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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

30 October 2026

Our Ref Overview and Scrutiny Committee 10 November 2026
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To: Members of the Committee: Councillors Jon Clayden (Chair), Claire Winchester (Vice-Chair), Sadie Billing, David Chalmers, Elizabeth Dennis, Dominic Griffiths, Nigel Mason, Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Martin Prescott, Paul Ward and Daniel Wright-Mason

Substitutes: Councillors Matt Barnes, Sam Collins, Sarah Lucas, Bryony May, Steven Patmore, 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, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF

On

TUESDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Isabelle Alajooz
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 - 8 SEPTEMBER 2026 (Pages 5 - 14)

To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 8 September 2026.

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. PRESENTATION: LIFESTONE HOMES OVERVIEW

To receive a presentation from Lifestone Homes (formerly SettleParadigm) on their work in North Herts.

10. INFORMATION NOTE: DECARBONISATION OF COUNCIL BUILDINGS (Pages 15 - 20)

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE DIRECTOR – ENVIRONMENT

Information note for Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee related to the project to decarbonise Council buildings.

11. SPOTLIGHT REVIEW: PARKING SERVICES - DRAFT SCOPE (Pages 21 - 30)

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

This report is to provide Members with details for a Spotlight Review to assess whether North Herts Council's Parking Strategy 2019–2031 remains effective and fit for purpose considering changing travel patterns, climate priorities and development pressures.

It proposes that the core elements of the scope for the Member led group be endorsed including: the title, objectives of the spotlight review, the key lines of enquiry, timeframe and potential witnesses and contributors.

12. INFORMATION NOTE: SECTION 106 (S106) TASK & FINISH GROUP UPDATE (Pages 31 - 40)

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE DIRECTOR – PLACE

To provide a six-month update, following the initial presentation of the Task & Finish Group recommendations to Cabinet in April 2026.

13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2026-27 (Pages 41 - 52)

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2026-27 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, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF ON TUESDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Jon Clayden (Chair), Claire Winchester (Vice-Chair), Sadie Billing, David Chalmers, Elizabeth Dennis, Dominic Griffiths, Nigel Mason, Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Martin Prescott, Paul Ward and Daniel Wright-Mason.*

In Attendance: *Reuben Ayavoo (Policy & Community Manager), Jo Doggett (Director - Regulatory), Robert Filby (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Sarah Kingsley (Director - Environment), Martin Lawrence (Strategic Housing Manager), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Jeanette Lowden (Shared Service Manager - Waste), Jeevan Mann (Scrutiny Officer) and Cassi Wright (Safeguarding Team Leader).*

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

Councillor Amy Allen, as Executive Member for Environment, Councillor Daniel Allen, as Executive Member for Governance, Councillor Val Bryant, as Leader of the Council, and Councillor Mick Debenham, as Executive Member for Regulatory.

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 01 minutes 46 seconds

There were no apologies for absence received.

17 MINUTES - 9 JUNE 2026

Audio Recording – 02 minutes 02 seconds

Councillor Jon Clayden, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Claire Winchester seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 June 2026 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

N.B. Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason entered the Council Chamber at 19:33.

18 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 02 minutes 48 seconds

There was no other business notified.

19 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 02 minutes 53 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.

N.B. Councillor Nigel Mason entered the Council Chamber at 19:35.

20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 03 minutes 55 seconds

There was no public participation at this meeting.

21 URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS

Audio recording – 03 minutes 59 seconds

The Chair noted one urgent item in relation to Keystage CIC and the treatment of housing benefit overpayments. The Chair provided details for its urgency and advised that the full Urgency Notice for this item had been published on the Council website

22 CALLED-IN ITEMS

Audio recording – 05 minutes 24 seconds

There were no called-in items.

23 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Audio recording – 05 minutes 29 seconds

No questions had been submitted by Members.

24 INFORMATION NOTE: ANNUAL REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN AND ADULTS 2025-26

Audio recording – 05 minutes 34 seconds

Councillor Daniel Allen, as Executive Member for Governance, presented the Information Note entitled ‘Annual Review of Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Adults 2025-26’ and advised that:

- The Council continued to maintain robust safeguarding arrangements alongside Hertfordshire County Council and partner agencies to identify, record and refer concerns relating to children, adults with care needs, domestic abuse and more.

- 479 external safeguarding referrals were made in 2025/26 compared to 454 in the previous year, which was thought to be due to improved awareness, recording, and organisational oversight rather than an increase in incidents.
- Adult referrals had increased from 397 to 432 on the previous year, while child referrals decreased from 57 to 47.
- Revised mandatory face-to-face training, improved staff inductions and other measures had contributed to the significant progress made to strengthen safeguarding processes.
- The Safeguarding Team was fully staffed with a full-time team leader in post since April 2026.
- Maintaining effective referrals and training arrangements, responding to increasingly complex mental health cases, and supporting work around domestic abuse and modern slavery were priorities for 2026/27.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Sadie Billing

N.B. Councillor Dominic Griffiths entered the Chamber at 19:41.

In response to questions, the Safeguarding Team Leader advised that:

- Thresholds for referrals were determined by Hertfordshire County Council, and this was considered while encouraging referrals where possible, although partner agencies would sometimes inform them that referral thresholds had not been met.
- Contact details for support services were shared with individuals who did not give consent to a referral and the information from these interactions was also recorded. A referral might be reoffered to individuals that they worked with on a longer-term basis.
- Child safeguarding referrals may have decreased due to the change in process for referring domestic abuse to Survivors Against Domestic Abuse.
- Repeat referrals were monitored, and escalation to partner agencies would take place if concerns were apparent.
- It was difficult to track the progress of referrals as follow-up information was not always received from partner agencies like the Mental Health Service.
- Referrals were predominantly received from Herts Careline, with a significant number from the Housing and Homelessness Advice and Customer Services teams too.

In response to questions, the Policy & Community Manager advised that:

- There was no duplication of safeguarding services as referrals were received by the Council and ensured to be adequate before being sent to the County Council, who undertook the support and investigation work.
- Extra resource within the team had allowed the Council to build on its safeguarding processes.

The Chair thanked the Safeguarding Team for their presentation.

25 INFORMATION NOTE: WASTE AND RECYCLING UPDATE

Audio recording – 16 minutes 51 seconds

Councillor Amy Allen, as Executive Member for Environment, presented the Information Note entitled 'Waste and Recycling Contract Performance' and advised that:

- A significant increase in recycling and a reduction in residual waste had been seen one year on from the waste contract change, which had been a huge transformation project involving multiple service areas.
- Issues arising from the contract change had been resolved as quickly as possible.
- The information note included a breakdown of communal collection issues, household composting performance, recycling performance and reasons why expected increases had not occurred, as well as lessons learned from issues and actions taken to improve service reliability.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Dominic Griffiths
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Caroline McDonnell

In response to questions, the Chair advised that:

- Data on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relating to missed collections was not detailed in the information note as this was regularly reported on elsewhere.
- If a bin was not presented, it was not classified as a missed collection.

In response to questions, the Shared Service Manager – Waste & Recycling advised that:

- There had been a peak in missed garden waste bin collections around the garden waste subscription period as several residents had not renewed their subscription but reported their bin as missed.
- Missed garden waste bin collections were above the target level but they were investigating ways to reduce this through monitoring of repeat missed bins and hotspots.
- Residential management companies were invited to attend engagement programmes to ensure that communal bin stores were kept clear and accessible as identified in the report.
- Additional signage, replacement stickers for bins, and new leaflets had been provided for communal areas who had experienced collection issues.
- Each issue was investigated by Veolia in conjunction with the Waste Team as unique problems could arise and a one size fits all approach was not appropriate.
- Carboard and fibre bins in communal areas could have been larger at the start of the waste contract change in hindsight, but the Waste Team had experienced resourcing issues at the time, which had impacted service delivery and consideration of issues like this.
- Additional staff had joined the Waste Team since the start of the contract change to maintain service delivery while addressing problems.
- The shift to recycling soft plastics had been a success and smoothed the transition to a 3-weekly collection cycle, and they would continue to provide communications to residents to increase their awareness on recycling soft plastics.

- Missed bin collections had decreased through the year, and regular meetings took place with their contractors to see what contributed and how they could resolve issues.
- Lost local knowledge of collection routes resulting from the contract change had contributed to more missed bin collections initially, but this had been stabilised with new crews, continued training and tablets to assist crews with collections.
- Performance indicators within the waste contract were monitored monthly.
- National recycling rates were recorded annually, and they were aiming to be in the top 5 local authorities in England if they met their aspiration of greater than 60%, which they hoped to continue to increase every year.
- The top 10 authorities in England in terms of recycling rate operated a variety of collection arrangements and frequencies.
- The Waste Team worked in conjunction with the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP), who were responsible for recycling centres and waste disposal, and data for recycling centres could be provided by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).
- The decrease in residual waste influenced by the waste contract change had resulted in an overall decrease in costs to HCC related to waste disposal.
- Improvements would be made to food waste caddy positioning after collections.
- Garden waste subscribers received emails before the subscription period became live, and promotion on social media was also done in advance, but this process could be evaluated before the next subscription period.
- A promotion had been run by the Council on water buttes in the recent drought.
- The Council worked with HWP on Waste Aware campaigns, and a focus had been given to food waste recycling to decrease its presence in the residual waste stream, and Members were encouraged to promote this to residents.
- Allowing garden waste subscription renewals at any time had been considered, but it was better to align them with the beginning of the financial year and the subscription period of East Herts Council.
- Members refer members of the public having recycling issues to the Waste Team as soon as possible.
- Climate change had impacted waste collections as it had reduced garden waste over the summer due to little vegetation growth and made conditions for collection crews more challenging.
- Other factors outside climate change such as the Deposit Return Scheme would be also considered going forward.
- Missed collections were not tied to rural or urban areas and were mostly related to operation challenges, but the Waste Team looked at data to help improve service delivery.

Councillor Nigel Mason left the Chamber at 20:06 and returned at 20:08.

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

- Soft plastics were measured by weight as this was a national metric, which was frustrating as it did not have a tangible impact on the data for waste and recycling streams.
- The Climate Change and Sustainability Officer Group already monitored the ongoing impact of climate change across service areas, which would help the Council to adapt to climate change going forward.

In response to questions, Councillor Amy Allen advised that:

- Composting bins were not offered by the Council, but there was a link through the HWP to Getcomposting.com, which provided more information on composting.
- If residents saw that their residual waste bin was regularly overflowing despite sorting their waste into the relevant recycling bins, this could be a sign of unmet need, and residents experiencing this could be eligible to apply for a larger residual waste bin.

- Information on recycling household items from A-Z was available on the Council website.

The Chair and Councillors Martin Prescott and Ralph Muncer thanked the Shared Service Manager – Waste & Recycling and Waste Team for their work since the waste contract change.

26 COUNCILLOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Audio recording – 01 hours 0 minutes 49 seconds

Councillor Daniel Allen, as Executive Member for Governance, presented the report entitled 'Councillor Learning and Development Annual Report' and advised that:

- This was the first annual report to be presented to the Committee following the adoption of the Learning and Development Protocol in March 2026.
- A high-level overview of learning and development was provided in the report, and political Group Leaders had been sent further information on individuals who had not completed their training.
- 84% of Members had completed all compulsory training modules, with most Members completing the GDPR, Code of Conduct, Cybersecurity and Safeguarding training at one of the in-person sessions in May 2026.
- All but 1 substitute Member of the Planning Control Committee and all but 2 Members of the Licensing and Regulation Committee had completed their mandatory training to sit on the respective Committees, and they would not be able to do so until they had completed the training.
- Training records had been added to the page of every Member on the Council website to highlight training delivered by the Council, and this would be regularly updated. Members were encouraged to attend external training as well, but this would not be recorded.
- Thanks was given to all Members that had completed their training.

Councillor Nigel Mason highlighted that bringing the protocol in had been a good idea, especially the in-person training.

Councillor Martin Prescott highlighted the quality of in-person training and commended the implementation of this.

Councillor Daniel Allen advised Members to investigate extra training available through the Local Government Association as this could be useful.

Councillor Martin Prescott proposed and Councillor Claire Winchester seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Committee noted the Annual Report on Councillor Learning and Development.

(2) That the Committee discussed and provided suggestions on Councillor Learning and Development provision and increasing Member completion.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To comply with the Councillor Learning and Development Protocol as considered and endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 24 March 2026.

N.B. Following the conclusion of the item there was a break in proceedings at 20:39 and the meeting reconvened at 20:48. During the break, Councillor Dominic Griffiths left the Chamber and did not return.

27 ALLOCATION OF MHCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT

Audio recording – 01 hours 16 minutes 10 seconds

Councillor Mick Debenham, as Executive Member for Regulatory, presented the report entitled 'Allocation of MHCLG Homelessness Grant' and advised that:

- The Council had received multi-year ringfenced funding of £2.88M from MHCLG to help it meet its homelessness duties.
- Cabinet had approved the first allocation of the grant funding on 16 June.
- A 3-year settlement for all but £426K of the remaining grant funding was proposed to ensure service continuity, regardless of the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- Significant amounts were proposed to be allocated to One YMCA and Lets4U, with smaller amounts proposed for other organisations as detailed in paragraph 8.13 of the report.
- A document detailing the achievements of the housing service over the last two years had been published in the Members Information Bulletin recently.
- The grant allocation would enable the Council to best meet its Housing Strategy.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason
- Councillor Claire Winchester

In response to questions, Councillor Mick Debenham advised that the Government decision to pause LGR in Hertfordshire would have no impact on the allocation of grant funding proposed.

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

- The Council inevitably had to compete with other authorities for properties to house residents both in and outside the district, but the £4-5K detailed in paragraph 8.8 of the report was one of the benchmark figures used for their spending, while also considering value for money against individual household circumstances.
- The unallocated funding for the 28/29 financial year was less as there was likely to be underspending in the first two years, and further funding such as the Rough Sleeper Grant announced by the Government after the report had been published may become available.
- Individuals from North Herts were prioritised over individuals from outside the district, except where the Council had legal responsibilities to look after specific individuals.

Councillor Claire Winchester proposed and Councillor Nigel Mason seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet approves the funding proposals for the allocation of Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant received from MHCLG as outlined in Table 1 in paragraph 8.13 of the report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

(1) There is a need to secure housing services for homeless households in the district, including key existing services on the single homeless pathway. Adopting the recommendation at 2.1 secures the provision of high-quality local services to help those in need and provides stability into the first year of the new unitary authority.

(2) The recommendation at 2.1 is consistent with the priorities set out in the Council's Housing Strategy (2024 – 2029) and the Council Plan.

28 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2026-27

Audio recording – 01 hours 25 minutes 34 seconds

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report entitled 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2026-27' and advised that:

- The Work Programme was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.
- A site visit to Riverside Walk and Churchgate had taken place on Friday 4 September and a site visit to the Museum Collection Facility would be scheduled for October or November in due course.
- Items for the next Committee meeting included a presentation from Settle Paradigm, updates on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) future plans, Decarbonisation of Council Buildings, the Scope of the Parking Spotlight Review, and the Work Programme and Decisions Monitoring Tracker.
- Service Managers would be consulted on topics for the Crime and Disorder Matters All-Member briefing in January to share with Committee Members for consideration.
- A response to the findings of the S106 Task and Finish Group would be provided at the Cabinet meeting in November.
- Members could submit items for the Work Programme via email, in-person or through the referral form.
- Specific questions should be submitted ahead of each meeting so that responses could be coordinated with Executive Members and Officers.
- The Forward Plan published on 21 August was attached at Appendix 2 to the report, and the Decisions and Monitoring Tracker was attached at Appendix 3.
- Recommendations from the Committee on the reports for the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Funding for LGR and Churchgate had been resolved by Cabinet and Council accordingly.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor David Chalmers

In response to questions, the Chair advised that:

- They would await more information from central government regarding LGR before acting on the item scheduled for the next Committee meeting.
- Looking at costs associated with LGR should be specific to the Council, rather than County wide, and the LGR future plans item should be approached in an appropriate way.
- The item on the Work Programme related to the Climate Emergency would also focus on the Ecological Emergency declared by the Council.
- It was acknowledged that site visits were difficult for Members to attend on a weekday.

In response to questions, the Scrutiny Officer advised that:

- Officers would check on whether having an All-Member Briefing would discharge the Crime and Disorder function of the Council.
- Overview and Scrutiny Members would be responsible for the scope of the All-Member Briefing on Crime and Disorder Matters.

Councillor Claire Winchester proposed the recommendation in the report, and this was seconded by Councillor Sadie Billing.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Martin Prescott

The following points were made as part of the debate:

- The Scope of the Parking Spotlight Review should include revenue generation from car parks, enforcement and delivering on priorities.
- An item relating to Environmental Crime should be scheduled on the Work Programme as they should look at whether more resources would need to be allocated.
- Royston Learner Pool should be put into the Work Programme.
- Having an Information Note on the activities of the Planning Enforcement Team would be useful.

In response to points raised during the debate, the Scrutiny Officer advised that the scope of the Parking Spotlight Review should be targeted rather than broad as it was only a 1-day exercise.

In response to points raised during the debate, the Chair advised that:

- The draft scope for the Parking Spotlight Review would be discussed and refined at the next Committee meeting by Members.
- Scheduling Royston Learner Pool on the Work Programme would be looked at with the relevant officers.

In response to points raised during the debate, the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager advised that Planning Enforcement Matters were reported on quarterly to the Planning Control Committee, and any discussion by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this could not relate to specific enforcement matters.

In response to points raised during the debate, Councillor Nigel Mason advised that an Information Note relating to Planning Enforcement would likely result in the discussion of individual cases as it was a complicated topic but was happy for this to be investigated further.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that a six-monthly Work Programme meeting had been suggested ahead of the November Committee meeting.

In response to the Scrutiny Officer, Councillor Martin Prescott highlighted that there may be greater participation from Members if it was held remotely on another evening.

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

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Committee prioritised topics for inclusion in the Work Programme attached as Appendix 1 and, where appropriate, determined 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 2, suggested a list of items to be considered at its meetings in the coming civic year.

(3) That the Committee, noted the Decisions and Monitoring log, as attached at Appendix 3.

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.

29 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Audio recording – 01 hours 46 minutes 56 seconds

Councillor Jon Clayden proposed and Councillor Claire Winchester seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be 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).

30 PART 2 MINUTES - 18 JUNE & 2 JULY 2024, 7 JANUARY & 11 MARCH 2025 AND 9 JUNE 2026

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

Councillor Jon Clayden, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Claire Winchester seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Part 2 Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 18 June & 2 July 2024, 7 January & 11 March 2025, and 9 June 2026 were approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chair.

The meeting closed at 9.24 pm

Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
10 November 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: Decarbonisation of Council buildings

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE: Director - Environment

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Environment

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Sustainability;

1. SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this Information note for Members of Overview & Scrutiny related to project to decarbonise Council buildings.

2. STEPS TO DATE

2.1 The aim of the Decarbonisation Phase 2 project is to decarbonise (move away from direct use of fossil fuels e.g. gas) our key council buildings: Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum, the Council Offices, and to complete the decarbonisation of North Herts Leisure Centre. The project is delivered through installation of low carbon heating measures, as well as building fabric improvements and solar panels at Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum. The project runs over three years, due for completion by end of March 2028.

2.2 The project is funded by a blend of grant funding and capital budget. In April 2025, North Herts Council was awarded £1,172,000 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), delivered by the government body Salix, to support the Decarbonisation Phase 2 project. Full Council approved a capital allocation to support the project of £2,190,636 as part of the budget 2025/26 in February 2025. An additional £104,400 budget was approved in September 2025 for the appointment of the external roles of quantity surveyor and principal designer, giving a total project budget of £3,467,036.

2.3 Delivering this project is an important action in our sustainability strategy and an essential step towards achieving our 2030 net zero target for the council's operational emissions. It aligns with the council's sustainability priority.

2.4 The primary benefit of the project is an initial net annual reduction of approximately 100 tonnes of carbon emissions (tCO2e). This results from a reduction of 175-190 tCO2e related to moving away from gas use and an increase of 84 tCO2e from additional electricity use. This is around 3% of the council's emissions in 2024/25. These emissions savings will increase as the UK electricity grid moves towards clean renewable energy, in line with the UK Government's goals.

2.5 A project board was set up at the beginning of the project to provide appropriate governance and oversight. It includes senior officers and the Executive Member for Environment and the Executive Member for Resources.

2.6 The original funding application and feasibility was developed in conjunction with Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd, the main construction contractors who have delivered the leisure decarbonisation project on behalf of the Council.

2.7 An updated feasibility study was undertaken during summer 2025. At a project board meeting in September 2025, and based on advice from Varsity Consulting, it was agreed that the most cost-effective delivery approach would be to work with a specialist mechanical and electrical contractor. This was due to the project being primarily mechanical and electrical with limited building interventions, making it less complex than the leisure decarbonisation project and much smaller in scale and budget. A further feasibility study during autumn 2025 led to the following decisions by project board in November 2025:

a. to appoint a mechanical and electrical designer (Couch Perry & Wilkes LLP (CPW)), architects and principal designer (Saunders Boston Architects Ltd), and quantity surveyor and project management support (Varsity Consulting Ltd) to develop designs for Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum and the learner pool at North Herts Leisure Centre.
b. to deliver interventions at the Council Offices through existing contractors, managed by Property Services.

2.8 During 2026, designs have been developed for Hitchin Town Hall and the learner pool, working with the facilities teams at each site to address practical concerns. A planning application was submitted for North Herts Leisure Centre in April 2026, with approval awarded on 15 July 2026. Planning was submitted in August 2026 for Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum, with approval awarded on 19 October 2026 (subject to conditions). Additional cooling works, including the replacement of the chiller for North Herts Museum and installation of air conditioning in certain rooms, were included in the project scope during the summer of 2026. This was to ensure the designs and works for both cooling and decarbonisation were aligned.

2.9 Works at the council offices have been undertaken between August and October 2026 to disconnect the last remaining gas boilers and install storage and panel heaters in the toilets and landing spaces. This also involved connecting the reception area and customers services centre to the wider air conditioning serving the building. Works at the council offices are due for completion by the end of October 2026.

2.10 In September 2026, a specialist Mechanical and Electrical contractor, Briggs & Forrester Special Projects Ltd (Briggs & Forrester), was appointed to oversee detailed designs (RIBA Stage 4) for Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum and the learner pool. The designs are anticipated to be completed in late November 2026, so that an update in costs can be provided, prior to a contract award decision by Cabinet in January 2027. Subject to approval, these works would be delivered by Briggs & Forrester.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

3.1 The following points address the issues raised by Overview & Scrutiny and bring in key lessons learnt from the leisure decarbonisation project.

3.2 Timelines and avoiding slippage

3.3 This project had a three-year planned timeline. This included a planning year (2025/26) where no grant funding could be used. The additional year allowed the council sufficient time to review the planned interventions and delivery route. In turn, this allowed the project board to make decisions as set in in 2.7, to ensure the delivery approach and measures achieve best value for the council.

3.4 The priority for the current financial year, as set out in 2.8, has been to manage some of the key project risks. A particular risk is obtaining planning permission and the project

team worked towards early submission of planning applications. This was achieved for North Herts Leisure Centre learner pool with planning permission being granted in July 2026. Submission of the planning application for Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum was delayed from April to August 2026, due to the need to address practical concerns from the facilities team and to consider feedback provided from the Senior Conservation Officer regarding the potential impact on the listed Hitchin Town Hall. As the planning submission addressed the concerns raised by the Senior Conservation Officer, it helped to mitigate this planning risk with permission awarded on 19 October 2026, subject to conditions.

3.5 Prior to submission of a planning application for North Herts Leisure Centre, the project team also engaged with the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation on plans and ensured that updates to the council's license to alter the site include the phase 2 works, as well as the main leisure decarbonisation project. This early engagement helped to prevent delays. It should be noted however, that this project does not have the same legal complexities as the leisure decarbonisation project, such as permission for running cables through third party land.

3.6 A key part of scoring in the procurement of the contractors overseeing detailed designs, Briggs & Forrester, was that they could deliver the project to the required project milestones. These milestones are both internal and external and set out below:

a. Delivery of detailed designs and cost plan in time to inform recommendations on appointing contractor to deliver works for Cabinet meeting in January 2027. A decision taken in January allows the contractor sufficient time to order key equipment and spend the grant funding available for that year.
b. Subject to Cabinet decision, mobilising to be on site in February 2027 to complete works at Hitchin Town Hall and North Herts Museum by June 2027. Completing works by June 2027 allows for the grant allocation in 26/27 to be spent and for additional cooling to be in place ahead of Summer 2027.
c. Completion of works at North Herts Leisure Centre learner pool in October to November 2027. This is partly timed to meet the Salix funding criteria as the existing gas boilers need to be 10 years old when they are removed and therefore cannot be removed before Summer 2027. The works are also being timed to avoid peak use of the learner pool in September 2027.

3.7 **Procurement of contractors**

3.8 The procurement approach for this project has sought to build on learning from the leisure decarbonisation project and ensure best value for the council.

3.9 As set out in 2.7, a decision was taken to work with a specialist mechanical and electrical contractor, rather than appoint a tier one construction contractor, due to the size of the project and its focus on specialist mechanical and electrical works. This route is likely to save money overall. It was also decided that a contractor would only be brought into the project after RIBA stage 3, so that the council can continue to have close oversight of development of designs.

3.10 Three specialist roles were appointed following this decision. Firstly, it was decided that a quantity surveyor should be in place from the start of the project. Varsity Consulting were appointed to fulfil this role and have experience working with the council on the leisure decarbonisation project. Varsity also have extensive experience of supporting delivery of public sector decarbonisation projects. Secondly, CPW were appointed as mechanical and electrical designers, due to their specialist knowledge and previous experience working with the council on the leisure project. Lastly, architects Saunders

Boston were appointed due to their experience working on listed buildings, leisure facilities and decarbonisation projects.

3.11 Briggs & Forrester were appointed through a mini competition of contractors on a specialist mechanical and electrical framework. They were selected due to their relevant experience and commitment to meeting the council's requirements. They also demonstrated good value compared to other contractors on the framework.

3.12 Briggs & Forrester will oversee the development of detailed designs and provide costs for delivery of the works, building on pricing information provided during the mini competition related to overheads, profit and risk. These costs will be reviewed by the quantity surveyors, Varsity Consulting, to inform the paper to be taken to Cabinet in January 2027. Subject to Cabinet approval, Briggs & Forrester could then be appointed to deliver the works for this project using the Pagabo Framework.

3.13 **Top project risks**

3.14 The top project risks are:

a. Obtaining planning permission. This is the council's top-rated risk. Planning approval for Hitchin Town Hall being awarded on 19 October 2026 has helped to mitigate this risk but consideration of the conditions provided is also required.

b. Risk of identifying asbestos. While any asbestos identified in the museum refurbishment project of 2013-15 was removed, there is a risk that asbestos could be identified if interventions are undertaken in areas not impacted by that project. To mitigate this risk, intrusive asbestos surveys will be carried out during the detailed designs development phase.

c. Risk of additional costs being identified and the council being responsible for further costs. The appointment of the quantity surveyors from the outset as well as regular cost reviews being built into the project programme aims to mitigate this risk. A detailed cost plan will be produced at the end of RIBA Stage 4, to give a contract cost for delivery.

d. Risk of project slippage leading to issues with meeting grant funding requirements due to delays or resource capacity. The decision to bring in Varsity Consulting early has helped to bring in additional project management support for the project. Delivering to key project milestones is also a requirement of the contractor appointed to oversee detailed designs in September 2026, as set out in 3.6.

e. Risk of additional costs and / or project delays related to Distribution Network Operator approvals if additional electrical capacity is required. Hitchin Town Hall is the building where an upgrade in electrical capacity could be needed with Briggs & Forrester currently validating previous assessments.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 As outlined in 3.6, the next key project milestone following completion of detailed designs is taking a report to Cabinet at its meeting on 19 January 2027 on appointment of the contractor to deliver the works. Subject to approval at that meeting, works will commence to align to the milestones listed in 3.6.

5. APPENDICES

5.1 None

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

James Lees	Climate Change and Sustainability Project Manager	James.Lees@north-herts.gov.uk, Tel: 01462 474 183
Sarah Kingsley	Director for Environment	Sarah.kingsley@north-herts.gov.uk Tel: 01462 474 183

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Spotlight Review: Parking Strategy 2019-2031 - Draft Scope

REPORT OF: The Scrutiny Officer

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: All Priorities

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is to update Members on the progress towards establishing a Spotlight Review to assess whether North Herts Council's Parking Strategy 2019–2031 remains effective and fit for purpose considering changing travel patterns, climate priorities and development pressures.

It proposes that the core elements of the scope for the proposed group be endorsed including: the title, objectives of the review, the key lines of enquiry, timeframe and methodology.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

2.1. Review and comment on the draft scoping document as attached at Appendix 1.

2.2. Endorse the principles of the scope, attached at Appendix 1, and approve consultation with Group Leaders to appoint members and a Chair for the Spotlight Review.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To ensure that the final scoping document takes into account suggestions from Members and relevant Officers.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. At the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programming session on Tuesday 12 May 2026, Members agreed to investigate the effectiveness of the current Council Parking Strategy 2019–2031.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. This report has been submitted to the Committee prior to the appointment of any members and a Chair to the Spotlight Review, to allow for additional consultation with Members and relevant Officers.

5.2. The Director of Place and Transport Parking and Projects Manager have been consulted to help develop the scope.

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. At the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programming session on Tuesday 12 May 2026, Members agreed to investigate the effectiveness of the current Council Parking Strategy 2019–2031.

7.2. Following an internal restructure, the Place Director is recruiting for the revised Parking Services Manager post, whose responsibility will include undertaking any future updates to the Council's Parking Strategy.

7.3. Ahead of this, it has been considered by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and the Director of Place, that a Spotlight Review into the current Parking Strategy 2019-2031 would be beneficial to identify any necessary changes to meet the needs of the residents and businesses of North Hertfordshire, as well as North Herts Council itself.

7.4. The existing strategy was adopted in 2019 and is now more than halfway through its lifespan, while the context in which it operates has changed substantially.

7.5. The lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel and town-centre activity, stronger policy commitments on climate change and sustainable transport, planned development—including the Churchgate redevelopment in Hitchin—and evolving expectations from residents and businesses are creating new pressures on parking provision. It is therefore timely to test whether the strategy still reflects current practice, meets the needs of North Hertfordshire's communities and businesses, and provides a sound basis for future council decisions and investment.

7.6. Using council data and stakeholder evidence, the Spotlight review will examine implementation, parking provision and usage, local needs, financial sustainability and links to sustainable travel. The findings will inform an evidence-led update to the strategy and recommendations to Council.

7.7. The outline scope for the Spotlight review was discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on Tuesday 8 September 2026.

7.8. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has drafted the outline scope for the Spotlight review.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. Paragraph 6.2.7(u) of the Council's Constitution enables the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: *To appoint time limited task and finish groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet/Council/relevant Executive Member*.

8.2. Scrutiny reviews are known by different names depending upon the duration of the review. Often a Task and Finish Group spans several months, whereas a review that takes place in a day is called a Spotlight review or an inquiry day, but the scoping process, Member involvement and reporting process remain the same.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Overview and Scrutiny Committees were established by the Local Government Act 2000 (s.9) (amended by the Localism Act 2011).

9.2. Section 6 of the Council's Constitution set out the Council's obligations with regard to scrutiny.

9.3. A Spotlight review is an informal group, which undertakes scrutiny work, but is not covered by legislation. Section 6.2.7(u) of the Council's Constitution, however, permits the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to: *appoint time limited task and finish groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet.*

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. As detailed in Section 15, Human Resource Implications, the wider the reach, the more significant the impact on officer time in terms of report writing, data analysis and meeting attendance. Given recent funding pressures and the consequent reduction in officer numbers, significant requests to support 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.

10.3. It is proposed that to limit the financial implications and impact on other workloads associated with this review that meetings be conducted during normal working hours and, where possible, are held remotely.

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. Effective overview and scrutiny of policy, administrative, service delivery and the scope and time frame for scrutiny interventions should be considered in the 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 known equalities implications or requirements that apply to this report. Effective scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that 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 and 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. The input of relevant officers in consultation is therefore essential to ensure that the scope of the review remains deliverable with current resources.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Parking Strategy 2019 to 2031 Spotlight Review v1

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Jeevan Mann	Scrutiny Officer	jeevan.mann@north-herts.gov.uk Tel: 01462 474 295
James Lovegrove	Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager	James.Lovegrove@north-herts.gov.uk
Natasha Jindal	Governance Consultant	Natasha.Jindal@north-herts.gov.uk
Amber Smith-Howell	Policy & Strategy Officer	amber.smith-howell@north-herts.gov.uk
Tim Everitt	Performance and Risk Officer	Tim.Everitt@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1. Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on Tuesday 8 September 2026, at which the Spotlight Review was discussed - Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 8th September, 2026, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council

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DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT
SPOTLIGHT REVIEW – North Herts Council Parking Strategy

A review has been requested to ensure that the council's car parking strategy reflects current practice and meets the needs of the residents and business of North Hertfordshire, as well as North Herts Council itself.

The aim of this review is:

To assess the continuing relevance and effectiveness of the Parking Strategy 2019–2031; and

To inform the scope, direction and objectives of any future update.

Review

Background

The council's parking strategy was published in 2019 and covers the period 2019–2031, which we are now over half-way through. Moreover, the wider context has changed due to the legacy and impact of COVID-19, wider policies and strategies relating to climate change and sustainable travel, and work such as the Churchgate redevelopment project in Hitchin is applying new pressure to the existing provision. It is therefore a timely moment to review the strategy in light of these changes.

Establishing and maintaining the correct balance between overarching transport strategy, parking provision and charging presents several challenges. Underprovisioned parking, excessive charges or changes to subsidy schemes have the potential to dissuade visits to population centres, reducing the community feel associated with them and threatening the viability of local businesses. On the other hand, overprovisioned or very cheap parking may be expensive to the council in maintenance, reduce the income available to fund other services and discourage "modal shift" towards sustainable transport alternatives.

The review will consider evidence on public provision and permit parking, on-street electric car charging, inconsiderate parking and transient congestion (notably around schools), without assuming that these things occur uniformly across the district.

Key issues / areas of investigation:

- Effectiveness of the existing parking strategy and progress in implementing its actions since 2019
- Provision and usage of regulated parking since the current strategy began, including car parks, on street permit schemes, season tickets and resident permits, assessed through the available data on location, capacity, utilisation, tariffs, penalty notices and impact of free parking sessions

- Impact and suitability of parking arrangements for each major population centre in the district (Baldock, Hitchin, Knebworth, Letchworth, Royston) including local decision making, planned development, business needs, resident parking behaviours and relationship with sustainable travel

Key questions to be answered:

- What revisions to the existing parking strategy and/or its action plan needed to reflect current conditions?
- How will the council balance parking demand against the needs of existing and future residents and businesses, taking into consideration there are wider policies, strategies and sustainability modes that link into this?

Areas of investigation and scope:

1) Parking strategy and data review

a) To review the parking strategy 2019–2031, consistent with its medium-term action plan and alongside the service-led strategy

b) To review data on parking usage and income

2) Wider strategy and 'fit' review

a) To consider the key aims of wider corporate, local and national strategies and policies

3) Direct evidence gathering

a) To gather evidence from business and parish council representatives, and other stakeholders

b) To receive the perspectives of the police and county council

Exclusions

- Any function entirely under the purview of Herts County Council
- Speeding, fly-tipping, active travel and other highway-related issues

Anticipated Benefits

- Informing the scope of the planned update to the existing parking strategy
- Clarity on how short-term, demand-led and operational parking considerations should be balanced against broader, longer-term policy objectives and priorities

- Deepen understanding of parking policy among members, the public and stakeholders

Indicators of success for the Spotlight Review

- Parking strategy is up-to-date and fit for purpose (tested by making recommendations to Cabinet and/or Council and having them be taken forward)
- Members are clear on the council's parking strategy, its relationship to broader policy and priorities, and its effectiveness to date (tested by asking about confidence before and after the review)
- The council's car parks are well-utilised (tested by periodic review of data)

Link with Council Priorities

- Thriving Communities
- Accessible Services
- Responsible Growth
- Sustainability

Potential Witnesses and Contributors

- Director, service managers and transport and parking leads within the Place Directorate
- BID managers
- Other business group representatives, e.g., Herts Chamber of Commerce
- Hertfordshire Constabulary representatives
- HCC Highways representatives
- Council and county officers with responsibility for sustainability, climate policy and sustainable transport
- Town/parish council representatives
- Members of the public
- Civil Enforcement Officers

Methodology

- Review papers provided in advance; ask questions of officers in live session
- Hear evidence in person from stakeholders in live session, supplemented by written representations where needed
- Propose and discuss ideas for change in live session; finalise through written follow-up with officer support

Information documents

- Existing parking strategy 2019–2031
- Parking survey data, where available
- Recent historical data (since 2019) on sessions, parking charges and income by car park
- Recent historical data (since 2019) on parking permits issued and spaces available by zone
- Data on capacity, resident permits, penalty notices, tariffs, time limits and impact of 'free parking' windows on local businesses

Membership

- Executive Member for Place
- Witnesses/contributors as listed above

Members

- To be confirmed

Lead Support Officer

- To be confirmed

Support Officer

- Jeevan Mann, Scrutiny Officer, Jeevan.Mann@north-herts.gov.uk

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
10 NOVEMBER 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: Section 106 (S106) Task & Finish Group

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE: Director - Place

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Place

COUNCIL PRIORITY: All Priorities;

1. SUMMARY

1.1 To provide a six-month update, following the initial presentation of the Task & Finish Group recommendations to Cabinet in April 2026.

2. STEPS TO DATE

2.1 The Section 106 Task and Finish Group reported its findings and recommendations to the meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 24 March 2026. The Committee resolved that the recommendations be considered by Cabinet.

2.2 The report and its recommendations were considered by Cabinet in April 2026. The recommendations were not adopted at that meeting. Cabinet identified that additional work was needed on specific matters before being re-presented.

2.3 The Scrutiny Officer has requested a six-month update be presented at this meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

3.1 At this stage, the O&S recommendations from the s106 Task & Finish Group have not been approved by Cabinet for implementation. Cabinet resolved that further consideration of the recommendations was carried out before being re-presented for consideration.

3.2 In the approved minutes Cabinet noted, in particular

a. that the resource implications of the recommendations had not been fully considered or presented in time for consideration in the 2026/27 budget; and
b. That Chairs of the Community Forums should have been consulted.

3.3 This first observation is particularly relevant to Recommendation 2 of the Task & Finish report. This advocates using Community Partnership Officers to provide additional support to Parish Councils on planning and s106 matters.

3.4 The Task & Finish report includes service responses to Recommendation 2 from the Director: Place and Policy & Communities Manager. These both identify a specific lack of capacity and expertise in this area. This would need to be addressed for the recommendation to be successfully implemented.

3.5 Following Cabinet, further work has been ongoing between the Place and Governance directorates. A proposal for additional officer resource has been proposed for consideration in the new budget-setting cycle. The Executive Members for Place and Governance have been briefed and are supportive.

3.6 The second observation in Paragraph 3.2(b) relates primarily to Recommendations 1 & 3 of the Task & Finish group. These identify that Community Forums should assume responsibility for developing community infrastructure priorities in unparished areas.

3.7 The officer view is that this is best pursued once there is clarity on the proposed additional officer resource and the response to Recommendation 2. Firstly, to ensure any current or perceived asymmetry between parished and un-parished areas is not simply reversed in the opposite direction. Secondly, that the proposed officer resource would likely also provide the capacity to support in delivering these recommendations.

3.8 Although the O&S recommendations presently remain unapproved, its broader findings are being progressed where they coincide with planned activities and projects. For example, recent workshops have been held with Parish Councils as part of the current Local Plan consultation. These have discussed how neighbourhood priorities might be developed.

3.9 The table attached at Appendix 1 provides a summary of work that has taken place against the O&S recommendations (notwithstanding their current status).

3.10 A short update was also provided to the internal, cross-party Strategic Planning Project Board in September. This included representatives from the three main political groups represented on the Council.

3.11 At the Cabinet meeting in April, it was suggested in debate that elements of the recommendations requiring additional resource could be complicated by the prospect of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). At the time of that meeting, it was assumed that new unitary authorities could be in place from April 2028.

3.12 The delay to the LGR programme for Hertfordshire gives additional space to proactively consider the implications of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations through the current budget planning cycle. This is outlined above.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 Member budget workshops are due to take place in November. The outcomes of these will inform which proposals are taken forward through the committee process. This will culminate in Full Council being asked to approve the 2027/28 Budget in February 2027.

4.2 It may be possible to re-present the Task & Finish recommendations to Cabinet in early 2027 if officers have confidence in the relevant budget bid being supported. Alternately, it may be more appropriate to re-present the recommendations following Full Council's consideration of the budget to provide certainty.

4.3 Other projects and business as usual activities which may contribute – either directly or indirectly to the Task & Finish recommendations – will continue to progress.

5. APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix 1 – Update on Task & Finish Recommendations

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

Nigel Smith	**Director - Place**	**nigel.smith@north-herts.gov.uk, Tel: 01462 474 847**
Reuben Ayavoo	Policy & Communities Manager	Reuben.ayaboo@north-herts.gov.uk

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Section 106 Task and Finish Group, report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, March 2026

7.2 Section 106 Task and Finish Group, report to Cabinet, April 2026

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Overview & Scrutiny s106 Task & Finish – update

The table below updates on the T&F recommendations. Although, as above, these are yet to be formally approved, there are areas where relevant work is progressing under 'business as usual' or other, approved workstreams. Matters directly related to the April 2026 Cabinet debate that require progress or resolution before any future report back are highlighted.

T&F Recommendation	Update – November 2026	Action(s)
Recommendation 1: Development of 'Community Infrastructure Priorities' • Parish Councils within North Hertfordshire develop a list of Community Infrastructure Priorities. • In unparished areas of the District, we recommend Community Forums assume responsibility for developing these priorities. • Recommend work is undertaken to investigate the feasibility of formalising this process as part of the updated North Hertfordshire Local Plan.	Initial scoping consultation on the Local Plan completed Spring 2026. This set out information on process and key consultees – including Parish Councils and was also presented to Community Forums. The ongoing Local Plan 'Content and Evidence' consultation asks more detailed questions and provides a means of continuing to promote this approach. Sessions were held in October 2026 with Parish Councils grouped by broad geography. The Council will have to set out infrastructure needs to support the Local Plan in any event and this will be prepared in a way that allows it to be viewed by area.	• Continue to engage with Parish Councils on an ongoing basis through Local Plan – including consideration of any responses to contents & evidence consultation • Progress infrastructure planning for the Local Plan in a way which allows area-based presentation of information • Consultation with Area Forum chairs (in the round and once approach to recommendation 2 is more resolved)
Recommendation 2: Utilisation of Community Partnership Officers • Community Partnership Officers are trained and utilised to support Parishes in the completion of the Section 106 consultation form and act as a bridge	Request for additional officer resource to sit within the Policy & Community service is being progressed through the budget setting cycle for 2027/8.	• Continue to progress through budget process including Member input through workshops prior to formal committees.

T&F Recommendation	Update – November 2026	Action(s)
between Parish Councils and the District Council as the Planning Authority	There will need to be a clear separation between the roles of existing officers who support partnership working, signpost community groups and facilitate engagement as opposed to providing technical Planning advice on S106 that this proposed role seeks to do. The proposed role will also have a wider remit to support other directorates including Environment & Commercial on work and projects with planning implications or overlaps.	
Recommendation 3: S106 Training for Parish Councils • In unparished areas, Community Partnership Officers work with the Chair and Members of Community Forums to complete the Section 106 consultation form. • As part of the annual planning training offered to Parish Councils, greater emphasis is placed on S106 process and how Parishes can fully engage with the consultation.	First part of the recommendation is linked to consideration of Recommendation 2. Parish Council information sessions were held in October 2026 to update on planning matters, including the new Local Plan and planning for community needs.	• As above • Continue to ensure co-ordinated approach to consultations, briefings and meetings
Recommendation 4: Improvement of Communication and Reporting • North Hertfordshire District Council Section 106 webpage is updated to include, but not limited to, details of what community projects have been delivered	As per original report, information is more regularly published on the website. It is acknowledged that this can be 'dry' or difficult to find and better signposting or wayfinding within the Council website would be beneficial.	• Add case studies of projects delivered with s106 funding to reporting or on website • Understand scope to update or amend website in terms of general structure and navigation

T&F Recommendation	Update – November 2026	Action(s)
and where, frequently asked questions, an overview of the process and the timeframes which should be expected, restrictions on what Section 106 contributions cannot be spent or and a named contact for more information on Section 106 in North Hertfordshire. • Reinstatement of the Section 106 report for each area of the District (Southern Rural, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Baldock and Villages and Royston and Villages).	The Director: Place response to the second element of the recommendation was that the increased transparency and publication of information on the website should allow interested parties to 'self serve' relevant information. Awaiting Cabinet re-consideration of the task & finish recommendations before proceeding.	principles (subject to resource) with relevant teams
Recommendation 5: Improvement of County Councillor Engagement • That the Executive Member for Place in conjunction with the Chair of the Task and Finish Group, write to Hertfordshire County Council to request that their practices for Section 106 funding for developments in North Hertfordshire include engagement with the relevant County Councillor for the division impacted. **Recommendation 6: Circulation of Hertfordshire County Council Infrastructure Prospectus** • That the Executive Member for Place in conjunction with the Chair of the Task and Finish group, write to Hertfordshire	Hertfordshire County Council participated in the task and finish group and were aware of 'direction of travel' and recommendations. These recommendations require formal approval by Cabinet which, if resolved, would trigger a letter from the Executive Member and Chair of the T&F Group requesting a review of processes (presumably on a county-wide basis for consistency). HCC Officers have advised they intend to begin publishing the Infrastructure Prospectus before the end of 2026. This is intended as a web-based resource which will be updated iteratively.	

T&F Recommendation	Update – November 2026	Action(s)
County Council to request that the distribution of the Infrastructure Prospectus includes relevant Members and Officers at North Hertfordshire District Council		
Recommendation 7: Developer Engagement with Communities • There is an expectation that developers engage and consult with the community as early in the planning process as possible, including at the pre-application stage, and following this engagement developers should clearly demonstrate to the District Council either as part of a planning application or supplementary document, the feedback received from the community and the amendments, if any, that have been made in response to this feedback. We also recommend this expectation is formalised as part of the updated North Hertfordshire Local Plan.	The Director: Place response identified that Local Plans cannot set formal requirements for pre-application engagement as this is a 'process' matter that isn't legislated for. The September 2026 meeting of Cabinet approved a Communications & Engagement Strategy for the new Local Plan. The Cabinet report sets out an approach to retaining residual guidance which remains of relevance on, for example, Development Management and Neighbourhood Plans etc.	• Implement Cabinet recommendations around engagement following conclusion of current Local Plan consultation exercise
Recommendation 8: Developer Contributions paid for 9 properties or less • That as part of the updated North Hertfordshire Local Plan, a mechanism is developed to ensure developers are liable to pay a contribution towards community infrastructure and/or improvements for those developments of 9 homes or less.	This continues to be progressed through the Local Plan. Viability work has been commissioned.	• Communicate outcomes with Members as Local Plan work progresses

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2026-27

REPORT OF: SCRUTINY OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: All Priorities;

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2026-27 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 1 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 2, suggests a list of items to be considered at its meetings in the coming civic year.

2.3. That the Committee, note the Decisions and Monitoring log, as attached at Appendix 3.

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 In accordance with best practice Executive Members are invited to present reports that fall under their remit and to make presentations on specific issues that the Committee wish to consider.

7.2 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.

7.3 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, which are discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee at monthly meetings with the Scrutiny Officer. Appendix 1 contains the work programme for 2026-27.

8.2 When considering additional topics, Members should assess likely impact and consider prioritisation of items to ensure that the most appropriate items are taken forward to the work programme.

8.3 A Work Programme Mid-Year Review session has been arranged for Tuesday 17 November 2026 via Zoom, which will allow Members to suggest topics for inclusion at future meetings.

Forward Plan

8.4 The Forward Plan published in October can be found at Appendix 2. Members can view currently published forward plans here: Browse plans - Cabinet, 2026 | North Herts Council

8.5 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.

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 15: Human Resource Implications of this report, 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 service delivery and other projects.

10.2 Although not significant, a committee attendance allowance of £25.17 per Officer per evening meeting can be claimed by officers in attendance. This is in addition to providing time off in lieu or overtime as an alternative.

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 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 Council Plan objectives might, therefore, be potentially negatively impacted.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix 1 – Work Programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2026-2027

16.2 Appendix 2 – Forward Plan (October 2026)

16.3 Appendix 3 – Overview and Scrutiny Decisions and Monitoring Log

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Jeevan Mann	Scrutiny Officer	Jeevan.mann@north-herts.gov.uk Tel: 01462 474 295
James Lovegrove	Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager	James.Lovegrove@northherts.gov.uk
Natasha Jindal	Governance Consultant	Natasha.Jindal@north-herts.gov.uk

Tim Everitt	Performance and Risk Officer	Tim.Everitt@north-herts.gov.uk
Ellie Hollingsworth	Policy & Strategy Team Leader	Ellie.hollingsworth@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 Previous Reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Forward Plans.

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KEY
Items identified for work programme
Annual reports
Scrutiny reports
Completed

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2026-27

MEETING DATE	ITEMS AT MEETING	EXECUTIVE / REPORT AUTHOR
Tuesday 9 June 2026	• Annual O&S Report • Annual 3C's Update • LGR Budget • Churchgate • Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	• Councillor Claire Winchester • Councillor Val Bryant • Councillor Ian Albert • Councillor Tamsin Thomas • Scrutiny Officer
Tuesday 8 September 2026	• Annual review of Safeguarding • Councillor Learning and Development Annual Report • Allocation of MHCLG Homelessness Grant Funding • Waste Update • Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	• Councillor Daniel Allen • Councillor Daniel Allen • Councillor Mick Debenham • Councillor Amy Allen • Scrutiny Officer
Tuesday 10 November 2026	• Settle / Paradigm • Decarbonisation of Council Buildings • Draft scope for Parking Services spotlight review • Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	• Settle / Paradigm • Councillor Amy Allen • Councillor Jon Clayden • Scrutiny Officer
Tuesday 05 January 2027	• Community Safety Report • Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	• Councillor Mick Debenham • Scrutiny Officer
Tuesday 02 February 2027	• Climate Emergency update • Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	• Councillor Amy Allen • Scrutiny Officer
Tuesday 9 March 2027	• RIPA • Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	• Councillor Daniel Allen • Scrutiny Officer

Spotlight Review

- Parking – to be scheduled

Task and Finish Group

- None Scheduled

Site Visit

- Museum Collection Facility – to be scheduled

Briefing

- Crime and Disorder Matter (topic tbc) – January 2027

Candidate items to be scheduled:

- To be confirmed

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 23 October 2026

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
Food Sampling Policy		Cabinet	24 Nov 2026	Cabinet Report to consider the Food Sampling Policy	Frank Harrison, Environmental Health Manager Tel: 01462 474 861 frank.harrison@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Churchgate Shopping Centre - Historic Rent and Service Charge Arrears		Cabinet	24 Nov 2026	Churchgate Shopping Centre - Historic Rent and Service Charge Arrears	Philip Doggett, Principal Estates Surveyor Tel: 01462 474 141 philip.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Adoption of Homelessness Action Plan and grant allocations		Cabinet	24 Nov 2026	Adoption of Homelessness Action Plan and grant allocations	Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager Tel: 01462 474 250 martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6

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
Appointing contractor for Decarbonisation Phase 2 Project		Cabinet	19 Jan 2027	Appointing contractor for Decarbonisation Phase 2 Project	Sarah Kingsley, Director - Environment Tel: 01462 474 552 sarah.kingsley@north-herts.gov.uk, James Lees, Climate Change and Sustainability Project Manager Tel: 01462 474 183 James.Lees@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Garden Waste Charging 27/28		Cabinet	19 Jan 2027	Garden Waste Charging 27/28	Jeanette Lowden, Shared Service Manager - Waste jeanette.lowden@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Royston Learner Pool Construction Contract award		Cabinet	19 Jan 2027	Royston Learner Pool Construction Contract award	Sarah Kingsley, Director - Environment Tel: 01462 474 552 sarah.kingsley@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
2026-27 Q2 Council Delivery Plan Update		Cabinet	19 Jan 2027	2026-27 Q2 Council Delivery Plan Update	Rachel Cooper, Controls, Risk and Performance Manager Tel: 01462 474 606 rachel.cooper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6

DECISIONS

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
ALLOCATION OF MHCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT			
4	RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet approves the funding proposals for the allocation of Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant received from MHCLG as outlined in Table 1 in paragraph 8.13 of the report. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: (1) There is a need to secure housing services for homeless households in the district, including key existing services on the single homeless pathway. Adopting the recommendation at 2.1 secures the provision of high-quality local services to help those in need and provides stability into the first year of the new unitary authority. (2) The recommendation at 2.1 is consistent with the priorities set out in the Council's Housing Strategy (2024 – 2029) and the Council Plan. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting - Tuesday 8th September 2026 @ 7:30pm	RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the funding proposals for the allocation of Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant received from the MHCLG as outlined in Table 1 in paragraph 8.13. REASONS FOR DECISIONS: (1) There is a need to secure housing services for homeless households in the district, including key existing services on the single homeless pathway. Adopting the recommendation at 2.1 secures the provision of high-quality local services to help those in need and provides stability into the first year of the new unitary authority. (2) The recommendation at 2.1 is consistent with the priorities set out in the Council's Housing Strategy (2024 – 2029) and the Council Plan. Cabinet Tuesday 22nd September 2026 @7:30pm	Open

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