

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices,
Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City
on Thursday, 6th February, 2020 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Jean Green (Chair), Terry Tyler (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Daniel Allen, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Ruth Brown, Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, George Davies, Steve Deakin-Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Morgan Derbyshire, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Ian Moody, Michael Muir, Lisa Nash, Sue Ngwala, Sam North, Helen Oliver, Sean Prendergast, Mike Rice, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Val Shanley, Carol Stanier, Martin Stears-Handscomb, Claire Strong, Kay Tart, Richard Thake and Michael Weeks

IN ATTENDANCE: David Scholes (Chief Executive), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)

ALSO PRESENT: At the commencement of the meeting approximately 2 members of the public, including registered speakers.

64 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 1 second

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kate Aspinwall, David Barnard, Bill Davidson, Faye Frost, Gary Grindal, Gerald Morris and Tom Tyson.

65 MINUTES - 16 JANUARY 2020

Audio Recording – 1 minute 29 seconds

It was moved by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb, seconded by Councillor Paul Clark and:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 16 January 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair.

66 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 38 seconds

There was no other business notified.

67 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 45 seconds

(1) Mobile Phones

The Chair asked those present to ensure that mobile phones were turned off or the ring tone and other sounds muted.

(2) Climate Emergency

Members were reminded that this Council had declared a Climate Emergency. This was a serious decision and meant that, as this was an emergency, all of us, officers and Members have that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.

(3) Audio Recording

The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council policy this meeting was being audio recorded. Members of the public and the press may use their devices to film/photograph, or do a sound recording of the meeting.

(4) Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded to make declarations of interest before an item, the detailed reminder about this and speaking rights was set out under Chair's Announcements on the agenda.

(5) Standing to speak

The Chair reminded Members that, as resolved at the last meeting of Full Council, the requirement to stand when speaking was removed from the Constitution.

(6) Refreshments

The Chair invited all Councillors to refreshments after the meeting in Committee Rooms 2/3.

(7) Comfort break

The Chair advised that, If the meeting went on beyond 9pm, she would call a 5 minute comfort break. Please remain in the room prior to this to ensure you can vote.

(8) Rules of Debate

The Chair reminded Members that, in accordance with the Constitution please could Members ensure that no speech exceeded five minutes without the consent of the Chair.

She advised that she had however given prior permission to the Executive Member for Finance and IT to exceed this limit for his speech regarding the Budget.

(9) Civic Awards Ceremony

The Chair reminded Members that her Civic Dinner and Awards Ceremony was fast approaching on 28 February 2020 at Hitchin Town Hall.

All Members had received an invitation and were encouraged to reply as soon as possible.

The Chair advised that her charity this year was North Herts and Stevenage Parkinsons. Any funds raised would benefit the whole District, although a request would be made for some of the money to be allocated to the Royston Branch.

68 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 5 minutes 38 seconds

There were no public presentations.

69 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 5 minutes 43 seconds

6a Item Referred from Cabinet: 28 January 2020 – Property Acquisition and Development Strategy

The Executive Member for Enterprise and Co-operative Development presented the referral from Cabinet regarding the Property Acquisition and Development Strategy together with the following appendices:

- Report considered by Cabinet on 28 January 2020;
- Appendix A - Property Acquisition and Development Strategy;
- Appendix B - Appendix 1 of Property Acquisition and Development Strategy;
- Appendix C - Appendix 2 of Property Acquisition and Development Strategy;
- Appendix D - Appendix 3 of Property Acquisition and Development Strategy;
- Appendix E - Appendix 4 of Property Acquisition and Development Strategy.

He advised that Cabinet had recommended that:

“That the Property Acquisition & Development Strategy, including Appendices, be approved.”

It was moved by Councillor Keith Hoskins, seconded by Councillor Helen Oliver and:

RESOLVED: That the Property Acquisition & Development Strategy, including Appendices, be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To give effect to the Property Acquisition & Development Strategy so NHDC has in place a clear basis for pursuing property opportunities that are for the purposes of its functions or the benefit, improvement or development of its area;
- (2) To put in place a framework of robust and practical guiding principles that apply governance and rigorous appraisal to property acquisition and development decisions by NHDC, in order to safeguard the necessary capital expenditure and taxpayers' resources.

6b Item Referred From Cabinet: 28 January 2020 – Revenue Budget 2020-2021

RESOLVED: That the referral from Cabinet regarding the Revenue Budget 2020-2021 be taken with Item 8 (Minute 71 refers).

6c Item Referred from Cabinet: 28 January 2020 – Investment Strategy

RESOLVED: That the referral from Cabinet regarding the Investment Strategy be taken with Item 9 (Minute 72 refers).

70 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020/21

Audio recording – 8 minutes 31 seconds

The Leader of the Council presented the report entitled Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 together with the following appendix:

- Appendix 1 - North Herts District Council Draft Pay Policy Statement 2020/21.

He advised that Paragraph 3.11 of the Statement should be amended to read “Returning Officer/counting officer fees are paid by the parish, North Herts District Council or the Government and are payable to the Returning Officer in respect of Elections and referendums.”

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb, seconded by Councillor Paul Clark and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Paragraph 3.11 of the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 be amended to read “Returning Officer/counting officer fees are paid by the parish, North Herts District Council or the Government and are payable to the Returning Officer in respect of Elections and referendums.”;
- (2) That, subject to the amendment in (1) above, the 2020/21 Pay Policy Statement attached at Appendix 1 be endorsed;
- (3) That revisions made in year to the Pay Policy Statement, be delegated to the Corporate Human Resources Manager, in consultation with the Leader. Revisions which might arise in the year include changes in structure, changes to employment benefits, subsequent pay awards agreed nationally and new legislative requirements.

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

71 REVENUE BUDGET 2020/21

Audio recording – 12 minutes 42 seconds

The Chair advised that the recommendations in the referral from Cabinet regarding the Revenue Budget 2020/21 mirrored those in the report considered by Council.

The Leader of the Council made an introductory speech regarding the Revenue Budget 2020/21 (Attached as Appendix A to the Minutes).

The Executive Member for Finance and IT gave a detailed speech regarding the report entitled Revenue Budget 2020/21 and the following appendices (Attached as Appendix B to the Minutes), following which he called for a recorded vote.

- Appendix A - Financial Risks;
- Appendix B - Revenue Budget Savings and Investments;
- Appendix C - Budget Summary 2020-24.

Councillor Adem Ruggiero-Cakir sought advice regarding his ability to vote regarding R7 in the Revenue Budget report.

The Service Director- Legal and Community and Service Director – Resources gave advise as requested.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Sam North;
- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Tony Hunter;
- Councillor Richard Thake;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Ian Albert.

It was proposed by Councillor Ian Albert. Seconded by Councillor Sam North.

The recommendations were then put to the meeting and it was a recorded vote.

RESOLVED:

For:

Councillors: Ian Albert, Daniel Allen, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Ruth Brown, Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Steve Jarvis, Ian Mantle, Lisa Nash, Sue Ngwala. Sam North, Helen Oliver, Sean Prendergast, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Carol Stanier, Martin Stears-Handscorn, Kay Tart and Terry Tyler.

TOTAL FOR 23

Against:

Councillors: George Davies, Steve Deakin-Davies, Morgan Derbyshire, Jean Green, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Tony Hunter, David Levett, Ian Moody, Michael Muir, Mike Rice, Val Shanley, Claire Strong, Richard Thake and Michael Weeks.

TOTAL AGAINST 15

RESOLVED:

- That the transfers from reserves to the General Fund as detailed in 8.4.3 to 8.4.4 be approved;
- That the forecast savings target for future years be noted and the approach to balancing the budget, as detailed in paragraph 8.9.4 be confirmed;
- That the position on the Collection Fund and how it will be funded be noted;
- That the position relating to the General Fund balance and that due to the risks identified a minimum balance of £2.45 million is recommended be noted;

- That the savings and investments as detailed in Appendix B be approved;
- That a net expenditure budget of £15.124m, as detailed in Appendix C be approved;
- That a Council Tax increase of £5 for 2020/21 for a band D property, with other increases pro-rata to this (as per the Medium Term Financial Strategy) be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that all the relevant factors are taken in to consideration when arriving at the proposed Council Tax precept for 2020/21;
- (2) To ensure that Cabinet recommends a balanced budget to Full Council on 6 February 2020.

72 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (INTEGRATED CAPITAL AND TREASURY)

Audio recording – 1 hour 10 minutes 51 seconds

The Chair advised that the recommendations in the referral from Cabinet regarding the Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury) mirrored those in the report considered by Council.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury) together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A - Investment Strategy;
- Appendix A1 - Full Capital Programme 2020-21;
- Appendix A2 - New Capital Schemes and 2020-21.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn;
- Councillor Sam North;
- Councillor Steve Deakin-Davies
- Councillor Ian Albert.

It was proposed by Councillor Ian Albert, seconded by Councillor Sam North and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Investment Strategy (as attached at Appendix A), including the capital programme and prudential indicators be adopted;
- (2) That the four clauses in relation to the Code of Practice on Treasury Management (as detailed in paragraphs 8.11 to 8.16) be adopted.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that the capital programme meets the Council's objectives and officers can plan the implementation of the approved schemes;

- (2) To ensure the Council's compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management, the Local Government Act 2003, statutory guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the CIPFA Prudential Code. As well as determining and managing the Councils risk appetite in respect of investments.

73 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Audio recording – 1 hour 33 minutes 40 seconds

There were no notices of motions considered.

74 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Audio recording – 1 hour 33 minutes 43 seconds

There were no questions from Members submitted.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm

Chair