

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



15 January 2025

Our Ref Council 23 January 2025
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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 GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF**

on

THURSDAY, 23RD JANUARY, 2025

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 - 28 NOVEMBER 2024 To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 28 November 2024.	5 - 24
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. <u>Ecological Emergency</u> 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

25 - 26

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

7. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

27 - 30

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.

9. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

31 - 110

REPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

To consider and agree the Draft Proposals for the second stage of public consultation of the Community Governance Review.

10. REVIEW OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME

111 -

REPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

144

To agree the Member's Allowances Scheme 2025/2026 having taken into account the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel ('IRP') and consider applying an indexation to the Scheme through to 31 March 2029.

11. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2025/26

145 -

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – CUSTOMERS

156

For Council to consider and approve the Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2025/26.

12.	Q2 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (INTEGRATED CAPITAL AND TREASURY) MONITORING	157 -
	REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES	188

To obtain early approval for spend at North Herts Leisure Centre in 2025/26, so that it can be delivered alongside the decarbonisation works. This involves seeking Council approval for spend in 2025/26 on a new flume (£300k) and a refurbishment of the pool changing rooms (£250k) that includes them being converted in a change village.

13.	CONSTITUTIONAL AND GOVERNANCE REVIEW	189 -
	REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – LEGAL AND COMMUNITY AND MONITORING OFFICER	214

N.B. This item was deferred from the Council meeting of 28 November 2024.

This report presents a summary of the areas reviewed and any in principle recommendations of the Constitutional & Governance Working Group ('Working Group') in relation to the following:

- The Planning Control Committee meetings and Sub-Committees (including start times/ potential end times).
- Standards Committee – recommendation to review the Terms of Reference to include other meaningful areas of remit.
- Council Procedure Rules to be reviewed and amended in respect of Member Motions and Questions, (including agenda management, number, length of time on debate/ remit/ and Member speeches).

The report also covers areas considered but not recommended for change at this stage.

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 Garden City, SG6 3JF
on Thursday, 28th November, 2024 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Clare Billing (Chair), Tina Bhartwas (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Daniel Allen, Amy Allen, David Barnard, Matt Barnes, Sadie Billing, Ruth Brown, Cathy Brownjohn, Val Bryant, Rhona Cameron, Jon Clayden, Ruth Clifton, Sam Collins, Mick Debenham, Emma Fernandes, Dominic Griffiths, Keith Hoskins, Steve Jarvis, Tim Johnson, Chris Lucas, Sarah Lucas, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Bryony May, Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Michael Muir, Sean Nolan, Steven Patmore, Louise Peace, Vijaiya Poopalasingham, Sean Prendergast, Martin Prescott, Emma Rowe, Claire Strong, Tom Tyson, Paul Ward, Laura Williams, Alistair Willoughby, Stewart Willoughby, Claire Winchester, Dave Winstanley, Donna Wright and Daniel Wright-Mason.

IN ATTENDANCE: Faith Churchill (Democratic Services Apprentice), Steve Cobb (Licensing and Community Safety Manager), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Ian Fullstone (Service Director - Regulatory), Edward Leigh (Senior Transport Policy Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Callum Reeve (Electoral Services Assistant), Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Nigel Smith (Strategic Planning Manager), Sohanna Srinivasan (Principal Planning and Urban Design Officer), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community) and Sjanel Wickenden (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer).

ALSO PRESENT: At the start of the meeting 9 members of the public, including registered speakers were present.

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 46 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Chalmers, Elizabeth Dennis, Joe Graziano, Lisa Nash and Tamsin Thomas.

54 MINUTES - 19 SEPTEMBER 2024

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 5 seconds

Councillor Clare Billing, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19 September 2024 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

55 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 47 seconds

There was no other business notified.

56 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 52 seconds

N.B. Councillor Sam Collins entered the Chamber at 19:43.

- (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.

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that a general dispensation had been granted for Agenda Item 9 - Land North of Great Ashby (GA2) Strategic Masterplan Framework.

- (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 applied to Agenda Items 9 and 10 and the corresponding referrals.
- (6) The Chair advised Members that there were changes to the order of the published agenda.

Also, that public participation would be immediately before the respective agenda items - 9 and 10.

- (7) The Chair welcomed newly elected Councillor Sarah Lucas to her first Council Meeting.
- (8) The Chair advised that tickets were now available to purchase for the Chair's Civic Event and Awards 2025, being held on Friday 28 February 2025.
- (9) The Chair and Members paid tribute to former Councillor Ray Bloxham.
- (10) The Chair and Members paid tribute to former Councillor Anthony Burrows.

Councillors Ralph Muncer and Daniel Allen paid tribute to the former Councillors.

A minute's silence was observed in memory of both former Councillors.

- (11) A donation was made to the Chair's Charity – SANDS on behalf of the estate of the former Councillor Michael Weeks.

59 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Audio recording – 17 minutes 20 seconds

There was one motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.15.

(A) Motion Similar to One Previously Rejected

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed the motion as follows:

The following motion has been submitted to consider a motion previously rejected, due notice of which has been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.15(b).

In accordance with paragraph 4.8.15(b) of the Council's Constitution, we the undersigned twelve members support the following motion being considered by Full Council at its meeting on 28 November 2024:

"That Full Council considers a report and recommendations on the North of Stevenage Masterplan at its meeting on 28 November 2024, following reconsiderations by the Project Board."

It is noted that the land to the north of Stevenage is allocated for development in the Council's Local Plan (NS1 Policy SP16), as a strategic site. The Council's adopted Local Plan polices requires preparation of such a Masterplan.

The motion of 11 July 2024 was lost, as per the debate, on the basis that there would be further examination by the Council's Local Plan Project Board of issues raised during debate.

The Project Board has considered these matters, and therefore the Masterplan has been referred for approval. There is no reason to delay reconsideration of the matter by Full Council.

The Council therefore resolves to consider any similar referral motions from Cabinet / motion.

Councillor Val Bryant stated that it was important to carefully review Masterplans, and that Officers had met with the developer after which detailed amendments and clarifications had been presented to Members and the Strategy Group.

Councillor Stewart Willoughby seconded the motion and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Full Council would consider the report and recommendations on the North of Stevenage Masterplan at its meeting on 28 November 2024, following reconsiderations by the Project Board and any similar referral motions from Cabinet.

57 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 23 minutes 12 seconds

N.B. Councillor Cathy Brownjohn left the Chamber at 20:33 and returned at 20:42.

The Chair invited Ms Silke Gruner, Mr Emanuele Lo Faro and Mr Edward Keyner to present to Council their presentation regarding Agenda Item 9 - Land North-East of Great Ashby (GA2) Strategic Masterplan Framework.

Ms Gruner thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided a presentation for Members which included that:

- It had taken 10 years to get to this stage.
- This was a development of 600 homes including 250 affordable dwellings. The site would have a community centre and a primary school.
- This was a landscaped led development utilising the woodlands and providing an attractive edge to the site.
- The Masterplan had previously been described as excellent by Members and this reflected the preparation and commitment of the team. The team had worked with Officers and the Project Board to get to this point.
- Work was continuing with Officers on the pre application phase with an aim to submit an outline planning application in early 2025.
- There would be further details in the outline planning application including the housing mix and density and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- There was ongoing work on a sustainable travel strategy linking the development, including improvements to bridleways.
- In coordination with the Highways Agency extensive modelling and assessment work had been completed regarding the traffic impact from the development
- There would be a primary school on the site and a community centre. There had been discussion regarding an NHS provision, but these were ongoing.
- The development would be implemented by a construction partner subsequent to any planning application.
- It was expected that the development including infrastructure would occur over a period of 5 years with 150 to 200 homes built each year.

The following Members asked points of clarification:

- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Laura Williams
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Vijaiya Poopalasingham
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Sam Collins

In response to points of clarification, Ms Gruner advised that:

- There would be active travel routes between Great Ashby and Stevenage, some of which would be dedicated cycle paths.
- There had been a question-and-answer session at the Community Hall in Great Ashby.
- Questions had been raised regarding any NHS facilities however, this was not something under their control, a site would be made available if successful.
- There was an emergency vehicle access point from Back Lane.
- This was an allocated site in the Local Plan, the Local Plan had been agreed with one site access. Highways had been consulted regarding this matter.
- There were ongoing discussions with Herts Badger Group regarding their concerns.
- There were ongoing discussions regarding an NHS facility. These would be progressed and a suitable location would be allocated if successful.
- Work was ongoing with the Highways team at Hertfordshire County Council regarding the access point with some minor alterations made to the geometry of the junction.

- The Highways team undertook computer modelling of the site reviewing existing movements and taking into account the growth from this and other developments. The modelling then predicted any pinch points, queue times and areas where more infrastructure would be required.
- It was expected that the bus loop would commence in phase one of the development and progress with the phases. It was anticipated that this would be when the Section 106 funding for the primary school was received and after the completion of a set number of dwellings.
- There were four areas identified for potential cycle routes or upgrades to existing routes, these would be finalised and secured at the reserve matters stage.
- The Highways modelling did not identify any further junctions for improvements. However, it did highlight the need to improve pedestrian and cycle routes and crossings.
- The emergency access from Back Lane would be controlled by key activated bollards. Pedestrians, cyclist and horse riders would be able to pass through this access route.
- The Highways modelling established that the junction was viable for the increased volume of traffic. The model was approved as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment and was available online. Pedestrian and cycle ways were encouraged.
- If there was a major shift in movement habits the assessment could be refreshed.
- The modelling took into account the developments at GA1 and in North Stevenage.
- There was an established shop in Great Ashby and it was considered that this was within walking and cycling distance and that therefore a new shop would not be viable. The space could however be used for other commercial purposes.
- Several points were raised during the public consultation, however most of these discussions related to the outline planning and reserve matters stages of the development and were not for consideration under this item.
- The undeveloped land outside of the development site was not in their remit. There might be scope for the Highways team to discuss any access with the landowner.
- Councillors and Highways could influence the bus service however, this was not the remit of the developer.
- There was an international drive to shift traffic transport, this was especially successful in the younger generation. Public transport, cycle routes and pedestrian pathways were in place to assist with this.
- There was still some movement on the bus route and work was ongoing with the bus company and Highways, and Councillor could have input into these discussions.
- There had been considerable work with the GA1 developers especially regarding links to the local centres, community hubs and schools.
- The bus route although considered did not form part of the Masterplan.
- The engagement team had sent invitations to local residents informing them of the public consultations. These were also advertised locally including a leaflet drop in Great Ashby. Clarification could be sought regarding which Councillors were invited.
- Throughout the 15 years of engagement with this development, there had always only been one point of access to this site. Access from Back Lane was not viable, and no other alternatives had been put forward.
- To gain access from Back Lane would mean the destruction of kilometres of hedgerows and ditches, this was not ecologically or financially viable for 600 homes, and therefore had not been considered.

In response to points of clarification, Mr Lo Faro advised that:

- It was anticipated that the bus service would serve both the GA1 and GA2 sites with links into Stevenage.
- There were ongoing traffic surveys assessing existing parking areas to minimise any displacement.
- There had been a review commissioned by Highways regarding the access point and this review validated the one access point.

The Chair thanked Ms Gruner, Mr Lo Faro and Mr Keyner for their presentation.

The Chair noted that this concluded the public participation on Agenda Item 9 - Land North-East of Great Ashby (GA2) Strategic Masterplan Framework and reminded Members that no further questions would be addressed to the public participants.

61 LAND NORTH-EAST OF GREAT ASHBY (GA2) STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

Audio recording 1 hour 12 minutes

N.B. Councillors Alistair Willoughby and Stewart Willoughby declared an interest regarding a family member employed by the Developer. The Monitoring Officer confirmed they had sought advice and a dispensation had been granted for the item.

Interim Executive Member for Planning and Transport, Councillor Daniel Allen, presented referral 8B from Cabinet and the report 'Land North-East of Great Ashby (GA2) – Strategic Masterplan Framework' and stated that:

- This site was allocated in the Local Plan for the development of 600 homes.
- Due to the size of the development a Masterplan was required following a public consultation.

The Strategic Planning Manager presented the report and provided a visual presentation of the site plans.

The following Members asked points of clarification:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Vijaiya Poopalasingham
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Laura Williams
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

In response to points of clarification, the Strategic Planning Manager advised:

- There would be minor, low level work required for the emergency access point on Back Lane.
- The landlord of the disused land had not indicated any potential forthcoming development of the land.
- Cycle times had focused on the two development sites.
- There would be a cycle route to the south for the secondary school and to the southwest to Stevenage Town Centre. Further routes would be reviewed at the next stage of the development.
- Developer contributions would be negotiated at the outline planning and reserve matters stages.

In response to points of clarification, the Senior Transport Policy Officer advised:

- An extensive upgrade would be required for general access from Back Lane, this development would not generate anywhere near enough S106 money for that.
- It was thought that an average person would take approximately 20 minutes to cycle to Stevenage train station from the site.
- Further bus service details would be required at the outline planning stage of the project. The ideal route would link both sites and link to the hospital. The residents of Great Ashby would also benefit from a more frequent service.

- There would be a physical locked restriction in place at Back Lane, Emergency services would have a key for access.
- The most direct cycle route to Stevenage would be via a recently built underpass. A review would occur regarding St Nicholas Park and any feasibility for a cycle path upgrade.
- Further tests regarding feasibility would occur at the outline planning stage, with the Planning Committee considering the details and reports.
- A recent traffic survey had occurred and using that modelling the impact of 1280 new vehicles suggested that 290 traffic movements would occur out of the area in peak morning traffic with 120 movement into the area. Highways had therefore not proposed any improvements but would encourage active walking and cycling.
- There were some improvements expected to a crossing at Mendip Way.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Steve Jarvis

Points raised in debate included:

- There were concerns regarding the single access point.
- It should be considered whether additional access via Back Lane would outweigh the harm of any hedge removal.
- It was important to continue discussions with the NHS regarding the possibility of any healthcare provision.
- Residents and the public should be updated on each progression stage.
- The site was included in the Local Plan with one principal access point.
- It was often difficult to secure agreements at the Masterplan stage.
- Back Lane should not be used for access.
- It was optimistic to assume residents would walk and cycle, and more likely that they would drive.
- There were isolated woodlands that would not be attractive to walk or cycle alone through.
- The access onto and through the site was not satisfactory.

N.B. Councillor Dominic Griffiths left the Chamber at 21:18 prior to the vote on this matter and did not return.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Strategic Masterplan Framework for the land North-East of Great Ashby (Local Plan site GA2), attached at Appendix A, was approved and adopted as a material planning consideration for relevant planning decisions relating to the site.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To set an agreed design framework for the delivery of a strategic site within the Council's adopted Local Plan.
- (2) To accord with policy requirements of the Local Plan.

N.B. Following the conclusion of this item there was a break in the proceedings until 21:37. Councillor Ruth Clifton did not return after the break.

57 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 2 hours 7 minutes 35 seconds

The Chair invited Mr Richard Kelly to present to Council his presentation regarding Agenda Item 10 - North Stevenage Strategic Masterplan Framework.

- There had been ongoing engagement with the public, stakeholders, Stevenage Borough Council, the developers of HO3 and the Gravely Parish Councillors to get to this point.
- This was a high-quality development with supporting infrastructure, allotments, open spaces, a primary school and community building.
- The development would deliver 900 homes, of which 40% would be affordable.
- The overarching principles of the development were set out in the Local Plan.
- The Masterplan expanded on the policies set out in the Local Plan and considered how they would be assessed and mitigated during the Planning process.
- A detailed design code would be available at the reserved matters stage.
- The Masterplan had been amended to show how the two sites integrated, including the retail facilities in HO3 and the community building in NS1.
- Discussions were ongoing with the NHS regarding the use of the Community building.
- It was anticipated that it would take 4 minutes to cycle and 16 minutes to walk across the sites.
- The positioning of pedestrian, cycle and vehicle connection point between the two sites was the outcome of considerable discussions with both Councils and the Highways team.
- The access points had now been fixed with the commencement of work at the HO3 site.
- The NHS had not reached a conclusion regarding a GP surgery on the site.
- The development would incorporate the ratings contained in the recently adopted Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) standards.
- The outline planning permission had been submitted and included an environment scheme. This would be presented to the Planning Control Committee for consideration.

The Chair thanked Mr Kelly for his presentation.

The Chair noted that this concluded the public participation on Agenda Item 10 - North Stevenage Strategic Masterplan Framework and reminded Members that no further questions would be addressed to the public participant.

62 LAND TO THE NORTH STEVENAGE STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN FRAMEWORK

Audio Recording 2 hour 13 minutes 26 seconds

Interim Executive Member for Planning and Transport, Councillor Daniel Allen, presented referral 8B from Cabinet and the report 'North Stevenage Strategic Masterplan Framework' and stated that:

- There had been issues raised when this item was presented to Council in July 2024. The report utilised visual materials to provide an update and highlighted the changes made to the Masterplan after that meeting.
- The access points onto the site had been clarified as well as the access from the site on to the adjoining development. Vehicles would be able to travel between the two sites.
- The shops and school were within a 20 minute walk from all parts of the development.
- The developer would discuss NHS participation during the formal planning stage.
- The development aimed for Sustainability SPD gold standards in health placemaking, open space, sustainable drainage and sustainable travel.

- The Project Board considered the updates and amendments in October 2025 and recommended it to Council for reconsideration.
- Members attended a briefing on this matter on the 6 November 2024.

The Principal Planning and Urban Design Officer presented the report and provided a visual presentation of the site plans.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Caroline McDonnell
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

Points raised in debate included:

- There were improvements made to the plans which installed confidence and had addressed the previous concerns from July.
- The Council were to adopt the local spaces, this was good news.
- It was unfortunate that changes could not be made to the Stevenage site.
- Perhaps future Masterplans with transcending borders could be more joined up.
- The additional information was a good addition to the report.
- The Council thoroughly scrutinises decisions which affect the community.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed and Councillor Dave Winstanley seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That following the Full Council decision not to adopt the masterplan in July 2024, Council noted the additional information and clarification in the report.
- (2) That the Strategic Masterplan Framework for North Stevenage, attached at Appendix A, was approved and adopted as a material planning consideration for relevant planning decisions relating to the site.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To facilitate the delivery of a strategic site within the Council's adopted Local Plan.
- (2) To accord with policy requirements of the Local Plan.

60 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 2 hours 29 minutes and 21 seconds

The Chair advised that the referrals 8B and 8C from Cabinet had been taken with the respective items on the agenda.

8A) Statement of Gambling Principles 2025-2028

Councillor Alistair Willoughby presented the referral from the Licensing and Regulation Committee and advised that:

- It was a requirement to review the policy every three years.
- There had been safeguarding updates to included, the White Ribbon Campaign, Violence against Women and Girls Charter and child sexual exploitation.

Councillor Daniel Allen thanked Officers for their hard work preparing this item.

Councillor Alistair Willoughby proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council adopted the Statement of Gambling Principles 2025-2028 policy.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) Licensing authorities are required to publish a policy every three years by virtue of section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 ("the Act").
- (2) A new policy must be published by 3 January 2025 to comply with this statutory requirement.
- (3) The policy builds on the effectiveness of the existing policy with minor amendments to reflect changes in legislation.

58 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Audio recording – 2 hours 31 minutes 49 seconds

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

(A) Removal of Public Bins

Councillor Matt Barnes to Councillor Amy Allen (Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management).

"At Full Council in January, when discussing the planned removal of public litter bins arising from the new waste contract, the Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management said:

"Once the proposed criteria is ready I will be able to share it with ward Councillors. Based on these criteria the potential for removal list will be shared with Members; the proviso being that if Members collectively want to keep a bin, then 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 Administration now appears set to go ahead with these plans without doing any of this.

Last month it wrote to Parish Councils where 30% or more will be removed, but did not supply the proposed criteria or the potential removal list - making it difficult for them to provide any meaningful feedback. Parishes below this threshold, like Knebworth or Great Ashby, as well as unparished areas like Baldock, Letchworth and Hitchin, received no proactive communication, and nor were ward Councillors provided with any details about the impact in our areas - despite these very clear promises being made.

Could the Executive Member therefore explain to Council what has changed, and why the Administration now feels it is acceptable to go ahead with these plans without telling anyone which bins they intend to remove?"

Councillor Amy Allen gave a response as follows:

"The Waste Client Team are currently managing a program of projects in order to ensure the successful implementation of a new Waste Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract in May.

Like all new projects that are reviewed as they are implemented, a Member's workshop was held on 12 September 2024 an opportunity for Councillors to consider and comment on the criteria used in assessing the need for litter bins.

Following this the team communicated updates on the project via the Members Information Service, that is the MIS which everyone gets every week. This provided updates on two occasions and is circulated to both Ward and Parish Councillors. The second update also included the letter to be sent out to those impacted by 30% or more bins being removed. Parishes and Ward Councillors are welcome to contact the team if they have any concerns about their area or the project as a whole.

Since the publication of the MIS note the team have responded to approximately 40 inquiries about the project, including those not in the 30% bracket such as Knebworth and Great Ashby and have shared criteria for each area where requested, as an example Knebworth Parish were proactive in engaging with the team on bins in their area and were able to identify bin locations which were felt to be of value over others area. A new list has therefore been mutually agreed affecting the same number of bins.

The Waste Client Team are continuing to liaise with other areas who have contacted them including arranging site meetings where necessary. However, to remind Members that the principles of the project have already been agreed and these will not change. Should Members have any non ward specific concerns about the roll out of the project, please get in touch with myself."

Councillor Barnes asked a supplementary question, as follows:

"Comparing notes with colleagues there are some clear discrepancies in the data, in some cases bins which are on the list either do not exist or removed long ago, in other cases bins which do exist are not on the list at all meaning their future is unclear. Given these finds are you confident that the decisions being made are robust and fair and, if you are, will you now agree to make the entire list available to members so that the plans can be properly scrutinised?"

Councillor Amy Allen responded:

"I will speak to my Service Director and my Contract Manager about sharing details but, if there are bins that do not exist, that could be for many reasons including that someone had nicked it, with a couple in Royston, or set fire to, so if those could actually be reported to us , then that would be very, very helpful.

I'll get back to you on all the other bits and pieces when I have spoken to Sarah."

(B) Royston Leaner Pool

Councillor Tim Johnson to Councillor Mick Debenham (Executive Member for Environment).

"Earlier this year, Cabinet resolved to explore further funding options for the Royston Learner Pool. Please could the Executive Member update Council on the current status of this project?"

Councillor Debenham gave a response as follows:

“Members will be aware that the current business case for building a learner pool at Royston is not affordable and therefore Cabinet agreed not to proceed with the build at this time. However, Officers have been investigating other potential sources of funding which could help bridge the funding gap.

Today the Council's Grant Officer has investigated opportunities for external grants but, unfortunately, we have not found any suitable funds to apply to. Service Director – Place has also written to Royston Town Council to explore whether there could be any opportunities for them to provide funding. As of this moment we have yet to receive a formal response.

Separately, Officers are exploring Section 106 contributions from future developments. Sports England have calculated a potential £180,000 contribution towards pool space which could be allocated against any future project. The wider project to decarbonise Royston Leisure Centre and to build the gym extension is now entering into the detailed design stage so it is highly unlikely that the building of a learner pool can be accommodated within this project therefore, any new business case would have to be considered post 2025/26. In the meantime, Officers will continue to investigate opportunities including alternative build designs which may lower the overall capital costs.”

Councillor Johnson asked a supplementary question, as follows:

“I think that there is an opportunity, and I would just like you to guarantee please that the scheme will not be cancelled permanently?”

Councillor Debenham responded:

“I think everybody here wants there to be a learner pool in Royston. The problems we are facing with getting grants, between 2019 and 2023, 85 pools have closed, public pools so most of the grant funding is towards keeping existing pools open, rather than extending ones that are there but, it is £2.5M pounds that was put into the Capital Allocation for this in the 2024/25 budget, and it will be down to the next budget, where I cannot comment on whether it will still be there but, it has not been removed as of yet.”

(C) Churchgate Regeneration

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Daniel Allen, Leader of the Council.

“To ask the Leader of the Council (a) how much the Churchgate Regeneration Project will cost and (b) how the Council intends to fund the Churchgate Regeneration Project?”

Councillor Daniel Allen gave a response as follows:

“You know I cannot answer your question Ralph, the Council is still working through the options having listened to the public in our first round of consultations, until we have a preferred scheme and know how this will be delivered, we are unable to answer.”

Councillor Muncer asked a supplementary question, as follows:

“I have a copy of the North Herts Labour Party Manifesto for the local elections of this year and on page 14, and I am more that happy to provide colleagues opposite with this, it says deliver the Churchgate project and it says with a rubber stamp, a graphic saying that it is fully costed. Now evidently, we have heard from the Leader of the Council that it is not in fact fully costed because we do not know what the costs are at all. So does the Leader of the Council

know something that evidently Officers and Members do not or was the Labour party at the local elections at best being disingenuous to the residents of North Hertfordshire?"

Councillor Daniel Allen responded:

"Simply put Councillor Muncer, we listen to the public, we make sure that we make sure that we fund everything correctly, so yes, we will make sure that we put it through with a rubber stamp. We will make sure it happens unlike the previous promises that have been made before this and we will make sure that when it does happen it is fully costed and you will be able to see that we get a lot more."

N.B. Councillor Sadie Billing left the Chamber at 22:12 and returned at 22:29.

(D) Single Person Council Tax Discount

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

"To ask the Executive Member for Finance and IT how many households and/or residents in North Hertfordshire benefit from the Single Person Discount on Council Tax?"

Councillor Albert gave a response as follows:

"Simply put on current numbers there are 18,831 people claiming the single person's discount, which is approximately 33% of all the household in North Herts."

Councillor Muncer asked a supplementary question, as follows:

"During the summer the idea of the Labour Government scrapping the Single Person Council Tax Discount and thus depriving over well nearly 19,000 residents in North Hertfordshire of this crucial lifeline. Can the Executive Member for Finance and IT commit to maintaining the Councils, Single Person Council Tax Discount until 2028 the lifespan of this Council?"

Councillor Albert responded:

"It begs belief that when I was getting the question like this as a supplementary, I mean I was hoping that Councillor Muncer would be asking well actually have all the people needing single person discount are claiming it, because that would be a really good question and a sensible question to ask because that is how important that the single person discount.

I would like to think that Councillor Muncer will be asking about what is and has been claimed by a number of local community organisations for our Council Tax Reduction Scheme with its new banding system that actually has benefitted thousands of our residents. I would like to think you would be asking about how we are going to improve that even more but that clearly was not the question but, as Councillor Muncer knows the single person discount is not in the gift of any Local Authority is in the gift of government.

The Chancellor clearly decided, rightly decided that the single person discount will continue and that I welcomed and I hope that Councillor Muncer will welcome that as well but, what I am going to say is what we can do as a Council and single person discount is not something that we can influence but, I certainly will be more than happy that if the next time I see the Chancellor I will be more than happy to say thank you Rachel Reeves for continuing with the single person discount, that was absolutely the correct decision."

E) Civil Enforcement Officer Roles

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Daniel Allen, Interim Executive Member for Planning and Transport:

"To ask the Interim Executive Member for Planning and Transport (a) how many Civil Enforcement Officers are currently employed by the Council and (b) how many Civil Enforcement Officer posts are currently vacant?"

Councillor Daniel Allen gave a response as follows:

"We have the equivalent of 11 full time Officers with some post being part time, we currently have 9 posts filled with 2 further posts recruited to, with anticipated start dates in January 2025. We have 1 part time post vacant. We also have a Parking Enforcement Manager and a Parking Services Team Leader, so if all staff are present now, we usually have 4 Officer operating due to rest days however this number will drop if an Officer is on annual leave or sick."

Councillor Muncer asked a supplementary question, as follows:

"Parking on Codicote High Street is an issue that people are rightly concerned about particularly with the over 400 homes of which are proposed to be built in the village, now obviously as awful lot of the Civil enforcement Officers are based and focused on our Town Centres and the car park of which are situated there but, can I ask the Leader of the Council what steps are going to be taken to ensure that rural communities like Codicote and Kimpton get their fair share and that parking restrictions are enforced in those rural communities to alleviate the pressures of drivers?"

Councillor Daniel Allen responded:

"Driver parking restrictions in Codicote are minimal, the High Street in Codicote does not have parking restrictions, there are only double yellow corner protectors at the junction of the High Street, and Dollimore Close, Newtown, Bury Lane and Heath Lane. Therefore, we have it as part of our mobile patrol, which means we drive through the High Street and we can make sure if there is anyone parked illegally during the shift when the resources allow. Our Officers do not walk patrol Codicote as it is unnecessary. They will drive patrol and if a vehicle is observed to be parked in contravention, then the Officer will park and walk to the vehicle.

Since the start of the financial year we have issued 21 penalty charge notices, which is quite significant considering the minimal parking restrictions, it would tend to suggest that people struggle to park legally. It is worth noting that blue badge holders can park on a double yellow line for up to 3 hours and that loading and unloading can take place on a double yellow line if it is constant, for up to 30 minutes. Drivers could be parked on double yellow line corners because of a convenience shop, it would be very difficult to catch these drivers due to Codicote not having its own dedicated Patrol, we acknowledge that we cannot enforce vehicles parked on pavements if there is no parking restrictions.

So, all in all, we are making sure that we support those local areas and it is very very disingenuous to suggest that we do not."

59 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Audio recording – 2 hours 50 minutes 20 seconds

N.B. Councillors Cathy Brownjohn and Sarah Lucas left the Chamber at 22:27 and did not return. Councillor Sadie Billing left the Chamber at 22:30 and returned at 22:43.

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

(B) Hitchin industrial Estate Fires

Councillor Jon Clayden proposed the motion as follows:

The Hitchin area has recently been plagued by a series of industrial fires associated with metal recycling facilities within the industrial area to the north of the town.

Most recently, a fire broke out on the industrial estate on the 8th of November 2024 at around 2:30am, producing a plume of smoke and steam that was visible across a wide area for much of the day, and affected local residents including children on their way to school. Fires also occurred in the same area in September 2024, July 2024, February 2024 and December 2023.

In response to these fires, there have been multiple calls for action in the press from Hitchin and Ickleford councillors, and the MP for Hitchin, across political parties and over several months. There has, however, been no intervention from the Environment Agency in response to these calls that members have been made aware of, despite their increasing urgency. Since the Environment Agency licences the recycling operators it has the authority to review or revoke their licences, but has not exercised this authority.

These fires put residents at risk of harm due to the significant air pollution they produce, which is spread over a wide area, and would be expected to be worsened by repeated exposure. The amount of air pollution present is, however, not quantifiable in the absence of systematic monitoring. Given the quantities of water needed to put them out, and the proximity of the River Hiz, they also threaten our precious chalk streams, which are already under pressure.

Council reiterates the importance of recycling to a sustainable North Herts, but clarifies unambiguously that this must not be at the expense of residents' long-term health.

Council acknowledges with gratitude the efforts of the Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in responding to, containing and extinguishing these fires each time they occur, and investigating their causes. It nevertheless notes that these investigations have not led to meaningful reduction in the recent frequency of these potentially harmful fires, indicating that management of the associated risks appears to be ineffective or impossible.

Council therefore resolves to:

Instruct the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health to write promptly to the Environment Agency, to express North Herts Council's serious concerns about the safety of recycling sites on the Hitchin industrial estate, and request that their operators' licences be reviewed urgently.

Work proactively to instigate a system of air quality monitoring in the residential areas closest to the industrial estate.

Further instruct the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health to report back to Council within six months with details of any action that has been taken by the competent authorities.

Councillor Louise Peace seconded the motion.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Dave Winstanley
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Sam Collins
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Lousie Peace
- Councillor David Barnard

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Tim Johnson
- Councillor Nigel Mason

Points raised in the debate included:

- The frequency of these fires was unacceptable.
- Ongoing prevention work was not always visible.
- The Ward Councillors had been in regular contact with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and the Environmental Agency (EA) voicing the concerns of their residents.
- The Leader of the Council had written to the Environment Agency regarding the Air Quality.
- The MP for Hitchin had sent an urgent request for air monitoring to the Environment Agency.
- The Managing Director had been on a fact finding exercise and been in contact with the press regarding the situation.
- No water had entered into the river, and Anglian water had tested the water silo which, met the required fowl levels.
- There would be a public meeting with the MP for Hitchin in January 2025.
- The air quality should have been tested during the fires to get a proper assessment.
- There was a Health and Safety risk to residents.
- There was a meeting on the 29 November 2024 with representatives from HCC, EA, this Council and the MP for Hitchin to discuss the situation.
- Residents were subjected to Heavy Good Vehicles (HGVs) transporting scrap for 12 hours a day.
- Residents had been supported during the 5 fires that had occurred this year.
- There had been fires at these sites dating back to 2018, this was not a new problem.
- The HGVs ignore road weight limits and were not appropriate for Hitchin.
- The changing wind directions meant that air quality testing would need to take place in several places.
- There was cross party support for residents.
- The Fire Service did an amazing job.
- Site licenses should be checked.
- The EA did not regard a lithium battery fire as a licensing breach. The regulations need to be tightened.
- During the most recent fire, local residents were told to shut windows, yet children were still expected at school.
- The smoke from these fires was having an effect on the health and wellbeing of residents.
- Why had no lessons been learnt from the previous fires.
- Concerns would be raised at a County Level.
- The fires were causing disruption and anxiety to residents.
- The County Council and the EA should change their policies to stop this from reoccurring.
- The HGV weight limit issue would be highlighted to the Road Police.
- Praise was given to Officers and the fire service who had put their lives on the line to attend these fires.

The Managing Director advised that the operating licences were issued from the Environmental Agency and not Hertfordshire County Council or North Hertfordshire District Council.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council

Instructed the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health to write promptly to the Environment Agency, to express North Herts

Council's serious concerns about the safety of recycling sites on the Hitchin industrial estate, and request that their operators' licences be reviewed urgently.

Work proactively to instigate a system of air quality monitoring in the residential areas closest to the industrial estate.

Further instructed the Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health to report back to Council within six months with details of any action that has been taken by the competent authorities in the intervening period to monitor pollution and mitigate the risks of future fires.

N.B. Councillor Emma Rowe left the Chamber at 23:01 and returned at 23:04.

(C) A1(M) Junction 6 (Welwyn) to 8 (Hitchin and Stevenage) Upgrade

Councillor Ralph Muncer proposed the motion as follows:

In December 2014, the Government announced the A1(M) between Junction 6 (Welwyn) to Junction 8 (Hitchin and Stevenage) would be upgraded to increase capacity by 50% as part of the £1.5 billion Road Improvement Strategy. Unfortunately, the scheme was delayed and subsequently cancelled in April 2023.

The A1(M) between Junctions 6 and 8 is already one of the busiest sections of the A1 between London and Leeds, and with the adoption of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan in November 2022, resulting in more than 12,000 new homes being built in close proximity to the motorway over the next decade, the pressure on this key artery is only set to increase.

Upgrading this section of the A1(M) would not only reduce congestion and delays making journey times quicker for drivers who use the motorway, but would also help to reduce pressure on local roads in North Hertfordshire such as the A602.

Therefore, Council resolves that the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Transport calling on the Government to reinstate plans to upgrade the A1(M) between Junction 6 (Welwyn) to Junction 8 (Hitchin and Stevenage).

Council further resolves that the Leader of the Council writes to the Member of Parliament for Hitchin, the Member of Parliament for North East Hertfordshire and the Member of Parliament for Stevenage, urging them to call on the Secretary of State for Transport to reinstate plans to upgrade the A1(M) between Junction 6 (Welwyn) to Junction 8 (Hitchin and Stevenage).

Councillor Steve Patmore seconded the motion.

The Chair advised that there had been an amendment to this motion which had been proposed by Councillor Paul Ward and seconded by Councillor Matt Barnes and had been published as a supplementary document.

Councillor Paul Ward proposed the amendment as follows:

In December 2014, the coalition Government announced the A1(M) between Junction 6 (Welwyn) to Junction 8 (Hitchin and Stevenage) would be upgraded to increase capacity by 50% as part of the £1.5 billion Road Improvement Strategy. Unfortunately, the scheme was delayed and subsequently cancelled by the Conservative government in April 2023.

The A1(M) between Junctions 6 and 8 is already one of the busiest sections of the A1 between London and Leeds, and with the adoption of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan in November 2022, resulting in more than 12,000 new homes being built in close proximity to the motorway over the next decade, the pressure on this key artery is only set to increase.

Even now, before new homes are built, the existing lack of capacity on the A1(M) creates additional burden on surrounding local North / South roads used by the district's residents such as the B197 in Knebworth and B656 in Codicote.

As soon as the A1(M) has any capacity reduction on this section, such as the sink holes in March and September 2024 requiring lane closures, it brings chaos to the lives of our local communities. These corridors were never intended to be the extra capacity for the A1(M). The county's Local Transport Plan 2018-2031 specifically cites the delivery of the A1(M) smart motorway scheme as enabling traffic reductions on parallel routes to support active travel modes.

Upgrading this section of the A1(M) would not only reduce congestion and delays making journey times quicker for drivers who use the motorway, but would also help to reduce pressure on local roads in North Hertfordshire such as the A602, B197 and B656.

Therefore, Council resolves that the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Transport calling on the Government to reinstate plans to upgrade the A1(M) between Junction 6 (Welwyn) to Junction 8 (Hitchin and Stevenage) that were cancelled by the prior Conservative government.

Council further resolves that the Leader of the Council writes to the Member of Parliament for Hitchin, the Member of Parliament for North East Hertfordshire and the Member of Parliament for Stevenage, urging them to call on the Secretary of State for Transport to reinstate plans to upgrade the A1(M) between Junction 6 (Welwyn) to Junction 8 (Hitchin and Stevenage) and mitigate the impact of needed housing growth for North Hertfordshire residents living near the A602, B197 and B656.

Councillor Matt Barnes seconded the amendment.

The amendment was accepted by Councillor Ralph Muncer as the proposer.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor David Barnard
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Ian Mantle
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

Points raised in debate included:

- The amendment was welcomed, as was the cross-party support.
- This motion was not about political point scoring.
- The road was not under Highways control.
- The Council declared a climate emergency, this project goes against that.
- The money would be better spent on railway improvements.
- England had the safest roads in Europe, this project was the only way to increase the road capacity.

Having been proposed as amended, and seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

That the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Transport calling on the Government to reinstate plans to upgrade the A1(M) between Junction 6 (Welwyn) to Junction 8 (Hitchin and Stevenage) that were cancelled by the prior Conservative government.

That the Leader of the Council writes to the Member of Parliament for Hitchin, the Member of Parliament for North East Hertfordshire and the Member of Parliament for Stevenage, urging them to call on the Secretary of State for Transport to reinstate plans to upgrade the A1(M) between Junction 6 (Welwyn) to Junction 8 (Hitchin and Stevenage) and mitigate the impact of needed housing growth for North Hertfordshire residents living near the A602, B197 and B656

(D) Impact of Family Farm Tax on Rural Communities in North Hertfordshire

The Chair advised that due to the time already taken to determine the business on the agenda this item would be deferred to the Extraordinary meeting of Full Council on December 2024.

63 CONSTITUTIONAL & GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Chair advised that due to the time already taken to determine the business on the agenda this item would be deferred to the Extraordinary meeting of Full Council on December 2024.

The meeting closed at 11.09 pm

Chair

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COUNCIL 23 JANUARY 2025

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b), 1 question was submitted by Members by the deadline date for questions set out in the Council's Constitution.

(A) FREE AFTER 3PM PARKING

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

"Can the Executive Member for Planning and Transport clarify why the administration is getting rid of free after three pm parking in Royston, citing consistency across the area, when anomalies are allowed to remain elsewhere, and what consultation has been done with local businesses?"

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COUNCIL 23 JANUARY 2025
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PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The following Motion has been submitted, due notice of which has been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12.

To be moved by Councillor David Chalmers and seconded by Councillor Claire Winchester.

Support the Introduction of a Youth Mobility Scheme

This council notes that:

- Opportunities for young people to travel, study, and work abroad foster cultural exchange, personal development, and economic growth.
- The UK previously benefited from the EU's Erasmus+ programme, which supported youth mobility and exchange. Prior to Brexit, our young people were able to freely travel between member states, and wider European Economic Area (EEA) to live work and study without time limits.
- Since the UK's departure from the EU, young people in North Hertfordshire and across the UK face increased barriers to living, working, and studying in European countries, limiting opportunities that were previously available. We now have a 90-day limit on the time we can spend in European countries without buying a visa.
- Young people have been disproportionately impacted by the restrictions on mobility.
- A Youth Mobility Scheme between the UK and the EU would offer structured opportunities for young people to gain international experience and develop skills valuable to their personal and professional futures. In North Hertfordshire, according to the 2021 Census, 26,000 young people aged between 18-35 (19% of the total population) would be eligible to benefit from the scheme. The ability to experience different cultures and gain a better perspective of the world is extremely valuable, especially for young people.
- Local businesses – especially those in hospitality -would also benefit from the extra temporary personnel offered by young people across the EU taking advantage of the scheme.

Justification:

This motion seeks to enhance the prospects of young people across North Hertfordshire, providing them with access to opportunities that foster growth, learning, and intercultural understanding. According to the 2021 Census 26,000 young people aged between 18-35 would be eligible to take advantage of the scheme – 19% of the local population. A Youth Mobility Scheme which has been proposed by the European Union would strengthen ties between the UK and EU, aligning with the council's commitment to creating a thriving and inclusive community. The UK currently has Youth Mobility Schemes with Australia and Japan allowing 18 – 35 year olds to move and work freely between countries for up to 2 years – the UK /EU Youth Mobility Scheme would follow this model.

Local businesses – especially those involved in hospitality – would benefit from the extra temporary personnel supplied by young people across the EU taking advantage of the scheme. Local educational institutions would also benefit from potential EU students.

In April 2024 the EU Commission expressed a desire to open negotiations with the UK on a youth mobility scheme for young people aged 18-30, which was rejected by the previous Conservative Government and has yet to be accepted by the current Labour Government.

This council resolves to:

- 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.**

TITLE OF REPORT: NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The following Motion has been submitted, due notice of which has been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12.

To be moved by Councillor Paul Ward and seconded by Councillor Tim Johnson.

Digital Exclusion and fair representation for all in Council consultations

A person is digitally excluded if they are unable to use information technology in the ways that are needed to participate fully in modern life.

The Council says in the District Plan 2024-28 that Accessible Services are a priority, particularly digitally. However it also recognises that some residents are not digitally savvy or cannot access digital services. It says “some of our residents can’t or don’t use online services, so we’re committed to remaining accessible in other ways including by post, phone and via our Customer Service Centre.”

A House of Lords committee report in January 2024 on Digital Exclusion in the UK identified issues with affordability, connectivity, skills, motivation and digital-only public services.

There is evidence to show older people are disproportionately affected by digital exclusion. Age UK has found that around 20% of people aged 65 or over do not use the internet and 46% cannot complete all the fundamental tasks to safely use it. North Hertfordshire has a population with 19.7% aged 65 or over, higher than the England average of 18.6% (ONS 2022 data).

However, digital exclusion is not only about elderly people. The Centre for Social Justice has estimated that 30% of digitally excluded people in the UK are of working age. Other groups that are disproportionately affected by the problem include people with low incomes and those with mental and/or physical health conditions.

The Council must be careful to avoid indirect age or other discrimination in its consultations.

However the evidence of the Council providing effective non-digital access across consultations is variable. For example the Churchgate consultation included clear instructions for non-digital users and was also advertised broadly. However the consultation on Car Park charges used email, and the Parish Arrangements consultation was online.

The Council can do better at this consistently to give all our residents a fair deal in accessing all consultations and contributing into local democracy. Whilst Councillors themselves are a vital link to the community in person, they cannot be relied on to be the sole non-digital means of engagement with our residents.

This motion highlights two additional complimentary steps the Council can take to ensure those digitally excluded are included in all public engagement and help close our community’s digital gap.

Council therefore resolves that:

- 1. Reports brought to Council that propose any element of public consultation must explicitly consider non-digital access provision for both communicating the consultation and obtaining feedback, in either section “12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS” or a new dedicated section;**
- 2. The Executive Member for Community & Partnership is instructed to develop a Digital Inclusion strategy to support the Council Plan, and report back to Council within six months with details of recommendations and further actions.**

COUNCIL
23 January 2025

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Functions related to community governance – Non-Executive function.
(Electoral Services: Community and Partnerships)

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / ACCESSIBLE SERVICES / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider the Draft Proposals that have been formulated from the responses to the first stage of consultation that closed on 7 October 2024.
- 1.2 To agree the recommendations for the second stage of public consultation of the Community Governance Review (CGR).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the outcome of the first stage consultation be noted.
- 2.2. That Council agree the Draft Proposals for the Community Governance Review, launching a public consultation on these [note that the Final Recommendations will be considered at a future Council meeting, taking the results of the public consultation into account.]
- 2.3. That Council notes that hard-copy leaflets will be distributed to households in areas where external parish boundaries are proposed to be moved, new parish councils established, or new parish wards implemented.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The Council is required to keep parish electoral arrangements under review. Following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review of district electoral arrangements (Council size and warding patterns), it is necessary to review parish arrangements across the district to bring them into alignment, ensure they remain fit for purpose, and to ensure they continue to reflect local needs. This report provides Draft Proposals following the first round of public consultation. Before Final

Recommendations can be developed and considered, there must be a public consultation on the Draft Proposals, the responses to which will be taken into account in forming the Final Recommendations.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The Council committed to commence a CGR at its meeting on 11 July 2024. Therefore, following the initial consultation, the Council is required to take into account the responses received and develop Draft Proposals for further consultation.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. A Consultant from the Association of Electoral Administrators has been instructed to be the day-to-day lead for organising and co-ordinating the CGR. The Consultant is able to provide specialist, experienced knowledge to assist in the delivery of the review at this time. Budget was agreed by Council in July 2024.
- 5.2. A Community Governance Review Working Group has been established where relevant officers and the Consultant meet on a regular basis with the Group Leaders.
- 5.3. The Working Group met on 18 November 2024 and again on 10 December 2024 to discuss the outcome of the first stage consultation and development of Draft Proposals, as included within this report. In reviewing and putting forward these Draft Proposals, the Working Group has not formed any set views on these, given the initial responses to the first stage of the consultation has been limited.

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. Council agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR), with the publication of the Terms of Reference and formal consultation commencing on 19 July 2024 in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 7.2. References in legislation to a 'parish' also include a parish which has an alternative style (such as 'town', 'village' or 'community' council) and parish meetings.
- 7.3. The Terms of Reference for the CGR were broad, allowing for a review of all aspects of community governance within the council area. This includes, for example, the creation or naming of a parish, the establishment of a separate parish from an existing parish, alteration of parish boundaries, abolition or dissolution of a parish, change to parish electoral arrangements or parish grouping.
- 7.4. The overall timescales for the CGR are as follows:

Date	Action
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11 July 2024	Full Council approves the Terms of Reference, signifying the start of the CGR.
19 July to 7 October 2024	First public consultation, lasting 11 weeks. Longer than usual to accommodate consulting over school holidays and to allow Parishes to meet in September to feed into the consultation.
November 2024 to December 2024	Review by Officers and development of Draft Proposals. CGR Working Group meetings held as appropriate to discuss, prior to consideration by Council.
23 January 2025	Draft Proposals to be considered by Council and approved for second round of consultation.
31 January 2025 to 28 March 2025	Second public consultation, on Draft Proposals.
	Review by Officers and development of Final Recommendations. CGR Working Group meetings held as appropriate to discuss, prior to consideration by Council.
July 2025	Full Council discuss and agree Final Recommendations.
July 2025	Reorganisation Order made.

- 7.5. Once approved, the final outcome of the CGR will be implemented ahead of the 2026 local elections. This means that new parish council areas (if any), changes to parish council areas (if any), changes in the number of parish councillors (if any), and any resulting changes in council tax arrangements for households all change at that time. Ahead of those changes, a review of polling districts and polling places will be carried out, to take account of changes to electoral areas.

Decision-making process and statutory criteria

- 7.6. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 sets out two statutory criteria. The Council must, by law, have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review:
- a. reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and
 - b. is effective and convenient.
- 7.7. In addition, the Council must take into account the 2010 government guidance ([published by DCLG](#)). The Council must also have due regard for responses submitted during the consultations and be open and transparent such that local stakeholders are made aware of the outcome of the decisions and the reasons behind those decisions.
- 7.8. Whilst Members are advised to read the DCLG guidance in its entirety, some key extracts are included below. Essentially, the guidance supports the 2007 Act requiring that local people are consulted, and that their views are taken into account during the CGR. Whilst North Herts Councillors are the decision-makers, those decisions must be based on evidence submitted through the CGR consultation process. *Numbers refer to paragraph numbers in the DCLG guidance; emphasis added for clarity:*

7. The guidance supports and helps to implement key aspects of the 2006 white paper. The 2007 Act **requires that local people are consulted during a community governance review, that representations received in connection with the review are taken into account** and that steps are taken to notify them of the outcomes of such reviews including any decisions.

58. **It is clear that how people perceive where they live** - their neighbourhoods - is significant in considering the identities and interests of local communities and depends on a range of circumstances, often best defined by local residents. Some of the factors which help define neighbourhoods are the geography of an area, the make-up of the local community, sense of identity, and whether people live in a rural, suburban, or urban area.

59. Parishes in many cases may be able to meet the concept of neighbourhoods in an area. Parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity. Like neighbourhoods, **the feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are the primary considerations.**

95. The recommendations **must take account of any representations received and should be supported by evidence which demonstrates that the recommended community governance arrangements would meet the criteria set out in the 2007 Act.** Where a principal council has conducted a review following the receipt of a petition, it will remain open to the council to make a recommendation which is different to the recommendation the petitioners wished the review to make. This will particularly be the case where the recommendation is not in the interests of the wider local community, such as where giving effect to it would be likely to damage community relations by dividing communities along ethnic, religious or cultural lines.

97. The aim of the 2007 Act is to open up a wider choice of governance to communities at the most local level. However, the Government considers that there is sufficient flexibility for principal councils not to feel 'forced' to recommend that the matters included in every petition must be implemented.

- 7.9. It is important to note that it is North Herts Council who decide community governance arrangements. Therefore, where difficult decisions must be made, consideration must be given to opposing and differing views in light of legislation, best practice, and official guidance. Best practice guidance includes, for example, not having 'island' or 'donut' parishes or parish wards which are wholly surrounded by one other parish or parish ward, and using identifiable markers for boundaries (such as rivers, railways, roads and the edges of properties).
- 7.10. Essentially proposals for change should first identify the identities and interests of the communities, and then consider the governance arrangements for that area.
- 7.11. Members are invited to note that the course of appeal is by way of Judicial Review, a potentially expensive and damaging mechanism open to local stakeholders if there is a failure in the decision-making process. For example, a failure to consult properly, or a failure not to take into account relevant consideration, or conversely irrelevant issues are taken into account in reaching a decision. In other words, it is important to ensure that community governance decisions can be justified both evidentially and procedurally to avoid potential legal challenge.
- 7.12. It is also important to recognise that the number of responses received is not necessarily strong evidence on the strength of feeling either for or against any particular viewpoint.

It is true that stakeholders preferring the status quo may not make representations until and unless there is a suggestion of significant change that they would otherwise oppose. Therefore, where little response was received, it cannot be assumed that local people are in favour of supporting the change proposed by a few submissions; they may well currently be unaware of those suggestions and happy with no change. That is why the second round of formal consultation is important.

- 7.13. The aim of a CGR is to ensure community governance arrangements are appropriate at a local level. It is therefore not appropriate to use Ward or Division boundaries to determine parish boundaries, although changes made through the recent LGBCE review of wards is taken into account.
- 7.14. Members are reminded that the scope of the CGR is defined in law. Whilst some responses have been received that are outside of the scope of the CGR, this Council has no authority to make decisions or recommendations on those matters and so cannot engage in meaningful discussion about them. Specifically, the CGR cannot consider or determine:
- a. Parliamentary constituency boundaries
 - b. County Divisions, other than requesting consequential amendments are made to align with any changes to parish boundaries
 - c. District Wards, other than requesting consequential amendments are made to align with any changes to parish boundaries
 - d. The number of County or District councillors
 - e. The powers and authority of different tiers of government (for example, a CGR cannot recommend granting planning determination powers to parish councils)

Consultation

- 7.15. The initial consultation took place from 19 July to 7 October 2024, inviting respondents to give their views on community governance arrangements in their local area and across the district. The following were consulted by sending details of the CGR and a link to the online feedback form:
- a. all householders, via the authority-held mailing lists and links from the home page of the website
 - b. all parish councils
 - c. all District Councillors
 - d. relevant County Councillors
 - e. local political parties
 - f. Members of Parliament
 - g. Police & Crime Commissioner
- 7.16. A total of 133 responses were received (of which one was submitted on paper). Given the broad and open nature of the initial consultation, a wide range of responses were received. These have been weighed against the statutory criteria and used to form the Draft Proposals that follow. Note that many respondents would not have been aware of these criteria when responding, although the points they have raised have been considered against those criteria as widely as possible. Note also that an initial consultation is, in its very nature, very difficult to respond to with meaningful proposals for change; many people find it easier to respond to specific recommendations and therefore an absence of commentary at this stage is not indicative of the feelings of local communities about governance in their area.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

- 8.1. Draft Proposals are proposed here, for discussion and subsequent agreement by Full Council. Once approved, there will be a public consultation on the Draft Proposals.
- 8.2. Members of the Working Group agreed the principle that a Draft Proposal must be both clear (easy to understand what the proposal is) and definite (making a recommendation, rather than leaving an area with no Draft Proposal and leaving a 'blank sheet' for consultation. This allows residents and elected bodies to respond effectively and makes clear the proposed outcome of the CGR for each area if nothing changes during the consultation period. This supports open consultation and democracy, encouraging responses to definite proposals.
- 8.3. No decisions are confirmed at this stage. The consultation process on the Draft Proposals is an essential part of the CGR, and responses will (by law) be taken into account in producing the Final Recommendations to Council.
- 8.4. This section of the report presents the rationale and evidence for the Draft Proposals.
- 8.5. The Council is required to publish the reasons for making its decisions as a result of a CGR. As such, a summary of the responses to the consultation are included at the appropriate section of the report, with all submissions included at the end, with personal information redacted or removed.
- 8.6. The sections of the report that follow show each area in turn, with consideration given for the boundary and geographical area, the name, and then the governance arrangements (such as numbers of councillors). Areas are shown in alphabetical order, but note that some changes in boundary arrangements are listed in both affected areas. The Draft Proposals included within the report for approval have been considered by the Community Governance Review Working Group.
- 8.7. Members are invited to note that, based on the underpinning legislation and guidance, which set out the statutory criteria for a CGR as well as the need to take into account local representations made through the consultation processes, at later stages the scope for making further changes or amending Final Recommendations may be limited by decisions made now. Any further suggestions must (1) be supported by evidence, (2) have been brought to the authority's attention during the CGR to date, and (3) have been consulted upon or raised through the consultation process. **This means that proposals for new governance arrangements cannot be considered at the final stage of the review only. Anything discounted at this stage and therefore not consulted upon cannot subsequently be included in the final recommendations.**
- 8.8. It is noted that the Council is required to continue to monitor community governance arrangements on an on-going basis, and a future CGR may be required in specific areas as further residential development takes place.
- 8.9. Note that maps are included where a proposed Draft Proposal includes a change to an existing boundary or creation of a new boundary. Maps that refer to more than one area may be included multiple times in the report, making each section effectively standalone.

8.10. In considering the number of parish councillors to serve a particular area, we have used the following:

- a. The statutory minimum number of councillors is five; there is no maximum, although it becomes more difficult and less effective or efficient to maintain an excessively large parish council. This allows North Herts Council to consider the current number of parish councillors by area, recognise the different situations within each area, and then assess the appropriate number of parish councillors by area. There is no requirement for the number of electors represented by a single parish councillor to be the same between different parishes, although they should be comparable between wards of the same parish.
- b. Whilst the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) published guidance in 1988 on the suggested number of parish councillors per parish area based on the size of the electorate, these are non-statutory and there is no requirement for parish councils within an area to have equal ratios of electors to councillors. Further, these pre-date the digital age and do not necessarily reflect the ways in which parish councillors communicate with and represent their local communities. The CGR Working Group felt the NALC recommendations were overly generous with the number of parish councillors suggested, given the new ways in which parish councils now operate (for example, one existing Town Council would see an increase from 15 to 20 councillors overall). This would lead to a democratic deficit, with insufficient candidates to hold contested elections, an increase in co-opted members, and an increased number of ongoing vacancies/ ongoing co-options and a potential risk that no contested elections would take place.
- c. An alternative approach, published in 1992 by the Aston Business School, set out the range of numbers of parish councillors based on the electorate. The CGR Working Group felt that, given the advances in technology outlined above that have transformed the ways of working for parish councillors, the lower end of these ranges should be used as a guideline for the proposed number of Councillors for each parish and town council, with a minimum of 7 (which allows for the work of the council to continue in the event of short-term absences):

Number of electors	Councillors (Aston Business School report)	Proposed number of councillors
< 500	5 – 8	7
501 – 2,500	6 – 12	7
2,501 – 10,000	9 – 16	9
10,001 – 20,000	13 – 27	13
> 20,000	13 – 31	13

- d. For warded parishes, the total number of councillors is based on the table above, with representation in each ward in proportion to the number of electors in that ward.
- e. Where proposals suggest a change in the number of parish councillors, this is based on the numbers above. As part of the consultation on the Draft Proposals, parish councils are invited to submit representations, if applicable and appropriate, to counter these draft proposals and encouraged to highlight how local governance is better served by different numbers than these recommendations, such as retaining the status quo.

Once approved by Full Council, there will be a public consultation on the Draft Proposals. That is, the Draft Proposals are for consultation; they are not finalised at this stage. The only way to feed into the decision-making process is via the public consultation process. Where a parish council, local resident, business or other organisation or body does not agree with a Draft Proposal they are invited to respond to the consultation stating their views, their reasons, and any alternative proposal. In general, Draft Proposals to create a new council or change a boundary must attain sufficient support (quantitatively and/or qualitatively) through the public consultation to indicate broad support for the change. Where a Draft Proposal is that the number of local councillors is changed, Parish and Town Councils will be encouraged to respond directly to confirm support or otherwise for the proposal, with their reasons. Best practice for a CGR consultation is that where it is proposed that the number of Councillors is changed (in line with the above recommendations) unless we receive representations to the contrary, the number of Councillors representing that area will increase.

Where a new Town Council is proposed, the CGR Working Group expects to see strong endorsement of the proposal from the local community in order to be able to support it as a Final Recommendation.

Draft Proposals

8.11. This section of the report is listed in alphabetical order of parish or area.

8.12. In addition to taking the public consultation responses into account, these Draft Proposals have been shaped by internal analysis and review of current arrangements.

General responses (all areas)

A total of 6 responses related to 'all' areas. Of these, one simply said "Yes", one said "1", and three contained the same allegations about discrimination taking place outside of the District, and outside of the remit of a CGR.

The remaining response acknowledged that arrangements "may need tweaking" but felt doing so was a waste of time and money. Once a CGR has commenced it cannot legally be stopped; the majority of other responses from local residents and parish councils and community groups have identified changes needed and therefore the value of the CGR. As this contribution does not provide any recommendations that can be implemented within a CGR, no further action is required.

Ashwell

Electorate	1620	
Number of councillors	Current: 12	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 5 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two, from the same respondent, said the parish should be in South Cambs and not Hertfordshire. The external boundaries of North Herts District, and Hertfordshire County, are outside of the scope of a CGR. One respondent commented on the poor state of roads and lack of hedge-cutting, stating both that the parish council did nothing about it, and also that it was to save North Herts Council money. These are County Council functions, and in any case are not relevant considerations for a CGR. One respondent noted they felt the parish worked well, but it seems to have many vacancies. The parish council responded, with a request that the number of parish councillors be reduced from 12 to 9. This agrees with the NALC recommendation for a parish council of this size, although the proposed scale for NHC would see a greater reduction. The proposal is therefore the lower figure, with the parish council invited to make further representation as appropriate (noting that in general terms, local circumstance and the view of the existing parish always takes precedence over non-statutory guidance of parish councillor numbers). 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 12 to 7.</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Baldock

Electorate	8134 Baldock East: 2327 Baldock West: 5807
Number of councillors	Not currently parished
Next elections	Not applicable
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 7 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One spoke about a lack of engagement with the community, but did not go as far as suggesting a parish council be installed (the inference is that they felt the town already has a local council, but that it was not as engaged as they would have liked). • Four residents noted the town does not have a council, which they felt was disadvantageous in some circumstances (such as the expansion of the town and major developments) and meant a lack of local influence in decision making. The suggestion was that, as smaller nearby areas had their own parish council, Baldock should also have its own local council. • One resident felt no change was needed. • One local district councillor noted that the boundaries should be adjusted for the nearby parish areas of Clothall and Bygrave to exclude Baldock itself. However, they felt the town should not have a local council of its own, arguing that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local people are already actively volunteering and involved in the community. ○ There is no need for an additional layer of democracy. ○ They felt a town council would become unnecessary political leading to apathy and disinterest. ○ As parish councillors are unpaid, they felt the representation would be limited with certain demographic groups less able to undertake the role due to time pressures and so leading to less representation. ○ Local people do not wish to pay an additional precept on their council tax.
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Adjust the external boundaries of Clothall and Bygrave parishes such that the town of Baldock is excluded from them; the new parish boundaries should follow the new district ward boundaries. Area CBW moves from Clothall to Baldock West; CBE from Clothall to Baldock East; BBE from Bygrave to Baldock East. See maps at the end of this report.</p> <p>(2) Whilst one local councillor and resident has eloquently explained why they feel Baldock should not have a local council, three residents felt the town should have one. At</p>

	<p>this stage, the first consultation, it is very difficult for people to assess the options available to them without further information or context. There is an argument that as the town expands, there may be an increased desire for local representation to help shape and influence growth in the town. Therefore, the Draft Proposal is to create a parish for Baldock, served by a new Town Council with 9 Councillors, subject to engagement from local residents through the consultation. The Town Council will have two wards, following the district wards: Baldock East: 3 Cllrs Baldock West: 6 Cllrs</p> <p>(3) To ensure local people are aware of the proposal to establish a Town Council and the opportunities and implications of it, hard-copy leaflets should be produced with the Comms team and distributed to every household in Baldock inviting them to respond to the consultation. The information will be entirely neutral, leaving the opportunity for local people to discuss and motivate the decision.</p>
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Barkway

Electorate	716	
Number of councillors	Current: 7	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The respondent felt no change was required.	
Draft Proposals	(1) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.	

Barley

Electorate	574	
Number of councillors	Current: 6	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	No responses were received during the consultation.	
Draft Proposals	(1) Increase the number of parish Councillors from 6 to 7. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.	

Bygrave

Electorate	208	
Number of councillors	Current: 5	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 4 responses were received that referred to Bygrave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three all mentioned that they felt the current arrangements for the parish work well, reflecting the rural nature of the community and noting the current housing, farming and business interests. However, one of these noted the significant new residential development that would, due to its size, overwhelm the current parish. • The one other response, which covered a range of parish areas, also advocated that the new development on the edge of Baldock (but technically within Bygrave parish) be included in Baldock and not Bygrave. This will ensure Bygrave remains a rural parish. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Adjust the boundary, such that the Bygrave parish boundary does not include any of the district ward of Baldock East. Area BBE from Bygrave to Baldock East. See maps at the end of this report.</p> <p>(2) Increase the number of parish Councillors from 5 to 7.</p> <p>(3) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Caldecote and Newnham

Electorate	87: Caldecote: 14 (2 Cllrs) Newnham: 73 (4 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 6	Proposal: 7 total
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 1 response was received. They felt the arrangements were effective and convenient, although would prefer more information about meetings (this being outside of the scope of a CGR).</p> <p>However, with such a small electorate the democratic burden is quite high – one in seven electors in Caldecote are parish councillors. It is up to local people if they prefer to retain a parish council or not, with the alternative being a parish meeting. However, given no residents suggested removing the parish council, and one supported current arrangements, the recommendation is for ‘no change’ and the retention of the parish council.</p>	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Increase the number of parish Councillors from 6 to 7: Caldecote: 2 Cllrs Newnham: 5 Cllrs</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Clothall

Electorate	126	
Number of councillors	Parish meeting	Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 2 responses was received, stating the arrangements work well at present. One referred to the parish boundary with Baldock.</p> <p>Clothall parish meeting currently extends into the two wards of Baldock East and Baldock West. As with Bygrave parish, this is due to the large-scale residential development on the edge of Baldock which is incorporated within the District wards in Baldock but not yet the parish.</p>	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Adjust the boundary, such that the Clothall parish does not include any of the district wards of Baldock East or Baldock West. Area CBW moves from Clothall to Baldock West; CBE from Clothall to Baldock East. See maps at the end of this report.</p>	

Codicote

Electorate	2762: Codicote Village: 2123 (8 Cllrs) Codicote East: 639 (2 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 10	Proposal: 7 total
Next elections	2026	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 3 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One simply replied “I do not know” in response to the questions. • One felt that parish councils are “ineffective”, suggesting that the district council ignores them and that the parish has been overdeveloped as a result (outside of the scope of a CGR). • The final response expressed concern about the lack of training for the parish councillors (outside the scope of the CGR) and lack of buses, GP surgery, parking restrictions and speed limits (all outside the scope of a CGR). 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Decrease the number of parish Councillors from 10 to 7: Codicote Village: 5 Codicote East: 2</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2026 result in a 2-year term of office ending in 2028; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Graveley

Electorate	356	
Number of councillors	Current: 5	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 5 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two suggested including the development sites of GA1 and GA2 from Graveley and Weston into Great Ashby. • Two highlighted the benefits of their parish council in representing their community and preventing the loss of identity for the area. They did not want the parish to be merged with others nearby and felt it was important to be kept separate from Stevenage (although it is important to note there is no intention for the external district boundaries to be adjusted, and certainly not through this CGR). One (from a parish councillor) also wanted more information on the District council website about what a parish can and cannot do; this is outside of the scope of a CGR although NALC may be better placed in providing such advice to their member parish councils. • The final response raised concerns about an individual parish councillor, which are outside of the scope of the CGR. Concerns about the conduct of a parish councillor should be raised with the Monitoring Officer for investigation. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Increase the number of parish Councillors from 5 to 7. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Great Ashby

Electorate	4130	
Number of councillors	Current: 12	Proposal: 9
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 6 responses were received, in addition to those for Graveley and Weston regarding the boundary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One felt Great Ashby should remain in North Herts and the parish council area expanded to cover the whole of the developed area. • Two felt Great Ashby should be part of Stevenage. However, adjusting the external district boundaries is outside of the scope of a CGR. • One resident felt there was no need for a parish council and no sense of identity within the parish. • The Parish Council provided a detailed response to the consultation, outlining some of the work they have done. They confirmed they felt 12 councillors was the right number. In terms of the parish boundary, they felt that until the sites at GA1 and GA2 were confirmed and established it would not be reasonable to adjust the parish boundaries. To some extent, this follows convention as it is often the local residents of a new site that are best-placed to determine which parish they feel most aligned with. Despite other submissions to the contrary, therefore, the parish council view for not adjusting the boundaries to take on additional (as yet unbuilt) properties takes precedence. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 12 to 9. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Hexton

Electorate	89	
Number of councillors	Parish meeting	Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a	
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received. The respondent felt voting was easy at the current polling place, but felt the community doesn't get any support from the Council (presumably the district).	
Draft Proposals	No changes required.	

Hinxworth

Electorate	250	
Number of councillors	Current: 5	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 2 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One felt that, when a parish councillor resigns, their post should be up for election and not co-option. When a parish councillor resigns or leaves office, there is a statutory process that must be followed – the parish must publish a notice of vacancy, and local electors in the parish may request an election to take place to fill that vacancy; if sufficient requests are not received the parish may fill the vacancy by co-option. This process cannot be changed through a CGR. • One felt that the views of parts of the parish, from outside the core village, had not been taken into account by the parish in responding to planning applications. They felt adjustments to the planning process and parish council involvement would be beneficial. Whilst planning is outside of the scope of a CGR, it is important that local people are adequately represented by their parish council and through effective local governance arrangements. One option to enforce this is to implement parish wards, with each ward covering different parts of the parish to ensure views are represented. However, given the small size of Hinxworth parish this does not appear to be a viable option. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Increase the number of parish Councillors from 5 to 7. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Hitchin

Electorate	27088 Bearton: 6941 Highbury: 4926 Oughton: 4153 Priory: 4615 Walsworth: 6453	
Number of councillors	Unparished	Proposal: n/a
Next elections	N/a	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 16 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One: "Hitchin may also benefit from being made a parish to be a more democratic focal point for the town's community identity. If the district council is minded to create a parish of Hitchin, would recommend transferring the North parish ward from St Ippolyts into the new Hitchin parish as having long been part of the Hitchin urban area." • Ten specifically asked for a town council to be considered or created, and gave specific reasons for wanting a town council – supporting local democracy, ensuring representation, and providing local services. • Two were happy with current arrangements. • Two were opposed to creating a new parish council. • One opposed a new council unless a Unitary Authority was likely, in which case a local council would be important. There are currently no plans to implement a Unitary Authority in the area. <p>On balance, given the views expressed wishing for Town Council, the Draft Proposal is to establish a Town Council for Hitchin. Local people can then consider the options and respond, via the consultation, to advise if they support a Town Council or oppose it.</p> <p>With respect of the St Ippolyt's North residents, the decision as to whether they should be part of Hitchin should rest with them. Given the boundary of the parish cuts through communities, on the face it appears that they would be better served by being in Hitchin. However, only residents of that area can determine their preference based on community identity, and effective and convenient local governance. Therefore the Draft Proposal is that St Ippolyt's North becomes part of Hitchin, subject to the result of the consultation.</p>	
Draft Proposals	(1) Move St Ippolyt's North parish ward from St Ippolyt's to Hitchin. Area INH moves St Ippolyt's North to Hitchin Priory parish ward. See maps at the end of this report. (2) Create a new parish for Hitchin, served by a new Town Council, subject to engagement from local residents	

	<p>through the consultation, with wards that align to the district wards:</p> <p>Hitchin Priory (includes St Ippolyt's North): 3</p> <p>Hitchin Oughton: 2</p> <p>Hitchin Bearton: 3</p> <p>Hitchin Walsworth: 3</p> <p>Hitchin Highbury: 2</p> <p>[If St Ippolyt's North does not move to Hitchin, the total number of councillors would still be 13, split thus: Priory 2, Oughton 2, Bearton 3, Walsworth 3, Highbury 3]</p> <p>(3) To ensure local people are aware of the proposal to establish a Town Council and the opportunities and implications of it, hard-copy leaflets should be produced with the Comms team and distributed to every household in Hitchin inviting them to respond to the consultation. The information will be entirely neutral, leaving the opportunity for local people to discuss and motivate the decision.</p>
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Holwell

Electorate	334	
Number of councillors	Current: 5	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 2 responses were received, from the same resident. They raised concerns about communication and representation from the parish council. They also felt Holwell could merge with Ickleford parish to create a larger a more efficient parish council.</p> <p>Merging Ickleford and Holwell parishes would result in Holwell being a parish ward within Ickleford parish. There would not necessarily be an increase in local representation, nor in communication between the council and residents. The issues raised by the respondent (apparent lack of scrutiny, poor cashflow management, lack of representation, lack of external speakers at meetings) would not be resolved by merging the parish. It is therefore unlikely that merging the parish would be in the best interest of local residents.</p>	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Increase the number of parish Councillors from 5 to 7.</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Ickleford

Electorate	1704	
Number of councillors	Current: 8	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 5 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One simply said “Satisfactory”. • One referred mainly to Hitchin. • The remaining three all refer to the development at the far north of the parish, known as Lavender Grange. This area is essentially a development stemming from Henlow parish and Stondon parish, both in Bedfordshire. The community are physically distant from the rest of Ickleford, and have reported issues as a result. A CGR has no scope to change the external boundary of the district, and so Lavender Grange remains part of Ickleford. However, there is one option that could support greater representation for local residents in Lavender Grange – the introduction of a new parish ward to serve that area. However, whilst this would increase the democratic cost and complexity of elections, it would not guarantee that local people from Lavender Grange would stand for election to represent their community, and even if they did it will not resolve some of the longstanding issues (such as with the Royal Mail postcodes). However, the option for specific representation via a distinct parish ward should be offered to local residents. The Draft Proposal, therefore, is to create a parish ward for the northern part of Ickleford. 	
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7. (2) Create a parish ward for the Lavender Grange community, subject to engagement from local residents through the consultation (Area ILG; see maps at the end of this report): Ickleford parish ward: 5 councillors Lavender Grange: 2 councillors (3) Ensure local people in Lavender Grange are aware of this proposal, and invite them to respond, via a hard-copy distribution in the affected area. (4) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections. 	

Kelshall

Electorate	128	
Number of councillors	Parish meeting	Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a	
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received. This respondent noted that residents within their community of around 10 properties were excluded from the catchment of 'every senior school' but should be included. This is not within the scope of a CGR, and the best route to raise such concerns is via the County Council, potentially through the local County Councillor.	
Draft Proposals	No changes.	

Kimpton

Electorate	1835	
Number of councillors	Current: 8	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2026	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 5 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two felt the current arrangements were appropriate, although one noted improved communication from the parish council would be beneficial. • One noted that links towards St Albans were clearer and stronger than those towards Hitchin and elsewhere in the district, although a CGR does not alter external district boundaries. • One existing parish councillor raised a number of issues. These included: the need to recognise the value of parish councils (noted); the need for improved governance, legislative reviews, and training for councillors (reviews of legislation are outside of the scope of a CGR, and training of parish councillors is within the remit of the parish council supported by their professional networks); increased use of technology (outside of the scope of a CGR), holding of regular elections (these take place every 4 years, although are only contested if sufficient candidates stand; this is outside of the remit of a CGR). They also suggested that some parish and district councils could be consolidated (i.e. parishes abolished) leaving remunerated neighbourhood councillors to deliver services; this novel approach to local government reorganisation is outside of the scope of a CGR and would be best directed to DLUHC for consideration. • The parish council responded to advise they are satisfied with current arrangements. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2026 result in a 2-year term of office ending in 2028; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Kings Walden

Electorate	814: Kings Walden: 181 (2 Cllrs) Breachwood Green: 633 (6 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 8	Proposal: 7 total
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 4 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One felt the arrangements work well. • Two were unaware of the work of the parish council. • The fourth felt that Langley parish meeting should be merged with Kings Walden, St Paul's and Preston parishes to create one large parish. This view was not echoed by any other response for any of the other parish areas. Therefore, on balance, it appears to not reflect the views of the broader community. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7: Kings Walden: 2 Breachwood Green: 5</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Knebworth

Electorate	3578	
Number of councillors	Current: 12	Proposal: 9
Next elections	2026	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 10 responses were received. Most were supportive of the current arrangements and boundaries. As with many parishes in the area, some properties that are ostensibly within Knebworth are just outside the district boundary (which is not changing through this CGR).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One respondent felt that small parishes and small councils become too divisive, although the role of parish councils is to represent small local areas. • One respondent noted that the shape of the parish boundaries has resulted in some anomalies, with near neighbours not being in the same parish but distant ones being in the same parish. This is inevitable given the historic parish boundaries that have been adjusted over time to avoid other developing towns. • One respondent suggested adjusting the parish boundary to align with the district ward; this would see part of Codicote parish being moved into Knebworth simply to align the boundaries. This does not appear to be reflective of the communities in either parish. • One respondent raised a number of points: they felt the parish's comprehensive plan had been ignored by the district; that the parish council was important to ensure local views were represented. They also raised a number of concerns outside of the scope of a CGR (highway maintenance, street cleaning, surface water drainage). Overall, this respondent felt the parish council had a place and was of value to the local community. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 12 to 9.</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2026 result in a 2-year term of office ending in 2028; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Langley

Electorate	152	
Number of councillors	Parish meeting	Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a	
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received, as noted above, suggesting merging Langley with neighbouring parishes. This does not appear to reflect the identities and interests of local communities.	
Draft Proposals	None.	

Letchworth

Electorate	25617	
Number of councillors	Not parished	Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 12 responses were received. With one exception, all of the respondents were satisfied with there being no parish council and several noted the previous parish council was abolished some time ago. The one remaining response felt the Heritage Foundation was an anomaly and should be replaced by a parish council.</p> <p>On balance, given the previous history of an unsuccessful parish council in Letchworth and the clear strength of feeling against reintroducing one, there are no proposals to have a parish council for Letchworth.</p> <p>If changes implemented through future Local Government Reorganisation would indicate that Letchworth would be under-represented by not having a Town Council, this decision can be revisited in a specific and targeted CGR at the time.</p>	
Draft Proposals	None.	

Lilley

Electorate	314	
Number of councillors	Current: 7	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	No responses received.	
Draft Proposals	(1) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.	

Nuthampstead

Electorate	115	
Number of councillors	Parish meeting	Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a	
Consultation responses	No responses received.	
Draft Proposals	None.	

Offley

Electorate	1268: Offley: 860 (5 Cllrs) Cockernhoe: 408 (4 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 9	Proposal: 7 total
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 4 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two were supportive of current arrangements. • Two (one from a local parish councillor, and the other from a respondent who made submissions about a number of areas) felt a realignment of parishes might be valuable – separating Cockernhoe from Offley. One of these also suggested including Lilley instead to have a shared parish to address shared issues such as bus services. However, bus services are outside of the remit of a parish council, and although lobbying and campaigning for improvements and change is very much a matter for local councils, that may have more weight as two separate councils making the same requests rather than a single council making a request. As a result, and in the absence of further evidence suggesting the parishes should be reconfigured, there are no proposals to change Offley parish boundaries. <p>Whilst there may be merit in splitting Offley into two parishes, there would be a loss in terms of economies of scale – each of the two much smaller parishes would have an overhead in terms of administrative and democratic support. It is generally unusual to create small parishes in recent times, with most small parishes having historic roots. It is therefore unlikely to be in the best interests of the communities to split the parish into two. After careful consideration, it is proposed to retain Offley and Cockernhoe as a single parish. As future developments progress and new residents occupy properties in the area, it may be prudent to conduct a separate and specific CGR to revisit this. It is the views of the residents in the parish, including and in particular those new residents who will in future occupy the new developments, that will be pertinent in those discussions.</p>	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 9 to 7: Offley: 5 Cockernhoe: 2</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Pirton

Electorate	1245	
Number of councillors	Current: 9	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 6 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parish council felt the arrangements were appropriate with no changes, but noted they would prefer election dates to coincide with those of the district. • One commented on electoral administration, and one advocated the introduction of proportional representation (outside of the scope of a CGR). • One felt parish council meetings could take place online to make them more accessible (this is outside of the scope of a CGR). • The other respondents were happy with current arrangements or felt unable to comment upon them. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 9 to 7. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Preston

Electorate	352	
Number of councillors	Current: 7	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received, from the parish council, who felt the arrangements in place remained appropriate.	
Draft Proposals	(1) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.	

Radwell

Electorate	113	
Number of councillors	Parish meeting	Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a	
Consultation responses	No responses received.	
Draft Proposals	None.	

Reed

Electorate	265	
Number of councillors	5	Proposal: 5
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 5 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four were supportive of the current arrangements, noting the boundaries and sense of identity and community within the parish. • The response from Reed Parish Council noted that the boundaries are correct. They have considered increasing the number of councillors, but concluded there is no need to at present (on that basis, there is no Draft Proposal for Reed parish council to increase the number of parish councillors). 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Royston Town

Electorate	13544 District ward Heath: 3885 District ward Meridian: 5357 District ward Palace: 4302	
Number of councillors	Current: 15 If no changes are made, the following will take effect from 2026: Garden Lane: 1 Cllr Meridian: 5 Cllrs Palace: 4 Cllrs South: 1 Cllrs West: 3 Cllrs Willowside: 1 Cllr	Proposal: 13 in total
Next elections	2026	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 12 responses were received. At present, Royston is split into multiple small wards following the LGBCE review of district wards, and one aim of this CGR is, subject to local support through the consultation, to resolve that.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst most supported the current arrangements, several noted the need to realign the town wards to the district ward boundaries. • One respondent felt the Town Council should be abolished, with the district being the only local council for the town. Another felt there should be no Town Council wards (this is not an option as the district wards require equivalent Town Council wards). • One respondent felt the number of Councillors was too high. • The Town Council response, echoed by a response from a parish councillor and by local residents, was that the Town should have three wards and elections should be adjusted to come into line with the district elections. 	
Draft Proposals	(1) Abolish the current Town wards and replace with wards that align completely with the district wards. (2) Reduce the number of Town Councillors from 15 to 13: Heath: 4 Meridian: 5 Palace: 4 (3) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2026 result in a 2-year term of office ending in 2028; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.	

Rushden and Wallington

Electorate	335 Rushden: 214 (3 Cllrs) Wallington: 121 (2 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 5	Proposal: 7 total
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 4 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two were supportive, with no changes recommended. • The other two, whilst very supportive of the current arrangements, noted that Redhill village is currently split between Rushden & Wallington and Sandon. Both felt the village is better represented and better served by Rushden & Wallington. Whilst just over half of the small community is in Sandon, they are much closer geographically to Rushden and Wallington villages. The general view for all CGR matters is for the local residents to determine which parish they feel most closely aligned with. Therefore, the Draft Proposal is for the community to be moved into Rushden & Wallington (Wallington parish), and for the affected residents to be consulted prior to the Final Recommendations being completed. To ensure local views are heard, a further recommendation is to deliver hard-copy information to all households in Redhill, regardless of which parish they currently reside in. 	
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Move the boundary such that the whole of Redhill village is in Wallington parish (moving some from Rushden, and some from Sandon). Area SW moves from Sandon to Wallington; RW from Rushden to Wallington. See maps at the end of this report. (2) Deliver hard-copy information to all residents in Redhill parish regarding this Draft Proposal. (3) Increase the number of parish Councillors from 5 to 7: Rushden: 4 Wallington: 3 (4) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections. 	

Sandon

Electorate	404	
Number of councillors	Current: 6	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	A total of 2 responses were received that referred to Sandon, both advocating for the village of Redhill to be moved entirely to Wallington.	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) As noted above, move the boundary such that the whole of Redhill village is in Wallington parish (moving some from Rushden, and some from Sandon). Area SW moves from Sandon to Wallington. See maps at the end of this report.</p> <p>(2) Increase the number of parish Councillors from 6 to 7.</p> <p>(3) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

St. Ippolyts

Electorate	1644: South: 907 (5 Cllrs) North: 737 (3 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 8	Proposal: 7 total
Next elections	2028	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 4 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parish council supported no change. • One respondent advocated abolishing this and all other parish councils. • The other two responses were broadly supportive of the parish, but raised specific points (requesting a monthly local market, and support for children's play areas) that are outside of the scope of a CGR. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) As noted above, move St Ippolyt's North parish ward from St Ippolyt's to Hitchin following consultation with local residents. Area INH moves St Ippolyt's North to Hitchin Priory parish ward. See maps at the end of this report.</p> <p>(2) Either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> If the move of St Ippolyt's North to Hitchin <u>does</u> go ahead, then reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7. or: If the move of St Ippolyt's North to Hitchin <u>does not</u> go ahead, then reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7: <div style="margin-left: 40px;">South: 4 North: 3</div> 	

St. Paul`s Walden

Electorate	1081	
Number of councillors	Current: 7	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2028	
Consultation responses	No responses received.	
Draft Proposals	No changes.	

Therfield

Electorate	451	
Number of councillors	Current: 7	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	No responses received.	
Draft Proposals	(1) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.	

Weston

Electorate	813	
Number of councillors	Current: 9	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received, from the parish council. They advise they are happy with the current arrangements but note that changes may be required in the future if the development site GA2 is built-out. At that time, there may be a need to adjust the parish boundaries such that the development is included in Great Ashby rather than Weston.	
Draft Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reduce the number of Parish Councillors from 9 to 7. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections. 	

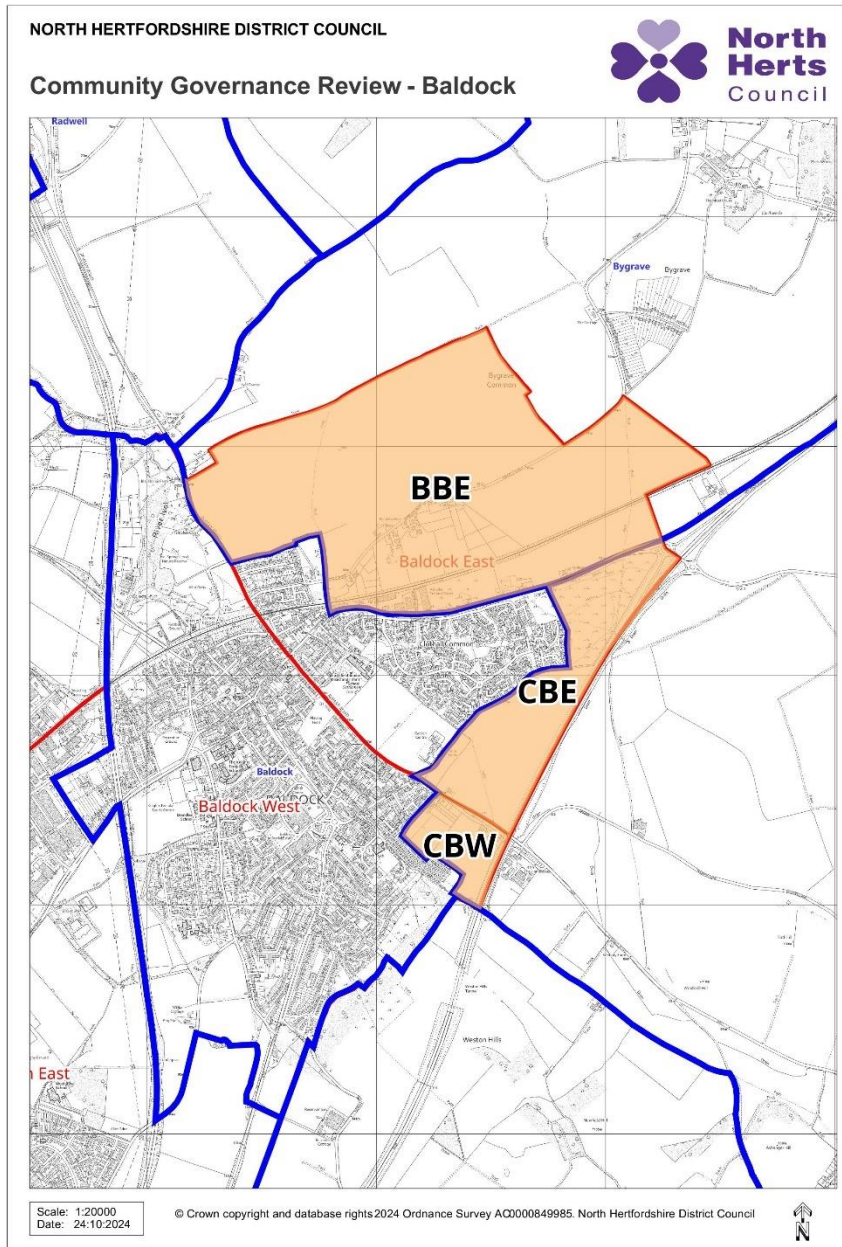
Wymondley

Electorate	902: Gt Wymondley: 137 (2 Cllrs) Lt Wymondley: 642 (5 Cllrs) Todds Green: 123 (1 Cllr)	
Number of councillors	Current: 8 total	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 3 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One referred to restoring Wymondley station and opening a local shop; both are outside of the remit of a CGR. • One felt that Todd's Green should be moved from Stevenage into Wymondley; external district boundaries cannot be adjusted through a CGR. • The third felt broadly satisfied with the current arrangements but felt that a disproportionate amount of parish council spending was in just one of the villages and called for greater transparency and distribution. This is outside of the scope of a CGR. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7: Gt Wymondley: 1 Cllr Lt Wymondley: 5 Cllrs Todds Green: 1 Cllr</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

MAPS

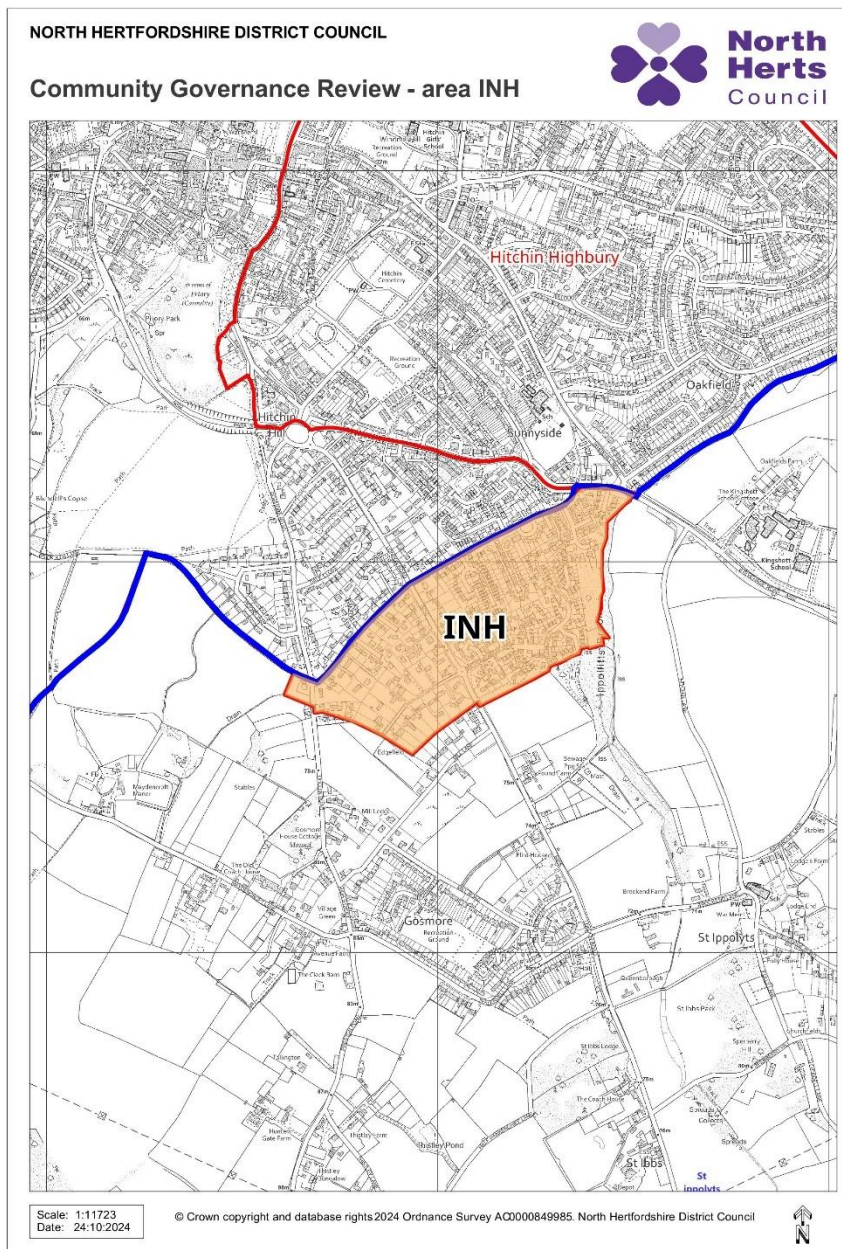
Baldock, Bygrave, Clothall.

Area CBW moves from Clothall to Baldock West; CBE from Clothall to Baldock East; BBE from Bygrave to Baldock East.



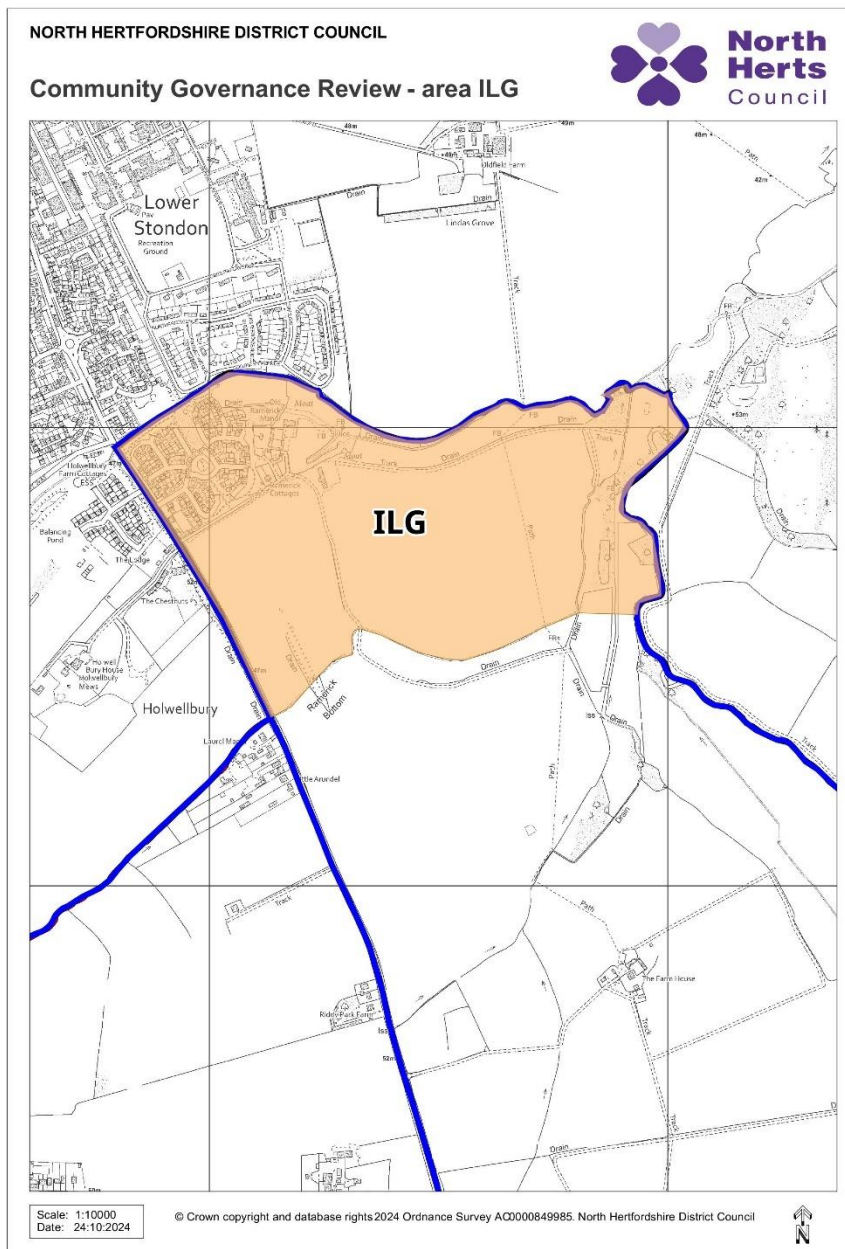
Hitchin & St Ippolyt's

Area INH moves St Ippolyt's North to Hitchin Priory parish ward.



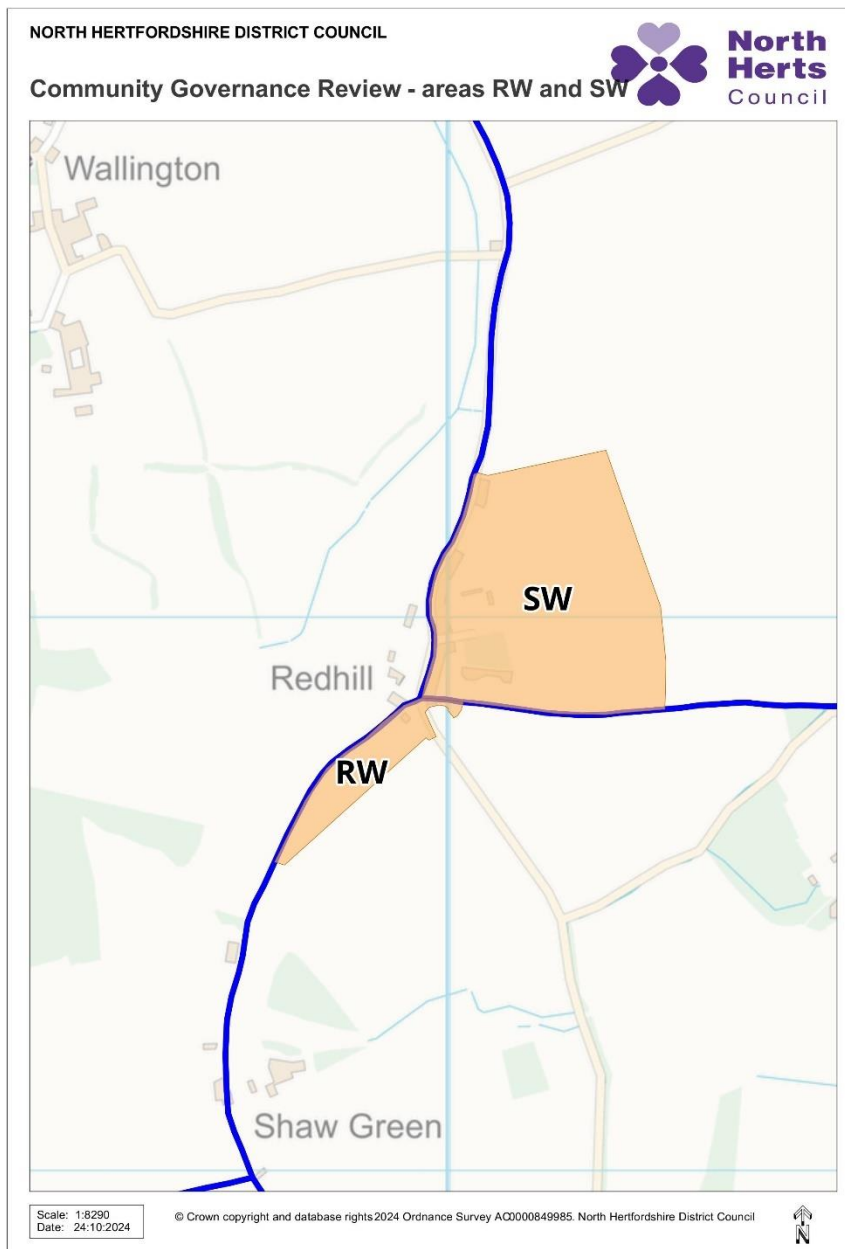
Ickleford

Create a parish ward for the Lavender Grange community (Area ILG).



Rushden, Sandon, Wallington

Area SW moves from Sandon to Wallington; RW from Rushden to Wallington.



9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Council, as principal council, has authority to take decisions about parish electoral governance arrangements under Sections 79 and 102(2) the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 9.2. A District Council that is undertaking a review, must notify the County Council that the review for its area is to be undertaken and the terms of reference (including any modifications to those Terms), as per section 79(3).
- 9.3. Sections 81 – 84 of the said Act cover relevant aspect of the Terms of Reference for the review. These are Terms under which the review is to be undertaken and specify the area under review, which were approved by Full Council at its meeting on 11 July 2024. As soon as practicable after deciding the Terms, they must be published. They were published on the Council's dedicated [Community Governance Review webpage](#) as well as part of the first stage of consultation.
- 9.4. 14.5.1 Council Functions states that functions relating to Community governance are reserved to Council as referred in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000.
- 9.5. If changes to external parish boundaries are agreed and implemented, there may be consequential changes required in terms of asset transfer between parish councils. The district Legal Services team will be responsible for ensuring this takes place in an appropriate and legally compliant manner following completion of the CGR. Creation of any new parish council may require an interim arrangement, such as for setting the initial Council Tax precept; Legal Services will be responsible for implementing these interim arrangements, typically through the appointment of local elected District Councillors to undertake those duties suitably supported by officers.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Council is required to undertake regular reviews of community governance at its own cost. The costs or savings associated with the outcome of a CGR are met by parish councils. Members are invited to note that as per the first round of consultation, the consultation on the Draft Proposals will be electronic. However, where the Draft Proposals make changes for specific properties (such as changes to external parish boundaries, or the creation of new parish councils) these require printed materials to be delivered to the affected properties with print and distribution costs attached.
- 10.2 As a guide, if all the Draft Proposals are agreed for consultation it would affect circa 25,000 households. It would cost in the region of £14,000 to print and post an A5 colour document via the company used for the main electoral printing, such as canvass forms and postal vote ballot packs. Note this does not account for VAT or any increase in Royal Mail postage costs.

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. Government guidance states that it is good practice to conduct a full review at least every 10 – 15 years and keep the area under review in the interim. Given the level of development and residential growth, and the recent review of District Wards since the last review, it is now timely to formally review the parish governance arrangements throughout the area.
- 11.3. There may be changes in the indicative timetable provided for the Review, depending on local circumstances i.e. by-elections, staff leave, consequential matters as a result of a general election being called so close to the local elections, although implementation ahead of May 2026 is anticipated.
- 11.4. Failure to properly conduct or implement a CGR may result in a Judicial Review. The approach highlighted in this report and consultation on the Draft Proposals, aims to reduce the risk of this happening.

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. A review of community governance will not impact on the requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 12.3. Parish and Town Councils are the most local tier of government in England and play an important role in terms of community empowerment at a local level. A CGR offers an opportunity for both existing parishes and local people to feed into this process and offer proposals for any changes.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The appointment of the consultant to assist with the CGR has alleviated some of the pressure within the service and ensured the service continues to run effectively (given the significant demands the Democratic Services Team has experienced last year).

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Terms of Reference

- 16.2 Appendix B – Redacted consultation responses
- 16.3 Appendix C – Draft proof of the flyer that will be circulated to households where the Draft Proposals make changes specific to properties – as identified within the Draft Proposals.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Guidance on Community Governance Reviews
[Guidance on community governance reviews \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- 18.2 Council – 23 September 2021 – Electoral Cycle Consultation – Minute No. 52 refers
<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2614>
- 18.3 Council - 7 December 2021 - [Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 7th December, 2021, 7.30 pm - North Hertfordshire District Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://north-herts.gov.uk/agenda)
- 18.4 Council – [20 January 2022 – Council Size Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission for England \(LBGCE\) – Minute No.78 refers](#)
- 18.5 Council – 14 July 2022 – [Warding Arrangement Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England \(LGBCE\) - Minute No.134 refers](#)
- 18.6 [Council – 19 December 2022 – Electoral Review – Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England on Proposed Warding Arrangements – Minute No. 162 refers](#)
- 18.7 [Council – 11 July 2024 – Community Governance Review – Terms of Reference – Minute No. 27 refers](#)

Terms of Reference - Community Governance Review

A review of parish electoral arrangements under the
Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Introduction

North Hertfordshire District Council has decided to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act"), to consider parish boundaries, parish ward boundaries, parish election dates and councillor representation throughout the local authority area.

Why undertake a Community Governance review?

A CGR provides an opportunity for district councils to review and make changes to community governance within their area. Such reviews can be undertaken when there have been changes in population or in reaction to specific, or local, new issues to ensure that the community governance for the area continues to be effective and convenient and it reflects the identities and interests of the community.

The government has emphasised that ultimately recommendations made in a CGR ought to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

Government guidance further states that it is good practice to conduct a full review at least every 10– 15 years and keep the area under review in the interim. Given the level of development and residential growth, and the recent review of District Wards since the last review, it is now timely to formally review the parish governance arrangements throughout the area.

Scope of the review

North Hertfordshire District Council has decided to undertake a CGR to consider whether governance arrangements across the **whole** of the local authority area are:

- a) reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- b) effective and convenient to the community in that area.

In doing so the review is required to take into account:

- a) the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and
- b) the size, population and boundaries of the local community or parish.

The review will also consider whether it is appropriate to parish unparished wards, including whether to create new parish council(s) or make changes to existing parish arrangements, and whether election dates should be amended for parish councils, with the potential outcomes of the review that are covered and any recommendations as set out under sections 87-92 of Act [[Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)]

Who will undertake the community governance review

As the principal authority, North Hertfordshire District Council (as principal council) is responsible for undertaking any CGR within its electoral area.

The review will comply with the legislative and procedural requirements set out in the 2007 Act, as well as statutory guidance and best practice models. This includes guidance produced jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). This review will follow the approach set out in these Terms of Reference, including the indicative timetable.

A timetable for the review

The indicative timetable for the review is as follows. Depending on local circumstances some dates may change, although implementation ahead of May 2026 is anticipated.

Date	Action
11 July 2024	Full Council approves the Terms of Reference, signifying the start of the CGR.
19 July to 7 October 2024	First public consultation, lasting 11 weeks.
November 2024 to December 2024	Review by Officers and development of Draft Recommendations. CGR Working Group meetings will be held as appropriate to discuss, prior to consideration by Council.
23 January 2025	Draft Recommendations to be considered by Council and approved for second round of consultation.
31 January 2025 to 28 March 2025	Second public consultation, on Draft Recommendations.
	Review by Officers and development of Final Recommendations. CGR Working Group meetings will be held as appropriate to discuss, prior to consideration by Council.
July 2025	Full Council discuss and agree Final Recommendations.
July 2025	Reorganisation Order made.

Consultation

Before making or publishing Final Proposals, in line with legislative requirements, the Council will take full account of the views of local people. The Council will comply with legislative requirements by;

- a) consulting local government electors for areas under review;
- b) consulting any other person or body (including a local authority or elected representative) which appears to the principal council to have an interest in the review; and
- c) taking into account any representations received in connection with the review.

When taking account of written representations, the Council is bound to have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review is;

- a) reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- b) effective and convenient to the community in that area.

In order to ensure that this review is conducted transparently, as soon as practicable the Council will publish its recommendations and take such steps as it considers sufficient to ensure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of the recommendations and the reasons behind them.

The value of local councils

The Council believes that local parish and town councils play an important role in terms of community empowerment at a local level and want to ensure that local governance in the areas subject to this review continue to be robust, representative and enabled to meet the challenges that lie before it.

Parish and town councils have a key role to play in representing the views, promoting the needs, of the borough's local communities and neighbourhoods and that every opportunity should be afforded to them to express such views to the Council prior to any decisions taken which might affect local circumstances.

Parish boundaries

The Council considers that 'natural' settlements or settlements as they are defined in the Local Development Framework should not in normal circumstances be partitioned by parish boundaries.

The Council considers that the boundaries between parishes should where possible either reflect the 'no-man's land' between communities represented by areas of low population or by identifiable physical barriers. These physical barriers might include natural boundaries such as rivers or man-made features such as railways or roads.

In reaching conclusions on the boundaries between parishes, the Council will take into account community identity and interests in an area and will consider whether any particular ties or linkages might be broken by the drawing of particular boundaries. Equally, the Council, during its consultations will be mindful that proposals which are intended to reflect community identity and local linkages should be justified in terms of sound and demonstrable evidence of those identities and linkages.

In any event the Council will endeavour to select boundaries that are, and are likely to remain, easily identifiable as well as taking into account any local ties which might be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

Parish and Town Council level of membership

The Council notes that legally the number of parish councillors for each parish council shall not be less than five and that there is no maximum number. In the instance of parish wards, any warded parish must have at least one parish councillor per ward. Furthermore, each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities.

It is an important democratic principle that each person's vote should be of equal weight so far as possible, having regard to other legitimate competing factors, when it comes to the election of councillors.

Whilst it will not be possible, nor desirable, to create absolute uniformity in councillor representation at a parish level it is the policy of the Council to provide an equality of representation across the area as far as possible.

Whilst the Council is keen to ensure that the allocation of councillors to parish councils is equitable across the borough using NALC guidelines, it acknowledges that local circumstances may occasionally merit variation. Therefore, in exceptional circumstances, or in the case of parish warding, the Council accepts that it may be appropriate to increase or decrease the allocation of councillors to a parish council to reflect local circumstances.

Whilst the Council has discretion in this matter and will be mindful to apply the NALC guidelines it will, wherever possible, fully consider and take into account the wishes of the local area and the existing levels of representation which have stood the test of time before arriving at a decision.

Parish election dates

North Hertfordshire District Council previously elected 'by thirds', with elections taking place in three out of every four years. In line with these arrangements, scheduled parish elections also took place in three out of every four years, with some parish councils electing in each of those three years. The Council now elects all District Councillors in one scheduled election every four years, following a resolution by Council.

It may be prudent for scheduled elections for parish councils to be aligned with the District Council election dates. This can save considerable money for parish councils, who will then all share their election dates, and makes the democratic process easier and more accessible for electors. If election dates change for any parish council, the term of office for parish councillors in affected parishes will be shorter or longer than four years in the first scheduled election after the completion of the Review. Full details will be prepared and shared alongside any Draft Recommendations for consultation.

How to contact us

If you would like to say how you view potential future arrangements under these Terms of Reference please respond to the online consultations on the North Hertfordshire District Council website, <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/>

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Appendix B – Redacted responses to the stage 1 consultation

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
4	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	All;	Yes
38	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident; Grosvenor Group	All;	Current arrangements might need tweaking. But, seriously, what a waste of time is being committed (therefore money) with this proposed exercise. It's simple - if it isn't broken don't waste time trying to fix it - if it's bent, leave it, don't even try fixing it ---- UNTIL IT DOES REALLY NEED FIXING. Current arrangements work as well as can be expected, so stop wasting time - put effort where it matters
58	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	All;	1
61	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident; Note: Outside the district Responding from: [REDACTED AS NOT RELEVANT TO CGR AND UNCLEAR IF THIS IS THE FORMAL RESPONSE OF THE ORGANISATION]	All;	There has been false statements and education written on plates which are untrue and is demonstrates religious discrimination and hatred amongst community and unlawful in the first place there are many voices are not heard many victims not compensated for hatred and racism and discrimination against women and children.
64	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident; Note: Outside the district Responding from: [REDACTED AS NOT RELEVANT TO CGR AND UNCLEAR IF THIS IS THE FORMAL RESPONSE OF THE ORGANISATION]	All;	I believe in multiculturalism communities should not segregated.
103	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident; Note: Outside the district Responding from: [REDACTED AS NOT RELEVANT TO CGR AND UNCLEAR IF THIS IS THE FORMAL RESPONSE OF THE ORGANISATION]	All;	The local churches have wrong information put up with is discriminating the black people and ethnic cleansing which promoting hatred among people and social segregation.
28	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Ashwell ;	There is no point to a parish council only interested in pointless vanity projects. They do nothing about the state of the roads or that the road banks are so overgrown it obscure the drivers' vision and it is downright dangerous and the only reason they are not cut back is to save the district council money
31	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Ashwell ;	Ashwell should be in South Cambridgeshire not Hertfordshire
54	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Ashwell ;	Ashwell Parish Council seems to work well. However there seems to be a problem getting residents involved in standing for election for the council since there are always vacancies. It may be that

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
			prospective councillors are discouraged by the abundance of regulations that seem to be associated with council membership.
71	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Ashwell ;	Ashwell should be in South Cambs
119	I'm responding on behalf of a Parish or Town council*; Ashwell Parish Council	Ashwell ;	At 2nd September 2024 Parish Council meeting, the Parish Council wish to propose reducing the number of parish councillors to nine (currently twelve).
19	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Baldock ;	<p>Very little engagement with the community by that I mean few surgeries to make representations as a resident.</p> <p>Town talks held either at the library or community centre would be helpful.</p> <p>No engagement is ever undertaken with communal developments, i.e., flats.</p> <p>My view is that improvements can only occur once a review of how the current working practice operates, therefore is it easy to accept its convenient to do things in a way that they have always been done or an acknowledgement that the current practice needs revision. I would have preferred being asked the question. 'This is how we do it. This is what we plan to do.' If feedback is low, then what is the likelihood of change. Likewise, if residents have a wish list is change going to happen.</p> <p>In answer to the 3 points for comment my answers are: No, no and yes properties are divided by that normal domestic v flats.</p>
20	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Baldock ;	We don't have a parish or town council. Our representation is via a group of NHDC councillors locally known as the Baldock committee. This is an anomaly- for example when it came to commenting on the local plan for the expansion of Baldock and the development of a neighbourhood plan, this had to be nominally led by Bygrave who do have a parish council. I appreciate that no NHDC towns have their own councils but I feel that this is a strange way of organising local democracy by denying local representation to the majority of North Herts citizens.
22	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Baldock ;	I live in Baldock, which does not have its own parish/town council. This seems strange, given that much smaller settlements, such as Clothall and Bygrave do have their own local parish councils. Baldock seems just to be represented by District Councillors, who are therefore fulfilling a dual role. I wonder whether Baldock would benefit from a parish council of its own.
81	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Baldock ;	Baldock has no local government parish council, only a church parish council. This means that Baldock residents miss out on ability to influence local issues. Can this be sorted out?
88	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Baldock ;	Nothing to note. All seems fit for purpose
97	I'm responding in my capacity as a District Councillor; I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Baldock ;	<p>- The current parish boundaries of Clothall and Bygrave that overlap the newly expanded District boundaries of Baldock East ward should be changed to no longer overlap into this ward. The parishes are designed to cover a rural area of village community that Baldock East does not represent. This means any future Baldock East residents that come to live in these areas will not be properly represented by the current arrangements. This will also divide up a community that will already have its obstacles due to being a large new housing development in a town that hasn't seen this scale of building for a long time, if ever. No parish boundaries should exist within Baldock Town.</p> <p>- Baldock should not have a town council. Many residents of Baldock already have a strong history of</p>

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
			volunteering and being active in their communities. An additional layer of administration and potential political point scoring is not something that residents are keen to see or participate in. A town council precept is also not something that many of the town's households can afford or are particularly interested in paying into. It is unclear what role a town council would play in a community that already covers the town with an incredible level of activity and spirit. With town councillor being an unpaid position, it is felt that there would not be strong diversity in the representation, particularly among younger working people and women who tend to have the bulk of family caring responsibilities. Residents have had a high level of politicking in the last few years that has resulted in a higher engagement with the political system, but adding to this could lead to burnout and apathy.
17	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Baldock ;	Why does Baldock not have a parish council? Could it have one?
51	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Barkway ;	No need to change anything. If it's not broken don't fix it. It NHDC that needs fixing.
24	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Bygrave ;	I believe that the rural nature of Bygrave is a true reflection of the makeup of residents.
65	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Bygrave ;	We are very happy with the current boundary of the parish and content including housing farming and business inputs
Page 91	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Bygrave ;Ashwell ;Caldecote and Newnham ;Hinxworth ;Radwell ;Baldock ;	The current arrangements work well, but care must be taken regarding the new development in Bygrave parish, which clearly due to its size would overwhelm the current Parish
99	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Bygrave ;Great Ashby Community Council ;Graveley ;St. Ippolyts ;Hitchin;Baldock ;Clothall;Weston ;Offley ;	<p>Great Ashby parish boundary should be enlarged to include the adjoining allocated development sites GA1 and GA2 (currently in Graveley / Weston parishes).</p> <p>Baldock should be made a parish, which should cover the combined area of Baldock East and Baldock West wards, thereby including the various proposed development sites around Baldock that currently fall within Bygrave and Clothall parishes. A town council for Baldock should assist with building community networks to help integrate the residents of the new developments as the town grows. If the district council decides a parish for Baldock is not appropriate, I would still encourage removing the parts of Baldock East ward from the parishes of Bygrave and Clothall, so as not to create awkward relationships between the new developments and the villages / rural parts of those parishes.</p> <p>Hitchin may also benefit from being made a parish to be a more democratic focal point for the town's community identity. If the district council is minded to create a parish of Hitchin, would recommend transferring the North parish ward from St Ippolyts into the new Hitchin parish as having long been part of the Hitchin urban area.</p> <p>There may be merit in splitting the current Offley parish into a reduced Offley parish east of Lilley Bottom Road and a new 'Cockernhoe' parish west of that road, allowing the Cockernhoe parish to more directly focus on assimilating the proposed growth on the edge of Luton into that area.</p>

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
			<p>Mindful that successive governments periodically talk about changing two-tier (county / district) areas into unitary authorities, there may be advantages in ensuring that the whole district is covered by parishes so as to let the new parish / town councils develop their own capacity to act as focal points for community life ahead of any change to unitary authorities being introduced. If we do end up with unitary authorities at whatever geography, parishes then become even more important for their focal role in the community and as the only other tier of local government.</p> <p>If the council accepts the recommendations to make Hitchin and Baldock parishes, that just leaves Letchworth unparished. Given the history of the short-lived town council here, if Letchworth were to be made a parish again, it would need more careful consideration, particularly to ensure that the division of roles between the town council and Heritage Foundation was understood from the outset allowing the organisations to function in a complementary way. If the district council does decide to reinstate a Letchworth parish, I would recommend using the elegantly simple and historic single word name of 'Letchworth', rather than the ungainly 'Letchworth Garden City'. We can respect and be rightly proud of the town's heritage and important role in the history of town planning without needing to shoehorn it into the name.</p>
	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident; Newnham Village Hall	Caldecote and Newnham ;	The current arrangements are effective and convenient for local people More published information on meetings would be an advantage
	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Clothall;	The current arrangement works very well
32	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Codicote ;	<p>I am new to the area and went to my first parish council meeting a few weeks ago. It seemed that Codicote shares its parish councillors with Kimpton but not the boundaries I found it very confusing. I think parish councillors could probably do with some training regarding how to run a meeting, noting who attended, what to do in case of emergencies, introducing councillors, welcoming newcomers etc. Personally, I was very disappointed with something that should be community focused. It seems that money from S106 towards infrastructure from new builds is not forth coming because of the ridiculous system that allows builders to keep the money until they have sold their last property. Parish councillors seemed to be very frustrated by the lack of support from North Herts. Codicote is a village but all the residents pay their taxes and yet don't seem to benefit particularly with lack of buses, GP surgery, support for parking restrictions or speed limits etc all that has been requested time and time again.</p>
48	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Codicote ;	I don't know
70	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Codicote ;	Parish Councils seem to be totally ineffective as District Council completely ignores them and overrules any suggestions they make. Sighting in particular the complete inappropriate over development of Codicote.
85	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Graveley ;	[Comment redacted – personal information] The current Parish Council does very little for the community and Councillors have to be pleaded with to even discuss a matter of concern to residents. It is disgraceful that council tax is paid to people who have no ideas for the community and don't spend the money on projects of value to the community.

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
86	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident; I'm responding in my capacity as a Parish/Town Councillor ;	Graveley ;	Important to keep as this helps define the area and keeps the identity from merging with Stevenage. Can NHDC website be clearer on what the Parish Council can and cannot do. Give more clarity and allow us to look after more
87	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Graveley ;	I like having a parish council in Graveley as it understands and fights for things that affect our village. If we were to be swallowed up by other councils we would lose our unique identity as a village. They are able to spend money from the budget within the village for all our use.
121	I'm responding on behalf of a Parish or Town council*; Graveley Parish Council	Graveley ;	The sites identified as GA1 in the Local Plan 2011 to 2031 and the North of Stevenage development, which are currently within Graveley Parish, will have residents that identify much more with Great Ashby / Stevenage than with Graveley village. If these developments proceed, we request that the parish boundary is moved such that these sites are moved from Graveley Parish into Great Ashby or that the two new developments become a parish on their own, perhaps 'Forster Parish'.
15	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Great Ashby Community Council ;	I believe the whole of the Great Ashby Development should be within North Herts. And therefore the Great Ashby Parish Council should cover / include the whole Great Ashby Development too.
183	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Great Ashby Community Council ;	It is about time that all of Great Ashby became part of Stevenage especially as Stevenage is expanding into East Herts. Everything we do is in Stevenage but we are not entitled to use Stevenage Council Services as we don't live in Stevenage, this needs changing
94	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Great Ashby Community Council ;	Everything we do is in Stevenage, shop , schools, doctors , hospital. We shouldn't be a separate parish it has no benefit
112	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Great Ashby Community Council ;	Why do I need a parish council? I'm sorry, but I don't. Another waste of money. I can only speak about my own "identity" and no they don't reflect me. Interests.. no, they don't reflect my interests. I don't identify as being part of a community. I'm sorry, but you are living in a different place to me if you think we live in a community in North Herts / Great Ashby. I feel no community connection or responsibility locally. It's each for their own. I pay taxes as I legally have to, the services provided that I use are [redacted] and you have a parish council spending money on [redacted].
128	I'm responding on behalf of a Parish or Town council*; Great Ashby Community Council	Great Ashby Community Council ;	The North Herts District Council Community Governance Review was discussed at the Full Council meeting of the Great Ashby Community Council held on 19 September 2024. Our official response follows: Great Ashby Community Council (GACC) serves the local community through the delivery of services which would otherwise not operate such as the provision of dog waste bins and the maintenance and enhancement of some children's play areas; projects which improve the health and well-being of the community and the local environment such as the current project to install a defib at the District Park and the roundabout planting scheme; and the Council represents local views to higher authorities and external

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
Page 94			<p>bodies. GACC encourages residents' feedback and actively provides input into the planning process – this has been valued by residents in relation to the proposed developments of GA1 and GA2.</p> <p>GACC has an allocation of 12 councillors, which the Council believes is sufficient to allow for a diverse body of councillors to represent the community of Great Ashby. We would not like to see this changed. The Council has welcomed three new Councillors in recent months, and has received more enquiries to join, which suggests the Council is respected and recognised as being effective within the community and that residents have a growing interest in participating in local governance.</p> <p>Our view is that the parish boundary arrangements are currently set correctly to reflect the community of Great Ashby residing within North Hertfordshire.</p> <p>Councillors discussed whether the proposed developments identified as GA1 and GA2 within the North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031 would affect our view on the need for a change to the parish boundary, should these sites be approved by the LPA. It is a certainty that should additional housing of the scale proposed be placed within this parish, having potential to increase the population of the parish by approximately 40-50%, this would have a significant effect on our existing community. It could be argued that should this realised, Great Ashby would be the size of a small town without any amenities of a town, and this would need careful consideration. Councillors' views varied, and it was determined that without any resolved specific detailed planning documents to inform a decision, GACC is unable to comment on any future movement of the parish boundary at this time. In that sense, the timing of this Community Governance Review is unhelpful for Great Ashby.</p> <p>With regard to election timetabling, the Council preference is for election dates for the parish to be aligned with the District Council dates in future.</p>
83	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hexton;	Voting is easy at the church.Village is small community but never gets any organised input from council or their representatives just mail drops
68	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hinxworth ;	I would like people to be elected by popular vote when someone resigns from the Parish Council rather than non elected people co-opted in.
105	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hinxworth ;	<p>The SG7 5HB local community is geographically remote (around a mile) from Hinxworth village and has its own identity. This is not generally an issue and I tend to look to NHDC for matters of local interest. However, if the Parish Council is to comment on planning applications within our local community it should consult with us before expressing an opinion to NHDC. On the most recent application the Parish Council has not represented our local community view and left us wondering why.</p> <p>The NHDC consultation planning process has been transparent and implemented well.</p> <p>The only change I would suggest is to tighten up the terms of reference of the Parish Council for planning. I could only find the NHDC description that a Parish Council generally comments on planning. I would like to add that any such comments should necessarily incorporate local community views.</p>
18	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	Happy with the arrangements for Hitchin

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
40	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	I am happy with the electoral arrangements in my area
47	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	Hitchin is underrepresented as it is currently unparished, a Town Council would provide the necessary vehicle to be a statutory consultee on matters such as planning and could easily and fairly enhance the services currently provided by NHC to ensure they met the needs of the Hitchin Community rather than those of a diverse North Herts Area. This would become even more essential were the area to eventually go to a Unitary Authority. A well established and effective TC needs to be in place before the UA even if this creates another layer of Govt in the interim.
49	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	I would suggest that Hitchin should be parished and a Hitchin Town Council created. The town has a thriving civic community and no formal local political entity to act as a forum for that. Parishes add a great deal of value at the lowest level of governance and if they are good enough for rural areas why not the towns? A small local precept could add much value and give rise to the possibility to bring in grants and match funding.
50	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident; I'm responding in my capacity as a District Councillor;	Hitchin;	Hitchin should have its own town/community council. There are only 4 Hitchin Area Forums (formerly Area Committees) per annum now with considerably reduced grant giving opportunities. Hitchin does not have the ability to raise any separate precept to fund exclusively Hitchin projects. A town/community council would be able to respond more speedily to residents' requirements.
56	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	[No comment received]
55	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	I do not want a town council for Hitchin.
92	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	Hitchin needs its own town council with its own precept. The current arrangements are unsatisfactory and Hitchin residents are denied this more local representation
104	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident; I'm responding on behalf of another organisation (such as a business) ; Hitchin Initiative Ltd	Hitchin;	Hitchin is presently unparished, hence lacking democratic representation and funding.
110	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	Hitchin needs a town council to give more local control and to "reflect the identities and interests of the local community'.
113	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	I believe we residents of Hitchin should have our own town council for us to have a say or our own Town with our own counsellors focused purely on hitchin and not the wider district and have the opportunity to develop and provide additionality to services above our existing level.
124	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	Please consider setting up a Town Council in Hitchin
131	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	If you ask most new people of Hitchin, little will be known about the wards and Parishes. More localised access to messaging and people on the ground could help to improve this. A Town Council would certainly be a good place to start.
133	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;	We had a separate town council for where I previously lived. They levy an additional subsidy on top of the council tax with little transparency about where it goes and not very much power. As such, I would be

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
			reluctant for any powers to be delegated from North Herts council to a new Hitchin town council. I think the same purpose might be addressed by having subcommittees in North Herts council of the existing elected councillors rather than delegated to a committee with little transparency on how members are appointed.
134	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Hitchin;All;	<p>1. I think that parish boundaries should be reviewed to facilitate the creation of sensible electoral units in future boundary reviews. For example, I understand there will be new houses built in the Great Ashby area (and a few existing houses) where residents will feel as though they are part of Great Ashby but they are currently in a different rural parish, with no direct connections to other parts of that parish. The parish boundaries in such circumstances should be shifted so that the new houses are in the same parish area as the current houses. I understand that the same will apply to houses built to expand Baldock and this may also be the case elsewhere. (There are a few existing houses in Wymondley parish close to the boundary with Hitchin that I think would more sensibly be reallocated (by changing the boundary) from that parish into Hitchin, although that might be too small a change to be worthwhile.)</p> <p>2. I live in Hitchin. At present I would oppose the creation of a Town Council. However, this depends on whether we retain our current district/county council structure or move to a unitary authority. I would support the creation of a unitary authority (if the area covered were sensible) and if so then I think it would be important to create a Town Council in Hitchin. I am unclear whether that consideration is within the scope of this review, but suggest it is borne in mind as it seems quite possible that we might move to a unitary authority in the future when public desire for a Town Council to be created may increase given that the unitary authority will feel more remote than the current District Council.</p>
64	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Holwell ;	<p>Could do with Parish representatives that care about the Parish, they wave through most planning applications with "no objection".</p> <p>Any communication with the Parish takes over a week to receive any response/request.</p> <p>Parish meetings could be more inclusive and invite 3rd parties to speak, Fairfield Parish in Bedfordshire for example regularly has guest speakers.</p> <p>Reduce the Council Tax proportion for Parish, huge increase for nothing extra.</p>
122	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Holwell ;	<p>Current Parish committee needs to change as no interest in what's best for its residents. Cash flow is not managed professionally.</p> <p>Underlining issue is the Parish is so small its income is limited and unable to provide the service it should.</p> <p>Given Holwell boundary is next to Ickleford, it would make sense to merge the Parishes to better serve its residents.</p>
3	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Ickleford ;	Satisfactory
53	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Ickleford ;	The inclusion of the newly developed Lavendar Grange estate at the extreme northern end of the parish should be reviewed. This area is far removed from the core of Ickleford and looks more to the built up area around Henlow Camp as the area that provides community facilities. The current inclusion in Ickleford parish leads to a lack of attention to the concerns and priorities of those living in the area (including myself). The lack of connectivity between the northern exteme and core of the parish also means residents to the north do not use any of the facilities within the core of the parish that are the priority of the existing parish council.

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
			<p>Due to the proximity to the boundary between North Herts and CBC areas this should be resolved as part of a review within CBC too. Ideally the northern end of Ickleford parish, south western end edge of Henlow parish and eastern side of Lower Stondon should all be reviewed to create a new arrangement of community governance that actually reflects the built up area.</p>
114	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Ickleford ;	<p>I currently live in Lavender Grange at the very northern end of Ickleford Parish. The current arrangements are not effective or convenient for us at all. We are over 2 miles separated from the core of Ickleford village, while directly adjoining the settled area around Lower Stondon/ Henlow Camp. As a result our primary community is not Ickleford and the current arrangements result in us being divided from our natural community.</p> <p>This also causes challenges with accessing services. Within North Herts we are regularly challenged when using the recycling centre in Letchworth because we have a Bedfordshire postcode and our council tax bills, despite being for North Herts, list Bedfordshire in our address because not even our own council seems to be able to recognise that we are in North Herts and not Bedfordshire. Similarly, residents have had issues with emergency services responding to the estate because the postcode and county do not align.</p> <p>Both the Parish, Council and County Council borders in this area need review in collaboration with Central Beds. Despite clearly being one built up area we are currently split 3 parishes, 2 withing Central Beds and 1 within North Herts. This results in a fundamental failure of effective local governance.</p>
117	I'm responding in my capacity as a District Councillor;	Ickleford ;	<p>Ickleford parish had a central village core with rural dwellings between the outer edges of the village core and the parish boundary. The nature of the parish was fundamentally changed when site LS1 was allocated in the Local Plan and built out.</p> <p>LS1, hereafter referred to as Lavender Grange, is a development of some 150 houses at the extreme Northern edge of the parish. The development, like the existing neighbouring properties at Ramerick Cottages, Ramerick Barns and Ramerick Hall are in the parish of Ickleford in North Herts, but any casual observer would assume that the properties are in Bedfordshire and in the parish of Lower Stondon as they lie beyond the Bedfordshire border road sign. This is not the case.</p> <p>The residents at Lavender Grange have faced many challenges due to confusion concerning their address. This was not helped by Royal Mail insisting that the properties be given an SG16 (Bedfordshire) postcode while the legacy properties referred to above have an SG5 (Ickleford, Herts) postcode. More frustratingly, another new development opposite Lavender Grange has been given an SG5 postcode, so we now have the situation where two facing developments are in Central Beds with a Herts postcode and in Herts with a Beds postcode. It should be acknowledged that postcode addressing no longer includes a county name, but this causes many problems and in the past, I have have to look into healthcare access, access to refuse centres, foodbanks and initially there were issues with emergency service delays due to address confusion. I have also pointed out in the past that residents at Lavender Grange have an unacceptable journey to their polling station at Ickleford village hall.</p>

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
Page 98			<p>In terms of parish representation, during the construction of LS1, a resident of Ramerick Barns was elected to the parish council, However, there is no representation on the parish council from the Lavender Grange community at the moment. The parish council - in particular the clerk - has done everything possible to reach out to the residents at Lavender Grange. A noticeboard has been installed, welcome information delivered and residents are invited to attend parish council meetings. However the Lavender Grange residents do not seem to feel part of Ickleford parish.</p> <p>There is a further distinction in that the the Lavender Grange development has a management company - First Port, which provides a poor service. Many issues that would be dealt with by the parish council or district council in the rest of the parish are the responsibility of First Port - this is another point of difference and one could argue, why should Lavender Grange residents pay the same precept to the parish council or indeed council tax to NHC when they do not receive the same services?</p> <p>With the likelihood of another significant development south of Lavender Grange, parish arrangements should be considered carefully so they are robust for the future. All of the correspondence I have had with Lavender Grange residents suggest that they purchased a house in North Herts and they want to remain in North Herts (there has been a campaign to get their postcode changed to SG5, but Royal Mail refused). No changes should be made without full consultation of residents.</p> <p>More needs to be done to include these residents in the parish as Lavender Grange currently feels divided from the rest of the parish. I think it would be useful to have a parish councillor from Lavender Grange on the parish council or if this is not possible, one of the parish councillors should have a specific role as a representative to this community.</p> <p>Parish council arrangements for residents in the rest of the ward work well.</p>
98	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident; Consilium Financial Planning Limited	Ickleford ;Hitchin;	<p>My business is in Hitchin. My home is in Ickleford. We are blessed to have proactive elected councillors in Hitchin and district generally. Often party differences are put to one side when it comes to matters Hitchin. We have a thriving town. A town with history and people who "love" living and working here. Hitchin has a marvellous creative vibe. The recently formed Hitchin Creative HC which now manages the fantastic summer and winter Hitchin Festivals activity promote the arts in Hitchin. Never has the arts been so important to the collective wellbeing of our townspeople, families, residents, visitors. With LA budgets stretched the formation of the Hitchin Town Council funded by a modest precept will ensure the good work carried out by HC has the air to breathe. Thus, is just one example of the many benefits a HTC will bring. Local immediate accountable democracy.</p>
77	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Kelshall ;Baldock ;	<p>Currently where I live in the Kelshall parish our cluster of 10+ homes are considered out of catchment for every senior school.</p> <p>I would like Kelshall parish to be included as Sandon is.</p>
5	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Kimpton ;	<p>The current electoral arrangements are OK but communication between Parish Council and local residents needs to improve.</p>

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
44	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Kimpton ;	No problem with existing arrangements
46	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Kimpton ;	Kimpton parish feels a long way from Hitchin and the parishes north of Hitchin. I would suggest that this is a broad range of interests and identities since Harpenden is the nearest town, rail station and indeed bus routes are easier towards St Albans than Hitchin. Difficult to comment on the changes to improve re costs of a broad geographical stretch, for example. The local councillor is engaged with the community. Would like to see the new MP more actively locally engaged.
52	I'm responding in my capacity as a Parish/Town Councillor ; Kimpton Parish Council parish Councillor	Kimpton ;	<p>While Parish Councillors do have their ears to the ground in the local community there are potential changes to be made as part of a broader effort to improve the efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of local government in the UK, ensuring that district and parish councils can better serve their communities and adapt to modern challenges.</p> <p>Enhanced Roles and Responsibilities: Parish councils, as the first tier of local government, are seeing an expansion in their roles. They are involved in a wide array of community services, such as provision of lighting, allotments, play areas, and commenting on planning proposals and local infrastructure projects. The role of Parish Councillors needs to be recognised given the sacrifices they make to represent the interests of their communities.</p> <p>Improved Governance: legislative reviews are required to provide clearer guidelines and support for parish councils, ensuring they can effectively manage local issues and contribute to broader regional planning and development strategies. Again Parish Councillors should be adequately trained and qualified to a higher standard and there should be financial incentives in place to assume these additional responsibilities.</p> <p>Digital Transformation and PropTech Integration: Local councils should adopt PropTech solutions to modernize planning processes. These include using 3D images and voice technology for local planning. North Herts DC has started this process to enhance efficiency and transparency in administrative functions and in our PC we find it very useful. However some councillors are inadequately trained and add little value. We need fewer, but better, people.</p> <p>Election and Governance Reforms: Regular elections for parish councils should be held, ensuring democratic representation and local accountability, but elections impact the funding and decision-making processes of parish councils. I think there is merit to the idea around the consolidation of some district and parish councils to improve administrative efficiency and reduce costs. This includes remunerating more professional "neighbourhood" councillors to streamline operations and enhance service delivery.</p>
111	I'm responding on behalf of a Parish or Town council*; Kimpton Parish Council	Kimpton ;	KPC is content with the number of parish councillors, the council name and the boundary of the parish.
26	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Kings Walden ;	Would be good if the parish council actually done something.
63	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Kings Walden ;	Unaware of them.
108	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Kings Walden ;	I think the current arrangements work well.

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
56	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident; District Councillor	Kings Walden ;Preston ; St. Paul's Walden ;Langley ;	Langley needs to be incorporated into St. Paul's Walden, it's currently a meeting, an absolute nightmare trying to engage with the Meeting who fail to respond. People feel un-engaged and left out. Needs greater transparency and inclusivity. Preston, Kings Walden and St. Paul's fall under Hitchwood, all administered by same Clerk, maybe the three could be unified to save money and before a unitary Parish called Hitchwood.
25	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Knebworth ;	Seems fine
27	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Knebworth ;	Parish boundaries good because we are a village with fields around. Not sure being with Stevenage for elections is good because we don't really have connections there. We are with north herts council for local matters which is fine but this doesn't connect with Stevenage. I think the villages get forgotten when it comes to funding, courses, playschemes etc.
34	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Knebworth ;	It's ok
42	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Knebworth ;	We don't require any changes. We should change the boundaries to include recent housing developments on our borders. Parish Council arrangements are ideal
57	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Knebworth ;	Extend the size of the boroughs to widen the community & ensure a more global approach. There is too much division & sectarianism. People are not considering their impact on their neighbours. Councillors & Parish representatives must be rotated regularly to truly reflect our region
78	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Knebworth ;	Seem ok
107	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Knebworth ;	My neighbour about 400m away is not in the Parish, yet a friend about 4 miles away is and I go past this neighbour to get to my friend. The shape of the Parish is odd, so outlying members of the parish are not considered as much. The good news is that the Parish News can be subscribed via email, saving paper, costing less. This is not well publicised and I only discovered this by accident. Surveys and electronic documents should be written in UK English not US.
127	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Knebworth ;	The current arrangements appear to work. Residents are represented by the Parish Council who take into account the views of those who live in the village. By having this council we retain the 'village feel' and the community spirit
132	I'm responding in my capacity as a District Councillor;I'm responding in my capacity as a Parish/Town Councillor ;I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Knebworth ;	Concept of the parish council - I think it works well to represent local people's views (say versus unparished). It doesn't have much hard power but can get things done, examples I've personally been involved in or lead include the Neighbourhood Plan and the purchase of The Station public house. Keeping its focus on Knebworth (including Old Knebworth) makes logical sense as a distinct community. Ward boundaries - Knebworth parish is a very odd shape due to historical changes, it has parts that wrap around to the west side of Codicote down Three Houses Lane and beyond. It seems an anomaly. There are also parts of Codicote that may be better served within the parish there. There may be an opportunity to align to the District Ward boundaries, that could be looked at.

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
			Councillors number and elections - from my observations this works OK, the council normally just about gets enough willing volunteers but is often short of one or two max. It has a non-party-political nature currently which seems to work well but of course isn't in scope I guess of the review as that could change over time.
P1	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Knebworth ;	<p>[Transcribed from paper submission]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have a comprehensive local plan which appears to be neglected by NHDC & HCC. 2. Our two district councillors are also parish councillors. 3. It is important to retain our parish councillors as the HCC councillors have not provided any local input for many, many years. 4. If we lose our parish council, with its excellent local knowledge and input, residents will lose out. 5. Parish issues must be handled in Knebworth. NHDC must not go the way of HCC councillors. 6. There is no local highway maintenance by HCC. 7. NHDC no longer provides pavement/street cleaning. 8. A surface water drain has been blocked for over thirty years. 9. HCC has wasted considerable sums of public money, achieving nothing. Local knowledge, rather than move responsibilities 'up the line', move responsibilities to parish councils, with appropriate funding. 10. Knebworth is to undergo a massive expansion programme. 11. In view of comment 10, should our councillors, parish and NHDC, be increased. New councillors to represent Knebworth East, Knebworth West/North and Central. 12. We have a very successful parish council, which in recent years has made very successful village improvements. 13. I may be wrong, but neither HCC nor NHDC have made improvements to the village – since the Local Government Act review of 1974. 14. I cannot see how the elimination of parish councillors will work for Knebworth. 15. At the next stage, NHDC should show the planned improvements to the rural areas. 16. Leave parish councillors in place. <p>Online response in unacceptable, as my PC has been out of service for over a week. Knebworth library did not have details as promised. How many online responses have been received.</p>
8	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	Letchworth has previously had a Parish Council. It added costs to residents whilst delivering nothing of value in return. We already have too many District Councillors. Democracy does not require more people who think they know what you want better than you do.
9	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	Everything good. Imposition of town or parish council to be strongly resisted. We had it once. It was dreadful. Luckily we were able to vote to get rid of it.
11	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	Parishes should be represented by local residents. There does not appear to be an opportunity to join a Parish Council.
13	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	We already have enough levels of local government in Letchworth. Adding another level to NHDC and The Heritage Foundation would slow decision making and possibly add to conflict due to vested interests.
14	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	I have lived here for over 12 years and have not yet seen or heard anything from or about any parish council meetings/elections/initiatives. In fact I did not think there was a parish council in or around Letchworth, only NHDC and The Heritage Foundation. Both of these have held elections in the time I have lived here.

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
			I can therefore only conclude that any Parish Council that does exist is woefully ineffective.
23	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	No change required.
33	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	We rejected a parish council previously and see no reason to introduce another level of government that cost us a considerable sum to cancel. I can see no useful purpose in setting up an organisation that spends public money.
39	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	The current Parish and Town boundaries are in the right plaes.
69	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	Keep it as is we previously abolished a parish council due to its waste of public funds.
80	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	No changes required
89	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	Locally in Letchworth we have the anomaly of the Letchworth Heritage Foundation which has i suggest has outlived its usefulness. In Letchworth we have to go through two Planning organisations in order to build extensions etc . If we want to remove a hedge an deceased tree the permission must be sought from Letchworth Heritage Foundation. Would it not be worth winding the Foundation up and transferring assets to the local council and then any subsequent profits be used to reduce council tax bills.
103	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Letchworth ;	n
107	I'm responding in my capacity as a Parish/Town Councillor ; Offley Parish Council parish Councillor	Offley ;	<p>The current arrangements include Cockernhoe in the Offley Parish Council, in reality Cockernhoe is not very close and maybe better matched with say Breachwood Green. The Village of Lilley sits as a separate Parish and maybe better matched with Offley as some issues, I e bus services, effect both areas and they geographically much closer.</p> <p>I would like to see more devolution to Parish Councils, I e a much greater say in Highway issues issues as these effect parishes more and more. These would include speed, condition of the carriageways, heavy vehicle bans, etc. At present the parishes seem to have little say with Highways on issues which affect them.</p>
55	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Offley ;	I think a parish council is highly valuable to us the residents it is a valid point of contact with someone who is very aware of the community they live in and therefore is qualified to represent us in any proposals that may effect the local environment and people that live there.
130	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Offley ;	Not so much borders definitely post codes
7	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Pirton ;	I'm not closely involved enough to make an informed opinion, but things seem to be working o.k as they are.
30	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Pirton ;	I know someone who wasn't asked for ID when voting (even though they took it with them)

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
59	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Pirton ;	Boundaries are correct. I would like to see some provision for the voice of young people to be heard on the Parish Council.
62	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Pirton ;	Would like to see PPR introduced
74	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Pirton ;	The current arrangements, whereby the Parish Council meet in the Village Hall, are not all inclusive hence I believe, the very low attendance at their meetings of local residents. I would suggest that access to meetings via "zoom" or like would encourage more active participation by local residents. The use of social media such as facebook has highlighted the lack of communication by the current council when "hot topics" are commented on by residents who are able to use the platform to express their thoughts.
90	I'm responding on behalf of a Parish or Town council*; Pirton Parish Council	Pirton ;	The parish boundaries do reflect the local community. We have right number of seats on the parish council, but are always short of councillors to fill these seats. There have been no changes locally that mean parish arrangements should change. We would prefer election dates for the parish council and the district council to be on the same date in future.
129	I'm responding in my capacity as a Parish/Town Councillor ;I'm responding on behalf of a Parish or Town council*; Preston Parish Council	Preston ;	Preston Parish Council is happy with the current parish electoral arrangements. These arrangements reflect the interests of the local community and are convenient for local people. The Parish boundaries are in the correct place.
103	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Reed ;	I think the parish council for Reed works well as it is, I think the boundaries are in the right place.
75	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Reed ;	The current parish system has been in place for many years and is perfect for a small community
76	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Reed ;	The system in place is and has been perfectly adequate for a small parish
106	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Reed ;	I think they are about right. Reed is distinct from other local parishes, having its own clear identity and different interests from, say, Barkway, Chipping and Buckland. It is a small village with a parish council of just 5 members but it appears effective within its sphere of interest and its mandate.
125	I'm responding in my capacity as a Parish/Town Councillor ;I'm responding on behalf of a Parish or Town council*; Reed Parish Council parish Councillor	Reed ;	Reed Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important review. In response to the questions on which we have been invited to offer a view, we have the following observations in relation to the parish of Reed. Do the current arrangements reflect the identities and interests of the local community? If not, what changes could be made to improve that? The current arrangements are, in our view, about right. There has been no call, so far as we are aware, for Reed to merge with any other local parishes, and we would not favour any such merger. Our interests, reflecting those of a small village with fewer than 350 residents, are significantly disparate from those of much larger nearby villages to necessitate the continuance of separate representation. Reed Parish Council currently has 5 members. We have considered whether there is a case for

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
Page 104			<p>expanding the Council to 6 members and have concluded that there is not, at least at the moment. Not even our longest-serving members can remember a meeting going inquorate. Whilst our members work hard to fulfil their duties, these are generally manageable within the current resources. This might change if the Council were obliged to take on significant new projects or responsibilities.</p> <p>Are the current arrangements effective and convenient for local people? If not, what changes could be made to improve them?</p> <p>Reed Parish Council works well within the community it serves. Councillors are accessible and responsive. The small size of the parish also means that most councillors are known personally to residents. A community WhatsApp group, as alongside our website, is well-used and lively, and provides a useful forum within which matters of local concern can be raised and responded to efficiently.</p> <p>Are the current Parish and Town boundaries in the right place, or are some properties divided from their communities?</p> <p>Whilst it is true that some properties within Reed Parish are at a distance from the main village, it is not clear that allocating them to another parish would provide a better solution. For example, the A10 provides a natural boundary between Reed and Reed End, the latter being part of Therfield parish. Moreover, some properties are by their nature rural and isolated, for example present and former farmhouses. We therefore see no case for changing the boundary.</p>
	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Royston Town ;	I believe the current arrangements reflect the identities and interests of the local community and are effective and convenient. I believe they are in the right place.
	10 I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Royston Town ;	Not sure what the purpose of Royston Town Council is, aside managing council property bookings and running the May Fayre. Their decisions are always over ruled by NHDC. Would prefer for their tasks to be taken on by NHDC (as other towns have done) and residents to be given a council tax reduction.
	16 I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Royston Town ;	It is fine. No changes needed.
	21 I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Royston Town ;	I am happy with the current arrangements.
	35 I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Royston Town ;	Parish ward boundaries should be redrawn to mirror the district council ward boundaries. Consideration should be given to the number of Royston Town councillors which I believe is too large.
	36 I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Royston Town ;	I believe Royston is split into districts, I would have thought it would make more sense for us to be a complete section, as any decisions affect the whole town.
	82 I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Royston Town ;	I think most residents have no idea what they do. There should be a better way of communicating their role and activities.
	91 I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Royston Town ;	Current arrangements and boundaries are fine.
100	I'm responding in my capacity as a District Councillor;I'm responding in my capacity as a Parish/Town Councillor ;I'm responding in my	Royston Town ;	Town Council wards should reflect District wards as far as possible, to avoid confusion to residents and to make running elections more straightforward and efficient. In practice Town Councillors represent all Royston residents, not only those in their ward, so the Ward boundaries make little difference to community representation. The number of Councillors on Royston Town Council is sufficient and should

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
	capacity as a resident; Royston Town Council Parish Councillor		<p>be maintained at 15. These should be elected to 3 Wards to match the District Wards as follows: Royston Palace - 4 Town Councillors, Royston Heath 5 Town Councillors, Royston Meridian 6 Town Councillors. This would mean that Royston Heath would include Royston Garden Lane (1), Royston West (3) & Royston Willowside (1) and Royston Meridian would include Royston Meridian (5) & Royston South (1).</p> <p>The Electoral cycle of the Town Council should be adjusted to coincide with the District elections, such that Town Councillors elected in 2026 would be elected for a 2 year term only and be re-elected on 4 year terms from 2028.</p>
101	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Royston Town ;	I think councillors elected to Royston Town Council should live in the area they are representing
120	I'm responding on behalf of a Parish or Town council*; Royston Town Council	Royston Town ;	<p>Members of Royston Town Council were disappointed when their response to the LGBCE review was not taken into account and six parish wards were set for Royston, two of them with just one allocated councillor.</p> <p>Royston Town Council met on 23rd September 2024 and their official consultation representation is detailed below -</p> <p>There should be three wards in Royston rather than the six parish wards that were agreed after the LGBCE review -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royston Heath Ward – to include the wards for Royston West, Royston Willowside and Royston Garden Lane - allocated 5 Town Councillors. • Royston Palace Ward – to remain as is - allocated 4 Town Councillors • Royston Meridian Ward – to include the wards for Royston Meridian and Royston South - allocated 6 Town Councillors. <p>The electoral arrangements for Royston Town Council should be brought into line with North Herts Council whereby the town councillors elected in 2026 would have a shortened term of office (2 years) and their term of office would expire in 2028.</p> <p>The total number of councillors should be 15 and this should not be reduced.</p>
126	I'm responding in my capacity as a District Councillor;	Royston Town ;	<p>The proposed one member wards for Royston Town Council are not suitable. It is not equitable that ~1% of the town's population in each case should elect 1/15 of its councillors. This will also be confusing for residents and lead to fewer contested elections.</p> <p>A better solution would be to match the 3 District wards. If Meridian is considered too large, then it could be divided into North and South, along Newmarket Road (RMR-1&2 and RMR-3&4).</p> <p>You might also like to consider reducing the number of councillors from 15 to 14. This would mean the seats could be divided in exactly the same proportion as district wards (i.e. 4, 6, 4 vs 2, 3, 2).</p>
12	I'm responding in my capacity as a Parish/Town Councillor ; Rushden and Wallington Parish Council	Rushden and Wallington ;	<p>Our Parish is made up of three villages, Wallington, Rushden and Redhill.</p> <p>However, Redhill, for some reason is split into 2 and one half is in the Rushden and Wallington Parish and the other half is in the Parish of Sandon. It would make much more sense to include the whole of Redhill into the parish of Rushden and Wallington as it would include all the residents in the same Parish and make them feel much less divided.</p>

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
72	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Rushden and Wallington ;	A small parish that is able to truly reflect the views of its residents. Both villages share similar issues and concerns so a joint parish council is ideal
115	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Rushden and Wallington ;	The current arrangements are efficient and convenient.. The current Parish boundaries does not include our part of Redhill. I would like this to be corrected as we are in the Parish of Wallington and wish to keep this boundary in place.
116	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Rushden and Wallington ;	I live in Redhill and am on the Wallington side of the parish. The line runs down the middle of the road. I do not wish the boundaries to change. I like the history of us being in 3 parishes. I have not felt there is a problem when it comes to planning or anything else.
67	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	St. Ippolyts ;	I think parish councils are living in a previous age of lordships and serfs and are not representative of the modern age. They add an unnecessary step in the planning process and could easily be abolished.
102	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	St. Ippolyts ;	The village green at Gosmore would be much appreciated and needed if the parish would allow us to have a local market for the village, on the village green. Perhaps once per month or more. To sell local produce foods, fruit, vegetables, drinks, home made items. Their refusal was due to parking issues but there are many events in the village and cope admirably with parking, it would be of be of great help especially to the elderly and mothers at home and young families.
109	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	St. Ippolyts ;	While I believe the council currently acts mostly in the interests of the parish, I see important subjects that affect the local community sideline in favour of more status quo and basic admin. Digital connectivity is seemingly ignored, the local school suffers as a result, and provision for child recreation areas is woefully lacking in certain parts of the parish. Improvements to parish effectiveness is paramount to ensure the forward-looking interests of the community are addressed.
118	I'm responding on behalf of a Parish or Town council*; St Ippolyts Parish Council	St. Ippolyts ;	Resolved. No change to our civil boundary that includes north and south wards also land west of Stevenage.
96	I'm responding on behalf of a Parish or Town council*; Weston Parish Council	Weston ;	<p>The survey was discussed at the Parish Council meeting on the 8th August 2024. Our official response is as follows:</p> <p>We are happy with the current arrangements but anticipate that changes will be required in the future. More specifically, the site identified as GA2 in the Local Plan 2011-2031 would more than double the number of residential properties in the parish. Since the residents of that site will identify as being part of Great Ashby rather than Weston, it would be sensible to move the parish boundary to reflect that.</p> <p>In the event that development takes place on the GA2 site we would therefore request that the parish boundary be moved such that the area defined as GA2 in the Local Plan 2011-2031 is moved from the Parish of Weston into that of Great Ashby.</p>
43	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Wymondley ;	Wymondley Parish Council covers a diverse area consisting of Great Wymondley, Little Wymondley, Redcoats Green, Titmore Green and Todds Green. A disproportionately high amount of the annual budget is allocated to the largest village Little Wymondley. I do not suggest any boundary changes but perhaps the budget could be redefined to show the spending split by the five villages/hamlets so that residents can see that they are getting a fair return on the council tax they are paying.

ID	In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?	Which parish or area are you responding about?	What would you like to tell North Herts Council about the current parish electoral arrangements in this area?
60	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Wymondley ;	<p>Reverse the Beeching Cuts of 1963 and restore Wymondley station.</p> <p>Or at the least, open a convenience store in Little Wymondley for the local residents.</p> <p>The recent road works are going well so thank you.</p> <p>And yes, the current Wymondley boundary is in the correct place.</p>
95	I'm responding in my capacity as a resident;	Wymondley ;	I believe Todd's Green should be taken out of Stevenage and put into Wymondley. Any major changes would affect us more than Stevenage and we should be able to have a say about it.

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HAVE YOUR SAY

on a new Town Council for Hitchin

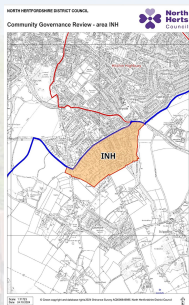
We want to know what you think about two changes proposed in your area: a Town Council for Hitchin and a change to a parish ward for St Ippolyt's.

RECOMMENDATION 1: To establish a Town Council for Hitchin with 5 wards (to align with the district wards) with 13 Town Councillors:

- **Hitchin Priory:** (includes St Ippolyt's North): represented by 3 Town Councillors
- **Hitchin Oughton:** represented by 2 Town Councillors
- **Hitchin Bearton:** represented by 3 Town Councillors
- **Hitchin Walsworth:** represented by 3 Town Councillors
- **Hitchin Highbury:** represented by 2 Town Councillors

Please note that the establishment of a Town Council will affect your council tax. To give you an example, in North Hertfordshire those homes with a parish/town council in Band D pay between £22 - £121 additionally per year per household as part of their Council Tax.

RECOMMENDATION 2: To move St Ippolyt's North parish ward from St Ippolyt's Parish Council to become part of Hitchin Town Council (Hitchin Priory ward).



A larger map can be viewed at www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-governance-review.

Please note that no decisions have been made on either recommendation.

Your feedback will be considered at a future council meeting so it is therefore important that you respond to this consultation.

North Herts Council is undertaking a review of parish electoral arrangements, known as a Community Governance Review (or CGR). You can find all the details at www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-governance-review.

As part of the review, we're inviting you to have your say on the draft recommendations that have been developed from the responses to the first consultation (which closed in October 2024) on the current parish electoral arrangements.

The draft recommendations may affect you.

To have your say

Visit www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-governance-review.
Scan the QR code



Don't have access to a computer?

Visit our Customer Service Centre based in our head office on Gernon Road, Letchworth which is open 9am to 5pm. If you need help completing the survey, please call 01462 474000 or email CommunityGovReview@north-herts.gov.uk

The deadline for responses is 28 March 2025.

Whether you agree or disagree with the draft recommendations, please tell us your views and any alternative proposal you may have.

COUNCIL
23 JANUARY 2025

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Allowances - Non-Executive function.
(Democratic Services: Community and Partnerships)

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES/ACCESSIBLE SERVICES/RESPONSIBLE
GROWTH/SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To agree the Member's Allowances Scheme 2025/2026 having taken into account the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel ('IRP'). This IRP recommended scheme includes a recommendation to the application of an index for up to four years. If 2.2 is approved, this index will be applied in subsequent years 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29, with an IRP review to be undertaken in 2028/29 for 2029/30.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council:

- 2.1. Considers the report and recommendations of the IRP, as attached as Appendix A of the submitted report.
- 2.2. Agrees the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2025/2026 as set out in Appendix B, amended as per tracked changes, of the submitted report, with specified indexation to be applied for up to the next four years, through to 31 March 2029.
- [N.B. Subject to 2.2, the next Review will be post the District Council elections in May 2028.]*
- 2.3. Express appreciation to the IRP for their work over the last year on this report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure that the Council meets its statutory requirements of an annual review and adoption of the scheme.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. None, as the Council is required to undertake an annual review prior to the beginning of the financial year and approve a Scheme of basic and other prescribed allowances for Members. In making or amending a Scheme the Council shall have regard to the recommendations made by the Panel. The Council can amend the Scheme as per the IRP recommendations either partly or wholly or to retain the current Scheme.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Panel invited the three Group Leaders to respond to a series of questions prior to attending a meeting on 8 and 15 November 2024 to discuss their views of the Scheme.
- 5.2. The Panel interviewed the Monitoring Officer and Independent Person of Standards on 22 October 2024 regarding the role of the Independent (and Reserve Independent) Persons of the Standards Committee.
- 5.3. The Panel invited the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Council to a meeting on 8 November 2024 to understand this role and the level of engagement required.
- 5.4. The Panel invited the Chairs of Community Forums to a meeting on 18 October 2024 to understand the role and the level of responsibility and engagement required.
- 5.5. A survey was circulated to all Members on 2 October 2024 and closed on 17 October 2024 which sought to understand Members' opinions of the Scheme. There were 30 responses received from Members to this survey, including Members from all political groupings.

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 is required under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended) to agree on an annual basis a Scheme of Allowances payable to Members' for the following financial year. Under the Regulations, when making or amending a Scheme, the Council 'shall have regard to the recommendations' of an IRP (Regulation 19). The Regulations state that before the beginning of each year the authority shall make a Scheme for the allowances for that year. The Members Allowance Scheme is comprehensive and includes Basic Allowances ('BA'), Special Responsibility Allowances ('SRA') (for posts which carry specific responsibilities) and other allowances and expenses that may be claimed.
- 7.2. A Scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to an indexation which can be used for up to four years before another review of allowances is required.
- 7.3. The Scheme was last approved by Council in January 2024. The current IRP was appointed as notified by delegated decision on 15 December 2022, for a 4-year term. The following people form the IRP:

Ms Margaret Waller
Ms Julie Byrom
Mr Tom Etheridge

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

IRP considerations:

- 8.1 A key role of the IRP is to recommend a Scheme which recognises Members' responsibilities and workloads, whilst being mindful of financial restraints, inflation and the cost of living.

- 8.2 The IRP had previously recommended a 6.6% increase to the Basic Allowance in their 2024/25 review and suggested that future increases should be linked to the Council Staff Pay Award for the previous year.
- 8.3 For 2022, 2023 and 2024, the Council Staff Pay Award has been a flat amount for most grades (£1,925 in 2022 and 2023, and £1,290 in 2024), rather than a percentage increase as had been the case prior to 2022.
- 8.4 The Panel considered how the average increase percentage should therefore be calculated and agreed on the average increase over all posts, which for 2024 would be 4.1%. It is therefore recommended that the Basic Allowance be increased by this percentage for 2025/26 resulting in a Basic Allowance of £5,999.
- 8.5 The Panel considered and agreed that this calculation should be used for future increases to the Basic Allowances for the next three years (2026, 2027 and 2028) and should be indexed to the previous year's National Joint Council's Pay Award, pay grade 6.6.
- 8.6 The Panel reviewed the SRA payments in greater detail than in their last review. This included the roles of Chair and Vice Chair of the Council and Chairs of Community Forums.
- 8.7 The IRP noted the Council's preference to pay multiple SRAs and reviewed Members who were paid more than one SRA. They noted that the five Members paid multiple SRAs had specialist responsibilities, as well as being Chair of their relevant Community Forum, and this was usual for Councils with established Community Forums.
- 8.8 The Panel raised no concerns with the number of Members who were paid an SRA, which stood at 17 Members representing less than 50% of Members.
- 8.9 Effective from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, an SRA in the amounts indicated below, shall be paid to those Councillors who hold the following special responsibilities:

Role	Amount (£) (rounded to nearest pound)
Leader of the Council <i>Indexed SRA</i>	17,997
Deputy Leader of the Council <i>Indexed SRA</i>	2,523
Cabinet Executive Members (x7) <i>Indexed SRA</i>	8,999
Chair – Community Forums (x 5) <i>Non-Indexed SRA</i>	1,081
Chair - Finance, Audit and Risk Committee <i>Indexed SRA</i>	4,319
Chair - Overview and Scrutiny Committee <i>Indexed SRA</i>	4,319
Chair - Planning Control Committee <i>Indexed SRA</i>	8,999
Chair - Licensing and Appeals Committee <i>Non-Indexed SRA</i>	1,715
Leader of each Opposition Group <i>Indexed SRA</i>	4,319* (*Subject to a minimum of 3 members)

8.10 As per paragraph 6.5 of the IRP report (attached as Appendix A), the IRP have recommended that National Joint Council's Pay Award for pay grade 6.6 be applied as an indexation to SRAs, apart from situations where the IRP recommends that they be held at the current rate until the next full review of allowances. This would apply to the following roles: Chair of Licensing & Regulation Committee, Chair and Vice Chair of Council and Chairs of Community Forums.

8.11 The Panel reflected on the new role of the Community Forums (previously Area Forums), following the constitutional change from Area Committees in 2023, where decision making responsibility was removed. They acknowledged that these Forums provided an accessible way for local issues to be addressed and brought to the attention of the Council. However, they did not feel the role justified an increase in allowance and should remain at the current rate, without any indexation, until the next full review.

8.12 **Childcare and Dependent Carers' Allowance**

This was previously increased in line with the London Weighted Real Living Wage to reflect the actual cost of childcare, to encourage diversity in the composition of the Council and to be more reflective of the actual costs for using a suitably qualified and competent carer.

It is recommended that this is linked to the London Weighted Real Living Wage 2024/2025 to £13.85 per hour and should be indexed to this for future years, until the next report of the IRP.

All other aspects in relation to this part of the Scheme remain unchanged.

8.13 **Chair and Vice Chair of the Council Allowances**

The Panel reviewed these roles and considered that the current allowance was the correct level of remuneration for the role and its associated responsibilities.

8.14 **Chair of Licensing and Regulation Committee**

The Panel considered that the allowance for this role appeared low when compared to neighbouring authorities. However, as there was only one scheduled meeting of this Committee per Civic Year, it was felt the allowance should be held at its current rate without indexation until the next full review.

8.15 **Independent Person (IP) and Reserve Independent Person**

The allowance of the Independent Person (IP) and the Reserve Independent Persons of the Standards Committee was not within the remit of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. The IRP agreed to consider and incorporate these roles into the 2024/2025 Members' Allowances Scheme.

This was reviewed and not increased in the last review for 2024/25. In respect of this review, initially it was felt that the payment was comparatively high for the role, but the IRP met with the Monitoring Officer to understand the role played by the IP and Reserve Independent Persons. Following this it was agreed that due to the large number of complaints received and the value these roles offered the Monitoring Officer, the allowances for these roles should remain at current levels, without indexation, until the next full review.

8.16 Independent Non-Voting Member on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) set the standards that local authorities should follow in relation to finance, accountancy, and related matters. CIPFA have issued guidance that it is best practice to have an independent (non-political) person on the audit committee. Council at its meeting on 11 November 2021 approved the appointment of this role as of the 2022/2023 civic year.

This had been reviewed in 2024/25 and not increased. In respect of this review, the Panel agreed to review the allowance for this role again and recommends that the allowance for this role should remain at its current level, without indexation, until the next full review.

8.17 Travel and Subsistence Allowances

The IRP agreed that these should continue for this year to be linked to and thereafter to be indexed directly to the payment of staff claims (at the rate set and from time to time amended by the HMRC).

The IRP recommends that the ability to claim for taxi fares should be included in the scheme, only where no public or private transport is available and upon the production of a receipt (gratuities/tips should not be claimed).

The Panel also noted that currently there are few expense claims made by Councillors, £2043.10 by 7 Councillors in 2023/24.

8.18 Frequency of Reviews and future considerations

The IRP considered that the changes proposed in their report for 2025/26 would place remuneration on a sustainable footing until the next all-out elections in May 2028. Therefore, they would not conduct a further full review ahead of this date, unless meaningful changes were made to the structure of responsibilities and would consider targeted recommendations for those changes.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003/1021 (as amended) make provisions regarding the setting of Members Allowances.
- 9.2. Regulation 10(1)-(2) provides that before the beginning of each year, an authority shall make the Scheme required for payment of basic and other allowances. As per Regulation 10(4)-(5) and Regulation 21(1)(e), the IRP may recommend a scheme that makes provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to an index, as may be specified by the authority. Where this is approved and the only subsequent change made to a scheme in any year thereafter is effected by such annual adjustment in accordance with such index, the scheme shall be deemed not to have been amended. *This means that if in future years, if approved, the index is applied, and no further IRP review is required during those years, albeit that in approving this index, the Council cannot rely on that for longer than four years before seeking a further recommendation from the IRP. Also note that if other, non-indexation changes to the scheme/ revocation of the scheme are then proposed, before such changes are approved, the IRP should consider and make recommendations on the proposals, to be taken into account by the authority before approving any new scheme*

- 9.3. Regulation 19 requires that before an authority makes or amends a scheme it must have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by the IRP.
- 9.4. The function of making any Scheme authorised or required by regulations under section 18 (Schemes for basic, attendance and special responsibility allowances for local authority members) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, or of amending, revoking or replacing any such Scheme, is a Full Council responsibility, by virtue of The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000/2853. This is therefore detailed as a function and reserved to Full Council under section 4.4.1(i) of the Council's Constitution '*considering recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel and adopting an allowances scheme or assessing, revoking or replacing the whole or part of any such scheme*'.
- 9.5. The adopted Scheme must be published in at least one or more newspapers circulating in the district area under Regulation 16.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Should the proposed Members' Allowances Scheme be approved, based on the 6.6% increase to the BA and increases to the SRA, as applicable, the additional budget required to fund the scheme would be £36,962 as detailed below. If these proposals are adopted, then the impact would be incorporated into the 2025/26 budget estimates. The budget does make a general provision for inflation, although this increase would be above that general provision:

	Current Allowances 2024/25			Proposed Allowances 2025/26			
	No of roles	Annual Allowance	Total Allowance	No of roles	Annual Allowance	Total Allowances	Increase
Members Allowance		£	£		£	£	£
Basic Allowance	51	5,763	293,913	51	5,999	305,949	12,036
Special Responsibility Allowances							
Leader	1	16,003	16,003	1	17,997	17,997	1,994
Deputy Leader	1	2,858	2,858	1	2,523	2,523	-335
Cabinet Exec Members	7	6,858	48,006	7	8,999	62,993	14,987
Chair - Area / Community Forums	5	1,081	5,405	5	1,081	5,405	0
Chair - Finance, Audit & Risk Committee	1	4,000	4,000	1	4,319	4,319	319
Chair - Overview & Scrutiny Committee	1	4,000	4,000	1	4,319	4,319	319
Chair - Planning & Control Committee	1	6,858	6,858	1	8,999	8,999	2,141
Chair - Licensing & Appeals Committee	1	1,715	1,715	1	1,715	1,715	0
Leader of the opposition groups*	2	2,858	5,716	2	4,319	8,638	2,922
Total			388,474			422,587	34,113
Chair of Council	1	5,830	5,830	1	5,830	5,830	0
Vice Chair of Council	1	1,124	1,124	1	1,124	1,124	0
Total			6,954			6,954	0
Independents							
Independent Person	1	2,697	2,697	1	2,697	2,697	0

Reserve Independent Person	2	648	1,296	2	648	1,296	0
Finance Audit and Risk Committee – Non-Voting Member	1	1,060	1,060	1	1,060	1,060	0
Total			5,053			5,053	0
TOTAL			400,481			434,594	
Budget			397,600			397,600	
Additional Budget Required			Small in-year overspend			36,994	

*Assumes two opposition group but could be more in the future (subject to a minimum of 3 Members in each group). Budget would be adjusted accordingly.

Excludes provision for Childcare and Dependent Carers' Allowances for which there is a separate budget of £500.

10.2 The financial implication to the budget regarding the Childcare and Dependent Carers' Allowance is difficult to calculate as there are variables that will affect this i.e. the number of new Members elected in May who will need to make use of the allowance, number of meetings scheduled and personal circumstances as to whether it is required.

10.3 There is a requirement to advertise the Scheme in one or more local papers. The cost to advertise the Scheme following the last review in both the Royston Crow and The Comet was £700.56.

10.4 The amounts in the Members' Allowances Scheme are currently cumulative – it is possible for Members to be entitled to more than one SRA in addition to the BA.

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. None contained within this report.

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. The inclusion of the dependent carers and childcare allowance continues to aid Councillors' to fulfil their responsibilities and provide recompense to them as noted at 8.9, which is important to avoid disadvantaging those with commitments.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1. As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 Members allowances are paid by the payroll provider Liberata via the iTrent system and any changes need to be notified to the provider to ensure the correct rates are paid. Members are required to submit expenses via the self-service online portal. The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Team provide advice where needed and the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager reviews and approves the Councillors' allowance claims.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1. Appendix A – Report (including appendices) and Recommendations by the IRP on the Members' Allowances Scheme.
- 16.2. Appendix B – Proposed Members' Allowances Scheme with tracked changes (2024/2025 with proposed Scheme highlighted)

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 James Lovegrove, Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager
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- 17.5 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy & Communities Manager
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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [The Local Authorities \(Members' Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2003](#)
- 18.2 [Councillors' Allowance Council webpage](#)
- 18.3 [Delegated Decision – Appointment of IRP – 15 December 2022](#)
- 18.4 [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 25th January, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council](#)

A Review of Members' Allowances for North Herts District Council.

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel – December 2024.

Margaret Waller

Julie Byrom

Tom Etheridge

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) was convened to undertake a full review of Members' Allowances. The review was undertaken and the Panel convened in accordance with The Local Authority' (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations (SI 1021) (2003) and the Guidance on Regulation for Local Authorities Allowances (2003).
- 1.2. The Panel met on 26th September, 15th, 27th October and 8th, 17th & 17th November. Membership of the Panel was Julie Byrom, Independent Member for numerous Councils, Tom Etheridge, HM Treasury and local resident and Margaret Waller, MCIPD.
- 1.3. The Panel was assisted and supported throughout by Melanie Stimpson, Democratic Services Manager, James Lovegrove, Committee Member and Scrutiny Manager and Faith Churchill, Democratic Services Apprentice.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1. The Regulations provide for independent remuneration panels to have the following functions:
- to make recommendations to the authority as to basic allowances that should be payable to its elected members.
 - to make recommendations to the authority about the responsibilities or duties which should lead to the payment of a special responsibility allowance and as to the amount of such an allowance.
 - to make recommendations to the authority about the duties for which a travelling and subsistence allowance can be paid and the amount of this allowance.
 - to make recommendations as to the amount of co-optees' allowance, in this case the Independent Persons (Standards), Reserve Independent Person and Independent Person Audit and Risk.
 - to make recommendations as to whether the authority's allowance scheme should include an allowance in respect of the expenses of arranging for the care of children and dependants and if it does make such a recommendation, the amount of this allowance and the means by which it was determined.
 - to make recommendations on whether any allowance should be backdated to the beginning of a financial year in the event of the scheme being amended.
 - to make recommendations as to whether annual adjustments of allowance levels may be made by reference to an index, and, if so, for how long such a measure should run.

3. Deliberations of the Panel

- 3.1. The Panel referred to its previous report of 2023 which informed its work for this year. The Panel looked at all posts receiving Special Responsibility Allowances in greater detail than last year. In particular we reviewed the posts of Chair, Vice Chair, Chair of Community Forums, as well as Independent Person of the Standards Committee, and Independent Member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee which were not recommended for increase last year.
- 3.2. The Panel gained the views of stakeholders by survey and interview. A questionnaire was sent to all 51 Councillors. 30 Councillors responded. A response rate of 58%. The survey results are attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.3. The Panel also sent separate questionnaires to Group Leaders and interviewed them. The interviews were very informative and the Panel thank all parties for their participation and views. Interviews also took place with the Chair and Vice Chair of Council, Chairs of the Community Forums and the Monitoring Officer, as well as one of the Independent Person.
- 3.4. A key role of the Panel is to recommend a scheme of allowances which recognises both Members' responsibilities and workloads. The Panel was mindful of financial restraints, inflation and the cost of living when making recommendations.
- 3.5. The Panel were also made aware of difficulty in filling certain posts in receipt of an SRA due to heavy workload and the possible impact on an individual's employment.
- 3.6. It should be noted that of the 30 respondents to the survey for Councillors (referred to in para 3.2) 29 had other income, although it is not known whether this was by private means or by employment. 23 out of 30 respondents reported that they would be unable to be a Councillor without another income.

4. Basic Allowance

- 4.1. The current Basic Allowance is £5763. It was increased by 6.6% as a result of the last IRP report in 2023/24. It was recommended that the Basic Allowance be increased annually in line with council staff pay awards thereafter. The next increase in allowance will therefore be payable from 1 April 2025 and will be the 2024 National Joint Council's Pay Award.
- 4.2. The 2024 National Joint Council's Pay Award was a flat amount of £1290, equivalent to a 5.77% increase for the lowest paid workers.
- 4.3. There are various ways of interpreting this increase for Councillors Basic Allowance:
- 4.3.1. Taking the total cost of the pay award and dividing it by the salary bill giving a percentage of 3.7%

4.3.2. Working out the increase for every post in percentage terms. An average of this is 4.1%.

4.4. The Panel decided that a 4.1% increase was more appropriate given that even with this increase North Herts is still just below average in terms of the Basic Allowance paid to Councils. The recommended basic allowance would therefore be £5999. (see Recommendation One)

5. Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

5.1. The Panel is aware of the 'Guidance for Local Authorities 2003' which states:

Para 68 – A special responsibility allowance may be paid to those members of the Council who have significant responsibilities over and above the generally expected duties of a Councillor. These responsibilities must be related to the discharge of the Authority's function.

para 71 – The Regulations do not limit the number of special responsibility allowances which may be paid, nor do the regulations prohibit the payment of more than one special responsibility allowance to any one member.

para 72 – However, these are important considerations for Local; Authorities. If the majority of members of a council receive a special responsibility allowance the local electorate may rightly question whether this was justified. Local authorities will wish to consider very carefully the additional roles of members and the significance of these roles, both in terms of responsibility and real time commitment before deciding which will warrant the payment of a special responsibility allowance.

5.2. It is noted that five North Herts Councillors receive more than one SRA. All five have a specialist responsibility and are members of a Community Forum as Chair. This seems usual in Councils which have established Community Forums for a part of its structure. Seventeen Councillors receive an SRA. This is, at 33%, less than 50% of Councillors and the Panel expressed no concern regarding this number. The Leader receives more than one SRA as he is currently an interim for a vacant Executive post.

6. IRP approach to Special Responsibility Allowances

6.1. The Panel were anxious to benchmark posts receiving SRAs wherever possible. We used four methods:

- looking at local comparators (see Appendix 3)
- using national data to try and 'pin' where various posts should sit (see Appendix 4)
- Councillors were asked their views on the most important and least important roles to receive SRAs (See appendix 1)

- Looking at the number of scheduled meetings for each post receiving an SRA (see Appendix 2)

6.2. This approach has certain advantages and disadvantages. Looking at both local and national data we cannot be sure that we are comparing like for like but these figures do at least provide an indication of what looks 'high' and what looks 'low'.

6.3. This was supplemented by a 'sense check' based on what the Councillors' survey and interviews with Group Leaders told us.

6.4. On the whole, many posts were seen as 'low' rather than 'high' and hence our recommendations below and given in summary in paragraph 10.

6.5. After this year it is recommended that the National Joint Council's recommended pay award for Pay Grade 6.6 (as a percentage if a flat amount) be applied as an indexation to SRAs apart from situations where the IRP recommends that they be held at the current rate until the next full review of allowances (as outlined at 8.2).

6.6. The current SRAs and those paid by other local Councils are at Appendix 3.

6.7. Comments on individual posts are as follows:

Leader of the Council

6.8. In other councils, the Leader is frequently paid three times the Basic Allowance. Evidence for this is provided by Dr Declan Hall who has advised on Councillor's allowances for the last 20 years (see, in particular, his paper for the Councillor's Commission '*Member's Remuneration. Models, Issues, Incentives and Barriers.*')

6.9. Under the current remuneration rates, the Leader is paid 2.8 times Basic Allowance. It is recommended therefore that a rate of three times Basic Allowance be implemented.

Deputy Leader

6.10. Under the previous joint administration, this post was held by a Councillor from the second largest party. In a single-party administration, this needs re-examination. The allowance is £2858 plus £6858 for an Executive role, giving an amount equivalent to just under 64% of the Leader, within national parameters.

6.11. In the paragraph below, the Panel recommends that members are paid 50% of the Leader's allowance. If this increase is added to the Deputy Leader's Allowance, this would give 66% of the Leader's payment, slightly above national guidelines. It is therefore recommended that the total payment be 65% of the Leader's in total. i.e. a small reduction in the Deputy rate.

Executive

- 6.12. The Executive plays an important part in ensuring the objectives of the administration are met. The Panel heard that the level of remuneration was a factor in attracting Councillors to take up these roles. The Panel considered that 50% of the Leader's allowance is appropriate. As the Panel has recommended an increase to the Leader's remuneration, this also means a recommended increase to the remuneration of the Executive.

Chair of Planning Control Committee

- 6.13. Representations were made that this post was one of the most demanding posts in the Council. This is evidenced by the high number of scheduled meetings in the year – 22. Even if all of these do not take place the workload to implement the local plan is extensive. Considering this, the Panel felt that this post should be seen as equivalent to an Executive post and should be paid 50% of the Leader's allowance. As with the Executive members, this means the Panel has recommended an increase in remuneration for the Chair of Planning.

Chairs of Finance, Audit & Risk Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- 6.14. Again, these posts were seen as important for the proper functioning of the administration. It was considered that due to the ability O&S Committee to call in Council's decisions and the importance of the governance function these posts should remain at 24% of the Leader's allowance.

Chair of Licencing & Regulation Committee

- 6.15. This SRA appeared low when compared with neighbouring councils and national figures. The Panel understands that the Chair is only required for one meeting per year. Bearing that in mind it is considered that the current SRA is correct and should be held at the current rate until the next review full of allowances.

Leader – Main Opposition Party/Leader Other Parties (min. 3 members)

- 6.16. The Panel considered that any administration should be able to be challenged by an effective opposition. The Leader of the Opposition posts were considered equal in value to the Chairs of FAR and O&S Committees. They were currently paid below either local or national comparators. It is recommended that they be 24% of the Leader.

Chair & Vice Chair of the Council

- 6.17. The Chair is an important civic role and in the current remuneration structure sits between the Chairs of Planning and Chairs of FAR and O&S. This is viewed by the Panel as correct, and the current allowance was considered satisfactory. The Panel recommends that the allowance should be held at the current rate until the next full review of allowances.

Chairs of Community Forums

- 6.18. The Panel recognised that these forums posts provided an accessible way for local issues to be addressed and brought to the attention of the Council. It was however considered by the Panel that no increase in allowance could be justified and that the allowance be held at the current rate until the next full review of allowances.

Independent Members and Persons

- 6.19. Interviews took place with the Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person of Standards. The service provided is an excellent one and Reserve Independent Persons are also being recruited to assist where there are conflicts of interest. As the payment made to the Independent Person of Standards is already high, it is recommended it be held at the current rate until the next full review of allowances.
- 6.20. The Independent Member for Finance Audit and Risk is currently paid £1060 and this is in line with other similar posts therefore no change is recommended.

7. Transparent performance expectations

- 7.1. The Panel identified a year ago that there is considerable variation between different Councillors' approaches to positions of responsibility in the Council.
- 7.2. A year ago, the Council accepted a recommendation that it should set clear and publicly transparent performance expectations for the holders of SRAs. As we noted in our last report, this variation makes recommending changes to SRAs difficult.
- 7.3. The IRP have tried to provide an objective view of the value of posts independent of the postholder and in line with the statutory guidance.

8. Index Linking

8.1. It is recommended that from 1 April 2026, Basic Allowance and SRAs be increased in line with the National Joint Council's recommended pay award for Pay Grade 6.6 (as a percentage if flat amount), a year in arrears, except where the recommendation is to hold allowances at the current level until the next full review of allowances.

8.2. For the purposes of clarification these roles will not have indexation applied:

8.2.1. Chair of Licensing & Regulation Committee.

8.2.2. Chair and Vice Chair of Council.

8.2.3. Chairs of Community Forums.

8.2.4. Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons of the Standards Committee.

8.2.5. Independent Member of the Finance Audit and Risk Committee.

9. Dependant Carers and Child Allowance

9.1. It is recommended that no change be made to this allowance apart from to update the rate for care to the October 2024 London Weighted Real Living Wage per-hour (£13.85). This should be amended every year to match the most recent Real Living Wage figure.

10. Travel and Subsistence Allowances.

10.1. The Travel and Subsistence Allowances are in line with HMRC recommendations and are in line with Staff rates. This should continue.

10.2. Representations were made to include the possibility of Council members claiming taxi fares. It is recommended that Councillors be allowed to claim taxi fares only when no public or private transport is available. Fares may be claimed subject to the production of receipts. Gratuities/tips should not be claimed.

10.3. Few Councillors claim expenses. Indeed, only £2043.10 was claimed by seven Councillors in 2023/24.

11. Future Reviews

11.1. The Panel believes these recommendations place remuneration on a sustainable footing until after the next all-out elections scheduled for 2028. The Panel therefore recommends that there are no further IRP reports until after the 2028 elections unless there are meaningful changes to the structure of council responsibilities, which should be accompanied by recommendations on remuneration narrowly targeted at those changes.

12. Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The Basic Allowance should be increased for 2025 to £5999 in line with the average across all pay scales for the National Joint Council's 2024 pay agreement. It should also be increased by National Joint Council's pay award for Pay Grade 6.6 for the next three years i.e. 2026, 2027 and 2028. The increase of 2026 being the 2025 National Joint Council's Pay Award (Pay Grade 6.6), the increase of 2027 being the National Joint Council's Pay Award (Pay Grade 6.6) for 2026 and the increase of 2028 being the National Joint Council's Pay Award (Pay Grade 6.6) for 2027.

Recommendation 2. That the Leader of the Council be paid 3x Basic Allowance.

Recommendation 3. That the Deputy Leader's SRA be both the allowance for being Deputy Leader £2523 and the allowance for being a member of the Executive £8995.

Recommendation 4. That the Executive be paid 50% of the Leader's allowance.

Recommendation 5. That the Chair of Planning Control Committee be paid 50% of the Leader's allowance.

Recommendation 6. That the Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk and the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny be paid 24% of the Leader's allowance.

Recommendation 7. That the SRA for the Chair of Licensing be held at the current rate until the next review of allowances.

Recommendation 8. That the Leader of the Opposition Parties (with a minimum of 3 members) be paid 24% of the Leader's allowance.

Recommendation 9. That the Chair and Vice Chair of Council SRA should be held at the current rate until the next review of allowances.

Recommendation 10. That the Chairs of the Community Forums SRAs held at the current rate until the next review of allowances.

Recommendation 11. That the payments made to the Independent Person of the Standards Committee, Reserve Independent Persons of the Standards Committee and Independent Member of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee should be held at the current rate until the next review of allowances.

Recommendation 12. That SRAs be increased as outlined in Section 6 of this report from 1 April 2025 and should then be in line with the National Joint Council's Pay Award from 1 April 2026 unless the role is listed under 8.2 of this report.

Recommendation 13. That the Dependent Carers and Child Allowance is updated to the October 2024 London Weighted Real Living Wage per-hour and amended every year to match the most recent Real Living Wage figure

Recommendation 14. That the Travel and Subsistence allowance scheme be amended to allow taxi fares to be claimed when no public or private transport is available subject to the production of receipts. Gratuities/tips should not be claimed.

Recommendation 15. That the next full review of allowances takes place after the 2028 elections and IRP reports before then are limited to any meaningful changes to the structure of Council responsibilities.

13. Implementation Date

The Implementation Date for all recommendations is 1 April 2025.

14. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire for Councillors – Members Allowance

Appendix 2 – Number of Council meetings in 2024-25 Civic Year

Appendix 3 – Councillor Allowances Scheme at neighbouring authorities

Appendix 4 – SRA Payment Rationale

Questionnaire for Councillors – Members Allowance

(30 responses)

Key:

**Compulsory Question*

Question 1 – What Political Party do you represent? (24 Responses)

Labour	15
Liberal Democrats	5
Conservative	4

Question 2 - In addition to being a District Councillor, are you a Parish or County Councillor? Please tick all that apply. * (30 Responses)

No	24
Parish Councillor	2
County Councillor	5

Question 3 - Do you have any specific areas you would like the IRP to consider? (21 Responses)

- “the amount of time devoted to the role has been more than I'd anticipated particularly in terms of the high traffic of emails that we receive and the high volume of papers to read and digest for each meeting. The meetings themselves can also take 3/4 hours and we have also had a number of briefings and inductions that have been time consuming (not to criticise this - it's important to have training and inductions but it has taken up a lot of time).”
- “The IRP should consider the additional work required by single-ward members.”
- “Allowances for Vice Chairs of Committees.”

- “Rural Councillors have multiple Parish Councils to report to, and attend each month, along with village-based community groups. This demands many hours of evening commitment, etc.”
- “Committee Chairs Vice Chair of Council Deputy Leader”
- “That the hours we tend to ‘work’ would be considered unsociable hours most of the time, and that a lot of us are doing this alongside working full time/ part time jobs and having families and caring responsibilities.”

Question 4 – How long have you been a District Councillor? * (30 Responses)

0-12 months	10
13-24 months	6
25-36 months	4
37 months-onwards	10

Question 5 - On average, how many District Council meetings do you attend each month? (Including formal Council meetings, informal briefings with officers, etc.) * (30 Responses)

1-3 meetings	9
4-6 meetings	10
7-10 meetings	6
11+ meetings	5

Question 6 - How many hours do you spend in a month on duties associated with your Basic Allowance? * (i.e. Casework, reading, attending meetings, etc.) (30 Responses)

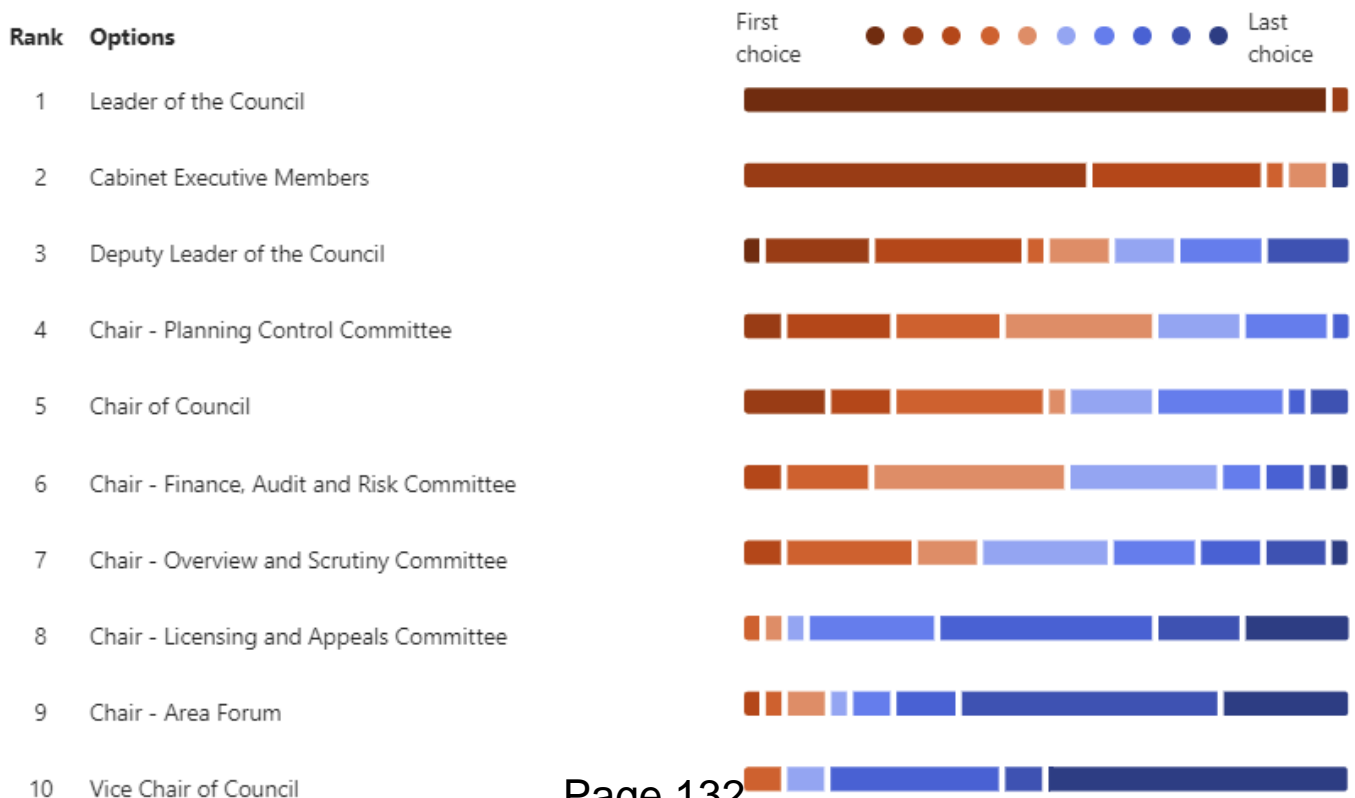
0-3 hours	0
4-6 hours	0
7-9 hours	4

10-12 hours	5
13+ hours	21

Question 7 - If you have a role that receives a Special Responsibility Allowance, please indicate how many hours per month you spend specifically on this role. (12 responses)

0-3 hours	0
4-6 hours	2
7-9 hours	1
10-12 hours	4
13+ hours	5

Question 8 - Place rank the importance of the roles - the most important at the top and the least important at the bottom. (28 Responses)



Question 9 - Any comments as to why you have ranked in this order? (14 Responses)

- “Certain committees have more responsibility and attention from the public, and also sit more. Leader and Cabinet have the majority of responsibility day to day.”
- “The area forums are a good thing to have, but they don't feel critical. The vice-chair of the council seems only occasionally to be a consequential role”
- “The Leader and Cabinet Members are responsible for strategic decisions and need to attend a lot of meetings both within the Council, Herts (County) wide and with local residents across the district. Chair of Planning involves 2 meetings per month, briefings and a lot of documents to read which is very time consuming and it is also a public facing role. The Deputy Leader is of less importance in a single party administration but the role is very time consuming in a joint administration and is usually accompanied by a Cabinet role as well. The role of Chair of Council varies according to the post holder and is therefore difficult to define. However the Chair is often the public face of the Council more than a Deputy Leader in a single party administration.”
- “I’ve considered time spent and time expected in these roles and the level of responsibility”
- “Leader and cabinet members have considerable responsibility. However chair of PCC is an extremely demanding role that makes decisions that are very visible to the public. The number of members of the public that attend PCC is far in excess of any other council meeting.”

Question 10 – Do you have other income? * (30 responses)

Yes	29
No	1

Question 11 - Would you be able to be a Councillor without other income? (i.e. only on Basic Allowance and possible SRA) * (30 responses)

Yes	7
No	23

Question 12 - Does the Basic Allowance pay for your associated costs with being a Councillor? (i.e. cost of phone, internet access, etc.) * (30 responses)

Yes	22
No	8

Question 13 - What are your views on the current expenses paid under the scheme? (i.e. mileage rates, subsistence allowances, etc.) * (30 responses)

- "I don't claim expenses and I don't really know what the rates are."
- "They seem reasonable but I have not had an opportunity to claim since becoming a new Councillor in May. I was unable to claim petrol expenses for my first few months, as unfortunately I had not kept my petrol receipts. This has been a learning experience that I will take note of in the future."
- "I do not use them. The basic allowance covers my needs."
- "The current system seems to be in line with other authorities, other than the usage of Trains and Private Hire Vehicles."
- "Travel by public transport should be incentivised."
- "Need to update for EVs"

- “Far far to low. I could have incredibly qualified council leaders but they cannot afford to risk leaving, or losing due to time constraints, high paying jobs”

Question 14 - Do you have any views on other expenses that should be covered by the scheme? (15 Responses)

- “Members should be able to claim childcare costs for attending meetings in the evening (I do not know if that is currently possible).”
- “Private Hire Vehicles”
- “Memberships of relevant organisations eg ILM”
- “The car allowance has not been considered for many years, despite massive increases in fuel cost and maintenance.”

The other 10 responses said “No”

Question 15 - Have you claimed any expenses within the last 12 months? * (30 Responses)

Yes	4
No	26

Question 16 - If so, do you feel the payments are enough to cover your expenses? If not, please add comments below as to why not. (11 Responses)

- “If so, do you feel the payments are enough to cover your expenses? If not, please add comments below as to why not.”
- “Specifically childcare reimbursement to attend Full Council Meetings which were reimbursed in full.”
- “Expenses if claimed I believe cover the expenses”
- “No, but I didn't choose to become a councillor for the money.”

Question 17 - If you do not claim expenses, why do you not claim them? Please select all that apply. (24 Responses)

Not worthwhile for small amounts	17
The information is publicly available	2
Basic Allowance/SRA is enough to cover my expenses	9
Unsure of the claim process	8
Other	3

Scheduled Council Meetings – 2024-2025 Civic Year

Committee	Number of meetings per year
Annual Council	1
Cabinet	7
Cabinet Panel on the Environment	6
Cabinet Sub (Council Charities)	1
Cabinet Sub (LA Trading)	2
Council Tax Setting	1
Finance, Audit and Risk	6
Full Council	5
Joint Staff Consultative	4
Licensing and Regulation	1
Licensing Sub-Committee	2
Overview and Scrutiny	7
Planning Control Committee	22
Standards Committee	2
Total	67

Council Allowance Scheme

<u>Local Authority</u>	<u>Basic Allowance</u>	<u>Leader of the Council</u>	<u>Deputy Leader of the Council</u>	<u>Cabinet Executive Members</u>	<u>Chair – Area Forums</u>	<u>Chair – Finance, Audit and Risk Committee</u>	<u>Chair – Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u>	<u>Chair – Planning Control Committee</u>	<u>Chair – Licensing and Appeals Committee</u>	<u>Leader of each Opposition Group</u>	<u>Chair of the Council</u>	<u>Vice-Chair of the Council</u>
North Herts Council	£5,763	£16,003	£2,858	£6,858	£1,081	£4,000	£4,000	£6,858	£1,715	£2,858	£5,830	£1,124
Welwyn Hatfield Council	£6,357.42	£13,772.56	£11,477.97	£11,003.22	N/A	£4,279.03	£4,279.03	£6,112.90	£4,279.03	£8,630.85	£7,335.48	£3,667.74
East Herts	£5,678.79	£19,767	£12,225.96	£9,780.96	N/A	£6,646.04	£6,464.04	£7,336	£6,051	A factor of 0.1 of the Basic Allowance multiplied by the number of members	£6,500	£1,450
Hertsmere	£7,234	£28,936	£17,362	£15,915	N/A	£2,894	£7,234	£8,681	£2,894	£8,681 (Of largest group), £2,894	£2,894	N/A
Three Rivers	£5,460	£10,920	N/A	N/A	N/A	£2,730	N/A	£5,460	£2,730	£4,095(Of largest group), £1,638	£5,460	£2,730
Stevenage Borough Council	£8,819	£24,756	N/A	£12,124	N/A	£4,952	£10,888	£12,124	£4,952	£3,988 (Leader of the opposition), £2,658 (Leader of minority opposition party)	£14,540	£5,810
Dacorum Borough Council	£6,120	£18,360	N/A	£12,240	N/A	£6,120	£6,120	£6,120	£6,120	£7,650	£9,481	£1,774
Watford	£8,441	£76,986	N/A	£3,229	N/A	£8,878	£8,878	£8,878	£8,878	£112 p.a per group member	£4,500	£1,500

Post	Current SRA (£)	Previous IRP % of BA Recommendation	Percentage of Leader (National Data)	Recommendation	Comments
Leader	16003	2.8x BA	3x BA	£17,997.00	3x BA
Deputy Leader	9716 (2858 + 6858)	0.5x BA	55-66%	£11,518.00	65% of leader (2523 + 8995)
Executive	6858	1.2x BA	40-55%	£8,999.00	50% of leader
Chair Planning	6858	1.2x BA	20-35%	£8,999.00	50% of leader
Chair FAR	4000	0.7x BA	20-35%	£4,319.00	24% of leader
Chair O&S	4000	0.7x BA	25-35%	£4,319.00	24% of leader
Chair Licensing & Regulation	1715		20-25%	£1,715.00	
Leader - Opposition Parties (min 3 Members)	2858	0.5x BA	20-35%	£4,319.00	24% of leader
Chair of Council	5830			£5,830.00	
Vice Chair of Council	1124			£1,124.00	
Chair Community Forums	1081			£1,081.00	
<p>Basic Allowance 4.1% increase from £5,763 to £5,999.</p> <p>Average, not including Watford, is £6,098</p> <p>Leader average, not including Watford, is £18,930.</p>					

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MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME ~~2024/25~~2025/26 – 2028/29

1. Definitions

In this scheme:

"Council" means North Hertfordshire District Council;

"Councillor" means a Member of the Council who is a Councillor;

"year" means the 12 months ended 31 March;

2. Commencement and Duration

This scheme shall have effect for the year commencing 1 April ~~2024-2025~~ and for subsequent years, save that the Council may amend the scheme at any time subject to the provisions of paragraph 9 hereunder.

3. Basic Allowance

Subject to paragraph 9, a basic allowance of £5,~~763~~999 shall be paid to each Councillor¹ for each year.

4. Special Responsibility Allowance

For each year a special responsibility allowance in the amounts indicated below shall be paid to those Councillors who hold the following special responsibilities:

Leader of the Council	£ 16,003 <u>17,997</u>
Deputy Leader of the Council	£ 2,858 <u>2,523</u>
Cabinet Executive Members (x7)	£ 6,858 <u>8,999</u>
Chair - Area Forums (x 5)	£1,081
Chair - Finance, Audit and Risk Committee	£ 4,000 <u>4,319</u>
Chair – Overview and Scrutiny Committee	£ 4,000 <u>4,319</u>
Chair - Planning Control Committee	£ 6,858 <u>8,999</u>
Chair of Licensing and Appeals Committee	£1,715
Leader of each Opposition Group	£ 2,858 <u>4319</u> *

* Subject to a minimum of 3 Members.

Such allowances shall be subject to the requirements of Paragraph 9 hereunder.

5. Chair and Vice Chair of Council Allowance

Chair of Council £5,830

Vice Chair of Council £1,124

6. Indexing of Allowances

On an annual basis, for the next four years, the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances be increased in line with Council Officer's pay awards, a year in arrears, except for the following roles (where the allowances remain at the current level until the next full review of allowances – post District Council elections in May 2028):

Chair of Licensing and Regulation Committee
Chair and Vice-Chair of Council

¹ 51 Councillors

Chairs of Community Forums

Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons of Standards Committee

Independent Member of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

The indexation will be the average percentage, having established the increase for every post in percentage terms.

7. Travelling and Subsistence Allowances

Travelling and subsistence allowances are payable at the recommended HMRC approved amounts of 45 pence per mile for cars for the first 10,000 miles and 25 pence per mile thereafter, whilst undertaking duties as listed in (a) – (i), replacing the following National Joint Council recommended rates for local government staff.

Cyclists 20.0p

Motorcycle 24.0p

Fares

Second class train fares, single or return, may be claimed for journeys commencing within North Hertfordshire. For journeys commencing outside North Hertfordshire, the cost of the fare will only be reimbursed from inside the district border to a destination within it.

Taxis

Taxi fares may be claimed for journeys where no suitable public or private transport is available. Payment for fares will be made subject to the production of receipts for the journey(s) and does not cover gratuities or tips.

Car Sharing

An additional allowance of 5p (HMRC approved amount) per passenger per mile be paid when a Member takes other Members whilst carrying out approved duties and in the following circumstances

- (a) the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council when engaged on official Council business;
- (b) the Chair and Vice-Chair of any Committee or Sub-Committee for attending pre-agenda and briefing meetings and opening tenders;
- (c) Cabinet Portfolio Members for attending meetings with officers in connection with their official duties as Spokesperson;
- (d) attendance by Councillors at a meeting of the Council or any Committee or Sub Committee appointed thereby in accordance with the provisions of Section 102(1)(a) and (c) of the Local Government Act 1972 (including informal meetings of such bodies which have been arranged at the behest of the appropriate Chair and to which all Members therefore have been invited to attend), of which they are a Member, or has been specifically requested to attend by the Chair and such is recorded in the minutes of the meeting;
- (e) attendance by Councillors at a meeting of any Working Party or Panel to which they have been appointed by any of the bodies referred to in (d) above and comprising representatives of more than one political group;

- (f) attendance by Councillors at Seminars and other similar meetings arranged formally for the purpose of informing and/or training to which representatives of more than one political group have been invited;
- (g) attendance at meetings of external bodies to which the Councillor claiming is the Council's appointed representative;
- (h) attendance by Councillors at conferences, courses, seminars, etc;
- (i) attendance by Councillors at Town or Parish Council meetings within their ward to explain District Council business.

(No such allowance shall be payable in respect of attendance at any conference or meeting in relation to which the Councillor is entitled to a payment in the nature of an allowance under Section 175 of the Local Government Act 1972.

No such allowance shall be payable if such a payment would be contrary to a provision made by or under any enactment.)

Subsistence Allowances

The same as those used for the payment of staff claims for meals taken away from home, to be paid at the rate set and from time to time amended by the HMRC.

Amount that can be claimed per meal

Breakfast	5.00
Lunch	10.00
Tea	5.00
Evening meal	10.00

Subject to a maximum that is based on time away from home or usual place of work

5 hours	5.00
10 hours	10.00
15 hours/ per day	25.00

7. Renunciation

A Councillor may by notice in writing given to the Democratic Services Manager elect to forego any part of his/her entitlement to an allowance under this scheme.

8. Childcare and dependent Carers' Allowance

A care allowance will be paid to any Member who incurs expenditure on the care of young children and or dependent relatives in order to perform their duties as a Councillor, subject to:

- (a) the duty being one for which Travelling and Subsistence Allowance is payable under this Scheme of Members' Allowances; and
- (b) that each individual claim shall not exceed the actual sum paid or ~~£13.45~~ £85 (London Weighted Real Living Wage) per hour, which ever is the lesser.
- (c) Consideration being given to an additional allowance for specialist care for a dependent, where this is known to be more expensive and agreed in advance of the claim being made.

9. Part-Year Entitlements

If during the course of the year the Council amends the amounts payable in respect of basic or special responsibility allowance, then the entitlement to such allowance shall be adjusted pro-rata to the proportion of the year that such allowance is payable.

Where a Councillor (a) is not a Councillor for the whole of the year; or (b) during the course of the year takes up or relinquishes a position in respect of which a special responsibility allowance is payable, then the entitlement to basic or special responsibility allowance shall be adjusted pro-rata to the proportion of the year during which they were a Councillor or held such position.

10. Claims

A claim for travelling and/or subsistence allowance under this Scheme shall:

- a) be made via the iTrent self-service online portal within three months of the end of the month in which the meeting/activity in respect of which the entitlement to the allowances arises (or by 30 April if incurred between January and end of March);
- b) include a statement on the online claim form confirming the Councillor claiming the allowance that they are not entitled to receive remuneration in respect of the matter to which the claim relates otherwise than under the Scheme;
- c) be accompanied by receipts itemising VAT as appropriate.

Claims submitted later than three months after the relevant date, and/or one month after 31 March shall be paid only in such exceptional circumstances following approval by the Service Director: Resources in accordance with the Financial Regulations.

11. Payments

Subject to the provisions of paragraph 9 payments of basic and special responsibility allowances shall be made in monthly instalments.

Payments in respect of travelling and subsistence allowance shall be made as soon as is practicable after submission of a claim.

12. External Conferences, Seminars, etc.

Travelling and subsistence Allowance at the same rate as that applying under the Members' Allowances Scheme are payable to those Members attending conferences, seminars, courses, etc., falling within the criteria specified in Section 175 of the Local Government Act, 1972 where such attendance has been previously approved by the Council.

13. Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons of Standards Committee

Independent Person	£2697
Reserve Independent Person	£648 per Reserve IP

14. Independent Member on the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee £1060

COUNCIL 23 January 2025
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*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2025/2026

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR CUSTOMERS

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND IT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY/ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) in accordance with the requirements of the schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme, revise the scheme, or replace it.
- 1.2 The Council carried out a full review of its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2022/23. The review resulted in the introduction of a banded scheme from 2023/24. The new scheme is now coming to the end of its second year.
- 1.3 The scheme has been reviewed during 2024/25 and no significant changes are required. There are two small adjustments to the scheme, in relation to the Post Office compensation scheme and an uplift to the bands to reflect Consumer Price Index (CPI) These are covered in more detail in Section 8 of the report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council approve 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.
- 2.2 That Council note 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.
- 2.3 That Council note that the Discretionary Exceptional Hardship Scheme, previously agreed to provide additional transitional support will continue to be used to support cases of exceptional hardship.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that the Council has a Council Tax Reduction Scheme that continues to:
- Provide the greatest support to the lowest income households.
 - Reduce the administrative burden that has been placed on the Council since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC)
 - Be simple to understand, meaning that customers will be able to calculate entitlement and assess the impact of potential changes in circumstances.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 There is a requirement to provide a Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The purpose of this report is to consider whether the scheme meets the needs of providing support where it is required and is affordable. We continue to monitor and analyse the scheme and do not propose any significant changes to the scheme for 2025/26. Alternatives are to replace the scheme or make no changes. The scheme is effective enough to not require a full replacement or major changes therefore the small amendments will be made, one being to adhere to legal requirements and the second, a minor update.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive Member for Finance and IT has been consulted throughout.
- 5.2 Consultation has also been undertaken with the following
- The County Council (including Fire & Rescue)
 - The Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
 - The Councils website
 - Regular meetings with the Executive Member for Finance and IT
 - A report was presented to the internal Political Liaison Board of the Executive and Leadership Team on 03 December 2024

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 15 November 2024.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The current Council Tax Reduction Scheme administered by the Council is divided into two schemes, one for pension age applicants who receive support under the rules prescribed by Central Government, the funding of that scheme is recouped in full from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, (MHCLG) and the scheme for working age applicants being determined solely by the local authority.
- 7.2 Pensioners, subject to their income, can receive up to 100% support towards their Council Tax. The Council has no power to change the level of support provided to pensioners and therefore any changes to the level of Council Tax Reduction can only be made to the working age scheme.
- 7.3 In 2023 the Council moved to a banded scheme, which was designed to meet a number of key objectives, these were and remain:

- To provide the greatest support to those on the lowest income
- To reduce the administrative burden that has been placed on the Council since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC)
- To be simple to understand, meaning that customers will be able to calculate entitlement and assess the impact of potential changes in circumstances.
- To give financial stability by reducing monthly changes to Council tax bills

7.5 The scheme is constantly monitored, and consideration given to whether any changes are needed for the following year in order to reflect external changes. For 2025/26 there are two minor changes recommended (one of which is legislative) these are covered in more detail in Section 8.

7.6 Where it has been recommended to make significant changes to the Scheme, these should be the subject of public consultation before a final recommendation is made to the Council for adoption or not into the Scheme. As the changes recommended in this report relate to one legislative change and another that is not significant, we have carried out a light touch public consultation via our website between 08 November and 06 Dec 24. No comments were received from the public; however a comment was received from Citizens Advice concerning the impact of CPI on the bands. This is being addressed with the changes proposed in this report.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 In previous years, Cabinet has considered whether any changes to the Housing Benefit Regulations should be reflected within the Council's CTRS Scheme. There has been a recent change to the Housing Benefit Regulations, which require adoption within the Council's CTR scheme for 2025/2026. This change relates to the Post Office Compensation scheme which requires us to disregard any compensation received for the purpose of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction.

8.2 Through our monitoring and analysis, we are recommending a slight increase of the income bands to reflect CPI and current rates of Universal Credit awards. This will ensure those in most need continue to receive full support and prevents the uplift in benefit income being detrimental to the customer.

8.3 The recommended increase in bands equates to 1.7% across all bands to align with CPI for 2025/26. Additionally, three bands will be increased further to a total of 2.7% as we can see this is required to ensure those most in need continue to receive the maximum support of 100%. The three bands this applies to are Single no children (SN) Single one child (S1) and Couple no children (CN)

8.4 The reason for increasing these bands further is that our monitoring showed that following the benefit uplift in April 2024 of 6.7% some households as a result fell just outside of the top of the income band and moved into a lower band where they had to contribute to their Council Tax. What that meant was that these people were required to contribute more to their council tax than the additional income they were receiving, having an adverse impact. The intention of the scheme is to provide the greatest support to those on the lowest income and therefore an adjustment to these bands will enable that.

- 8.5 In addition to the financial changes, we are strengthening the wording in our policy in relation to our approach to investigating and handling of fraud. This has been recommended by the Shared Anti-Fraud Service who have reviewed our policy.
- 8.6 Figure 1 shows the income tables of the scheme in 23/24 and Figure 2 shows the proposed income tables for 25/26

Figure1

Band	Discount	Single Person	Single Person with one child	Single Person with two children	Single Person with three or more children	Couple with no children	Couple with one child	Couple with two children	Couple with three or more children
1	100%	£0 to £100.00	£0 to £165.00	£0 to £220.00	£0 to £330.00	£0 to £140.00	£0 to £205.00	£0 to £260.00	£0 to £340.00
2	75%	£100.01 to £180.00	£165.01 to £245.00	£220.01 to £300.00	£330.01 to £385.00	£140.01 to £220.00	£205.01 to £285.00	£260.01 to £340.00	£340.01 to £395.00
3	45%	£180.01 to £240.00	£245.01 to £305.00	£300.01 to £360.00	£385.01 to £445.00	£220.01 to £280.00	£285.01 to £345.00	£340.01 to £400.00	£395.01 to £455.00
4	25%	£240.01 to £300.00	£305.01 to £365.00	£360.01 to £420.00	£445.01 to £505.00	£280.01 to £340.00	£345.01 to £405.00	£400.01 to £460.00	£455.01 to £515.00
5	0%	Over £300.01	Over £365.01	Over £420.01	Over £505.01	Over £340.01	Over £405.01	Over £460.01	Over £515.01

Figure 2

Band	Discount	Single person	Single Person 1 child	Single person 2 children	Single person 3 children	Couple No children	Couple 1 child	Couple 2 children	Couple 3 children
1	100%	£0 to £103.00	£0 to £169.00	£0 to £224.00	£0 to £336.00	£0 to £144.00	£0 to £208.00	£0 to £264.00	£0 to £346.00
2	75%	£103.01 to £185.00	£169.01 to £252.00	£224.01 to £305.00	£336.01 to £391.00	£144.01 to £226.00	£208.01 to £290.00	£264.01 to £346.00	£346.01 to £402.00
3	45%	£185.01 to £246.00	£252.01 to £313.00	£305.01 to £366.00	£391.01 to £452.00	£226.01 to £288.00	£290.01 to £351.00	£346.01 to £407.00	£402.01 to £463.00
4	25%	£246.01 to £308.00	£313.01 to £375.00	£366.01 to £427.00	£452.01 to £513.00	£288.01 to £349.00	£351.01 to £412.00	£407.01 to £468.00	£463.01 to £524.00
5	0%	Over £308.01	Over £375.01	Over £427.01	Over £513.01	Over £349.01	Over £412.01	Over £468.01	Over £524.01

- 8.7 The banded scheme provides the highest level of discount of 100% of the Council tax liability (Band 1) meaning, someone with 100% discount is not expected to contribute towards their Council Tax bill. All current applicants that are in receipt of a 'passported benefit' such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) will receive this maximum discount, likewise those whose only income is universal credit will also receive 100%

discount. All other discount levels are based on the applicant's and partner's (where they have one) net income.

- 8.8 The scheme allows for variation in household size with the levels of income per band increasing where an applicant has a partner, and / or dependants. There are no charges made where an applicant has non-dependants living with them. This means that the administration of the scheme is more straightforward whilst also protecting low-income families where adult children remain at home.
- 8.9 To encourage work, a standard £50 per week disregard is provided against all earnings. Where a family also receives a childcare disregard (for childcare costs not paid for by Central Government schemes), there is a further income disregard applied where the childcare criteria is met.
- 8.10 The Council was mindful that the initial transition to the banded scheme would result in a change to the entitlement of some applicants and so made a provision for additional discretionary support to individuals who experienced exceptional hardship. Where any applicant was likely to experience exceptional hardship, they were encouraged to apply for a CTR hardship award for a specified period of time. However, the take-up for this has been low, mainly due to the support awarded within the scheme, which has meant that those experiencing hardship as a result of the change in the scheme has been limited. This funding is still available and will be promoted for claimants that may be adversely affected by the scheme.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 a local authority is permitted reduce its council tax. Accordingly Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act requires a local authority to have in place a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- 9.2 The Council is required to maintain and annually review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with Section 13A and Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012).
- 9.2 Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to make any revision to its scheme or any replace scheme no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect.
- 9.3 Section 3(1) of Schedule 4 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012, which inserts Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to consult on any changes to its scheme as follows:
- Consult any Major Precepting Authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
 - Publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
 - Consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.
- 9.4 Full Council's terms of reference include at 4.4.1 (z) "approving the Council Tax Reduction Scheme".

In considering the CTRS cabinet is acting in accordance with statutory provisions and in accordance with its obligations under the Council's constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 24/25 cost approximately £9.18m which is borne by the Council's Collection Fund. Costs are shared between the Council and the Major Precepting Authorities which is expected to be in approximately the following proportions:

- County Council (including Fire and Rescue Service) (around 76%)
- Police and Crime Commissioner (around 12%)
- District Council (around 12%)

These proportions are based on the overall share of Council Tax income and will change over time in line with decisions made by each Authority on levels of Council Tax increase. Recently, these have mainly been affected by the levels of increase (without a local referendum) that have been allowed by Government.

The costs of Council Tax Reduction are not funded by the Precepting Authorities directly. Instead, the estimated level of eligibility is converted into a number of band D equivalent properties. That then reduces the overall tax base (i.e., the number of properties expected to pay Council Tax), and therefore the amount of income that each Precepting Authority should expect to receive. Differences between what was expected, and the amount collected are managed through a Collection Fund. The precepting Authorities will share any surpluses or shortfalls in the following year.

10.2 Maintaining the existing scheme without the minor changes to thresholds gave an estimated tax base (as at October 2024) of 51,358.40 Band D equivalent properties. The minor changes give an estimated tax base (at the same date) of 51,315.1 Band D properties. The reduction of 43 properties equates to an estimated reduction in funding for North Herts of £12,000. This assumes that there is no impact on the collection rate, which we estimate at 99%. We are monitoring the collection rate as it may improve, as the banded scheme should improve residents' ability to pay the Council Tax that they are liable for.

10.3 There is currently approximately £270,000 remaining of the hardship funding that will be used to provide discretionary support where required and appropriate.

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 General economic factors can have an impact on the number of people that claim CTRS and therefore it is difficult to predict the number of households that will be eligible in the future and the extent of that entitlement and impact on the cost of the scheme. The only way to mitigate the risk of increasing spend is to make the scheme less generous. This

in turn will mean increases in the amount of Council Tax to be collected, which may prove counter-productive and move the problem into increased bad debts.

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 It should be noted that this scheme only applies to and impacts a specific age group: working-age claimants. The new scheme aims to improve accessibility to the scheme for all claimants through a simplified process; and improve the support available to those that are on the lowest incomes.
- 12.3 An equalities impact assessment (EIA) was completed for the current scheme in December 2022 before it was implemented. Actions from the EIA included promotion of the Exceptional Hardship Scheme, this was carried out in a number of ways and applications considered on an individual basis. As there are no significant changes being proposed for 25/26 another assessment is not required.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The banded scheme and proposed adjustments in this report have a positive human resource impact as staff spend less time chasing debt for small amounts that we know are unlikely to be paid. The banded scheme is more straightforward and easier for customers to understand meaning that resources are utilised dealing with more complex matters.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A - Caseload examples
- 16.2 Appendix B – Benefit Information Sheet

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Anne Banner, Benefits Manager
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- 17.3 Geraldine Goodwin, Revenues Manager
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- 17.4 Ian Couper, Service Director – Resources
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- 17.5 Ellie Hollingsworth, Policy and Strategy Officer
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- 17.6 Douglas Trail Stevenson, Property Solicitor
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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 None

Caseload Example - Single 1 Child

Michelle a single parent of one child and is in receipt of full Universal Credit (UC). The income she receives from child benefit is disregarded as is the amount of the Housing Element included in her UC payment.

In 2023 she received 100% CTR reduction so didn't need to make any payments towards her Council Tax as her income was below £165 pw. In 2024 due to the CPI increase her UC increased by £485.16 per year this took her over Band 1 income bracket by £2.17 pw and moved her into Band 2 meaning she had to pay £7.92 pw towards her Council Tax.

In 2025 the increased income bands will mean she will receive 100% CTR as her income will be below £169 pw.



Caseload Example – Couple No Children

Gemma and Michael are under 25 years old and receive UC. In 2023 they received maximum CTR as their income was below £140 pw.

In 2024 due to the CPI increase their UC income increased by £489.23 per annum, they remained in the 100% income band and received full CTR.

In 2025 the increased income bands will mean they will receive 100% CTR as their income will be below £144 pw.



Caseload Example – Couple 1 child

Anne and David have 2 non-dependent children living with them. They also have a daughter who is disabled, who gets full rate Disability Living allowance which is disregarded as is the child benefit they receive.

Anne receives UC of £1385.71 per month and David works and earns £500 per month. The total income is £435.16 pw, as £50 is disregarded for working and a further £50 is disregarded for the disabled child. The assessable income is £335.16 pw which falls into Band 3. They will need to contribute £17.19 per week towards their Council Tax liability of £38.20 per week.



Caseload Example – Single 2 Children

Sarah lives with her two dependent children. She works part time and receives £100 pw earnings plus £998.37 UC pm. Her income is £253.51 pw, £50 is disregarded for working and her housing costs are removed, therefore her assessable income is £203.51 pw. This puts her in the Band 1 meaning she gets 100% CTR.



Caseload Example – Couple No Children

Mark and Sue have no children or housing costs as they own their home.

Mark has been made redundant and is claiming UC, Sue is disabled and receives £108 pw Personal Independence Payment which is ignored as income.

Marks UC income is 1033.79 pm, £50 is disregarded as Sue is disabled, so the assessable income is £188.56 pw. They will be in Band 2 meaning they need to contribute £9.55 pw towards their Council Tax liability of £38.20 pw.



Caseload Example – Couple 3 (plus) Children

Samantha and Tina have 4 children and receive UC of £1787.69 pm.

Tina works and earns £700 pm, £50 is disregarded for working, so the weekly assessable income is £524 pw. Their income falls into Band 4 and therefore receive 25% CTR.



Caseload Example – Couple 3 (plus) Children

Ben and Denise own their own home they have 3 dependent children one of which is disabled and 1 non-dependent living at home.

The disabled child receives DLA of £184.30 pw which is disregarded as is the child benefit for all 3 children of £59.50 pw. The adult daughter's income is disregarded from the calculation.

Denise receives Carers allowance of £81.90 which is disregarded as income. Ben works and earns £400 pm, he receives UC of £2014.35 pm, £50 is disregarded for a disabled child and £50

disregarded for working. Their total assessable income is £534 per week. They do not qualify for any council tax reduction.



Caseload Example – Single No Children

Stephen is a single claimant; his only income is UC while he is seeking work. He receives £900 pm UC. After his housing costs are disregarded, his assessable income is £90.79 pw. This means he will be in Band 1 and receive 100% CTR.



Appendix B Income Disregards

The following incomes are disregarded under the Councils Council Tax Reduction scheme. The claimants may receive these benefits, but they are discounted when calculating the entitlement.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Carers Allowance (CA)

Child Benefit & Child Maintenance (CB)

War Pensions and War Disablement Pensions

Income from non-dependants.

Support component of Employment Allowance

Housing Element within Universal Credit

Limited Capability to Work (LCW)

Legacy benefits that are treated as passport are:

Income Support

Employment Support Allowance (Income Related)

Job Seekers Allowance (Income Related)

These legacy benefits are due to end by March 2026 when all legacy claims are migrated to Universal Credit.

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COUNCIL
23 January 2025

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: SECOND QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2024/25

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: FINANCE AND I.T.

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on progress with delivering the capital and treasury strategy for 2024/25, as at the end of September 2024.
- 1.2 To update Cabinet on the impact upon the approved capital programme for 2024/25 – 2033/34. The current estimate is a decrease in spend in 2024/25 of £15.388M and an increase in spend in 2025/26 of £11.110M and £2.000M in the following years of the capital programme. The most significant individual changes to the forecast spend in 2024/25 relate to the reprofiling into future years of £5.000M Public Sector Decarbonisation Project, £2.500M Royston Learner Pool, £1.950M Museum Storage unit, £1.000 Royston Leisure Centre Gym Extension.
- 1.3 To inform Cabinet of the Treasury Management activities in the first six months of 2024/25. The current forecast is that the amount of investment interest expected to be generated during the year is £2.80M. This is an increase of £0.300M on the estimate reported in the 1st quarter report.
- 1.4 To obtain early approval for spend at North Herts Leisure Centre in 2025/26, so that it can be delivered alongside the decarbonisation works. This involves seeking Council approval for spend in 2025/26 on a new flume (£300k) and a refurbishment of the pool changing rooms (£250k) that includes them being converted in a change village.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council approves capital budgets in 2025/26 for a new flume (£300k) and a refurbishment of the pool changing rooms (£250k) at North Herts Leisure Centre.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Options for capital investment are considered as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.
- 4.2 The primary principles governing the Council's investment criteria are the security of its investments (ensuring that it gets the capital invested back) and liquidity of investments (being able to get the funds back when needed). After this the return (or yield) is then considered, which provides an income source for the Council. In relation to this the Council could take a different view on its appetite for risk, which would be reflected in the Investment Strategy. In general, greater returns can be achieved by taking on greater risk. Once the Strategy has been set for the year, there is limited scope for alternative options as Officers will seek the best return that is in accordance with the Investment Strategy.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Consultation on the capital expenditure report is not required. Members will be aware that consultation is incorporated into project plans of individual capital schemes as they are progressed.
- 5.2 There are regular updates and meetings with Treasury advisors (Link).

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 18th October 2024.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 In February 2024, Council approved the Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy for 2024/25 to 2033/34. To be consistent with the strategy, the monitoring reports for Capital and Treasury are also integrated.

- 7.2 Link Asset Services Ltd are contracted to provide Treasury advice. The service includes:
- Regular updates on economic and political changes which may impact on the Council's borrowing and investment strategies
 - Information on investment counterparty creditworthiness
 - Technical updates
 - Access to a Technical Advisory Group.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Council has £122.0M of capital assets that it currently owns. The Investment Strategy set out the reasons for owning assets that are not for service delivery, including an assessment of Security, Liquidity, Yield and Fair Value. There have been no significant changes in relation to these since the last quarter.

Capital Programme 2024/25

- 8.2 The full capital programme is detailed in Appendix A and shows the revised costs to date, together with the expected spend from 2024/25 to 2033/34 and the funding source for each capital scheme.
- 8.3 Capital expenditure for 2024/25 is estimated to be **£15.699M**. This is a decrease of **£15.388M** on the forecast in the 1st quarter report (reported to Cabinet on 10th September 2024). Table 1 below details changes to capital programme.

Table 1- Current Capital Estimates

	2024/25 £M	2025/26 £M	2026/27 to 2033/34 £M
Original Estimates approved by Full Council February 2024	22.623	15.110	12.039
Changes approved by Cabinet in 3rd Qrt 2024/25	0.960		
Changes approved by Cabinet in 2023/24 Capital Outturn report	2.654	0.193	
Revised Capital estimates at start of 2022/23	26.237	15.303	12.039
Changes approved by Cabinet in March 2024:			
Redistribution of Shared Prosperity Fund	-0.083		
Solar Together	0.563		
Changes approved by Full Council July 2024:			
Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund	2.400		
Royston Leisure Centre Gym Extension	0.250		
Changes at Q1	1.048	0.948	
Changes approved by Full Council Sept 2024	0.672	-0.672	
Executive Member – Finance and I.T. approved additional Expenditure Hitchin Fitness Gym Lift	0.020		

	2024/25 £M	2025/26 £M	2026/27 to 2033/34 £M
Reprofile Leisure Budgets		0.550	-0.400
Changes at Q2	-15.408	11.110	2.000
Current Capital Estimates	15.699	27.239	13.639

8.4 Table 2 lists the schemes in the 2024/25 Capital Programme that will now start or continue in 2025/26 and onwards:

Table 2: Scheme Timetable Revision:

(Key: - = reduction in capital expenditure, + = increase in capital expenditure)

Scheme	2024/25 Working Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2025/26 onwards £'000
Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund	13,190	8,190	-5,000	The works will take place during 25/26, with spend in this year to purchase the plant and equipment. This is to enable the drawdown of the PSDS funding in line with the grant conditions.	5,000
Royston Learner Pool	2,500	0	-2,500	There will not be any capital works during this financial year, as still trying to identify external funding to provide a viable scheme. The funding will be slipped until 2025/26 with a decision to be made as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process.	2,500
Museum and Commercial Storage	2,000	50	-1,950	An options appraisal report to inform next steps was presented to Cabinet on 19th November. The bulk of this budget will be spent in future years rather than in the current financial year. It is therefore also recommended that the earmarked project allocation of £2m in 2025/26 is reprofiled to 2026/27.	1,950
Royston Leisure Centre Gym Extension	1,250	250	-1,000	Project plan is that the works will take place during 25/26 with just preliminary expenditure in this year.	1,000

Scheme	2024/25 Working Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2025/26 onwards £'000
Solar Together	563	0	-563	Still looking to come to an agreement with two businesses, but the time taken to agree financial and legal arrangements means that any installations will not commence until 25/26.	563
Charnwood House	391	25	-366	Still working to agree a letting that would deliver community use of the building. It is therefore unlikely that any substantial capital works could be completed this financial year.	366
Oughtonhead Common Weir	364	0	-364	Due to additional river flow modelling requested by the Environment Agency it has not been possible to proceed with the development of a detailed specification. However in the meantime we are progressing the securing of the various permissions to allow the project to continue.	364
Resurfacing Lairage Car Park	346	0	-346	A survey is being undertaken at both Multistorey car parks to carry out a structural appraisal to identify and document any signs of structural distress, deterioration, or damage. This project is therefore on hold until the results of this survey are known in March 2025	346
Cycle Strategy Implementation	278	0	-278	The development of cycle strategy and transport plan initiatives is dependent on Officer capacity and hope to make progress during 2025/26 (linked to proposed investment in additional capacity).	278
Transport Plans Implementation	250	0	-250		250

Scheme	2024/25 Working Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2025/26 onwards £'000
Renovate King George V Skate	249	0	-249	Due to procurement concerns raised by Procurement and Legal a new service level agreement was negotiated with Groundwork East to deliver this project. This process caused a delay in re tendering these works which are now at a stage to be awarded. It is expected that the works will be completed early in the 25/26 financial year.	249
Green Infrastructure Implementation	185	0	-185	Work has commenced on developing green infrastructure plans, but not expecting any capital spend this year.	185
Playground Renovation 24/25	180	0	-180	Due to procurement concerns raised by Procurement and Legal a new service level agreement was negotiated with Groundwork East to deliver this project. This process caused a delay in re tendering these works which are now at a stage to be awarded. It is expected that the works will be completed early in the 25/26 financial year.	180

Scheme	2024/25 Working Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2025/26 onwards £'000
Home Repair Assistance	205	100	-105	The combination of limited demand for Housing Repairs Assistance Grants (HRAG) during the previous year, alongside limited resources to actively promote these grants, has meant that demand to date has not met the provision made for this assistance. Due to the forthcoming significant changes associated with the enactment of the Renters' Reform Bill, which is due early in 2025/26, and hopefully the permission to grow the service, it is expected that demand for HRAG grants will rise.	105
Off Street Car Parks Resurfacing	100	20	-80	The car parks are generally in good condition and have not deteriorated to the extent predicted when the original budget was set by the Engineer.	80
Replacement Chiller for the Museum	80	0	-80	A grant bid has been made to provide a contribution to the decarbonisation of Hitchin Town Hall and Museum (as well as the District Council Offices and the learner pool at North Herts Leisure Centre). The works have been delayed until we know the outcome of the bid and whether there are opportunities to align the works, This adds risk as the current chiller could fail (which would require repairs and/ or a temporary replacement) but gives the opportunity to assess the whole building and make sure all elements work together ,	80

Scheme	2024/25 Working Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2025/26 onwards £'000
Avenue Park Splash Park	70	0	-70	The proposed development around Baldock may include a new splash park facility as part of the community provision of that development. Therefore it is proposed to delay the upgrade of the current system pending the outcome of the planning process for Baldock.	70
Newark Close Road Replacement	65	20	-45	The road is generally in good condition and does not require complete re-surfacing as was anticipated by the Engineer when the budget was set. However, some patching work identified by the engineer in his recent survey will be undertaken in this financial year. The £45k slippage can be carried into financial year 2026/27.	45
King George V Muga Hitchin	55	0	-55	This project is dependent upon the availability of S106 contributions from the Highover Farm Development. Once construction begins the resources will be available to cover the cost of the project. Therefore proposed to delay the project until the S106 funds are received.	55
Norton Common Bowls Pavilion	55	0	-55	We are working with Estates and Property Services to agree suitable lease terms with the users of the pavilion and the scope of the works to be undertaken to ensure the building is fit for purpose. Unfortunately this process has taken longer than envisaged.	55
Instal On Street Charging	50	0	-50	On-street charging will be part of a wider review of charging for parking, including off-street parking.	50

Scheme	2024/25 Working Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2025/26 onwards £'000
Museum Services Development	48	0	-48	This budget is a legacy from the main grant funded contribution to the North Herts Museum project and is earmarked for some improvements to the Terrace Gallery external area. Whilst officers still intend to complete this work, other priorities and capacity within the team mean that this will need to be pushed back to the 25/26 financial year.	48
Community Facilities Refurbishment	48	0	-48	Pirton PC have informed that they will have the necessary funding and permissions in place to fulfil the conditions on the release of the grant and intend to commence the build of the project in February 2025. The funding will be drawn down before the end of March 2026.	48
Bancroft Lighting	45	0	-45	Has not progressed due to a lack of technical support and capacity. Therefore proposed to delay the project into the next financial year when it is envisaged the appropriate internal support will be available.	45
Baldock Road Recreation Ground Letchworth	30	0	-30		30
Swinburne Recreation Ground Hitchin, Car Park	30	0	-30		30

Scheme	2024/25 Working Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast £'000	Difference £'000	Reason for Difference	Estimated impact on 2025/26 onwards £'000
Norton Common Tennis Courts	25	0	-25	Due to difficulty in obtaining a sufficient number of quotations to undertake the work we have currently been unable to progress this work within procurement guidelines. The initial scope of the works was not fully identified until the quotation process was undertaken, therefore the level of structural works to the Tennis Courts has increased the required budget.	49
Other minor changes			-49		49
Total Revision to Budget Profile			-14.046		14.070

- 8.5 There are also changes to the overall costs of schemes in 2024/25. These changes total a net decrease of £1.362million and are detailed in Table 3

Table 3: Changes to Capital Schemes Commencing in 2024/25:

(Key: - = reduction in capital expenditure, + = increase in capital expenditure)

Scheme	2024/25 Working Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast Spend £'000	Difference £'000	Comments
Refuse and Recycling Bins	90	130	+40	Bin purchases are semi-cyclical, with bins having an estimated life of between 10 and 15 years. Wheeled bins for the residual waste service were introduced in 2012 and consequently we are replacing more bins. In addition, new developments require new bins and this is an increasing burden on the budget. Also, the service has been unable to implement a previously agreed charge for replacement bins due to limitations in IT and therefore costs have not reduced or been offset as had previously been anticipated.
Local Authority Housing Fund Pt2	107	0	-107	Settle have delivered all the planned properties for part 2 of the LAHF. The Council has provided funding to settle based on the eligible costs that they incurred. There are no further payments due.

Scheme	2024/25 Working Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast Spend £'000	Difference £'000	Comments
Local Authority Housing Fund Pt3	960	0	-960	There has been no interest from Registered Providers so the funding will have to be returned to Government.
Letchworth Multistorey Parapet /Soffit / Decoration	129	0	-129	Funding was based on an expected future requirement, which has not materialised. To be removed until a specific need is identified.
Lairage Multistorey Structural Repairs	111	0	-111	Funding was based on an expected future requirement, which has not materialised. To be removed until a specific need is identified.
Burials Database System	55	0	-55	Capital budget no longer required as the decision has been taken to use the in-house Low Code option to develop a replacement database system for burials.
Former Public Convenience Portmill Lane	25	0	-25	Remove until we have a plan for the wider Churchgate area.
Other minor changes			-15	
Total revision to scheme spend			-1,362	

8.6 Table 4 below shows how the Council will fund the 2024/25 capital programme.

Table 4: Funding the Capital Programme:

	2024/25 Balance at start of year £M	2024/25 Forecast Additions £M	2024/25 Forecast Funding Used £M	2024/25 Balance at end of year £M
Useable Capital Receipts and Set-aside Receipts	4.914	0.0	(4.678)	0.236
S106 receipts			(0.539)	
Other third party grants and contributions			(8.062)	
Revenue Contribution			(0.030)	
Borrowing			(2.390)	
Total			(15.699)	

- 8.7 The availability of third-party contributions and grants to fund capital investment is continuously sought in order to reduce pressure on the Council's available capital receipts and allow for further investment. Additional capital receipts are dependent on selling surplus land and buildings. Ensuring that the Council gets best value from the disposal of land and buildings can take a long time and therefore the amounts that might be received could be subject to change.
- 8.8 The Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) at 31st March 2024 was negative £2.58M. Based on current forecasts it will become positive during 2024/25 as the Council does not have sufficient funding (eg Capital Receipts) to finance the Capital programme. This means the Council will have to borrow to fund the programme in this year, with MRP (Minimum Revenue Provision) charged to the General Fund in 2025/26.
- 8.9 The usual process is that budgets for the following year will be agreed at the Council meeting at the end of February. This gives the opportunity for all proposals to be considered together, and the relative priorities can be assessed. However, especially for capital proposals where greater planning is required, there can be a benefit to approving the proposals earlier. Especially where the schemes are already on the capital programme, and the decision relates to a change to the planned timing. Cabinet are asked to recommend to Council that two schemes are approved now, rather than waiting until the budget meeting at the end of February. Both schemes relate to North Herts Leisure Centre and would allow the works to be carried out whilst the pool is closed for the wider decarbonisation works are carried out during 2025/26. This would minimise overall disruption to users of the facility. The other reason for bringing forward the flume replacement is that it is starting to need more repairs. The works are the refurbishment of the pool changing rooms, and conversion in to a change village (previously agreed to take place in 2026/27, £250k) and a flume replacement (previously agreed to take place in 2028/29, £150k). The amount for the changing rooms is unchanged, but latest costs for the flume show a need to increase the budget up to £300k.

Treasury Management 2024/25

- 8.10 The Council invests its surplus cash in accordance with the Investment Strategy (see paragraph 4.2). This surplus cash is made up of capital funding balances, general fund balance, other revenue reserves and provision balances and variations in cash due to

the timing of receipts and payments. During the first six months of 2024/25, the Council had an average investment balance of £59.0M and invested this in accordance with the treasury and prudential indicators as set out in the Integrated Capital and Treasury Management Strategy and in compliance with the Treasury Management Practices.

8.11 The Council will generate £2.4M of interest in 2024/25 from investments made during the first half of the year. This includes the interest that will be earned during the second half of the year on investments that have already been made. The average interest rate on all outstanding investments at the 30th September was 5.17%. (30th June was 5.42.%). Based on current investments and forecasts of interest rates and cash balances for the remainder of the year, it is forecast that the Council will generate £2.8M of interest over the whole of 2024/25.

8.12 As at 30th September 2024, the split of investments was as shown in the table below.

Banks	11%
Building Societies	0%
Government	7%
Local Authorities	82%

8.13 The level of risk of any investment will be affected by the riskiness of the institution where it is invested and the period that it is invested for. Where an institution has a credit rating this can be used to measure its riskiness. This can be combined with the period remaining on the investment to give a historic risk of default percentage measure. The table below shows the Historic Risk of Default for outstanding investments at 30th September 2024. The most risky investment has a historic risk of default of 0.018%. It should also be noted that in general the interest rate received is correlated to the risk, so the interest income received would be less if the Council took on less risk.

Borrower	Principal Invested £M	Interest Rate %	Credit Rating	Days to Maturity at 30 Sept	Historic Risk of Default %
Australia & New Zealand Bank	2.0	5.34	AA-	16	0.001
Lloyds Bank	1.0	5.19	A+	16	0.002
DMO	2.0	4.94	AA-	17	0.001
Cheshire East Council	2.0	5.3	AA-	21	0.001
Uttlesford District Council	2.0	5.25	AA-	21	0.001
Surrey County Council	2.0	5.05	AA-	27	0.002
City of Bradford MDC	2.0	5.38	AA-	34	0.002
Lancashire County Council	1.0	5.37	AA-	37	0.002
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	1.0	5.6	AA-	43	0.003
DMO	1.0	4.905	AA-	45	0.003
London Borough of Haringey	2.0	5.2	AA-	59	0.004
Luton Borough Council	2.0	4.95	AA-	59	0.004
Folkestone & Hythe District Council	2.0	4.95	AA-	69	0.004
West Dunbartonshire Council	2.0	5.7	AA-	76	0.005

Borrower	Principal Invested £M	Interest Rate %	Credit Rating	Days to Maturity at 30 Sept	Historic Risk of Default %
DMO	1.0	4.835	AA-	79	0.005
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	2.0	5.2	AA-	84	0.005
Dudley Metropolitan District Council	1.0	5.25	AA-	91	0.006
Nat West	1.0	5.17	A+	97	0.012
Australia & New Zealand Bank	1.0	5.26	AA-	91	0.006
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council	2.0	4.8	AA-	108	0.007
Nat West	1.0	5.13	A+	118	0.015
Stoke on Trent City Council	1.0	5.75	AA-	119	0.007
London Borough of Barking & Dagenham	3.0	5.05	AA-	121	0.007
Liverpool City Council	2.0	5.25	AA-	170	0.010
Reading Borough Council	2.0	4.75	AA-	188	0.011
Blackpool Council	3.0	4.75	AA-	205	0.011
Gravesham Borough Council	1.0	5.2	AA-	206	0.013
Lancashire County Council	3.0	5.2	AA-	211	0.013
Bournemouth Christchurch & Poole Council	2.0	4.8	AA-	223	0.013
Cheshire East Council	2.0	5.2	AA-	233	0.014
Liverpool City Council	2.0	4.85	AA-	301	0.018
	54.0	5.17			0.007

DMO credit rating is the UK credit rating.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet's terms of reference under 5.6.7 specifically includes "to monitor expenditure on the capital programme and agree adjustments within the overall budgetary framework". The Cabinet also has a responsibility to keep under review the budget of the Council and any other matter having substantial implications for the financial resources of the Council. By considering monitoring reports throughout the financial year Cabinet is able to make informed recommendations on the budget to Council. The Council is under a duty to maintain a balanced budget.
- 9.2 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that:
"every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs."
- 9.3 Asset disposals must be handled in accordance with the Council's Contract Procurement Rules.
- 9.4 The Prudential Indicators comply with the Local Government Act 2003.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The main financial implications are covered in section 8 of the report.
- 10.2 The Council operates a tolerance limit on capital projects that depends on the value of the scheme and on this basis over the next ten-year programme it should be anticipated that the total spend over the period could be around £4.9M higher than the budgeted £58.580M.
- 10.3 The capital programme will need to remain under close review due to the limited availability of capital resources and the affordability in the general fund of the cost of using the Council's capital receipts. When capital receipts are used and not replaced the availability of cash for investment reduces. Consequently interest income from investments reduces. £1.0M currently earns the Authority approximately £50k per year in interest. The general fund estimates are routinely updated to reflect changes in income from investments. When the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) reaches zero the Council will need to start charging a minimum revenue provision to the general fund for the cost of capital and will need to consider external borrowing for further capital spend. The CFR at the 31 March 2024 was negative £2.58M.
- 10.4 The Council also aims to ensure that the level of planned capital spending in any one year matches the capacity of the organisation to deliver the schemes to ensure that the impact on the revenue budget of loss of cash-flow investment income is minimised.

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 The inherent risks in undertaking a capital project are managed by the project manager of each individual scheme. These are recorded on a project risk log which will be considered by the Project Oversight Group (if applicable). The key risks arising from the project may be recorded on IdeaGen (the Council's Performance & Risk management software).
- 11.3 Risks associated with treasury management and procedures to minimise risk are outlined in the Treasury Management Practices document, TMP1, which was adopted by Cabinet in July 2003 and is revisited annually as part of the Treasury Strategy review. The risk on the General Fund of a fall of investment interest below the budgeted level is dependent on banks and building societies need for borrowing.

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 no direct equalities implications directly arising from the adoption of the Capital Programme for 2024/25 onwards. For any individual new capital investment proposal of £50k or more, or affecting more than two wards, an equality analysis is required to be carried out. This will take place following agreement of the investment proposal.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to recommendations of this report. The projects at section 8.4 may have impacts that contribute to an adverse impact. As these projects go forward, an assessment will be made where necessary.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no direct human resource implications.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A, Capital Programme Detail including Funding 2024/25 onwards.
16.2 Appendix B, Treasury Management Update.

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy)

<https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24164/INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20INTEGRATED%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY.pdf>
<https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24165/FAR%20Appendix%20A-%20Integrated%20Capital%20and%20Treasury%20Strategy.docx.pdf>

Project	Service Directorate							Funding				
		2024/25 Funding £	2025/26 Funding £	2026/27 Funding £	2027/28 Funding £	2028/29 Funding £	2029/30 - 2033/34 Funding £	Funded from Other Grants	Funded from Government Grant	Funded from s106 contributions	Funded from Revenue / IT Reserve	Balance funded from Capital Receipts/ Set- aside receipts/ Borrowing
40 KVA UPS Device or Battery Replacement	Customers	12,000	14,000	0	0	16,000	0	0	0	0	0	42,000
Air Handling Humidification	Enterprise	15,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15,000
Alternative to safeword tokens for staff/members working remotely	Customers	9,900	0	3,000	0	19,000	0	0	0	0	0	31,900
Audio Improvements to Mountford Hall	Enterprise	15,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15,000
Avenue Park Splash Park	Place	0	70,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,000
Baldock Road Recreation Ground Letchworth	Place	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Bancroft & Priory Splash Pads	Place	13,200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13,200
Bancroft Lighting	Place	0	45,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	45,000
Burymead Road Transfer Facility	Place	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000	0
Cadcorp Local Knowledge & Notice Board Software	Customers	5,400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	200	5,200
CCTV at DCO & Hitchin Town Hall	Customers	14,900	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14,900
CCTV Replacement	Customers	131,900	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	131,900
Charnwood House	Enterprise	25,000	365,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	390,600
Community Centres Flat Roof Safety Barriers	Resources	43,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	43,000
Conference Calling Solutions in Large Meeting Rooms at District Council Offices	Customers	13,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13,000
Council property improvements following condition surveys	Resources	165,200	100,000	100,000	85,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	450,200
Cyber Attacks - Events Monitoring Software Solution	Customers	2,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,000
Cycle Strategy implementation (GAF)	Regulatory	0	278,000	0	0	0	0	0	278,000	0	0	0
DR Hardware Refresh Inc UPS Battery Pk (unit 3)	Customers	8,000	43,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	51,000
Email Encryption Software Solution	Customers	17,700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17,700
Environmental Improvements	Place	78,300	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	78,300
Fibre Waste Bins	Place	0	1,170,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,170,000
Green Infrastructure implementation (GAF)	Regulatory	0	185,000	0	0	0	0	0	185,000	0	0	0
Grounds Maintenance Vehicles & Machinery	Resources	315,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	315,000
Hitchin Lairage car park - cosmetic coating to four stairwells and replacement windows and doors	Resources	75,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	75,000
Hitchin Swim Centre Café	Place	19,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19,000
Hitchin Swimm Centre Pool View	Place	70,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,000
Hitchin Swim Centre Reception Toilet Refurbishment	Place	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
Hitchin Swim Centre: Archers Member Change and Relaxation Area Refurbishment	Place	300,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	300,000
Hitchin Swim Centre: Changing Village Refurbishment	Place	0	0	225,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	225,000
Hitchin Swim Centre: Fitness Equipment Replacement	Place	391,700	0	0	0	0	0	10,000	0	0	0	381,700
Hitchin Town Hall Kitchen Enhancement	Enterprise	0	0	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25,000
Howard Park Kiosk Refurbishment	Enterprise	15,400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15,400
Howard Park Letchworth Path Resurfacing	Place	0	20,000	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
Infrastructure Hardware	Customers	375,000	0	18,000	18,000	190,000	0	0	0	0	0	601,000
Installation of trial on-street charging (GAF)	Regulatory	0	50,000	0	0	0	0	0	50,000	0	0	0
Ivel Springs Footpaths	Place	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,000
King George V Muga Hitchin	Place	0	55,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	55,000	0	0

Project	Service Directorate							Funding				
		2024/25 Funding £	2025/26 Funding £	2026/27 Funding £	2027/28 Funding £	2028/29 Funding £	2029/30 - 2033/34 Funding £	Funded from Other Grants	Funded from Government Grant	Funded from s106 contributions	Funded from Revenue / IT Reserve	Balance funded from Capital Receipts/ Set- aside receipts/ Borrowing
John Barker Place, Hitchin	Regulatory	1,096,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	270,400	0	825,600
Laptops - Refresh Programme	Customers	40,000	319,000	49,000	35,000	40,000	443,000	0	0	0	0	926,000
Leased Cars	Resources	141,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	141,000
Letchworth OD Pool Café	Place	53,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53,000
Local Authority Housing Fund Pt 2	Regulatory	300	0	0	0	0	0	0	300	0	0	0
Local Authority Housing Fund Pt 3	Regulatory	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Match funding for Electric Vehicle charging	Regulatory	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,000
Members Laptops Refresh Programme	Customers	0	0	30,000	0	0	60,000	0	0	0	0	90,000
Microsoft Enterprise Software Assurance	Customers	0	679,000	0	0	747,000	747,000	0	0	0	0	2,173,000
Museum Storage Facility	Enterprise	50,000	1,950,000	2,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,000,000
Newmarket Road Royston Skatepark & Access	Place	88,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88,500	0	0
NH Museum & Community Facility	Enterprise	0	48,300	0	0	0	0	48,300	0	0	0	0
NH Museum Chiller	Enterprise	0	80,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80,000
NHLC Air Handling Units	Place	250,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	250,000
NHLC Café	Place	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
NHLC Gym Platform Lift Replacement	Place	15,700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15,700
NHLC Gym Equipment	Place	434,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	434,000
NHLC Gym Refurbishment	Place	292,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	292,000
NHLC Interactive Water Feature	Place	0	0	0	120,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	120,000
NHLC Pool Replacement	Place	90,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	90,000
NHLC Pool, Female and Accessible Wet Change Refurbishment	Place	0	250,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	250,000
NHLC Pool Flume Replacement	Place	0	300,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	300,000
NHLC Pool View	Place	110,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	110,000
Northern Transfer Station	Place	0	0	3,000,000	3,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,000,000
Norton Common Bowls Pavilion	Place	0	55,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	28,000	0	27,000
Norton Common Footpaths	Place	0	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,000
Norton Common Letchworth Tennis Courts	Place	0	48,700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48,700
Off Street Car Parks resurfacing and enhancement	Resources	20,000	130,000	59,400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	209,400
Old Hale Way Allotments Hitchin	Place	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Oughtonhead Common Footpaths	Place	0	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Oughtonhead Common Hitchin Weir	Place	0	363,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	363,600
Oughtonhead Common Signage and Interpretation	Place	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10,000
Parking Charging, Payments & Management	Regulatory	235,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	235,000
Parking Machines Replacement	Regulatory	291,200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	291,200
Parking Machines Upgrade - Contactless Payment Facility Installation	Regulatory	56,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	42,000	0	0	14,000
PC's - Refresh Programme	Customers	26,600	7,000	8,000	5,000	8,000	13,000	0	0	0	0	67,600
Playground Renovation District Wide	Place	151,700	360,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	900,000	0	0	0	0	1,951,700
Priory Memorial Gardens MUGA Royston	Place	55,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55,000
Private Sector Grants	Regulatory	100,000	164,700	60,000	60,000	60,000	300,000	0	0	0	0	744,700
Provide housing at market rents.	Enterprise	3,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,000
Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund	Place	8,190,100	5,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	7,730,100	0	0	5,460,000
Ransoms Rec Footpaths, Gates and Railing	Place	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Refurbishment and improvement of community facilities	Legal and Community	0	47,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	47,800
Refuse and Recycling Bins	Place	130,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	270,000	0	0	0	0	760,000

Project	Service Directorate							Funding				
		2024/25 Funding £	2025/26 Funding £	2026/27 Funding £	2027/28 Funding £	2028/29 Funding £	2029/30 - 2033/34 Funding £	Funded from Other Grants	Funded from Government Grant	Funded from s106 contributions	Funded from Revenue / IT Reserve	Balance funded from Capital Receipts/ Set- aside receipts/ Borrowing
Remote testing equipment - Emergency Lights and Water Temperature Monitoring	Resources	0	13,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13,000
Renovate skate park at KGV Hitchin	Place	0	248,700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	248,700
Replacement of Newark Close, Royston	Enterprise	20,000	45,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	65,000
Replacement of the timber access bridge at Norton Common	Place	75,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	75,000
Resurface Lairage Car Park	Resources	0	346,300	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	346,300
Riverside walkway, Biggin Lane	Place	53,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53,000
RLC change village refurbishment – replacement of cubicles, lockers, vanity area and group change.	Place	150,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	150,000
RLC Café	Place	0	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Royston Leisure Centre Dry Side Toilet Refurbishment	Place	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Royston Leisure Centre extension	Place	250,000	1,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	168,000	0	1,082,000
RLC Pool View	Place	70,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	70,000
RLC Gym Equipment	Place	0	349,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	349,800
RLC Gym Refurbishment	Place	0	452,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	452,000
RLC Learner Pool	Place	0	2,500,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,500,000
Royston Leisure Centre Members Changing Refurbishment	Place	200,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	200,000
S106 Projects	Various	12,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12,000	0	0
S016 Funding for additional social housing	Regulatory	0	192,500	0	0	0	0	0	0	192,500	0	0
Security - Firewalls	Customers	23,600	0	18,000	0	18,000	0	0	0	0	0	59,600
Shared Prosperity Fund Community and Place Intervention: Community Engagement Schemes	Enterprise	130,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	130,000	0	0	0
Shared Prosperity Fund Community and Place Intervention: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	Enterprise	50,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	50,000	0	0	0
Shared Prosperity Fund Community and Place Intervention: Local sports facilities, tournaments, teams and leagues	Resources	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	100,000	0	0	0
Solar Together	Place	0	563,000	0	0	0	0	0	44,000	0	0	519,000
St Johns Cemetery Footpath	Place	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
Swinburne Recreation Ground Hitchin	Place	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30,000
Tablets - Android Devices	Customers	13,900	10,000	10,000	4,000	4,000	12,000	0	0	0	0	53,900
Technology One Financial System	Resources	155,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	155,800
Thomas Bellamy House, Hitchin	Enterprise	6,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6,000
Transport Plans implementation (GAF)	Regulatory	0	250,000	0	0	0	0	0	250,000	0	0	0
Walsworth Common Pavilion - contribution to scheme	Place	0	300,000	0	0	0	0	250,000	0	37,000	0	13,000
Waste and Street Cleansing Vehicles	Place	0	8,500,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,200,000	5,300,000
Weston Hills Baldock	Place	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
Weston Hills LNR Footpath Renovation	Place	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20,000
WiFi Upgrade	Customers	0	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
Wilbury Hills Cemetery Footpaths	Place	10,000	0	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40,000
		15,699,000	27,239,000	5,915,400	3,607,000	1,372,000	2,745,000	308,300	8,859,400	851,400	3,230,200	43,328,100

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Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy

**Mid-Year Review Report
2024/25**

Date of issuance: 03.10.24

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1. Background

1.1 Capital Strategy

In December 2021, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, (CIPFA), issued revised Prudential and Treasury Management Codes. These require all local authorities to prepare a Capital Strategy which is to provide the following: -

- a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services;
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed;
- the implications for future financial sustainability.

1.2 Treasury management

The Authority operates a balanced budget, which broadly means cash raised during the year will meet its cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensure this cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being invested in low-risk counterparties, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering optimising investment return.

The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Authority's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Authority, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning to ensure the Authority can meet its capital spending operations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses, and on occasion any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Authority risk or cost objectives.

Accordingly, treasury management is defined as:

"The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

2. Introduction

This report has been written in accordance with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2021).

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Authority's treasury management activities.
2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Authority will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by the full Council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement - including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy - for the year ahead, a Mid-year Review Report and an Annual Report, (stewardship report), covering activities during the previous year. (Quarterly reports are also required for the periods ending April to June and October to December and are assigned to Cabinet).
4. Delegation by the Authority of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
5. Delegation by the Authority of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specific named body. For this Authority, the delegated body is Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and covers the following:

- An economic update for the first half of the 2024/25 financial year;

- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy;
- The Authority's capital expenditure, as set out in the Capital Strategy, and prudential indicators;
- A review of the Authority's investment portfolio for 2024/25;
- A review of the Authority's borrowing strategy for 2024/25;
- A review of any debt rescheduling undertaken during 2024/25;
- A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2024/25.

3. Economics and Interest Rates

3.1 Economics Update

- The third quarter of 2024 (July to September) saw:
 - GDP growth stagnating in July following downwardly revised Q2 figures (0.5% q/q)
 - A further easing in wage growth as the headline 3myy rate (including bonuses) fell from 4.6% in June to 4.0% in July;
 - CPI inflation hitting its target in June before edging above it to 2.2% in July and August;
 - Core CPI inflation increasing from 3.3% in July to 3.6% in August;
 - The Bank of England initiating its easing cycle by lowering interest rates from 5.25% to 5.0% in August and holding them steady in its September meeting;
 - 10-year gilt yields falling to 4.0% in September.
- The economy's stagnation in June and July points more to a mild slowdown in GDP growth than a sudden drop back into a recession. Moreover, the drop in September's composite activity Purchasing Managers Index, from 53.8 in August to 52.9, was still consistent with GDP growth of 0.3%-0.4% for the summer months. This is in line with the Bank of England's view, and it was encouraging that an improvement in manufacturing output growth could be detected, whilst the services PMI balance suggests non-retail services output grew by 0.5% q/q in Q3. Additionally, the services PMI future activity balance showed an uptick in September, although readings after the Chancellor's announcements at the Budget on 30th October will be more meaningful.
- The 1.0% m/m jump in retail sales in August was stronger than the consensus forecast for a 0.4% m/m increase. The rise was reasonably broad based, with six of the seven main sub sectors recording monthly increases, though the biggest gains came from clothing stores and supermarkets, which the ONS reported was driven by the warmer-than-usual weather and end of season sales. As a result, some of that strength is probably temporary.
- The government's plans to raise public spending by around £16bn a year (0.6% GDP) have caused concerns that a big rise in taxes will be announced in the Budget, which could weaken GDP growth in the medium-term. However, if taxes are raised in line with spending (i.e., by £16bn) that would mean the overall stance of fiscal policy would be similar to the previous government's plan to reduce the budget deficit. Additionally, rises in public spending tend to boost GDP by more than increases in taxes reduce it. Our colleagues at Capital Economics suggest GDP growth will hit 1.2% in 2024 before reaching 1.5% for both 2025 and 2026.
- The further easing in wage growth will be welcomed by the Bank of England as a sign that labour market conditions are continuing to cool. The 3myy growth rate of average earnings fell from 4.6% in June to 4.0% in July. On a three-month annualised basis, average earnings growth eased from 3.0% to 1.8%, its lowest rate since December 2023. Excluding bonuses, the 3myy rate fell from 5.4% to 5.1%.
- Other labour market indicators also point to a further loosening in the labour market. The 59,000 fall in the alternative PAYE measure of the number of employees in August marked the fourth fall in the past five months. And the 77,000 decline in the three months to August was the biggest drop since November 2020. Moreover, the number of workforce jobs fell by 28,000 in Q2. The downward trend in job vacancies continued too. The number of job vacancies fell from 872,000 in the three months to July to 857,000 in the three months to August. That leaves it 34% below its peak in May 2022, and just 5% above its pre-pandemic level. Nonetheless, the Bank of England is still more concerned about the inflationary influence of the labour market rather than the risk of a major slowdown in labour market activity.

- CPI inflation stayed at 2.2% in August, but services inflation rose from a two-year low of 5.2% in July to 5.6%, significantly above its long-run average of 3.5%. Food and fuel price inflation exerted some downward pressure on CPI inflation, but these were offset by the upward effects from rising furniture/household equipment inflation, recreation/culture inflation and a surprisingly large rise in airfares inflation from -10.4% in July to +11.9% in August. As a result, core inflation crept back up from 3.3% to 3.6%. CPI inflation is also expected to rise in the coming months, potentially reaching 2.9% in November, before declining to around 2.0% by mid-2025.
- The Bank initiated its loosening cycle in August with a 25bps rate cut, lowering rates from 5.25% to 5.0%. In its September meeting, the Bank, resembling the ECB more than the Fed, opted to hold rates steady at 5.0%, signalling a preference for a more gradual approach to rate cuts. Notably, one Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member (Swati Dhingra) voted for a consecutive 25bps cut, while four members swung back to voting to leave rates unchanged. That meant the slim 5-4 vote in favour of a cut in August shifted to a solid 8-1 vote in favour of no change.
- Looking ahead, CPI inflation will likely rise in the coming months before it falls back to its target of 2.0% in mid-2025. The increasing uncertainties of the Middle East may also exert an upward pressure on inflation, with oil prices rising in the aftermath of Iran's missile attack on Israel on 1 October. China's recent outpouring of new fiscal support measures in the latter stages of September has also added to the upshift in broader commodity prices, which, in turn, may impact on global inflation levels and thus monetary policy decisions. Despite these recent developments, our central forecast is still for rates to fall to 4.5% by the end of 2024 with further cuts likely throughout 2025. This is in line with market expectations, however, although a November rate cut still looks likely, December may be more problematic for the Bank if CPI inflation spikes towards 3%. In the second half of 2025, though, we think a more marked easing in inflation will prompt the Bank to speed up, resulting in rates eventually reaching 3.0%, rather than the 3.25-3.50% currently priced in by financial markets.
- Our forecast is next due to be updated around mid-November following the 30 October Budget, 5 November US presidential election and the 7 November MPC meeting and the release of the Bank of England Quarterly Monetary Policy Report.
- Looking at gilt movements in the first half of 2024/25, and you will note the 10-year gilt yield declined from 4.32% in May to 4.02% in August as the Bank's August rate cut signalled the start of its loosening cycle. Following the decision to hold the Bank Rate at 5.0% in September, the market response was muted, with the 10-year yield rising by only 5bps after the announcement. This likely reflected the fact that money markets had priced in a 25% chance of a rate cut prior to the meeting. The yield had already increased by about 10bps in the days leading up to the meeting, driven in part by the Fed's "hawkish cut" on 18 September. There is a possibility that gilt yields will rise near-term as UK policymakers remain cautious due to persistent inflation concerns, before declining in the longer term as rates fall to 3.0%.
- The FTSE 100 reached a peak of 8,380 in the third quarter of 2024, but its performance is firmly in the shade of the US S&P500, which has breached the 5,700 threshold on several occasions recently. Its progress, however, may pause for the time being whilst investors wait to see who is elected the next US President, and how events in the Middle East (and Ukraine) unfold. The catalyst for any further rally (or not) is likely to be the degree of investors' faith in AI.

MPC meetings: 9 May, 20 June, 1 August, 19 September 2024

- On 9 May, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 7-2 to keep Bank Rate at 5.25%. This outcome was repeated on 20th June.
- However, by the time of the August meeting, there was a 5-4 vote in place for rates to be cut by 25bps to 5%. However, subsequent speeches from MPC members have supported Governor Bailey's tone with its emphasis on "gradual" reductions over time.
- Markets thought there may be an outside chance of a further Bank Rate reduction in September, following the 50bps cut by the FOMC, but this came to nothing.
- Nonetheless, November still looks most likely to be the next month to see a rate cut to 4.75% but, thereafter, inflation and employment data releases, as well as geo-political events, are likely to be the determinant for what happens in the remainder of 2024/25 and into 2025/26.

3.2 Interest Rate Forecasts

The Authority has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Authority to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1 November 2012.

Our latest forecast on 28 May sets out a view that short, medium and long-dated interest rates will fall back over the next year or two, although there are upside risks in respect of the stickiness of inflation and a continuing tight labour market, as well as the size of gilt issuance.

Our PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps, calculated as gilts plus 80bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1 November 2012.

Link Group Interest Rate View	28.05.24									
	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27
BANK RATE	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00
3 month ave earnings	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.00	3.00	3.00
6 month ave earnings	4.40	3.90	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.10	3.10	3.20
12 month ave earnings	4.30	3.80	3.50	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.20	3.30	3.40
5 yr PWLB	4.50	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80
10 yr PWLB	4.60	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.90
25 yr PWLB	5.00	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.40	4.40	4.30	4.30
50 yr PWLB	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.30	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10

4. Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Update

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS), for 2024/25 was approved by the Council on 29/02/24

- There are no policy changes to the TMSS; the details in this report update the position in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

5. The Authority's Capital Position (Prudential Indicators)

This part of the report is structured to update:

- The Authority's capital expenditure plans;
- How these plans are being financed;
- The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the prudential indicators and the underlying need to borrow; and
- Compliance with the limits in place for borrowing activity.

5.1 Prudential Indicator for Capital Expenditure

This table shows the revised estimates for capital expenditure and the changes since the capital programme was agreed at the Budget.

Capital Expenditure by Service	2024/25 Working Estimate £'000	Current Position £'000	2024/25 Revised Estimate £'000
Advances	1,096	0	1,096
Asset Management	770	40	315
CCTV	132	127	132
Community Services	48	0	0
Computer Software and Equipment	773	165	718
Corporate Items	2,366	-6	736
Growth Fund Projects	713	0	0
Leisure Facilities	21,198	522	11,558
Museum & Arts	2,173	15	95
Parking	1,493	0	777
Renovation & Reinstatement Grant Expenditure	204	0	100
S106 projects	0	12	12
Waste	120	72	160
Total capital expenditure	31,087	947	15,699

5.2 Changes to the Financing of the Capital Programme

The table below draws together the main strategy elements of the capital expenditure plans (above), highlighting the original supported and unsupported elements of the capital programme, and the expected financing arrangements of this capital expenditure. The borrowing element of the table increases the underlying indebtedness of the Authority by way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), although this will be reduced in part by revenue charges for the repayment of debt (the Minimum Revenue Provision). This direct borrowing need may also be supplemented by maturing debt and other treasury requirements.

Capital Expenditure	2024/25 Working Estimate £m	Current Position £m	2024/25 Revised Estimate £m
Total capital expenditure	31,087	947	15,699
Financed by:			
Capital receipts and Set Aside Receipts	4,905	576	4,678
Other third party grants and contributions	9,974	195	8,062
S106 Receipts	542	148	539
Revenue	30	0	30
Total financing	15,451	919	13,309
Borrowing requirement	15,636	28	2,390

5.3 Changes to the Prudential Indicators for the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), External Debt and the Operational Boundary

The table below shows the CFR, which is the underlying external need to incur borrowing for a capital purpose. It also shows the expected debt position over the period, which is termed the Operational Boundary.

Prudential Indicator – the Operational Boundary for external debt

	2024/25 Original Estimate £m	Current Position £m	2023/24 Revised Estimate £m
Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement			
Total CFR	11.856	-2.513	2.296
Prudential Indicator – the Operational Boundary for external debt			
Borrowing	12.182	0.322	2.390
Other long-term liabilities	0.106	0.106	0.106
Total External Debt (year end position)	0.4310	0.322	0.322

5.4 Limits to Borrowing Activity

The first key control over the treasury activity is a prudential indicator to ensure that over the medium term, net borrowing (borrowings less investments) will only be for a capital purpose. **Gross external borrowing** should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2024/25 and next two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years. The Authority has approved a policy for borrowing in advance of need which will be adhered to if this proves prudent.

A further prudential indicator controls the overall level of borrowing. This is **the Authorised Limit** which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. It is the expected maximum borrowing need with some headroom for unexpected movements. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

Authorised limit for external debt	2024/25 Original Indicator £m	Current Position	2024/25 Revised Indicator
Borrowing	7.0	0.322	7.0

6. Borrowing

The Authority's revised capital financing requirement (CFR) for 2024/25 is £2.296m. The CFR denotes the Authority's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. If the CFR is positive the Authority may borrow from the PWLB or the market (external borrowing), or from internal balances on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions. Table 5.4 shows the Authority has borrowings of £0.322m and has utilised £4.879m of cash flow funds in lieu of borrowing. This is a prudent and cost-effective approach in the current economic climate but will require ongoing monitoring if gilt yields remain elevated, particularly at the longer-end of the yield curve (25 to 50 years).

It is anticipated that further external borrowing will not be undertaken during this financial year.

7. Debt Rescheduling

No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the quarter.

8. Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits

It is a statutory duty for the Authority to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the half year ended 30 September 2024, the Authority has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Authority's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25. The Director of Finance reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Authority's Treasury Management Practices.

9. Annual Investment Strategy

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2024/25, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the Authority on **29/02/24**. In accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, it sets out the Authority's investment priorities as being:

- Security of capital
- Liquidity
- Yield

The Authority will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with the Authority's risk appetite. In the current economic climate, it is considered appropriate to keep investments short term to cover cash flow needs, but also to seek out value available in periods up to 24 months.

Creditworthiness.

The UK's sovereign rating has proven robust through the first half of 2024/25. The new Labour Government is expected to outline in detail its future fiscal proposals in the Budget scheduled for 30 October 2024.

Investment Counterparty criteria

The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS is meeting the requirement of the treasury management function.

CDS prices

It is noted that sentiment in the current economic climate can easily shift, so it remains important to undertake continual monitoring of all aspects of risk and return in the current circumstances.

Investment balances

The average level of funds available for investment purposes during the first half of the financial year was **£54.1m**. These funds were available on a temporary basis, and the level of funds available was mainly dependent on the timing of precept payments, receipt of grants and progress on the capital programme. The Authority holds **£20m** core cash balances for investment purposes (i.e., funds available for more than one year).

	Amount £	Average Interest Rate %
Managed By NHDC		
Banks	6,000,000	5.24
Building Societies	0	0
Local Authorities	44,000,000	5.19
Government	4,000,000	5.17
Total	54, 000,000	5.17

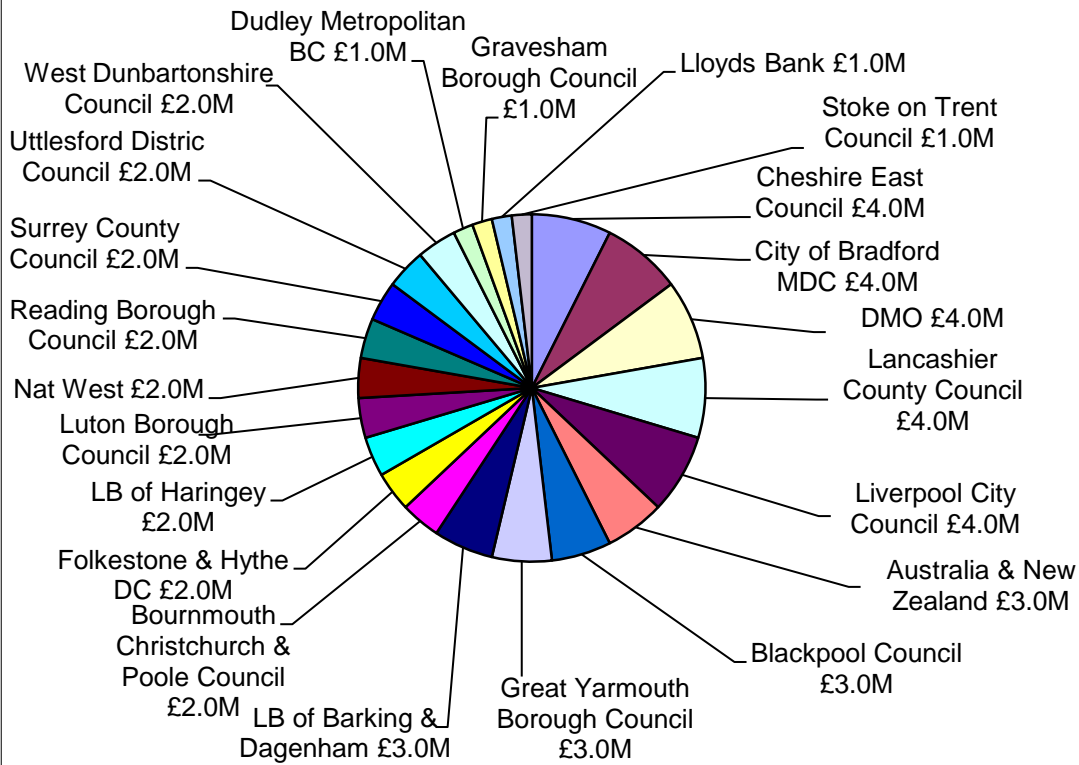
In percentage terms, this equates to:

	Percentage
Government	7
Banks	11
Local Authorities	82
Building Societies	0

The approved 24/25 strategy is that no more than 60% of investments should be placed with Building Societies and Property Funds with a maximum value of £25M. The value at 30 September was £0M.

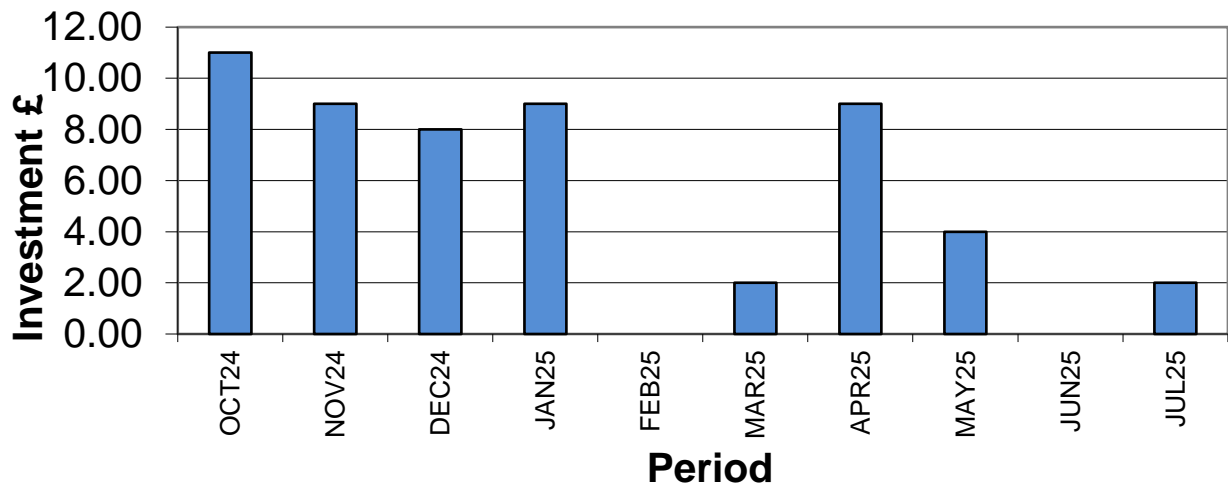
The pie chart below shows the spread of investment balances as at 30 September 2024. This is a snapshot in time that demonstrates the diversification of investments.

Placement of Investments 30th Sept 2024

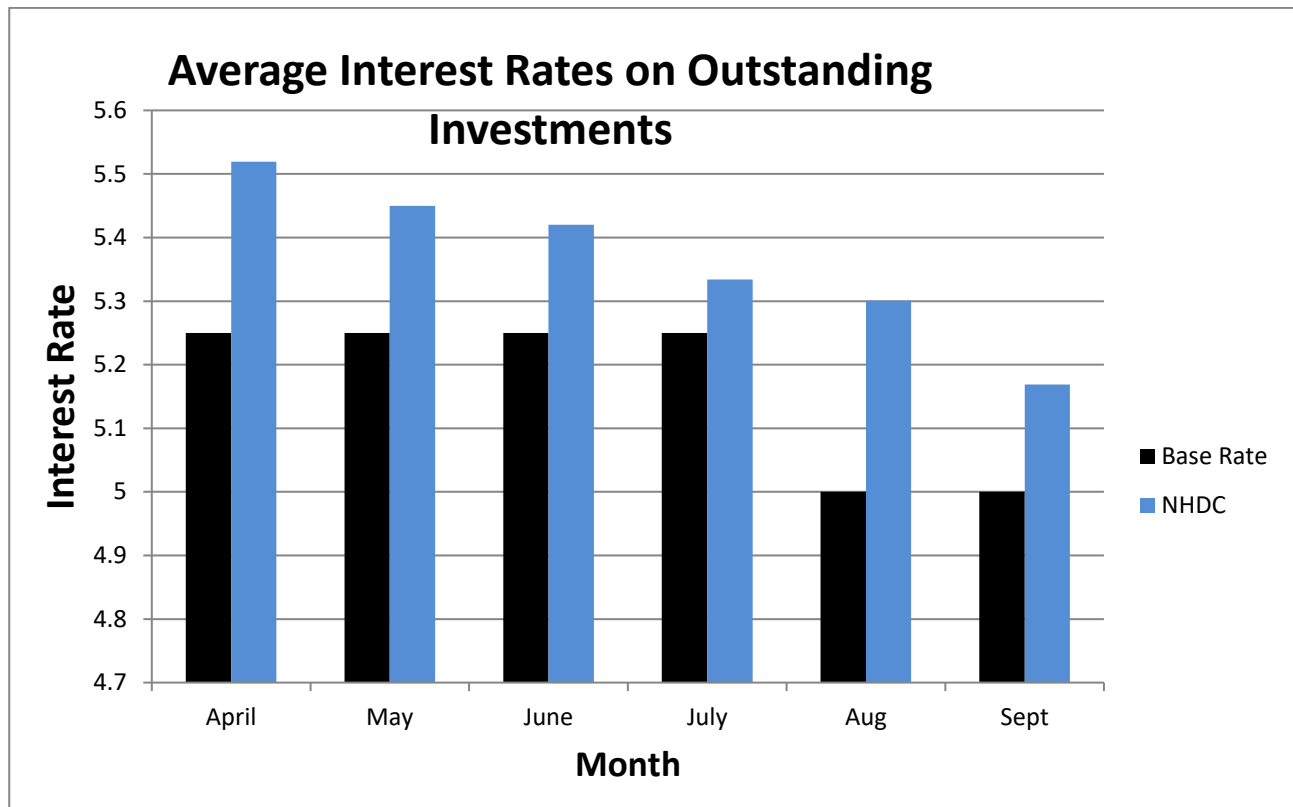


The chart below shows the Council's investment maturity profile.

Investment Maturity 30th Sept 2024



The graph below shows the average rate of interest on outstanding investments at 30 September.



Approved limits

Officers can confirm that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the period ended 30th September 2024.

COUNCIL
15 January 2025

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: CONSTITUTIONAL & GOVERNANCE REVIEW

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

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL: CLLR DANIEL ALLEN

COUNCIL PRIORITY: **Thriving Communities/Accessible Services/Responsible
Growth/Sustainability**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents a summary of the areas reviewed and any in principle recommendations of the Constitutional & Governance Working Group ('Working Group') in relation to the following:
- *The Planning Control Committee meetings and Sub-Committees (including start times/potential end times).*
 - *Standards Committee – recommendation to review the Terms of Reference to include other meaningful areas of remit.*
 - *Council Procedure Rules to be reviewed and amended in respect of Member Motions and Questions, (including agenda management, number, length of time on debate/ remit/ and Member speeches).*

The report also covers areas considered but not recommended for change at this stage.

[Members should note that further recommendations may need to be considered on the same or similar areas, post the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Review Report, within 6 months of this report and for that reason this should not require a motion under Council Procedure Rule 14.8.15(b)].

To note, that since the original version of this report was published for the meeting of 28 November, and then 9 December, a request for a further amendment and possible referral are covered by recommendations 2.9 and 2.10.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Full Council approves:

- 2.1. *The removal of the Planning Control Committee Sub-Committee meetings from the 2025 calendar.*
- 2.2. *That Planning Control Committee meetings commence at 7pm, from:*
2.2.1 *January 2025; (or if the vote on this is lost)*
2.2.2 *May 2025.*

- 2.3. 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. Such amendment to take effect from:
 2.3.1 January 2025; **(or if the vote on this is lost)**
 2.3.2 May 2025.
- [Note this is not a guillotine provision to end the meeting at 10.30pm]**
- 2.4. 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.
- 2.5. The proposed amendments to the Council Procedure Rules ('CPR') on Member Motions, Member Questions and Rules of Debate, as follows:
- 2.5.1. CPR 4.8.2 (f) and (g) order of business be move to the end of the meeting.
- 2.5.2. CPR 4.8.12 (a) Motions on Notice – to be amended to one Motion per Political Group, to be accepted in the order that they are received.
- 2.5.3. 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.
- 2.5.4. CPR 4.8.12 (d) Motions on Notice - Debate to be up to 15 minutes per Motion, **[and if recommendation 2.5.2 is lost, the maximum time for all Motions in total, one hour – guillotine for Members Motion]**.
- 2.5.5. 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 **[and in the event recommendation 2.5.2 is lost, this order would be repeated until any time expired – as under 2.5.4/ or if 2.5.4 lost until all Motions have been considered]**.
- 2.5.6 CPR 4.8.14 (e) Content and Length of Speeches – to be reduced per Councillor to three minutes.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 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) accordingly¹.

¹ NB Individual Executive Decisions are prescribed decisions and all require a Delegated Decision.

- 2.8 *(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:*
- 2.8.1 *Baldock and District – to become Baldock and Villages Community Forum;*
- 2.8.2 *Royston and District – to become Royston and Villages Community Forum.*
- 2.9 *To amend section 14.6.11(b)(iv)A as detailed in paragraph 8.*
- 2.10 *To consider any recommendations from Cabinet (if made) from 14 January 2025, on the amendment to 14.6.5 (a)(xiii) and 14.6.13.*

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure the arrangements are up-to date and fit for purpose.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. A number of issues were considered by the Working Group, and not taken forward. These are detailed below. The recommendations put forward by the Councillors on the Working Group, are those that they were predisposed towards, and considered worth Full Council debate and determination.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. In the 2023/24 municipal year, it was indicated that the Constitutional & Governance review would be undertaken, post all-out elections. The Council approved the principle of establishment of a Member (Group Leaders/ nominated Sub) Officer (Managing Director, Service Director Resources/ section 151, Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Manager and Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Working Group, in its calendar of meetings in May 2024. The purpose was to review the Constitutional and decision-making arrangements, such work, and recommendations to be made during 2024. The Working Group has met twice (August and October) to consider the matters detailed in this report and has made the recommendations - based on those that the Members within the Group, considered should be taken forward for formal consideration.
- 5.2. There was consultation in April 2024 with the then Chairs/ Vice Chairs of the Community Forums. Their feedback was considered by the Working Group.
- 5.3. There has been consultation with the Members of the Planning Control Committee by the Chair of that Committee, on how to improve its effectiveness. Following this, further District Councillor consultations on the Planning Control Committee/ Sub-Committees review options were undertaken (whether to have Sub-Committees, timing of meetings and any 'guillotine' cut off for meeting items). These consultations were considered and form the basis for recommendations (although are included for information purposes as Appendices A-B).

- 5.4. The Members, Reserve Members, Co-optees, Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons of the Standards and Finance, Audit and Risk ('FAR') Committees were also consulted on potential changes and / or merge of the Standards Committee with an Audit-type Committee, such as FAR. The potential review of arrangements was also discussed at the Standards Committee on 23 October and a recommendation made at that meeting to the Working Group. The consultation response is Appendix C and the recommendation repeated in 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 The Working Group considered several issues during its two meetings, which are summarised as follows (with some additional background on key themes starting at 7.2):

7.1.1. **PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE:** the length, timing and arrangements for the meetings were considered in the light of current issues and previous Corporate Peer recommendations. ***Further background below under 7.2.***

7.1.2. **FINANCE, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE:** PREVIOUS LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) PEER REVIEWS: should the scrutiny/ review of Financial reports be dealt with by Overview & Scrutiny, rather than FAR, or a separate scrutiny committee. ***Further background below under 7.5.***

7.1.3. **STANDARDS COMMITTEE:** should this be combined with another Committee, or the Terms of Reference be reviewed, or status quo. ***Further background below under 7.11.***

7.1.4. **CABINET PANEL ON THE ENVIRONMENT:** was it as effective as it could be, could it be improved, or should it be removed. *The discussion confirmed retaining and improving the arrangements.*

7.1.5. **DELEGATED DECISION – FINANCIAL LIMITS FOR NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS – further background information below under 7.18.**

7.1.6. **MEMBER MOTIONS / QUESTIONS –** the order of business in the meetings, remit, timing, number was considered. There were also discussions on the length of the speaking time for Members. and how to ensure that the Council better manages and has a more effective meeting agenda. ***This is covered by sub-numbered recommendations under 2.5.***

7.1.7. **COMMUNITY FORUMS –** the Working Group considered the April 2024 Chair and Vice Chair feedback consultation and the possibility of making these Forums more effective. There were discussions concerning a central District Panel Grant allocation approach as well as considering the renaming of two of the Forums. *The discussions confirmed that there would be no District Panel Grant approach recommendation. Renaming two of the Forums has been covered in recommendation 2.8.*

- 7.1.8. *Whether any further Constitutional & Governance changes may be required, after the Corporate Peer Review 2024. There is no recommendation at this juncture– as this would be covered by any subsequent action plan, following the Peer Report.*

PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE:

- 7.2 The effectiveness of this Committee/ workloads and decision making has long been an issue and the subject of a previous LGA Corporate Peer Challenge review (2020). This continues to be a concern with some recent meetings finishing very late in the evening/ or in the early hours. It was recommended in 2020 by the LGA Peers that the Council should plan and be ready for the future increased planning applications (post Local Plan adoption), and that it:

“Consider starting meetings earlier. Members and officers are not performing at their best at late night meetings after a full day’s work and there is an increased risk of challenge from applicants if it was perceived that an application had been rushed because of a long meeting.”

“The finish time of planning committees should also be reviewed.”

- 7.3 The Membership at the time did not agree with earlier meetings nor guillotine provisions. Current Membership survey responses relating to the Planning Control Committee are appended at A and B. The Comments of the Chair relating to the former were also considered by the Working Group, who advised, amongst other issues, that there was scope for earlier Committee meetings, however, a further survey was advisable (*which was undertaken*). Additional Planning Control Committee Members comments are included in Appendix B. The survey responses indicated a greater willingness to consider slightly earlier meetings, and a ‘cut-off’ guillotine provision, together with better informal management of the agendas, and public speaking arrangements. ***Recommendations 2.2-2.3 cover these issues.***
- 7.4 The Group Leader/ Subs on the Working Group did not support the use of Planning Sub-Committee to consider Masterplans or Design Codes, therefore ***Recommendation 2.1 has been made to remove the current meetings listed from January 2025.***

FINANCE, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE:

- 7.5 In 2020 the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge undertook a review, the review report and Action Plan were considered and agreed through Cabinet on 24 March 2020 and 23 June 2020, respectively.
- 7.6 A follow up review was undertaken by (a different) LGA Corporate Peers during 2022 and a further LGA Peer report was issued in January 2023 (see Appendix A to that 2022 report). This concentrated on Overview & Scrutiny, and Finance, Audit and Risk (‘FAR’) Committees and several further recommendations were made. These were separated out into the Action Plan with responses and proposed actions for the Committees consideration and recommendations to Cabinet. This was then considered by Overview & Scrutiny and FAR in June 2023. Initial Action plan link ([CLICK HERE](#)).

- 7.7 Two recommendations related to the current FAR Committee's remit:

“Split finance scrutiny from audit and risk. The scrutiny of finance should sit with a scrutiny committee rather than in the audit and risk committee.”

“After the audit and risk function had been split from the finance (scrutiny) role, the new audit committee should focus on understanding their audit role and undertake a self-assessment of the role of an effective audit committee.”

- 7.8 As part of the Action Plan put forward (to listed recommendations nos' 24 and 25, see link in 7.6 above) was to:

“The reasons behind the recommendation are understood but considered premature. Given the various recommendations that need to be implemented in respect of Overview and Scrutiny Committee it is perhaps not the best time to be giving the committee additional work. Equally the introduction of an independent member and the various recommendations that need to be implemented in respect of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, should improve, and enhance that Committee. This recommendation will therefore be revisited in 18 months as part of a wider review of structures post 2024 election.”

- 7.9 The role of an 'Audit' Committee is to carry out a set statutory function, to audit and seek assurance for certain Council's financial reporting, internal controls, governance, and risk management functions. As CIPFA has set out:

“Local government bodies are expected to meet high standards of governance and accountability. An audit committee provides a specialist forum to support and monitor the authority in the areas of governance, risk management, external audit, internal audit, financial reporting, and other related areas. There are a number of statutory duties, regulations, and standards relating to financial reporting, governance, and audit that the authority must comply with, and an audit committee is best placed to oversee these.”

- 7.10 Whilst this was considered by the Working Group (as per the Action Plan response), given the subsequent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge was arranged and ongoing at the time of *this* report, there is no Working Group recommendation on this issue. *However, there was an ongoing LGA Corporate Peer Challenge at the time of preparing this report; it has been mooted that a similar recommendation is likely to be made (expected in February 2025). This will be for a later Council meeting once an action plan response is agreed. There is also a potential SIAS review regarding the effectiveness of FAR, which will be reported through the Committee process in due course, which will require consideration prior to any changes.*

STANDARDS COMMITTEE:

- 7.11 There is no legal requirement to have such a Committee, however, this Council chose to continue with one following changes to the regime in or around 2011. Furthermore, a principal Council must have 'arrangements' in place to consider complaints against Councillors (in North Herts case, District and Local Parish, Town, and Community Councillors within the District), as per the requirements under the Localism Act 2011.

- 7.12 The current Committee has remit to consider ethical standards matters, promote those, review the Councillor Complaints Handling Procedure and complaints, consider appeals against the Monitoring Officer's refusal to grant a dispensation, consider any political restriction (as relevant) and, most significantly if it arises, Councillor complaints via a Sub-Committee. The membership is 12 District Councillors, up to 4 Co-opted Parish Councillors and the Independent and Reserve Independent Persons are invited to attend the meetings (they are not members of the Committee).
- 7.13 The Committee generally meets twice a year. However, the agendas are limited, often to the Standards Matters report (which includes complaints received/ general ethical standards issues), and one other report covering e.g., a Code or Complaints Handling Procedure Review. Locally most within Hertfordshire have retained a Standards Committee, although not all appear to have scheduled meetings. This is largely reflective of the national picture, albeit that some councils have incorporated the statutory ambit of the Standards Committee within an Audit Committee that deals with audit / financial monitoring / assurances.
- 7.14 To gauge views, an email with survey was therefore sent to the 34 Standards Committee and Finance, Audit & Risk Committee Members (and any reserves), co-optees and Independent and Reserve Independent Persons to seek their thoughts on potential changes. 8 responses were received: 4 District Councillors (full Members of the Standards Committee), one of the Parish Co-optee and the Independent Person and, the then, Reserve Independent Persons responded. None were received from FAR Committee, their reserves, or their Independent Member.
- 7.15 The survey responses relating to Standards Committee merge is appended at C. The Standards Committee considered and debated the matter on 23 October. They were not in favour of a merge with another Committee. They recommended (item 6) that:
- “(3) That the Committee recommended that the working party be urged to retain and strengthen this Committee in consultation with the recommendations and comments from the Independent Person.”***
- 7.16 The Working Group considered and accepted this principle. ***It is reflected in recommendation 2.4.***
- 7.17 *As an additional point, it is worth noting that post the Standards Committee meeting on 23 October, the Deputy Prime Minister indicated that there will be a review of the local government standards framework – with proposals to allow for suspension of members who have breached their Code of Conduct. That is likely to mean that the current Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee would have to be reviewed in due course, in any event, if such changes are enacted.*

DELEGATED DECISION – FINANCIAL LIMITS FOR NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS:

- 7.18 Members and Officers may have a general delegation or be given a specific one to come to a decision. Some of those general and specific decisions will be Executive in nature or Non-Executive. In terms of Executive decisions, these can be taken by both a Member of the Executive/ the Leader, or by an Officer. All Executive decisions are subject to Delegated Decision reporting requirements under relevant legislation 2012² (irrespective of financial level). Regarding *individual* Non-Executive decisions, these can only be taken by Officers; Regulations were introduced in 2014³ that placed requirements to produce a written record for Non-Executive Decisions, and for financial matters these relate to award a contract or when the Council will incur expenditure which, in either case, materially affects the Council's financial position. 'Materially affects' is not defined in legislation – it is something for local determination and the current limit was set in 2015 of £50K. ***This has been covered in recommendation 2.7.***

RECOMMENDATION 2.9

- 7.19 A request for this amendment was made by the Service Director: Regulatory.

RECOMMENDATION 2.10

- 7.20 Cabinet will be considering a report relating to a Local Government Ombudsman report on 14 January 2025. This amendment will only be considered if such a recommendation is made to Full Council.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE:

- 8.1. For the reasons set out in the report (including earlier LGA Corporate Peer Challenge proposals and current workload), some amendments to arrangements are recommended. The survey results are supportive of an earlier commencement of meetings and a form of guillotine (stop) provision. The latter proposed is not a 'hard' stop, but one that allows some flexibility to conclude a matter that is under consideration at 10.30pm (as the last item of business, although the meeting may continue beyond that time). The timing of 10.30pm should also ensure that, if items then need to be carried forward to a later meeting, the number of items are likely to be limited in number. Agenda management will also be key to this and ensuring that those items with higher public interest are dealt with earlier on in the meeting where possible. The Working Group also felt that improvements could be made to the *reasonably new* Public Speaking Scheme to assist with the timing of each item, and this can be amended by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair/ Vice Chair of Committee and Group Leaders.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE, FINANCE, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE, PANELS & FORUMS

- 8.2. Nothing further to add.

² Regulation 13 2012 No. 2089

³ 2014 No. 2095 The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

MEMBER MOTIONS / QUESTIONS/ DEBATE

- 8.3. Member Motions and Questions were historically dealt with at the end of Full Council meetings, and were changed in the last few years to earlier on in the agenda/ the meetings. That has resulted in the 'main' decision making items not being considered until later in the evening (9/9.30pm or e.g. at the last meeting 10.30pm).
- 8.4. Currently the wide scope of any Motion has also meant, in recent times that more generic Motions are presented to Full Council, that the Council has no direct responsibility for, nor power to do more than debate and write to relevant Ministers/ parties. As many of the other Reports and referral items that are presented to Council concern important local decision making issues, it was considered appropriate to review the order of business for Member Motions and Questions, the number and timing spent on the debate. The recommendations under 2.5 reflect pertinent proposals for change.

DELEGATED DECISION – FINANCIAL LIMITS FOR NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

- 8.5. The level of Decisions that “materially affects the Council’s financial position” was set at North Herts Council at/ or above £50k, in 2015. It is therefore suggested that this be increased as per recommendation 2.7. with consequential amendments to relevant Procedure Rules, Regulations and Guidance.

AMENDMENT TO SECTION 14.6.11(b)(iv) A – SERVICE DIRECTOR: REGULATORY

- 8.6. The Council has responsibilities under the Environment Act 2021 and Biodiversity Duty. This includes securing and / or facilitating Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). There are two ways in which BNG may be secured through a s106 legal agreement:
- 8.6.1 In association a planning application for development where significant-on site habitat is to be provided to satisfy BNG requirements, so this would follow the ‘normal’ application process; or
- 8.6.2 through a ‘Habitat Bank’ where units are provided for sale by a provider to developers who cannot (fully) meet BNG requirements on their own site.
- 8.7 Where 8.6.2 occurs, the preference is for North Herts Council planning applications to utilise local Habitat Banks. BNG Habitat Banks generally do not require planning permission as they fall within permitted development rights relating to the management of land (i.e. they will involve the growing of grassland, planting of trees or other habitat creation on agricultural or otherwise undeveloped land). Such matters are a LPA function that normally falls to the relevant Service Director. It is therefore proposed that this can be covered by the following amendment to the above delegation under 14.6.11(b)(iv) A:
- “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”*
- 8.8 The above amendment should ensure that this issue is covered.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 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.
- 9.3. In respect of recommendation 2.3, there is a possible risk of increased appeals for non-determination of an application, should the application be considered outside of the statutory or agreed time limit. The statutory time limits for applications for planning permission are set out in article 34 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure (England) Order 2015 (as amended). They are 13 weeks for applications for major development, 10 weeks for applications for technical details consent, and (from 1 August 2021) applications for public service infrastructure development, and 8 weeks for all other types of development (unless an application is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, in which case a 16 week limit applies). Where a planning application takes longer than the statutory period to decide, and an extended period has not been agreed with the applicant, the policy is that the decision should be made within 26 weeks for major applications and 16 weeks for non-major applications (as defined by article 34(2)(b) of the Development Management Procedure Order 2015) to comply with the 'planning guarantee'. Failure to meet these timeframes leads to a refund of the applications fees. The Development Control Manager will seek to manage the risks through advanced planning of the agenda, although additional meetings may be required.
- 9.4. In respect of recommendation 2.7, it should be reiterated that all Executive Decisions made by individuals must be recorded, include prescribed information and made available for inspection under the requirements of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. Therefore no financial exemptions for financial decisions apply. All should be recorded and unless they include exempt information, reported in the normal manner (MIS/ on the Council's Delegated Decision page).
- 9.5. The Council, as the Local Planning Authority, has a general duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under the Environment Act 2021, otherwise known as the 'biodiversity duty'.
- 9.6. Otherwise, the legislation is as stated above.

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, albeit additional impacts may be identified with the requirement for any additional meetings or Committees. There are some positive staff and Member wellbeing issues regarding any changes to the lateness of meetings. This could, however, be offset if more meetings are required.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 None identified in respect of the specific amendments proposed.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Survey of Planning Control Committee Members by Chair of the Planning Control Committee;
- 16.2 Appendix B – Survey of all District Councillors on Planning Control Committee Arrangements.
- 16.3 Appendix C – Standards Committee Survey Comments.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Author:

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

Consultees:

- 17.2. Anthony Roche, Managing Director.
- 17.3. Ian Couper, Service Director Resources.
- 17.4. Melanie Stimpson, Democratic Services Manager.

17.5. James Lovegrove, Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager.

17.6. Reuben Ayavoo, Policy & Communities Manager

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

APPENDIX A

Following the Council meeting of 11 July, the Chair of the Planning Control Committee canvassed the Committee Members, on how to make the arrangements more effective. The Committee feedback provided by the Chair on 30 July, was collated in excel and reproduced below. The numbering system reflects '1' who was in favour of a particular approach (1111 = 4):

Meeting Time	Papers	Training/Member Support	Community Engagement	Additional notes
18:00	1111 Publish earlier	111111 Site visits	1 Let members of the public know what to expect at committee	1 Members feel committees should end by either 10pm or 10:30pm at the latest
18:30	1111 Reduce items at each committee to a 'managable' level	1111	Don't keep residents waiting late into the night	11 Structure agendas with the most complex applications first
19:00	111111 Publish all reports and papers ahead of the meeting - if there is a missing representation do not send the mater to committee until everything is received	1		
Daytime	1111			
Adhoc (evening)	1111			
Gilloutine & Deferral System	11			
Bespoke Single Item Meetings	1111			

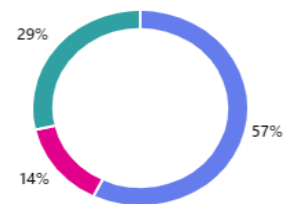
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APP B PCC SURVEY RESULTS & ADDITIONAL MEMBERS COMMENTS

1. Question: if you are a current Member on the Planning Control Committee, *would you be willing to start earlier th...*

[More details](#)

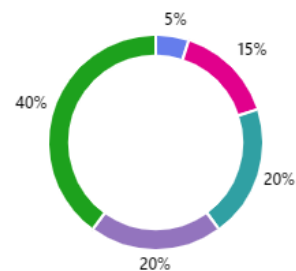
● Yes - PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 2	8
● No - MOVE TO QUESTION 5	2
● Maybe - it depends on the time PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 2	4



2. Question: if you are a Member of the Planning Control Committee and answered **YES** or **MAYBE** to question 1 above, w...

[More details](#)

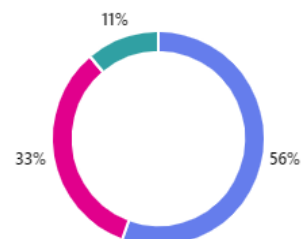
● Option 1: 5pm start	1
● Option 2: 5.30pm start	3
● Option 3: 6pm start	4
● Option 4: 6.30pm start	4
● Option 5: 7pm start	8



3. Question: if you are **NOT** a current Member on the Planning Control Committee, *would you be in favour of starting ...*

[More details](#)

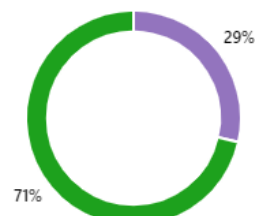
● Yes - PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 4	5
● No- MOVE TO QUESTION 5	3
● Maybe - it depends on the time - PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 4	1



4. Question: if you are **NOT** a Member of the Planning Control Committee and answered **YES** or **MAYBE** to question 3 abo...

[More details](#)

● Option 1: 5pm start	0
● Option 2: 5.30pm start	0
● Option 3: 6pm start	0
● Option 4: 6.30pm start	2
● Option 5: 7pm start	5

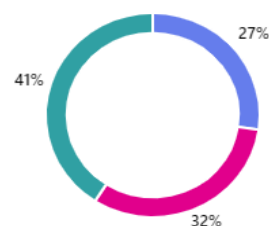


APP B PCC SURVEY RESULTS & ADDITIONAL MEMBERS COMMENTS

5. Question: **Would you support changing the current rules on finish of meetings?** eg if the Planning Control Committee ...

[More details](#)

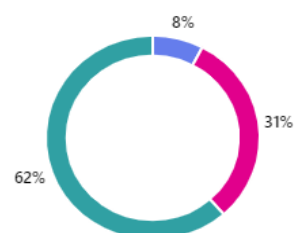
- Yes - ANSWER QUESTION 6 6
- No - MOVE TO QUESTION 7 7
- Maybe - it depends on the time proposed a- ANSWER QUESTION 6 9



6. Question: If you answered **YES** or **MAYBE** to a guillotine provision, **what time do you think is reasonable?**

[More details](#)

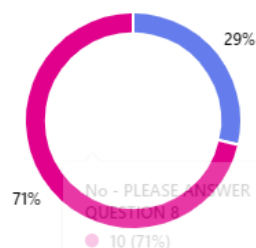
- Option 1: Finish at 9:30pm - or after the item being considered at 9:30pm? 1
- Option 2: Finish at 10.00pm - or after the item being considered at 10.00pm? 4
- Option 3: Finish at 10.30pm - or after the item being considered at 10.30pm? 8



7. Question: Council approved some Planning Control Committee Sub-Committee meetings, at its meeting in May, dates sta...

[More details](#)

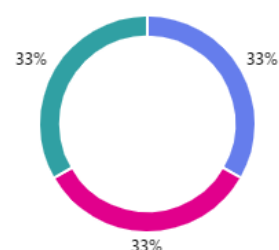
- Yes 4
- No - PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 8 10



8. Question: if you are NOT in favour of the approved Sub-Committee 2pm start, **would you consider earlier meetings?**

[More details](#)

- Yes - PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 9 3
- No 3
- Maybe - if you answer this, PLEASE ANSWER QUESTION 9 3



APP B PCC SURVEY RESULTS & ADDITIONAL MEMBERS COMMENTS



Some members also wished to provide additional comments re the consultation, which were as follows:

PCC Member	<p><i>As a member of PCC I share the concerns. We have had a number of meetings in the last year or so that have had too many agenda items and finished too late. After 10.30pm we have been going for three hours plus and I sometimes worry about the standard of decision making when people are tired. And of course, many of us will also have had a full working day as a prelude the PCC.</i></p> <p><i>However, I am unsure what the solution are:</i></p> <p><i>* More meeting? We have already stepped up to two a month, that would seem to me the most you can reasonably expect PCC members to commit to as it stands;</i></p> <p><i>* Earlier starts? Perhaps, but for PCC members working full time, that is a real challenge as most of us want to finish work and eat before the Planning meeting, particularly given the long meetings. Also, for me it is the length of the meeting, not the late finish that is the worst thing. But I go to bed late anyway. Some members commute to London and elsewhere to work, for them, earlier starts are a non runner;</i></p> <p><i>* A cut off? Perhaps this makes sense, but it would need to be quite late. No items commencing after 10.30pm doesn't seem unreasonable. However, that would no doubt be unpopular with applicants and opponents who are cut off. We would need to ensure that applications with members of the public present were heard before the guillotine;</i></p> <p><i>* Day time meeting? Ask me when I'm retired! For those members working full-time, or for some working part-time or with other commitments, very problematic. I took annual leave to attend the Highover Farm site visit as a one off, but my leave is a finite resource. Of course, some employers offer paid time off for Council duties, perhaps it is worth polling members as to how common that is. Otherwise, if you want members to regularly attend during the day, a responsibility allowance would perhaps be justified, but I worry about the optics of an SRA for Planning.</i></p>
PCC Member	<p><i>Earlier meetings would work for some but depends on how early those would be. I for example would be able to meet at 6pm at the earliest.</i></p> <p><i>Having a cut off would work but I think this would need to be subject on how far we have got with an agender item. For example if the particular agender is almost complete I would say we should finish that then arrange to complete the rest another date.</i></p>

APP B PCC SURVEY RESULTS & ADDITIONAL MEMBERS COMMENTS

	<p><i>Sub committees again would work if maybe they can be remote I for one would not be able to be at the chamber due to work and childcare arrangements.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, I think anything we do will work for some but might not work for all.</i></p> <p><i>[NB note the recently published consultation on remote/ hybrid or potential proxy voting commenced last week]. Therefore in the future more flexibility may be available.</i></p>
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District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)	<i>"I think that it is important to keep Standards as a distinct committee to ensure that there is a high quality of work done by a membership that cares about what they are doing. Mixing standards in with the work of FAR (as an example) would risk fewer members wanting to be involved in Standards because there are different levels of interest for getting involved with financial audit and risk vs Standards issues."</i>
District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)	<i>"I believe that this move would be welcome, as standards could easily be folded into FAR and save some time on another meeting."</i>
District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)	<i>"I think it makes sense to discontinue the Standards committee in its current form and am happy with your proposal."</i>
District Councillor (full Member of Standards Committee)	<p><i>"On balance I would broadly be in favour of this change.</i></p> <p><i>Currently standards meetings are very short and involve a lot of Cllrs. This change would save time and money and most importantly improve efficiency.</i></p> <p><i>If this were to happen, it is my understanding that there would be no need to increase the number of Cllrs who currently sit on FAR?"</i></p>
Parish Councillor Standards Committee co-optee	<i>"As a Parish Council representative my input is that I believe the PC reps offer a 2 way window into upholding Standards in our councils. Having representation from Parishes both helps Parish Councillors appreciate that there is a Standards process fully recognised by the Council and Parish Councillors are in turn providing transparency to a wider audience . Given national issues currently being discussed and also noting issues recently in the news closed to home in Dacorum Council I believe it important to have as much transparency as possible and the presence of Parish Councillors is a beneficial part of the process."</i>
Independent Person	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. I have reminded myself of the present Standards Committee's terms of reference and note the first: ...to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-Opted Members of the authority. The words are a direct lift from s27 of the Localism Act. They are an unambiguous obligation.</i> <i>2. As I see it, North Herts Council has delegated that major responsibility to the Standards Committee whose role then is to ensure, on behalf of the Council, that its members do, indeed, behave properly; that they observe the Nolan principles, as reflected in the adopted code of conduct.</i> <i>3. I suggest, therefore, that the working group's review should not focus solely on rationalising the numbers of committees and their meeting frequency, relevant though such matters are in the interests of administrative efficiency. It ought to</i>

	<p>take into account, also, the significance and importance to the Council of each committee.</p> <p>4. In that context and uniquely, in my view, the Standards Committee has a purpose that sits above the others. It is the body that sets the tone for all members' activities as elected representatives; and it oversees how a tone, thus set, is applied.</p> <p>5. I suggest that this major responsibly would fit uneasily as an adjunct to another committee - Finance, Audit and Risk - in which location it could give the impression of being subordinate to that body. In my view its status is the opposite: its role as tone-setter eclipses other Council functions.</p> <p>6. In my view, also, to merge it with Finance, Audit and Risk could give the electorate the understandable impression that oversight of members' adherence to their conduct obligations had become less important. Such a position would do little to promote the electorate's confidence in their local government. More than that: it would be undesirable, I suggest.</p> <p>7. Therefore, rather than giving the impression of diluting the importance of standards by implementing the contemplated merger, the working group would do well to consider inviting the Standards Committee to review its present terms of reference to ensure that they enable it fully to fulfil its role. In particular, '...7.5.8 to assist Councillors and Co-Opted Members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;' would bear detailed consideration of how it might be given practical expression.</p> <p>8. A final thought: an understandable driver for the review might be to save officers' time and Council resources. From the explanation in the invitation to comment of how a revised standards arrangements might work, I'm not convinced that it would make a substantial difference to justify the notion on that ground alone.</p> <p>9. In short, for the reasons set out above, I suggest that an amalgamation is inappropriate and that the existing Standards Committee should be retained with an enhanced brief.</p> <p>10. I would be happy to discuss this topic with the working party if its members felt that that would be helpful."</p>
(then) Reserve Independent Person	<p>"The promotion and maintenance of high standards ought to be central features of good governance. Having a "standalone" Standards Committee helps to keep standards matters in the minds of elected members and of the wider body public. Councillors are busy people with full agendas so it is perhaps understandable if from time to time ethical considerations, particularly in nuanced circumstances, become somewhat</p>

	<p><i>blurred. Having a specific committee on which councillors themselves sit provides a regular reminder of the importance of standards. Similarly having executive members involved adds to the importance attached to standards matters. It would be a pity if any new organisational configuration meant that our standards regime lost its particular identity with the risk of becoming an afterthought.</i></p> <p><i>I have found our "inner sanctum" made up of Councillors, Mo, dep Mos, IP and RIPS particularly useful. From our annual IP meetings with Paul Hoey it is apparent that such an arrangement is not widespread. It has proved an efficient and effective way of keeping our standards regime in good health. I would hope that this would not be lost in any re-organisation."</i></p>
(then) Reserve Independent Person	<p><i>"I do want standards to be given as central a place in the structures as possible, so I have a slight hesitation about merging the committee that keeps an eye on these with another that has a different agenda. If however those of you who know a lot more than me are content that standards will retain a central place in the new structures, then that's fine by me."</i></p>

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**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL
9 DECEMBER 2024**

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: CONSTITUTIONAL & GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The following proposed amendment to recommendations has now been submitted:

2.5.4. CPR 4.8.12 (d) Motions on Notice - Debate to be up to ~~15 minutes~~ 30 minutes per Motion, [and if recommendation 2.5.2 is lost, the maximum time for all Motions in total, ~~one hour~~ 90 minutes – guillotine for Members Motion].

Proposer: Cllr Matt Barnes

Seconder: Cllr Sean Prendergast

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**COUNCIL
9 DECEMBER 2024**

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: CONSTITUTIONAL & GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The following proposed amendment to recommendations has been submitted.

Recommendation 2.5 to be amended to read:

2.5.1. CPR 4.8.2 (f) ~~and (g)~~ order of business be move to the end of the meeting.

2.5.2. CPR 4.8.12 (a) Motions on Notice – to be amended to ~~one~~ three ~~Motions~~ per Political Group, to be accepted in the order that they are received.

Proposer: Cllr Ralph Muncer

Seconder: Cllr David Barnard

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