NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISION SHEET

Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth, SG6 3JF on Tuesday, 9th January, 2024 at 7.30 pm

1   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Matt Barnes, Clare Billing, Adam Compton, Ian Moody and Mick Debenham.

Having given due notice Councillor Daniel Allen substituted for Councillor Debenham.

2   MINUTES - 7 NOVEMBER AND 5 DECEMBER 2023

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on '7 November 2023 as amended and 5 December 2023' 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)   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.

(3)   The Chair advised that for the purposes of clarification clause 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution does not apply to this meeting.

5   PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this meeting.

6   URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS

No urgent or general exception items were received.

7   CALLED-IN ITEMS

There have been no called-in items.

8   MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

No questions had been submitted by Members.

9   RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That the report entitled 'Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee' was noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and comment on actions and feedback received regarding resolutions previously made.

10   Q2 UPDATE ON PROGRESS AGAINST THE COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN

RESOLVED: That the Committee identified any project(s) for which they would like to receive a more detailed update.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the Committee noted the progress against Council projects as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A) including changes to milestones, performance indicators and risks, and made recommendations and comments to Cabinet.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: 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.

11   LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET:

(1) That Cabinet note the results of the review of the policies of the NHLP set out in Appendix A and the PAS toolkit in Appendix B.

(2) That Cabinet agree that a full review and update of the NHLP is undertaken.

(3) That work commences during 2024/25 on updating the technical studies needed to provide a robust evidence base to inform an update of the Local Plan and early community engagement take place.

(4) That a further report on the detailed scope of the update and the timetable for its preparation, submission and examination is prepared at the earliest opportunity once the implications of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are better understood and the statutory framework required to implement the reforms has been approved.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To ensure that North Herts Council fulfils its commitments as set out in Policy IMR2 of the North Herts Local Plan which requires the Council to undertake a whole plan review by the end of 2023 to determine whether the plan needs to be updated either in whole or in part.

12   2024 - 2028 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet approves the 2024 - 2028 Marketing and Communications Strategy.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

(1) With residents facing a cost-of-living crisis and council budgets being tightened further, it has never been more important for councils to communicate effectively with their audiences.

(2) Effective communication is critical as it has the power to engage communities, challenge misconceptions, build trust and confidence in the council and through that, strengthen relationships with residents, stakeholders, and staff.

(3) Although communications help to tell the story of North Herts Council (and improve resident perceptions of the council), marketing is needed to promote and raise awareness of our vision, priorities, and themes, to ensure that the right people, get the right message, at the right time through their preferred channel of choice.

(4) It is therefore recommended, that the 2024 - 2028 strategy is a Marketing and Communications Strategy.

13   COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS (MARCH - JUNE 2023)

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet comment on and note the key findings and observations from round one of the Community Survey and comment on the approach to future surveys (as detailed in section 8.5).

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure that Cabinet is aware of the results of the Community Survey (our first digital residents' survey) and how they compare to the Local Government Association (LGA) June 23 Resident Satisfaction phone survey results.

14   OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Committee prioritised topics for inclusion in the work programme attached as Appendix A and, where appropriate, determined the high-level form and timing of scrutiny input.

(2) That the Committee, having considered the most recent iteration of the Forward Plan, as attached at Appendix B, suggested a list of items to be considered at its meetings in the coming civic year.

(3) That the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan as attached at Appendix C was considered.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

(1) To allow the Committee to set a work programme which provides focused Member oversight, encourages open debate and seeks to achieve service improvement through effective policy development and meaningful policy and service change.

(2) The need to observe Constitutional requirements and monitor the Forward Plan for appropriate items to scrutinise remains a key aspect of work programming.