

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth, Herts, SG6 3JF
on Thursday, 10th July, 2025 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Keith Hoskins MBE (Chair), Clare Billing, Tina Bhartwas, Ian Albert, Daniel Allen, Amy Allen, Matt Barnes, Ruth Brown, Val Bryant, David Chalmers, Jon Clayden, Mick Debenham, Elizabeth Dennis, Emma Fernandes, Joe Graziano, Dominic Griffiths, Steve Jarvis, Chris Lucas, Sarah Lucas, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Ralph Muncer, Michael Muir, Sean Nolan, Steven Patmore, Louise Peace, Vijaiya Poopalasingham, Sean Prendergast, Martin Prescott, Emma Rowe, Claire Strong, Tamsin Thomas, Tom Tyson, Paul Ward, Laura Williams, Alistair Willoughby, Stewart Willoughby, Claire Winchester, Dave Winstanley, Donna Wright and Daniel Wright-Mason.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ian Couper (Director - Resources), Steve Crowley (Director - Enterprise), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Chloe Gray (Enterprise Manager), Susan Le Dain (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Anthony Roche (Chief Executive), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager) and Douglas Traill-Stevenson (Property Solicitor).

ALSO PRESENT:

At the commencement of the meeting there was 1 member of the public in attendance.

Richard Beesley, Consultant was also in attendance.

Steve Norris, Executive Director, Ben Evans, Surveyor and Neil Parlett, Senior Director from Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) were also in attendance.

20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 44 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lisa Nash, Caroline McDonnell, Bryony May, Tim Johnson, Ruth Clifton, Rhona Cameron, Sadie Billing, Cathy Brownjohn, David Barnard and Sam Collins.

21 MINUTES - 22 MAY 2025 AND 16 JUNE 2025

Audio recording – 2 minutes 12 seconds

Councillor Keith Hoskins, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 22 May 2025 and 16 June 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

22 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 49 seconds

There was no other business notified.

23 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 55 seconds

N.B. Councillor Martin Prescott entered the Chamber at 19:35.

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) The Chair reminded Members that the Council had declared both a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency. These are serious decisions, and mean that, as this was an emergency, all of us, Officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.
- (3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (4) The Chair advised that the normal procedure rules in respect of debate and times to speak will apply.
- (5) The Chair advised that 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution did not apply to this meeting. A comfort break would be held at an appropriate time, should proceedings continue at length.
- (6) The Chair advised of a change in the order of the Agenda. Agenda Items 14, 15 and 16 would be considered following Item 6. This would be followed by Agenda Item 7 and then Items 17 and 18 would be considered. Then returning to Agenda Items 8 to 13.

In response to a question from Councillor Daniel Allen, the Chair advised that he had opted to trial Questions from Members and Motions on Notice ahead of other items.

- (7) The Chair announced that Ros Allwood, Cultural Services Manager, had been working at North Hertfordshire for 30 years, and extended his gratitude to Ros for her services to the Council.

The following Members provided comments:

- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

Councillor Keith Hoskins proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Council placed on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Ros Allwood for her long and valuable service to Local Government.

- (8) The Chair announced that Aimee Jarmain, Senior Benefits Subsidy Officer, had been working at North Hertfordshire for 30 years, and extended his gratitude to Aimee for her services to the Council.

The following Member provided comments:

- Councillor Ian Albert

Councillor Keith Hoskins proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Council placed on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Aimee Jarmain for her long and valuable service to Local Government.

- (9) The Chair announced that former Chief Executive Stuart Philp passed away on 10 December 2024.

The following Members paid tribute:

- Councillor Keith Hoskins
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Steve Jarvis

- (10) The Chair announced that former District Councillor Marilyn Kirkland had passed away on 13 June 2025.

The following Members paid tribute:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby

- (11) The Chair announced that former District Councillor Lawrence Oliver had passed away recently.

The following Members paid tribute:

- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Claire Strong

Members stood for a minute in silence in tribute to them all.

24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 25 minutes 20 seconds

There was no public participation.

25 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 25 minutes 25 seconds

The Chair advised that the referrals from Cabinet, the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be taken with the respective item on the agenda.

33 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Audio recording – 25 minutes 25 seconds

Councillor Keith Hoskins, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

34 CHURCHGATE VIABILITY AND NEXT STEPS - PART 2

N.B. This item was considered in restricted session and therefore no recording is available.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the report prior to coming to the decision in Part 1.

REASON FOR DECISION: Using the knowledge collated from the public consultation and the technical due diligence carried out by Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH), there are various ways that the site (also known as the Churchgate Regeneration Zone) could be developed. However, for the Council to move forward it is important that the various options are narrowed down according to feasibility. This recommendation allows the Council to proceed with the option that is more likely to succeed based on the evidence.

35 CHURCHGATE VIABILITY AND NEXT STEPS - PART 1

Audio recording – 1 hour 0 minutes 37 seconds

Councillor Tamsin Thomas, the Executive Member for Enterprise, presented the report entitled 'Churchgate Viability and Next Steps – Part 1' and advised that:

- This report provided an update on the next phase of the Churchgate Regeneration Project.
- The Council purchased the Churchgate Shopping Centre Leasehold on 1 August 2022.
- The Project Board had completed the first three stages of the Project Management process and were now in the final stage of delivering the project.
- Due to its complexity, the Council had appointed expert consultants Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) to assist with delivery of this project.
- Public consultations were held with 3,700 responses received through surveys and individual responses.
- Following a viability assessment and combining the results of the consultations, LSH defined five 'Development Principles' which had been endorsed by the Project Board.
- The Council remained committed to a revitalisation of Churchgate and asked LSH to balance viability with vision.
- Three Project Board workshops were held which have resulted in four development options each of which have been financially appraised by LSH.
- The report recommended to Council to secure the services of a Project Manager to allow the formal procurement process to commence and to move forward with the preferred Option 3.

Steve Norris, Executive Director at LSH, gave a presentation entitled 'Churchgate Regeneration Zone' and advised that:

- LSH had been appointed to assist the Council with the stages of property and regeneration cycle for Churchgate.
- The first workshop had been a viability assessment of the site, looking at the final land value of the site and whether the scheme was viable or not viable.

- The second workshop was an assessment of potential uses for the site.
- Following the workshops LSH had produced four options for the Council.
- Option 3, a mixed-use development of plots 1-5, had been selected by the Project Board as the preferred option.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Joe Graziano
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Tamsin Thomas

Points raised during the debate included:

- This was a step in the right direction with good public consultation.
- The five Development Principles were the result of the public consultation and these were what the public wanted the Council to achieve.
- This site was long overdue for development.
- Although there were concerns regarding achieving 40% of affordable housing and around parking, this project was community focused and sustainable.
- The Council had paid over market value for the freehold of the Churchgate Shopping Centre.

In response to a point raised, Steve Norris, Executive Director at LSH advised that the next steps for this project was preparation of a Business Plan with milestones for delivery which would be brought to Council in October 2025.

In response to points raised, the Chief Executive advised that the Council had not paid above the market price for the Churchgate Shopping Centre and that the price had been approved by external surveyors.

A point of personal explanation was provided by Councillor Ralph Muncer in response to points raised by Officers relating to the purchase price of the Churchgate freehold.

Councillor Tamsin Thomas proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Supported and endorsed the Churchgate Project Board recommendation to discount Option 4 due to it not being financially viable and undertake further work to develop a proposal based upon 'Option 3', which includes by default, Options 1 and 2.
- (2) Supported and endorsed the five 'Development Principles' that are set out in paragraph 8.5.
- (3) Members approved additional funding for a specialist Project Manager of £120k as set out at 8.13, as this was not identified as part of the 25/26 budget setting process.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: Using the knowledge collated from the public consultation and the technical due diligence carried out by Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH), there are various ways that the site (also known as the Churchgate Regeneration Zone) could be developed. However, for the Council to move forward it is important that the various options are narrowed down according to feasibility. This recommendation allows the Council to proceed with the option that is more likely to succeed based on the evidence.

N.B. Following the conclusion of this item there was a break in proceedings at 21:02 and the meeting reconvened at 21:10. During the break, Councillor Dominic Griffiths left the Chamber and did not return.

26 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Audio recording – 1 hour 39 minutes 24 seconds

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report entitled 'Community Governance Review – Final Recommendations' and advised that:

- Two amendments had been published that related to the number of parish councillors for Ashwell and Codicote.
- A further amendment had been required relating to a change of the electoral cycle for Codicote as the final recommendation printed in the report of when Codicote next elected was incorrect.
- A valid petition containing 123 signatures had been received from St Ippolyts Parish Council on the draft proposals. As these were not being presented to Council as Final Recommendations, the Parish Council had confirmed that they would not present the petition and were satisfied if the petition was referenced as part of officer's presentation.
- In addition, St Ippolyts Parish Council wanted it noted that the report detailed that no Parish Council response had been received. However, included in the list of redacted responses included the Parish Council response in objection to both draft proposals.
- It had been noted that a comment had been incorrectly listed under Pirton which related to Offley. The comment had already been included in both the Offley and incorrectly in the Pirton list of redacted comments. However, the outcome remained unchanged.

Richard Beesley, the consultant working for the Council, presented the report entitled 'Community Governance Review – Final Recommendations' and advised that:

- Full Council had agreed to undertake the Community Governance Review in July 2024.
- The Final Recommendations being considered by Council had been produced following two public consultations and took into account both the statutory criteria and the 2253 responses received.
- The final recommendations had been developed, discussed, debated and refined by the cross-party Member Working Group, and some substantial changes made in response to the feedback received during the consultation.
- It was noted that the consultant had supported a large number of local authorities through Community Governance Reviews and the number of responses to this consultation was a very substantial response and indicated the strength of feeling from local people to the draft proposals.
- Following the first public consultation held in November 2024, Draft Proposals were brought before Council in February 2025 ahead of a second public consultation which ran until May 2025.
- The report contained details of every affected parish, town and community.
- Redacted anonymised submissions were included in Appendix A of the report.
- Expressed appreciation to all those who contributed to the development of the Final Recommendations by responding to the consultation.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Joe Graziano
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Daniel Allen

In response to questions, the Consultant advised that:

- Weston Parish Council did make a response in the first consultation regarding the parish boundaries. Although the second consultation response from the parish referred to the synchronisation of election dates and the number of parish councillors, not to the possible boundary changes
- The final recommendation did not include a change to the number of parish councillors for Kings Walden parish.
- From experience other councils had moved parish elections dates to align with a new unitary authority.

In response to questions, the Chief Executive advised that:

- The Hertfordshire Leaders Group were currently looking at a range of options for local government reorganisation.
- The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill required all authorities to have effective council governance.
- Based on government timelines, there would not be a unitary election in 2028, but parish council elections would still take place as scheduled.
- It would be for the new unitary authorities to decide what would work best for their areas regarding further election cycles.
- The Community Governance Review had commenced before the government white paper was published.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed, and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded the recommendations as contained within the report, subject to the amendment to the election cycle for Codicote.

Councillor Ralph Muncer proposed an amendment to recommendation 2.2 to retain 10 Parish Councillors in Codicote. Councillor Steven Patmore seconded the amendment. Following a vote, this amendment was carried.

Councillor Tom Tyson proposed an amendment to recommendation 2.2 to reduce the number of Parish Councillors for Ashwell from 12 to 9. Councillor Ruth Brown seconded the amendment. Following a vote, this amendment was carried.

The following Members took part in the debate on the substantive Motion:

- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Daniel Allen

Points raised during the debate on the substantive Motion included:

- The Final Recommendations reflected the wishes of Knebworth.
- This was a well-produced report with clear recommendations.
- The public consultations ensured this was a democratic process and had reached the right decisions.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed as amended and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Noted the outcome of the consultation.
- (2) Agreed the Final Recommendations for the Community Governance Review (as detailed under para 8.10 of the report – R1 – 41) subject to the following amendments:

Codicote:

Change the electoral cycle for Codicote, 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.

R10: To retain 10 Parish Councillors:

Codicote Village: 8

Codicote East: 2

Ashwell:

R1: To reduce the number of Parish Councillors from 12 to 9.

- (3) Noted that following decision 2.2, a Community Governance Order will be prepared, to implement the agreed recommendations, subject to consent by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (where required).

REASON FOR DECISIONS: 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 the Final Recommendations that have been developed taking into account the responses to the public consultation on the Draft Proposals.

36 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Audio recording – 2 hours 7 minutes 21 seconds

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

(A) **Impact of Luton Airport Expansion**

Councillor Chris Lucas to Councillor Daniel Allen, Leader of the Council:

‘In light of the Labour Secretary of State for Transport’s announcement on 3rd April giving the go-ahead to expand Luton Airport from 16.7m passengers to 32m passengers and Alistair Strathern, the Labour MP for Hitchin’s endorsement of the expansion plan, could the Labour Leader of North Hertfordshire District Council explain the impact this will have on the residents of North Hertfordshire, specifically those who live under the current flight path or adjacent to the airport?’

Councillor Daniel Allen provided the following response:

'Luton planned to increase the passenger numbers to 32 million a year. They have clarified they want to achieve this by the 2040's. So, this change will happen gradually and slowly, but I know for many the scale of the change will cause considerable concern. Seeing as you mention Alistair Strathern, I will share his work. He has been engaging with the Department of Transport, Ministers and their teams to share the concerns on the impact Luton Airport is already having on nearby communities and to push for consideration on the further impact that expansion will bring. I will continue to push for all relevant stakeholders to improve traffic flow around the site and through our constituency towns and villages. I want to make sure there are more robust monitoring and enforcement on the noise impacts of flight paths and flight times. It is a shame that you have never written or emailed him about it Cllr Lucas, because he would have been very happy to discuss it with you. But in a direct answer to your question, we don't know yet. We are working with our MPs, with Luton Borough Council and with the Liberal Democrat led County Council to make sure that our residents are supported in the best way possible. I also am looking to the positives of this. We need to capture every opportunity that this brings for our residents in infrastructure improvements and the potential 28,000 new jobs and new housing that will come along with this.'

Councillor Chris Lucas asked a supplementary question, as follows:

'No, I haven't written to Alistair Strathern on this matter, but I have actually spoken to him at length on this matter and the answers I got from him are wholly unsatisfactory as was the response and answer that you have just provided. In light of this, I wonder if you could give us some assurances and reassurances to the people who are directly affected by this terrible decision to expand Luton Airport is going to have on the local community and can you give assurances that you will be campaigning and fighting tooth and nail against this expansion?'

Councillor Daniel Allen responded:

'I can't. The decision has been made. I will make sure that we capture every opportunity this brings for our residents.'

(B) Lithium-Ion Battery Hazards

Councillor Jon Clayden to Councillor Mick Debenham, Executive Member for Regulatory:

'Given ongoing public concern about industrial fires caused by lithium-ion batteries, could the executive member please update us on what the council has done to understand and mitigate their impact on residents?'

Councillor Mick Debenham provided the following response:

'I am sure that everybody in this room and the general public all share concerns around this very important issue and of course I am happy to answer his question, but I would just like to gently nudge people towards the NHDC website which has had a dedicated page to the fires since April and was last updated in June and it currently has answers to twelve FAQs about this.'

The response to the fires has been a multi-agency effort involving North Herts Council, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), Fire and Rescue, Public Health and the Environment Agency. All the parties have been working with the business owners to reduce the risk of future fires and to ensure that businesses are operating within the conditions of their license. The Environment Agency and HCC are the licensing authorities and they have assured partner agencies that both of the scrap metal businesses involved are indeed operating within the conditions of these licenses. HCC and North Herts Council have jointly commissioned a health impact survey to be carried out by independent experts to fully assess any risks to local residents and the nearby school. Work has already begun and an in-depth survey will be

conducted over several months to gather sufficient data to be able to bring comprehensive conclusions. Once we have this information, we will be able to see if and what further action needs to be taken.'

Councillor Jon Clayden asked a supplementary question, as follows:

'The point is specifically about what this Council is doing and part of the motion that was carried by the Council in November required and I quote work proactively to instigate a system of air quality monitoring in the residential areas closest to the industrial estate. Can you clarify whether that has happened and whether the air quality data specifically will be made available to members and to the public?'

Councillor Mick Debenham responded:

'Of course, that is all part of the ongoing assessment and as well as air pollution they will be looking at noise pollution and pollution generated by traffic in and around the estate. The idea is to look at all potential risks to human health created by the sites and the cumulative effects or impacts on residents and of course we will publish the survey.'

(C) Recycling Rates

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Amy Allen, Executive Member for Environment:

'What the recycling rate for North Hertfordshire is projected to be following the introduction of the new waste contract?'

Councillor Amy Allen provided the following response:

'60%.'

Councillor Ralph Muncer asked a supplementary question, as follows:

'I wish to highlight Brownfield Way which is in Blackmore End in the south of my ward, because half of Brownfield Way is located within the district of North Hertfordshire and half of it is located within the district of St Albans. Now, from August, from next month residents in North Hertfordshire will have bins collected once every 3 weeks, whereas the residents in St Albans will have their bins collected once every two weeks. If St Albans can maintain one of the best recycling rates in the country of 64%, whilst also charging a lower rate of council tax then why can't North Herts?'

Councillor Amy Allen responded:

'We don't have control over what St Albans do with their services and I am quite proud of the pioneering service that we are providing to our residents and the changes we are making regarding emissions and government legislation.'

(D) Penalty Charge Notices

Councillor Matt Barnes to Councillor Donna Wright, Executive Member for Place:

'How many Penalty Charge Notices were issued in Council car parks in each locality during the periods March to May 2024 and March to May 2025?'

Councillor Donna Wright provided the following response:

'I am happy to provide the data by locality. So firstly for Baldock the number of penalty charge notices issued from March to May 2024 was 17. In the same period in 2025 it was 23. For Hitchin for 2024 it was 1,060, for 2025 1,500. For Knebworth in 2024 it was 14, in 2025 it was 10. In Letchworth for 2024 it was 217. In 2025 it was 397. And finally for Royston the figure for 2024 was 258 and for 2025 it was 316. I should add that these figures include the display machines at Hitchin Swimming Centre and Norton Common.'

Councillor Matt Barnes asked a supplementary question, as follows:

'Given the significant increase in the number of areas, do you feel that the Council provided enough support and information to local residents and businesses during the roll out of the new parking machines.'

Councillor Donna Wright responded:

'Yes, there has been a lot of support. We are still reviewing the amount of support that we provide. Obviously, the installation of the new machines has taken time to bed down and there has been an increase in Penalty Charges Notices (PCNs) as a result, but this is mostly due to visitors entering their vehicle numbers incorrectly. Hopefully with time people will get used to the new system and realise that they have to remember their Vehicle Registration Number (VRN) and input it correctly. We also have to bear in mind that this year we have a full team of CEOs compared to the same period last year which means we have been able to provide more coverage for both on street and off-street parking and this has obviously contributed to an overall increase in the number of PCNs issued. We need to bear in mind that PCNs only account for less than 1% of the total number of successful parking transactions made over the same period. But the team is continuing to provide support and there will be a full report going to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September with further details on that.'

37 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Audio recording – 2 hours 18 minutes 18 seconds

There was one motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12, which was withdrawn at the meeting on the basis that the Director – Resources would consult Group Leaders, the Executive Member and the Shadow Executive Member before a response was submitted to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Fair Funding Review.

N.B. Councillor Claire Strong left the Chamber at 21.52 and did not return.

27 NOMINATION OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER BODIES FOR 2025/26

Audio recording – 2 hours 21 minutes 26 seconds

The Chair invited Members to nominate three Members to be appointed as representatives to the outside organisation the Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre.

Councillor Ruth Brown nominated Councillor Tina Bhartwas and Councillor Claire Winchester seconded.

Councillor Daniel Allen nominated Councillor Tamsin Thomas and Councillor Mick Debenham and these nominations were seconded by Councillor Ian Albert.

The Chair invited Members to nominate a Member as representative to the outside organisation the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed Councillor Amy Allen and Councillor Val Bryant seconded.

The Chair invited Members to nominate one Member as representative to the outside organisation the Chilterns Conservation Board.

Councillor Val Bryant proposed herself and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded.

Following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council

- (1) Nominated and approved Councillors Tina Bhartwas, Tamsin Thomas and Mick Debenham as the representatives of the Council to the outside organisation the Howard Garden Social and Day Care Centre.
- (2) Nominated and approved Councillor Amy Allen as the representative of the Council to the outside organisation the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership.
- (3) Nominated and approved Councillor Val Bryant as the representative of the Council to the outside organisation the Chilterns Conservation Board.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To comply with the provision of Standing Order 4.4.1(h) of the Council's Constitution.

28 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2024-2025

Audio recording – 2 hours 26 minutes 11 seconds

Councillor Matt Barnes presented the report and referral 6A from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, entitled 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2024-2025'.

Councillors Ruth Brown, Daniel Allen and Ralph Muncer thanked Councillor Matt Barnes and the Scrutiny Officer for their work with the Committee over the last year.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Jon Clayden seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024/2025 as attached at Appendix A was noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable Council to consider and comment on the report of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the work of the Committee in the 2024/2025 Civic Year.

29 REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2024/25

Audio recording – 2 hours 28 minutes 32 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Resources presented the report and referral 6C from Cabinet on the 'Revenue Budget Outturn 2024/25' and advised that:

- This report was requesting the transfer to and from the reserves as set out in table 9.
- The budget had been prudently based on the business rate baseline income.
- The balance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) grants reserve was higher than forecast. This included the gains from Business Rates above the baseline level.

- The end of year monitoring report and the list of budget variances was highlighted in table 2.
- Appendix A summarised the significant variances across the year.
- Whilst there was an underspend against the budget and an increase in the General Fund balance, this should be considered in light of the budgets approved for carry forward.
- The carry forward total was £1.682 million as referenced in paragraph 8.3 of the report.
- Details of what had happened in relation to the budgets carried forward from 2023/2024 could be found in paragraph 8.5 of the report.
- The end of year General Fund balance, which had not yet been subject to an audit, was currently £16.081million as detailed in paragraph 8.16 of the report.
- The General Fund balance was well above the recommended minimum balance.
- The allocation of budget risks was highlighted in paragraph 8.17 of the report.
- There was still an underlying budget shortfall which would need to be addressed.
- The public consultation which would run until 1 August 2025 had already received 500 responses.

In response to a question from Councillor Ralph Muncer, Councillor Ian Albert advised that the Strategic Priorities Fund had not been spent, as detailed in the table in paragraph 8.2 of the report.

In response to a question from Councillor Matt Barnes, the Director – Resources advised that more information regarding Penalty Charge Notices and car parking tickets would be provided in the 2025/2026 Quarter 1 report to Council.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council approved the net transfer to earmarked reserves, as identified in table 9, of £1.006million.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) Members are able to monitor, make adjustments within the overall budgetary framework and request appropriate action of Services who do not meet the budget targets set as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.
- (2) Changes to the Council's balances are monitored and approved.

30 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) END OF YEAR REVIEW 2024/25

Audio recording – 1 hour 25 minutes 48 seconds

N.B. Councillor Paul Ward declared an interest due to his employment and left the Chamber and did not take place in the debate or vote.

Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Resources presented the report and referral 6D from Cabinet on the 'Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) End of Year Review 2024/25' and advised that:

- The overall picture was that spend for the year had been lower than expected.
- The Council had been able to fund all capital expenditure from grants and capital receipts.
- Details of some of the capital schemes that had been completed this year were set out in paragraph 8.6 of the report.
- The rates of return on investments had remained high and generated nearly £3 million of income over the year.
- Most of investments made had been with other local authorities.
- The main report detailed the position of the capital projects.

- There had been one minor breach of investment limits for one day due to staff absence, as set out in paragraph 8.10 of the report.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Approved the actual 2024/25 prudential and treasury indicators as detailed in Appendix B.
- (2) Noted the annual Treasury Management Review for 2024/25 (Appendix B).

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded.
- (2) To ensure the Council's continued compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management and the Local Government Act 2003 and that the Council manages its exposure to interest and capital risk.

N.B. Councillor Paul Ward returned to the Chamber at 22.11.

31 **FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25**

Audio recording – 2 hours 39 minutes and 36 seconds

Councillor Sean Nolan presented referral 6B from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and the report entitled 'Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2024/25' and thanked new Members for settling well into the role and enabling the good work of the Committee to continue. Councillor Nolan also expressed his thanks to the Director – Resources, the Independent Member, the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS), the external auditors KPMG for their support and debate during the Civic Year.

Councillor Sean Nolan proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council noted the Annual Report of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide Full Council with assurance as to the effectiveness of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

32 **REPORT ON RISK MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE (YEAR-END UPDATE)**

Audio recording – 2 hours 42 minutes 54 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Resources presented the report and referral 6E from Cabinet on the 'Annual Report on Risk Management Governance (Year-End) Update' and advised that this report highlighted the ongoing work on Risk Management over the last financial year and gave assurances to Council that it was operating effectively.

Councillor Paul Ward stated that this was a very comprehensive report and that details of the largest risks were highlighted in page 443 of the report.

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Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Daniel Allen seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council noted the report.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) Cabinet has responsibility for ensuring the management of risks.
- (2) This report is presented to Council as our Risk Management Framework Strategy document determines that all Councillors should support and promote an effective risk management culture.

The meeting closed at 10.16 pm

Chair