

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,  
Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3JF  
on Thursday, 26th February, 2026 at 7.30 pm

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Isabelle Alajooz (Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer), Ian Couper (Director - Resources), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Susan Le Dain (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Anthony Roche (Chief Executive) and Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager).

**ALSO PRESENT:** At the commencement of the meeting there were 2 members of the public.

#### 83 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

*Audio recording – 1 minute 59 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sam Collins, Dominic Griffiths, Steve Jarvis, Steven Patmore and Claire Strong.

#### 84 MINUTES - 29 JANUARY 2026

*Audio Recording – 2 minutes 24 seconds*

Councillor Val Bryant advised that a response had been received from the Executive Member for Environment, Transport and Growth at Hertfordshire County Council following the motion passed at the Full Council meeting on 29 January 2026. The response would be shared with Group Leaders in due course.

Councillor Keith Hoskins proposed and Councillor Val Bryant seconded and, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 29 January 2026 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### 85 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 32 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

**86 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 40 seconds*

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) The Chair reminded Members that the Council had declared both a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency. These are serious decisions, and mean that, as this was an emergency, all of us, Officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.
- (3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (4) The Chair advised that the normal procedure rules in respect of debate and times to speak will apply.
- (5) The Chair advised that 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution did not apply to this meeting. A comfort break would be held at an appropriate time, should proceedings continue at length.
- (6) The Chair reminded Members that they had until Friday 27 February to complete the annual Outside Bodies Review Survey for each organisation that they had been appointed to.
- (7) The Chair announced that former District Councillor Jean Andrews had passed away recently.

**87 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*Audio recording – 6 minutes 44 seconds*

There was no public participation.

**88 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

*Audio recording – 6 minutes 48 seconds*

The Chair advised that the referrals from Cabinet would be taken with the respective item on the agenda.

**89 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2026/27**

*Audio recording – 7 minutes 6 seconds*

The Director – Resources presented the report entitled 'Pay Policy Statement 2026/27' and advised that:

- The Council were required to approve a Pay Policy Statement each year before 31 March, for the following financial year.
- The pay award for the upcoming year had not yet been agreed, therefore, the policy statement reflected current pay levels. A delegation to the Director – Resources was included within the recommendations to allow for this to be updated once an award had been agreed.

- Additional information on recruitment and retention payments had been detailed at paragraph 7.1 in Appendix 1 to the report for transparency purposes.
- Pay multiples had decreased slightly as recent pay awards had seen higher increases for lower paid staff.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Val Bryant seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That Council approved the 2026/27 Pay Policy Statement attached at Appendix 1.
- (2) That Council delegated authority for revisions made in year to the Pay Policy Statement, to the Director – Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** To comply with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011, Statutory Guidance issued under s40 and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

**90 BUDGET 2026/27 (REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS)**

*Audio recording – 9 minutes 44 seconds*

The Chair invited Councillor Val Bryant, as Leader of the Council, to present the referral from Cabinet and she advised that:

- The Council had a duty to set the budget for the forthcoming year.
- The financial settlement from the Government had been better than expected and they would use this to invest in the district through a value for money approach to create a fairer, greener North Herts.
- 500 residents had responded to the Budget Consultation Survey
- While those who had responded were in favour of freezing Council Tax, this would not be financially viable as they would need to ensure that service would deliver for residents and remain sustainable in the medium-term before Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in 2028.
- Council Tax was proposed to be increased by 2.99% in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy, which was the equivalent to 15p per week for a Band D property. However, the Council continued to see its share of the Council Tax bill decrease despite this.
- Their Council Tax Reduction Scheme would continue to remove the need for the poorest residents to pay Council Tax, and pension age residents would also continue to receive Council Tax reductions through the Government Scheme.

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, presented the report entitled 'Budget 2026/27 (Revenue and Capital Budgets)' and advised that:

- The reports for the Revenue and Capital Budgets had been combined to cover general spending, and the Investment Strategy which covered more technical matters such as treasury investments would be discussed as a separate item.
- The Finance Team should be thanked for their work on producing the budget
- The budget would be set with the knowledge that they had a 3-year funding settlement from the Government that would cover the next two financial years of the Council and the first year of a new unitary authority. However, if the Council existed beyond 2028, they would ensure that the necessary resources would be available.
- They were grateful to residents that had participated in the Budget Consultation Survey to ascertain financial priorities following concern over the new fair funding formula.

- However, the final settlement from this had been positive and enhanced by both a reduction in required pension contributions and a projected increase in Extended Producer Responsibility payments which had removed the need to find a further £2.5M in savings.
- Funding for the Council through the Core Spending Power would increase by 4.3% next year, and by 2.3% and 2.2% in the following years.
- Additional funding for homelessness prevention had also been agreed as part of the settlement.
- There would be a prudent use of financial reserves to enable investment in the district and maintain a medium-term balanced budget.
- Members had been engaged on the budget process via budget workshops and there had been no opposition to the proposals set out within these such as increased investment in the Economic Development Team to help deliver the Economic Development Strategy.
- The top four services as ranked by residents in terms of importance in the Budget Consultation Survey were waste collections, street cleaning, greenspaces and community safety.
- The change to 3-weekly waste collections had already generated £1.2M in savings for Hertfordshire County Council.
- Reserves were healthy and general fund reserves were at a similar level, and prudent management of these would yield long lasting improvements for their services.
- £4.75M would be invested in a new learner pool at Royston Leisure Centre, which would significantly improve access to swimming facilities for all ages.
- £200K of investment would go into interactive water play at North Herts Leisure Centre to create more engaging and inclusive play spaces for families.
- £200K of capital investment would be put into digital signage for Hitchin car parks which had been welcomed by Hitchin Town BID and local businesses.
- £295K had been allocated to greenspaces across the district to increase biodiversity, repair and improve footpaths, and support wildlife at various sites.
- The Community Safety budget would be doubled from £10K to £20K to deliver additional measures to reduce crime, tackle fly tipping and address antisocial behaviour.
- An extra £30K would be provisioned to local organisations through Community Forums, and £40K would be given to key partner organisations such as North Herts Citizens Advice Bureau to continue their important work.
- £70K would be allocated to Herts Futures subject to contributions from other local authorities in the county.
- £2M would be reserved for the delivery of LGR to secure capacity through the transition phase, and to support staff by helping them to undertake the required training ahead of joining the new unitary authorities.
- The Garden Waste collection charge had already been raised to £57 per year which was still less than most other councils.
- Parking charges would be raised overall by 2%, which was less than inflation.
- Risks posed to the Council when setting the budget and how those would be monitored were detailed in Appendix D to the report. Additionally, an assessment of the risks identified by each Director had been compiled and added to the risk register.
- The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee should be thanked for their review of the budget process and assumptions.
- The minimum recommended general fund balances were set out in paragraphs 8.14-8.16 of the report.
- There was a need to increase Council Tax to continue to deliver services and address their Corporate Priorities, particularly Sustainability.
- There was an assumption that they would increase Council Tax by the maximum of 2.99%, which would be £8.01 per year for a Band D equivalent property.
- This increase would generate an extra £400K and freezing rates or increasing them by a lower percentage would be irresponsible as there was no mechanism to recover the

funding lost from not increasing rates, and services would be impacted without the extra funding.

- The Council Tax Reduction Scheme would continue to provide support to those in need, especially those who were terminally ill who were entitled to a 100% reduction.
- The Council were asked to bring forward capital expenditure on pool covers which would allow work on this to be complete before the outdoor pool season.
- Information on the implementation of a Council Tax premium on second homes was outlined at paragraph 8.30, which related to recommendation 2.9.
- They were proud of what the budget represented and would deliver for their communities.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed the recommendations in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Sean Nolan.

In response to a question from Councillor Claire Winchester, Councillor Val Bryant advised that additional spending on security at Council meetings had been proposed following recent incidents with members of the public and was a positive, precautionary measure to address the issue of safety for Members, Officers and other members of the public.

Councillor Ralph Muncer then proposed amendments to remove R1, R8, R9, R10, R15, R21, R22, R38, R40, R43, R44 and R47 from the budget and add CON1 and CON2 as detailed in the supplementary document, and highlighted that:

- They were in an age of uncertainty with the flawed approach to LGR implemented by the Government.
- Labour had increased Council Tax by 20% since being in administration, compared to other councils such as East Cambridgeshire District Council who had frozen it for the last 13 years.
- Raising Council Tax by the maximum would add to the increasing fees, charges and taxes across the board.
- No proposed amendments to the budget from the Liberal Democrats suggested an agreement between them and the administration.
- Their party represented low tax and good value for money for hardworking taxpayers and to prove this, they would cut Council Tax this year and the year after and ensure that it was frozen for the year after the Council ceased to exist.
- Should the Government delay LGR in Hertfordshire, they would be prepared to deliver additional savings and efficiencies within the Council.
- Their proposals would be paid for by reprioritising projects, reducing proposals to increase staff numbers, and diverting funding allocated to LGR back to residents as the Government should burden the costs of LGR, not the Council.
- They disagreed with the need for an Executive Member for LGR/Devolution as the responsibilities of this role should be undertaken by the Leader of the Council.
- They would be withdrawing the amendment to remove R52 as it was vital that Members and Officers should go unharmed while attending meetings.
- A Rural Parking Enforcement Officer would be introduced to ensure that rural parking was enforced and resident concerns were alleviated. An increase in Penalty Notice Charges (PCNs) would partly fund this.
- Investment into a learner pool in Royston was commended but would be consistently monitored and scrutinised so that costs would not spiral.
- Members nor members of the public had not been informed of the costs of the Churchgate project and it would be irresponsible to pay for it through borrowing.
- They wanted to take the necessary and difficult decisions for residents to retain their money, and reward working through tax cuts for residents.

This was seconded by Councillor David Barnard.

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

- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Sean Nolan
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Laura Williams
- Councillor Vijaiya Poopalasingham
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Tamsin Thomas
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Chris Lucas
- Councillor David Barnard

The following points were made as part of the debate on the amendments:

- The proposed amendments were financially irresponsible and would not balance in the medium-term.
- The proposed reduction in Council Tax was an attempt to grab short-term newspaper headlines.
- Opposition to the increase in planning fees and charges had not been justified.
- Budget workshops could have been used to discuss these amendments and there had been plenty of opportunities to table them.
- Many other councils had reserved funding for LGR such as Broxbourne.
- They wanted to provide sustainable futures for residents and funding cuts would remove stability within communities, leaving them worse off in the future.
- It was their duty as a Council to serve their community and safeguard parks and greenspaces.
- Savings on staff in the short-term would be felt by residents in the long-term.
- Amendments of this nature, submitted on the day of the meeting were not serious and were an annual performative exercise by the opposition.
- The real cost of these amendments would be £2.5M over the next three years.
- R8 would help to retain the resourcing for the Communications Team which looked internally at corporate projects that produced income and R9 would help improve services for residents not only now, but in the future. R10 would also help to support their resilience against cyberattacks and removing this, R8 and R9 were ill thought amendments.
- The Leader of the Council did not have the capacity to undertake both the responsibilities of the Executive Member for LGR/Devolution and their own.
- The Executive Member for LGR/Devolution helped to influence change in times to come and would not be needed in a business-as-usual setting. However, having an Executive Member for this was not unusual among other local authorities and would help to mitigate the lost opportunities from the transformation phase of LGR
- Time spent on LGR before May 2027 would be crucial as Members would not be able to discuss LGR after this date unless elected to a new shadow authority.
- Investment would be pulled away from staff, apprenticeship programmes and safeguarding in favour of convenient headlines that would increase pressure on already hardworking staff, weaken safeguarding capacity and incur higher costs later.
- Long-term opportunities and community investment should be chosen over short-term benefits associated with cost saving.
- Planning for LGR was key, whether it was liked or not.
- It would be reckless to cut the investment in their capacity and support structures for staff that would help to deliver the best outcomes for LGR.

Thursday, 26th February, 2026

- The addition of a Rural Parking Officer was an amendment designed to grab the attention of rural residents and rural parking issues could be resolved in a different way.
- The amendments would make the coordination of volunteers to help with the transfer of items from the existing museum collection facility to the new one difficult, and more expensive if they had to resort to a removal company. It would also prevent them from restarting their education outreach programme.
- R38 was needed to help the Town Hall and Museum continue to generate revenue which they had already proven they could do.
- The importance of staff in the context of LGR was not doubted.
- LGR proposals had been drawn out at the Herts Leaders Group, therefore, it was a leadership function, and they could not justify an additional £9K towards an Executive Member for this, therefore, R51 should be voted on separately.
- Council Tax reductions would be funded by the sacrifice of investment in LGR, which would be the biggest structural change the Council would ever face.
- Governance, resilience and future preparations would all be weakened by these amendments.
- The amendments had been costed, researched and discussed very carefully with Officers before submission. They would save taxpayers money which would then be spent in ailing town centres.

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

*N.B. Following the conclusion of the vote, there was a break in proceedings and the meeting reconvened at 21:04.*

*N.B. During the break, Councillor Lisa Nash left the Council Chamber and did not return.*

The following Members took part in the debate on the original motion:

- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Tim Johnson
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Vijaiya Poopalasingham
- Councillor Amy Allen
- Councillor Mick Debenham
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Donna Wright
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby

The following points were raised as part of the debate:

- Finalisation of the budget had been fraught with uncertainty from the fair funding review, but the positive outcome from this that meant they would not have to use significant amounts of their reserves in the medium-term.
- The main proposals in the budget had not been challenged at workshops as they broadly delivered on the overall strategy of the Council.
- Security arrangements for Council and Committee meetings were supported.
- The feasibility study and business case built for a new learner pool in Royston was also welcomed as it would be a wonderful community asset that would address years of the facilities in the town not keeping up with growth.
- Thanks was put on record to Members and Officers who had continued work on the feasibility of the learner pool after an amendment to include it in the budget for 2025/26 had been lost.

- It was hoped that the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee would guard the Council against unexpected costs of the learner pool.
- There had been a lost opportunity to build the learner pool in tandem with the decarbonisation works in terms of the costs and disruption that could have been saved.
- There would be a fair financial return on the Royston learner pool by 2040.
- More funding towards North Herts Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), North Herts Centre for Voluntary Services (CVS) and North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum (MEF) were welcome additions to the budget.
- £9K for the Executive Member for LGR/Devolution should be funded by existing budgets.
- This was a well-balanced, structured budget that put communities and residents first and included support towards local organisations and homelessness prevention.
- Funding for greenspaces would benefit the next generation of residents.
- Residents of Great Ashby were represented by those in the administration, correcting years of under representation and delivering for them.
- They were proud that the Council could deliver a new major asset for the district.
- It felt good to be able to address concerns expressed by Royston residents on pool facilities in the town.
- Continued support for North Herts CAB, CVS and MEF showed that they valued organisations within the district that worked behind the scenes to bring people together.
- Increased funding for community grants would empower local groups, volunteers and grassroots projects that would make a real difference in neighbourhoods.
- This budget demonstrated that the Council had remained in good health and the Executive Member and Director for Resources should be commended.
- Financial stability would not be compromised by the resilience that would be built by this budget ahead of LGR.
- Their commitment to new car parking signage in Hitchin would ease congestion across the town and support better parking.
- A huge difference was made to the community by the Wellbeing Team and the provision for a permanent Community Wellbeing Officer would help to keep this.

In response to points raised in the debate, Councillor Ian Albert advised that:

- There had been cross-party unanimity on budget issues, with Royston Learner Pool being an example of this.
- Budget provision for a Rural Enforcement Officer could have been accepted if it had been proposed further in advance, and Members were urged to discuss proposals like these with them in the future.
- Delivery of the learner pool would be scrutinised to ensure that it stayed on track.

Having been proposed and seconded and, the outcome of the recorded vote was:

VOTE TOTALS:

YES	:	40
ABSTAIN	:	5
NO	:	0
TOTAL	:	45

THE INDIVIDUAL RESULTS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

Cllr Ian Albert	YES
Cllr Amy Allen	YES
Cllr Daniel Allen	YES
Cllr David Barnard	ABSTAIN
Cllr Matt Barnes	YES
Cllr Tina Bhartwas	YES

Cllr Clare Billing	YES
Cllr Sadie Billing	YES
Cllr Ruth Brown	YES
Cllr Cathy Brownjohn	YES
Cllr Val Bryant	YES
Cllr Rhona Cameron	YES
Cllr David Chalmers	YES
Cllr Jon Clayden	YES
Cllr Ruth Clifton	YES
Cllr Mick Debenham	YES
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis	YES
Cllr Emma Fernandes	YES
Cllr Joe Graziano	ABSTAIN
Cllr Keith Hoskins	YES
Cllr Tim Johnson	YES
Cllr Chris Lucas	YES
Cllr Sarah Lucas	YES
Cllr Ian Mantle	YES
Cllr Nigel Mason	YES
Cllr Bryony May	YES
Cllr Caroline McDonnell	YES
Cllr Ralph Muncer	ABSTAIN
Cllr Michael Muir	ABSTAIN
Cllr Sean Nolan	YES
Cllr Louise Peace	YES
Cllr Vijaiya Poopalasingham	YES
Cllr Sean Prendergast	YES
Cllr Martin Prescott	ABSTAIN
Cllr Emma Rowe	YES
Cllr Tamsin Thomas	YES
Cllr Tom Tyson	YES
Cllr Paul Ward	YES
Cllr Laura Williams	YES
Cllr Alistair Willoughby	YES
Cllr Stewart Willoughby	YES
Cllr Claire Winchester	YES
Cllr Dave Winstanley	YES
Cllr Donna Wright	YES
Cllr Daniel Wright-Mason	YES

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- (1) Noted the position on the Collection Fund and how it would be funded.
- (2) Noted the position relating to the General Fund balance and that due to the risks identified a minimum balance of £3.5 million was recommended.
- (3) Noted the Chief Finance Officer's section 25 report (Appendix D) which provided a commentary on the risks and reliability of estimates contained in the budget.
- (4) Approved the revenue savings and investments as detailed in Appendix B.
- (5) Approved the capital programme as detailed in Appendix C.
- (6) Approved a net expenditure budget of £27.524m as detailed in Appendix E.
- (7) Approved a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, which was in line with the provisions in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

- (8) Approved bringing forward the capital budget for pool covers at the outdoor pools to 2025/26.
- (9) Noted that a Council Tax premium on Second Homes would be implemented from 1 April 2026, which adopted the decision taken by Council on 29 February 2024.

**REASONS FOR DECISIONS:**

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

**91 INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2026/27**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 58 minutes 0 seconds*

*N.B. Councillor Paul Ward declared an interest in this item due to his employment and left the Chamber for the duration of the item.*

*N.B. Councillor Ruth Clifton left the Chamber at 21:31 and did not return.*

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, presented the referral from Cabinet and the report entitled 'Investment Strategy 2026/27' and advised that:

- The Investment Strategy detailed the assets the Council had and how they would maintain them, in addition to their plans for new assets.
- It would also determine funding for capital spend and an approach to borrowing a minimum revenue provision.
- The approach to investing surplus cash would be determined by a focus on investments that would provide security, liquidity and yield.
- Following the motion on Local Government Pension Scheme and Responsible Investment passed by Council on 4 December 2025, they had met with treasury advisors to address the requirements of the motion without putting the Council at risk.
- Changes made to the strategy had been outlined at paragraph 8.8 in the report although it was noted that it would be impractical to change their bank account right now.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Sean Nolan seconded the recommendations in the report.

As part of the debate, Councillor Dave Winstanley put on record his thanks to Members and Officers for all the work that had gone into producing the Investment Strategy and for the inclusion of Environmental, Social and Governance investments throughout it.

As part of the debate, Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason also put on record his thanks to Members and Officers for the speed with which they had implemented these changes and that it was a good first step towards change.

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

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

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

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

*N.B. Following the conclusion of the item, Councillor Paul Ward returned to the Chamber at 21:35.*

**92 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2026/27**

*Audio recording – 2 hours 3 minutes 30 seconds*

The Director – Resources presented the report entitled 'Council Tax Resolution 2026/27' and advised that:

- The Council Tax rate set by the Council was combined with those of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Hertfordshire County Council to formally set Council Tax for the district in 2026/27.
- The format for Council Tax was set out in the Local Authorities Regulations 2012, which were outlined in the report.
- Appendix A to the report explained the reason for each element in the recommendations.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Sean Nolan seconded and, the outcome of the recorded vote was:

**VOTE TOTALS:**

YES	:	39
ABSTAIN	:	5
NO	:	0
TOTAL	:	44

**THE INDIVIDUAL RESULTS WERE AS FOLLOWS:**

Cllr Ian Albert	YES
Cllr Amy Allen	YES
Cllr Daniel Allen	YES
Cllr David Barnard	ABSTAIN
Cllr Matt Barnes	YES
Cllr Tina Bhartwas	YES
Cllr Clare Billing	YES
Cllr Sadie Billing	YES
Cllr Ruth Brown	YES
Cllr Cathy Brownjohn	YES
Cllr Val Bryant	YES
Cllr Rhona Cameron	YES
Cllr David Chalmers	YES
Cllr Jon Clayden	YES
Cllr Mick Debenham	YES
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis	YES
Cllr Emma Fernandes	YES
Cllr Joe Graziano	ABSTAIN
Cllr Keith Hoskins	YES
Cllr Tim Johnson	YES
Cllr Chris Lucas	YES
Cllr Sarah Lucas	YES

Cllr Ian Mantle	YES
Cllr Nigel Mason	YES
Cllr Bryony May	YES
Cllr Caroline McDonnell	YES
Cllr Ralph Muncer	ABSTAIN
Cllr Michael Muir	ABSTAIN
Cllr Sean Nolan	YES
Cllr Louise Peace	YES
Cllr Vijaiya Poopalasingham	YES
Cllr Sean Prendergast	YES
Cllr Martin Prescott	ABSTAIN
Cllr Emma Rowe	YES
Cllr Tamsin Thomas	YES
Cllr Tom Tyson	YES
Cllr Paul Ward	YES
Cllr Laura Williams	YES
Cllr Alistair Willoughby	YES
Cllr Stewart Willoughby	YES
Cllr Claire Winchester	YES
Cllr Dave Winstanley	YES
Cllr Donna Wright	YES
Cllr Daniel Wright-Mason	YES

**RESOLVED:**

(1) That it was noted that at its meeting on 29 January 2026 the Council Tax Setting Committee confirmed the amount 51,529.0 as its Council Tax base for the year 2026/2027 in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 (the Regulations).

a) 51,529.0 being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Regulations, as its Council Tax base for the year.

b)	Parish/Town	Council Tax Base	Parish/Town	Council Tax Base
	Ashwell	909.00	Knebworth	2,074.50
	Barkway	439.90	Lilley	183.80
	Barley	341.80	Offley	621.20
	Bygrave	133.90	Pirton	709.60
	Caldecote and Newnham	60.60	Preston	262.10
	Clothall	88.70	Radwell	56.70
	Codicote	1,835.00	Reed	164.30
	Graveley	180.50	Royston	7,035.80
	Great Ashby	2,018.00	Rushden and Wallington	209.60
	Hinxworth	163.00	St Ippolyts	961.90
	Holwell	157.30	St Pauls Walden	577.80
	Ickleford	953.80	Sandon	258.60
	Kelshall	80.60	Therfield	278.30
	Kimpton	1,089.30	Weston	447.70
	Kings Walden	427.50	Wymondley	428.50

Being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Regulations, as the amounts of its Council Tax base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

- c) That it was noted that its meeting on the 26 February 2026 the Council has calculated the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2026/27 (excluding Parish precepts) as £14,211,183. As detailed in 2.2 (e) below the sum of special items is £1,779,755 and hence the total Council Tax requirement (including Parish precepts) is £15,990,938.
- (2) That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for 2026/2027 in accordance with Sections 31A, 31B and 34 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 (the Act):-

- a) £85,997,958 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2)(a) to (f) of the Act.
- b) £70,007,020 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act.
- c) £15,990,938 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year.
- d) £310.33 being the amount at (c) above divided by the amount at 2.1(a) above calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B(1) as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
- e) £1,779,755 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- f) £275.79 being the amount at (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (e) above by the amount at 2.1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates.

g)

Parish/Town	Basic £	Parish Precept £	Total £
Ashwell	275.79	137.36	413.15
Barkway	275.79	104.35	380.14
Barley	275.79	107.93	383.72
Bygrave	275.79	80.11	355.90
Caldecote and Newnham	275.79	39.81	315.60
Clothall	275.79	20.32	296.11
Codicote	275.79	62.92	338.71
Graveley	275.79	55.96	331.75
Great Ashby	275.79	24.63	300.42
Hinxworth	275.79	70.64	346.43
Holwell	275.79	97.03	372.82
Ickleford	275.79	70.77	346.56
Kelshall	275.79	49.63	325.42
Kimpton	275.79	87.58	363.37
Kings Walden	275.79	96.99	372.78

Parish/Town	Basic £	Parish Precept £	Total £
Knebworth	275.79	93.27	369.06
Lilley	275.79	118.19	393.98
Offley	275.79	72.40	348.19
Pirton	275.79	95.24	371.03
Preston	275.79	68.74	344.53
Radwell	275.79	27.16	302.95
Reed	275.79	52.41	328.20
Royston	275.79	84.92	360.71
Rushden and Wallington	275.79	21.15	296.94
St Ippolyts	275.79	46.61	322.40
St Pauls Walden	275.79	91.81	367.60
Sandon	275.79	32.87	308.66
Therfield	275.79	47.43	323.22
Weston	275.79	55.84	331.63
Wymondley	275.79	103.50	379.29

being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 2.2(f) above the amounts of the special item or items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 2.1(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

h)

Parish/Town	Valuation Bands							
	A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
Ashwell	275.43	321.34	367.25	413.15	504.96	596.78	688.58	826.30
Baldock	183.86	214.50	245.15	275.79	337.08	398.36	459.65	551.58
Barkway	253.43	295.66	337.91	380.14	464.62	549.10	633.57	760.28
Barley	255.81	298.45	341.09	383.72	468.99	554.27	639.53	767.44
Bygrave	237.27	276.81	316.36	355.90	434.99	514.08	593.17	711.80
Caldecote and Newnham	210.40	245.46	280.54	315.60	385.74	455.87	526.00	631.20
Clothall	197.41	230.30	263.21	296.11	361.92	427.72	493.52	592.22
Codicote	225.81	263.44	301.08	338.71	413.98	489.25	564.52	677.42
Graveley	221.17	258.02	294.89	331.75	405.48	479.20	552.92	663.50
Great Ashby	200.28	233.66	267.04	300.42	367.18	433.95	500.70	600.84
Hexton	183.86	214.50	245.15	275.79	337.08	398.36	459.65	551.58
Hinxworth	230.95	269.44	307.94	346.43	423.42	500.41	577.38	692.86
Hitchin	183.86	214.50	245.15	275.79	337.08	398.36	459.65	551.58
Holwell	248.55	289.97	331.40	372.82	455.67	538.52	621.37	745.64
Ickleford	231.04	269.54	308.06	346.56	423.58	500.59	577.60	693.12
Kelshall	216.95	253.10	289.27	325.42	397.74	470.06	542.37	650.84
Kimpton	242.25	282.62	323.00	363.37	444.12	524.87	605.62	726.74
Kings Walden	248.52	289.94	331.36	372.78	455.62	538.47	621.30	745.56
Knebworth	246.04	287.04	328.06	369.06	451.08	533.09	615.10	738.12
Langley	183.86	214.50	245.15	275.79	337.08	398.36	459.65	551.58
Letchworth	183.86	214.50	245.15	275.79	337.08	398.36	459.65	551.58
Lilley	262.65	306.43	350.21	393.98	481.53	569.09	656.63	787.96
Nuthampstead	183.86	214.50	245.15	275.79	337.08	398.36	459.65	551.58
Offley	232.13	270.81	309.51	348.19	425.57	502.95	580.32	696.38
Pirton	247.35	288.58	329.81	371.03	453.48	535.94	618.38	742.06
Preston	229.69	267.96	306.25	344.53	421.10	497.66	574.22	689.06
Radwell	201.97	235.62	269.29	302.95	370.28	437.60	504.92	605.90
Reed	218.80	255.26	291.74	328.20	401.14	474.07	547.00	656.40
Royston	240.47	280.55	320.63	360.71	440.87	521.03	601.18	721.42
Rushden and Wallington	197.96	230.95	263.95	296.94	362.93	428.92	494.90	593.88
St Ippolyts	214.93	250.75	286.58	322.40	394.05	465.70	537.33	644.80
St Pauls Walden	245.07	285.91	326.76	367.60	449.29	530.98	612.67	735.20
Sandon	205.77	240.07	274.37	308.66	377.25	445.85	514.43	617.32
Therfield	215.48	251.39	287.31	323.22	395.05	466.88	538.70	646.44

Parish/Town	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Weston	221.09	257.93	294.79	331.63	405.33	479.03	552.72	663.26
Wymondley	252.86	295.00	337.15	379.29	463.58	547.87	632.15	758.58

being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 2.2(f) and 2.2(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(l) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.

- (3) That it was noted that for 2026/2027 Hertfordshire County Council and the Hertfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Act, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Precepting Authority	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Hertfordshire County Council</b>	1,238.79	1,445.26	1,651.73	1,858.19	2,271.12	2,684.05	3,096.98	3,716.38
<b>Hertfordshire Police &amp; Crime Commissioner</b>	186.67	217.78	248.89	280.00	342.22	404.44	466.67	560.00

- (4) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 2.2(h) and 2.3 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets out the following provisional amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for 2026/2027 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

List of parishes and tax at different band (County, Care, Police, District and Parish)

Parish/Town	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Ashwell	1,700.89	1,984.38	2,267.86	2,551.34	3,118.30	3,685.27	4,252.23	5,102.68
Baldock	1,609.32	1,877.54	2,145.77	2,413.98	2,950.42	3,486.85	4,023.30	4,827.96
Barkway	1,678.89	1,958.70	2,238.52	2,518.33	3,077.96	3,637.59	4,197.22	5,036.66
Barley	1,681.27	1,961.49	2,241.70	2,521.91	3,082.33	3,642.76	4,203.18	5,043.82
Bygrave	1,662.73	1,939.85	2,216.97	2,494.09	3,048.33	3,602.57	4,156.82	4,988.18
Caldecote and Newnham	1,635.86	1,908.50	2,181.15	2,453.79	2,999.08	3,544.36	4,089.65	4,907.58
Clothall	1,622.87	1,893.34	2,163.82	2,434.30	2,975.26	3,516.21	4,057.17	4,868.60
Codicote	1,651.27	1,926.48	2,201.69	2,476.90	3,027.32	3,577.74	4,128.17	4,953.80
Graveley	1,646.63	1,921.06	2,195.50	2,469.94	3,018.82	3,567.69	4,116.57	4,939.88
Great Ashby	1,625.74	1,896.70	2,167.65	2,438.61	2,980.52	3,522.44	4,064.35	4,877.22
Hexton	1,609.32	1,877.54	2,145.77	2,413.98	2,950.42	3,486.85	4,023.30	4,827.96
Hinxworth	1,656.41	1,932.48	2,208.55	2,484.62	3,036.76	3,588.90	4,141.03	4,969.24
Hitchin	1,609.32	1,877.54	2,145.77	2,413.98	2,950.42	3,486.85	4,023.30	4,827.96
Holwell	1,674.01	1,953.01	2,232.01	2,511.01	3,069.01	3,627.01	4,185.02	5,022.02
Ickleford	1,656.50	1,932.58	2,208.67	2,484.75	3,036.92	3,589.08	4,141.25	4,969.50
Kelshall	1,642.41	1,916.14	2,189.88	2,463.61	3,011.08	3,558.55	4,106.02	4,927.22
Kimpton	1,667.71	1,945.66	2,223.61	2,501.56	3,057.46	3,613.36	4,169.27	5,003.12
Kings Walden	1,673.98	1,952.98	2,231.97	2,510.97	3,068.96	3,626.96	4,184.95	5,021.94
Knebworth	1,671.50	1,950.08	2,228.67	2,507.25	3,064.42	3,621.58	4,178.75	5,014.50
Langley	1,609.32	1,877.54	2,145.77	2,413.98	2,950.42	3,486.85	4,023.30	4,827.96
Letchworth	1,609.32	1,877.54	2,145.77	2,413.98	2,950.42	3,486.85	4,023.30	4,827.96
Lilley	1,688.11	1,969.47	2,250.82	2,532.17	3,094.87	3,657.58	4,220.28	5,064.34
Nuthampstead	1,609.32	1,877.54	2,145.77	2,413.98	2,950.42	3,486.85	4,023.30	4,827.96
Offley	1,657.59	1,933.85	2,210.12	2,486.38	3,038.91	3,591.44	4,143.97	4,972.76
Pirton	1,672.81	1,951.62	2,230.42	2,509.22	3,066.82	3,624.43	4,182.03	5,018.44
Preston	1,655.15	1,931.00	2,206.86	2,482.72	3,034.44	3,586.15	4,137.87	4,965.44

Radwell	1,627.43	1,898.66	2,169.90	2,441.14	2,983.62	3,526.09	4,068.57	4,882.28
Reed	1,644.26	1,918.30	2,192.35	2,466.39	3,014.48	3,562.56	4,110.65	4,932.78
Royston	1,665.93	1,943.59	2,221.24	2,498.90	3,054.21	3,609.52	4,164.83	4,997.80
Rushden and Wallington	1,623.42	1,893.99	2,164.56	2,435.13	2,976.27	3,517.41	4,058.55	4,870.26
St Ippolyts	1,640.39	1,913.79	2,187.19	2,460.59	3,007.39	3,554.19	4,100.98	4,921.18
St Pauls Walden	1,670.53	1,948.95	2,227.37	2,505.79	3,062.63	3,619.47	4,176.32	5,011.58
Sandon	1,631.23	1,903.11	2,174.98	2,446.85	2,990.59	3,534.34	4,078.08	4,893.70
Therfield	1,640.94	1,914.43	2,187.92	2,461.41	3,008.39	3,555.37	4,102.35	4,922.82
Weston	1,646.55	1,920.97	2,195.40	2,469.82	3,018.67	3,567.52	4,116.37	4,939.64
Wymondley	1,678.32	1,958.04	2,237.76	2,517.48	3,076.92	3,636.36	4,195.80	5,034.96

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** The Council is required to set the Council Tax and to set the overall level of Council Tax for the following financial year, taking into account the precepts of all major and local precepting authorities.

*N.B. Following the conclusion of the item, Councillors Martin Prescott and Rhona Cameron left the Chamber at 21:39 and did not return.*

### 93 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

*Audio recording – 2 hours 5 minutes 24 seconds*

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11, no questions had been submitted by the required deadline set out in the Constitution.

### 94 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

*Audio recording – 2 hours 5 minutes 33 seconds*

There was one motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12.

#### (A) Support for Trans Rights

Councillor Sadie Billing proposed the motion as follows:

‘Council notes that:

The Supreme Court, in the case of *Women Scotland v the Scottish Ministers*, ruled that the terms “man”, “woman” and “sex” in the Equality Act 2010 refer to “biological sex”. This judgement does not remove legal protection from trans people, as gender reassignment remains a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. The law requiring respect for trans rights has not changed.

However, the judgement, and the subsequent interim (now withdrawn) guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, has caused significant anxiety, uncertainty, and fear for the trans community. A recent Gallup survey found that two thirds of LGBTQ+ respondents had experienced anti LGBTQ+ violence or abuse, with abuse particularly severe for trans people. The LGBTQ+ community is more likely to experience disproportionately poor health outcomes, workplace conflict, homelessness, and barriers to accessing public services.

Council believes that:

1. Everyone should be safe and free to be themselves, without fear of hostility, violence, or discrimination.
2. Nobody’s life chances should be limited or determined because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
3. Everyone deserves clarity and reassurance on how their rights will be protected.

4. The erosion of trans rights threatens everyone's rights.

Therefore, Council resolves to:

1. Affirm their support for trans, non-binary, and gender diverse residents and our commitment to defending their rights and dignity.
2. Request the Leader of the Council to write to the Minister for Women and Equalities to:
  - (a) Express that the position of this Council is to support trans rights.
  - (b) Request guidance on how existing legislation will continue to protect the rights of trans people.
  - (c) Request clarity on whether the Government will bring forward new legislation in this area.
3. Commit to supporting Officers to take meaningful steps to promote safety and inclusion so that North Herts continues to be a welcoming and inclusive place for the LGBTQ+ community.
4. Build upon Council policies and practice to ensure that they explicitly affirm support for trans, non binary, and gender diverse people and that language used is inclusive.
5. Ensure that LGBTQ+ inclusion and trans awareness form part of ongoing staff and Councillor training, using existing or freely available resources.
6. Publicly mark and promote significant dates for the LGBTQ+ community (such as Pride, Trans Day of Visibility, etc.) through Council communications channels, as appropriate.
7. Continue to engage with local LGBTQ+ residents, staff, and organisations to inform Council services, community safety approaches, and staff policies (for example the recent funding with Impactful Lives).
8. Promote ways to report hate crimes and discrimination, ensuring that local and national support services are clearly signposted on Council platforms.
9. Continue to include commitments to equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination in Council supplier and partner expectations, encouraging inclusive practice in all Council linked work.
10. Actively encourage applications from LGBTQ+ people for Council jobs by:
  - (a) Requesting officers to consider whether any changes to recruitment practices are necessary or appropriate to support inclusion, and to bring forward any recommendations through the appropriate governance route.
  - (b) Reviewing recruitment processes to ensure they are inclusive and free from unnecessary barriers.
  - (c) Promoting the Council as an inclusive employer via LGBTQ+ networks, events, and community groups.
  - (d) Investigating whether the Council can offer the option to display pronouns during the application and onboarding process at no additional cost.

Any actions arising from this motion will be subject to existing legislation, available resources and appropriate governance and decision-making processes.'

Councillor David Chalmers seconded the motion.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor David Chalmers
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Tamsin Thomas
- Councillor Joe Graziano

The following points were made as part of the debate:

- Stonewall had found that 41% of trans people had experienced a hate crime in the last year and more than half hid who they were at work for fear of discrimination.
- Impactful Lives had found that 73% of the LGBTQ+ community in Hertfordshire thought society attitudes towards trans people had become increasingly negative in recent years and 87% felt that attitudes had become more negative overall.
- This motion would not change the law or address concerns immediately, but it would recognise the concerns of residents and support their rights, dignity and safety.
- They were happy to support the safety of young trans people in the district.
- If the Council did not support this motion, they would be ignoring the abuse and bullying that young trans people faced, therefore, it should be passed to ensure that regressive or exclusionary policies that would put them at risk of harm would not return.
- It was an honour to second this important motion that dealt with basic human rights for those in the community.
- The same fear and shame that had riddled homosexuals in the past had also destroyed the lives of many trans people recently.
- Trans people had been demonised and felt to feel like a threat to society because of the actions of a few.
- Impactful Lives had also found that 86% of the LGBTQ+ community they surveyed in Hertfordshire had experienced an increase in hostility or hate speech.
- Hertfordshire Constabulary would no longer participate in pride events across the county which added to the situation.
- Passing this motion would reaffirm the support that statutory bodies like the Council had for trans and non-binary residents.
- Respect, dignity and equality would be given to trans people from this motion.
- Freedom of expression did not mean having the right to demonise others and both transphobic and homophobic comments were not tolerated and should not be left unchecked.
- This motion sent a simple, powerful message that the Council stood for inclusion.
- They were proud of how far things had come since the Section 28 legislation that had made it illegal for local authorities to promote homosexuality in a positive way.
- With darks cloud on the horizon, Members were urged to vote in favour of this motion.
- Supporting this motion would allow more people to be themselves and make the world a better, more interesting place.
- The Supreme Court of Justice had got it right as their ruling had not weakened the legal protections for the trans community under the Equalities Act.

- It would be hypocritical to support this motion when they had a Women and Girls Safety Charter in place across North Herts and supporting it would allow biological males to be present in changing rooms and toilets for women and girls.
- It would be remis to neglect the struggles that trans people had faced and by acknowledging their support for them, they were not removing their support for women and girls.
- Academic studies had proven that when society had failed to acknowledge LGBTQ+ rights, rights for women and girls were not acknowledged either.
- Treating trans people with prejudice set back the progress on rights for women.
- More positive, diverse representation was hoped to be seen across the district.
- Fear of trans women in changing rooms and toilets was a manufactured fear and should not influence the direction of this motion.
- In an ideal world, they would not be discussing this motion or have to press for basic human rights.

Councillor Sadie Billing replied to the debate and advised that:

- Supporting trans rights would not weaken rights for women and girls as the law protected both.
- This motion affirmed the provision of dignity, safety and respect for everyone.

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

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- (1) Affirm their support for trans, non-binary, and gender diverse residents and their commitment to defending their rights and dignity.
- (2) Request the Leader of the Council to write to the Minister for Women and Equalities to:
  - (a) Express the position of this Council is to support trans rights.
  - (b) Request guidance on how existing legislation will continue to protect the rights of trans people.
  - (c) Request clarity on whether the Government will bring forward new legislation in this area.
- (3) Commit to supporting Officers to take meaningful steps to promote safety and inclusion so that North Herts continues to be a welcoming and inclusive place for the LGBTQ+ community.
- (4) Build upon Council policies and practice to ensure that they explicitly affirm support for trans, non binary, and gender diverse people and that language used is inclusive.
- (5) Ensure that LGBTQ+ inclusion and trans awareness form part of ongoing staff and Councillor training, using existing or freely available resources.
- (6) Publicly mark and promote significant dates for the LGBTQ+ community (such as Pride, Trans Day of Visibility, etc.) through Council communications channels, as appropriate.
- (7) Continue to engage with local LGBTQ+ residents, staff, and organisations to inform Council services, community safety approaches, and staff policies (for example the recent funding with Impactful Lives).
- (8) Promote ways to report hate crimes and discrimination, ensuring that local and national support services are clearly signposted on Council platforms.

**Thursday, 26th February, 2026**

- (9) Continue to include commitments to equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination in Council supplier and partner expectations, encouraging inclusive practice in all Council linked work.
- (10) Actively encourage applications from LGBTQ+ people for Council jobs by:
  - (a) Requesting officers to consider whether any changes to recruitment practices are necessary or appropriate to support inclusion, and to bring forward any recommendations through the appropriate governance route.
  - (b) Reviewing recruitment processes to ensure they are inclusive and free from unnecessary barriers.
  - (c) Promoting the Council as an inclusive employer via LGBTQ+ networks, events, and community groups.
  - (d) Investigating whether the Council can offer the option to display pronouns during the application and onboarding process at no additional cost.

The meeting closed at 9.57 pm

Chair