

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISION SHEET

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3JF
on Thursday, 23rd January, 2025 at 7.30 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tamsin Thomas, Dominic Griffiths, Sam Collins, Steven Patmore, Michael Muir, Sarah Lucas and Rhona Cameron.

2 MINUTES - 28 NOVEMBER 2024

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 28 November 2024 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) The Chair reminded Members that the Council had declared both a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency. These are serious decisions, and mean 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 agreed a change to the order of the published agenda and Agenda Item 6 'Questions from Members' and Agenda Item 7 'Notice of Motions' were taken after Agenda Item 13.
- (7) The Chair agreed that Agenda Item 9 'Community Governance Review – Draft Proposals for Public Consultation' was deferred to the Full Council meeting on Thursday 27 February 2025.
- (8) The Chair announced that Louise Symes, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager, had been working at North Hertfordshire for 30 years, and extended gratitude to Louise for her services to the Council.

RESOLVED: That the Council place on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Louise Symes for her long and valuable service to Local Government.

- (9) The Chair announced that former Councillor Tony Hunter passed away on 7 January 2025, and members stood for a minutes silence in tribute.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at this meeting.

6 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

The Chair advised that the referrals from cabinet listed as 8A, 8B and 8C would be taken with the respective items on the agenda.

7 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

As notified, the Chair stated that this item has been deferred to the meeting of Full Council on 27 February 2025.

8 REVIEW OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME

RESOLVED: That Council

- (1) Considered the report and recommendations of the IRP, as attached as Appendix A of the submitted report.
- (2) Agreed the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2025/2026 as set out in Appendix B, amended as per tracked with specified indexation has been applied for up to the next four years, through to 31 March 2029, subject to a freeze to any increase in Special Responsibility Allowances for 2025/2026. (From 1 April 2026 the Special Responsibility Allowances, as identified by the IRP in Recommendation 12 of their report, will be index linked.)
- (3) Expressed appreciation to the IRP for their work over the last year on this report.

REASONS FOR DECISION: To ensure that the Council meets its statutory requirements of an annual review and adoption of the scheme.

9 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2025/26

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Approved the continuation of the banded scheme for working age applicants which remains largely unchanged for 2025/2026, a small adjustment to the income bands to reflect CPI has been incorporated to ensure the scheme continues to support those most in need.
- (2) Noted the cost of the scheme is currently £9.18m noting that this is not an actual cost but a reduction of the amount of council tax collected.
- (3) Noted that the Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Scheme, previously agreed to provide additional transitional support will continue to be used to support cases of exceptional hardship.

Thursday, 23rd January, 2025

REASONS FOR DECISION: To ensure that the Council has a Council Tax Reduction Scheme that continues 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.

10 Q2 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (INTEGRATED CAPITAL AND TREASURY) MONITORING

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Noted the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2024.
- (2) Approved capital budgets in 2025/26 for a new flume (£300k) and a refurbishment of the pool changing rooms (£330k) at North Herts Leisure Centre.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) Cabinet has approved adjustments to the capital programme and has ensured 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.
- (3) The proposal to approve the 2025/26 capital budgets at North Herts Leisure Centre in January (rather than in the usual budget report at the end of February) means that the works can take place at the same time as the decarbonisation works, and therefore not require two periods where the pool cannot be used. It also provides a more obvious benefit to users of the facility.

11 CONSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNANCE REVIEW

RESOLVED: That Council approves

- (1) The removal of the Planning Control Committee Sub-Committee meetings from the 2025 calendar.
- (2) That Planning Control Committee meetings commence at 7pm, from January 2025.
- (3) A Planning Control Committee Council Procedure Rule, that, any item under the consideration of the Committee, at 10.30 pm, will be the concluding item of the meeting, with any remaining business to be considered at the next available meeting (subject to the discretion of the Chair on a remaining item). Such amendment to take effect from January 2025.
- (4) The Standards Committee's Terms of Reference be amended to include remit to consider and adopt or recommend adoption to the relevant decision-making body of relevant Ethical Standards Codes, or Protocols; and undertake any annual review of sections 1-18 of the Constitution (with the Monitoring Officer), prior to recommended change to Full Council.
- (5) The proposed amendments to the Council Procedure Rules ('CPR') on Member Motions, Member Questions and Rules of Debate, as follows:

- i. CPR 4.8.2 (f) and (g) order of business be move to the end of the meeting.
 - ii. CPR 4.8.12(a) Motions on Notice – three Motions per Political Group – **LOST**.
 - iii. CPR 4.8.12 (c) Motions on Notice – Scope, to be amended to areas the Council has responsibility for and are relevant to, or specifically affect the district – **LOST**.
 - iv. CPR 4.8.12 (d) Motions on Notice - Debate to be up to 30 minutes per Motion.
 - v. CPR 4.8.12 Motions on Notice – order of Motions shall be debated in rotation commencing with the largest opposition group, followed by the remaining opposition groups in descending order of group size and the administration group ending the round this order would be repeated until all Motions have been considered.
 - vi. 2.5.6 CPR 4.8.14 (e) Content and Length of Speeches – to be reduced per Councillor to three minutes.
- (6) The delegation to the Monitoring Officer to finalise any amendments relating to recommendations 2.3-2.5, as approved, in consultation with the Constitutional & Governance Working Group, and thereafter to be reported to Councillors via the Member Information Service.
- (7) The increase of the Non-Executive Delegated Decision financial/ contractual threshold reporting limit to £75K (from £50K) and instructs the Service Director Resources and Monitoring Officer to make the necessary amendments to the Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations (and relevant Guidance documentation) accordingly.
- (8) (As the non-Decision-making body by vote of assent), that the Leader will exercise his Executive function, to change the names of the following Community Forums:
- (8.1) Baldock and District – to become Baldock and Villages Community Forum.
 - (8.2) Royston and District – to become Royston and Villages Community Forum.
- (9) To amend section 14.6.11(b)(iv)A as detailed in paragraph 8.6-8.8 (namely):
- “all functions of the Local Planning Authority primarily Planning Policy and Development Control (including enforcement functions, authorising expenditure of planning obligation monies, Biodiversity Net Gain, and Environmental Impact Assessment functions, and Tree Preservation Orders), other than matters reserved to the Planning Control Committee”*
- (10) The revisions to section 14 of the Constitution relating to LGO decisions and payments, as detailed under section 8.5 of the Cabinet report, as follows:
- 14.6.5(a)(xiii) Managing Director’s delegation:
“(xiii) To consider any report of the Local Government Ombudsman and to settle any compensation payments ~~up to £2000~~ (in conjunction with the section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer)”
- 14.6.13 Proper Officers Schedule:
“Local Government Act 1974 S.30(5) To give notice and that copies of an Ombudsman’s report, in draft and final are available to the Managing Director, and Monitoring Officer (where maladministration identified)”

(11) To amend section 4.8.9(e) Presentations by the Public as follows:

(e) Number of presentations: At any one meeting no person or organisation may make more than ~~two~~ one presentations per agenda item (or combined referral and main item) and no more than two such presentations may be made on behalf of one organisation.

(12) To note that the Managing Director has extended the temporary Service Director – Housing & Environmental Health arrangements, as per his Delegated Decision of 18 December 2024, until 31 March 2025 – and that section 14 will be amended accordingly.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: To ensure the arrangements are up-to date and fit for purpose.

12 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11, four questions had been submitted by the required deadline set out in the Constitution.

(A) Free After 3pm Parking

Councillor Tim Johnson to Councillor Daniel Allen (Interim Executive Member for Planning and Transport)

(B) Response to Local Government Re-Organisation White Paper

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Daniel Allen (Leader of the Council)

(C) Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) – Issued

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Daniel Allen (Interim Executive Member for Planning and Transport)

(D) Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) – Appeals

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Daniel Allen (Interim Executive Member for Planning and Transport)

13 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

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

(A) Support the Introduction of a Youth Mobility Scheme

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Publicly endorse the principle of establishing a Youth Mobility Scheme between the UK and the European Union.
- (2) Instruct the Council Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, and the Secretary of State for Education, urging them to open negotiations with the European Union to create such a scheme.

(B) Digital Exclusion and fair representation for all in Council consultations

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Reports brought to Council that propose public consultation must explicitly explain the appropriate mix of digital and non-digital access provision for both communicating the consultation and obtaining feedback, based on the results of the equalities assessment and using the Community Consultation Strategy.
- (2) The Executive Member for Community and Partnership is required to develop a digital skills and literacy plan to help residents participate in consultations and surveys, as part of the mid-term review of the Digital Strategy 2024-27, and report back to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny within a year with recommendations on possibilities and further actions.