

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON TUESDAY, 14TH NOVEMBER, 2023 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Elizabeth Dennis (Chair), Ruth Brown (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Keith Hoskins, Steve Jarvis, Sean Prendergast and Alistair Willoughby*

In Attendance:

Isabelle Alajooz (Legal Commercial Team Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Deborah Coates (Principal Strategic Planning Officer), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Susan Le Dain (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Chloe Hipwood (Service Manager), Sarah Kingsley (Service Director - Place), Martin Lawrence (Strategic Housing Manager), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Nigel Smith (Strategic Planning Manager) and Louise Symes (Strategic Planning and Projects Manager)

220 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes and 35 seconds

There were no apologies for absence received.

221 MINUTES - 19 SEPTEMBER 2023

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 44 seconds

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

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19 September 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

222 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 24 seconds

There was no other business notified.

223 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 29 seconds

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;

- (3) Members were reminded that this Council had declared a Climate Emergency. This was a serious decision and meant that, as this was an emergency, all of us, officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.
- (4) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (5) The Chair advised the change in order of the agenda and Agenda item 6b would be taken ahead of Agenda item 11.

224 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 5 minutes 3 seconds

There was no public participation at the meeting.

225 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 5 minutes 8 seconds

The Chair invited Councillor Sean Nolan to present the Overview and Scrutiny Referrals on the 'Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Service Design'.

N.B. The referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee regarding the Medium Term Financial Strategy was considered with the relevant agenda item.

226 ALLOCATION OF (ADDITIONAL) HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT

Audio recording – 8 minutes 52 seconds

Councillor, Sean Prendergast, as Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health, presented the report entitled 'Allocation of (Additional) Homelessness Prevention Grant' and advised that:

- The calculations had changed in relation to the original recommendations with revised inflation figures.
- The allocation of the grant must be spent this financial year.
- The revised plan was to use the additional grant to finance core housing activity in 2023-24, such as staff salaries.
- This report highlighted the increasing pressure on the housing team, which would only increase in future years.

Councillor Sean Prendergast expressed his thanks to the officers in the housing team who worked incredibly hard to assist vulnerable people in the community.

Councillor Sean Prendergast proposed, and Councillor Alistair Willoughby seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Approved the allocation of a £192k of HPG in order to fund the salary budget shortfall in the housing team to March 2027.

- (2) Authorised the remaining amount (of £7.9k) to be used to offset the cost of hotel placements, which are anticipated to grow further over the winter months.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The recommendations in this report support the Council's response to the increasing volume and complexity of housing approaches, whilst also meeting the requirements of DLUHC's ringfenced use of the funding.

227 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

Audio recording – 12 minutes 45 seconds

Councillor Ruth Brown, Executive Member for Planning and Transport, presented the report entitled 'Strategic Planning Matters' and advised that:

- The Local Plan Review had started and was almost complete. The report from this review would go to Cabinet in January 2024, as outlined in 8.1 of the report.
- The Strategic Planning Board had approved one planning application and the other five applications were in the process of consultation for approval, as outlined in 8.44.
- The second expansion of Luton airport from 18 to 32 million passengers was currently under enquiry. Objections to this were climate change, noise, air quality and surface access, as outlined in 8.48.
- The local cycling plan was adopted by Herts County Council in September 2023, as outlined in 8.61.
- The application by the Council for a grant to install EV charging points in car parks across the district was successful, as outlined in 8.78.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed, and Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report on strategic planning matters was noted.
- (2) That the Planning Reforms responses from North Herts and HIPP, attached as Appendices A and B were endorsed.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To keep Cabinet informed of recent developments on strategic planning matters.

228 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024-29

Audio recording 18 minutes and 19 seconds

The Chair invited Councillor Sean Nolan, as Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, to present the referral from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on this item. Councillor Nolan advised that:

- Discussions centred around the challenges ahead over the next five years including the costs of two major contracts coming up and the potential impact on future saving targets.
- It was discussed that although the Council does have reserves to reduce the short-term impact, it needed to plan how to mitigate those items in the future.
- He thanked the Service Director – Resources and Executive Member for the points they addressed.
- There were financial challenges ahead, but that the Council was in a good position to face these going forward.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Finance and IT, presented the report entitled 'Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-29' and advised that:

- This report improved the way Cabinet and full Council were able to review financial matters.
- The government had failed to provide a new funding formula or plan for funding for local government.
- The Council was responsible for setting a balanced budget.
- The estimated rate of savings of £3.1million by 2028-29 was detailed in page 59 of the report.
- The Council was in a good position with reserves which would give time to consider the best ways to balance the budget up to 2028-29.
- Going forward it was vital to consult with Councillor colleagues and residents to ensure needs were met.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, acknowledged the hard work that it takes not only to deliver a balanced budget, but also to deliver the services for the residents of North Herts. She drew attention to Appendix A of the report which explained Council reserves and how important it was to consider what could happen if the Council was underfunded and needed to rely on these reserves.

In response to a question from Councillor Steve Jarvis, Councillor Ian Albert advised that all the four items in page 59 of report regarding addressing the funding gap were being considered.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, as Chair, advised that this report showed that the Council had a good level of scrutiny by addressing these items and reported that Cabinet wanted to thank the members of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee for their continued positive work.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, and Councillor Steve Jarvis seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That Council adopt the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as attached at Appendix A.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: Adoption of a MTFs and communication of its contents will assist in the process of forward planning the use of Council resources and in budget setting for 2024/2025 to 2028/2029, culminating in the setting of the Council Tax precept for 2024/25 in February 2024. This will (alongside the existing Council Plan) support the Council in setting a budget that is affordable and aligned to Council priorities.

229 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

This item was not required at this meeting. Following the above resolution that the Waste, Recycling and Street Cleaning Service Design be deferred to the next meeting of the Cabinet, the meeting did not consider any matters in part 2.

230 WASTE, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING SERVICE DESIGN - PART 2

Due to the decision taken on the Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Service Design – Part 1, this item was not considered at this meeting.

N.B. The meeting did not move into part 2 and any discussions and resolutions taken were in part 1.

231 WASTE, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING SERVICE DESIGN - PART 1

Audio recording 5 minutes 12 seconds

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, as Chair, proposed that Cabinet accepted the recommendations as amended by Overview and Scrutiny Committee included in referrals 6a and 6b, with the addition that these items were deferred to the next meeting of the Cabinet for consideration. This was seconded by Councillor Alistair Willoughby, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That any changes to the service design identified in paragraph 8.2 of the part 1 report (and Appendix 2 of the part 2 report) regarding waste and recycling service would be referred back to Cabinet for approval.
- (2) That any changes to the service design identified in paragraph 8.2 of the part 1 report (and Appendix 2 of the part 2 report) regarding street cleansing service would be referred back to Cabinet for approval.
- (3) That this item and the part 2 item, included as Agenda Item 11, be deferred to the next meeting of Cabinet.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure decisions are taken by elected representatives and not delegated to Officers.

The meeting closed at 8.02 pm

Chair