

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held as a Virtual Meeting
on Thursday, 11th February, 2021 at 7.30 pm

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), Peter Lapham (Interim Property Consultant) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)

80 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

Audio recording – 41 seconds

The Chair welcomed everyone to this virtual Council meeting that was being conducted with Members and Officers at various locations, communicating via audio/video and online. There was also the opportunity for the public and press to listen to and view proceedings.

The Chair invited the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager to explain how proceedings would work and to confirm that Members and Officers were in attendance.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager undertook a roll call to ensure that all Members and Officers could hear and be heard and gave advice regarding the following:

The meeting was being streamed live onto You Tube and recorded via Zoom.

Extracts from the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol was included with the agenda and the full version was available on the Council's website which included information regarding:

- Live Streaming;
- Noise Interference;
- Rules of Debate:
- Voting and
- Part 2 Items

Members were requested to ensure that they were familiar with the Protocol.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager reminded Members that, due to a software update by Zoom, our usual voting procedure had been disrupted and would no longer work as required, therefore all voting would take place using raise hand function.

The Chair of the Council, Councillor Terry Tyler started the meeting proper.

81 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 5 minutes 43 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Faye Frost, Ian Moody, Val Shanley and Kay Tart.

Councillor George Davies had apologised that he would be arriving late for the meeting.

82 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 6 minutes 16 seconds

There was no other business notified.

83 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 6 minutes 20 seconds

(1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council policy this meeting was being audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recordings would be available to view on Mod.gov and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel.

(2) 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 had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.

(3) 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.

(4) The Chair reminded Members that the normal procedure rules in respect of debate and times to speak would apply:

No speeches may be made after the mover has moved a proposal and explained the purpose of it until the motion has been seconded.

When seconding a motion or amendment, a Member may reserve their speech until later in the debate.

In accordance with the Constitution please can Members ensure that no speech exceeds five minutes without the consent of the Chair.

(5) The Chair advised that, if the meeting was still in progress at 9pm, he would call a comfort break at an appropriate place.

(6) The Chair informed Members that he would be taking Items 12 and 13 prior to Item 9.

84 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 9 minutes 15 seconds

There were no presentations by members of the public.

85 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 9 minutes 20 seconds

6a - Referral from Cabinet - 26.01.21 - Revenue Budget 2021-22

The Chair advised that Referral 6a would be considered with Item 8 (Minute 87 refers).

6b - Referral from Cabinet - 26.01.21 - Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury)

NB: The Chair advised that he would be taking Referral 6b after Item 8 (Minute 87 refers).

Audio recording – 2 hours 39 minutes 22 seconds

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the referral from Cabinet regarding Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury).

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Tony Hunter;
- Councillor David Levett.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, Councillor Sam North seconded and it was:

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 8.12 to 8.17) 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.

86 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

Audio recording – 9 minutes 50 seconds

The Leader of the Council presented the report entitled Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 together with the following appendix:

- Appendix 1 - North Herts District Council Draft Pay Policy Statement 2021/22.

Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn proposed, Councillor Paul Clark seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the 2021/22 Pay Policy Statement attached at Appendix 1 be endorsed;

- (2) That revisions made in year to the Pay Policy Statement be delegated to the Service Director - Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council. 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.

87 REVENUE BUDGET 2021/22

Audio recording – 14 Minutes 40 seconds

The Chair advised that he would be inviting Councillor Stears-Handscomb (Leader of the Council) to speak, following which Councillor Ian Albert (Executive Member for Finance and IT) would present the report. He had agreed that Councillor Albert may speak for more than 5 minutes regarding the Budget.

The Chair stated that, Members were aware that this would be a recorded vote and that he proposed taking all of the recommendations as one, unless he heard to the contrary.

The Leader of the Council made an introductory speech regarding the Revenue Budget 2021/22 (Attached as Appendix A to the Minutes).

The Executive Member for Finance and IT gave a detailed speech regarding the report entitled Revenue Budget 2021/22 and the following appendices (Attached as Appendix B to the Minutes), he also directed Members attention to the referral from Cabinet (6a).

- Appendix A – Financial Risks 2021/22;
- Appendix B – Revenue Budget Savings and Investments;
- Appendix C – Budget Summary 2021–2026;
- Appendix D – Budget Summary 2021–2026 (£10 Council Tax increase 2021/22).

The Executive Member for Finance and IT advised that the following recommendations contained in the report should be amended as follows:

Recommendation 2.5 to read:

Approves a net expenditure budget of £18.441m, as detailed in Appendix C.

Recommendation 2.6 to read:

Approves a Council Tax increase by the maximum allowed without the need for a local referendum in 2021/22(as per the Medium Term Financial Strategy). This is likely to be an amount of £5 for a band D property, with other increases pro-rata to this.

He then called for a recorded vote.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, and Councillor Sam North seconded the recommendations contained in the report, as amended.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Michael Weeks;
- Councillor Gerald Morris;
- Councillor Terry Hone;
- Councillor Tony Hunter;
- Councillor Paul Clark'

- Councillor Carol Stanier;
- Councillor Sam North;
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg;
- Councillor Michael Muir.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT, Service Director – Resources and Managing Director responded to questions.

Councillor Simon Harwood proposed, and Councillor David Levett seconded the following amendment:

“That, in consultation with Officers, fellow councillors and Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, a 3 year pilot programme be created to look at the creation of a rewilding scheme, to introduce ‘nature highways’ and / or ‘bee and wildflower corridors’ through North Hertfordshire. This pilot will focus / look at particularly community engagement - getting schools, groups and other members of the community directly involved in the project. This approach from elsewhere has been shown as key to success for generating long-lasting momentum and building a strong sense of community ownership.

That £150k, over three years, be added to the budget for this purpose. This funding will allow us, subject to agreement, to assign a dedicated person (part-time) to coordinate action, engage local communities and to manage the project and to undertake the purchase of the necessary material.”

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate regarding the proposed amendment:

- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Gerald Morris;
- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb;
- Councillor Sam Collins;
- Councillor Helen Oliver;
- Councillor Simon Harwood;
- Councillor Daniel Allen.

Councillor David Levett called for a recorded vote on the proposed amendment.

The result of the recorded vote on the proposed amendment was:

For: Councillors: David Barnard, John Bishop, George Davies, Steve Deakin-Davies, Morgan Derbyshire, Jean Green, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Tony Hunter, David Levett, Jim McNally, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Mike Rice, Claire Strong, Richard Thake, Terry Tyler and Michael Weeks.

Total: 18

Against: Councillors: Ian Albert, Kate Aspinwall, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Ruth Brown, Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Gary Grindal, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Steve Jarvis, Ian Mantle, Lisa Nash, Sue Ngwala, Helen Oliver, Sean Prendergast, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Carol Stanier, Martin Stears-Handscomb and Tom Tyson.

Total: 22

Abstain:

Councillors: Daniel Allen and Sam North.

Total: 2

Therefore the motion was lost.

NB: The Chair announced a comfort break at 9.14 pm.

NB: The meeting resumed at 9.26pm

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager undertook a roll call to ensure that all present could hear and be heard.

Councillor David Levett proposed, and Councillor Richard Thake seconded the following amendment:

“That an allocation of £100k is made to SADA to assist with providing safe havens for those suffering from domestic abuse by providing longer term security against homelessness.”

The following Members took part in the debate regarding the proposed amendment:

- Councillor Sam North;
- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Gary Grindal;
- Councillor Ian Albert.

Councillor David Levett, with the agreement of Councillor Richard Thake, agreed to withdraw the proposed amendment, providing it remained on the table.

The following Members took part in the debate regarding the recommendations contained in the report:

- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor George Davies;
- Councillor Ian Albert.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT advised that the recommendation contained in the referral from Cabinet regarding an additional £50k payable to Citizens Advice North Herts had been included at line R12 of Appendix B and Recommendation 2.5 of the report.

The Chair advised that a recorded vote would be taken on recommendations 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 contained in the report and separate recorded vote would be taken on recommendation 2.6 contained in the report. The results of these recorded votes were as follows:

Recorded Vote regarding recommendations 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 contained in the report:

For:

Councillors: Ian Albert, Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Ruth Brown, Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Gary Grindal, 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-Handscob, Terry Tyler and Tom Tyson.

Total: 25

Against:

Councillors: David Barnard, John Bishop, George Davies, Steve Deakin-Davies, Morgan Derbyshire, Jean Green, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Tony Hunter, David Levett, Jim McNally, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Claire Strong, Richard Thake and Michael Weeks.

Total: 16

Abstain:

Councillor Mike Rice.

Total: 1

Recorded Vote regarding recommendation 2.6 contained in the report:

For:

Councillors: Ian Albert, Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Ruth Brown, Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Gary Grindal, 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-Handscomb, Terry Tyler and Tom Tyson.

Total: 25

Against:

Councillors: David Barnard, John Bishop, George Davies, Steve Deakin-Davies, Morgan Derbyshire, Jean Green, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Tony Hunter, David Levett, Jim McNally, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Mike Rice, Claire Strong, Richard Thake and Michael Weeks.

Total: 17

Abstain:

Total: Nil

Therefore it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Collection Fund and how it will be funded be noted;
- (2) That the position relating to the General Fund balance and that due to the risks identified a minimum balance of £3.85 million is recommended be noted;
- (3) That the savings and investments as detailed in Appendix B be approved;
- (4) That a net expenditure budget of £18.441m, as detailed in Appendix C be approved
- (5) That a Council Tax increase by the maximum allowed without the need for a local referendum in 2021/22(as per the Medium Term Financial Strategy) be approved. This is likely to be an amount of £5 for a band D property, with other increases pro-rata to this.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that all relevant factors are considered in arriving at a proposed budget and Council Tax level for 2021/22, to be considered by Full Council on 11 February 2021.
- (2) To ensure that Cabinet recommends a balanced budget to Full Council on 11 February 2021.

88 LAND AT TEMPLARS LANE, PRESTON

Audio recording – 3 hours 24 minutes 5 seconds

NB This Item was considered following the Part 2 Item of the same name (Minute 92 refers)

The Committee Member and Scrutiny Manager undertook a roll call to ensure that all present could hear and be heard.

Councillor Sean Prendergast declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in that he worked for one of the housing associations being discussed. He advised that he would take no part in the debate or vote and, on the advice of the Service Director – Legal and Community, left the meeting.

The Executive Member for Enterprise and Co-operative Development presented the report entitled Land at Templars Way, Preston together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A - Site Plan;
- Appendix B - Marketing Brochure and Estates Gazette Advertisement.

Councillor Keith Hoskins proposed, Councillor Paul Clark seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the terms for the sale of this land be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To release surplus property to provide a financial receipt to help fund the capital programme;
- (2) To enable the development of new homes in North Hertfordshire.

89 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Audio recording – 3 hours 29 minutes 10 seconds

No motions had been submitted.

90 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Audio recording – 3 hours 29 minutes 17 seconds

No questions had been submitted by Members.

91 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Audio recording – 2 hours 47 minutes 23 seconds

Councillor Terry Tyler proposed, Councillor Keith Hoskins seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

92 LAND AT TEMPLARS LANE, PRESTON

NB: This item was not audio recorded or filmed.

NB This Item was considered prior to the Part 1 Item of the same name (Minute 88 refers)

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager undertook a roll call to ensure that all present could hear and be heard.

The Executive Member for Enterprise and Co-operative Development presented the report entitled Land at Templars Lane, Preston together with the following appendices:

- Appendix C - Summary of all Offers;
- Appendix D - Analysis of Final Offers.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn;
- Councillor Gary Grindal;
- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Michael Muir;
- Councillor Richard Thake.

In response to queries from Councillor Michael Muir and Sean Prendergast the Service Director – Legal and Community gave advice regarding declarations of Interest.

Councillor Sean Prendergast declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in that he worked for one of the housing associations being discussed and left the breakout room.

The debate continued.

Questions were answered by the Executive Member for Enterprise and Co-operative Development, the Managing Director, the Service Director Legal and Community and the Interim Property Consultant.

Councillor Keith Hoskins proposed, Councillor Paul Clark seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the terms for the sale of this land be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To release surplus property to provide a financial receipt to help fund the capital programme;
- (2) To enable the development of new homes in North Hertfordshire.

The meeting closed at 11.02 pm

Chair