

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth
on Monday, 19th December, 2022 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Councillor Daniel Allen (Chair), Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Ian Albert, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, George Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, James Denselow, Morgan Derbyshire, Chris Hinchliff, Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Chris Lucas, Nigel Mason, Ian Moody, Ralph Muncer, Michael Muir, Lisa Nash, Sean Nolan, Tom Plater, Sean Prendergast, Claire Strong, Mandi Tandi, Richard Thake, Tamsin Thomas, Tom Tyson, Phil Weeder, Alistair Willoughby, Val Bryant and Terry Tyler

IN ATTENDANCE: Ian Fullstone (Service Director - Regulatory), Isabelle Alajooz (Legal Commercial Team Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Richard Beesley (Consultant) and Louis Mutter (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)

ALSO PRESENT: There were no members of the public present for the duration of the meeting.

158 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 43 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Amy Allen, Kay Tart, Carol Stanier, Sam North, Ian Mantle, Jean Green, Gerald Morris, Juan Cowell, Adam Compton, Raj Bhakar, Sam Collins, David Barnard, Clare Billing and Adem Ruggiero-Cakir.

159 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 18 seconds

There was no other business notified.

160 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 26 seconds

- (1) The Chair paid tribute to former Councillor Judi Billing MBE who passed away on Thursday 24 November 2022. He remarked that Judi served as a district councillor for the Hitchin Bearton ward for over 40 years, as well as having served as County Councillor for Hitchin North since 2013. She served on Cabinet at North Herts Council as the Executive Member for Community Engagement, was Chair of the Standards Committee and co-Chair of the Cabinet Panel on Community and Enterprise. The Chair noted that outside of the Council Judi had worked across party lines with the Local Government Association and was awarded an MBE in 2015 for her services to local government.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Leader of the Council and the Labour group at North Herts, paid tribute to former Councillor Billing, and highlighted that Judi was a powerhouse of Local Government, who was committed to supporting communities. She noted that Judi was a phenomenal woman who had acted as her harshest critic but also her biggest support since her election. For many Members, Judi had acted as a grounding influence and made young, ambitious Members realise that being a District Councillor was a worthy role and was not just a springboard onto bigger things. Judi knew the how vital it was to sometimes just serve your community. Judi had been a passionate and caring individual and North Herts, as well as the entire Local Government family, had lost a giant following her passing.

The following Members also paid tribute to former Councillor Judi Billing MBE:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Keith Hoskins
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Thomas Plater
- Councillor Michael Muir
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Daniel Allen

A minute of commemoration was held in memory of former Councillor Judi Billing MBE.

- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded.
- (3) 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.
- (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.
- (5) The Chair clarified the rules of debate for Members.
- (6) The Chair advised that a comfort break would be taken at a suitable time in the meeting, should proceedings continue at length.

161 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 34 minutes 05 seconds

There were no petitions or public requests to speak at this meeting.

162 ELECTORAL REVIEW – RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND ON PROPOSED WARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Audio recording – 34 minutes 18 seconds

Monday, 19th December, 2022

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report entitled 'Electoral Review – Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England on Proposed Warding Arrangements' and advised of the following:

- This was the second part of the ongoing consultation being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and followed the conclusion of the information gathering exercise which concluded in August 2022 and the findings published on 1 November 2022.
- As a statutory consultee on the process, the Council had been invited to make a submission to the consultation on the proposed pattern of wards for the district. Individuals and community groups could make separate submissions.
- If the Council failed to approve a submission, then the LGBCE would base their final decision on other submissions received.
- The recommendation at this meeting was to approve the submission at Appendix A, which had been agreed following comments made by Councillors and discussion amongst Group Leaders at the Boundary Review Project Board.
- The deadline for submission was 9 January 2023.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded the proposals. Following this, the Chair opened up the debate to Members.

Councillor Morgan Derbyshire proposed an amendment to the wording of Point 7 in the appendix, to suggest that it highlight 'the Council strongly objects' to proposals regarding Baldock and surrounding areas, rather than has 'significant concerns'. This was seconded by Councillor Claire Strong.

Councillor Dennis-Harburg and Councillor Brown agreed to incorporate the amendment into the original motion.

Councillor Terry Tyler raised concerns regarding the proposals for the current Chesfield ward. He noted that Great Ashby already had an identity crisis and these proposals would destroy and confuse the community, who will not be represented by the same people. It would make more sense to include GA1 and GA2 in Great Ashby Parish Council, as creating a community was more important than making numbers work.

Councillor Michael Muir noted his concerns regarding the Baldock warding proposals. He advised that he agreed with the proposed names, but disagreed with proposals to make the proposed new housing to the north of Baldock part of a wider Gravely and Ashwell rural ward. These 3000 new houses would become part of the town of Baldock, just as the Clothall Common development in the current Baldock East ward had previously. He would prefer to see these houses included within the Baldock East ward, with an additional Councillor, and would make a separate submission to the consultation.

Councillor Richard Thake commented that although he did not agree with all the proposals, following discussions with residents on the issue it had become apparent that most were in favour of the process. However, many had raised issues with the proposed 'Mimram' name of the ward and requested this be changed. He proposed that this be changed to 'Codicote and Kimpton' ward and this was seconded by Councillor Ralph Muncer.

Councillor Dennis-Harburg and Councillor Brown agreed to incorporate the amendment into the original motion.

Councillor Steve Jarvis noted that he agreed with comments made by Councillor Muir with regard to the new houses in Baldock and suggested that these residents would not consider themselves part of Bygrave and it would be inappropriate to do so. There would be issues with the villages becoming part of a larger ward and the focus would be on the highest populated

area in the new Baldock housing. Overall he agreed with the proposal, but suggested this ward was reviewed again.

Councillor Alistair Willoughby agreed with other comments regarding the Baldock proposals and noted that there was consensus that the new houses would be part of Baldock. Therefore these new residents would be part of the town and could not have their needs met by being part of a wider rural ward.

Councillor Tom Tyson noted the aim of the review was to create a good pattern of wards that should reflect community evidence and links, but the proposals to combine new housing in Baldock with the rural surrounding areas did not meet these requirements and there would be an obvious conflict between town and rural residents.

Councillor Claire Strong noted that following consultation with Parish Councils they had advised that they were not content with the proposed names of some of the Southern Rural wards. She noted that concerns had been raised about the name 'Offley and Pirton', as this omitted Lilley, and that the proposed 'Langley, Preston and Walden' ward name was inappropriate as there was no village called Walden. Councillor Strong proposed that the wording be amended to highlight that the Council objected to the ward names of 'Offley and Pirton' and 'Langley, Preston and Walden' and recommend that these instead be named 'Offa' and 'Hitchwood' respectively.

Councillor Dennis-Harburg and Councillor Brown agreed to incorporate these amendments into the original motion.

Councillor George Davies echoed comments made by Councillor Terry Tyler and noted that the exclusion of the development sites from Great Ashby was not satisfactory. He highlighted the section in the report which confirmed that this review could only affect district boundaries and could not impact parish boundaries. Therefore it was important that a Community Governance Review was carried out to amend the boundaries of the parish and this could be completed in the future following these changes proposed.

Having been proposed by Councillor Dennis-Harburg and seconded by Councillor Brown, with proposed amendments from the debate incorporated, the Chair moved to a vote and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Council approved the response to the LGBCE consultation, attached as Appendix A for submission to the LGBCE, subject to the following amendments:

- Point 4.e to remove suggested ward name 'Mimram' and retain the suggested ward name by the Commission of 'Codicote and Kimpton'.
- Point 4.f to include objection of the proposed ward name 'Langley, Preston and Walden' and that the ward name should instead be referred to as 'Hitchwood' (being the former name for this area and a more accurate reflection of the different communities in the proposed ward).
- Point 4.h to include objection of the proposed ward name 'Offley and Pirton' and the ward name should instead be referred to as 'Offa'.
- Point 7 to include that the Council 'strongly objects' to the proposals regarding Baldock and specifically the proposed Ashwell and Weston ward, rather than it 'has significant concerns'.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

Chair