

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISION SHEET

Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber - District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth, SG6 3JF
on Tuesday, 17th February, 2026 at 7.30 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Amy Allen.

2 MINUTES - 20 JANUARY 2026

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 20 January 2026 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) The Chair reminded Members that the Council had declared both a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency. These are serious decisions, and mean that, as this was an emergency, all of us, Officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.
- (3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (4) The Chair advised for the purposes of clarification that 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution did not apply to this meeting.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation at the meeting.

6 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

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.

7 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE FOLLOW UP

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Noted the findings of the CPC follow up report.
- (2) Noted the progress against the CPC action plan.

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

8 BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT 2026

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the contents of the Biodiversity Duty Report 2026 at Appendix A and approve its publication on the council's website.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the council is compliant with the Biodiversity Duty (Environment Act 2021) and its requirement to publish a biodiversity duty report within twelve weeks of the reporting period end date. The end date of the first reporting period must be no later than 1 January 2026.

9 HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT ALLOCATIONS AND UPDATE

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the funding proposals for the allocation of the remainder of the 2025/26 award of homelessness grants as outlined in Table 3 in paragraph 8.2.

REASON FOR DECISION: There is a need to secure additional services for homeless households in the district. Adopting the recommendation at 2.1 secures the provision of high-quality local services to help those in need, which is also consistent with the priorities set out in the Council's Housing Strategy (2024 – 2029).

10 NORTH HERTS COUNCIL STRAY DOGS POLICY

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Adopted the Policy as presented.
- (2) Noted the following, in considering this policy:
 - (a) The Policy, at point 1.2, states the accepted definition of a Stray Dog, which the Act does not provide.
 - (b) The Act requires the appointment of a Responsible Officer for the purpose of discharging these duties and the Policy, at point 1.3 accommodates this.
 - (c) The Policy sets out in section 2, the conditions whereupon a stray dog will and will not be collected or seized, as this is not fully defined in the Act.
 - (d) The Policy also sets out at point 2.4 how the Council will manage stray dogs which are or are believed to be a Prohibited Breed, as defined under the Dangerous Dogs Act, 1991.
 - (e) The Policy, in section 4, states the legal requirement under the Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations, 2015, that all qualifying dogs be microchipped and how this will be accommodated.
 - (f) The Act requires the Council to ensure the health and welfare of any collected stray dog during the 7-day retention period. The Policy states how the Council will accommodate this requirement, including the scope and limitations of this obligation at points 5.2 and 5.3.
 - (g) The Policy, in section 6 states the conditions required for returning the collected stray dog to the owner, including at point 6.3 the requirement for all accrued costs to be paid in full with no option of any instalments or discount (except that offered when micro-chipping unchipped stray dogs).
 - (h) The Policy states, in section 7, states how the Council will dispose of the stray dog either at the end of the 7-day retention period or before in necessary for humane reasons. Part 7.5 outlines how dangerous dogs will controlled and should be considered in conjunction with point d, above.
 - (i) The Policy, at section 9 seeks to delegate future amendments of this Policy to the Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Regulatory in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Constitution.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To enable the Council to clearly state how it intends to meet its obligations under the Act, whilst putting in place limitations against the unreasonable use of public funds and to protect the Responsible Officer against undue criticism or challenges which could in turn risk the perception and reputation of the Council.

11 DESIGN CODE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT - APPROVAL FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Endorsed the scope, structure and detailed codes drafted to date for the draft Design Code SPD, attached as Appendix A for the purpose of the consultation only.
- (2) Approved the draft Design Code SPD for a period of public consultation in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- (3) Delegated authority was granted to the Director: Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Place to finalise the consultation draft, including the approval of any outstanding technical, illustrative or presentational elements, provided that no changes are made which would materially alter the policy intent, scope or effect of the draft SPD endorsed by Cabinet.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To allow the draft Design Code SPD to be progressed to public consultation so that it may be developed and eventually adopted to support the Local Plan and decisions on planning applications.
- (2) To support a common standard for design quality across North Herts.
- (3) To reinforce and deliver the Council's pledges and ambitions as set out in the Climate and Ecological Emergency declarations through design.
- (4) To ensure the best prospects of the Design Code SPD being finalised and approved before the Government's recently announced 'cut off' date of 30 June 2026 for planning documents of this nature to be adopted.

12 PROPOSED CAR PARKING TARIFFS FOR 2026/27

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- (1) Adopted the proposed off-street and on-street car park tariff increases for 2026/27 referred to as Option 3 in paragraphs 8.2.14 of this Report and as set out in: (i) Tables 1, 2 and 4 for Hitchin, Letchworth and Knebworth at Appendix A, and (ii) Tables 5a for Royston off-street car parks and 6a for Royston on-street parking bays in Market Hill at Appendix B.
- (2) Increased the proposed charges for season tickets for each of its long stay car parks in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston and business permits at St. Martins Road car park in Knebworth for 2026/27 as set out in Tables 7 and 8 at Appendix A.
- (3) Increased the charges for resident permits, visitor permits, business permits and visitor tickets for resident parking zones for 2026/27 as set out in Section 8.4 of this report.
- (4) Delegated to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport all decisions necessary to give effect to the recommendations including the issuing of the Notice of Variation to the 2024 Off-Street Parking Traffic Regulation Orders and the 2023 On-Street Consolidation Order.

- (5) Noted the 'direction of travel' with regard possible subsidy schemes arising from the proposed programme of tariffs and charges.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To implement an increase in car parking tariffs, season tickets and permits within resident parking zones in order to effectively manage their use and in accordance with the Council's fees and charges policy as set out in its Medium- Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). To set car parking tariffs that support the achievement of modal shift away from private car use and to help support the vitality of town centres.

13 BUDGET 2026/27 (REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS)

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That it:

- (1) Notes the position on the Collection Fund and how it will be funded.
- (2) Notes the position relating to the General Fund balance and that due to the risks identified a minimum balance of £3.5 million is recommended.
- (3) Notes the Chief Finance Officer's section 25 report (Appendix D) which provides a commentary on the risks and reliability of estimates contained in the budget.
- (4) Approves the revenue savings and investments as detailed in Appendix B to be amended.
- (5) Approves the capital programme as detailed in Appendix C.
- (6) Approves a net expenditure budget of £27.323m, as detailed in Appendix E with amount and detail to be amended.
- (7) Approves a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, which is in line with the provisions in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- (8) Approves bringing forward the capital budget for pool covers at the outdoor pools to 2025/26.
- (9) Notes that a Council Tax premium on Second Homes will be implemented from 1st April 2026, which is adopting the decision taken by Council on 29 February 2024

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure that all relevant factors are considered in arriving at a budget (revenue and capital) and Council Tax level for 2026/27. To ensure that the budget is aligned to Council priorities for 2024-28 as set out in the Council Plan.

14 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2026/27

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That it:

- (1) Approves the adoption of the Investment Strategy (as attached at Appendix A).
- (2) Approves the adoption of the four clauses in relation to the Code of Practice on Treasury Management (as detailed in paragraphs 8.10 to 8.16).

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To ensure the Council's compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management, the Local Government Act 2003, statutory guidance from Government, and the CIPFA Prudential Code. As well as determining and managing the Councils risk appetite in respect of investments.