

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



30 May 2025

Our Ref Overview and Scrutiny Committee 10 June 2025
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To: Members of the Committee: Councillors Claire Winchester (Chair), Jon Clayden (Vice-Chair), Tina Bhartwas, Sadie Billing, Cathy Brownjohn, David Chalmers, Elizabeth Dennis, Dominic Griffiths, Ralph Muncer, Martin Prescott, Paul Ward and Daniel Wright-Mason

Substitutes: Councillors Sam Collins, Sarah Lucas, Caroline McDonnell, Vijaiya Poopalasingham and Claire Strong

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

to be held in the

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON
ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF**

On

TUESDAY, 10TH JUNE, 2025 AT 7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Thompson
Director – Governance

****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	Members are required to notify any substitutions by midday on the day of the meeting. Late substitutions will not be accepted and Members attending as a substitute without having given the due notice will not be able to take part in the meeting.	
2. MINUTES - 11 MARCH 2025 AND 6 MAY 2025	To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 11 March 2025 and 6 May 2025.	(Pages 5 - 26)
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	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. URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS	The Chair to report on any urgent or general exception items which required their agreement. At the time of printing the agenda, the Chair had not agreed any urgent or general exception items.	

7. CALLED-IN ITEMS

To consider any matters referred to the Committee for a decision in relation to a call-in of decision. At the time of printing the agenda, no items of business had been called-in.

8. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

To receive and respond to any questions from Members either set out in the agenda or tabled at the meeting.

**9. INFORMATION NOTE - FULL YEAR PERFORMANCE UPDATE ON 3CS
24/25**

(Pages
27 - 40)

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL SERVICES
MANAGER

This information note is to provide an update on the full year (24/25) performance regarding the Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3C's) for the Council the and the contractors that provide services on the Council's behalf. This briefing accompanies the 3C's dashboard at Appendix A, and the breakdown of the 3C's by service and type at Appendix B.

**10. INFORMATION NOTE - MOBILISATION OF WASTE CONTRACT UPDATE
INFORMATION NOTE OF THE SHARED SERVICE MANAGER – WASTE
MANAGEMENT**

(Pages
41 - 54)

At the meeting of Cabinet on 9 July 2024 the Council agreed to award the new waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to Veolia UK Ltd. This contract has subsequently been mobilised with the contract beginning on 4 May 2025. Service changes as part of the new contract are due to commence on 4 August 2025.

**11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25
REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER**

(Pages
55 - 68)

Annual Report of work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Civic Year 2024/25.

**12. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME
REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER**

(Pages
69 - 90)

This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2025-26 civic year. It also includes items that have not yet been assigned to a specific meeting of the Committee.

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON TUESDAY, 11TH MARCH, 2025 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Matt Barnes (Chair), Tom Tyson (Vice-Chair), Jon Clayden, Elizabeth Dennis, Ralph Muncer, Louise Peace, Martin Prescott, Laura Williams, Claire Winchester, Donna Wright and Daniel Wright-Mason.*

In Attendance: *Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Philip Doggett (Principal Estates Surveyor), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Jeevan Mann (Scrutiny Officer), Robert Orchard (Culture and Facilities Services Manager), Callum Reeve (Electoral Services Assistant), Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Nigel Smith (Strategic Planning Manager), Louise Symes (Strategic Planning and Projects Manager) and Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community).*

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

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Finance and IT, Councillor Val Bryant, as Deputy Leader of the Council, and Councillor David Barnard were in attendance.

85 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 36 seconds

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Tina Bhartwas was absent.

86 MINUTES - 4 FEBRUARY 2025

Audio Recording – 1 minute 45 seconds

Councillor Matt Barnes, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded, and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 4 February 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

87 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 21 seconds

There was no other business notified.

88 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 23 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The Chair advised that for the purposes of clarification clause 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution does not apply to this meeting.
- (4) The Chair reminded Members of the adopted North Herts Scrutiny Charter and the need to ensure that the meeting was conducted with independence, initiative and integrity. The full Charter was available to Members via the Scrutiny Intranet pages.
- (5) The Chair advised of a change to the order of the Agenda and Agenda Item 14 would be taken after Agenda Item 7.

89 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 3 minutes 42 seconds

There was no public participation at this meeting.

90 URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 46 seconds

The Chair noted two urgent items in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan Referendum for Barkway and Nuthampstead and Local Government Reorganisation – Interim Plan Submission. The Chair provided details for their urgency and advised that the full Urgency Notices for both items had been published on the Council website.

91 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Audio recording – 6 minutes 20 seconds

No questions had been submitted by Members.

92 RIPA ANNUAL REPORT

Audio recording – 6 minutes 28 seconds

N.B. Councillor Laura Williams entered the Council Chamber at 19:37.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the reported entitled 'Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act ('RIPA') Update and Annual Review' and advised that:

- The report provided an overview of the compliance with RIPA and highlighted the minor amendments that had been made to the RIPA policy as part of the annual review.
- The amendments were largely administrative and included the updates to officer titles as part of the staffing restructure which would be further finessed.
- The amendments also ensured consistency with the Home Office Code of Practice and clarification on the use of social media during investigations.

- The report was being brought to the committee to maintain transparency and accountability on the use of investigatory powers.

In response to a question from Councillor Matt Barnes, the Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that all officers were made aware of the updated RIPA policy and designated officers were given proper training to make sure that collaboration with third parties took place appropriately.

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

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the content of the report.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: The adoption of the amended RIPA Policy (Appendix A – include updated titles within the appendix to the Policy).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: To comply with the best practice guidance and the Committee's terms of reference.

93 CALLED-IN ITEMS

Audio recording – 8 minutes 52 seconds

Councillors Ralph Muncer, David Barnard and Martin Prescott presented the Called-In item from the Cabinet meeting on 11 February 2025 entitled 'Proposed Parking Tariffs for 2025/26' and advised that:

- Councillors Joe Graziano and Steven Patmore were unable to attend this meeting.
- Within the Budget announced in October 2024 by the government, National Insurance for Employers had been increased. This would directly impact local businesses and in turn employees who would be likely to see their wages reduced as a result of cost cutting measures by businesses. Because of this, North Herts residents would have less disposable income to spend in the district and town centres.
- High streets had only recently recovered from significant economic events in recent times such as the COVID Pandemic and the Ukraine War.
- The increase to National Insurance for Employers would be yet another significant economic challenge that would further hinder the recovery.
- The decision to increase car parking charges would add to the pressures and challenges which independent local businesses already faced from increasing business rates, rents, and inflation.
- A 10p increase to parking charges in some car parks did not sound like a lot, however, it could mean the difference in people choosing to visit towns in North Herts and this could have a negative impact on local businesses if the parking charges decreased footfall in town centres.
- Car parking charges across the district should be frozen in the 2025/26 financial year to support businesses who were already faced with multiple challenges as a result of the policies of the current Government.
- The 30-minute tariff in Knebworth should be abolished to allow free parking for up to 30 minutes in the St Martin's Road Car Park which would not only support local businesses on this road and in the High Street, but would alleviate current and future congestion pressures in the village ahead of approximately 600 proposed homes being built.
- The proposed parking tariffs were not discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee before Cabinet took the decision on them, and it was important for Members across North Herts Council to be able to scrutinise the decisions that the minority administration made.

- The increase in car parking charges and the ongoing possibility of on-street charges would be a tax on rural communities who had limited or no access to public transport.
- Rural shoppers were a major contributor to town centres and the increase to parking charges would be an unfair financial attack on them.
- Increasing parking charges may encourage people to shop at bigger greenfield sites with free parking rather than town centres and high streets.
- The decision on increasing parking charges should be reconsidered and withdrawn if the right solution could not be found.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Matt Barnes

In response to questions, Councillors Ralph Muncer, David Barnard and Martin Prescott advised that:

- Statistics on the percentage of elderly and disabled residents that would be affected by the proposed increase to parking charges were not available at the time. However, these communities would certainly feel the impact of the proposed increases and this had been considered when calling in the item.
- Specific studies on the effects of increased car parking charges could not be named at the time. However, other authorities had carried out studies and increasing car parking charges had been a detractor from town centres. For example, footfall in Harpenden Town Centre had decreased significantly because of the car parking charges that were implemented by St Albans City and District Council.
- Encouraging footfall and supporting local businesses should be a priority for the Council.
- Cabinet should have considered the economic circumstances of local businesses in the current climate when they made the decision.
- As a scrutiny committee, they should be able to make recommendations for local communities and businesses and seek to support Cabinet in making decisions that would promote growth for the benefit of residents.
- The increase had been debated at Cabinet in terms of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. However, since then, developments had taken place in which the economy had not performed well and the budget had impacted local businesses. Therefore, the decision should be looked at within the scope of the new developments that had taken place.
- They were supportive of Knebworth Parish Council and Royston Town Council progressing discussions with North Herts Council on 30-minutes free parking in St Martin's Car Park in Knebworth and the Free After Three scheme in Royston respectively. However, they believed that North Herts Council had greater ability and resilience than both the Parish and Town Councils to freeze car parking charges, and therefore North Herts Council should freeze them to allow the Parish and Town Councils to spend money elsewhere on benefiting their communities in other areas.
- One of the benefits of calling in the item for discussion at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was that Members of all political parties across the Council had a chance to give their input on the issue.
- Businesses needed support immediately rather than one year from now.

Councillor Val Bryant, as Deputy Leader of the Council, provided a response and advised that:

- The proposed increase to parking charges was the lowest sensible inflationary amount in order to try and minimise the effects on local businesses.

- The effect of parking charges was anecdotal and there was no data on the effect that increased parking charges had on local businesses. Hitchin Town BID had not provided any figures for this during the consultation process, but this may be something that needed looking at.
- As a resident of North Herts who used public transport, she thought that the small increase to parking charges would not make a difference to residents living in rural areas.
- Data collection on the effects of increased parking charges on rural residents was not available but should be looked at in the future.

The Service Director – Regulatory provided a response and advised that:

- Proposed increases were on existing parking tariffs, there were no proposals for additional tariffs outside of those that already existed.
- Area Forums and Business Improvement Districts had been consulted, representing both a scrutiny and economic development perspective when considering increased parking charges and they had provided responses to the proposals.
- Royston First BID had proposed an amendment to the original proposed tariff increases and this had been adopted by the Cabinet in its decision.
- A productive meeting with Royston Town Council and Royston First BID had taken place earlier that day and subject to their approval processes they would likely be putting forward a funding option to seek to continue the Free After Three scheme. They were also supportive of the new parking machines which required car park users to 'tap in' and 'tap out' as they needed to understand whether the scheme would meet their aspirations in the future.
- Knebworth were still looking to subsidise the 30-minutes free parking in St Martin's Car Park.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

In response to questions, the Service Director – Regulatory advised that:

- Royston Town Council had likely taken the decision to seek to continue the Free After Three scheme with St Mary's Primary School in mind as there was limited parking at the school itself.
- By asking people to tap in and tap out of car parks, they would be able to track data on footfall and inform the Town Council and BID of the impact of their funding dedicated to the scheme in the future.

In response to questions, the Service Director – Resources advised that:

- There was no evidence to suggest that increasing parking charges resulted in a drop in revenue immediately after, or in the financial year when the increases were announced.
- There was an error on Appendix A where the higher tariff proposals were not in line with the inflationary increase. These would be recalculated and put into the figures to be considered by Cabinet.

In response to questions, the Strategic Planning & Projects Manager advised that the inflationary changes were rounded to the nearest 10p as they had moved away from 5p increases in the past.

In response to questions, Councillor Val Bryant advised that:

- From her experience, car parks in Hitchin were at maximum capacity after 3pm daily.
- Knebworth Parish Council had made no comments on the increase in parking tariffs, they simply wished to keep the 30-minutes free parking in St Martin's Road Car Park.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Finance and IT advised that:

- There had been no increase to season tickets for car parks in North Herts.
- The Town Centre Manager for Hitchin raised a number of concerns about any future Sunday parking and evening charges, but not around the proposed increase to existing tariffs.

Councillor Ralph Muncer highlighted that in order to abolish the 30-minute tariff in St Martin's Car Park in Knebworth, it would cost £3,000 annually.

Councillor Ralph Muncer proposed, and Councillor Martin Prescott seconded the following recommendation to Cabinet:

- (1) That Cabinet should freeze parking charges in the 2025/26 Financial Year.
- (2) That Cabinet should remove the 30-minute parking charge in St Martin's Road Car Park, Knebworth.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Matt Barnes

The following points were raised as part of the debate:

- The measure to freeze parking charges would aim to support local businesses who would face challenges presented by the increase to National Insurance.
- The proposed parking charges could have been debated at a previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to avoid the call in process altogether, however the discussion that had taken place at the meeting today had been valuable and Cabinet should note the importance of Overview and Scrutiny in helping it to reach robust policy decisions.
- The consultation with the relevant BIDs and Area Forums had been extensive and the agenda for recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings had been lengthy, hence why it had not been brought to the Committee before it went to Cabinet.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed the amendment, and these were seconded by Councillor Tom Tyson, as follows:

- (1) Remove the consideration to freeze parking charges in the 2025/26 Financial Year.
- (2) Replace the recommendation to remove the 30-minute parking charge in St Martin's Road Car Park, Knebworth with an amendment for Cabinet to reconsider proposed on-street and off-street charging tariffs in Royston and Knebworth in light of the information received at the meeting.
- (3) That Cabinet considers the increase in parking charges based on the updated modelling, specifically around the 4% increase in charges, where this had not been applied to all charges.

The following Members took part in the debate on the amendment:

- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Tom Tyson

The following points were raised as part of the debate on the amendment:

- It made sense for Cabinet to reconsider the increase to all parking tariffs by the inflationary rate of 4% in light of the recalculation that would need to be made to the higher tariff charges.
- Knebworth and Royston were very different communities and considering them together in the proposal would not be helpful.
- Cabinet would consider each area individually in detail when making a decision on funding for parking schemes.

Following a vote, the amendments were **CARRIED**.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis proposed an amendment to be included in the motion that Cabinet notes the importance of Overview and Scrutiny in supporting Cabinet in reaching robust policy decisions and works with the Chair of the Committee to effectively facilitate this.

Councillor Ralph Muncer accepted the amendment into the substantive motion. This was also accepted by Councillor Martin Prescott as seconder.

Councillor Ralph Muncer took part in the debate on the substantive motion and highlighted his concern with the amendments made as they did not support the removal of the 30-minute tariff charge in St Martin's Car Park.

VOTE TOTALS:

YES	:	7
ABSTAIN	:	2
NO	:	2
TOTAL	:	11

THE INDIVIDUAL RESULTS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

Cllr Matt Barnes	YES
Cllr Jon Clayden	YES
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis	YES
Cllr Ralph Muncer	ABSTAIN
Cllr Louise Peace	YES
Cllr Martin Prescott	ABSTAIN
Cllr Tom Tyson	YES
Cllr Laura Williams	YES
Cllr Claire Winchester	YES
Cllr Donna Wright	NO
Cllr Daniel Wright-Mason	NO

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that:

- (1) Cabinet reconsiders the proposed on-street and off-street charging tariffs in Royston and Knebworth in light of the information received at the meeting.
- (2) Cabinet considers the increase in parking charges based on the updated modelling, specifically around the 4% increase in charges, where this had not been applied to all charges.
- (3) Cabinet notes the importance of Overview and Scrutiny in supporting Cabinet in reaching robust policy decisions and works with the Chair of the Committee to effectively facilitate this.

94 PLANNING AND TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO UPDATE

Audio recording – 1 hours 4 minutes 48 seconds

The Service Director – Regulatory presented the report entitled 'Planning & Transport Portfolio Update' and advised that Building Control was the only area under Planning & Transport that was not covered within the report. He invited Members to ask any questions that they may have.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Donna Wright
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Louise Peace
- Councillor Tom Tyson

In response to questions, Councillor Val Bryant advised that:

- The Interim Executive Member for Planning & Transport had given their apologies for this meeting.
- The appointment of a permanent Executive Member for Planning & Transport could be expected to take place around the time of the Annual Council meeting.
- Discussion around using the Community Safety Budget to upgrade lampposts to smart lampposts had taken place. These would house CCTV cameras and EV charging points and they would try to account for as many lampposts as possible before undertaking this to spread the costs of the project.

In response to questions, the Strategic Planning & Projects Manager advised that:

- Consultants had been commissioned to investigate access options to Hitchin Station not just from the eastern side, but under the bridge to the station as well. The options had been presented to Network Rail and they were waiting for them to respond. Once a response had been received, they would be able to provide an update and narrow down the options to take forward.
- The Senior Transport Policy Officer worked with both the Master Planning Team at North Herts Council and the County Council. When planning applications were received, they would advise the Planning Development Team on recommendations that could be made to facilitate the Local Transport Plan.

- The County Council were prioritising some of the more important routes in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and s106 contributions would be directed to these going forward.

In response to questions, the Service Director – Regulatory advised that:

- A Project Prioritisation Programme was in place and timelines for projects were led by statutory and grant deadlines. Everything else that was not dictated by one of these deadlines was done in discussion with the portfolio holder.
- Highways were responsible for pavements across the district, and they had been awarded £6.7 million of Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Funding (LEVI) for on-street charging purposes. The Council would be presenting their case for their share of the funding along with the other ten District and Borough Councils across the County.
- Most lampposts were located at the back of pavements, therefore solutions such as retractable bollards may need to be implemented to facilitate on-street EV charging where this was the case.
- It would not be financially viable for most EV charging companies to install charging points in rural areas, therefore the Council would allow the installation of EV charging points in their car parks to increase the availability of EV charging points to rural residents when visiting towns in North Herts.
- Within the Local Plan, there was a stepping stone approach to Town Centre Strategies. Draft work on these had been taken to the Strategic Planning Project Board, with the view from the Board to take them forward as a single document. Officers were proceeding with that as quickly as possible and stakeholder workshops around the strategies with the BIDs and local businesses had taken place.
- The Draft Town Centre Strategy was targeted to be presented at Cabinet in June as part of the Forward Plan.
- The Strategic Planning Project Board were presented with a detailed assessment of the retail need within the new strategy. However, not as much floor space was needed on retail as initially thought due to the post-COVID rise in online shopping and the evidence base to support this had been presented to local businesses and the BIDs.
- The previous estimates provided by Network Rail on station access through a tunnel for a grant application were estimated in excess of £20M. Because of this, it would be key to work with Network Rail on an eastern access point as s106 money would never be able to cover this project.
- Luton Airport expansion was a project of national significance dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate. A decision had not been made yet regarding this project, however, there would be ongoing works for the Council if the project was approved to assist the airport with monitoring its green infrastructure growth plans.
- When local government reorganisation came into effect and the creation of a unitary authority took place, the aim would be to keep the Local Plan for North Herts and align it with the local plans of other District and Borough Councils that would be absorbed by the unitary authority.
- Planning Performance Agreements were entered into whereby the applicant paid 100% of the additional fees or costs that were incurred by the Council for processing large scale or complex applications.
- Two agency staff had been employed under planning performance agreements, and in the current financial year, £135K had been given by developers towards this and other consultants. An additional £175K had been spent on agency staff and consultants where there were vacancies within planning and transport departments, however, this spending had been within existing budgets.
- Two officers within the Strategic Planning Department were on 5-year contracts and would be expiring soon but their contracts would be made permanent as part of the budget proposals.
- A budget growth bid had also been submitted to recruit an additional Transport Officer to assist the Senior Transport Policy Officer.

- Until the terms of reference for the S106 Task and Finish Group were agreed and government planning policies were published, officers could not predict how the findings of the S106 Task and Finish Group would link with the Local Plan Review.

In response to questions, Councillor Ian Albert advised that:

- Investigation on access options for Hitchin station had been initiated by the Council with the former MP for Hitchin, Bim Afolami, and the work had been continued by the current MP, Alistair Strathern who had met with Network Rail and other stakeholders last week to look at the access options for the site. The wider options for the site would also be looked into with the view to relocate the aggregates company currently occupying the site so that it could be developed, and HGVs could be rerouted away from the town centre.
- The County Council did not have the funding for a station access project, and they were yet to persuade Network Rail of the importance of the land they occupied. In addition, they would have to negotiate with Govia Thameslink to staff the new station access point.
- Better pedestrian and cyclist access on Walsworth Road would also be explored as part of this project.
- The County Council were reluctant to put funding towards pavement solutions to address the problems that would arise from EV charging through smart lampposts.
- Network Rail had carried out costings for a station access project in conjunction with the Levelling Up Fund, but these estimates had been more than £10M which was excessively more than s106 contributions would be able to cover. Therefore, the Council would continue to work with Network Rail to look at some of the alternative options that had been presented to them.

Councillor Dennis highlighted that the railway bridge on Cambridge Road was a significant pinch point for all forms of traffic and that any work on the project would be welcomed.

In response to questions, the Strategic Planning Manager advised that:

- The requirements in the latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stated that the Council had to deliver almost 1000 homes annually and the long-term annual average was currently just 350.
- The current Local Plan would start taking steps towards this and larger applications for strategic sites were being progressed, however, it would be difficult for the Council to consistently hit the annual target until multiple large sites were under construction at the same time.
- Thousands of homes would be delivered as part of the future Baldock expansion scheme but only 800-1,000 of these would be in construction over each five-year period.
- They were on target with the Local Plan, however the future progress of this was contingent on government regulations as announcements on further consultation of the NPPF were pending, as well as new national development policies that the Council would not be allowed to replicate in their Local Plan.

Councillor Ralph Muncer put on record his thanks to the Service Director – Regulatory for his contributions to the Council over the last 35 years and wished him well in retirement.

Councillor Matt Barnes also thanked the Service Director – Regulatory for his service to the Council.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the report and its appendices.

REASON FOR DECISION: This report was following the request of the Committee for an update on the Planning and Transport portfolio.

95 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Audio recording – 1 hour 47 minutes 59 seconds

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Jon Clayden 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 21:28. During the break Councillor Martin Prescott left the Chamber and did not return.

96 MUSEUM STORAGE OPTIONS - PART 2

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

Councillor Val Bryant, as Deputy Leader of the Council, presented the report entitled 'Acquisition of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City for the Museum Storage Facility'.

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

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that: Cabinet approve the acquisition of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City on the terms set out in the Part 2 report and noting the detailed Budget Cost Plan for adapting, fitting out and upgrading the building for museum storage at Appendix A.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: A limited number of modern buildings of this age and size become available to purchase or lease in Letchworth Garden City and surrounding area, particularly one on a long lease at a peppercorn rent for the full term, with an expiry date in 2150. Unit 1 includes land fronting Works Road and to the side of the unit, plus a large part of the car park with the ability to erect a fence to separate the area from the rest of the car park used by adjoining units. In addition, the Council already owns the long leasehold interest in Unit 3 City Park, Letchworth Garden City, having acquired it in June 2016 with that building being used for general archive storage, IT servers, offsite disaster recovery, careline business continuity and legal department storage.

97 MUSEUM STORAGE OPTIONS - PART 1

Audio Recording - 2 hours 22 minutes 13 seconds

Councillor Val Bryant, as Deputy Leader of the Council, presented the report entitled 'Acquisition of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City for the Museum Storage Facility' and advised that:

- The storage facility was an open plan, modern warehouse in the main commercial area of Letchworth Garden City.

- If they acquired the facility, the Council would receive rent from Citysprint (UK) Limited until January 2026 and the tenant would be responsible for repairs, maintenance and business rates, giving officers time to plan the future conversion of the facility.
- A favourable Pre-Purchase Report from Brown & Lee Property Consultants and a Full Building Survey from Hollis confirming the soundness of the facility had been received.
- Significant investment would be required to ensure the environmental sustainability and efficiency of the facility and the preservation of the museum collection.
- This was an opportunity to acquire a long-term storage space at a decreased cost.
- The sale of the current storage site at Bury Mead Road in Hitchin would have the potential to raise up to £500,000.
- The acquisition of Unit 1 would alleviate storage pressures at Broadway Gardens in Letchworth.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Finance and IT, advised that:

- Due to the nature of the building, extensive fitting would be required to repurpose it for museum storage purposes. However, the total cost of investment would come to £2.5 million which was well within the £4 million earmarked for the acquisition of museum storage space.
- The leasehold for the facility had 125 years left on it.
- £64,000 in rent would be received from the existing tenant until January 2026, allowing the Council to collect income until then.
- Facilities of this size were not on the market very often.
- The contract procurement rules were followed when investigating alternative options for museum storage.
- If the purchase did not go through, other options would continue to be explored such as grant funding towards another facility.
- The time scales for acquiring the building would not allow for the Council to obtain grant funding towards the purchase, however, they would investigate obtaining grants towards project staff and the refitting.
- A partnership solution was being explored by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation who sought input from the Council towards a feasibility study over Vantage Point in Letchworth. However, the viability of this facility was not guaranteed and the initial cost projections of this were £137,000 higher than the acquisition of Unit 1 over its lifetime.
- However, if these projections changed, there would be the possibility to re-explore this option.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

In response to questions, the Culture and Facilities Service Manager advised that:

- There was a possibility of exploring income from Unit 1 through the commercialisation of the building, however, this would need further research as the property coming to market was a recent development.
- Unit 1 came with a great deal of office space and welfare facilities would be built which would allow for the potential of the storage facility being open to the community. The income stream from this would be nominal, but this had been considered as part of the acquisition.
- The location of the new facility in Letchworth would allow the museum to have a greater presence across the district as the Museum itself was in Hitchin and it was marketed as a district-wide museum.

- There would be security concerns over the museum collection if the surplus storage space designed to futureproof the growth of the collection was granted to third parties on a temporary basis.

In response to questions, Councillor Ian Albert advised that:

- The extensive archives would be available to the general public through behind-the-scenes tours. The Bury Mead Road facility did not have allow for these to be carried out.
- As this would form part of the Council Delivery Plan, they would need to keep the project under review by setting up a project board to review the project and its progress.

In response to questions, Councillor Val Bryant advised that:

- There was social value from moving to Unit 1 as there would be space for a classroom, and there was already a car park large enough to fit approximately 30 vehicles. Therefore, there would be scope for visits from the public and outside organisations.
- The North Herts Museum collection had many different items with different storage needs and they expected the collection to grow from the archaeology expedition that was taking place in Baldock.
- The Museum Storage project would have a recognised project manager and project management structure to ensure that it was delivered within the budget and timescales as discussed previously.

In response to questions, the Principal Estates Surveyor advised that additional Council departments and outside voluntary organisations utilising the surplus storage space would be a future possibility, however, ensuring the preservation of the museum collection was the first priority.

In response to questions, the Service Director – Resources advised that if a project board was set up to follow through with the museum storage project, it would go through the project management framework which would have both Executive Member and Member involvement. Given the capital size of the project, this would be the recommended action to take.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

The following points were raised as part of the debate:

- It would be prudent to consider the refurbishment work and continue to explore grant funding towards this and the relocation of the project costs.
- This solution would be cost effective, and the project had been delayed in the past, therefore it was long overdue that it was commenced.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Claire Winchester seconded and, following a vote it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend: That Cabinet approve the acquisition of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City on the terms set out in the Part 2 report and noting the detailed Budget Cost Plan for adapting, fitting out and upgrading the building for museum storage.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: A limited number of modern buildings of this age and size become available to purchase or lease in Letchworth Garden City and surrounding area, particularly one on a long lease at a peppercorn rent for the full term, with an expiry date in 2150. Unit 1 includes land fronting Works Road and to the side of the unit, plus a large part of the car park with the ability to erect a fence to separate the area from the rest of the car park used by adjoining units. In addition, the Council already owns the long leasehold interest in Unit 3 City Park, Letchworth Garden City, having acquired it in June 2016 with that building being used for general archive storage, IT servers, offsite disaster recovery, careline business continuity and legal department storage.

The Chair thanked Members and officers for their work on the Museum Storage Project so far.

98 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

Audio recording – 2 hours 44 minutes 40 seconds

N.B. Councillor Laura Williams left the Chamber at 22:15 and did not return.

The Managing Director presented the report entitled 'Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan' and advised that:

- The Corporate Peer Challenge Review took place at the beginning of November and the final report was received before Christmas. It was noted at the Cabinet meeting in January with a delegation to produce the Action Plan, which would then be presented to Cabinet at a later meeting, following comments from this Committee.
- Within the report, there were ten recommendations made to the Council. The Action Plan would respond to these alone and any other useful information that had been picked up from the report would be looked at separately.
- Some of the recommendations from the report were quite narrative and in response, several of the actions within the Action Plan were also narrative.
- As the response in the Action Plan was refined in more detail, the actions would become more time specified.
- The first recommendation mentioned the golden thread which was a term used to describe the link between the overarching corporate policies, included in the Council Plan, and how these linked to the operational delivery of services.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Donna Wright
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Claire Winchester

In response to questions, the Managing Director advised that:

- In the medium to long-term, it was not certain that the District Council would exist due to local government reorganisation.
- The Corporate Peer Review took place before the Devolution White Paper was published.
- If North Herts did not exist, priorities that were mapped out in the Action Plan would have to be changed. They did not have the funding or staff resources to do everything, therefore they would have to prioritise certain actions, especially with the future proposed structure change of the Council.
- The process around Regular Performance Reviews and One-to-Ones would be reviewed as part of the Action Plan, and this would involve engagement with senior managers to embed new processes.

- The Local Government Association required an Action Plan to be published within 3 months of the report being published.
- The Action Plan had some useful short-term actions for the Council to undertake in addition to other projects that would help the Council for whatever came next such as the Digital Transformation Update.
- Local Government reorganisation was looking very likely which meant that recommendations that had been made in the report and the Action Plan would not necessarily be relevant in the future.

In response to questions, Councillor Val Bryant advised that:

- Modernisation was listed as one of the recommendations and in response to this, the Digital Transformation Update had already begun and this could save resources and money for the Council.
- The narrative on Place within the Action Plan had unfortunately been overtaken since the announcement of the Devolution White Paper.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Matt Barnes

The following points were raised as part of the debate:

- Both documents should be welcomed to conduct best practice within the industry and it would be irresponsible to discharge responsibilities prior to reorganisation taking place.
- The Action Plan could be summarised in two terms, pressures and prioritisation.
- Digital Transformation would be pivotal in the coming years, it would have a major impact on members of staff in their jobs and it would be beneficial for this to be maintained.
- It was important for staff briefings to continue to take place to drive the direction on what should be achieved in times of uncertainty.

The Chair thanked the Managing Director for their report.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the content of the Corporate Peer Challenge report and its recommendations were noted.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the proposed Action Plan, and referred it onto Cabinet, to be considered on 18 March 2025.

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

99 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Audio recording – 3 hours 8 minutes 13 seconds

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report entitled 'Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25' and advised that:

- Members would be invited to a Work Programme training session on 13 May which would contain training from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and a workshop

with the Scrutiny Officer and the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager to begin looking at items for the 2025/26 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

- Appointments to the S106 Task and Finish Group had been made and the draft scope had been reviewed by the Chair and sent to both officers and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to ensure that it had been well defined. Comments on the draft scope were due back on Tuesday 18 March.
- The Local Government Association Peer Review actions were included in Appendix C of the report.
- No referrals had been made to Cabinet from the last Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 4 February, however, the referrals from this meeting would be made to the next Cabinet meeting on 18 March.
- The Scrutiny Officer and Committee, Scrutiny and Member Manager would be attending a Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Conference on Thursday 20 March. Following this, feedback would be provided to Members on its contents.

Councillor Ralph Muncer thanked the Chair, Members, and officers for their engagement with the formation of the S106 Task and Finish Group so far.

The Chair asked Members for their opinions on two items on the Forward Plan to be discussed at the next Committee meeting. These were the Sustainability Strategy and the Town Centre Strategy.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis supported the discussion of the Town Centre Strategy at the next meeting, although she recognised the work that would need to be carried out by officers before it could be presented and emphasised that they should not be pressured to present it at the next meeting if it was not ready in time.

Councillor Louise Peace highlighted that a consultation on sustainability was ongoing, and that they should wait to discuss the Sustainability Strategy until after the results from this had been published.

In response to Councillor Louise Peace, the Chair advised that the progress of the consultation would be kept under review.

In response to a question from Councillor Ralph Muncer on seeking the views of the Cabinet Panel on Environment regarding the Sustainability Strategy, the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager advised that this could be organised with them, and that all Members were able to attend meetings of the Cabinet Panel on the Environment.

The Chair also mentioned the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as an item for discussion at the Committee meeting in June, however, if more urgent items needed to be discussed, the discussion of this could be delayed to a future Committee meeting.

The Chair noted that the Town Centre Strategy would come to the next Committee meeting, along with potential updates on Museum Storage Options and the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan. The Chair also wished for these items to be discussed at the workshop in May.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Ralph Muncer seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee prioritises topics for inclusion in the Work Programme attached as Appendix A and, where appropriate, determines the high-level form and timing of scrutiny input.
- (2) That the Committee, having considered the most recent iteration of the Forward Plan, as attached at Appendix B, suggests a list of items to be considered at its meetings in the coming civic year.
- (3) That the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan as attached at Appendix C be considered.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To allow the Committee to set a work programme which provides focused Member oversight, encourages open debate and seeks to achieve service improvement through effective policy development and meaningful policy and service change.
- (2) The need to observe Constitutional requirements and monitor the Forward Plan for appropriate items to scrutinise remains a key aspect of work programming.

The meeting closed at 10.47pm

Chair

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON TUESDAY, 6TH MAY, 2025 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Matt Barnes (Chair), Tom Tyson (Vice-Chair), Tina Bhartwas, Jon Clayden, Elizabeth Dennis, Ralph Muncer, Louise Peace, Martin Prescott, Laura Williams, Claire Winchester, Donna Wright, Daniel Wright-Mason.*

In Attendance: *Amy Cantrill (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Ian Couper (Director - Resources), Sarah Kingsley (Director - Environment), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Jeevan Mann (Scrutiny Officer).*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting there was one member of the public.*

Councillor Mick Debenham was in attendance as Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Green Spaces and Councillor Val Bryant was in attendance as Deputy Leader of the Council.

100 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio Recording – 1 minute 9 seconds

There were no apologies for absence from Members.

101 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio Recording – 1 minute 19 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The Chair advised that for the purposes of clarification clause 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution does not apply to this meeting.
- (4) The Chair reminded Members of the adopted North Herts Scrutiny Charter and the need to ensure that the meeting was conducted with independence, initiative and integrity. The full Charter was available to Members via the Scrutiny Intranet pages.

102 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 17 seconds

There was no public participation at this meeting.

103 DECARBONISATION OF LEISURE CENTRES CONTRACT AWARD UPDATE

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 21 seconds

Councillor Mick Debenham, as Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Green Spaces, presented the report entitled 'Decarbonisation of Leisure Centres Contract Award Update' and highlighted that:

- In 2024 the Council was awarded a £7.74 million of grant funding for decarbonisation, to be used at the leisure centres in Royston, Hitchin and Letchworth.
- Added to the decarbonisation works were an extension to the gym and change village refurbishment at Royston and a new change village at North Herts Leisure Centre (NHLC).
- In March 2025 Wilmot Dixon Construction (WDC) submitted a provisional Contract sum of £15.895 million, which was being negotiated by the quantity surveyor for the Council, Varsity Consulting (VC).
- The final figure for the construction would be presented to the Cabinet meeting on the 20 May, where a decision on awarding the construction contract would be considered.
- Due to conditions of the grant funding, early equipment orders were placed meaning the project had already spent £6.709 million.
- As part of the works there would need to be closures at the leisure centres which would unfortunately cause disruption to customers and the Council would need to cover the revenue impact and this had been valued at approximately £900K by Everyone Active (EA).
- This figure could change depending on improvements in the programme of works, for example redeploying staff to the outdoor swimming pools or construction taking less time than predicted.
- Cabinet would be asked to consider an extension of the outdoor pool opening until the end of October at the meeting on the 20 May, after that meeting the full plan would be finalised.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Louise Peace
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Laura Williams
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Donna Wright

In response to questions, Councillor Mick Debenham advised that:

- The potential cost implications at the start of the project were lower, however due to unforeseen circumstances, the structure at Hitchin created a health and safety risk, and therefore while work was carried out on the roof a period of partial closure would be required, which accounted for a significant increase in the loss of revenue.
- Hitchin works had to be delayed due to a bat survey, therefore could not start in the summer 2025.
- Membership would not be charged for the time of closures, and EA members would be able to visit other EA centres nationwide.
- Schools who currently used facilities affected would be contacted.
- The project was a design and build contract which transferred more risk onto the contractor. WDC was cognisant of the risks, having completed the first stage tender, therefore VC have advised 5% would be reasonable.

- The Council had spent the grant on equipment already, so the project should go ahead despite the increased costs. Failure to proceed would mean the Council would be required to store, and arrange disposal of, the already purchased equipment.

In response to questions, the Director - Environment advised that:

- At the commencement of the project the Council was not aware of the level of disruption that would be caused. Following the audit from WDC, it was agreed partial closure would be the safest option and the loss of revenue figures from EA had only recently been made available to the Council.
- The Council had communicated with EA and both would try and retain current customers during the disruption however all cases were individual and unpredictable.
- The figures provided by EA in regard to loss of revenue are standardised, for example, cost of loss of pool per day multiplied by predicted days of closure.
- EA had agreed to subtract the wage costs if staff were transferred to the outdoor pool and would be flexible if the £900K could be reduced.
- Within the contract there are some risks, if there is an issue with the design WDC which results in added cost then that cost is on them. The reason the surveyor is comfortable, all major risks have been drawn out like the Hitchin roof.
- The project had a risk register, a project board and weekly meetings with WDC and EA to negate further risk, the biggest risk had already been negated by securing the grant funding.
- The communication plan was not finalised but would be created by the Council in conjunction with WDC and EA, and the majority of communications would come from EA.
- The museum storage was not ready to be used for this project. However, we are using a Council owned building for some of the storage to reduce costs.
- A written response would be provided in regard to asbestos surveys of the buildings.
- The council is a pre-construction agreement with WDC and the final cost would be agreed on 20 May 2025. Once the construction contract was signed some of the risk would then be passed to WDC.
- This project used the SCAPE framework which was standard for this kind of procurement. All the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stages are done before construction contract is signed as standard.
- In regard to risk of additional closure, we are negotiating a clause that would be included in the contract so the project would be finished on time. However, certain things would be outside the control of WDC, for example weather conditions during construction.
- In the short term it would be cheaper to not do the project. However, due to the Net Zero target of the Council and the eventual cost of replacing the current heating system, in long term different without a Grant would be more expensive.
- The decarbonisation works must be completed by March 2026 to get the full grant funding.
- The programme of works was staggered, with Royston starting in July 2025, Letchworth in July 2025 and Hitchin in September 2025.
- There would be a small overlap between the closures of the Royston and Letchworth pools.

In response to questions, the Director - Resources advised that:

- The original budget was approximately £12.5 million.
- Funding for the revenue costs would come from the Councils General Fund Reserves and Council could make a decision to reduce spend in other areas but that would be part of the budget setting process.

In response to the questions Councillor Val Bryant gave a brief overview of the meeting on the 27 March 2025.

The Chair advised Members that there was a work programming session scheduled for Tuesday 13 May where planning for further Scrutiny of this project could be discussed and added to the Work Programme for the Committee.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed, and Councillor Elizabeth Dennis seconded.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Louise Peace
- Councillor Laura Williams

The following points were raised as part of the debate:

- That Officers and Portfolio Holders were thanked for their hard work on this project.
- Concerns over the budget were acknowledged and potential future increases were raised.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should continue to monitor the project.
- That the grant funding was crucial to the affordability of this project.
- The contract signed must be tight and protect taxpayers money as much as possible, without compromising safety.
- Communication must be done in all formats to involve all residents of the District.
- The contribution this action would make towards achieving the Net Zero target for the District by 2030 should be communication to residents.

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

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Overview and Scrutiny noted the projected provisional increase in the capital budget to £16.166m.
- (2) That Overview and Scrutiny noted the current estimated one-off revenue impact of £900k in 2025/26 through loss of income, due to partial and full facility closures.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Overview and Scrutiny noted the report and provided comment to Cabinet on the report.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To enable Overview and Scrutiny the opportunity to scrutinise the progress to date of the leisure decarbonisation project, including spend to date and anticipated increases in capital budget expenditure, as well as loss of revenue implications, prior to the contract award decision being considered by Cabinet on 20 May 2025.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Chair

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 10 JUNE 2025

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: Full Year Update on Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3C's) 24/25

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL SERVICES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COUNCILLOR VAL BRYANT

PRIORITY: ACCESSIBLE SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This information note is to provide an update on the full year (24/25) performance regarding the Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3C's) for the Council and the contractors that provide services on the Council's behalf. This briefing note accompanies the 3C's dashboard at Appendix A, and the breakdown of 3C's by service and type at Appendix B.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 The Council has a well embedded policy and procedures for handling customer feedback; the 3C's Policy. We welcome feedback from our customers about our services so that we can continue to learn about how we can make improvements and what we do well.
- 2.2 The 3C's policy sets out clearly the definition of a comment, compliment, and complaint as well as how to escalate a complaint either to stage 2 of the process or the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Customers can give feedback in a number of ways and can do this directly to the Council or to the contractors who provide key services on our behalf.
- 2.3 The 3C's policy was updated and refreshed and was adopted by Cabinet in September 2022. The updated policy ensures the Council and communities we serve know how to access help, and that a safe and compassionate system to deal with complaints is in place.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 During 24/25 the number of compliments received directly by North Herts Council decreased in volume compared to the previous year, whilst the number of comments and complaints received rose slightly.
- 3.2 The areas that generally receive the highest amount of feedback are those where there is the highest level of contact or interactions from residents such as the waste and recycling service and the leisure facilities.

- 3.3 The number of complaints received by both the Council and our contractors increased from 384 in 23/24 to 591 in 24/25 (a 54% increase). Of the total 591 complaints, 391 (66%) relate to services delivered by our key contractors, including our waste and recycling contractors (21) and the leisure centres (370).
- 3.4 The percentage of stage 1 complaints resolved within the SLA of 10 days has risen from 86% in 23/24 to 91% in 24/25, which is 11% above the target of 80%. March 25 saw the lowest number of complaints logged with (6), with May & December 24 coming in second lowest with only (9) logged.
- 3.5 As part of the 3C's policy refresh at the end of 2022, the deadline for responding to stage 2 complaints was increased from 10 days to 20 days. This was to allow sufficient time for officers to investigate and consider complaints which are usually complex in nature.
- 3.6 Leisure had the highest number of complaints not resolved within 10/20 days (x8); however, this was mainly due to waiting for a response from Everyone Active. Complainants were kept updated regarding changing timeframes.
- 3.7 The summary dashboard at Appendix A shows annual comparisons of both 3C's received directly at North Herts Council and 3C's received by our contractors. The dashboard also details the percentage of interactions resulting in a formal complaint. It is worth noting that the percentage of interactions/collections/visitors resulting in a complaint is currently below 0.2%.
- 3.8 Appendix B provides a breakdown of all 3C's received by service and type. The areas of highest complaints reported directly were Leisure (40) and Green Space (24). Specific areas of repeat Leisure complaints were regarding poor hygiene, cancelled classes, price increases, and the booking system. Some specific areas of Green Space complaints were regarding overgrown vegetation, poor grass cutting, gate access at the cemeteries, and overhanging trees.
- 3.9 It is worth noting that although Leisure received the highest number of complaints (40), the total amount of complaints received directly by the Council has decreased slightly, from 179 in 23/24, to 176 in 24/25.
- 3.10 The volume of 3C's received by the leisure centres marks the largest increase, with the total 3C's being 334 in 23/24 and 823 in 24/25. This large increase relates to the start of the new contract with Everyone Active, which commenced on the 1 April 2024, and new processes and systems implemented as a result. From 1 April 2024, KPI data is being collected by the Leisure and Active Communities team and will be used as baseline data to be able to monitor trends moving forward.
- 3.11 Everyone Active are addressing these complaints according to their complaint's procedure. When the complaints are about new policy changes, they provide extra information to clarify. Complaints about cleanliness are investigated and responded to by Everyone Active, and the Leisure and Active Communities team. The top five complaints relate to policy changes.
- Advanced booking of sessions
 - Split sessions/lunch closure at lidos
 - Concession changes
 - Increase in swimming lesson capacity
 - No show/late cancel charges

- 3.12 Urbaser saw a 73% decrease in complaints logged; with 77 in 23/24 compared to 21 in 24/25.
- 3.13 Urbaser also received some great compliments (21). Some specific compliments included:
- “Very helpful and polite young man working on the bin emptying crew helped me with my grey recycling bin today - above and beyond”
 - “I have been over to Baldock, and the area has been left the cleanest I have seen for many years so please pass on my thanks to the team involved. Please pass on this message to the crew involved and thank them for me for doing such a great job. Really appreciated.”
- 3.14 There were 131 compliments received directly to the Council. The Careline service received the highest number, with 42. These are generally submitted by a client’s family following an incident where the Careline staff had provided an emergency response service, these included:
- Customer said “that in today's world, our Careline service was outstanding and particularly Shane, Careline Technician, as he was so kind and caring and she felt completely at ease with him”
 - Customer called to say “that Lesley, Careline Operator, was brilliant for her help when her mother needed it and awarded her a gold star.
- 3.15 There were 24 stage 2 complaints over the course of the year; 5 of which were for Planning Control (however 4 of these complaints were not justified). Of the 29 stage 2 complaints, only 9 were deemed to be justified.
- 3.16 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the complaint outcome after completing our process, they may escalate their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Complaints escalated to the LGO will usually have exhausted our internal complaints process.
- 3.17 The LGO received 5 complaints during this period. It’s prudent to note there may be some cases that do not reach the Council, as they are premature and will be referred to go through the 3C’s procedure. These cases are then shown in the Annual Review Letter received from the LGO in July. Further information can be found on the LGO’s website, by searching for the reference numbers found in the table below. ([Decisions - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#))

The table below summarises the LGO decisions on those 5 complaints:

Service (as classified by the LGO)	LGO Decision	Further information
Planning & Development 23 012 307	Upheld: fault and injustice	In summary, the resident complained the Council failed to follow its planning enforcement policy when investigating her reports of planning breaches. The Council agreed to the LGO’s recommendations of:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologising to the customer for the frustration caused • Issuing a written reminder to enforcement staff about the need for clear and accurate communication with residents on enforcement cases. The aim behind this being to ensure officers do not inappropriately raise residents' expectations about what action it would take and when by <p>The LGO have now recorded a compliance outcome of 'remedy complete and satisfied'.</p> <p>Planning Enforcement Service improvements can be found at Appendix C.</p>
Benefits & Tax 24 004 775	Upheld: fault and injustice	<p>The resident complained the bailiffs acting on behalf of the Council made an unnecessary visit incurring extra fees and failed to properly respond during telephone conversations when he explained his vulnerabilities. The LGO recommended to refund the enforcement costs of £310.</p> <p>The LGO have now recorded a compliance outcome of 'remedy complete and satisfied'.</p> <p>Enforcement Agency Service improvements can be found at Appendix C.</p>
Benefits & Tax 24 006 736	Closed after initial enquiries – no further action	<p>The resident complained that the Council failed to contact him about a Council Tax debt which led to a liability order and costs. The LGO decided not to investigate as the matter was out of time and there was no evidence of fault by the Council.</p>
Planning & Development 24 015 901	Closed after initial enquiries – no further action	<p>The resident complained about the conduct of two Council planning officers during an application for a development near her property, and how the Council responded to her complaints. The LGO decided there was not enough evidence of fault by</p>

		the Council in the planning process to warrant investigation.
Housing 24 018 639	Closed after initial enquiries – no further action	The resident complained about the Council's handling of his homeless case, saying that the Council did not provide him with adequate support. The LGO decided not to investigate as there was insufficient evidence of fault.

- 3.18 Following an audit conducted by the Shared Internal Audit Service last year, we received a reasonable overall assurance that there are effective controls in operation for the LGO processes. One of the low priority recommendations was to highlight details of the above complaints to the Overview and Scrutiny committee, including what the remedy was and what service improvements have been made. These can be found at Appendix C.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 3C's performance will continue to be monitored and reported to this Committee on a six-monthly basis.
- 4.2 The Customer Service Manager (CSM) will continue to keep up to date with guidance and case studies from the LGO, sharing any key learning. The CSM will also provide regular updates to the Leadership Team on a quarterly basis.

5. APPENDICES

- 5.1 Appendix A – Dashboard
- 5.2 Appendix B - Breakdown by service area
- 5.3 Appendix C – Service improvements

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 6.1 Chris Jeffery
Customer & Digital Services Manager
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7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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3C's Performance Summary: 2024/2025

3C's Received directly at NHC - Annual Comparisons

	22/23	23/24	24/25
Number of Comments received	28	35	60
Number of Compliments received	172	142	131
Number of Complaints received	185	179	200
Total received	385	356	391
% complaints resolved within 10 working days	77%	86%	91%
% of complaints justified	30%	31%	43%
Complaints received by the LGO	13	6	5

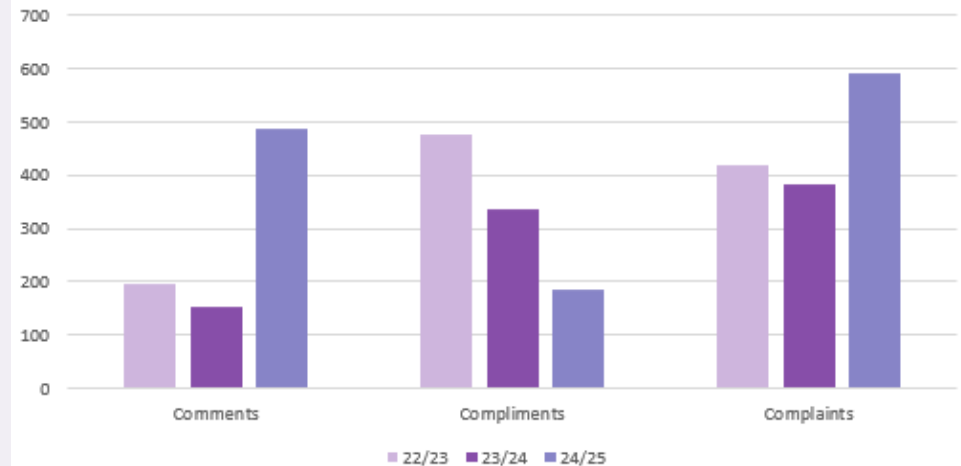
Contractor Complaints Data (all contractors)

	22/23	23/24	24/25
Number of Comments received	170	120	427
Number of Compliments received	305	195	53
Number of Complaints received	232	205	391
Total received	707	520	871

Combined Totals

	22/23	23/24	24/25
Number of Comments received	198	155	487
Number of Compliments received	477	337	184
Number of Complaints received	417	384	591
Total received	1092	876	1262

Full Year 3C's Comparisons NHC & Contractors Combined



Percentage of interactions resulting in a formal complaint

	Number of interactions /	% of
NHDC	120,228 interactions	0.19%
Urbaser	7.72million* collections	0.000%
North Herts Leisure Centre	606,356 visitors	0.024%
Hitchin Swim Centre & Archers	606,685 visitors	0.023%
Royston Leisure Centre	355,045 visitors	0.018%

* [This figure is based on data from 23/24]

Waste and Recycling Data (combined)

	Comments	Compliments	Complaints	Totals
24/25	17	29	41	87
23/24	26	86	98	210
22/23	37	73	135	245

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Breakdown of 3C's by service area – 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

Regulatory	Comments	Compliments	Complaints
Planning Control & Conservation	2	6	23
Planning Policy	2	0	1
Parking Enforcement	5	2	8
Place	Comments	Compliments	Complaints
Leisure	14	0	40
Green Space	5	11	24
Waste Management	11	8	20
Housing & Environmental Health	Comments	Compliments	Complaints
Housing Needs	0	3	19
Homelessness & Housing Advice	0	12	18
Environmental Health – Protection	1	2	4
Environmental Health - Commercial	0	2	4
Customers	Comments	Compliments	Complaints
Benefits	0	3	4
Careline	0	42	5
Customer Service Centre	8	14	11
MSU Post & Administration	2	7	0
Revenues Billing and Recovery	4	1	16
Revenues Technical	1	0	0
Enterprise	Comments	Compliments	Complaints
Museum	0	3	0
Estates	0	0	1
Property Services	0	2	0
Legal & Community	Comments	Compliments	Complaints
Electoral Services	2	2	1
Community Health & Wellbeing	0	4	0
Community Safety	1	3	0
Licensing	0	3	1
Resources	Comments	Compliments	Complaints
Accountancy Services	2	0	0
Managing Director	Comments	Compliments	Complaints
	0	1	0
Totals	60	131	200
Contractor Data	Comments	Compliments	Complaints
Waste (Urbaser)	6	21	21
North Herts Leisure Centre	148	10	146
Hitchin Swim Centre	178	18	161
Royston Leisure	95	4	63

Contractor Totals	427	53	391
Combined Totals	487	184	591

Appendix C – Planning Enforcement service improvements

1. Weekly case reviews available for Officers to discuss investigations and receive guidance from colleagues and line managers to improve officer experience and confidence to make robust evidence-based decisions
2. Investigation reports developed and includes clear guidance to assist and steer new officers with the matters required to inform details required from site visits and how to assess and draw conclusions from the information they have obtained
3. Regular 1-2-1 meetings between Case Officers and Line Managers
4. Development and Training Plans, which are bespoke tools that track officer progress, development, and training required and delivered to support individual progress pathways
5. Internal consultations established as a forum for Officers to discuss and benefit from the specialist knowledge and experience of colleagues in other areas of the Planning Service and Legal Team
6. Data of planning enforcement cases and actions published on Council website, including number of cases investigated, actions taken and pending. In publicising this information Officers aim to strengthen community support and confidence in the work of the Planning Enforcement Service
7. Planning Enforcement webpage now includes Frequently Asked Questions following work collating information on complaints and queries received most often
8. Triage of emails received, and updates given to customers, responding to specific information where possible to provide swifter information
9. Planning enforcement auto-reply email used as a valuable tool to advise customers on the process and timescales, also signposts to relevant areas for specific complaints not dealt with by planning enforcement
10. Pre-application advise for landowners/developers to discuss options to resolve planning breaches
11. Performance monitoring undertaken on a quarterly basis
12. Customer Experience engagement and improvement reported to PCC on 21st November 2024

Appendix C – Enforcement Agency service improvements

“Following the Complaint and the Ombudsman’s findings, we immediately gave additional training in vulnerability for Office Staff and Agents, both in a classroom situation and by on-line training courses. We stressed the importance of investigating thoroughly and observing tone of voice, actions, comments made and asking more questions and asking for medical evidence to assist us in helping the charge payer and assessing the situation thoroughly.

If the Staff believe that there is a vulnerable situation, we will discuss with the Council and take further instructions.

We also gave additional training when telephone calls become heated or difficult and the importance of being accurate with applying the arrangements, when they are agreed, and emailing the detailed arrangement to the charge payer. Both sides will then have a record of what has been agreed, when to pay and the amount payable. This then avoids any unnecessary attendances, which may escalate a situation.

The training is repeated every three months, and we encourage referral to a manager or senior member of the team if a telephone call or Agent’s visit becomes contentious.

We have also included in the training the importance of signposting charge payers to any relevant non-paying organisations such as Citizens Advice. We have added to our Website and Letters details of the National Support Network, Support Hub, which provides a wide range of resources, helplines, self-help apps, local support services and peer support groups.

Our system now highlights potentially vulnerable cases, vulnerable cases, possible complaints and complaints in different colours to assist the staff and our arrangement and arrangement email system has also been made easier to use for the operators.”

CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE (CSC) PERFORMANCE
24/25



CSC PERFORMANCE				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Calls offered (total)	21,922	23,400	23,063	35,474
% Calls answered (KPI – 95%)	96%	94%	88%	80%
% Calls answered within 45s (KPI – 80%)	75%	62%	50%	49%
Call wait time (avg)	1:12	2:19	5:08	7:30
F2F visitors	1,955	1,736	1,669	3338
Emails handled	1,675	1,921	1,852	2,758

ISSUES AFFECTING PERFORMANCE	ACTIONS
Staff shortages throughout the year.	Temporary staff recruited on a rolling basis and fast-track trained to handle waste enquiries.
Waste customer services brought in-house (TUPE), training these staff members, garden waste re-subscription period.	Continuously reviewed processes to ensure staff had all relevant information to work as efficiently as possible.
Impact of new payment system, some team members unable to take payments mid-call created a resource bottleneck. Changed format of invoices generated additional contact.	Reported to Finance. Resourcing adjusted to manage demand.
Waste garden subscription period at the same time as annual Council Tax billing.	Non-essential activities cancelled so all resources possible allocated to support call answering. Offered overtime and flexi to staff.
Increase of face to face and email contact because telephone lines were so busy. More resource diverted to reception, compounding issues on the telephone.	Updated messaging on the telephone lines, website, social media to advise of how busy we were, article published in MIS to advise Councillors of current position.
Repeated attempts from customers to get through increasing demand.	Email auto response updated to advise of long response times.
Waste contract / service change.	Digital Services team working hard to integrate with contractor's waste management system so more can be reported online to avoid contact to the CSC.

CLLR PORTAL – avg completion (working days)

CLlr Community Safety (6 cases) – 2
CLlr Green Space Request (51 cases) – 4
CLlr ‘Other’ Enquiries (45 cases) – 23
CLlr Parking Services (13 cases) – 6
CLlr Planning Request (6 cases) – 5
CLlr Waste Concern (41 cases) - 5

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
10 JUNE 2025

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE : UPDATE ON MOBILISATION OF WASTE COLLECTION AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE SHARED SERVICE MANAGER – WASTE MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

PRIORITY - SUSTAINABILITY

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the meeting of Cabinet on 9 July 2024 the Council agreed to award the new waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to Veolia UK Ltd. This contract has subsequently been mobilised with the contract beginning on 4 May 2025. Service changes as part of the new contract are due to commence on 4 August 2025.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 The mobilisation of the contract has been an extensive project but key steps to date are highlighted in the table below:-

Event	Date
Meeting of NHC Cabinet to agree contract award	9 July 2024
End of standstill	12 August 2024
Initial meeting with Veolia	15 August 2024
Completion of the Letchworth leases assignment	21 August 2024
Press release in relation to award	September 2024
Inter Authority Agreement Signing	5 December 2024
Vehicle Orders placed	6 December 2024
MRF tender publishing	16 December 2024
Bins and caddy mini competition publishing	December 2025
Bins and Caddy Tender Award	March 2025
Council tax service change introduction leaflet	March 2025
Members briefing	27 March 2025
MRF tender intention to award	2 April 2025
Collection Contract Award & Contract Signing	2 May 2025
Old Whitespace waste management IT system shutdown	3 May 2025
Depot handover	4 May 2025
New vehicles arrive	4 May 2025
New ECHO waste management IT system go live	6 May 2025
Bin deliveries began	6 May 2025
Press Release	20 May 2025

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 The mobilisation of the contract has gone well with minimal disruption to collection and cleansing services. The service experienced five dropped roads in week one and only one dropped road in week two.
- 3.2 The vehicle workshop is being relocated to the Buntingford depot, however work to install equipment has been delayed due to the EHC grounds maintenance contractor moving off site late and the area not being vacant until contract start. In addition landlord consent for alterations is still outstanding.
- 3.3 All but one of the planned electric vehicles are delayed. This is as a result of the manufacturer finding a fault with the chassis and battery supports. At this stage we do not yet have an anticipated date for their arrival or whether an alternative manufacturer will be chosen. Diesel fuelled vehicles are being used in the interim. The EV charging infrastructure has all been installed now at the Letchworth depot.
- 3.4 All online forms are now available to the customer. Work is ongoing to fully integrate online forms with the waste management IT system. Fully integrated forms include:-
- Check your bin day
 - Missed bins
 - Garden waste subscription
 - Order a bin/replacement or repair a bin
 - Report an overflowing litter bin
- 3.5 Some forms like clinical waste collections or bulky waste collections are very complex and are taking longer to integrate, either due to scheduling requirements needed to complete the task and/or payment integrations.
- 3.6 Some data errors exist in the waste management IT system, and this is an ongoing process for correction by Veolia. This will affect bin collection day look ups and there is a small risk of missed collections being slightly higher as a result. Any identified are being checked.
- 3.7 The data for communal properties is not pulling through correctly for properties which are serviced by a communal bin store. A resolution is being sought for this with Veolia and this affects the reporting of missed collections at communal properties and bin collection day look up.
- 3.8 The updated risk register is presented in Appendix 1. The amended elements for this update are shown in red.
- 3.9 The majority of risk scores which have changed have reduced the risk score now that the contract has mobilised. Some however have increased where the risk was realised and are still not resolved. These include Risk 27 – the availability of online services in EHC, Risk 31 – Litter bin review, Risk 37 – Bin collection day search in EHC.
- 3.10 Collection rounds and new service mobilisation plans are not yet available for the new service and this presents as a new risk as these have not been provided within contractually specified timeframes. The reasoning is predominantly to allow for input from existing collection staff to ensure that new routes have local knowledge input.
- 3.11 The lack of availability of the mobilisation plan for the service roll out impacts on the planned communications relating to day changes. Residents need to be informed of any day changes and their new cycle, i.e. which bin will be collected first after the start of the

new service on 4 August 2025. In addition, some residents will also need to be informed of any infill collections. This may occur where there is an extended gap between the last collection on the old service and the new service collections. At the bid stage Veolia indicated that there would be approximately 50% of households experiencing a day change.

- 3.12 Communications plans are provided in Appendix 2 and are still on target. It is anticipated that the next tranche of written communications will be developed and distributed in sufficient time to all households.
- 3.13 To date residents have received to their house a leaflet with council tax, there will receive further information on the new bin and what it is for when it arrives. Outlook magazine will also be delivered to every household with details about the new service and during July residents will receive a further service leaflet and collection day change information direct to their door.
- 3.14 We will be encouraging Members and Parish councillors to proactively support the communications plan.
- 3.15 The Shared Waste Service has a Communications Officer vacancy, and this has significantly impacted on the ability to deliver the communications plan. Face to face events are the most likely elements of the communications plan to be scaled back and some elements have already been. Recruitment is underway to the post.
- 3.16 From mid-June the Shared Waste Service will have a Contract Officer vacancy. Recruitment is underway. Additional temporary positions are also planned to support the roll out of the new service and recruitment is planned soon.
- 3.17 Staff resource levels continue to impact, as with any service mobilisation there is an uplift in resident contacts and this coupled with the waste management IT system set up differing from the previous set up is impacting on the workload of staff in the shared waste team and customer service team.
- 3.18 Issues with the waste management IT system are being reported to Veolia and are being rectified but this is a slow process. Weekly progress meetings are being held with Veolia to discuss outstanding elements of work linked to IT as well as weekly mobilisation meetings.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Information will continue to be provided via the Members Information Service (MIS)
- 4.2 The new service leaflet is in final draft stage. At the time of writing this will be shared with a panel of residents before the final design is confirmed to ensure that all aspects of the information are clear.
- 4.3 Once the mobilisation plan and collection day changes are confirmed the communication material for this will be finalised. The print deadline is 13 June 2025, given the tight timelines a new risk has been added to the risk register.
- 4.4 Service leaflets and letters will be distributed by one of two methods. For those households with a collection day change, this presents as a more complex communication, and these will be sent via Royal Mail. For those areas with the same collection day, but where the new cycle needs to be communicated we anticipate delivering by a hand delivery service similar to that provided for Outlook.

- 4.5 Should timeframes allow we also anticipate using correx signs in villages where there are day changes. This communication method is not suitable for towns as neighbouring streets may have differing collection days.
- 4.6 Given the timeframes all collection day change information presents some level of risk. There are risks associated with mail merge of information regarding day changes being accurate and there are risks associated with hand delivery services distributing to the correct areas.
- 4.6 Recruitment of temporary positions is required to support the service roll out and manage additional resident contacts which require more detailed responses and visits.
- 4.7 A members briefing will be held on 14 July prior to the service changes and all members are encouraged to attend.
- 4.8 Monthly members drop-ins continue to also be held. These dates and online meeting links are published in MIS.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Mobilisation Risk Log

Appendix 2 – Headline External Communications Plan Overview

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

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7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Project Risk Log

Project Name: Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Contract Mobilisation and Demobilisation

Risk No.	Date Raised	Risk Owner	Title	Description	Category	Impact	Probability	I/P Score	Proximity	Last Review Date	Key Affecting Impacts	Completed Risk Mitigating Actions	Ongoing Risk Mitigating Actions	Action Owner(s)	Status of Actions
2	22/07/2024	Chloe Hipwood	Skills shortage due to staff leaving.	There is a risk that the project cannot be delivered successfully due to lack of staff, skills and experience in the client team as a result of staff leaving.	People, Operational, Reputation	2	3	7	Immediate	28/05/2025	Morale	Contract Officer Post recruited to Maternity cover post recruited to Communications officer recruited to	Regular 1-2-1's Regular team meetings New team members undergoing training Recruitment for replacement Comms officer New vacancy - Contract Officer recruitment begun.	CH	Ongoing
3	22/07/2024	Sarah Kingsley/ Jess Khanom-Metaman	Project Management	There is a risk of insufficient project management resource, which delays progress of the work programme and/or increases risks to the councils	Financial, Operational, People, Reputation, Strategic	3	3	9	Immediate	05/03/2025	Time Resource Budget	Work Programme developed and presented to LT Agreement for mobilisation project board	Mobilisation Project Board set up	CH	Ongoing
4	22/07/2024	Chris Jeffrey	Skills Shortage for IT development	There is a risk that the customer service centre set up will be delayed due to lack of resources or adequately skilled staff to manage the IT set up.	Financial, Operational, People, Strategic, Information	2	1	3	Immediate	28/05/2025	Time Resource Budget	Early engagement meetings begun Core service BPM completed Project Team set up Regular updates from PM Meetings held with Veolia IT Confirmation of trade IT system remaining for an additional year A number of online forms fully integrated.	Regular meetings Remaining online forms have been built and are available to the customer, integration work is continuing.	CJ	Ongoing
5	22/07/2024	Adam Staples	Skills/Resource Shortage for IT development	There is a risk that the customer service centre set up will be delayed due to lack of resources or adequately skilled staff to manage the IT set up.	Financial, Operational, People, Strategic, Information	3	2	8	Immediate	28/05/2025	Time Resource Budget	Early engagement meetings begun Core service BPM completed Key staff assigned and consultants procured Meetings held with Veolia IT Budget agreed for development work Confirmation of trade IT system remaining for an additional year Some online forms fully integrated.	Regular meetings Remaining online forms are in development.	AS	Ongoing
6	22/07/2024	Jeanette Lowden	Current contractor drop in performance	There is a risk that the quality of current services will drop as a consequence of the incumbent losing the contract	Operational, Reputation	2	1	3	Immediate	28/05/2025	External Factors, Resource	Regular contract meetings Met with FCC management Regular review of performance with FCC CM Outstanding work has transferred to Veolia.	Increased monitoring of key hot spot areas - currently impacted by staff shortages Two managers leaving - decision requirement on recruitment options	JL,KP	Completed
7	22/07/2024	Chloe Hipwood	Delay to vehicle delivery due to award delay	There is a risk that vehicles will not be delivered for contract start due to delays in awarding the contract.	Financial, Operational, People, Reputation, Strategic	2	1	3	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Time	Letter of Comfort sent for NHC & EHC vehicles Majority of vehicles arrived as expected for contract start	EV vehicles delayed due to vehicle manufacturing fault. Awaiting confirmation of solution from Veolia. Additional service change vehicles anticipated to be online.	CH	Ongoing
8	22/07/2024	Chloe Hipwood	Service compliance	There is a risk that the service will not conform to the statutory guidance once published	Financial, Operational, Regulatory, Strategic	1	1	1	Life of project	28/05/2025	External Factors	Draft guidance considered by both Executive and Cabinet Guidance identifies that service is compliant.		CH	Completed

Project Risk Log

Project Name: Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Contract Mobilisation and Demobilisation

Risk No.	Date Raised	Risk Owner	Title	Description	Category	Impact	Probability	I/P Score	Proximity	Last Review Date	Key Affecting Impacts	Completed Risk Mitigating Actions	Ongoing Risk Mitigating Actions	Action Owner(s)	Status of Actions
9	22/07/2024	Rachel Cooper	Garden Waste Direct Debits - NHC	There is a risk that existing direct debits can not be transferred to inhouse finance systems	Financial, Information, Operational, People, Reputation,	1	1	1	Immediate	28/05/2025	Time Resource	Early engagement meetings begun Timelines developed Payment systems testing complete Process mapping with Customer Service Payment integrations begun Liaison with Interbacs Communication with cusomer base System testing Soft launch of web portal DD's taken and service operating as expected. ECHO integration working	Final tweaks to IT Integrations needed	RC, SM, LO, CJ	Ongoing
10	22/07/2024	Anita Higgs	Garden Waste Direct Debits - EHC	There is a risk that existing direct debits can not be transferred to inhouse finance systems	Financial, Information, Operational, People, Reputation,	3	3	9	Immediate	28/05/2025	Time Resource	Early engagement meetings begun Process mapping with Customer Service Communication with cusomer base Liaison with Interbacs	In house DD's testing - not yet complete DD's set up for other services - not yet complete IT Integrations - not yet completed System testing ongoing Soft launch of web portal - not yet completed	AH, SM, LO, AS	Ongoing
12	22/07/2024	Chloe Hipwood	EV Charging Infrastructure - NHC	There is a risk that the charging infrastructure will not be in place for time for the start of the contract	Financial, Operational	2	1	3	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Time, Resource, Budget, External Factors	Feasibility assessments undertaken Depot visits from Veolia complete Lease assignment Grid capacity request Budget allocation Procurement Installation		GH	Completed
13	22/07/2024	Geoff Hayden	EV Charging Infrastructure - EHC	There is a risk that the charging infrastructure will not be in place for time for the start of the contract	Financial, Operational	3	3	9	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Time, Resource, Budget, External Factors	Feasibility assessments undertaken Depot visits from Veolia complete Procurement Glendale move	Alterations to Buntingford electricity supply/ fuse board still to be completed. Grid capacity request Budget allocation Installation	IA, MC	Ongoing
14	22/07/2024	Sarah Kingsley/ James Ellis	Insufficient staff resource	There is a risk that the project has insufficient staff resources because of the necessity to maintain business as usual	Financial, Operational, People, Reputation,	2	3	7	Immediate	05/03/2025	Resource, Budget	IT projects managed corporately	Prioritisation of work streams	CH	Ongoing
15	22/07/2024	Jeanette Lowden	Lack of training in contract management	There is a risk that the client team is not fully functioning and can not manage the contract sufficiently due to lack of training in the new contract	Financial, Operational, People, Reputation,	1	1	1	>6 months	28/05/2025	Resource, Time	Circulation of specification Stable team Training arranged on specification and PMR Engagement of staff in IT set up	Regular team meetings	JL, KP	Completed
16	22/07/2024	Veolia	Permitting of Buntingford Depot	There is a risk that the service will not conform to the latest regulations regarding permitted activities at Buntingford depot and/or the permit is not transferred in time due to delayed contract award.	Financial, Operational, People, Regulatory, Reputation,	2	1	3	Immediate	28/05/2025	External Factors, Resource	Permit transferred to Veolia		Veolia	Completed
17	22/07/2024	Chloe Hipwood/ Jeanette Lowden	Health and Safety	There is a risk that the service will not conform to the latest regulations regarding health and safety	Financial, Operational, People, Regulatory, Reputation,	3	1	6	Life of project	05/03/2025	External Factors, Resource	Health and safety management evaluated as part of the bid process Depot walk about completed with Veolia	Review of risk assessments and SSoW as part of mobilisation	JL, KP	Ongoing

Project Risk Log

Project Name: Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Contract Mobilisation and Demobilisation

Risk No.	Date Raised	Risk Owner	Title	Description	Category	Impact	Probability	I/P Score	Proximity	Last Review Date	Key Affecting Impacts	Completed Risk Mitigating Actions	Ongoing Risk Mitigating Actions	Action Owner(s)	Status of Actions
18	22/07/2024	Sarah Kingsley/ Jess Khanom-Metaman	Funding for communication campaigns	There is a risk that sufficient funding is not available to adequately inform residents of necessary changes to their services. There is also a risk the each authority makes differing decisions on communications spend which affects how the service is perceived by residents.	Financial, Operational, People, Information, Reputation	3	1	6	Immediate	05/03/2025	Budget, Time	Draft Comms Plan developed Member workshop held Budget agreed	Ongoing review of necessary engagement of residents	CH/LO	Ongoing
19	22/07/2024	Jeanette Lowden	Folly Island	There is a risk that residents are unhappy with the requirement to have standard services	People, Reputation	1	3	4	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Time, Politics, External Factors	Review on site Proposal report drafted Consultation with residents complete Letters regarding changes sent Initial switch to fortnightly wheeled bins for residual waste	Consider resident champions Communications aligned with rest of district	JL, KP, LO	Ongoing
20	22/07/2024	Chloe Hipwood	MRF Contract	There is a risk that the MRF contract is not procured in time/ or that there are no preferred bidders	Financial, Operational, People, Regulatory, Reputation, Strategic	2	1	3	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Time, Resource, External Factors	Hertsmere agreement to participate Documents in final drafting stage Legal and procurement teams engaged Tender published Contract let	Contract signing still required	CH	Ongoing
21	22/07/2024	Anna Osbourne	Additional Buntingford Parking	There is a risk that the use of the Affinity Water site is not secured for the start of the contract	Financial, Operational, People	2	2	5	1-3 months	28/05/2025	External Factors		Licence to use still not confirmed.	AO	Ongoing
23	22/07/2024	Jeanette Lowden	Bin procurement	There is a risk that bins are not procured in time or that there is inadequate storage prior to delivery to households	People, Operational, Financial, Reputation	3	1	6	Immediate	28/05/2025	Time, resource, budget	Procurement options established Specification drafted Tender published Contract let Storage location confirmed Initial bins and rolling stock delivered.	Bin deliveries continue.	JL, KP	Ongoing
24	22/07/2024	Jeanette Lowden	Food Caddy Procurement	There is a risk that caddys are not procured in time or that there is inadequate storage prior to delivery to households	People, Operational, Financial, Reputation	3	1	6	Immediate	28/05/2025	Time, resource, budget	Procurement options established Specification drafted Storage location identified Tender published Contract let	Deliveries to storage site due June 25	JL, KP	Ongoing
26	22/07/2024	Chris Jeffrey	Availability of online services - NHC	There is a risk that the online web services are not set up for self serve in sufficient time for the start of the contract	Financial, Information, Operational, People, Reputation, Strategic	2	2	5	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Time, Resource, External Factors	Early engagement meetings BPM completed for core services Meetings held with Veolia IT Timeline for IT development established PID signed off A number of forms are live	System integration and testing required for remaining forms.	SM, CJ	Ongoing
27	22/07/2024	Adam Staples	Availability of online services - EHC	There is a risk that the online web services are not set up for self serve in sufficient time for the start of the contract	Financial, Information, Operational, People, Reputation, Strategic	2	3	7	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Time, Resource, External Factors	Early engagement meetings BPM completed for core services Meetings held with Veolia IT Timeline for IT development established Additional customer service support allocated. Direct entry into ECHO by customer service agents rather than via online forms	IT system set up and testing Allocation of sufficient resources	SM, AS	Ongoing

Project Name: Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Contract Mobilisation and Demobilisation

Risk No.	Date Raised	Risk Owner	Title	Description	Category	Impact	Probability	I/P Score	Proximity	Last Review Date	Key Affecting Impacts	Completed Risk Mitigating Actions	Ongoing Risk Mitigating Actions	Action Owner(s)	Status of Actions
29	22/07/2024	Chloe Hipwood/ Jeanette Lowden	TUPE transfer of staff	There is a risk that the incumbant lose significant numbers of staff or do not recruit, or staff don't wish to transfer through TUPE and the new contract is short staffed and under performs.	Information, Operational, People, Reputation,	3	1	6	1-3 months	28/05/2025	External Factors, Morale	Meeting with FCC management undertaken Veolia engaging with FCC and car park cleansing contract manager Continued engagement by all parties. Drafting in of additional resources by the Preferred Bidder		JL	Completed
30	22/07/2024	Jeanette Lowden	Flats Bin Capacity	There is a risk that bin capacity provision at flats is not reviewed in sufficient time to avert excess waste and collection problems at the start of the new contract or avert additional costs associated with weekly collections	Financial, Information, Operational, People, Reputation,	2	1	3	4-6 months	28/05/2025	Time, Resource	All new flats assessed for new capacities Bin size review completed New bin deliveries scheduled	Bin deliveries to occur with roll out	JL, KP	Ongoing
31	22/07/2024	Jeanette Lowden	Litter Bin Review	There is a risk that litter bin locations are not rationalised by the start of the contract and that there are additional contract costs	Financial, Information, Operational, Strategic	2	3	7	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Time, Resource, Politics	Built into work programme Litter bin RAG review complete workshop held with members Engagement with wards, towns and parishes Agreement of final list to remove	Removal of bins which require pavement reinstatement	JL, KP	Ongoing
32	22/07/2024	Jeanette Lowden/ Louise Overington	Historical Data Transfer	There is a risk that historical data regarding service complaints and enquiries can not be transferred to the new contract IT system	Information, Operational, People, Reputation,	1	2	2	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Resource, External Factors	Proposed set up of spreadsheet for historical data Hard code all previous data used in reporting Call centre scripting		SM,JL,LO,KP, GB	Completed
33	22/07/2024	Louise Overington	Trade Waste IT	There is a risk that the trade waste IT system is not fit for purpose following a move to a new Waste Management IT system.	Information, Operational, Reputation	1	2	2	4-6 months	28/05/2025	Budget, Time, Resource	Assessment of pros and cons of functionality alongside new system System retained for 1 year.	Functionality built into new CRMs	SM	Ongoing
34	22/07/2024	Geoff Hayden/ Anna Osbourn	Buntingford Repairs	There is a risk that Buntingford is not handed back to EHC with dilapidation repairs complete or EHC works not complete e.g. vehicle wash.	Financial, Operational,	2	3	7	Immediate	28/05/2025	Time, Resource, Budget	Walls in transfer shed have been repaired. Toilet block removed	Estates to arrange a dilapidations survey	GH, JL	Ongoing
35	22/07/2024	Michael Clark/Phil Doggett	Letchworth Repairs	There is a risk that Letchworth is not handed back to NHC with dilapidation repairs complete or NHC works not complete	Financial, Operational,	2	3	7	Immediate	28/05/2025	Time, Resource, Budget	Dilapidations survey received.	Estates to determine dilapidations costs for FCC. Work to be completed by the council TBC	MC, JL,PD	Ongoing
36	22/07/2024	Chris Jeffrey	Bin Collection Day Search - NHC	There is a risk that the bin day collection search is not up and running for the start of the contract or with timely changes for service change	Information, Reputation	2	1	3	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Resource, External Factors	Early engagement meetings IT teams have met with Veolia IT API documents provided Demo of system shown Bin day search online and available.	Development of mobile APP	CJ, SM	Ongoing
37	22/07/2024	Adam Staples	Bin Collection Day Search - EHC	There is a risk that the bin day collection search is not up and running for the start of the contract or with timely changes for service change	Information, Reputation	2	3	7	1-3 months	28/05/2025	Resource, External Factors	Early engagement meetings IT teams have met with Veolia IT API documents provided Demo of system shown	Development of mobile APP Bin day search in development	AS, SM	Ongoing
38	22/07/2024	Sara Mellor	Data Protection	There is a risk that the contract will not be compliant wth GDPR	Financial, Operational, Regulatory, Reputation	1	1	1	Life of project	26/11/2024	Resource, External Factors	Review of data to be held New data sharing agreement in place		SM, TS, JH	Ongoing

Project Risk Log

Project Name: Waste, Recycling & Street Cleansing Contract Mobilisation and Demobilisation

Risk No.	Date Raised	Risk Owner	Title	Description	Category	Impact	Probability	I/P Score	Proximity	Last Review Date	Key Affecting Impacts	Completed Risk Mitigating Actions	Ongoing Risk Mitigating Actions	Action Owner(s)	Status of Actions
39	22/07/2024	Chloe Hipwood	Food Waste Disposal	There is a risk that the change in disposal location will result in additional costs to the council as a result of a contract change requirement	Financial, Operational	2	1	3	4-6 months	28/05/2025	Budget, Resource	Notification given to Veolia Discussions with SP on procedure for agreement post award	Negotiation with the Veolia via contract change procedure	CH, CA, IA	Ongoing
40	22/07/2024	Phil Doggett/ Isabelle Alajooz	Availability of Letchworth Depot	There is a risk that the Letchworth depot is not vacated in time	Operational,	3	1	6	1-3 months	05/03/2025	External Factors	Change notice sent to FCC to end contract Lease termination date aligned with the end of the contract. Depot vacated on time.		PD/IA	Completed
41	24/07/2024	Geoff Hayden	Glendale Move	There is a risk that Glendale do not vacate the Buntingford Depot in time for the new provider to move in. This may also impact on the ability to install EV charging infrastructure.	Operational, Financial, Reputation	2	3	7	Immediate	05/03/2025	Budget, Resource, External Factors	New site cleared Glendale approached Planning applications being developed Glendale moved off site	Buntingford still to be cleared	GH	Ongoing
42	08/08/2024	Anita Higgs	Trade Direct Debits - EHC	There is a risk that the trade waste direct debit implementation creates additional work at a critical time during the mobilisation of the waste contract and that team capacity is affected if not implemented due to new EPR reporting requirements	Operational, Financial, Reputation	2	3	7	>6 months	28/05/2025	Resource	Reassurance provided by finance		AH	Ongoing
44	09/08/2024	Louise Overington	Service Change Communications	There is a risk that the service change communications plan does not effectively inform the majority of resident in how to participate effectively in the use of new services, or that the communication differs between authorities and that this causes confusion amongst residents.	Reputational Operational	3	2	8	Immediate	05/03/2025	Finance Resource	Draft Communications plan Timeline moved forward due to bin deliveries Member workshop held	Liaison with communication teams ongoing. Budget bids required to match communications plan for each authority Mobile app being considered to support resident communication.	CH	Ongoing
45	02/01/2025	Chloe Hipwood	Termination of FCC contract	There is a risk that an early termination of the FCC contract can not be agreed or that costs are in excess of budgets. A mid week termination would put additional operational pressure on Veolia during mobilisation, meaning an increased risk of service disruption during the first week.	Operational, Financial, Reputation	2	1	3	Immediate	28/03/2025	Budget, Resource, External Factors	Meetings held with FCC Change Notice issued Costs agreed Contract terminated		CH	Completed
46	28/05/2025	Louise Overington	Print deadlines	There is a risk that the service leaflet and day change information can not be printed on time due to delays in the provision of day change and mobilisation plan information. Leading to increased delivery costs, confusion by residents or increased contacts as a result of delays in information provision.	Operational, Financial, Reputation	3	1	6	Immediate	28/05/2025	Budget, Resource, External Factors	Meetings held with Veolia	Checking of data Pre-preparation of print copy	CH, LO, SM, JL	Ongoing

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Appendix Two - 2025 Waste Service Change – headline external communications plan

Key messages:

New waste and recycling collection service launch: North Herts and East Herts Councils will launch a new waste and recycling service on 4 August 2025, offering more recycling options and a more efficient service.

More recycling options: The new service will increase the range of materials that can be recycled at home, including increased capacity for cardboard and paper, and the addition of plastic bags and wrapping recycling.

Collection frequency changes: Collections will be on an alternating three-week cycle for non-recyclable waste, mixed recycling, cardboard and paper, while food waste will continue to be collected weekly and garden waste fortnightly for subscribers. Flats with communal bins will remain on their current collection cycle.

Bin deliveries: New blue-lidded bins, for cardboard and paper, will be delivered to households starting in May, with instructions not to use them until 4 August.





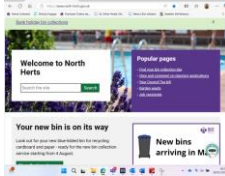
Government recycling targets: The changes are designed to meet the Government's 'Simpler Recycling' requirements which call for the separate collection of cardboard and paper and the recycling of soft plastics.



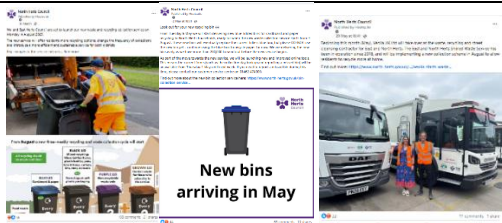


Public consultation: The decision to change the collection cycle and align services between North and East Herts follows a public consultation held in Summer 2022 and a competitive contract procurement process.




Support for extra capacity households: Households with special medical needs, multiple babies in nappies, and larger households will receive separate communication regarding extra support.

Communication of changes: Information about the changes will be communicated to residents across both digital and non-digital channels (see overleaf) over several months.

Headline External Comms plan:

Month	Activity	Item
OCTOBER 2022	Changes to bin collections coming in 2025 (non-digital & digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Press - featured in printed version of The Comet plus digital version of other local papers. E: Newsletter inclusion Social media promotion 	
SEPTEMBER 2024	Veolia announcement and three-weekly reminder (non-digital & digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Press - featured in printed version of The Comet & Royston Crow plus digital version of other local papers. E: Newsletter inclusion Social media promotion 	
2025		
MARCH	Introducing the changes A5 leaflet (non-digital & digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed and distributed to all homes who have their Council Tax bill posted to them Sent digitally to all homes who receive their Council Tax bill by email 	
PUBLISHED OCT 22, THEN ONGOING	FAQs/Service change webpage (digital)	
MARCH LAUNCH, THEN ONGOING	Website homepage promotion (digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAY – reminder re new bins arriving/changes JUNE – introducing the changes film JULY – countdown AUG – go live 	

MARCH LAUNCH, THEN ONGOING	Press releases issued to local media (non-digital & digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MARCH – introducing the changes MAY – reminder re new bins arriving/changes JULY – final – service changing on 4 August 	 
MARCH LAUNCH, THEN ONGOING	Social media promotion (digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MARCH – introducing the changes MAY – reminder re new bins arriving/changes JULY – countdown AUG – go live 	
MARCH LAUNCH, THEN ONGOING	E: Newsletter countdown (digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MARCH – introducing the changes MAY – reminder re new bins arriving/changes JULY – countdown AUG – go live 	
MARCH LAUNCH, THEN ONGOING	Parish and Town Council updates (digital & non-digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MIS (digital) – 15 updates sent so far Letters – being sent w/c 9 June 	
APRIL & ONGOING	Extra Capacity letter (non-digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed and distributed to all homes with extra capacity needs. 700 sent so far, 363 still to send (based on the data we hold) 	
MAY	Reminder of the changes leaflet (non-digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed and distributed to all homes alongside their new blue-lidded bins 	

MAY	Poster (non-digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A3 poster created for Parishes/Libraries/council-owned buildings To be displayed at all future Cllr surgeries and Forums too 	
MAY	Email footer added to external emails (digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and Cllr emails – with click-through to service change webpage. 	
MAY LAUNCH, THEN ONGOING	Town event pop-ups (in-person) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 May – Hitchin Eco Day 	
JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-person attendance at Area Forums (in-person) Vehicle naming competition launches 'Tag that truck' (digital & non-digital) Introducing the changes (graphical) film (digital) Detailed service change leaflet distributed to homes (non-digital) Outlook magazine double page spread (non-digital) Extra capacity other letters - NHS/midwifery services/Careline /care agencies etc (non-digital) 	
JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village day change signs displayed (non-digital) Vehicle livery updated with service change info (non-digital) Day change letters to residents (non-digital) Stakeholder packs (Cllrs, Customer service, Community Partnerships, Media) emailed (digital) 	
AUGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 AUGUST GO LIVE Real-life example film of the new service working (digital) 	

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 10 JUNE 2025

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2024/2025

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2024/2025

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

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

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider the Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the 2024/2025 Civic Year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee consider and comment on the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024/2025 as attached at Appendix A prior to consideration by Council.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To enable Overview and Scrutiny Committee 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 prior to consideration by Council.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has had the opportunity to consider and comment on the report prior to this meeting.

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 Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports each year to Annual Council giving a brief overview of the work undertaken by that Committee in the previous Civic Year.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The report at Appendix A sets out the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the Civic Year 2024/2025.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Section 6.2.6 of the Constitution states that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must report annually to the Full Council on their workings with recommendations for its future work programme and amended working methods if appropriate.
- 9.2 Section 4.4.1 (ee) of the Constitution states the Full Council will receive Annual reports from the Overview & Scrutiny, Finance, Audit and Risk and Standards Committees.
- 9.3 Full Council has therefore routinely received an Annual Report from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no capital or revenue implications arising from the content of this 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 There are no direct risk implications arising from 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 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

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 direct Environmental Implications arising from this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no direct Human Resource Implications arising from this report.
- 15.2 The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager, Scrutiny Officer and Committee Member and Scrutiny Officers support the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024/2025.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Reports to and Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the Civic Year 2024/2025.

[Browse meetings - Overview and Scrutiny Committee | North Herts Council](#)

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**North
Herts**
Council

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT
2024/2025**

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair's Foreword

It has been a fascinating and productive year as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The change of administration in 2024, alongside the appointment of a dedicated Scrutiny Officer, created an opportunity for us to approach things a bit differently, and I am pleased with the progress we have made.

The adoption of the Scrutiny Charter has been a significant milestone in setting out how we do scrutiny at North Herts. The Charter embodies all that we are trying to achieve and sets out how we can interact with each other to achieve the best outcomes for our residents. I hope that the committee will continue to lean on its principles for many years to come.

Together we have driven a noticeable shift in favour of proactive scrutiny. The revival of portfolio / service area reviews has been a welcome innovation and has given the committee a more in-depth opportunity to understand and contribute than has previously been the case, at least in recent years.

I am thankful for the way in which our Cabinet members and Service Directors have engaged with the committee. It has been rewarding to see many of the committee's recommendations and debate contributions being sought out and taken up by our Executive members – including on key topics such as museum storage, digital transformation, waste mobilisation, decarbonisation, and a potential learner pool at Royston.

It is a testament to the committee that alongside this packed schedule, we have initiated the first task-and-finish group since the pandemic, on housing developer contributions to infrastructure – a topic which is so important to local people. Thank you to Cllr Muncer and others for taking this on. I look forward to seeing the group's recommendations.

It is important that the council continues to nurture key partnerships, and this year we welcomed the Herts and West Essex ICB for the first time, as well as Hertfordshire Constabulary. Scrutiny can play an important role here, to ensure that these organisations are delivering for our residents. The committee also held its first "call-in" for many years, with members engaging in good faith on an otherwise controversial topic.

I am extremely grateful to the members of the committee - including my dependable Vice-Chair Cllr Tyson - for their commitment and enthusiasm. In an unusually politicised year, together we have made great strides towards creating an apolitical space where the

administration's ideas and the council's performance can truly be put to the test. Throughout the year, you have been consistently well-prepared, made constructive contributions, and ultimately improved the work of the committee. I cannot ask for more than that.

Finally, we are of course indebted to Jeevan, our brilliant Scrutiny Officer – ably supported by James - for their dedication to the committee's programme. Without their determined behind-the-scenes efforts, we would not have achieved anything like the progress which has been made. Thank you both, for all that you have done, and please keep up the good work!

I expect that the coming year will see no let-up in the activity of the committee, with many big projects still in the pipeline and the twin challenges of financial sustainability and local government reorganisation looming large over all council decisions.

It is however time for me to pass on the baton, and I wish Cllr Winchester and Cllr Clayden the very best of luck.

Matt Barnes
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2024-25

1) Overview and Scrutiny at North Hertfordshire Council

- a) The depth and breadth of the Council's work means that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must use its resources efficiently and effectively to scrutinise topics in the time available. It does so by:
- Considering a number of issues during its Committee meetings and making recommendations to Cabinet;
 - Appointing dedicated task and finish groups which can examine issues in depth and make recommendations to improve services.
 - Through briefings, verbal and written, provided to Members by Officers and Executive Members.

2) Methods of Scrutiny

- a) The Committee can scrutinise issues in a number of ways:
- By considering reports from, and questioning officers and Executive Members about different aspects of the Council's business;
 - By submitting written questions which require a written answer, and which members can follow up by asking supplementary questions in Committee;
 - By interviewing and questioning Executive Members about their respective portfolios;
 - By calling in decisions which are of great concern to members or to the public;
 - By inviting representatives from outside bodies to talk about topics of interest to the public in North Hertfordshire.

3) Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- a) There were six scheduled meetings this year and all proceeded as planned, in person in the Council Chamber, making effective use of the facility for officer presentations to be delivered remotely.
- b) There were two extraordinary meetings of the Committee this year.
- c) The Committee has considered a range of topics including scrutinising key decisions going to Cabinet, checking whether the Council has met its performance indicators and reviewing other issues which the Committee has decided would benefit from closer scrutiny.

4) Scrutiny Charter

- a) Following the Local Government Association Peer Review, a recommendation was made to develop and adopt a definition of what Scrutiny is at the Council.

- b) The Charter has been developed alongside publications from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny which provides best practice for scrutiny committees.
- c) The Scrutiny Charter was adopted unanimously at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday 3 September.
- d) Members are reminded of the Scrutiny Charter at each meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny to ensure that the meeting is conducted with independence, initiative and integrity, and the Charter is made available in full on the Council's intranet pages for Members.
- e) Details of the meeting at which this item was presented can be viewed [here](#).

5) Call-In

- a) The call-in process allows the Chair of the Committee, or five members of the Council, to call in a decision which is the responsibility of the Executive, which has been made but not implemented. The Committee can ask the Executive to reconsider the decision or can refer it to Council.
- b) The following decision made by the Cabinet at its meeting of 11 February 2025 were called-in:
 - (i) Proposed Parking Tariffs for 2025-26
- c) The Call-In was considered by the Monitoring Officer and following submission of the Call-In Request form was considered valid due to not having had due regard for the individuals and communities served by North Herts Council and their consultation.
- d) The Call-In was accepted and considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on Tuesday 11 March 2025. Evidence was provided by the 5 Members who Called In the item that the decision was contrary to the principles of decision-making, as summarised in the Constitution at 4.8.23(b).
- e) The Executive Member for Planning and Transport was invited to attend the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to answer questions in respect of the decision made by the Cabinet.
- f) Following the Call-In the Overview and Scrutiny Committee made three recommendations to Cabinet:
 - Cabinet reconsiders the proposed on-street and off-street charging tariffs in Royston and Knebworth in light of the information received at the meeting.
 - Cabinet considers the increase in parking charges based on the updated modelling, specifically around the 4% increase in charges, where this had not been applied to all charges.

- Cabinet notes the importance of Overview and Scrutiny in supporting Cabinet in reaching robust policy decisions and works with the Chair of the Committee to effectively facilitate this.
- g) The recommendations were considered by Cabinet at their meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday 18 March 2025.
- h) Details of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting at which the Call-In was presented can be viewed [here](#).
- i) Details of the Cabinet meeting at which the Call In recommendations were considered can be viewed [here](#).

6) Presentations by Executive Members

- a) The Committee invites Executive Members to speak on their portfolios and to present reports from their relevant portfolio that were of interest to the Committee or to address specific issues.
- b) Executive Members have taken leadership on presenting relevant reports to the Committee during this Civic Year, with Officer support being limited to answering specific or detailed questions.
- c) Executive Members are also welcomed when attending meetings and encouraged to take part in the meeting when appropriate.
- d) The Committee are grateful to the Executive Members for making presentations and attending meetings this year.

7) Crime & Disorder Scrutiny

- a) The Committee is also the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee for North Hertfordshire which is required to meet at least once a year.
- b) The Committee chose this year to invite Hertfordshire Constabulary to discuss Youth Engagement and Crime Prevention in North Herts.
- c) Details of the meeting at which this item was presented can be viewed [here](#).

8) Herts and West Essex ICB

- a) The Herts and West Essex ICB were invited to provide an update on the challenges facing dentistry in North Herts.
- b) Details of the meeting at which this item was presented can be viewed [here](#).

9) Safeguarding

- a) The Committee continued to take a close interest in safeguarding matters and received its annual update on the Council's safeguarding performance in September 2024.
- b) Details of the meeting at which this item was presented can be viewed [here](#).

10) Statistics

- a) In total, the Committee has considered 40 items at its meetings this year.
- b) It has made 44 recommendations on 21 topics to Cabinet. At every meeting the Committee also considered the resolutions previously made, referrals onto Cabinet and their outcome and the work programme.
- c) No written questions were submitted this year.

11) Task and Finish Groups

- a) At its meeting on Tuesday 3 September 2024, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that a Scrutiny Task and Finish Group should be established to investigate and ensure the Section 106 mechanism provides the best outcomes for communities in North Hertfordshire, prior to the adoption of the Local Plan.
- b) Details of the meeting at which this item was presented can be viewed [here](#).
- c) The draft Section 106 scoping document was discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on Tuesday 12 November 2024.
- d) Details of the meeting at which this items was presented can be viewed [here](#).
- e) Background training in Section 106 Obligations and Planning Enforcement was provided to all Councillors on Monday 13 January, which was followed by a background paper on Section 106 Obligations was provided to Councillors on Thursday 20 January 2025.
- f) Group Leaders were asked to nominate members for the Task and Finish Group and 5 politically proportionate panel members were confirmed to undertake the investigation. These Members were Councillor Ruth Brown, Councillor Ian Mantle, Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason, Councillor Paul Ward, with Councillor Ralph Muncer elected as Chair of the Group.
- g) The Panels first meeting was an informal meeting on Wednesday 30 April 2025.

12) Public Participation

- a) The scrutiny process is open to involvement by local people and the Committee encourages public participation.

- b) No members of the public attended the Committee's meetings to make presentations this year.
- c) Although physical attendance at the actual meetings was extremely low, recordings of the meetings on YouTube have received a total of 752 views. The average view duration of a recording was 11 minutes 01 seconds.

Meeting	Views	Duration
18/06/24	86	15:50
02/07/24 (Extra)	161	09:06
03/09/24	68	09:13
12/11/24	106	14:28
07/01/25	123	05:53
04/02/25	59	12:55
11/03/25	100	07:45
06/05/25 (Extra)	49	11:49

- d) Some of the ways for the public to get involved include suggesting a topic for investigation as a task and finish group; providing evidence to or at a meeting; and being co-opted on to a topic group. The Committee is keen to see more public participation both in its task and finish groups and in its committee meetings.

13) Peer Review 2022

- a) In 2020 the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) undertook a review, the review report and Action Plan were agreed through Cabinet on 24 March 2020 and 23 June 2020, respectively.
- b) A follow up review was undertaken by different LGA CPC Peers during 2022 and a further LGA Peer Committee Support report was issued in January 2023 and a number of further recommendations were made.
- c) Their initial findings included several recommendations which were first presented to the Committee as an Action Plan at the meeting on 20 June 2023 for consideration and was referred onto Cabinet to approve. The Action Plan was agreed by at the meeting on 27 June 2023.
- d) Since this the Action Plan was approved, this have been presented throughout the year to the Committee for consideration at each meeting under the Work Programme item.
- e) Some of the key recommendations included in the Action Plan were:
- To ensure effective training is provided for Members, as well as specific training to opposition Councillors.
 - To urgently fund and recruit a dedicated Scrutiny Officer.

- To establish clear lines of questioning and associated processes.
 - To develop clear reporting lines between Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny, including providing updates on referrals made.
- f) These actions have been progressed over the civic year with all but one now being completed. The peer-to-peer training action has been sourced and is on hold until the commencement of the Civic Year of 2025/26 and when the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny are appointed.

14) Call to Account

- a) The Call to Account process allows Members to scrutinise and review decisions made or actions taken in connection with any Councils functions. Members may request for Cabinet, Head of Paid Service and/or any appropriate Officer to provide an explanation of any matters within their remit, including but not limited to, explanation of:
- any particular decision or series of decisions
 - the extent to which the actions taken implement Council policy; and/or
 - their performance
- b) No Call to Accounts took place in Civic Year 24/25.

15) Further Information and Membership

- a) Further information about the work of scrutiny and contact details can be found [here](#)
- b) Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2024/2025:

Members of the Committee:

Councillor Matt Barnes (Chair)
Councillor Tom Tyson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Tina Bhartwas
Councillor Jon Clayden
Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
Councillor Ralph Muncer
Councillor Louise Peace
Councillor Martin Prescott
Councillor Laura Williams
Councillor Claire Winchester
Councillor Donna Wright
Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason

Substitutes:

Councillor David Barnard
Councillor Clare Billing
Councillor David Chalmers
Councillor Emma Fernandes
Councillor Keith Hoskins
Councillor Sean Prendergast
Councillor Vijaiya Poopalasingham
Councillor Claire Strong

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 JUNE 2025

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

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

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2025-26 civic year. It also includes items that have not yet been assigned to a specific meeting of the Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Committee prioritises topics for inclusion in the Work Programme attached as Appendix A and, where appropriate, determines the high-level form and timing of scrutiny input.
- 2.2. That the Committee, having considered the most recent iteration of the Forward Plan, as attached at Appendix B, suggests a list of items to be considered at its meetings in the coming civic year.
- 2.3. That the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan as attached at Appendix C be considered.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To allow the Committee to set a work programme which provides focused Member oversight, encourages open debate and seeks to achieve service improvement through effective policy development and meaningful policy and service change.
- 3.2 The need to observe Constitutional requirements and monitor the Forward Plan for appropriate items to scrutinise remains a key aspect of work programming.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Committee has varied its approach to overview and scrutiny activity over recent years. Currently it seeks to enter the process of policy development at an early stage and consequently may consider items associated with service action plans.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Each Committee meeting includes the opportunity for Members to comment on and input to the Committee's work programme.

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.
- 6.2 The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee are sent the latest Forward Plan upon publication.
- 6.3 The Committee is asked to review the Forward Plan at each regular meeting to identify potential issues for inclusion in the work programme. Identification of a focus for the Committee's future activity should be identified at this stage wherever possible.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The LGA Peer Committee Support was undertaken in 2022 and finalised in January 2023, which focused on the Overview and Scrutiny and Finance, Audit and Risk Committees. Recommendations for Overview & Scrutiny were made and are set out in the Action Plan at Appendix C.
- 7.2 In line with the recommendation of the Corporate Peer Challenge 2023 Executive Members were invited to present reports that fall under their remit and to make presentations on specific issues that the Committee wish to consider.
- 7.3 The Committee now considers a wide range of issues, where appropriate, commencing its reviews early in the policy development process. By doing this it seeks to ensure assumptions are challenged at an early stage, mistakes are avoided, and eventual outcomes provide optimal benefit to the community.
- 7.4 The Committee seeks to ensure that consideration of agenda items minimises the additional burdens on staff resources. Wherever possible, requests are made for the presentation of documents already in existence rather than the production of new documents specifically for the Committee.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Work Programme

- 8.1 The Committee's work programme for the year requires reviewing at each meeting and direction is sought from the Committee on items they wish adding. Appendix A contains the work programme for 2025-26.
- 8.2 When considering additional topics their risk assessment and prioritisation will ensure that the most appropriate items taking forward to the work programme.

Forward Plan

- 8.3 The Forward Plan for May at Appendix B. Members can view currently published forward plans here: [Browse plans - Cabinet, 2025 | North Herts Council](https://www.northherts.gov.uk/cabinet/2025) ([northherts.gov.uk](https://www.northherts.gov.uk))
- 8.4 Members are reminded that the Forward Plan acts as public notification of key executive decisions during the next four months and beyond that it is a working document subject to regular amendments.

Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

- 8.5 The Committee agreed at the meeting held on 20 June 2023 that the actions regarding the Overview and Scrutiny Committee included in the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan be appended to all future reports in order to:
- Act as an aide memoire when considering the work programme.
 - Consider any actions that need further work.
 - Assess the effectiveness of changes made.
- 8.6 The Committee is asked to consider the Action Plan and any update updates provided at Appendix C.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Under section 6.2.5 the Constitution, the Committee is responsible for setting its own work programme however it must ensure it retains sufficient capacity within the programme to meets its statutory obligations.
- 9.2 Section 6.2.7 (u) of the constitution allows the Committee “to appoint time limited task and finish topic groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work and report back to the overview and scrutiny committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet.”
- 9.3 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the approval of the future scrutiny work programme falls within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Depending on how they are applied in practice, the scope of the options presented in Sections 7 and 8 have the potential to be wide reaching. As detailed in Section 14: Human Resource Implications, the wider the reach, the more significant the impact on Officer time in terms of report writing, data analysis, and committee meeting attendance. Given recent funding pressures and the consequent reduction in Officer numbers, significant requests for scrutiny work will limit officer time available to spend on activities such as identifying and delivering cost reductions, income generation and project management.
- 10.2 Although not significant, a committee attendance allowance of £25.17 per Officer per evening meeting is payable to officers in attendance. This is in addition to providing time off in lieu or overtime as an alternative.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Effective overview and scrutiny of policy, administrative, service delivery, and expenditure decisions helps reduce the risk of an inappropriate decision being made. The scope and timeframe for scrutiny interventions should be considered in light of the potential impact of inappropriate scrutiny leading to decisions not being made, inappropriately made or not made at the right time.

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 equality implications arising from this report. Effective scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring the local government remains transparent, accountable and open which ensures that the delivery of public services benefits all aspects of the community, where practical.

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 widening of the reach of scrutiny reviews has the potential to significantly impact on officer time in terms of the reprioritisation of already agreed projects, their scope or timetabling or resources. There is also the potential for additional resource requirements in relation to report writing, information collection and analysis and committee attendance. Delivery of service plans to achieve the Council's agreed Corporate Plan objectives might, therefore, be potentially negatively impacted.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Work Programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025-2026
- 16.2 Appendix B – Forward Plan – 23rd May 2025
- 16.3 Appendix C – Corporate Peer Committee Support Action Plan in regard to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Jeevan Mann, Scrutiny Officer, Jeevan.Mann@north-herts.gov.uk , ext 4295
- 17.2 James Lovegrove, Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager, james.Lovegrove@northherts.gov.uk , ext 4204
- 17.3 Isabelle Alajooz, Legal Commercial Team Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer, Isabelle.Alajooz@north-herts.gov.uk , ext 4346
- 17.4 Tim Everitt, Performance and Risk Officer, Tim.Everitt@north-herts.gov.uk , ext 4646

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Previous Reports to the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) and [Forward Plans](#).

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

KEY
Items identified for work programme
Annual reports
Scrutiny reports
Completed

MEETING DATE	ITEMS AT MEETING	REPORT AUTHOR	PORTFOLIO HOLDER / REPORT PRESENTER
10 June 2025	O&S Annual Report	Jeevan Mann	
	3C's – info to note	Chris Jeffrey	
	Town Centre Strategy	Louise Symes	
	Waste Contract	Sarah Kingsley / Chloe Hipwood	
	Pay on Exit Parking	Louise Symes	
	Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	Jeevan Mann	
9 September 2025	Annual review of Safeguarding	Helen Rae	
	Council Plan 2025-26	Ian Couper	
	Council Delivery Plan & Performance indicators - Q1 Update	Ian Couper	
	Local plan	Nigel Smith	
	Museum storage	Stephen Hensby / Robert Orchard	
	Local government Reorganisation	Anthony Roche	
11 November 2025	Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	Jeevan Mann	
	3C's Half year update	Chris Jeffrey	
	Environmental Health	Frank Harisson	
	Leisure contract	Sarah Kingsley / Louise Randall	
	Director Update on Health Equalities	Jo Doggett	
6 January 2026	Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	Jeevan Mann	
	Crime and Disorder Issues – Hertfordshire Constabulary	Hertfordshire Constabulary	
	Council Delivery Plan & Key Performance Indicators – Q2 Update	Ian Couper	
	Community safety	Steven Cobb	
	Effectiveness of Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Ian Couper	
	S106 Task and Finish Group Report	Councillor Muncer / Jeevan Mann	
	Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	Jeevan Mann	

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

MEEETING DATE	ITEMS AT MEETING	REPORT AUTHOR	PORTFOLIO HOLDER / REPORT PRESENTER
3 February 2026	Budget Topics	Ian Couper	
	Digital Transformation and Inclusion	Chris Jeffrey	
	Enterprise portfolio Update	Steve Crowley	
	Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	Jeevan Mann	
24 March 2026	RIPA	Tbc	
	Council Delivery Plan & Key Performance Indicators – Q3 Update	Ian Couper	
	Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	Jeevan	
Backlog: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Planning Changes Officer recruitment / retention – grow your own / apprentices / career grading 			
Other candidate topics to be scheduled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Cabinet Panel Impact of the Council's grant policies Impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Tackling Homelessness in North Herts 			

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 23 May 2025

The Forward Plan contains brief details of Key Decisions that the Council is likely to take over the next four month period and beyond. You will also find details of contacts who can provide further information and hear your views. **Please note that the dates of some of the decisions may change from month to month, please check with Committee, Member and Scrutiny Services on (01462) 474655 before deciding to attend a meeting.**

Decision required	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker	Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested	Confirmation that other documents may be submitted to the Decision Maker	Procedure for requesting details of other documents
Revenue Budget Outturn 2024/2025		Cabinet	24 Jun 2025		Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) End of Year Review 2024/25		Cabinet	24 Jun 2025		Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Council Delivery Plan update		Cabinet	24 Jun 2025		Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Sustainability Strategy		Cabinet	24 Jun 2025		Georgina Chapman, Policy & Strategy Team Leader georgina.chapman@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Codicote Neighbourhood Plan		Cabinet	24 Jun 2025		Clare Skeels, Senior Planning Officer clare.skeels@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Land required for access to GA2		Cabinet	24 Jun 2025		Philip Doggett, Principal Estates Surveyor	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in

Decision required	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker	Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested	Confirmation that other documents may be submitted to the Decision Maker	Procedure for requesting details of other documents
					philip.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk		Column 6
The Arena, Baldock		Cabinet	24 Jun 2025		Philip Doggett, Principal Estates Surveyor philip.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Radburn Way, Letchworth Garden City		Cabinet	24 Jun 2025		Philip Doggett, Principal Estates Surveyor philip.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Draft Developer Contributions SPD		Cabinet	23 Sep 2025		Clare Skeels, Senior Planning Officer clare.skeels@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Permit Review		Cabinet	23 Sep 2025		Louise Symes, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager louise.symes@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
North Herts Council Draft Town Centres Strategy		Cabinet	23 Sep 2025		Louise Symes, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager louise.symes@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
3C's policy update		Cabinet	23 Sep 2025		Chris Jeffery, Customer Service Manager chris.jeffery@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6

**EXTRACT OF ITEMS FROM THE CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN THAT RELATE TO THE OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Key
Open Actions
Complete Actions

Action No.	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update
3	Consider how the provision of training can be improved to increase knowledge transfer and support members with ongoing training needs e.g., use of one-to-one coaching the provisional feedback from live meetings, further training to fill any gaps in knowledge and skills.	Will be incorporated within the Member training programme being developed.	Democratic Services Member Champions Learning + Development	On going	This is now on hold until the chair and vice chair are appointed for the Civic year 2025-26
4	Urgently fund and recruit a dedicated scrutiny officer.	Budget has been identified for a part-time Scrutiny Officer subject to successful recruitment.	Democratic Services Manager/ Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager	Completed	The Scrutiny Officer was appointed and start on 26 March 2024.
5	Members to actively review the Forward Plan and invitation of cabinet members to attend O&S. This could	This is already on every agenda and is done every meeting it will be for members to take forward with the Scrutiny Officer.	Scrutiny Committee/ Scrutiny Officer	Completed	The forward plan was on the O&S agenda on 3rd September 2024 and will continue to be on the agenda for all future meetings.

Action No.	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update
6	Proper and effective reporting onwards to council and cabinet by O&S as required.	Chair and Scrutiny Officer will need to take this forward and consider the best way to report O&S discussion to cabinet and council. This can be done verbally. A report from a Task & Finish Group would be a written report.	Scrutiny Committee/ Scrutiny Officer	Completed	It was agreed that the Chair and Vice chair will attend Cabinet meetings together where possible, to report on O&S discussions. A written referral will also be provided to Cabinet.
7	Establish clear meeting protocols and associated processes for questioning cabinet members.	For Scrutiny Officer to work through with the Chair	Chair of Scrutiny / Scrutiny Officer	Completed	It was agreed that the O&S work programme will be shared as part of the resolutions to Cabinet so that members have a view and can note the planned work for O&S.
8	Officers to always facilitate the bringing forward of future agenda items requested by O&S in a timely manner	This is accepted but felt to have been a one-off example. It would be for the Scrutiny Officer to ensure this happens.	Scrutiny Officer	On going	This is now being picked up as part of the monthly email to Senior Management and Executives to manage with Officers and bring forward any items for O&S.
10	Specific O&S training for the opposition to encourage effective opposition role. There is specific scrutiny training for groups in opposition to assist with scrutiny work and assist them in being more effective throughout the council.	Will be incorporated within the Member training programme being developed.	Democratic Services Member Champions Learning + Development	Completed	Covered under action point 2 and therefore this action point is closed.

Action No.	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update
11	Scrutiny needs to actively seek to implement the use of Task and Finish Groups.	This is for the Chair and Committee to consider with the support of the Scrutiny Officer.	Chair of Scrutiny / Scrutiny Committee / Scrutiny Officer	Complete	The Task and Finish Groups were discussed at the O&S on 3rd September 2024 and added to the work programme for scheduling.
12	It was observed by some members that the preparation for the special scrutiny meeting on the 'call to account' was beneficial and lessons learnt on how this preparation helped scrutiny should be considered in taking forward scrutiny in the future.	For Scrutiny Officer to work through with the Chair.	Chair of Scrutiny / Scrutiny Officer	Complete	Briefings will become standard before 'call to account' to best prepare Members for the item.
Page 81	Establish proactive annual programme of work and agenda setting.	This is for the Chair and Committee to consider, with the support of Scrutiny Officer.	Chair of Scrutiny / Scrutiny Committee / Scrutiny Officer	Complete	The Chair encouraged Councillors to identify items for the work programme at the meeting on 3rd September 2024 and will continue to do so at all future meetings.

Action No.	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update
14	Provide O&S training in Chairing Skills.	Will be incorporated within the Member training programme being developed.	Democratic Services Member Champions Learning + Development	Completed	Covered under action point 3 and therefore this action point is closed.
16	Ensure the scrutiny committee actively follow up on all recommendations.	This is already on every agenda. For Scrutiny Officer to work with the Chair and Committee to ensure it is actively looked at.	Chair of Scrutiny / Scrutiny Committee / Scrutiny Officer	Complete	Recommendations and referrals will be monitored going forward. These will be reviewed, and target dates set at the monthly meeting between the Chair, Vice-chair and Scrutiny Officer.
	Consideration should be given by the cabinet and portfolio holders on how they can carry out their role in a way that supports scrutiny being able to act as effectively as possible.	This links to the vision for scrutiny in recommendation one this should be a two-way critical friend relationship to be included as part of training and potentially part of work planning. Cabinet to consider how to better engage with Scrutiny.	Cabinet / Scrutiny Committee / Chair of Scrutiny	Completed	Similar to action points 6&19 and therefore closed.

Action No.	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update
18	Ensure minutes reflect the decisions of the meeting – e.g., requests for agenda items to be recorded in the minutes and added to the forward plan.	Committee Services and the Scrutiny Officer will make sure everything is accurately captured.	Scrutiny Officer	Completed	Resolutions report captures specific requests, supported by minutes produced and access to the YouTube recording of the meeting.
19	Cabinet members should consistently and without exception be expected to attend O&S committee meetings where decisions from their area of responsibilities are being scrutinised.	Agreed. This is the current approach unless there is an emergency. Cabinet to consider as part of how to better engage with scrutiny.	Cabinet	Completed	It was agreed that the Chair and Vice chair will build out working relationships with the Cabinet to encourage them to attend O&S meetings as appropriate.
20	The scrutiny chair or their representative should attend all cabinet meetings to present scrutiny findings particularly to enable the thinking and debate around the recommendations to be clearly communicated with the cabinet to maximise the impact scrutiny can have on decisions.	Agreed.	Chair of Scrutiny	Completed	Similar to action point 6. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice chair will attend Cabinet meetings together where possible, to report on O&S discussions. A written referral will also be provided to Cabinet.
21	Where Cabinet do not accept an O&S recommendation, reasons should be given.	Agreed. Cabinet to consider as part of how to better engage with scrutiny	Cabinet	Completed	Reasons for a recommendation not being accepted by Cabinet will be included in the Committee's Resolutions report.

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DECISIONS

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
DECARBONISATION OF LEISURE CENTRES CONTRACT AWARD UPDATE			
24	<p>RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Overview and Scrutiny noted the report and provided comment to Cabinet on the report.</p> <p>REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To enable Overview and Scrutiny the opportunity to scrutinise the progress to date of the leisure decarbonisation project, including spend to date and anticipated increases in capital budget expenditure, as well as loss of revenue implications, prior to the contract award decision being considered by Cabinet on 20 May 2025</p> <p>O&S committee meeting - Tuesday 6th May 2025 @ 7.30pm</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet:</p> <p>(1) Agreed to increase the project capital budget to £16.271 million. (2) Approved the extension of the lido seasons at both Hitchin and Letchworth as per paragraphs 8.13-8.14. (3) Approved the changes to the 2025/26 General Fund budget, resulting from the planned closures and extended opening of the lidos, a £937k increase in net expenditure. (4) Awarded the leisure decarbonisation construction contract to Willmott Dixon Construction at a value of £15.890 million.</p> <p>REASON FOR DECISIONS: To enable Cabinet to review the progress of the leisure decarbonisation project, including spend to date and anticipated increases in capital budget expenditure, as well as revenue implications (loss of income during closures and net costs of extending outdoor pool opening), and approve the award of the construction contract to Willmott Dixon Construction</p> <p>Cabinet meeting Tuesday 20th May 2025 @ 7.30pm</p>	Open

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN			
23	<p>RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the proposed Action Plan, and referred it onto Cabinet, to be considered on 18 March 2025.</p> <p>REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure that the Council responded to the matters identified within the CPC report, ensuring that the benefits of the CPC process are realised.</p> <p>O&S committee meeting - Tuesday, 11th March 2025 @ 7.30 pm</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan was approved.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Cabinet meeting Tuesday, 18th March 2025 @ 7.30 pm</p>	Open

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
MUSEUM STORAGE OPTIONS - PART 1			
22	<p>RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:</p> <p>That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that: Cabinet approve the acquisition of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City on the terms set out in the Part 2 report and noting the detailed Budget Cost Plan for adapting, fitting out and upgrading the building for museum storage.</p> <p>REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:</p> <p>A limited number of modern buildings of this age and size become available to purchase or lease in Letchworth Garden City and surrounding area, particularly one on a long lease at a peppercorn rent for the full term, with an expiry date in 2150. Unit 1 includes land fronting Works Road and to the side of the unit, plus a large part of the car park with the ability to erect a fence to separate the area from the rest of the car park used by adjoining units. In addition, the Council already owns the long leasehold interest in Unit 3 City Park, Letchworth Garden City, having acquired it in June 2016 with that building being used for general archive storage, IT servers, offsite disaster recovery, careline business continuity and legal department storage.</p> <p>O&S committee meeting - Tuesday, 11th March 2025 @ 7.30 pm</p>	<p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That Cabinet approved the acquisition of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City on the terms set out in the Part 2 report and noting the detailed Budget Cost Plan for adapting, fitting out and upgrading the building for museum storage.</p> <p>REASON FOR DECISION:</p> <p>A limited number of modern buildings of this age and size become available to purchase or lease in Letchworth Garden City and surrounding area, particularly one on a long lease at a peppercorn rent for the full term, with an expiry date in 2150. Unit 1 includes land fronting Works Road and to the side of the unit, plus a large part of the car park with the ability to erect a fence to separate the area from the rest of the car park used by adjoining units. In addition, the Council already owns the long leasehold interest in Unit 3 City Park, Letchworth Garden City, having acquired it in June 2016 with that building being used for general archive storage, IT servers, offsite disaster recovery, careline business continuity and legal department storage.</p> <p>Cabinet meeting Tuesday, 18th March 2025 @ 7.30 pm</p>	Open

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
MUSEUM STORAGE OPTIONS - PART 2			
21	<p>RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:</p> <p>That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that:</p> <p>Cabinet approve the acquisition of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City on the terms set out in the Part 2 report and noting the detailed Budget Cost Plan for adapting, fitting out and upgrading the building for museum storage at Appendix A.</p> <p>REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:</p> <p>A limited number of modern buildings of this age and size become available to purchase or lease in Letchworth Garden City and surrounding area, particularly one on a long lease at a peppercorn rent for the full term, with an expiry date in 2150. Unit 1 includes land fronting Works Road and to the side of the unit, plus a large part of the car park with the ability to erect a fence to separate the area from the rest of the car park used by adjoining units. In addition, the Council already owns the long leasehold interest in Unit 3 City Park, Letchworth Garden City, having acquired it in June 2016 with that building being used for general archive storage, IT servers, offsite disaster recovery, careline business continuity and legal department storage.</p> <p>O&S committee meeting - Tuesday, 11th March 2025 @ 7.30 pm</p>	<p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>That Cabinet approved the acquisition of Unit 1 City Park, Letchworth Garden City on the terms set out in the Part 2 report and noting the detailed Budget Cost Plan for adapting, fitting out and upgrading the building for museum storage at Appendix A.</p> <p>REASON FOR DECISION:</p> <p>A limited number of modern buildings of this age and size become available to purchase or lease in Letchworth Garden City and surrounding area, particularly one on a long lease at a peppercorn rent for the full term, with an expiry date in 2150. Unit 1 includes land fronting Works Road and to the side of the unit, plus a large part of the car park with the ability to erect a fence to separate the area from the rest of the car park used by adjoining units. In addition, the Council already owns the long leasehold interest in Unit 3 City Park, Letchworth Garden City, having acquired it in June 2016 with that building being used for general archive storage, IT servers, offsite disaster recovery, careline business continuity and legal department storage.</p> <p>Cabinet meeting Tuesday, 18th March 2025 @ 7.30 pm</p>	Open

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
CALLED IN ITEM - PROPOSED PARKING TARIFFS 2025/26			
20	<p>RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:</p> <p>That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that:</p> <p>(1) Cabinet reconsiders the proposed on-street and off-street charging tariffs in Royston and Knebworth in light of the information received at the meeting.</p> <p>(2) Cabinet considers the increase in parking charges based on the updated modelling, specifically around the 4% increase in charges, where this had not been applied to all charges.</p> <p>(3) Cabinet notes the importance of Overview & Scrutiny in supporting Cabinet in reaching robust policy decisions and works with the Chair of the Committee to effectively facilitate this.</p> <p>O&S committee meeting - Tuesday, 11th March 2025 @ 7.30 pm</p>	<p>(1) Accepted the hard work from Royston Town Council, and the BID, and the support from them in relation to the 'Free after 3pm' scheme and to continue work with Knebworth Parish Council and to delegate the final decision on these discount schemes to the relevant Service Director, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport, the Executive Member for Finance and IT and the Service Director – Resources.</p> <p>(2) Considered the increase in parking charges based on the updated modelling, specifically around the 4% increase in charges and reconfirmed the decision made by Cabinet on 11 February 2025.</p> <p>(3) Endorsed the importance of Overview & Scrutiny in supporting Cabinet in reaching robust policy decisions and works with the Chair of the Committee to effectively facilitate this.</p> <p>REASON FOR DECISIONS: To implement an increase in car parking tariffs 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.</p> <p>Cabinet meeting Tuesday, 18th March 2025 @ 7.30 pm</p>	Open

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
RIPA REPORT			
19	<p>RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: The adoption of the amended RIPA Policy (Appendix A).</p> <p>REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: To comply with the best practice guidance and the Committee's terms of reference.</p> <p>O&S committee meeting - Tuesday, 11th March 2025 @ 7.30 pm</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet adopted the amended RIPA Policy (Appendix A – to include updated titles within the appendix to the Policy after 1 April 2025).</p> <p>REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with the best practice guidance and the Committee's terms of reference</p> <p>Cabinet meeting Tuesday, 18th March 2025 @ 7.30 pm</p>	Open