

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON TUESDAY, 23RD SEPTEMBER, 2025 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Daniel Allen (Chair), Val Bryant (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Mick Debenham, Tamsin Thomas, Laura Williams and Donna Wright.*

In Attendance: *Isabelle Alajooz (Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer), Faith Churchill (Democratic Services Apprentice), Ian Couper (Director - Resources), Philip Doggett (Principal Estates Surveyor), Andrew Figgis (Economic Development Officer), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Chloe Gray (Enterprise Manager), Anthony Roche (Chief Executive), Rachael Rooney (Planning Approver), Nigel Smith (Director - Place) and Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager).*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting there were no members of the public.*

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 45 seconds

There were no apologies received from Members.

22 MINUTES - 24 JUNE 2025

Audio Recording – 1 minute 49 seconds

Councillor Daniel Allen, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Val Bryant seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 24 June 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

23 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 30 seconds

There was no other business notified.

24 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 59 seconds

- (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 for the purposes of clarification that 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution did not apply to this meeting.

25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 1 second

There was no public participation at the meeting.

26 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 4 minutes 8 seconds

The Chair advised that the items referred from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Finance Audit and Risk Committee would be taken with the respective items on the Agenda.

27 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT - DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 47 seconds

Councillor Donna Wright, as Executive Member for Place, presented the report entitled 'Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document – Draft for Public Consultation' and advised that:

- Following the adoption of the Local Plan in November 2022, the Council adopted a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide more details on contributions to developers and case officers.
- A review of the Developer Contributions SPD had been undertaken and updates had been made to reflect new requirements and guidelines.
- References to developer contributions requested by Hertfordshire County Council had been removed as they had published their own guidance in 2024.
- Additional detail on Biodiversity Net Gain provision had been included as this was now mandatory for developers.
- Open space standards had been revised to align with the Fields in Trust 2024 guidance which introduced target distances and a hierarchy of open spaces.
- The revised document was displayed at Appendix A to the report and showed updates as tracked changes.
- The Developer Contributions SPD was not subject to independent examination but required public consultation.
- The document should be endorsed and approved for public consultation.
- Results of the public consultation would be reported to Cabinet in early 2026.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Daniel Allen

In response to questions, the Director – Place advised that:

- The Developer Contributions SPD set out general guidelines on contributions for all developments and projects including those in town centres.
- Specific town centre projects that would seek developer contributions were detailed in the North Herts Town Centres Strategy itself.

In response to questions, Councillor Tamsin Thomas advised that this document would also link with the North Herts Economic Development Strategy as this would help to realise the opportunities that developer contributions and the North Herts Town Centres Strategy would create.

In response to questions, Councillor Donna Wright advised that Parish Councils responding to the public consultation would be offered direct contact with the Council.

Councillor Donna Wright proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the draft Developer Contribution SPD, attached as Appendix A, be endorsed and approved for a period of public consultation.

REASON FOR DECISION: To allow the Developer Contributions SPD to be updated and be used in decisions on planning applications.

28 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

Audio recording – 12 minutes 47 seconds

Councillor Donna Wright, as Executive Member for Place, presented the report entitled 'Strategic Planning Matters' and advised that:

- Two Government consultations were launched in May with the first on the "Speeding Up Building Out" paper which outlined measures to accelerate housing delivery.
- A joint response was submitted by the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) which supported the measures but raised concerns on administrative burden, enforcement challenges, support and other matters.
- HIPP also submitted a response to the second consultation on Planning Committee Reforms which expressed concern over the removal of Member rights to call-in applications.
- In August, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued a letter which outlined several changes to Chief Planners including an update to the plan making system. However, there was a lack of detail on this and the Strategic Planning Project Board had agreed to send a letter to MHCLG in response to express their frustrations on the delays to Local Plan making guidance.
- A Judicial Review had been launched against the proposed Luton Airport expansion and a hearing was scheduled to take place in November.
- Paragraph 8.2 showed the progress of the six largest strategic sites in the Local Plan.
- Under the current schedule, the Council would adopt the new Local Plan by the end of 2027.
- An initial expression of interest for the Call of Sites had been conducted from June to September and a formal Call of Sites would take place from November to January.
- Progress on Local Plans from other local authorities was detailed within the report.
- Government funding for Neighbourhood Planning Groups would cease and may influence the number of Neighbourhood Plans created in the future.
- A report on the Vision and Growth Study for North East Central Herts was due this month.

- North Herts Town Centres Strategy had been delayed and would now be presented at the Cabinet meeting in November, however, its new timetable would allow for more scrutiny from within the Council and public consultation.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Mick Debenham
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Daniel Allen

In response to questions, the Director – Place advised that:

- Detailed guidance on beautiful development was not yet available but would be likely to follow the consultation.
- The Judicial Review on Luton Airport expansion had been launched by another party, therefore, there would be no workload implications for officers on this.

In response to questions, Councillor Donna Wright advised that:

- North Herts Town Centres Strategy would be discussed at Community Forums in December under the current timetable.
- The Health Places Framework had not been mentioned in the discussions on the new Local Plan but would be raised with Officers.

Councillor Donna Wright proposed and Councillor Tamsin Thomas seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the report on strategic planning matters and appendices be noted.

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

29 CODICOTE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - REFERENDUM

Audio recording – 25 minutes 52 seconds

Councillor Donna Wright, as Executive Member for Place, presented the report entitled 'Codicote Neighbourhood Plan – Referendum' and advised that:

- The Referendum for the Codicote Neighbourhood Plan was held on 15 August.
- 534 voted "yes" and 57 voted "no" and 1 ballot paper was rejected.
- There was a 20.63% turnout and 94% voted in favour of the plan.
- Neighbourhood Plans were often made through delegated authority, however, as this covered two wards, it required consideration by Cabinet.

Councillor Donna Wright proposed and Councillor Tamsin Thomas seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) To note the result of the Referendum for the Codicote Neighbourhood Plan.
- (2) To approve that the Codicote Neighbourhood Plan 2024 – 2031 be "made" and become part of the statutory development plan for North Hertfordshire.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: As reported to Cabinet in June 2025, the Codicote Neighbourhood Plan has successfully been examined by an independent examiner and the subsequent Referendum, held in August was successful, with more than 50% of those voting in favour of the Codicote Neighbourhood Plan.

30 NORTH HERTS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2025-2030

Audio recording – 27 minutes 51 seconds

Councillor Tamsin Thomas, as Executive Member for Enterprise, presented the report entitled 'North Herts Economic Development Strategy 2025-2030' and advised that:

- An updated Economic Strategy supported by a fresh evidence base and consultation from Members, businesses and partners had been developed to replace the previous strategy.
- Tapping potential in the business community would be vital for the future growth of the district.
- The strategy set out how they would provide support to residents and unlock opportunities for them to provide greater economic resilience to the district.
- North Herts benefited from its location near towns such as Luton and Stevenage but also from its good links with cities like Cambridge and London.
- The district had a Gross Value Added (GVA) of £4.3 billion, working population of approximately 83,000, and over 6,000 enterprises operated within it.
- The strategy was built on two themes which were looking in to strengthen the local economy and building out to strengthen connections with nearby towns and cities with major growth which North Herts could support and capture.
- Five action areas had been identified from these themes and would inform a detailed Action Plan and Resourcing Model if the strategy was approved.
- The strategy underlined the Council priority of responsible growth and would help businesses to thrive, which would create opportunities for residents and enhance town centres and green spaces.
- A proposal to provision more resourcing towards the strategy was being worked on with consultants from SQW Limited.
- The Resourcing Model and Action Plan would be brought to Cabinet at a later stage once finalised.

In response to a question from Councillor Ian Albert, Councillor Tamsin Thomas advised that:

- Delays to the strategy were due to resourcing issues and the need to align it with the Economic Strategy of Hertfordshire County Council which had been altered since the change in Government administration.
- A workshop had been held with Shadow Executive Members and Senior Officers to scrutinise the strategy and its evidence base.

Councillor Tamsin Thomas proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the adoption of the Economic Development Strategy (2025-2030).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) The previous Economic Development Strategy was written and published in September 2015, based on historic evidence and not been updated since. The economic landscape of both the political environment, district and wider UK has changed dramatically due to several varying factors, resulting in the strategy becoming outdated.
- (2) Therefore, to respond to these fundamental changes and environment, the team were tasked with analysing the district according to economic development and writing a new strategy that is aligned to the most recent Council priorities, and its long-term vision to benefit both businesses and the people who visit, work and live in the district.

31 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN UPDATE

Audio recording – 36 minutes 47 seconds

Councillor Daniel Allen, as Leader of the Council, presented the report entitled 'Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan' and advised that:

- The Corporate Peer Challenge took place in November 2024 and provided the Council with several recommendations.
- The Corporate Peer Team would revisit the Council in December to see how they were progressing on these.
- Staff conferences had been introduced and the first conference in Hitchin had been well attended and received positive feedback.
- Changes arising from Local Government Reorganisation had been accounted for in the Action Plan and one item had been altered to reflect this.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed and Councillor Val Bryant seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the updates to the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that the Council responds to the matters identified within the CPC report, ensuring that the benefits of the CPC process are realised.

32 POSITION STATEMENT IN RELATION TO FLOODING

Audio recording – 38 minutes 57 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, presented the report entitled 'Position Statement in Relation to Flooding' and advised that:

- Consideration needed to be given to the future impacts that climate change would bring through weather events.
- Intense rainfall caused flooding in Hitchin and other areas last year.
- The report detailed the response that was given to this event and they would commit to provide a similar response to future weather events.
- Sandbags were provided to residents as the Council did not have a position on supplying these at the time.
- The Council needed a defined position on flooding to be able to respond to any future events decisively.
- Providing a position statement would also allow residents in susceptible areas to plan how to protect their properties.

- As detailed at paragraph 8.4 of the report, sandbags or equivalent items would not be provided to protect individual properties but may still be used to protect key assets, such as sub-stations or for a general flood response to divert water.
- The report recommended that the Council should not provide specific support to residents recovering from flooding to encourage them to arrange suitable insurance that would cover them for emergency incidents.
- Support would be given to residents in other ways through emergency accommodation, homelessness support, and communication with outside organisations to speed up recovery after an event.
- Hertfordshire County Council would provide kits to areas that would be or had been subject to flooding.
- Working with other organisations would help to support the right response to flooding in the future.

Councillor Daniel Allen put on record his thanks to Officers, Members and other organisations for their work to respond to the flooding that took place last year.

In response to a question from Councillor Daniel Allen, Councillor Ian Albert advised that their Position Statement followed the recommendations of the Local Lead Flood Authority.

In response to a question from Councillor Daniel Allen, the Director – Resources advised that the draft report had been checked against the flooding investigation report that had been published recently and the final report would also be checked against this.

In response to a question from Councillor Daniel Allen, Councillor Amy Allen advised that:

- The Environment Agency strongly recommended against the use of sandbags due to their one time use which also went against Council policies.
- Residents would receive more bespoke support through insurance providers.

As part of the debate, Councillor Donna Wright thanked Officers and Members for coordinating the response to the flooding last year and highlighted that sandbags were not effective in response to flooding that happened on Woolgrove Road in Hitchin.

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

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Approved that the Council does not provide flood defence items or funding to residents to protect or reinstate their property against or following flooding.
- (2) Noted that the Council would provide support to residents which would include providing information and guidance (including online, in-person and by phone). This would include support for anyone who is made homeless.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The report sets out various practical and financial reasons for not providing residents with flood defence items or funding to residents to protect or reinstate their property against or following flooding.
- (2) The Council will fulfil its role as a Category 1 responder, as set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, and provide support to communities affected by flooding.

33 COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2025/26 (QUARTER 1 UPDATE)

Audio recording – 47 minutes 16 seconds

The Chair advised that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was not in attendance to present the referral on this item.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, presented the report entitled 'Council Delivery Plan 2025/26 (Quarter 1 Update)' and advised that:

- There was a good discussion on the report at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with questions mainly focused on the projects for Leisure Centre Decarbonisation, Careline and Churchgate.
- The Council Delivery Plan covered key projects, their milestones and risks to delivery as well as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the overarching risks that could affect those.
- In response to the Corporate Peer Review, the Council had been investigating how to extend their KPIs to cover the achievement of the outcomes in the Council Plan.
- These would be included in the Q2 report with the aim that these would be smart measures that would not increase pressure on workload.
- Projects on Digital Transformation and Leisure Centre Decarbonisation had an amber delivery status which meant that one or more milestones had been missed without there being a significant impact to their delivery.
- Appendix A to the report detailed changes to milestones and new milestones which were highlighted in blue and yellow respectively and required approval.
- Four projects had a red risk level status and these were present where projects scored highly on likelihood and impact and as a result, received a high level of monitoring and review.
- Three KPIs had a red status with two related to Careline Installations and the other to Customer Service Centre (CSC) calls answered within 45 seconds.
- Explanations and planned actions were detailed in paragraph 8.4 of the report.
- Executive Members should take note of the projects in amber delivery or red risk level status in their areas.

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

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted progress against Council projects and performance indicators, as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A), and approved new milestones and changes to milestones.

REASON FOR DECISION: The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) monitoring reports provide Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet, with an opportunity to monitor progress against the key Council projects, and understand any new issues, risks, or opportunities.

34 FIRST QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2025/26

Audio recording – 51 minutes 58 seconds

Councillor Daniel Allen informed the Cabinet that the Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, Councillor Sean Nolan, was not in attendance having given apologies, however, had provided a written statement that was relayed to the Cabinet on his behalf, which highlighted the following:

- Consideration would be given to the risk that Princes Mews Car Park not being reopened would present.

- Increased Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) due to the installation of new parking machines had not led to an increase in forecast income.
- The decreased income from commercial waste collections was noted.
- Effects arising from leisure centre and garden waste collection income changes would be considered in Q2 when data was available on these.
- The increase in expenditure over the original budget position would impact future saving targets according to the Section 144 Officer.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, presented the report entitled 'First Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2025/26' and advised that:

- The report summarised the revenue budget position at the end of Q1.
- Table 3 showed significant variances affecting this year and next year.
- The £314,000 increase referenced in the final column of table would impact the budget position for next year.
- Future funding would be subject to a Government Fair Funding Review which may be positive but was still dependent on consultation and announcements later in the year.
- Recommendation 2.4 to delegate authority had been included as Business Rate Pooling had been available in previous years but it was noted that it had not yet been offered by the Government this year.
- Recommendation 2.5 approved debt write-off related to housing benefits.

In response to a question from Councillor Mick Debenham, the Director – Resources advised that they had not yet come to a final agreement with Everyone Active over the loss of revenue during the closures as they only had an initial estimate for this.

As part of the debate, Councillor Ian Albert advised that they would work to refine the initial estimate on the loss of revenue to Everyone Active into a finalised figure.

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

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Noted the report.
- (2) Approved the changes to the 2025/26 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a £453k increase in net expenditure.
- (3) Noted the changes to the 2026/27 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a total £689k increase in net expenditure. These would be incorporated in the draft revenue budget for 2026/27.
- (4) Delegated authority to the Director – Resources (in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources) to enter into a Business Rate Pooling arrangement (if available) if it is estimated that it will be in the financial interests of the Council.
- (5) Approve the write-off of a debt for £11,326.64, as detailed in paragraph 8.17.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: 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.

35 FIRST QUARTER TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2025/26

Audio recording – 58 minutes 10 seconds

Councillor Daniel Allen informed the Cabinet that the Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, Councillor Sean Nolan, was not in attendance having given apologies, however, had provided a written statement that was relayed to the Cabinet on his behalf, which highlighted the following:

- Higher than anticipated interest rates had led to an income increase of £1 million.
- Internal borrowing for capital projects should be considered against the ability to raise investment revenue and other associated charges.
- Any investments in a local authority affected by Local Government Reorganisation would move to the successor unitary authority.
- Risks associated with Government and local authorities were lower than banks and building societies.
- Limits to where investments could be made based on changes to the agreed strategy.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, presented the report entitled 'First Quarter Treasury Management Review 2025/26' and advised that:

- Reviews for the Capital Monitoring and Treasury Management had been split into separate reports to allow Members of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee to debate each part separately.
- The report confirmed that the treasury management was compliant within the quarter. Returns on investments were higher due to high balances generated by capital slippage and increased income from higher than anticipated interest rates.
- Paragraph 8.11 and 8.12 detailed the split of investments which were mainly placed in local authorities and the Government.

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

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of June 2025.

REASON FOR DECISION: 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.

36 FIRST QUARTER CAPITAL MONITORING REVIEW 2025/26

Audio recording – 1 hour 4 minutes 27 seconds

Councillor Daniel Allen informed the Cabinet that the Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, Councillor Sean Nolan was not in attendance having given his apologies, however, had provided a written statement that was relayed to the Cabinet on his behalf, which highlighted the following:

- Future spending on the capital programme would require internal borrowing and lead to a reduction in income from investments.
- It was requested that the Solar for Business scheme should be reviewed in the future if conditions and interest improved.

Council Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, presented the report entitled 'First Quarter Capital Budget Monitoring Review 2025/26' and advised that:

- Internal borrowing against savings would be needed to fund the capital programme, which would affect the investment income the Council would receive, and create a need to set aside a minimum revenue provision.
- The report detailed the Council spend on capital and how it was funded.
- Table 2 detailed projects that would be delayed to future years and Table 3 showed projects where the spend would differ from previous forecasts.
- The Solar for Business scheme had ceased due to a lack of interest and demand from businesses, in order to prioritise other actions in the Sustainability Strategy.
- The request to review the scheme in the future was noted.
- Paragraph 8.5 asked Cabinet to recommend that Council approved capital spend on the Warm Homes Scheme which was a Government funded scheme aimed at low income households to reduce emissions and tackle fuel poverty.
- After a successful bid to the Warm Homes Grant Scheme, the Council had been awarded £1.5M to deliver energy performance upgrades and low carbon heating to low income households across the district.
- The Council should publicise this scheme to residents and track its demand to assess the need for further promotion.

As part of the debate, Councillor Mick Debenham advised that promotional literature on the scheme would be distributed to residents via councillor surgeries.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Mick Debenham seconded, and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Noted the forecast expenditure of £27.624M in 2025/26 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.3 refers.
- (2) Approved the adjustments to the capital programme for 2026/27 onwards, as a result of the revised timetable of schemes detailed in table 2 and 3, increasing the estimated spend in 2026/27 by £0.838M and £0.608M in 2027/28.
- (3) Noted the position of the availability of capital resources, as detailed in table 4 paragraph 8.6 and the requirement to keep the capital programme under review for affordability.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That Council approve a capital budget of £1.275M (£0.319M in 25/26, £0.478M in 26/27 and £0.478M in 27/28) for the Government's new energy efficiency Warm Homes Scheme. This will be fully funded from Government grants, as paragraph 8.5 refers.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

- (1) Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded.
- (2) Paragraph 4.4.1 b) of the Council's Constitution details that Council will approve the budget. Any significant additions to the budget should be approved by Council and the decision to add the Warm Homes Scheme to the capital budget is therefore a referral to Council.

37 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Audio recording – 1 hour 10 minutes 59 seconds

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed and Councillor Val Bryant 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 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

N.B. Following the conclusion of this item, there was a break in proceedings and the meeting reconvened at 20.52.

38 PART 2 MINUTES - 24 JUNE 2025

N.B. This item was considered in restricted session and therefore no recordings were available.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed and Councillor Val Bryant seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Part 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 June 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

39 GRANT FOR AN OPTION AGREEMENT FOR THE SALE OF LAND TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO STRATEGIC HOUSING SITE GA2 - PART 2

N.B. This item was considered in restricted session and therefore no recordings were available.

Councillor Tamsin Thomas, as Executive Member for Enterprise, presented the report entitled 'Grant of an option agreement for the sale of land to facilitate access to strategic housing site GA2'.

Councillor Tamsin Thomas proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Approved the Council entering into an option agreement for the sale of the Council owned parcel of land edged red on the plan at Appendix B in accordance with the Heads of Terms attached at Appendix F of the Part 2 report.
- (2) Delegated authority to the Director – Governance in conjunction with the Director – Resources to complete, sign and seal all documents to give effect to the recommendations.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that access is available to facilitate the development of GA2, a Strategic Housing site allocated in the Local Plan, which will assist in the delivery of circa 600 new homes and associated facilities including affordable homes. Completion of the sale is also expected to generate a capital receipt.

40 GRANT OF AN OPTION AGREEMENT FOR THE SALE OF LAND TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO STRATEGIC HOUSING SITE GA2 - PART 1

Audio recording – 1 hour 36 minutes 51 seconds

Councillor Tamsin Thomas, as Executive Member for Enterprise, presented the report entitled 'Grant of an option agreement for the sale of land to facilitate access to strategic housing site GA2' and advised that:

- This report sought Cabinet approval to enter into an Option Agreement for the potential sale of Council owned land to facilitate an access road to the GA2 site allocated under Policy SP18 of the Local Plan.
- GA2 was a key development site located to the north-east of Great Ashby that would provide 600 homes and community infrastructure to the district.
- The Strategic Masterplan for the site was approved by Cabinet and ratified by Council in November 2024.
- Delivery of the site would require access from Mendip Way that would cross five parcels of land owned by five different landowners including the Council.
- The proposed Option Agreement was part of a wider collaboration with other landowners and would give Picture Estates Ltd the right to acquire the land subject to the approval of planning permission.
- Loss of open space and play area on the Council owned portion of land would be mitigated by provision on the development.
- Public consultation would be carried out on the sale of land subject to section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- The Option Agreement had been structured to ensure the Council would obtain best value through an external valuer and legal oversight.
- Upfront legal and professional costs would be initially covered by the developer and deducted from the final proceeds of sale which would be shared equally among the five landowners under a joint agreement.
- Entering into the Option Agreement would help to unlock a key housing site and associated infrastructure while securing future capital receipt which aligned with the Council priorities of Thriving Communities, Responsible Growth and Sustainability.
- The portion of Council owned land was edged in red at Appendix B to the report.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Mick Debenham
- Councillor Amy Allen
- Councillor Laura Williams

In response to questions, the Principal Estates Surveyor advised that:

- The other four landowners had signed their Heads of Terms already.
- The development value formula was industry standard and based on the ability of landowners to dispose of their land which was a set percentage of the gross development value, minus the costs which would be divided by the five parties.
- Open space and play area in the development would be larger, higher in quality, near to the existing site but north of the access road and delivered prior to the removal of the current facilities on Council land.
- The timing of this delivery would be answered in the future by planning officers.

In response to questions, Councillor Tamsin Thomas advised that:

- All five landowners would receive equal shares from the sale to reflect that each land parcel was essential to the development, and an external valuer would value the land independently at the point of sale to ensure best value for the Council.
- The Capital Receipt would be based on a formula that was tied to the development value of the land.

Councillor Tamsin Thomas proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Approved the Council entering into an option agreement for the sale of the Council owned parcel of land edged red on the plan at Appendix B in accordance with the Heads of Terms attached to the Part 2 report.
- (2) Delegated authority to the Director – Governance in conjunction with the Director – Resources to complete, sign and seal all documents to give effect to the recommendations.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that access is available to facilitate the development of GA2, a Strategic Housing site allocated in the Local Plan, which will assist in the delivery of circa 600 new homes and associated facilities including affordable homes. Completion of the sale is also expected to generate a capital receipt.

The meeting closed at 9.17 pm

Chair