

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DECISION SHEET

**Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber - District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth, SG6 3JF
on Thursday, 8th October, 2026 at 7.30 pm**

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joe Graziano, Claire Strong, Tim Johnson, Tina Bhartwas, Lisa Nash, Ruth Clifton, Daniel Wright-Mason and Sarah Lucas.

2 MINUTES - 16 JULY 2026

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 July 2026 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair advised that he had agreed to accept an urgent item of business to consider an extension to the 6 Month Rule for Councillor Lisa Nash, which would be considered after the scheduled Part 1 and Part 2 business.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) The Chair reminded Members that the Council had declared both a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency. These are serious decisions, and mean that, as this was an emergency, all of us, Officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.
- (3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (4) The Chair advised 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 encouraged all Members to attend Youth Democracy Day invite on 26 November 2026 and to direct any questions about the day to Committee Services.
- (7) The Chair advised Members that nominations for his North Herts Heroes Awards would be opening soon and further information would be available through the Members Information Bulletin.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

6 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

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

7 CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

RESOLVED: That the proposed changes to Section 2, Section 16 and Section 21 of the Council's Constitution, as outlined within the report and appendices, were adopted, subject to the amendment that the word 'minor' be removed from paragraph 16.3.8 of Section 16:

16.3.8 The Administration Group can only make changes to their budget proposals to the extent that they reflect new information that has become available. Such changes should be provided to the Section 151 Officer as soon as is practicable, so that they can determine the impact on the budget estimates. The changes will be published as an addendum to the Council report, along with a report on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the Council reserves to afford the financial impact. The Chief Finance Officer has a statutory obligation to refuse any changes that do not allow the Council to set a balanced budget.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure the Council's constitution is the framework for the Council's operations and decision making – it ensures that the Council operates in a way which is efficient and transparent, ethical and accountable to local people. It is a reference point for Members, officers and the public and is a living document which must be kept up to date and legally compliant. This is an iterative process which is undertaken throughout the year by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the 'Duty to Monitor and Review the constitution which is set out in Section 2 of the constitution and includes a combination of updates under the general housekeeping delegations in respect of minor amendments as well as more substantive amendments which are undertaken through engagement of the cross-party Constitutional Working Group.

8 NATIONAL SCHEME OF DELEGATION

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the amendments to Section 8.4 of the Constitution, attached as Appendix 1, were approved for implementation from 31 October 2026.
- (2) That the Planning Scheme of Management, attached as Appendix 2 and guidance in relation to committee briefings and site visits, attached as Appendix 3, were noted.
- (3) That the Director: Place be requested to consider any amendments proposed by Members to the Planning Scheme of Management, attached as Appendix 2, relating to the guidance on committee briefings and site visits, attached as Appendix 3, before those documents are finalised and published.
- (4) That the Director: Place, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, be requested to explore whether additional arrangements for Member and public engagement in planning applications determined under delegated authority could lawfully be introduced, having regard to the requirements of the National Scheme of Delegation and associated statutory guidance, with any proposals requiring constitutional amendments brought back to Full Council for consideration.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) A mandatory, National Scheme of Delegation (NSD) takes effect from 31 October 2026. Statutory Government guidance states that authorities' Constitutions must be amended to give effect to these new requirements in time.

- (2) Alongside the constitutional changes, operational guidance – the Planning Scheme of Management - will also be published. This sets out arrangements by which schemes for potential referral to Planning Control Committee are considered, as well as operational delegations to officers to make decisions in accordance with the NSD.
- (3) A report was published for Full Council to consider the committee briefings and site visit guidance at its meeting in April 2026. This item was deferred from consideration.
- (4) Subsequent legal advice, as well as good practice guidance published to assist with implementing the NSD, is now that additional and administrative guidance should not be constitutional. This enables it to be updated more efficiently and responsively.
- (5) This guidance is presented to provide broader context to the operational implications and procedural changes that are being introduced.

9 CHANGES TO THE CONTRACT PROCUREMENT RULES

RESOLVED: That Council adopted the changes to the Council's Contract Procurement Rules detailed in the report.

REASON FOR DECISION:

- (1) The increase in the threshold for single quotes reflects the impact of inflation and that not changing them creates additional work for Officers.
- (2) The introduction of geographical and supplier type restrictions gives the opportunity for procurements to be better aligned with policy objectives.

10 USE OF URGENCY IN RELATION TO CALL-IN FOR DECISIONS ON AWARDING UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) ALLOCATIONS

RESOLVED: That Council notes the use of urgency provisions in relation to the decisions on the award of UKSPF funding attached at Appendix A.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) Urgency provisions were used to ensure that the funding was allocated and spent by the 30th September deadline.
- (2) This is reported to Council to comply with the requirements of the Constitution.

11 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR - FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

- (1) That for the remainder of the civic year 2026-2027 the following Member and Substitute were appointed to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee:
 - Councillor Elizabeth Dennis as a Member of the Committee; and
 - Councillor Nigel Mason as a Substitute Member of the Committee
- (2) That Councillor Stewart Willoughby was appointed as the Vice Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee for the remainder of the civic year, 2026-2027

REASONS FOR DECISION: To comply with the provisions of 4.8.1 (a) (viii) and (ix) of the Council's Constitution following Councillor Sarah Lucas resigning as Vice Chair and from the Committee.

12 NOMINATION OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Council nominated and approved Councillor Mick Debenham to the outside organisation Baldock Community Centre Association 2025.
- (2) That Council noted the Bedford and River Ivel Drainage Board and the Letchworth Garden City Town Twinning Association were no longer active and therefore be removed from the list of appointments the Council makes.

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

13 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public were excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following report will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

14 PART 2 MINUTES - 16 JULY 2026

RESOLVED: That the Part 2 Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2026 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

15 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

(A) Councillor Resignation if Breach of Nolan Principles

Councillor Ruth Brown to Councillor Val Bryant, Leader of the Council.

(B) Update on Steps Taken to Implement Recommendations of Section 106 Task and Finish Group Report

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Val Bryant, Leader of the Council.

(C) Cost of Paused Local Government Reorganisation Process for the Council

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Val Bryant, Leader of the Council.

(D) Staff Recruitment for Local Government Reorganisation and Cost for NHDC

Councillor David Chalmers to Councillor Val Bryant, Leader of the Council.

(E) Council Procedure for Unauthorised Development

Councillor Ralph Muncer to Councillor Donna Wright, Executive Member for Place.

16 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12, two motions had been submitted by the required deadline set out in the Constitution.

(A) Paternity Leave

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Request Officers work with the Executive Member – Resources to explore eligible Council employees to receive further enhanced paternity and adoption provision for second parents, including consideration of an offer of six weeks paid paternity or adoption leave at a minimum of 90% of their salary. A paper will be produced in time for a wider discussion at the January Joint Staff Consultative Committee, as well as a consultation with our staff and trade union.
- (2) Requested that the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade urging the Government to introduce six weeks' fully paid paternity leave nationally.

(B) Local Government Reorganisation

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Requested the Chief Executive of North Hertfordshire District Council to provide a full accounting of the costs already incurred by the Council as a result of LGR, including additional staffing, officer time, consultants' fees, legal advice, recruitment, training, project management and other transition costs.
- (2) Requested the Leader of North Hertfordshire District Council to write to Angela Rayner MP, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to:
 - a) demand publication of the full rationale, evidence, financial assessments and departmental analysis underpinning the decision to select four unitary authorities for Hertfordshire.
 - b) seek an explanation of how ministers assessed the financial sustainability of the four-unitary model, including the projected £22 million first-year deficit for Central Hertfordshire.
 - c) seek a commitment that councils will be fully compensated for reasonable and demonstrable costs incurred as a direct consequence of the Government's LGR programme and its subsequent halt.
 - d) seek immediate clarity and reassurance for council officers whose employment, structures, reporting arrangements and career prospects have been thrown into uncertainty.
 - e) seek clarity on the Government's intentions and timetable for the future of Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire following the cancellation of the May 2027 shadow authority elections; and
 - f) demand that North Hertfordshire District Council is fully consulted before any further decision is taken, with that consultation involving representatives of all political groups on the Council and not solely the administration.

- (3) Called on the Government to ensure that any future proposals for local government in Hertfordshire put financial sustainability, effective public services, community links and the interests of residents, council taxpayers and frontline staff ahead of arbitrary ministerial timetables
- (4) Called on the Government to learn the fundamental lesson from this process: councils should never again be required to spend millions of pounds, consume thousands of hours of officer time and destabilise local government before the Government has established that its proposals are financially credible, legally sound and capable of being delivered.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

As advised the Chair had accepted an urgent item of business to consider an extension to the 6 Month Rule for Councillor Lisa Nash. The matter had been agreed as urgent as the next scheduled Full Council meeting would be after the six-month period had expired.

RESOLVED: That Council approved an extension of the six-month rule for Councillor Lisa Nash, for the reasons outlined within the report, for an additional six-month period, until 21 May 2027.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

(1) Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that 'if a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority'.

(2) The recommendation is required to enable Cllr Nash to continue to serve as a District Councillor.