Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023/2024

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

9 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2023/2024

RESOLVED: That council:

- (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:
 - enable us to increase the overall level of support for the lowest income households;
 - reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council following the introduction of Universal Credit and;
 - make the scheme easier for our customers to understand and calculate entitlement.
- (3) Approved the adoption of a new banded scheme for working age applicants from 01 April 2023.
- (4) Approved 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.
- (5) 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%.

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.

10 REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Considered the report and recommendations of the IRP, as attached as Appendix A of the submitted report.
- (2) Agreed the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/2024 as set out in Appendix B of the submitted report, subject to the removal to restrict to only one Special Responsibility Allowance.
- (3) Agreed the increase to the Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons allowances as detailed in 4.9 of Appendix A and 8.11 of this report.
- (4) Agreed the allowance to the Independent Non-Voting Member on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee as detailed in 4.7 of Appendix A and 8.12 of this report.
- (5) Expressed appreciation to the IRP for their work over the last 4 years.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that the Council meets its statutory requirements of an annual review and adoption of the scheme.

11 ELECTORAL SERVICES - SCALE OF FEES 2023/2024

RESOLVED: That the Council agreed the Scale of Fees for 2023/2024 as set out in Appendix A.

REASON FOR DECISION: 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.

12 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT REPORT

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Council approved the amendments detailed in Appendix A, subject to the removal of proposed changes to Section 8 of the Constitution regarding the Planning Control Committee.
- (2) That Council noted that guidance notes for Chairs in relation to 4.8.23(a) was attached at Appendix B. This may be amended as required by the Service Director: Legal & Community.

REASON FOR DECISION: To reflect good decision making practice and keep the Constitution up to date.

13 PENSION POOLING WITH ORPHANED BODIES

RESOLVED: That Council approved that North Hertfordshire District Council (as the relevant Admitted Body) be pooled with the following Orphaned Employers: Letchworth Garden City Town Council, Veolia ES Services team and Hitchin Markets.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) All of the Orphaned Employers (based on the 2019 valuation) have over 100% funding, which is better than the Council's funding position. Therefore, it is probably in the Council's best interest to be pooled with them.

(2) In the case of Letchworth Garden City Town Council, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) (as the Hertfordshire LGPS administrator) have legal advice that we are required to be pooled with LGCTC.

14 CHURCHGATE UPDATE - PART 1

RESOLVED: That Members noted the report.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure Members a kept updated on the progression of Churchgate.

15 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 Section 200A(4) of the said Act (as amended).

16 CHURCHGATE UPDATE - PART 2

RESOLVED: That Members noted the report.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure Members a kept updated on the progression of Churchgate.

17 PART 2 MINUTES - 22 SEPTEMBER 2022

RESOLVED: That the Part 2 Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 22 September 2022 be approved as a true record of proceedings and signed by the Chair.