

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,  
Letchworth  
on Thursday, 25th January, 2024 at 7.30 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors: Daniel Allen (Chair), Chris Lucas (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Amy Allen, David Barnard, Matt Barnes, Clare Billing, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, Cathy Brownjohn, Val Bryant, Sam Collins, Juan Cowell, Mick Debenham, Elizabeth Dennis, Dominic Griffiths, Chris Hinchliff, Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Daniel Marsh, Nigel Mason, Bryony May, Gerald Morris, Ralph Muncer, Sean Nolan, Louise Peace, Tom Plater, Sean Prendergast, Claire Strong, Mandi Tandi, Richard Thake, Tamsin Thomas, Terry Tyler, Tom Tyson, Phil Weeder, Alistair Willoughby, Dave Winstanley and Daniel Wright-Mason

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Anne Banner (Benefits Manager), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Jo Dufficy (Service Director - Customers), Geraldine Goodwin (Revenues Manager), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Callum Reeve (Democratic Services Apprentice), Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community) and Sjanel Wickenden (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Margaret Waller (Independent Remuneration Panel), Tom Etheridge (Independent Remuneration Panel) and Julie Byrom (Independent Remuneration Panel)

**ALSO PRESENT:** At the commencement of the meeting there were 2 members of the public present.

#### 250 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

*Audio recording – 2 minutes 10 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Raj Bhakar, Adam Compton, Faye Frost, Ian Moody, Michael Muir, Lisa Nash and Michael Weeks.

Councillor James Denselow was absent.

#### 251 MINUTES - 23 NOVEMBER 2023

*Audio Recording – 2 minutes 35 Seconds*

Councillor Claire Strong noted that in the minutes of the 23 November 2023 Councillor Tom Plater was recorded as Tom Plate and asked that this be amended.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 23 November 2023 as amended be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

**252 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 47 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

**253 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 53 seconds*

*N.B Councillor Juan Cowell entered the Council Chamber at 19:34.*

- (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 advised that the normal procedure rules in respect of debate and times to speak will apply.
- (5) The Chair advised that 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution did not apply to this meeting. A comfort break would be held at an appropriate time, should proceedings continue at length.
- (6) The Chair reminded the Committee about the upcoming Chair's Civic Event and Awards, being held on Friday 1 March 2024.
- (7) The Chair held a minute's silence to mark Holocaust Memorial Day

*N.B Councillor Tom Tyson entered the Council Chamber at 19:37.*

**254 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*Audio recording – 8 minutes 36 seconds*

There was no public participation.

**255 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

*Audio recording – 8 minutes 42 seconds*

There were two questions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11.

**(A) Home Internet for Officers**

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Ian Albert (Executive Member for Finance and IT).

“How much has the Council spent on providing home internet for Officers since 2019?”

Councillor Ian Albert gave a response as follows:

“I assumed that you might be referring to a Freedom of Information request we had from the Taxpayers Alliance last year where we provided a full response in relation to staff working at home payments, we do allow staff that work at home to claim an allowance towards additional costs, but in direct response to your question, we do not pay for Officers home internet bills.”

Councillor Ralph Muncer asked a supplementary question, as follows:

“In response to that Freedom of Information request I am sure that many members of the public will be quite simply shocked that some of their taxpayer’s money is going towards funding home internet for Officers to an extent. So will he commit to withdrawing this scheme for Officers and encouraging Officers who do not have access to suitable home internet to work from home, sorry forgive me to work from the Council Offices of which six million of taxpayer’s money was only recently spent on refurbishing them.”

Councillor Albert responded:

“So the answer to Councillor Muncer is no, working at home is good for the organisation, working from home has many benefits for staff as well as the Council and our residents, increases our resilience and business continuity as we saw during the pandemic. It has not led to any downturn in productivity, we are aware of the cost of living crisis and with limited pay increase, we feel a contribution to employees working from home costs is fair. Indeed 80% of our staff value, indeed highly valued the allowance. The Local Government Association says flexible working is good for retention and morale and gives people the ability to have more balance which is good from a health perspective, but the important thing here is balancing what if the needs of the business and the needs of our staff it’s a win-win we believe we have and that’s where we are, but I know Councillor Muncer is also keen on financial returns and if I haven’t yet managed to convince him about the importance of working home we have also demonstrated some very clear financial benefits from homeworking. For floor two we are receiving annual rental incomes of nearly £50,000 a year, we are also recharging costs of over £50,000 including business energy usage, broadband etc. Altogether this means we have £100,000 worth of returned, more than twice the amount we are paying currently in working at home allowances. Indeed, that money that we get generated may increase even more with potential future letting of floor 3. So once again this administration is showing how we carefully manage our resident’s money and actually carefully work with our staff to actually get the best from them and the best for our residents.”

## **(B) Impact of Waste Service Design on Rural Communities**

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Amy Allen (Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management).

“What steps will be taken to ensure Rural Communities such as Kimpton and Codicote are not disproportionately and adversely impacted by the proposed Service Design Changes pertaining to the new Waste Contract?”

Councillor Amy Allen gave a response as follows:

“It is hard to answer because at this stage, there no decision has been made about what bins if any are going because these decisions will not be made until we have completed the procurement and are moving our attention into mobilising the next contract because nothing is finalised yet. The intention is to do preliminary work behind the scenes with Officers, with Officers liaising with our colleagues in Parks to assess the potential for removal against the set criterion.

We haven't drawn up the criteria yet but as mentioned before we will be using the rap guidance - a link regarding said guidance which includes the information on the bin infrastructure, the right bin in the right place, should be in your Council email box Councillor Muncer as soon as I send it, in case you have not seen it, it is actually quite an interesting read. Once the proposed criteria is ready I will be able to share it more with ward Councillors, based on those criteria the potential for removal list will be shared with Members the proviso being that if Members collectively want to keep a bin than another will have to go. We will be asking Members to consider the need for the bin. We are also happy to engage with Parish Councillors who will no doubt have the knowledge of need in their Parish. The decision will ultimately need to be made by the District Council. I do appreciate that everyone would like answers now but we simply do not have the capacity to undertake another project until the procurement work is complete. I know this is frustrating. Regarding bulky waste collections, these are changes that bring us in line with other Councils, this seems to work for them and we have worked extensively with bidders and they have come back with ways to help counteract the impacts of the rampant inflation that has affected the UK and caused the price of this contract to have soared beyond expectations. I do hope that answers your question and I will forward the pdf to you."

Councillor Ralph Muncer asked a supplementary question, as follows:

"Fly tipping is an issue which disproportionately impacts rural communities within our District, now in April of last year I questioned the Executive Member on the impact of the cut to residual waste collections on fly tipping across the district and I was told by her and I quote it is quite unlikely we will see an increase in fly tipping, despite that being contrary to what Officers had written in their report so the question I have for the Executive Member we are now in January 2023, we are now seeing a cut to residents recycling collection we are going to be seeing a cut to the bulky waste collection services does she still agree with her comments in April 2023 that is quite unlikely we will see an increase in fly tipping or would she like to reassess her comments."

Councillor Amy Allen responded:

"Thank you for the invitation to reassess, so I know that there is going to be some adjustments and changes and I felt personally that regards to purple bin waste would not become a fly tipping issue, I would like to actually respond to the point about the recycling, the recycling is not actually being cut, it is going to be spread across two bins instead of one, and because of the volume and the changes that are being made there is actually going to be overall for a majority of households there are going to have more space for their recycling overall even with each bin being collected three weekly. This was actually done as a response to as well because of the confusion that seemed to be likely to be caused from it being a three weekly purple, a two weekly recycling etc etc. Now you are putting a bin out every week and you just need to remember which time to put out your garden waste, so because you are putting a bin out every week, it is less likely you are going to miss it, it is less likely you are going to have these issues and overall there is actually going to be more space for the recycling because of having a whole extra bin to put all your papers and cardboard into. Again none of these details are completely 100% finalised because we are still waiting to finish the procurement process. I do hope that has answered your question in some way Councillor Muncer."

## 256 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

*Audio recording – 17 minutes 54 seconds*

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

## **A) Anti Luton-Airport Expansion**

Councillor Chris Lucas proposed the motion as follows:

“Council notes that on 13th of October, The Parliamentary- Under Secretary of State for Local Government and Building Safety, Lee Rowley, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and The Parliamentary- Under Secretary of State for Roads and Local Transport, Richard Holden MP, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport gave their approval for London Luton Airport Operations Ltd. (LLAOL) to expand from its current 18 million passengers per annum to 19 million passengers per annum. We, the members of North Hertfordshire Council, express our firm opposition to this decision and to the further expansion of Luton Airport, currently being examined by National Infrastructure Planning, to 32 million passengers per annum for the following reasons:

### 1. Environmental Concerns:

a. The additional air traffic resulting from this expansion will contribute to poor air quality, posing significant health risks to residents; especially children, the elderly and individuals with respiratory conditions.

b. Aviation is widely recognised as both one of the most carbon-intensive forms of transport and one of the most difficult to decarbonise. This means that aviation could well be the largest contributor to UK greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, particularly if demand continues to grow. Expansion of Luton Airport will lead to an increase in these emissions, further accelerating climate change, and violating our local and national sustainability goals. This is in direct conflict with NHC’s Air Quality Action Plan (as published in February 2018) and our efforts to improve air quality and combat climate change.

c. This expansion will inevitably lead to the destruction of natural habitats and green spaces. The loss of these areas not only harms local wildlife but also diminishes the overall quality of life for residents who rely on these spaces for recreation and relaxation.

### 2. Noise Pollution:

a. The expansion of the airport will undoubtedly lead to increased noise pollution, disrupting the peace and tranquillity of our neighbourhoods. This will have adverse effects on the mental health and physical well-being of our residents, particularly those living within close proximity to the airport.

b. Sleep disturbance, stress, and potential damage to children's educational outcomes are associated with increased noise pollution.

### 3. Traffic Congestion:

a. Expansion at Luton Airport will lead to an increased number of both passengers and airport staff which will exacerbate traffic congestion on our roads, leading to longer commute times and decreased road safety.

b. Our road networks are already strained, and the expansion will only exacerbate the problem.

4. Impact on Local Economy: The economic benefits associated with the airport may benefit the residents of Luton but will likely have the inverse effect on our local economy in the long-term, due to people avoiding our towns altogether as a result of the traffic congestion and delays.

5. Alternatives and Mitigation:

a. All relevant stakeholders (local authorities and local communities) should explore alternatives to airport expansion, such as investing in improved public transportation and sustainable travel options.

b. A full, in-depth, robust and transparent Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and an Environmental and Social Governance Report (ESG) has not been carried out on the commissioning authority (Luton Borough Council) and all the suppliers, which means that residents have no idea of the short, medium and long-term impact that an expanded Luton Airport will have on their local environment.

The Council resolves that:

The Leader and the Deputy Leader write jointly to the Leader, Deputy Leader, Luton Borough Council's Chief Executive, the Managing Director of Luton Rising (the trading name of LLAOL), the Leaders/Deputy Leaders of all surrounding local government authorities, all relevant (local) members of parliament, the Secretary of State and the Shadow Secretary of State for Transport clearly stating that we as a Council are opposed to any further expansion of Luton Airport".

Councillor Sam Collins seconded the motion.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor David Barnard
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Tom Plater
- Councillor Dominic Griffiths.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, the motion, was:

**RESOLVED:** The Council resolved that the Leader and the Deputy Leader write jointly to the Leader, Deputy Leader, Luton Borough Council's Chief Executive, the Managing Director of Luton Rising (the trading name of LLAOL), the Leaders/Deputy Leaders of all surrounding local government authorities, all relevant (local) members of parliament, the Secretary of State and the Shadow Secretary of State for Transport clearly stating that we as a Council are opposed to any further expansion of Luton Airport.

**B) White Ribbon Motion**

Councillor Sean Prendergast proposed the motion as follows:

"Across the UK misogyny, harassment and violence towards women and girls is endemic. The White Ribbon campaign is at the forefront of campaigning to both end domestic violence and to eradicate attitudes that condone domestic abuse. This motion highlights their work and how North Herts council can support them.

This Council notes that:

- ONS figures show that almost one in three women aged 16-59 will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, that two women a week in England and Wales are killed by a current or former partner, that over half a million women are raped or sexually assaulted each year and that a YouGov poll shows that a third of girls have experienced sexual harassment in schools;
- North Hertfordshire Council is proud to actively support organisations who have continually fought for the safety and protection of women.
- According to crime-survey and other government data, victims disproportionately come from demographic groups that already experience inequality and additional challenges in our society, including those who are mixed-race, have disabilities, or are transgender.

This Council further notes that:

- White Ribbon UK is the leading charity with a mission to end male violence against women and part of the global White Ribbon movement.
- White Ribbon Day is marked annually on 25th November, the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women, by encouraging men and boys to pledge never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women and to show this by wearing a white ribbon on the day and a week or two afterwards; and
- White Ribbon UK operate a system of male Ambassadors and female Champions all with the aim of encouraging men to take the pledge and help to eradicate male violence against women.

This Council believes male violence against women can never be condoned and North Hertfordshire Council should do everything in its power to ensure women are safe. As part of this, the council should facilitate and encourage participation by councillors and staff in the White Ribbon Campaign.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- (1) Encourage all male councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge to never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women.
- (2) Work towards White Ribbon accreditation, joining the large number of public sector bodies that have already done so.
- (3) Mark White Ribbon Day on 25 November each year (aim for 2024, if not 2025) and encourage participation among councillors, council staff and local organisations.
- (4) Continue to work with organisations and support campaigns for the end of violence against women and the promotion of healthy relationships.
- (5) Ask the leader and deputy leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Education to request further work be done in support of all elements of this motion.
- (6) Call out all forms of sexual objectification and all its negative outcomes and encourage others to do the same. Championing the wellbeing of everyone, particularly of women and girls, and encouraging the education of everyone, particularly of men and boys”.

Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded the motion.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Tom Plater
- Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Tamsin Thomas
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Daniel Marsh
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Amy Allen

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, the motion, was:

**RESOLVED:** The Council resolved to:

- (1) Encourage all male councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge to never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women.
- (2) Work towards White Ribbon accreditation, joining the large number of public sector bodies that have already done so.
- (3) Mark White Ribbon Day on 25 November each year (aim for 2024, if not 2025) and encourage participation among councillors, council staff and local organisations.
- (4) Continue to work with organisations and support campaigns for the end of violence against women and the promotion of healthy relationships.
- (5) Ask the leader and deputy leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Education to request further work be done in support of all elements of this motion.
- (6) Call out all forms of sexual objectification and all its negative outcomes and encourage others to do the same. Championing the wellbeing of everyone, particularly of women and girls, and encouraging the education of everyone, particularly of men and boys.

### **C) Health Intervention**

Councillor Alistair Willoughby proposed the motion as follows, noting that further to that published it was being amended to remove reference to *'particularly against women and girls'* within point 'n' of the motion and the addition of *'and Deputy Leader'* in points 5 and 6 of the motion:

"Council notes that:

- a. A person's opportunity for good health starts before they have the need for healthcare. Therefore, the responsibility for good health must go beyond that of the health and social care systems.
- b. People with health problems are more susceptible to unemployment, lower earnings, sickness absence, and lower household income. Every year, 300,000 people stop work and become reliant on health-related benefits. A further 140 million working days are lost to sickness, costing the UK economy £15 billion. A healthy population is essential for a thriving society and economy.



- c. In 2020/21, one in five people in the UK lived in poverty, over half of these were living in working households. Inadequate incomes can cause poor mental health due to stress, the lack of feeling in control, being unable to access resources or adopt healthy behaviours. Living with day-to-day stresses of poverty in early childhood can have damaging effects on long-term health outcomes.
- d. Children living in cold homes are more than twice as likely to suffer respiratory problems than children living in warm homes.
- e. Young adults who are unemployed are more than twice as likely to suffer from mental ill health than those in work.
- f. There are nine times as many fatal and serious injuries among pedestrians aged 5-9 in the most deprived areas than the least. Streets and public spaces that are well designed also encourage active travel and can have other positive impacts such as reducing vehicle speeds. Good public transport also reduces poor air quality.
- g. Good green spaces enable people to be more physically active, feel safe and secure, and socialise and play.
- h. Food insecurity is caused by a multitude of interrelated factors across the levels of national society, community, household, and individual. It is three times more expensive to get the energy we need from healthy food than unhealthy food. Diet-related ill health is a leading cause of preventable illness in the UK, and a significant driver of health inequalities. It is also detrimental to mental health, being a cause of significant stress and anxiety in households.
- i. Social isolation and loneliness are associated with a 30% increased risk of heart disease and stroke. Positive friendships and being part of a community helps protect people from these damaging health effects.
- j. North Herts is one of the healthier places to live in Hertfordshire with an overall Health Index score of 120.1. However we know this headline figure masks areas of real need. 10.8% of people over the age of 65 in the district are in fuel poverty. 17.4% of children in the district live in low-income households. 61.2% of adults in the district are overweight or obese and 17.2% of children are overweight or obese when they start reception.
- k. The recent report summary published by The King's Fund on 'Driving better health outcomes through integrated care systems: The role of district councils' states that district councils have a valuable role to play within integrated care systems (ICSs) as we can influence wider determinants of health, can act and react in agile ways, and have strong connections with our local communities.
- l. The King's Fund report summary also says that district councils are important players in areas such as managing long-term conditions, reducing obesity, improving mental health and wellbeing, combatting food and fuel poverty, assisting hospital discharge, and shaping health-creating environments due to their powers in several areas such as housing, local economies, and the built and natural environment.
- m. There are significant physical and mental health inequalities among several demographics nationwide, including women and the LGBTQIA+, Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities among others. The Health Inequalities Steering Board (NHS Hertfordshire) commissioned a piece of work setting out some improvements to be made from 2023 which highlights some of the mental ill health issues that are prevalent in the participant group and the lack of good services to provide aid.

- n. Acts of violence and the effects of sexual violence on mental health and wellbeing cannot be understated. People abused during childhood in education, employment, and training may never fully recover to achieve their full potential, even if they have therapy. We need more investment from National Government to support trauma-informed therapy.
- o. People with intellectual disabilities are subject to multiple disadvantages such as limited education, employment, and skills training opportunities. Therefore, more investment from National Government is needed to support our communities to provide these opportunities.
- p. The challenge we face locally is a lack of hyper-localised data which can be utilised effectively to target the health interventions our communities need. But we know anecdotally the places where people need help overcoming the determinants of poor health – from damp homes to clean air to access to healthy activities.

All of this demonstrates the great need for this council to work across portfolios to bring about better health and social interventions and outcomes through our policies.

The Health Foundation sets out a whole council approach for local authorities and this administration does a good deal of work in this arena. We already support positive health outcomes via our Healthy Hub, and funding of the Citizens' Advice Bureau which helps reduce mental health inequalities and prevent depression and anxiety. But Local Authorities need to try to do as much as they can and ensure, where possible, that we consider the health and well-being impacts of the decisions we take.

The role of District Councils in effecting integrated health outcomes is well evidenced. As an authority, we should aim to consider the health impacts alongside other implications [financial, legal, risk, human resource environmental, social value and equalities].

This Council, therefore, resolves to incorporate the following into service planning and funding streams and:

1. Look to include the consideration of health and well-being implications in the decision-making process across all portfolios and service directorates, with increased support resources for officers (such as toolkits, assessment logic flows etc.);
2. Ask officers to ensure that, as the Council's policies are routinely reviewed, specific consideration is given to how policies and our related decisions and actions, affect our contribution to health interventions and outcomes, and where necessary, update these policies to have better impacts wherever possible. As part of this, Overview & Scrutiny should be given the opportunity to review policy changes and regularly review progress on health interventions;
3. Ask officers to continue to liaise with Hertfordshire County Council colleagues and continue to work with the Herts and West Essex and Cambridge and Peterborough Integrated Care Boards in their work on this, to take account of the findings in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and to encourage the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny and each Area Forum Chair to invite presentation of information on population health, health initiatives, and service provision for consideration by their respective committees and the wider public, at least once annually.
4. Ask officers to investigate the most appropriate training for Members and officers about how to promote health interventions, outcomes, and policies for consideration by Council;

5. Request that the Leader write to the Secretary of State for Health requesting that they provide the necessary powers and resources to make local action on health interventions and outcomes easier and to support the implementation of the recommendations of the joint LGA and NHS Confederation report on Integrated Care Partnerships (Integrated Care Partnerships: Driving the future vision for health and care | Local Government Association).
6. Request that the Leader write to the Chief Executive of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB requesting that they initiate a process of constitutional variation (as provided for under section 1.6 of the ICB constitution), with a view to inviting a third Local Authority partner member to join the ICB, and to consider allowing for that member to be drawn from either Hertfordshire County Council or North Hertfordshire District Council.
7. Continue to work with partners across the District, County and wider region to deliver widespread positive health interventions and outcomes”.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis seconded the motion, as amended.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Daniel Marsh
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Sam Collins
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Richard Thake

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, the motion, was:

**RESOLVED:** The Council would incorporate the following into service planning and funding streams and:

- (1) Look to include the consideration of health and well-being implications in the decision-making process across all portfolios and service directorates, with increased support resources for officers (such as toolkits, assessment logic flows etc.);
- (2) Ask Officers to ensure that, as the Council's policies are routinely reviewed, specific consideration is given to how policies and our related decisions and actions, affect our contribution to health interventions and outcomes, and where necessary, update these policies to have better impacts wherever possible. As part of this, Overview & Scrutiny should be given the opportunity to review policy changes and regularly review progress on health interventions;
- (3) Ask Officers to continue to liaise with Hertfordshire County Council colleagues and continue to work with the Herts and West Essex and Cambridge and Peterborough Integrated Care Boards in their work on this, to take account of the findings in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and to encourage the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny and each Area Forum Chair to invite presentation of information on population health, health initiatives, and service provision for consideration by their respective committees and the wider public, at least once annually.

- (4) Ask officers to investigate the most appropriate training for Members and officers about how to promote health interventions, outcomes, and policies for consideration by Council;
- (5) Request that the Leader and Deputy Leader write to the Secretary of State for Health requesting that they provide the necessary powers and resources to make local action on health interventions and outcomes easier and to support the implementation of the recommendations of the joint LGA and NHS Confederation report on Integrated Care Partnerships (Integrated Care Partnerships: Driving the future vision for health and care Local Government Association).
- (6) Request that the Leader and Deputy Leader write to the Chief Executive of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB requesting that they initiate a process of constitutional variation (as provided for under section 1.6 of the ICB constitution), with a view to inviting a third Local Authority partner member to join the ICB, and to consider allowing for that member to be drawn from either Hertfordshire County Council or North Hertfordshire District Council.
- (7) Continue to work with partners across the District, County and wider region to deliver widespread positive health interventions and outcomes.

*N.B Following conclusion of this item, there was a break in proceedings at 21:13 and the meeting reconvened at 21:24. During the break Councillors Sam Collins, Juan Cowell and Dominic Griffiths left the Chamber and did not return.*

## **257 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

Audio recording – 1 hour 52 minutes 51 seconds

The Chair advised that the items referred from Cabinet would be taken with the respective items on the agenda.

## **258 REVIEW OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2024/25**

Audio recording – 1 hour 52 minutes 11 seconds.

*N.B Councillor Phil Weeder returned to the Council Chamber at 21:28.*

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the item 'Review of Members Allowances Scheme 2024/25' and stated that:

- The Council is required to agree on an annual basis a Scheme of Allowances for the following financial year.
- When making or amending the Scheme, Council should consider the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP).
- Council last considered the Scheme at the Council meeting in January 2023, where it was agreed for one year only, therefore the IRP have conducted a full review of the scheme.
- Since the last review a new IRP had been appointed for a 4 year period, consisted of Margaret Waller and Tom Etheridge who were in person at the meeting and Julie Byrom who was attending the meeting remotely.

Margaret Waller, Independent Remuneration Panel member highlighted that:

- The recommendations referred to positions and not the people that occupied those roles.
- The role of a Councillor often came at a personal cost, and although paid a basic allowance the majority of Members had other jobs or income, to supplement this role.

- There were a number of approaches used to test the level of Basic Allowance, following which the IRP concluded that the rate was low and an increase of 6.6% was recommended to provide a solid basis for future Members.
- An attempt was made to depoliticise the Basic Allowance using a formula to baseline the allowance and this was highlighted within paragraph 5.4 of the IRP report. Although this had not been possible with regards to this review the IRP would address it as a key objective in future years.
- With the forthcoming 'all out' elections in 2024 and possibility of changes to the governance structure following the elections, it had not been considered prudent to increase the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) in excess of the Council pay award of 5.72%, although there were a few exceptions noted namely Chairs of Area Forums, Chair and Deputy of Council, Independent and Reserve Independent Persons of the Standards Committee and Independent Member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.
- The SRA for Area Forum Chairs was to be review next year, as the function of the Area Forums had changed in 2023-24.
- The SRA for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council and the Independent Persons payment for the Standards Committee and Finance Audit and Risk Committee remained frozen with the details highlighted within paragraphs 11 of the IRP report.
- The Independent Carers allowance was recommended to increase to £13.15 per hour.
- The Travel and Subsistence allowance had been amended to included travel by second class train.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Daniel Allen

In response to questions, Ms Waller advised that:

- It was very apparent that the Basic Allowance was too low. However, the IRP were more cautious towards the SRA payments especially with the likelihood of future structure changes.
- The role of the Chair of the Council depended on the enthusiasm and ability of the Chair, and the amount of time engaged in the role. A Chair in full time employment may not have the time to spend making the role successful, and the relationship and share of responsibilities between Chair and Vice Chair varied.

In response to a question, Mr Etheridge advised that recommendation 6.6 of the IRP report highlighted that clear and publicly transparent performance expectations were recommended for roles which were covered by an SRA.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis stated that, it was good that the report was depoliticise and this would encourage people from all backgrounds to feel confident to stand. The pay increase was the same as received by Officers and the SRAs were based on the role and not the person. The increase to the dependent carers allowance and the addition of train fares were a positive change, and in line with the Climate Emergency declaration.

Councillor Ruth Brown stated that the IRP had asked extensive questions and conducted interviews to come to these recommendations. A decision was made in 2021 and 2022 to freeze the allowance which as a result the allowance had fallen behind other local authorities, the report aimed to benchmark the allowance to similar Councils. The cost of living crisis is affecting all and whilst this increase was in line with inflation, it was still a cut in real terms. The increase would encourage candidates from a wider audience.

Councillor David Levett stated that to cover inflation there was a need to increase the allowance, however the allowance was not the reason he became a Councillor. The allowance helped towards performing the duties of a Councillor but was not considered as a wage. Times were hard for everyone and whilst the recommended increase was appreciated, it was not the right time to take it.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded the motion.

Councillor David Levett proposed an amendment to the recommendations, that Council accepted recommendations 2.1 and 2.3 but chose not to increase the allowances, thereby retaining the current Scheme. Councillor Richard Thake seconded the amendment.

The following Members took part in the debate on the proposed amendment:

- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Tom Plater
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Simon Bloxham
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Chris Lucas
- Councillor Dan Marsh
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Keith Hoskins

Councillor Daniel Allen requested a recorded vote.

Points raised in debate included:

- All out elections would occur this year, following which it was more appropriate to then make changes to the Scheme.
- With the increased waste costs, it was not an appropriate time to be increasing Councillor payments.
- Councillors should be there for North Herts residents not for money.
- The IRP is independent to remove politics from any decision making.
- The IRP completed the review, made recommendations, and had presented a report - Members should listen to their advice.
- The report should be accepted but the pay increase frozen.
- Councillors did not have to accept their Basic Allowance payment, or any part of it. A Councillor could give notice to the Democratic Services Manager to forego any part of their entitlement.
- Concerns regarding perception of increasing allowances to residents.
- Only a few Councillors submitted claims for the travel and subsistence allowance.
- The allowance was for the 51 Members that would be elected in May 2024, not necessarily those making the decision.
- It was not the right time but was there ever a right time.
- Last year the same conclusion was made for the allowances at County, and they were accepted.

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- To accept the recommendation and payment was a personal view, however other Members may need the increase.
- The allowance should be tracked with inflation, especially as Councillors were from all walks of life, but with the same aim, to represent the residents of North Herts.
- People were being held back from entering politics due to financial restraints.

Having been proposed and seconded and, a recorded vote having been requested, on being put to the vote the amendment was LOST as follows:

YES	: 7
ABSTAIN	: 1
NO	: 29
TOTAL	: 37

The individual results were as follows:

Cllr Daniel Allen	NO
Cllr Alistair Willoughby	NO
Cllr Amy Allen	NO
Cllr Bryony May	NO
Cllr Cathy Brownjohn	NO
Cllr Chris Hinchliff	NO
Cllr Chris Lucas	NO
Cllr Clare Billing	NO
Cllr Claire Strong	
Cllr Daniel Marsh	NO
Cllr Daniel Wright-Mason	NO
Cllr Dave Winstanley	NO
Cllr David Barnard	ABSTAIN
Cllr David Levett	YES
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis	NO
Cllr Gerald Morris	YES
Cllr Ian Albert	NO
Cllr Ian Mantle	NO
Cllr Keith Hoskins	NO
Cllr Louise Peace	NO
Cllr Mandi Tandi	YES
Cllr Matt Barnes	NO
Cllr Mick Debenham	NO
Cllr Nigel Mason	NO
Cllr Philip Weeder	NO
Cllr Ralph Muncer	YES
Cllr Richard Thake	YES
Cllr Ruth Brown	NO
Cllr Sean Nolan	NO
Cllr Sean Prendergast	NO
Cllr Simon Bloxham	YES
Cllr Steve Jarvis	NO
Cllr Tamsin Thomas	NO
Cllr Terry Hone	YES
Cllr Terry Tyler	NO
Cllr Tom Plater	NO
Cllr Tom Tyson	NO
Cllr Val Bryant	NO

As such it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the amendment was lost.

Councillor David Levett requested that each of the recommendations be voted upon separately.

Councillor Ian Albert requested a recorded vote on the recommendations.

The original motion, having already been proposed and seconded, following a vote, the result of recommendation 2.1 was as follows:

YES	: 37
ABSTAIN	: 1
NO	: 0
TOTAL	: 38

The individual results were as follows:

Cllr Daniel Allen	YES
Cllr Alistair Willoughby	YES
Cllr Amy Allen	YES
Cllr Bryony May	YES
Cllr Cathy Brownjohn	YES
Cllr Chris Hinchliff	YES
Cllr Chris Lucas	YES
Cllr Claire Strong	YES
Cllr Clare Billing	YES
Cllr Daniel Marsh	YES
Cllr Daniel Wright-Mason	YES
Cllr Dave Winstanley	YES
Cllr David Barnard	ABSTAIN
Cllr David Levett	YES
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis	YES
Cllr Gerald Morris	YES
Cllr Ian Albert	YES
Cllr Ian Mantle	YES
Cllr Keith Hoskins	YES
Cllr Louise Peace	YES
Cllr Mandi Tandi	YES
Cllr Matt Barnes	YES
Cllr Mick Debenham	YES
Cllr Nigel Mason	YES
Cllr Philip Weeder	YES
Cllr Ralph Muncer	YES
Cllr Richard Thake	YES
Cllr Ruth Brown	YES
Cllr Sean Nolan	YES
Cllr Sean Prendergast	YES
Cllr Simon Bloxham	YES
Cllr Steve Jarvis	YES
Cllr Tamsin Thomas	YES
Cllr Terry Hone	YES
Cllr Terry Tyler	YES
Cllr Tom Plater	YES
Cllr Tom Tyson	YES
Cllr Val Bryant	YES



As such it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Council considered the report and recommendations of the IRP, as attached as Appendix A of the submitted report.

Having been proposed and seconded and following a vote, the result of recommendation 2.2 was as follows:

YES	: 29
ABSTAIN	: 5
NO	: 4
TOTAL	: 38

The individual results were as follows:

Cllr Daniel Allen	YES
Cllr Alistair Willoughby	YES
Cllr Amy Allen	YES
Cllr Bryony May	YES
Cllr Cathy Brownjohn	YES
Cllr Chris Hinchliff	YES
Cllr Chris Lucas	YES
Cllr Claire Strong	ABSTAIN
Cllr Clare Billing	YES
Cllr Daniel Marsh	YES
Cllr Daniel Wright-Mason	YES
Cllr Dave Winstanley	YES
Cllr David Barnard	ABSTAIN
Cllr David Levett	NO
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis	YES
Cllr Gerald Morris	NO
Cllr Ian Albert	YES
Cllr Ian Mantle	YES
Cllr Keith Hoskins	YES
Cllr Louise Peace	YES
Cllr Mandi Tandi	ABSTAIN
Cllr Matt Barnes	YES
Cllr Mick Debenham	YES
Cllr Nigel Mason	YES
Cllr Philip Weeder	YES
Cllr Ralph Muncer	NO
Cllr Richard Thake	ABSTAIN
Cllr Ruth Brown	YES
Cllr Sean Nolan	YES
Cllr Sean Prendergast	YES
Cllr Simon Bloxham	NO
Cllr Steve Jarvis	YES
Cllr Tamsin Thomas	YES
Cllr Terry Hone	ABSTAIN
Cllr Terry Tyler	YES
Cllr Tom Plater	YES
Cllr Tom Tyson	YES
Cllr Val Bryant	YES

As such it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Council agreed the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2024/2025 as set out in Appendix B of the submitted report

Having been proposed and seconded and following a vote, the result of recommendation 2.3 was as follows:

YES	: 37
ABSTAIN	: 0
NO	: 0
TOTAL	: 37

The individual results were as follows:

Cllr Alistair Willoughby	YES
Cllr Amy Allen	YES
Cllr Daniel Allen	
Cllr Bryony May	YES
Cllr Cathy Brownjohn	YES
Cllr Chris Hinchliff	YES
Cllr Chris Lucas	YES
Cllr Claire Strong	YES
Cllr Clare Billing	YES
Cllr Daniel Marsh	YES
Cllr Daniel Wright-Mason	YES
Cllr Dave Winstanley	YES
Cllr David Barnard	YES
Cllr David Levett	YES
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis	YES
Cllr Gerald Morris	YES
Cllr Ian Albert	YES
Cllr Ian Mantle	YES
Cllr Keith Hoskins	YES
Cllr Louise Peace	YES
Cllr Mandi Tandi	YES
Cllr Matt Barnes	YES
Cllr Mick Debenham	YES
Cllr Nigel Mason	YES
Cllr Philip Weeder	YES
Cllr Ralph Muncer	YES
Cllr Richard Thake	YES
Cllr Ruth Brown	YES
Cllr Sean Nolan	YES
Cllr Sean Prendergast	YES
Cllr Simon Bloxham	YES
Cllr Steve Jarvis	YES
Cllr Tamsin Thomas	YES
Cllr Terry Hone	YES
Cllr Terry Tyler	YES
Cllr Tom Plater	YES
Cllr Tom Tyson	YES
Cllr Val Bryant	YES

As such it was:

**RESOLVED** That Council expressed appreciation to the IRP for their work over the last year on this report.

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

**259 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2024/2025**

*Audio recording – 2 hours 50 minutes 30 seconds*

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, presented the Cabinet referral entitled 'Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-25' and highlighted that:

- The scheme was in keeping with the Council priority, to put people first.
- The scheme included veterans and care leavers and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) were considering funding Council Tax for care leavers up to the age of 21.
- Although work was ongoing to increase the care leaver age to 25, this was not currently included and was required to be actioned in conjunction with HCC.

*N.B Councillor Matt Barnes left the Council Chamber at 22:24.*

Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report entitled 'Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-25' and highlighted that:

- The scheme had achieved its aims after its first year, however this came with some additional costs. These costs had been fully offset by a discretionary scheme.
- The scheme supported residents in a time of high inflation.
- The Royal British Legion had discussed the scheme and the considerations given to veterans and concluded that the scheme fully met the needs of veterans.
- Work was ongoing within HCC regarding exemptions for 18-21 year olds.

*N.B Councillor Matt Barnes returned to the Council Chamber at 22:28.*

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to questions, the Executive Member for Finance and IT stated that:

- The Council worked with partners and other agencies to help residents back into employment, this scheme worked separately to that aim.
- The term customers could be changed to residents in the report.

In response to a question, the Benefits Manager stated that those claiming Universal Credit may also be employed and receive the benefit to supplement their wages.

In response to a request for clarification from Councillor Ruth Brown regarding the wording of recommendation 2.1, the Chair confirmed that the word should be 'banded' and not branded.

The Service Director- Legal and Community clarified that any Member in receipt of Universal Credit and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme should declare this. Following discussion there were no Members required to make a declaration of interest.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Tom Plater
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Amy Allen
- Councillor Tamsin Thomas
- Councillor Simon Bloxham

Points raised in debate:

- It was concerning that there were no consultee comments included in the report from HCC or the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner.
- The 25% discount for single dwellers was not the same as the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- Residents in receipt of Universal Credit may not automatically be eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Elizabeth Dennis seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED** That Council:

- (1) Approved the new banded scheme for working age applicants which remained unchanged for 2024/2025.
- (2) Noted that the new scheme has had a greater financial impact than expected, and any resultant Collection Fund shortfall would be split between the Council and its Major Precepting Authorities. The Council's share would be around 12%.
- (3) Noted that the Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Scheme, previously agreed to provide additional transitional support, had been underspent, largely due to the positive impacts of the main scheme. (The surplus of this would be used to off-set the impact on the District Council in relation to the main scheme).
- (4) Noted a further review was being undertaken during 2024/2025, to ascertain any further changes to be considered for the scheme in 2025/2026.

**REASONS FOR DECISIONS:**

To ensure that the Council had a Council Tax Reduction Scheme that continued to:

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

*N.B. Following the conclusion of this item at 22:40, there was a break in proceedings and the meeting reconvened at 22.52.*

**260 Q2 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (INTEGRATED CAPITAL AND TREASURY) MONITORING**

*Audio recording – 3 hours 19 minutes 58 seconds*

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, presented the Cabinet referral entitled 'Q2 Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury) Monitoring' and highlighted that Cabinet considered and agreed with the comments from the Finance Audit and Risk Committee.

Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report entitled 'Q2 Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury) Monitoring' and highlighted that:

- The Council generated £1.3 million of interest during the first 6 months of 2023-24 as shown at 8.10 of the report. The expectation for the full year was over £3 million.
- Investments were compliant with the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Integrated Capital and Treasury Management Strategy and complied with the Treasury Management practices of the Council. The current split of investments was detailed in the report.
- The full capital programme was highlighted in Appendix A, with the estimated capital expenditure for 2023-24 being £8.2 million a decrease of £2.4 million from the original forecast.
- The decrease in spend largely related to the reprofiling of projects into future years.
- Table 1 highlighted the detailed changes whilst items in Table 2 highlighted the projects that would start or continue into future years.
- Changes to the capital schemes were highlighted on page 64.
- The Local Authority Housing Fund scheme had been fully funded by a grant but was included within the report due to the value size. The majority of this risk sat with settle.
- Approval was sought for the Splash Pad refurbishment to be reprofiled so work could be completed this year 2023-24.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis seconded and there being no debate, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That Council noted the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2023 including the new Capital items.
- (2) That Council confirmed the addition of the Local Authority Housing Fund Phase 2 to the capital programme for 2023/24 and approved the reprofiling of Bancroft & Priory Splash Pads from 2024/25 into 2023/24. Both as detailed in table 3.

**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.

**261 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT REPORT - deferred from 23 November 2023**

*Audio Recording – 3 hours 25 minutes 12 seconds*

The Service Director – Legal and Community presented the report entitled 'Constitutional Amendment Report' and highlighted that:

- This item had been deferred from the Council meeting in November 2023.
- The amendments related to the Terms of Reference of the Planning Control Committee, the removal of Appendices 1 and 2 of Section 8 and, should recommendation 2.2 be approved, there were some further consequential changes.
- Recommendation 2.5 was a stand-alone recommendation and related to 8.6 of the report, not 8.7 as detailed in the recommendation.
- The amendments on page 102 of the report had been superseded by proposed amendments circulated in the supplementary document.

- Further proposed amendments to the report were detailed on pages 103 and 104.
- The recommendations were brought to address various issues raised with speaking at the Planning Control Committee over the last few years.

**Recommendation 2.1:**

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded the motion.

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed an amendment, that the word 'ward' be deleted in lines 2 and 11 of the proposed changes to section 8.4.5 9 (c) (iii) of the planning Committee Terms of Reference. Councillor Tom Tyson seconded the amendment.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Louise Peace
- Councillor Simon Bloxham
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

Points raised in debate included:

- The proposed changes may cause confusion for Planning Officers.
- Advice may be sought after a planning decision on enforcements.
- Planning applications can involve more than one ward.
- There should be a valid planning consideration provided to call in an application.
- This recommendation could lead to Members making erroneous or political call ins.
- Councillors are there to help residents, and Councillors should be able react when a resident asks for help.
- Living and working in a single ward can cause some conflicts.
- The proposed changes would strengthen the call-in process and should be used for genuine reasons.

Councillor Val Bryant sought a further amendment to the amended proposal, which was rejected by Councillor Jarvis.

The Service Director – Legal and Community clarified that another Ward Member can call-in an item for a Member that represented a single ward.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, the amendment was carried.

Having been proposed by Councillor Dennis and seconded by Councillor Brown, the substantive motion was put to a vote, and it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Full Council approved the proposed amendments to the Planning Control Committee's Terms of Reference as per 8.1 of this report, with the deletion of the word "Ward", in lines 2 and 11 of the proposed changes to section 8.4.5(c)(iii) of the Planning Control Committee's Terms of Reference.

**Recommendation 2.2:**

The Service Director – Legal and Community clarified that should recommendation 2.2 be accepted, then recommendations 2.3 and 2.4 would be considered.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

- (1) **RESOLVED:** That Full Council approved the removal of Appendices 1-2 to Section 8 of the Constitution.

**Recommendation 2.3:**

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded the motion.

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed an amendment, that the words 'Ward Member' be replaced by 'Member' in paragraph 1.5, that paragraph 1.9 be deleted, and that the recommendation read that the Council 'agrees' rather than 'notes'. Councillor Tom Tyson seconded the amendments.

The Service Director – Legal and Community stated that a sense check would be applied should the amendment be passed.

Councillor David Levett having already submitted amendments as published with the agenda, agreed with the amendment proposal from Councillor Jarvis, and stated that should the amendment be carried, he would withdraw his proposed amendment relating to paragraph 1.9.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, the amendment was carried.

Having been proposed by Councillor Dennis and seconded by Councillor Brown, the substantive motion was put to a vote, and it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Full Council agreed the proposed Procedure for Speaking at the Planning Control Committee (Appendix A), with the replacement of the words "Ward Member with Member" in paragraphs 1.5, and with the deletion of paragraph 1.9.

**Recommendation 2.4:**

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded the motion.

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed an amendment to the recommendation and requested that the following be added to the end of the recommendation, 'including changes to 6.1 and 6.2 to make them conform with the procedure as amended in 8.4.5 (c)(iii)'. Councillor Tom Tyson seconded the amendments.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, the amendment was carried.

Councillor David Levett advised that his proposal to amend recommendation 2.3 and the speaking time and number of public speakers still needed to be moved.

The Chair advised that recommendation 2.3 had been amended, debated, and voted on, however Councillor Levett had prepared a further amendment to recommendation 2.3 ahead of the meeting.

The Service Director – Legal and Community – stated that Council was unable to return to recommendation 2.3 as it had been voted on. However, recommendation 2.4 if carried, would allow amendments to be made to the procedure following consultation with Group Leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Control Committee and the Service Director – Legal and Community. An indicative vote as to whether Members supported the proposals put forward by Councillor Levett would be helpful to aide these discussions following the meeting.

The Chair suggested that there could be an additional recommendation and an indicative vote regarding the amendments put forward by Councillor Levett. Councillor Levett agreed to the suggestion, as the amendments had been put forward in November 2023, and there was no other alternative.

The Chair announced that there would be an indicative debate and vote on the proposals put forward by Councillor Levett.

*N.B There was a break in proceedings at 23:37 the meeting reconvened at 23.47.*

The Chair informed Members that they would consider recommendation 2.4, which had been amended and that, following a vote on recommendation 2.4, an additional indictive amendment 2.4(A) would be added and considered.

Having been proposed by Councillor Dennis and seconded by Councillor Brown, the substantive motion was put to a vote, and it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Full Council agreed to the principle, that if the Procedure at 2.2 required further amendment, that the Monitoring Officer may do so in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Control Committee, and the Group Leaders, including changes to 6.1 and 6.2 to make them conform with the procedure as amended in 8.4.5 (c)(iii).

#### **Indictive amendment 2.4(A)**

Councillor David Levett proposed an amendment to the speaking process that would allow objectors and supporter more opportunities to have a public say on any planning application. He proposed that rather than one group of objectors and supporter having 5 minutes speaking time, that there would be up to three groups of objectors and supporters, each having 3 minutes speaking time. Councillor Terry Hone seconded the amendment.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Tom Plater
- Councillor David Barnard
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Richard Thake

Points raised in debate included:

- Concerns were raised over how much time a single public speaker would receive.
- The Chair can extend the speaking time, with sufficient notice.
- The speakers would need to strictly adhere to timings.
- Generally, at meetings there are more objectors than supporters.



- Member Advocates and a planning agent / representative would still get 5 minutes each.
- There were concerns that if there was one speaker the time allowed would only be 3 minutes instead of the current 5 minutes.
- Questioned whether the time allocated to one public speaker could be 5 minutes, at the discretion of the Chair.
- It was important that public speakers attend, but maybe have 5 minutes for a principal speaker.
- There were concerns that a speaker may bring others to increase the speaking time allowed.
- Having 5 minutes for a single speaker and 3 minutes each for multiple speakers made more sense.
- The reasoning was sound but in practice this would consume a lot of time.
- Currently more than 1 speaker could share the 'slot', and for major applications public speaking could be increased to 10 minutes.
- The public have a right to have their concerns heard.
- Concerns regarding speaking time equality.
- 9 minutes maximum for multiple speakers and 5 minutes for a single speaker was more logical.

Councillor Levett amended his proposed changes and clarified that, should there be 1 speaker for the slot then they would have 5 minutes speaking time, if there were up to 3 speakers, they would have 3 minutes speaking time each.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, the indicative amendment was:

**RESOLVED:**

Whilst this is not a formal resolution, the following should be taken into account by the Monitoring Officer, in finalising the Procedure, in respect of section 1.5 to 1.8 be amended as follows:

- (i) Section 1.5, bullet points 1 and 3:

“Objectors” Group – a maximum of 3 persons against approval of the application, the speaking time will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis, and the right to address the Committee is confined to persons who have previously made written representations on the application (either as an individual or as part of a consulted group during the consultation).

“Supporters” Group – a maximum of 3 persons in favour of approval of the application and the right to address the Committee is confined to persons who have previously made written representations on the application (either as an individual or as part of a consulted groups during the consultation).

- (ii) Section 1.6

In the case of objectors and supporters, no more than three people may speak on an application.

- (iii) Section 1.7

In the case of objectors and supporters the time allocated to each speaker is 3 minutes however, should there be only one objector or support the time allocated to each speaker is 5 minute. This time limit is strictly adhered to.

(iv) Section 1.8

In the case of a Major application or being of significant public interest, the Chair may agree to extend the speaking time allocated to each "group". Any request to extend the speaking time should be made to the Chair in writing by 5pm, three clear working days prior to the meeting date. The Committee, Member & Scrutiny Team will be advised/ and then advise all registered speakers of the extension. Any agreed extension of time shall be offered to all registered speakers.

*N.B Councillor Tyler left the Chamber at 00:10 and did not return.*

**Recommendation 2.5:**

The Chair advised that the recommendation should refer to '8.6' and not '8.7'.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded the recommendation as amended.

Councillor David Levett confirmed that he would be withdrawing the amendment proposed to this recommendation.

On being put to the vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Full Council approved the amendments detailed in 8.6 regarding delegations to attest the affixing of the Council's Common Seal.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** Recommendations 2.1-2.3 are to deal with a number of situations that have arisen over the last year (or so). Recommendation 2.3-2.4 allows for greater flexibility to update a Council Procedure, rather than making this a Constitutional matter, when amendments are required. Recommendation 2.5 is for practical resource reasons for attesting/ sealing documents.

The meeting closed at 0.15 am

Chair