

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



10 April 2024

Our Ref Council 18 April 2024
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To: The Chair and Members of North Hertfordshire District Council

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

to be held in the

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON
ROAD, LETCHWORTH**

on

THURSDAY, 18TH APRIL, 2024

at

7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Thompson
Service Director – Legal and Community

****MEMBERS PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU DOWNLOAD ALL AGENDAS AND REPORTS VIA THE MOD.GOV APPLICATION ON YOUR TABLET BEFORE ATTENDING THE MEETING****

Agenda

Part I

Item		Page
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2.	MINUTES - 25 JANUARY 2024 AND 29 FEBRUARY 2024	5 - 46
	To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 25 January 2024 and 29 February 2024.	
3.	NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS	
	Members should notify the Chair of other business which they wish to be discussed at the end of either Part I or Part II business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency.	
	The Chair will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.	
4.	CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	
	<u>Climate Emergency</u>	
	The Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to achieving a target of zero carbon emissions by 2030 and helping local people and businesses to reduce their own carbon emissions.	
	A Cabinet Panel on the Environment has been established to engage with local people on matters relating to the climate emergency and advise the council on how to achieve these climate change objectives. A Climate Change Implementation group of councillors and council officers meets regularly to produce plans and monitor progress. Actions taken or currently underway include switching to green energy, incentives for low emission taxis, expanding tree planting and working to cut food waste.	
	In addition the council is a member of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, working with other councils across Hertfordshire to reduce the county's carbon emissions and climate impact.	
	The Council's dedicated webpage on Climate Change includes details of the council's climate change strategy, the work of the Cabinet Panel on the Environment and a monthly briefing on progress.	

Ecological Emergency

The Council has declared an ecological emergency and is committed to addressing the ecological emergency and nature recovery by identifying appropriate areas for habitat restoration and biodiversity net gain whilst ensuring that development limits impact on existing habitats in its process.

The Council has set out to do that by a) setting measurable targets and standards for biodiversity increase, in both species and quantities, seeking to increase community engagement, b) to work with our partners to establish a Local Nature Partnership for Hertfordshire and to develop Nature Recovery Networks and Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire and c) to investigate new approaches to nature recovery such as habitat banking that deliver biodiversity objectives and provide new investment opportunities.

Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chair of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

To consider any questions submitted by Members of the Council, in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11 (b).

7. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

To consider any motions, due notice of which have been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12.

8. ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

To consider any items referred from other Committees. Any items referred to this meeting will be published as a supplementary document.

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9. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT REPORT

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – LEGAL AND COMMUNITY AND MONITORING OFFICER

55 - 60

This report covers proposed wording changes in respect of the appointment of the Executive Leader following the North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2023, and the elections in 2024. This is to correspond with the factual and legislative change post Local Government Boundary Review and The North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2023 and terminology, to improve certainty.

10. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider passing the following resolution:

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 said Act (as amended).

11. PART 2 MINUTES - 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

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To take as read and approve as a true record the Part 2 minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 28 September 2023.

12. SALE OF LAND AT HITCHIN ROAD, WESTON KNOWN AS THE SNIPE - PART 2

63 - 74

REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL ESTATES SURVEYOR AND THE ESTATE SURVEYOR

Report seeking approval of the sale of North Hertfordshire District Council's (NHDC's) freehold interest in land at The Snipe, Hitchin Road, Weston based on terms negotiated following Cabinet's resolution on 15th December 2020 (minute number 14). The land is an allocated housing site in the adopted North Herts Local Plan. This paper sets out the commercially sensitive terms referred to in Part 1.

13. SALE OF LAND AT HITCHIN ROAD, WESTON KNOWN AS THE SNIPE - PART 1

75 - 90

REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL ESTATES SURVEYOR AND THE ESTATE SURVEYOR

Report seeking approval of the sale of North Hertfordshire District Council's (NHDC's) freehold interest in land at The Snipe, Hitchin Road, Weston based on terms negotiated following Cabinet's resolution on 15th December 2020 (minute number 14). The land is an allocated housing site in the adopted North Herts Local Plan. The commercially sensitive terms are set out in the Part 2 report.

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

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.

- 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 Councils 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

Public Document Pack

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth
on Thursday, 29th February, 2024 at 7.30 pm

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Susan Le Dain (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Jo Dufficy (Service Director - Customers), Geraldine Goodwin (Revenues Manager), Caroline Jenkins (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Callum Reeve (Democratic Services Apprentice), Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager) and Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community)

ALSO PRESENT: At the commencement of the meeting approximately one member of the public was present.

262 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 2 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Hinchliff, Daniel Wright-Mason, Juan Cowell, Sean Nolan, Terry Tyler, Raj Bhakar, Faye Frost and Michael Weeks.

263 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 26 seconds

There was no other business notified.

264 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 33 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) Members were reminded that this Council had declared a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency. These were serious decisions and meant that, as these were emergencies, 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 asked Members to promote the requirement of Photo ID for voting using the flyers and posters provided.
- (7) The Chair reminded Members that Briefings for prospective Candidates and Agents were being held virtually on Wednesday 6 March and Monday 11 March both at 7pm.
- (8) The Chair reminded Members to ensure that any travel and subsistence claims for the 3 month period of January – March were submitted and approved by the end of April.
- (9) The Chair reminded the Committee about the upcoming Chair's Civic Event and Awards, being held on Friday 1 March 2024.
- (10) The Chair advised of a change in the order of the published agenda and Item 9 would follow item 7.

265 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 6 minutes 34 seconds

We have no public participation at this meeting.

266 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Audio recording – 6 minutes 37 seconds

There have been no questions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11.

267 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Recording – 6 minutes 46 seconds

There was one motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12 as altered under 4.8.14(h) and further accepted amendments.

A) 4 Day Working Week

The Chair noted that subsequent to the agenda publication there has been two amended Motions published as a supplementary document regarding the Motion proposed by Councillor Ralph Muncer, and to refer to the most recently published version, annotated with 'as amended with today's date'

The Chair invited Councillor Ralph Muncer to present the motion, noting that Councillor Ralph Muncer had been granted permission to speak for longer than five minutes on this item.

Councillor Ralph Muncer proposed the motion as follows:

'Council resolves that it will not implement, trial, experiment, or pilot (or equivalent) a four-day organisational working week, and that it will continue to support a full organisational working week, thereby enabling this authority to fulfil its statutory obligations, whilst ensuring the provision of cost-effective and efficient delivery of services to residents in North Hertfordshire (acknowledging that employees have the legal right to request flexible or part time working).'

Councillor David Levett seconded the motion.

The Chair advised that there had been an amendment to this motion which was proposed by Councillor Matt Barnes and seconded by Councillor Dominic Griffiths.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed the amended motion as follows:

'Council resolves that it will not implement, trial, experiment, or pilot (or equivalent) a four-day organisational working week during the 2024/25 civic year, and that it will continue to fulfil its statutory obligations, whilst ensuring the provision of cost-effective and efficient delivery of services to residents in North Hertfordshire (acknowledging that employees have the legal right to request flexible or part time working).'

Council also resolves that it fully supports the right of local authorities to continue to determine their own working arrangements.'

Councillor Dominic Griffiths seconded the motion.

The following Members took part in a debate:

- Councillor Daniel Marsh
- Councillor Sam Collins
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Tom Plater
- Councillor Dominic Griffiths
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Adam Compton
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

Points raised in the debate included:

- The four day working week trial in South Cambridgeshire District Council was proving to be successful, with no impact to service levels.
- North Herts Council should not restrict itself by removing the option of considering a four day working week for staff in the future.
- Members had a statutory duty to ensure continuous improvement of the Council.
- The Council faced continual difficulties recruiting staff across all service levels. One way to support staff was to offer flexible and part time working.
- The Council had a duty to provide value of money and to provide the best possible service to its residents.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote on the amended motion (the proposer and seconder of the original motion having accepted the amended motion), it was:

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Would not implement, trial, experiment, or pilot (or equivalent) a four-day organisational working week during the 2024/25 civic year, and that it will continue to fulfil its statutory

obligations, whilst ensuring the provision of cost-effective and efficient delivery of services to residents in North Hertfordshire (acknowledging that employees have the legal right to request flexible or part time working).

- (2) Fully supported the right of local authorities to continue to determine their own working arrangements.

268 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Recording – 39 minutes 51 seconds

The Chair advised that items 7A, 7C and 7D, referred from Cabinet, would be taken with their respective items on the agenda. Item 7B would be considered as a standalone item.

7B) Call to Account – Lord Lister Hotel

Members were advised that whilst Councillor Adam Compton was the current Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, that Councillor David Levett would present the item as former Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny, when the matter was considered.

Councillor David Levett advised that all the relevant papers had already been circulated to Members and he was happy to take any questions or comments.

The following Members took part in a debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Sam Collins

Points raised in the debate included:

- Council should be mindful to follow the processes within the Constitution for matters that required urgent decisions.
- This had been the first call to account for the Council.
- There were 3 ward councillors for Hitchin Highbury, not 2 as suggested in the report.

Councillor Adam Compton proposed, Councillor Val Bryant seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council noted the referred report, attached as Appendix A, together with the copy of the lessons learnt and the appropriate section of the minutes of the meeting of 28 September 2022.

REASON FOR DECISION: The recommendations were being made following the Call to Account on 28 September 2022.

269 COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS FOR EMPTY AND SECOND HOMES

Recording – 48 minutes 40 seconds

The Chair invited Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, Leader of the Council, to present the referral from the Cabinet on this item. Councillor Dennis advised that Cabinet agreed with this referral and thanked everyone for the hard work involved in producing this report.

Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report entitled 'Council Tax Premiums for Empty and Second Homes' and advised that:

- This report highlighted the proposed changes to Council Tax Premiums on Empty and Second Homes.
- There were two separate aspects to consider, empty homes and second homes.
- In 2019 the Council introduced a 100% premium for properties empty for more than 2 years.
- Analysis was carried out in December on the 157 properties which had been empty for over 2 years. 121 properties were paying Council Tax, 7 had no premium applied and 29 were not paying Council Tax regularly.
- The number of empty homes continued to rise and these were a challenge to the district.
- A premium could be avoided if an empty home was furnished as it then became classed as a second home.
- Changes to premiums on empty homes would come into effect from 1 April 2024, but premiums on second homes required a one-year notice applied, so this would not take effect until 2025.
- The impact of the additional premiums was to encourage homeowners to bring empty properties back into use and to revert second homes into primary residences.
- From 1 April 2024 the changes to premium would affect the 43 properties in North Herts which had been empty for over 5 years. The Council would be contacting all owners to make them aware of this change.

The following Members took part in a debate:

- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Sean Prendergast
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Adam Compton

Points included in the debate included:

- This report complimented the Empty Homes Strategy and demonstrated the commitment of the Council to support its communities and it would help to address the housing shortage.
- By contacting the homeowners of the 43 properties that had been empty for over 5 years, would improve the possibility of bringing those properties back into use.
- Assistance should be offered to homeowners via a loan or grant to assist them to bring an empty home back into use.
- Clarification of whether an empty home included any property that lacked facilities and was therefore unfit for occupation.

In response, the Revenues Manager advised that where a property that was unfit for occupation, the Council would use discretion on whether a premium should be applied.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That in accordance with Section 11B and 11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by Section 2 of the Rating (Properties in Common Occupation) & Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, Council agreed to increasing the council tax premiums on empty homes and introducing a new premium on second homes in a phased approach as follows:

- (1.1) That from 1 April 2025 the Council adopts the following full Premium levy rates:

- Properties empty for one year but less than five will receive a 100% Premium.
 - Properties empty for five years but less than ten years a 200% Premium.
 - Properties empty for more than ten years a 300% Premium.
- (1.2) That from 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2025 the following interim premiums are introduced:
- Properties empty for one year but less than two will not receive a Premium.
 - Properties empty for more than two years, but less than five years will receive a 100% Premium.
 - Properties empty for five years but less than ten years a 150% Premium.
 - Properties empty for more than ten years a 200% Premium.
- (2) That from 1 April 2025 the 10 % discount would be removed and a 100% Premium would be levied on all properties that are determined as a second home, subject to any exceptions once these have been confirmed by Regulations and that the Service Director – Customers in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and IT is delegated authority to make any amendments following further confirmation of the Regulations.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To support the principle of bringing unoccupied properties back into occupation in line with the proposed empty homes strategy. At the time of writing there are 43 properties that have been unoccupied for over five years.
- (2) The introduction of a phased approach of increasing the premiums enables us to advertise the changes. As the introduction of premiums for properties unoccupied for between one and two years is new there will be no expectation on the owners of these properties of an additional premium and therefore it is recommended that this aspect is deferred until 2025 to allow time to advertise the change.
- (3) In respect of a premium on Second Homes the Council is required to give one year's notice as this is the Council's first determination in this regard and therefore a resolution must be made before the end of the 2023/24 financial year in order to bring in the premium from 01 April 2025.
- (4) The Council does have the ability to revoke the decision in relation to Second Homes premium, during the year should any consultation that is carried out provide evidence that this would not be effective.

270 REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25

Recording – 1 hour 9 minutes 30 seconds

The Chair invited Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, as Leader of the Council, to introduce the item and present the referral from the Cabinet. Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance and IT was then invited to present the report and at the same time it was noted that Councillor Albert had been granted permission to speak for longer than five minutes on this item to deliver the budget speech.

During the introductory speech by the Leader of the Council, Members were advised that:

- The Council had a statutory duty to set the budget for the forthcoming year including a prudent use of reserves over the next few years.
- In September 2021 a vision was set for the Council and the district which was deliberately a medium-term plan and the priorities for the Council had not changed.
- The Council would be required to make £2.7 million savings each year by 2028/29.
- The funding received by the Council from the government was insufficient.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the Revenue Budget to Members, and advised that:

- The Council was required to set a balanced budget which would mean including some of the general fund reserves over the next few years.
- The general fund reserves were currently above the minimum balance of £2.46 million recommended by the Section 151 Officer.
- The spending power in 2024/25 was 9.5% higher than in 2015/2016 in cash terms.
- The Council had been awarded £7.7 million of funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme bid.
- There would be a one-off expenditure in 2024/25 in respect of the introduction of bee corridors across towns in the district.
- Further to the submitted report, the recommendations were being amended to include a one-off increase to the Area Forum grants budgets of £25k in 2024/25 and £10k for additional bee corridors.
- Each Area Forum would receive an additional grant for one year of £5k.
- The Council was required to find £2.7 million of annual savings or additional income within the next five years.

In response to a question from Councillor Ralph Muncer, the Service Director – Resources advised that the change to the figures quoted in the Cabinet report to those included within the Council report, were to reflect the changes in the energy costs of the leisure centres. The subsequent change to figures within the Council report reflected the installation of the bee corridors (£10k) and additional Area Forum grants (£25k).

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Terry Hone
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Adam Compton
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Tom Plater
- Councillor Sean Prendergast

Points raised in the debate included:

- The Council would need to look across the whole range of services it provided to see where changes could be made over the four year period without a reduction in the level of service.
- In future years it was expected that 1.99% will be the maximum increase set by the government and the 0.5% was a prudent assumption of what would be set by government for the increase in Council Tax as outlined in table 1.
- R1 was a revenue investment for the Careline service and not a capital investment as outlined in Table 7.
- The requirement to make more savings from the waste and street cleansing contract being introduced was highlighted in 8.28 of the report.
- The £7.7 million funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme was obtained from a bid for the leisure centres.

- The Council would look at reviewing the grants process so the additional grant of £5k awarded to the Area Forums, could be allocated via grants to improve services for residents including working with town and parish councils.
- Planning and transport were making a net investment of £100k and were investing in the local plan update by recruiting more staff and bringing in specialists to the team.
- The grounds maintenance contractor for the Council, John O'Connor, would be introducing bee corridors throughout the district. The first bee corridor had been introduced in Letchworth, which involved the planting of bee friendly plants in public areas and by working with residents to encourage planting of bee friendly plants in their gardens.
- Despite budget constraints, it was important to look at ways of making the district a nice place to live for its residents.
- This budget supported the housing strategy and would help to prevent homelessness in the district of the most vulnerable people in the community.

During the debate, at 21:39 Councillor Cathy Brownjohn left the Council Chamber and did not return to the meeting.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Matt Barnes seconded the amended recommendations and, the outcome of the recorded vote was:

VOTE TOTALS:

YES	:	27
ABSTAIN	:	12
NO	:	0
TOTAL	:	39

THE INDIVIDUAL RESULTS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

Cllr Daniel Allen	YES
Cllr Adam Compton	ABSTAIN
Cllr Alistair Willoughby	YES
Cllr Amy Allen	YES
Cllr Bryony May	YES
Cllr Chris Lucas	YES
Cllr Claire Strong	ABSTAIN
Cllr Clare Billing	YES
Cllr Daniel Marsh	YES
Cllr Dave Winstanley	YES
Cllr David Barnard	ABSTAIN
Cllr David Levett	ABSTAIN
Cllr Dominic Griffiths	YES
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis	YES
Cllr Gerald Morris	ABSTAIN
Cllr Ian Albert	YES
Cllr Ian Mantle	YES
Cllr Ian Moody	ABSTAIN
Cllr Keith Hoskins	YES
Cllr Lisa Nash	YES
Cllr Louise Peace	YES
Cllr Mandi Tandi	ABSTAIN
Cllr Matt Barnes	YES
Cllr Michael Muir	ABSTAIN
Cllr Mick Debenham	YES
Cllr Nigel Mason	YES
Cllr Philip Weeder	YES
Cllr Ralph Muncer	ABSTAIN

Cllr Richard Thake	ABSTAIN
Cllr Ruth Brown	YES
Cllr Sam Collins	YES
Cllr Sean Prendergast	YES
Cllr Simon Bloxham	ABSTAIN
Cllr Steve Jarvis	YES
Cllr Tamsin Thomas	YES
Cllr Terry Hone	ABSTAIN
Cllr Tom Plater	YES
Cllr Tom Tyson	YES
Cllr Val Bryant	YES

Therefore, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Noted the position on the Collection Fund and how it will be funded.
- (2) Noted the position relating to the General Fund balance and that due to the risks identified a minimum balance of £2.46 million is recommended.
- (3) Noted the net revenue savings that are likely to be required in future years, combined with the Chief Finance Officer's section 25 report (Appendix D) which provides a commentary on the risks and reliability of estimates contained in the budget.
- (4) Approved the revenue savings and investments as detailed in Appendix B with the additional investments in 24/25 only of £25k for Area Forum grants and £10k for additional bee corridors.
- (5) Approved a net expenditure budget of £19.933m, as detailed in Appendix C adjusted to reflect the additional investments in 24/25 totalling £35k.
- (6) Approved a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, which is in line with the provisions in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that all relevant factors are considered in arriving at a budget and Council Tax level for 2024/25. To ensure that the budget is aligned to Council priorities for 2024/25 as set out in the Council Plan.

At 21:50 there was a short comfort break and the meeting resumed at 22:00.

During the comfort break Councillors Lisa Nash and Dominic Griffiths left the Council Chamber and did not return to the meeting.

271 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (INTEGRATED CAPITAL AND TREASURY)

Recording 2 hours 31 minutes

The Chair invited, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, Leader of the Council, to present the referral from the Cabinet. Councillor Dennis advised that Members had the relevant papers and comments before them and would therefore hand to Councillor Ian Albert to present the item.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report and advised that:

- (1) There were two additional recommendations to the report in relation to £30k capital allocation for the refurbishment of the Howard Park Kiosk in to 2023/24; and £10k capital allocation for the Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme in to 2023/24.

- This paper combined capital budgets for 2024/25 onwards along with the treasury strategy.
- As capital spend was not directly matched by funding, the amount spent on capital had a direct impact on the cash available for investment.
- The Council would need to fund capital spend from borrowing internally from its cash reserves.
- Whether borrowing was made internally or externally, the Council would need to make a minimum revenue provision charge against the revenue budget.
- Increase in revenue costs from the capital spend meant the Council needed to review that the capital spend was still providing good value for money.
- Changes agreed at Cabinet to the Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme to reduce carbon emissions and provide energy savings were set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report.
- Capital investment has been allocated to upgrade the kiosk at Howard Park in Letchworth.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Michael Muir
- Councillor Steve Jarvis

In response to questions, the Service Director – Resources confirmed that the boiler replacement at leisure centres would be air source heat pumps and the boiler allocation could be found on page 9 of the Appendix.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (2) Approved the adoption of the Investment Strategy (as attached at Appendix A), including the capital programme and prudential indicators.
- (3) Approved the adoption of the four clauses in relation to the Code of Practice on Treasury Management (as detailed in paragraphs 8.10 to 8.16).
- (4) Agreed to bring forward the £30k capital allocation for the refurbishment of the Howard Park Kiosk in to 2023/24.
- (5) Agreed to bring forward £10k capital allocation for the Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme in to 2023/24.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that the capital programme meets the Council's objectives and officers can plan the implementation of the approved schemes.
- (2) To ensure the Council's compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management, the Local Government Act 2003, statutory guidance from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the CIPFA Prudential Code. As well as determining and managing the Councils risk appetite in respect of investments.

272 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2024/25

Audio recording – 3 hours 55 seconds

The Service Director – Resources presented the report 'Council Tax Resolution 2024/25' and advised that:

- This was a technical paper to set the overall Council Tax for the district including elements from Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- There had been an increase to the level of expenditure of £35k which had resulted in a change to the figures in recommendation 2.2 a) and b).
- The reasons for the recommendations were set out in the Appendix.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Matt Barnes seconded the amended recommendations and, the outcome of the recorded vote was:

VOTE TOTALS:

YES	:	26
ABSTAIN	:	4
NO	:	6
TOTAL	:	36

THE INDIVIDUAL RESULTS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

Cllr Daniel Allen	YES
Cllr Adam Compton	NO
Cllr Alistair Willoughby	YES
Cllr Amy Allen	YES
Cllr Bryony May	YES
Cllr Chris Lucas	YES
Cllr Claire Strong	ABSTAIN
Cllr Claire Billing	YES
Cllr Dave Winstanley	YES
Cllr David Barnard	NO
Cllr David Levett	NO
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis	YES
Cllr Gerald Morris	ABSTAIN
Cllr Ian Albert	YES
Cllr Ian Mantle	YES
Cllr Ian Moody	ABSTAIN
Cllr Keith Hoskins	YES
Cllr Louise Peace	YES
Cllr Mandi Tandi	NO
Cllr Matt Barnes	YES
Cllr Michael Muir	NO
Cllr Mick Debenham	YES
Cllr Nigel Mason	YES
Cllr Philip Weeder	YES
Cllr Ralph Muncer	ABSTAIN
Cllr Richard Thake	YES
Cllr Ruth Brown	YES
Cllr Sam Collins	YES
Cllr Sean Prendergast	YES
Cllr Simon Bloxham	NO
Cllr Steve Jarvis	YES
Cllr Tamsin Thomas	YES
Cllr Terry Hone	YES
Cllr Tom Plater	YES
Cllr Tom Tyson	YES
Cllr Val Bryant	YES

Therefore, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council:

(1) Noted that at its meeting on 29 January 2024 the Council Tax Setting Committee confirmed the amount 50,562.60 as its Council Tax base for the year 2024/2025 in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 (the Regulations).

a) 50,562.60 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Regulations, as its Council Tax base for the year.

b)

Parish/Town	Council Tax Base	Parish/Town	Council Tax Base
Ashwell	911.30	Knebworth	2,018.80
Barkway	421.20	Lilley	175.00
Barley	330.30	Offley	612.40
Bygrave	133.00	Pirton	699.20
Caldecote and Newnham	54.90	Preston	226.90
Clothall	82.20	Radwell	57.90
Codicote	1,663.10	Reed	165.80
Graveley	173.40	Royston	6,823.60
Great Ashby	2,017.40	Rushden and Wallington	207.40
Hinxworth	162.50	St Ippolyts	936.00
Holwell	158.20	St Pauls Walden	582.80
Ickleford	905.60	Sandon	242.90
Kelshall	79.10	Therfield	266.00
Kimpton	1,059.20	Weston	438.20
Kings Walden	425.00	Wymondley	427.60

Being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its Council Tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

c) That it be noted that at this meeting on the 29 February 2024 the Council has calculated the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2024/25 (excluding Parish precepts) as £13,146,782. As detailed in 2.2 (e) below the sum of special items is £1,476,117 and hence the total Council Tax requirement (including Parish precepts) is £14,622,899.

(2) That the following amounts were calculated by the Council for 2024/2025 in accordance with Sections 31A, 31B and 34 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 (the Act):-

- a) £79,013,921 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2)(a) to (f) of the Act.
- b) £64,391,022 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act.

- c) £14,622,899 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year.
- d) £289.20 being the amount at (c) above divided by the amount at 2.1(a) above calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B(1) as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
- e) £1,476,117 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- f) £260.01 being the amount at (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (e) above by the amount at 2.1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates.
- g)

Parish/Town	Basic £	Parish Precept £	Total £
Ashwell	260.01	121.43	381.44
Barkway	260.01	98.28	358.29
Barley	260.01	96.88	356.89
Bygrave	260.01	60.87	320.88
Caldecote and Newnham	260.01	45.54	305.55
Clothall	260.01	22.85	282.86
Codicote	260.01	65.50	325.51
Graveley	260.01	58.34	318.35
Great Ashby	260.01	22.80	282.81
Hinxworth	260.01	67.05	327.06
Holwell	260.01	74.95	334.96
Ickleford	260.01	63.49	323.50
Kelshall	260.01	36.25	296.26
Kimpton	260.01	81.71	341.72
Kings Walden	260.01	84.42	344.43
Knebworth	260.01	95.28	355.29
Lilley	260.01	95.40	355.41
Offley	260.01	66.51	326.52
Pirton	260.01	88.89	348.90
Preston	260.01	68.71	328.72
Radwell	260.01	24.18	284.19
Reed	260.01	49.87	309.88
Royston	260.01	59.22	319.23
Rushden and Wallington	260.01	23.00	283.01
St Ippolyts	260.01	36.08	296.09
St Pauls Walden	260.01	82.56	342.57
Sandon	260.01	37.05	297.06
Therfield	260.01	25.19	285.20
Weston	260.01	50.21	310.22
Wymondley	260.01	101.38	361.39

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 2.2(f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area

mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 2.1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

h)

Parish/Town	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Ashwell	254.30	296.68	339.05	381.44	466.20	550.97	635.74	762.88
Baldock	173.34	202.23	231.12	260.01	317.79	375.57	433.35	520.02
Barkway	238.87	278.67	318.48	358.29	437.91	517.53	597.16	716.58
Barley	237.93	277.58	317.23	356.89	436.20	515.51	594.82	713.78
Bygrave	213.93	249.57	285.22	320.88	392.19	463.49	534.81	641.76
Caldecote and Newnham	203.71	237.65	271.60	305.55	373.45	441.35	509.26	611.10
Clothall	188.58	220.00	251.43	282.86	345.72	408.57	471.44	565.72
Codicote	217.01	253.18	289.34	325.51	397.84	470.18	542.52	651.02
Graveley	212.24	247.61	282.97	318.35	389.09	459.84	530.59	636.70
Great Ashby	188.55	219.96	251.38	282.81	345.66	408.50	471.36	565.62
Hexton	173.34	202.23	231.12	260.01	317.79	375.57	433.35	520.02
Hinxworth	218.05	254.38	290.72	327.06	399.74	472.42	545.11	654.12
Hitchin	173.34	202.23	231.12	260.01	317.79	375.57	433.35	520.02
Holwell	223.31	260.53	297.74	334.96	409.39	483.83	558.27	669.92
Ickleford	215.67	251.61	287.55	323.50	395.39	467.28	539.17	647.00
Kelshall	197.51	230.43	263.34	296.26	362.09	427.93	493.77	592.52
Kimpton	227.82	265.78	303.75	341.72	417.66	493.59	569.54	683.44
Kings Walden	229.63	267.89	306.16	344.43	420.97	497.51	574.06	688.86
Knebworth	236.87	276.34	315.81	355.29	434.24	513.19	592.16	710.58
Langley	173.34	202.23	231.12	260.01	317.79	375.57	433.35	520.02
Letchworth	173.34	202.23	231.12	260.01	317.79	375.57	433.35	520.02
Lilley	236.95	276.43	315.92	355.41	434.39	513.37	592.36	710.82
Nuthampstead	173.34	202.23	231.12	260.01	317.79	375.57	433.35	520.02
Offley	217.69	253.96	290.24	326.52	399.08	471.64	544.21	653.04
Pirton	232.61	271.37	310.13	348.90	426.43	503.96	581.51	697.80
Preston	219.15	255.67	292.19	328.72	401.77	474.82	547.87	657.44
Radwell	189.47	221.04	252.61	284.19	347.34	410.49	473.66	568.38
Reed	206.59	241.02	275.44	309.88	378.74	447.60	516.47	619.76
Royston	212.83	248.29	283.76	319.23	390.17	461.11	532.06	638.46
Rushden and Wallington	188.68	220.12	251.56	283.01	345.90	408.79	471.69	566.02
St Ippolyts	197.40	230.29	263.19	296.09	361.89	427.68	493.49	592.18
St Pauls Walden	228.39	266.44	304.50	342.57	418.70	494.82	570.96	685.14
Sandon	198.05	231.05	264.05	297.06	363.07	429.08	495.11	594.12
Therfield	190.14	221.82	253.51	285.20	348.58	411.95	475.34	570.40
Weston	206.82	241.28	275.75	310.22	379.16	448.09	517.04	620.44
Wymondley	240.93	281.08	321.23	361.39	441.70	522.01	602.32	722.78

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 2.2(f) and 2.2(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(l) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- (3) Noted that for 2024/2025 Hertfordshire County Council and the Hertfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Precepting Authority	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£

Hertfordshire County Council

COUNTY PRECEPT	961.58	1,121.84	1,282.11	1,442.37	1,762.90	2,083.42	2,403.95	2,884.74
SOCIAL CARE PRECEPT	162.25	189.30	216.34	243.38	297.46	351.55	405.63	486.76

Total Hertfordshire County Council	1,123.83	1,311.14	1,498.45	1,685.75	2,060.36	2,434.97	2,809.58	3,371.50
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Hertfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner

	167.33	195.22	223.11	251.00	306.78	362.56	418.33	502.00
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- (4) Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 2.2(h) and 2.3 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby set out the following provisional amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for 2024/2025 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

List of parishes and tax at different bands (County, Care, Police, District and Parish)

Parish/Town	Valuation Bands							
	A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
Ashwell	1,545.46	1,803.04	2,060.61	2,318.19	2,833.34	3,348.50	3,863.65	4,636.38
Baldock	1,464.50	1,708.59	1,952.68	2,196.76	2,684.93	3,173.10	3,661.26	4,393.52
Barkway	1,530.03	1,785.03	2,040.04	2,295.04	2,805.05	3,315.06	3,825.07	4,590.08
Barley	1,529.09	1,783.94	2,038.79	2,293.64	2,803.34	3,313.04	3,822.73	4,587.28
Bygrave	1,505.09	1,755.93	2,006.78	2,257.63	2,759.33	3,261.02	3,762.72	4,515.26
Caldecote and Newnham	1,494.87	1,744.01	1,993.16	2,242.30	2,740.59	3,238.88	3,737.17	4,484.60
Clothall	1,479.74	1,726.36	1,972.99	2,219.61	2,712.86	3,206.10	3,699.35	4,439.22
Codicote	1,508.17	1,759.54	2,010.90	2,262.26	2,764.98	3,267.71	3,770.43	4,524.52
Graveley	1,503.40	1,753.97	2,004.53	2,255.10	2,756.23	3,257.37	3,758.50	4,510.20
Great Ashby	1,479.71	1,726.32	1,972.94	2,219.56	2,712.80	3,206.03	3,699.27	4,439.12
Hexton	1,464.50	1,708.59	1,952.68	2,196.76	2,684.93	3,173.10	3,661.26	4,393.52
Hinxworth	1,509.21	1,760.74	2,012.28	2,263.81	2,766.88	3,269.95	3,773.02	4,527.62
Hitchin	1,464.50	1,708.59	1,952.68	2,196.76	2,684.93	3,173.10	3,661.26	4,393.52
Holwell	1,514.47	1,766.89	2,019.30	2,271.71	2,776.53	3,281.36	3,786.18	4,543.42
Ickleford	1,506.83	1,757.97	2,009.11	2,260.25	2,762.53	3,264.81	3,767.08	4,520.50
Kelshall	1,488.67	1,736.79	1,984.90	2,233.01	2,729.23	3,225.46	3,721.68	4,466.02
Kimpton	1,518.98	1,772.14	2,025.31	2,278.47	2,784.80	3,291.12	3,797.45	4,556.94
Kings Walden	1,520.79	1,774.25	2,027.72	2,281.18	2,788.11	3,295.04	3,801.97	4,562.36
Knebworth	1,528.03	1,782.70	2,037.37	2,292.04	2,801.38	3,310.72	3,820.07	4,584.08
Langley	1,464.50	1,708.59	1,952.68	2,196.76	2,684.93	3,173.10	3,661.26	4,393.52
Letchworth	1,464.50	1,708.59	1,952.68	2,196.76	2,684.93	3,173.10	3,661.26	4,393.52
Lilley	1,528.11	1,782.79	2,037.48	2,292.16	2,801.53	3,310.90	3,820.27	4,584.32
Nuthampstead	1,464.50	1,708.59	1,952.68	2,196.76	2,684.93	3,173.10	3,661.26	4,393.52
Offley	1,508.85	1,760.32	2,011.80	2,263.27	2,766.22	3,269.17	3,772.12	4,526.54
Pirton	1,523.77	1,777.73	2,031.69	2,285.65	2,793.57	3,301.49	3,809.42	4,571.30
Preston	1,510.31	1,762.03	2,013.75	2,265.47	2,768.91	3,272.35	3,775.78	4,530.94
Radwell	1,480.63	1,727.40	1,974.17	2,220.94	2,714.48	3,208.02	3,701.57	4,441.88
Reed	1,497.75	1,747.38	1,997.00	2,246.63	2,745.88	3,245.13	3,744.38	4,493.26
Royston	1,503.99	1,754.65	2,005.32	2,255.98	2,757.31	3,258.64	3,759.97	4,511.96
Rushden and Wallington	1,479.84	1,726.48	1,973.12	2,219.76	2,713.04	3,206.32	3,699.60	4,439.52
St Ippolyts	1,488.56	1,736.65	1,984.75	2,232.84	2,729.03	3,225.21	3,721.40	4,465.68
St Pauls Walden	1,519.55	1,772.80	2,026.06	2,279.32	2,785.84	3,292.35	3,798.87	4,558.64
Sandon	1,489.21	1,737.41	1,985.61	2,233.81	2,730.21	3,226.61	3,723.02	4,467.62
Therfield	1,481.30	1,728.18	1,975.07	2,221.95	2,715.72	3,209.48	3,703.25	4,443.90
Weston	1,497.98	1,747.64	1,997.31	2,246.97	2,746.30	3,245.62	3,744.95	4,493.94
Wymondley	1,532.09	1,787.44	2,042.79	2,298.14	2,808.84	3,319.54	3,830.23	4,596.28

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The Council is required to set the Council Tax and to set the overall level of Council Tax for the following financial year, taking into account the precepts of all major and local precepting authorities.
- (2) The level of Council Tax Requirement has been considered necessary to meet the budgeting needs of the Council for 2024/25.

273 PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Recording – 3 hours 3 minutes 58 seconds

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, Leader of the Council, presented the report 'Pay Policy Statement' and advised that:

- The Pay Award for 2024/25 was not yet agreed and the current statement was based on the 2023/24 rate.
- The recommendation was to approve the draft statement found in Appendix 1.
- The Council delegated the authority for revisions to be made in year to the pay statement to the Service Director – Resources in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.
- The Council was part of the National Joint Council (NJC) for local government services, which was a combined body from multiple local authorities all over the country.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Adam Compton

In response to a question, the Service Director – Resources advised that Officers could claim travel expenses for travel carried out whilst on official duties.

In response to a question, the Managing Director advised that the spinal points and pay scales used were not specific to North Herts Council. The Council were looking at reviewing the pay scales, however, if this did happen it would inevitably have an impact on the budget.

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

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Council approved the 2024/25 Pay Policy Statement attached at Appendix 1.
- (2) That Council delegated authority for revisions made in year to the Pay Policy Statement, to the Service Director - Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council. Revisions which might arise in the year include changes in structure, changes to employment benefits, subsequent pay awards agreed nationally and new legislative requirements.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To comply with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011, Statutory Guidance issued under s40 and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

The meeting closed at 10.44 pm

Chair

Item No	Referred from:	CABINET
8A	Date:	19 MARCH 2024
	Title of item:	SHARED PROSPERITY FUND PROCESS
To be considered alongside agenda item:		Referral only

The report considered by Cabinet at the meeting held on 19 March 2024 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 19th March, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk)

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: The approval of up to £518,000 capital investment for the Solar for Business Programme, in addition to the £51,285 capital funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The Council will be provided with funding in April 2024 to allocate to schemes which were originally outlined in the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) Investment Plan that was submitted in July 2021. This plan was approved by Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in January 2022.
- (2) The Funds regulations allow considerable flexibility in how the Council allocates funding and under which approved UK SPF Activities. Officers presented a report to the Leadership Team on 5th February 2024, which outlined how we are proposing to spend the remainder of the Fund in line with the UK SPF criteria set. The Leadership Team agreed with the proposal in principle, and therefore it has been brought to Cabinet for further consideration.
- (3) Once final approval has been obtained, the individual projects will be managed by the relevant North Herts Council (NHC) service areas. We are seeking approval to delegate approval of spend decisions, payments or grants made under the scheme to the relevant Executive Members and Service Directors, as identified under table 8.1 of this report.

Audio recording – 23 minutes 58 seconds

Councillor Keith Hoskins, Executive Member for Enterprise and Arts, presented the report entitled 'Shared Prosperity Fund Process' and advised that:

- This report highlighted the recommendations for the allocation of the remainder of the funds in the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- He was pleased to report the Parish and Community Projects had been allocated £210,000 as detailed in paragraph 8.1 item (b).

The following Members took part in a debate:

- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis

Points raised in the debate included:

- It was important for the wellbeing of residents to improve the town centres and local environments where people lived.
- All these projects would support local communities.
- There was a need to publicise the improvements of town centres and local environments across the district.
- The Parish and Community Projects should be considered by the Panel before being approved by relevant Executive Members and Service Directors.
- The solar business pilot was an excellent project and would generate income for the Council and would save on carbon emissions.

In response to a question by Councillor Ian Albert, the Managing Director advised that it was only the Parish and Community Projects that would need to be considered by the Panel.

Councillor Keith Hoskins proposed and Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Considered and approved the proposed outline distribution of funding allocated (£510,000) to the Council by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities for 2024/5 under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- (2) Delegated approvals of individual grants and payments under the Fund to the relevant Executive Members and Service Directors, as identified with reference to Directorates in table 8.1, and confirmed that the Parishes and Community Projects Fund decisions would be taken following consideration and recommendation by the Panel.
- (3) Approved the updated Cabinet Capital and Revenue Grants Panel's Terms of Reference, Appendix C.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: The approval of up to £518,000 capital investment for the Solar for Business Programme, in addition to the £51,285 capital funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The Council will be provided with funding in April 2024 to allocate to schemes which were originally outlined in the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) Investment Plan that was submitted in July 2021. This plan was approved by Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in January 2022.
- (2) The Funds regulations allow considerable flexibility in how the Council allocates funding and under which approved UK SPF Activities. Officers presented a report to the Leadership Team on 5th February 2024, which outlined how we are proposing to spend the remainder of the Fund in line with the UK SPF criteria set. The Leadership Team agreed with the proposal in principle, and therefore it has been brought to Cabinet for further consideration.
- (3) Once final approval has been obtained, the individual projects will be managed by the relevant North Herts Council (NHC) service areas. We are seeking approval to delegate approval of spend decisions, payments or grants made under the scheme to the relevant Executive Members and Service Directors, as identified under table 8.1 of this report.

Item No	Referred from:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
8B	Date:	27 MARCH 2024
	Title of item:	STANDARDS MATTERS REPORT
To be considered alongside agenda item:		Referral only

The report considered by Standards at the meeting held on 27 March 2024 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Standards Committee on Wednesday, 27th March, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That all District Councillors should undertake post, all-out election training on the Code of Conduct within 2 months of their election (or availability of the training) whichever is the later date.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure good governance within the Council.

Audio recording: 3 minutes 10 seconds

The Chair invited Mr David Cook to address the Committee regarding the Standards Matters Report. Mr Cook thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, including that:

- He had circulated documents to Members with his ideas.
- The purpose of this Committee was to inspire confidence in governance arrangements, and he had provided some ideas that could enhance and improve these arrangements and to stimulate thoughts for the future.
- The governance arrangements were at the heart of the code of conduct policy and provided Councillors a clear understanding of the expectations.
- There were references to Chairman throughout the policy document and these should have been changed to Chair.
- It would be useful for an appendix to be attached to the Council report with information regarding how apologies should be handled, especially as this was the most likely outcome of a complaint.
- The appendix should include a timeline for apologies and highlight that all apologies should be sincere.
- There should be clear consequences if an apology deadline was missed.
- The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee in March 2023 said the recipient of an apology would be consulted. However, this was not reflected in the policy and there were concerns that this was unclear.
- It was unclear in the policy what was deemed an acceptable apology, whose judgement decided if an apology was acceptable and could Officers offer assistance.
- The Policy was unclear on whether an apology was still sincere after, missed deadlines, ongoing negotiations and when it was not accepted.
- The Policy should inspire confidence regarding the expectations following a complaint, these expectations were still unclear for all parties.

The following Members asked points of clarification:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Val Bryant

In response to points of clarification, Mr Cook advised that:

- Previously he was a Chief Executive of a Local Authority and was recruited to work at the Improvement and Development Agency as well as being a concerned citizen.
- The policy was unclear on how many times it was acceptable to miss an apology deadline. A recipient should be given a clear timescale and if these deadlines were missed the matter should be escalated.
- There were differences when a complaint was handled by the Committee to those handled as informal resolutions.
- The biggest deterrent to complaints was public knowledge. Currently the Committee received an abridge report for any complaints that were handled informally.
- The policy lacked clarity as to whether the level of experience of a Councillor or the duration over which the complaint related to should be considered, and this needed to be more transparent.
- Should a vexatious complaint be upheld then the likelihood was that the complaints were not vexatious. No one should be discouraged from submitting any complaint.

The Chair clarified that all complaints were reviewed by the Independent Person, and a judgement was made regarding formal or informal action. Informal complaints were held in confidence as stated in 8.2 of the policy, however there were some exceptions.

The Chair thanked Mr Cook for his presentation and invited the Deputy Monitoring Officer to present the report entitled 'Standard Matters Report' including that:

- The recommendations contained in this report were in place to ensure good governance within the Local Authority.
- The complaints received since the last meeting were summarised at 8.1 and 8.2 of the report.
- The Complaint Handling Procedure was detailed at 8.3 of the report and related to recommendation 2.2.
- The Complaint Handling Procedure was largely consistent with the Code published at the end of February 2024 however, work was ongoing to incorporate any appropriate amendments.
- The details concerning recommendations 2.3 and 2.4 were highlighted at 8.7 to 8.9 of the report and related to the compulsory training for District Councillors after the May 2024 election, and where appropriate, training for Town and Parish Councillors.
- Councillor, Officer working arrangements were detailed in paragraphs 8.11 and 8.12 of the report.
- Paragraph 8.12 summarised, the recommendations from the report of the Association for Public Service Excellence.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Dominic Griffiths

Points raised in debate included:

- The Member-Officer Protocol should be continually reviewed.
- Members and Officers were two distinct roles but with the aim to deliver vital services to residents in North Herts and it was important that the distinction between the two was recognised.
- The Member-Officer Protocol was very important and training would be provided after the election which would be beneficial to Members in understanding the relationship to maximise benefits to residents.
- Mr Cook gave a valuable and informative presentation, consideration should be given to his suggestions.
- There was always room for improvements.
- The details of the formal and informal channels stated in paragraph 8.12 was unclear.
- Online training did not allow Members to ask points of clarification.
- Interactions during face-to-face training increased learning.
- Questions could be sent to Officers and new Members could buddy up with existing Members.
- GrowZone logged when training had been completed and required questions to be completed before moving to the next training section.

In response to points raised in debate, the Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that:

- There was a full link in the report that expanded on the summary at paragraph 8.12 of the report.
- The Code of Conduct training would be interactive and would explain the salient parts of the constitution.

In response to points raised in debate, the Monitoring Officer advised that recommendation 2.3 required Members to confirm and approve that, 2 months was viable for the completion of the 1-hour training course for Councillors.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee

- (1) Noted the content of the report and made suggestions on future actions.
- (2) Delegated to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair any appropriate amendments to the Complaints Handling Procedure – following the publication of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Code (as detailed in 8.3-8.5).
- (3) Recommended that any Parish, Town and Community Councillors who have been newly elected/ or not undertaken training on the Code of Conduct during the last 12 months, undertakes Code of Conduct training, as supplied by the Council / or LGA within 2 months of their election or co-options, whichever is the later date.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That all District Councillors should undertake post, all-out election training on the Code of Conduct within 2 months of their election (or availability of the training) whichever is the later date.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure good governance within the Council.

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Item No	Referred from:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
8C	Date:	27 MARCH 2024
	Title of item:	MEMBERS PLANNING CODE OF GOOD CONDUCT
To be considered alongside agenda item:		Referral only

The report considered by Standards at the meeting held on 27 March 2024 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Standards Committee on Wednesday, 27th March, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: The adoption of new Code (Appendix A to this report) as the Appendix 1 to Section 8 of the Constitution replacement, with proposed appropriate amendments.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure good governance within the Council.

Audio recording: 40 minutes

The Monitoring Officer presented the report entitled 'Members Planning Code of Good Conduct' and highlighted the following that:

- This was due to have been reviewed in 2023 but at that time the Lawyers for Local Government (LLG) had instigated a review. Their review had now been completed and endorsed by the supreme court.
- LLG had made some minor amendments relating to social media that would strengthen the code.
- The Planning Code of Conduct at North Herts Council was last amended in 2020.
- The recommended code was based on the LLG model with some minor localised amendments and adopted some Local Government Association (LGA) model items.
- There had previously been a summary at the back of the code, this had now been moved to the beginning of the code.
- Amendments to the Code of Conduct had been included as tracked changes.
- There was a typographical error on page 20 with an additional 'e' in the tracked word registerable.
- There was a typographical error on page 22, it should read 'your wish to speak' at the second bullet point instead of you wish to speak.
- There was a typographical error on page 26 with a missing 'it' in section 11 Planning Enforcement.
- The code was robust and would assist Members.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Independent Person Nicholas Moss
- Reserve Independent Person Peter Chapman

In response to questions, the Monitoring Officer stated that:

- The last bullet point of the summary should read as ‘attend other specialist training if offered’ rather than if made. Otherwise, there were no actual changes to the summary, other than its position in the Code.
- Members on the Planning Control Committee were made aware of the code through planning training and Code of Conduct training, and it was essential that Members understood interests and any conflicts.
- New Members can contact the Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Committee Services for advice on procedures.

In response to questions, the Chair stated that:

- The word division could be removed from page 24 and the code could be amended.
- Newly elected Members would have support from their own party as well as Officers, the Monitoring Officers and Committee Services.
- This year there would be in person training from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) that would be mandatory for all Planning Control Committee Members.
- There would be more in-depth and detailed training provided throughout the next 4 years including on Masterplanning.
- There would be basic training yearly to highlight any planning changes that had occurred throughout the year.
- The Planning training would take place on 6 June 2024.
- All Members considered planning matters and the training would assist in their knowledge of planning considerations.
- Parish Councils were statutory consultees for planning applications, work would be ongoing regarding their understanding of the planning system and the consideration for Section 106 (s106) payments.
- Parish Councils were able to make requests and proposals for s106 payments in their parishes.
- Newly elected Members would be informed to contact Planning Officers directly for advice and to build their own planning knowledge.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee reviewed the new model Members Planning Code of Good Practice.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: The adoption of new Code (Appendix A to this report) as the Appendix 1 to Section 8 of the Constitution replacement, with proposed appropriate amendments.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure good governance within the Council.

COUNCIL
18 April 2024

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT REPORT

REPORT OF: THE SERVICE DIRECTOR LEGAL AND COMMUNITY & MONITORING OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL: COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH DENNIS

COUNCIL PRIORITY: **People First**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report covers proposed wording changes in respect of the appointment of the Executive Leader following the North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2023, and the elections in 2024. This is to correspond with the factual and legislative change post Local Government Boundary Review and The North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2023 and terminology, to improve certainty.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Full Council:

- 2.1. approves the proposed amendments to the Constitution as set out in section 8.4 of this report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure certainty around wording to cover the post all-out elections and better reflect potential situations where an election of a Leader may arise.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. This could have been dealt with as a delegated decision by the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Leader, and reported through to the membership, as per section 2.6.2 (b) of the Constitution (as the wording is inconsistent/ ambiguous). However, given the Council meeting corresponded with the timing of any such decision, it was considered more appropriate to place this before the membership.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Leader of Council has been consulted. The Deputy Leader received a copy of the draft report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The Council's Boundary and electoral arrangements were reviewed in 2022-2023 and following various decisions the Council decided (and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England concluded and then confirmed) new Boundaries and all-out 4 yearly elections from 2024 (see legal implications).
- 7.2 The Constitution contains a number of references to the Leader and being elected once every 4 years. The last election of a Leader was in 2021, and on paper such election would *ordinarily* expire in May 2025 (subject to a number of factual/ and legal situations arising).
- 7.3 It was therefore considered prudent to amend the provisions to ensure it was clear that a new election would be required in May 2024. This would under the Strong Leader model potentially then cover the next 4 year period.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The Council operates under a Cabinet and Strong Leader governance model. The Constitution currently only refer to the normal 4 year term and the situations that may arise – resigns, no longer being a Councillor, motion to remove.
- 8.2. The Standing Orders refer to an election of the Leader at Annual Council meeting 'once every 4 years' (as per 4.8.1 (a)(vi); with specific reference to the Leader under the Executive arrangements under section 5 (5.3.1 & 5.3.2), this denotes an election at Annual Council every 4 years, and a term of office until 'the fourth anniversary of their appointment', subject to a number of events arising (a)-(d). None of these *explicitly* cover the abolition of wards, and all-out election/ or retirement. The nearest is (c) "They are no longer a Councillor" – albeit that could be open to misinterpretation.
- 8.3. The Order that confirmed the electoral Changes in 2023 (The North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2023, provided for abolition of all wards, as per Article 3, and therefore 'retirement'. It would therefore be clearer to reflect this in the Constitution – namely that a new election of Leader is required post all out election in May 2024.
- 8.4. Accordingly it is proposed that the following be amended as per the strike through / new underlined wording (for ease shown red):

Section 4 Council Procedural Rules (Standing Orders)

4.8.1 (vi)

(vi) elect the Leader of the Council at the first annual meeting following a whole Council election for a four year term*;

Foot note:

**Subject to resignation, retirement, passing of a motion of no confidence, long term absence – i.e. in excess of 6 months; or no longer being a District Councillor through other events, such as '6 month rule', or abolition of ward; in all such cases, the subsequent election of a Leader can take place during any other Full Council meeting and will be for the remaining coterminous election cycle.*

Section 5.3 Leader

5.3.1 Election

The Leader will be a Councillor elected to the position of Leader by the Council at an Annual Meeting. An election will be held on the day of the Annual Meeting when the incumbent's term of office as Leader **has, expired**.*

Foot note:

**Subject to Council Procedural Rules – see 4.8.1.*

5.3.2 Term of Office

The Leader will hold office until the fourth anniversary of their appointment*, or until any of the following events arise:

- (a) They resign from the office;
- (b) They are ~~suspended~~ **disqualified** from being a Councillor;
- (c) They are no longer a Councillor; or
- (d) Where the Council passes a resolution removing them from office.

Foot note:

To the extent not covered in (a)-(d), **ibid.*

5.4(c) and 5.5.3 Also to change the reference from suspended to **disqualified** under 5.3.2 for Deputy Leader for other Cabinet Members to disqualified.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

General

- 9.1. Full Council's terms of reference include "approving or adopting the Policy Framework". The Policy Framework includes the Constitution.
- 9.2. Section 37 Local Government Act 2000 requires the Council to have in place a Constitution and to keep that under review. The Local Government Act 2000 section 9P sets out the requirements of a local authority's Constitution, including the requirements to prepare it and keep it up to date and the requirement to make it available for public inspection.

Specific

- 9.3. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 introduced the requirement of a Strong Leader and Cabinet model of executive arrangements (with some exceptions due to the size of the authority being less than 85,000 at the time) and or referenda.
- 9.4. Section 9I of the Local Government Act 2000 provides:
Election and term of office of leader
Executive arrangements by a local authority which provide for a leader and cabinet executive (England)—
 - (a) must include provision with respect to the election of the executive leader, including provision for an election where there is a vacancy in the office of executive leader, and
 - (b) may include provision with respect to the term of office of the executive leader.
- 9.5. Section 9IA further provides: Removal of leader
 - (1) *Executive arrangements by a local authority which provide for a leader and cabinet executive (England) must include provision for the council to remove the executive leader by resolution.*
 - (2) *If a council passes a resolution to remove the executive leader, a new executive leader is to be elected—*
 - (a) *at the meeting at which the leader is removed from office, or*
 - (b) *at a subsequent meeting.*

- 9.6. Article 3 of The North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2023 No 1024 provides:
3.— *Wards of the district of North Hertfordshire and number of councillors*
(1) *The existing wards of the district of North Hertfordshire are abolished.*
(2) *The district of North Hertfordshire is divided into the 25 wards listed in the first column of the table in Schedule 1.*
(3) *Each ward comprises the area identified on the map by reference to the name of the ward.*
(4) *The number of councillors to be elected for each ward is the number specified in relation to that ward in the second column of the table in Schedule 1.*

As all current wards are abolished and new ones (and membership) effectively created, all the current District Councillors retire on the 4th day after the election in 2024. The proposed changes make it clearer and better reflect the requirements of Sections 9I and 9IA.

- 9.7 It is proposed that 'suspended' is replaced by 'disqualified'. This is because it is a better reflection of the wording and definition under section 80 & 81A Local Government Act 1972 (as per section 80 "Disqualifications for election and holding office as member of a local authority in England":
(d) *has within five years before the day of election or since his election been convicted in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man of any offence and has had passed on him a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months without the option of a fine;*
(5A) *See also section 81A (disqualification relating to sexual offences etc (England)).*

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None identified in relation to the report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2 Ensuring the Council has appropriate governance arrangements in place is an important risk mitigation measure. The Council's Constitution is a fundamental part of those governance arrangements.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Otherwise, no specific equality issues identified.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this decision as this is not a procurement exercise or contract.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

14.1 None identified.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

15.1 None identified in respect of the specific amendments proposed.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 None.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Author:

17.1. Jeanette Thompson, Service Director Legal and Community, Monitoring Officer, email jeanette.thompson@north-herts.gov.uk;

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Constitution see webpage <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council-constitution>

18.2 The North Hertfordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2023 [[CLICK HERE](#)]

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Council
18 APRIL 2024

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: Sale of Land at Hitchin Road, Weston known as The Snipe.

REPORT OF: Paul Quin - Interim Estates Surveyor / Philip Doggett – Principal Estates Surveyor

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Ian Albert, Finance & IT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY, A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report seeking approval of the sale of North Hertfordshire District Council's (NHDC's) freehold interest in land at The Snipe, Hitchin Road, Weston based on terms negotiated following Cabinet's resolution on 15th December 2020 (minute number 14). The land is an allocated housing site in the adopted North Herts Local Plan. The commercially sensitive terms are set out in the Part 2 report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Full Council grant approval for the Council to enter into a binding contract with the purchaser, conditional upon the grant of planning permission for a residential development as described in Part 2 of this report.
- 2.2 That Full Council approve the sale to be entered into jointly with the neighbouring landowner and to share the proceeds on the basis of an apportionment equivalent to the percentage of ownership.
- 2.3 That Full Council approve that the costs of sale and allowable expenses be shared in proportion as stated in 2.2.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. These recommendations are made as a result of extensive marketing by the Council's appointed agents and take into consideration current Council policies on sustainability and carbon emissions, whilst achieving best consideration.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Do nothing – following the Cabinet decision on 15th December 2020 declaring the land surplus to Council requirements and authorising its disposal, doing nothing is not recommended option as it would fail to deliver housing supply or capital receipt. It would also leave the Council responsible for maintaining the land.
- 4.2 There were bids which could have resulted in a higher capital receipt, however these depended upon what was judged to be unachievable densities of development. When equated on a like for like basis to the recommended bidder, the capital receipt would have been in fact lower. Given the much greater level of risk associated with such higher density, these bids were not considered to be deliverable. Therefore, these options are not recommended.
- 4.3 There were 2 unconditional offers, however the prices were very significantly below the offer being recommended for acceptance. Whilst these could have resulted in an immediate capital receipt for the Council (subject to completion of legal formalities), the substantial deficit in receipt is not considered justifiable in comparison to the subject to planning proposal which is based upon density in close accordance with the Council's stated planning allocation. For this reason, the unconditional offers are not recommended for acceptance and would not constitute best value.
- 4.4 The Council could have marketed their land holding in isolation without the involvement of the adjoining landowner. The clear advice from the Council's development consultant was that critical synergy would be lost in achieving the optimum planning outcome, given potentially varying timescales for development and the real possibility of the adjoining owner going to market at a faster pace and therefore jeopardising a commercially sound outcome for the Council. This course of action is not therefore recommended.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive Member for Finance and IT has been consulted during the process and is supportive of the recommendations set out herein.
- 5.2 The relevant Ward Member, Cllr Jarvis, has been consulted and expressed concern as to how the proposals accord with the proposed action contained within the Council's Climate Change strategy which seeks Passivhaus standards of energy efficiency and sustainability (or similar) on Council land disposals.
- 5.3 As a result of this consultation and with careful consideration toward such standards, special care has been taken in appraising offers for the land, to ensure that best possible standards are achieved, whilst balancing commercial considerations set out within this report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. On 15th December 2020 (minute number 14), Cabinet declared this land surplus to the District Council's requirements and the decision to place it upon the open market or pursue alternative development options be delegated to the Service Director for Resources, in consultation with the Executive member for Finance and IT.
- 7.2 During the intervening period, the land has been placed on the open market and offers invited by informal tender on an unconditional basis or subject to planning. As a result, the anticipated capital receipt for the Council is expected to exceed the sum originally anticipated in the 15th December 2020 decision and above the threshold that can be approved by Cabinet. Accordingly, the matter is reported to Full Council at this stage, to ensure that due Governance is observed.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. Development consultants Aitchison Raffety were instructed by the Council to advise upon marketing strategy and methodology. Assessing the planning prognosis and taking account of necessary infrastructure detail of the new development, Aitchison Raffety advised that the land should be marketed jointly with the adjoining parcel of land which is in private ownership. It was determined that synergy could be achieved by combining the sites, with one Highways solution, one overall drainage solution and optimisation of Affordable Housing within a new development.
- 8.2 The apportionment of land equates to 61.9% in relation to Council owned land and 38.1% to the private landowner whose identity is confirmed in Part 2.
- 8.3 As mentioned at 2.2 above, each owner is to share proceeds as well as allowable costs and share of selling costs according to the percentages confirmed at 8.2 above.
- 8.4 Marketing details as attached in the Appendix to Part 1 of this report were prepared and circulated to a cross section of developers. A total of 120 sets of details were circulated.
- 8.5 35 full information packs were sent out as a result to parties expressing firm interest, as a result of which 18 offers were received. 16 of these offers were conditional upon planning consent and 2 were unconditional, as outlined at 4.3 above.
- 8.6 A detailed analysis was carried out by Aitchison Raffety and a report dated 12th September 2023 was presented to officers for further consideration. This report is shown as Appendix A to Part 2.
- 8.7 Apart from the capital sums received by tender, officers paid close attention to the associated details of those offers which demonstrated the strongest attention to energy efficiency and sustainability issues. Whilst Passivhaus standards were the ideal target, in line with the actions set out in the Climate Change Strategy, negotiations had to be carefully balanced by the need to accommodate the joint seller, who was focussed on achieving the best financial outcome. Whilst the Council might have declared that their percentage of the land be developed exclusively to Passivhaus standards, the layout of any new development would not necessarily accommodate such a definitive split.

- 8.8 With the considerations of 8.7 in mind, each offer was analysed to establish the most favourable bidder, given a balance of monetary offer and attention to Council's Climate Change Strategy.
- 8.9 After careful analysis, it transpired that Party A (identified in Part 2) compared favourably with Party B (also identified in Part 2), whose stated philosophy was focussed upon energy efficiency and sustainability. Both parties planned to build to Future Homes standards, significantly beyond current Building Regulations.
- 8.10 After reviewing both bidders' proposals, it was considered that Party A offered the overall best result for the Council. Further detail is provided in Part 2 of this report.
- 8.11 Since identifying the preferred bidder through the afore-mentioned analysis, work has been carried out by both sides. The purchaser has carried out further diligence, whilst the Council's Legal Services have issued a draft contract for sale, with the usual enquiries before contract being addressed.
- 8.12 Before seeking Full Council approval to the transaction, officers have sought to establish that all fundamentals are clearly understood between the parties, such that the report set out herein, accurately portrays the true position that the Council will be authorised to agree to.
- 8.13 Each bidder would have made a number of assumptions, some based upon desktop studies, rather than physical and/or intrusive investigations. Only once a purchaser is confident that they have an agreement subject to contract, will they embark upon the additional expense of the latter.
- 8.14 During the intervening period since agreement in principle, further confirmatory investigations have been carried out by the purchaser. Notably, a drainage solution has proven to be potentially more challenging than originally thought from desk top research. The final solution will only be established once a Full Planning Application is prepared and considered.
- 8.15 By way of an appropriate way forward, the purchaser has agreed to work on an open book basis, with the Vendor/s having the option to instruct independent consultants by way of cross checking. Should the end solution prove more expensive than the allowance of £100,000 already provided for in the purchaser's calculations, an equitable share of the costs will be entered into between all parties. Our selling agents advise that this would be consistent with the approach taken by any other potential buyers,
- 8.16 The North Hertfordshire Council adopted Local Plan 2011 – 2031 indicates an estimated density of 40 dwellings on the combined land, with an Affordable Housing quota of 40%. By analysing layouts and precedents of other sites granted planning consent in North Hertfordshire, Aitchison Raffety's advice is that potentially as many as 45 units could be deliverable. Some offers proposed many more units than this but were discarded as being unrealistic.
- 8.17 Subject to Full Council approval, it is proposed that the price, which is conditional upon the grant of planning permission, will be determined by applying a gross rate per sq ft to the consented scheme. This number is established by calculating the equivalent price offered by each party, assuming 40 units are consented, and which are expected to have a footprint of 50,000 sq. ft.

As the mix of development is yet to be determined in detail, this is proposed as the most equitable method by which to establish the end price. To simply base it upon the number of units could result in a disadvantageous outcome, if for instance, a lesser number of larger units should be delivered.

- 8.18 Hence, in the event of a larger scheme involving greater square footage gaining a consent, the gross price can easily be calculated.
- 8.19 Certain allowable expenses are to be agreed against the gross price, such as payments, drainage solutions and technical issues, all of which are identified in the proposed contract for sale. The exact extent of these costs will remain unknown until a scheme is formally consented and specific details agreed with the Council's Planning Department and County Highways. A range of anticipated outcomes is given in Part 2.
- 8.20 A long stop date equating to 30 months beyond exchange of contracts is to be incorporated into the contract. The purchaser has up to 15 months within which to secure a planning consent. Only if there is a live application still under consideration, or an appeal current, there is provision for the contract to be extended until the long stop date.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The decision to approve this proposed sale is required to be made at an ordinary meeting of Full Council in accordance with paragraph 4.4.1 (u) of the Council Constitution. This paragraph reads as follows: *"to authorise the disposal (by sale or lease) of land or buildings where the sale price, premium or initial annual rent (after the expiry of any rent free period) exceeds £2,500,000"*.
- 9.2 Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 allows a Council to dispose of land in any manner it wishes provided that the consideration is the best that can be reasonably obtained unless the Secretary of State consents to the disposal for less than best value.
- 9.3 The Council has advertised the proposed sale in accordance with sections 123(2A) and 127(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 233(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and must evaluate any public response as part of the decision-making process. In accordance with S.123 of the Local Government Act, notices have been placed in the Stevenage Comet newspaper, giving opportunity for any objections to be raised by no later than 18th April 2024. Approval of this proposed disposal is subject to there being no objections which are considered by the Council's Principal Surveyor and Legal Services to demonstrate a contravention of the Act. Any such objections will be duly considered and the authors of such advised as to the Council's findings.
- 9.4 By entering into the proposed contract for sale, the Council will be bound to sell their freehold interest in the subject land in the event of planning permission being granted for a minimum of 40 houses with a 40% proportion of Affordable Housing and the joint seller will also be bound to the same contract. The purchaser will similarly be bound to complete the purchase in the event of planning consent equivalent to, or greater than the abovementioned extent.
- 9.5 The Council is represented by in house Legal Services, who will protect the Council's interests in the matter. The Purchaser is to provide an undertaking to meet the sellers' reasonable abortive legal costs should the transaction not proceed.

Normally this would also include an undertaking to cover the Council's costs, however, if this proceeds, these will be covered from the proceeds of sale.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Upon completion of the proposed sale, a capital receipt will be received. An estimated range of outcomes is identified in Part 2. The capital receipt will be used to fund future capital expenditure and can also be invested to generate investment returns until it is needed.
- 10.2. Costs of sale such as legal and agent's fees, the latter being based upon 1.25% of the sale price, are to be met out of the proceeds. These will be treated as an off-set against the capital receipt.
- 10.3. Should the purchaser fail to complete the purchase after contract, £100,000 of the deposit monies shall be non-refundable.
- 10.4. The land does not currently command rental revenue and therefore no loss is anticipated by this sale. The sale also removes any risk and costs involved holding the land.
- 10.5. As referenced earlier in this report and at 9.4 above, the gross proceeds and costs of sale are to be split between the joint selling parties.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2. A number of unknowns exist prior to the contract becoming unconditional:
 - a. The purchaser may not succeed in gaining a planning consent. However, by entering into contract with Party A, it is considered that their Planning aspirations are realistic and therefore the optimum chances of success exist.
 - b. The demands of Hertfordshire Highways are outside of the Council's control and whilst generic estimations of S.106 costs have been factored in, excessive requirements such as new road layouts/roundabouts or crossings could add to allowable expenses.

Through negotiations and analysis of Party A's assumptions, it is judged that they are realistic and therefore the chances of greater than expected costs in this respect are mitigated.

- c. The price may be adversely influenced by higher than anticipated costs of a drainage solution. Nevertheless, the purchaser has made provision of £100,000 in their bid towards a viable solution and if this proves not to be adequate due to further complications being identified, the parties will gain a 2nd opinion on an "Open Book" basis.

- d. Whilst Party A's financial status is understood to be sound at this point in time, future changes to this prior to completion cannot be forecast. In the unlikely event of financial stress coming to bear upon the purchaser, it is conceivable that performance of the contract could become beyond their means.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. There are not considered to be any direct negative equality issues arising from this report.
- 12.3. The offers received for sale of the land were dealt with in a fair and consistent manner leading to recommendations set out in 2.1- 2.3.
- 12.4. The development resulting from the sale of the land will include 40% affordable housing units which will likely have positive impacts that the wider community might benefit from such as enhanced community inclusion, access to affordable housing, potential increase of social mobility and potential reduction in homelessness.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. There is not a requirement for Social Value to apply to the sale of land, however ensuring that the 40% Affordable Housing units will be provided, does help to ensure Social Value benefits. The results of these steps are that a mix of Shared Ownership and Social rent units will be provided.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 An Environmental Impact Assessment was carried out ahead of the 15th December 2020 Cabinet decision and can be referred to within the following link and is within the Final Sustainability Appraisal:

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/north-herts-local-plan-2011-2031>
- 14.2 As set out in this report, consideration has been given to the potential to meet the North Herts Council Climate Strategy action to require Passivhaus, BREEAM, or similar standards for all developments on land sold by the Council. Though a total of 120 developers were invited to bid on the site, not one offered to build to these standards. Nevertheless, through analysis of the offers that did come in, it has been possible to ensure building to the Future Homes Standards.
- 14.3 The Future Homes Standard is due to be implemented in 2025 and was recently consulted on. It will improve the energy efficiency and reduce emissions from new build homes through improvements to building regulations. It builds on improvements made in 2022 to building regulations part L on conservation of energy and part F on ventilation.

- 14.4 The 2025 Future Homes and Buildings Standards enhances air tightness levels and requires the use of low-carbon heating, particularly air source heat pumps. The Government anticipates that the Future Homes Standard will reduce emissions from buildings by 75-80% compared to those built under previous regulations from 2013 and considers buildings to be net zero compatible. The Energy Usage Intensity of homes built under the Future Homes Standard is around 45kWh/m2.yr which is significantly below older building regulations.
- 14.5 The Future Homes Standard does not achieve energy efficiency standards in line with Passivhaus Standard, which has requirements for very high airtightness levels, greater insulation, triple glazing and mechanical ventilation delivering space heating energy demand of 15kWh/m2.yr (a similar metric to the Energy Usage Intensity).
- 14.6 However, being Net Zero compatible and powered through low carbon technologies, the Future Homes Standard is a significant improvement on building regulations prior to the 2022 improvements and is broadly aligned with the Council's 2040 Net Zero district target.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The proposed land sale will have no impact upon North Herts council staff.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 None.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Attached Part 1 background papers from – Aitchison Raffety marketing particulars.

18.2 15th December 2020 Cabinet decision record. [CLICK HERE](#).

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PART 1 BACKGROUND PAPER

PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

FOR SALE

ON BEHALF OF THE JOINT OWNERS

2.1 HECTARE (5.19 ACRE) PRIME HOUSING SITE

LAND AT HITCHIN ROAD, WESTON, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG4 7AY



**ALLOCATED GREENFIELD HOUSING SITE, WITHIN THE NORTH HERTS COUNCIL
ADOPTED LOCAL PLAN**

OFFERS INVITED ON AN UNCONDITIONAL OR SUBJECT TO PLANNING BASIS

INFORMAL TENDER, OFFERS BY 12 NOON, 12 SEPTEMBER 2023

LAND AT HITCHIN ROAD, WESTON, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG4 7AY

LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

Weston is an attractive and highly sought after village approximately 2.5 miles south of Baldock and Letchworth and c4 miles north of Stevenage and east of Hitchin. The village is highly accessible with the A1M to the west and the Baldock bypass to the north. Weston has a nursery/primary school, shop, church, village hall, public houses and sports clubs.



The land comprises two distinct parcels. The larger eastern section is owned by North Herts Council (NHC) and is overgrown grassland with hedged boundaries. The western parcel is privately owned and is in use as grazing land. There is a mature hedge belt between the parcels.

The site has extensive frontage to Hitchin Road with a wide verge. There is a pumping station beyond the northwest corner of this frontage.

To the south of the site are houses in The Snipe and a mature public play area.



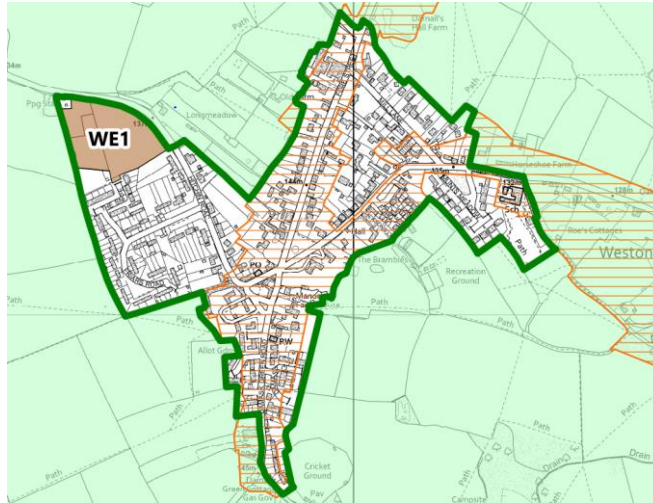
These particulars have been prepared in good faith to give a fair overall view of the property, do not form any part of an offer of contract and must not be relied on as statements or representations of fact. Any areas, measurements or distances referred to are given as a guide and are not precise. No assumption should be made that contents shown in photographs are included in the sale.

LAND AT HITCHIN ROAD, WESTON, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG4 7AY

TOWN PLANNING

The land is within the town planning jurisdiction of North Herts Council.

Within the recently adopted North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031 the site is allocated as the only housing site in Weston, site WE1 as per the plan below.



The specific allocation policy is shown below:

Ref	Local Housing Allocations and site specific policy criteria	Dwelling estimate
Policy WE1	<p>Land off Hitchin Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site layout to take account of existing wastewater infrastructure; • Address existing surface water flood risk issues, including any run-off through SUDs or other appropriate solution; • Western hedgerow to maintained and strengthened to form a robust boundary; and • Archaeological survey to be completed prior to development. 	40 homes

Whilst a dwelling estimate of 40 dwellings is stated above, we consider that subject to other technical and town planning issues the site could potentially accommodate a higher number of dwellings should prospective purchasers consider that to be favourable.

The adopted policy for affordable housing provision in NHC on sites over 25 dwellings is 40%.

CIL is not in place in NHC, and a Section 106 agreement will be required. Attention is drawn to the NHC SPD, "Developer Contributions", dated January 2023 which together with the policies in the adopted local plan provide prospective purchasers with general planning information required. Any further planning enquiries should be to the selling agent and **NOT** directed to NHC planning officers.

LAND AT HITCHIN ROAD, WESTON, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG4 7AY

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

A detailed information pack is available upon request and includes a Topographical Survey; an Archaeological Desk-based Heritage Assessment and a Phase 1 Desk Study and Walkover Survey.

A Proposed Highways Access Strategy Report was produced by clients' highway consultants and was submitted to HCC for a pre-application response. Our clients' highways report supports the technical suitability of up to 70 dwellings with a simple junction access from Hitchin Road. The HCC pre-application response accepts the junction location and design but proposes a capacity of up to 40 dwellings due to their opinion as to location sustainability. HCC also suggest some limited pedestrian and vehicle local enhancement and they seek a financial contribution towards sustainable transport. In our consultant expert's opinion some of the HCC comments/requests are capable of challenge and interested parties should take their own expert consultant advice.

Our clients have also commissioned a Flood Risk and Drainage Review Report. The site is within flood zone 1 so a low-risk location. There is a foul water sewer crossing the site close to the intersecting hedgerow and also around the site edges to the pumping station. There is a private surface water land drain on a small corner of the site close to The Snipe that serves some existing adjoining homes. This is in the process of being repaired/replaced. Usual lift and shift provisions will apply. Surface water drainage for the new homes on site will be via infiltration and an appropriate SUDS strategy will be required.

VIEWING OF THE SITE

External viewing of the site may be undertaken from the road frontages of Hitchin Road and The Snipe. Internal viewing of the larger eastern parcel only is permitted at any time at your own risk. There is a gate from The Snipe into this parcel and from this section you can also obtain views into the western paddock. There is also a track by the Hitchin Road pumping station which offers another view into the smaller western paddock. Internal entry onto the western paddock without an appointment is not permitted due to the horses. **If internal viewing of this section is required then it is strictly upon request.**

METHOD OF SALE

Offers are invited on either an unconditional basis (subject to contract only) or on a subject to planning basis.

To accompany ALL offers, it is essential that detailed supporting information is also included.

This must include a preliminary site layout and the offer must set out the density of development upon which it is based, in terms of GIA for both the private and affordable homes split.

For conditional offers, the offer must also include the key terms for any conditional contract, such as contract duration and long stop date; an achievable target layout density and land value/ft² for both the private sale and affordable homes and a contractual minimum density. Conditional offers should be made gross of any s106 costs at this stage.

The selected buyer should be prepared to provide "a legal undertaking to the vendors reasonable legal costs" (abortive or otherwise) and if the prospective buyer does not conclude the purchase then the vendor will require assignment/ability to use all plans and rely on all reports. The property is marketed for sale by informal tender, with best offers to be submitted by 12 noon on Tuesday 12 September 2023. VAT will **not** be charged on the land sale.

LAND AT HITCHIN ROAD, WESTON, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG4 7AY

We anticipate a prompt interview process for any shortlist, post bid date.

Interested parties are encouraged to obtain as high a level of internal approval as possible to support their offer and should clearly state the level of internal approval obtained and what future approval process would occur if successful. Any specific conditions and the need for any pre-contract surveys must be made clear as well as funding arrangements and key financial assumptions.

LEGAL ASPECTS

The freehold title to the property is held in two titles with HD498242 owned by NHC and HD208783 privately owned. The parties have entered into an agreement in order to facilitate the joint sale. The grazing land is subject to a tenancy, but vacant possession can be provided at one months notice.

Following submission of any conditional offers, assuming any such parties are shortlisted then they will be provided with a draft conditional contract to confirm general acceptance to the key terms.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Green field housing sites are in short supply, and this is the only housing allocation within this highly sought after village. All enquiries & offers for this property should be directed to sole agents, Aitchison Raffety, for the attention of Kevin Rolfe MRICS, kevin.rolfe@argroup.co.uk



Eastern Parcel



Western Parcel

These particulars have been prepared in good faith to give a fair overall view of the property, do not form any part of an offer of contract and must not be relied on as statements or representations of fact. Any areas, measurements or distances referred to are given as a guide and are not precise. No assumption should be made that contents shown in photographs are included in the sale.

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