NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

MEETING HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING
ON TUESDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 2021 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Martin Stears-Handscomb (Chair), Paul Clark (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Judi Billing, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Keith Hoskins and Steve Jarvis.*

Deputy Executive Member: Councillor Ian Mantle.

In Attendance: *Councillor David Levett (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Ian Fullstone (Service Director - Regulatory), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Steve Crowley (Service Director - Commercial), Nigel Smith (Strategic Planning Manager), Helen Leitch (Principal Landscape and Urban Designer), Chloe Gray (Commercial Manager) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

82 WELCOME AND REMOTE/PARTLY REMOTE MEETINGS PROTOCOL SUMMARY

Audio recording – 42 seconds

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

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager undertook a roll call and drew attention to the Remote/Partly Remote Meetings Protocol Summary which gave advice regarding the following:

- Attendance;
- Live Streaming;
- Noise interference;
- Rules of Debate; and
- Voting.

Members were advised that, due to an upgrade on zoom the usual voting system no longer worked as required. Voting would take place using the blue raised hand symbol.

The Chair, Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb, started the meeting proper.

83 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 3 minutes 48 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gary Grindal and Deputy Executive Members Ruth Brown, Sean Prendergast and Carol Stanier.

Councillor Kate Aspinwall, Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee also offered her apologies for the meeting.

84 MINUTES - 15 DECEMBER 2020

Audio Recording – 4 minutes 20 seconds

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

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 15 December 2020 be approved as a true record of the proceedings.

(2) That, with the authorisation of the Chair, his electronic signature and initials be attached to the Minutes approved in (1) above.

85 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 5 minutes 15 seconds

There was no other business notified.

86 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 5 minutes 19 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. More details were included on the agenda front sheet.

(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 advised that he would be taking Items 13 and 14 following Item 10.

87 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 6 minutes 27 seconds

There were no presentations by members of the public.

88 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 6 minutes 32 seconds

7a Referral from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee: 18 January 2021 – Revenue Budget 2021-22

The Chair advised that this referral would be considered with Item 11.

7b Referral from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee: 18 January 2021 – Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury)

The Chair advised that this referral would be considered with Item 12.

7c Referral from Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 19 January 2021 – Proposed Amendments to Performance Management Measures for 20/21

The Chair advised that this referral would be considered with Item 13.

89 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

Audio recording – 7 minutes

The Executive Member for Planning and Transport presented the report entitled Strategic Planning Matters and drew attention to the following:

- In respect of the NHDC Local Plan, there had been no communication from the Inspector as yet;
- The next Local Plan hearings were due to take place on 1 / 2 February 2021 and would be regarding Site BK3 and the Master planning process;
- He was due to meet with St Albans District Council to discuss duty to co-operate;
- There was ongoing discussions regarding the expansion of Luton Airport;
- Parking income was reduced due to less parking to towns.

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

RESOLVED: That the report entitled Strategic Planning Matters be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep Cabinet informed of recent developments on strategic planning matters and progress on the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

90 BALDOCK, BYGRAVE AND CLOTHALL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Audio recording – 10 minutes 51 seconds

The Executive Member for Planning and Transport presented the report entitled Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A - Examiners report for the Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan August 2020;
- Appendix B - Schedule of proposed additional modifications for consultation – November 2020;
- Appendix C - Schedule of representations received – January 2021.

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

RESOLVED:

(1) That the responses received to the Council's proposed modifications to the Examiner's recommendations on the Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan be noted.

(2) That following the inclusion of the proposed modifications to the Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan as set out in Appendix A and subject to the Council's additional modifications in Appendix B, it be approved to proceed to a referendum.

(3) That the Counting Officer be instructed to make arrangements and conduct a referendum on the Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To progress the Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan, enable a referendum to take place and, if more than 50% of those voting in favour of the Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan take steps towards "making" the neighbourhood plan.

91 CONSERVATION AREA SUMMARY REPORT AND NEXT STEPS

Audio recording – 12 minutes 7 seconds

The Executive Member for Planning and Transport presented the report entitled Conservation Area Summary Report and Next Steps together with the following appendix:

- Appendix A - North Hertfordshire Conservation Areas - Summary Report.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb.

Members commented that this was an excellent report and the officers should be thanked for their hard work.

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

RESOLVED:

(1) That the findings of the North Hertfordshire Conservation Area Summary Report, attached as Appendix A to this report be endorsed, as part of our statutory requirement to review conservation areas from time to time.

(2) That the way forward as set out in the draft programme of work identified within this report at Table 1 be agreed.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure conservation areas, historic assets and buildings of local importance within North Hertfordshire are appropriately assessed and designated to inform decision making for planning applications and the preparation of Local and Neighbourhood Plan.

92 REVENUE BUDGET 2021/22

Audio recording – 29 minutes 2 seconds

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Revenue Budget together with the following appendices:

- 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;
- Revenue Budget 2021-22 – Addendum;
- Appendix B - Revenue Budget Savings and Investments – Addendum;
- Appendix C - Budget Summary 2021-26 – Addendum;
- Appendix D - Budget Summary 2021-26 – Addendum.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT drew attention to the following:

- An addendum report and appendices had been published that reflected the position taking into the account the decision to support the leisure facilities;
- An amendment had been made to saving E5;
- The impact on the Tax Base was detail in Paragraph 8.5;
- Table 1 showed the impact of a £10 increase in council tax;
- It had been decided to continue with the Business Rate Pool;
- Appendix B outlined the proposed savings;
- The work of the Challenge Board would continue;
- Citizens Advice had provided a business case for additional funding.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Judi Billing seconded the recommendations as per the report addendum and an additional recommendation that Citizens Advice be awarded additional funding of £50,000 for 2021/22 only.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

Councillor Steve Jarvis proposed and Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb seconded that, in the event that a £10 increase in 2021/22 is allowed, the additional funding (£247k) be set aside for Covid support for residents, in 2021/22 only.

The Chair thanked the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee for the referral (7a) which endorsed the recommendations.

RESOLVED: That the increase in the 2020/21 working budget of £291k, as detailed in table 5 be approved.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

(1) That the position on 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 £18.391m, as detailed in Appendix C be approved. In the event of a £10 band D increase being allowed, then Appendix D would apply,

(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. However in response to the consultation on the Local Government settlement, a £10 increase for a band D property (other bands pro-rate) may be allowed.

(6) That, in the event that a £10 increase in 2021/22 is allowed, the additional funding (£247k) be set aside for Covid support for residents, in 2021/22 only.

(7) That Citizens Advice North Herts be allocated an additional £50,000 funding in 2021/22 only.

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.

93 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (INTEGRATED CAPITAL AND TREASURY)

Audio recording – 46 minutes 4 seconds

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- A full list of planned capital expenditure (2021/22 onwards);
- Appendix A2 - A list of new capital schemes and schemes planned to commence from 2021/22.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT drew attention to the following:

- Investments in commercial aspects would likely require borrowing and this would be considered at the appropriate time
- Yield was low currently therefore consideration would be given to selecting alternative investments
- That the Service Director – Resources and his team be thanked for their hard work, which had been praised by auditors.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb seconded and it was:

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

(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.

94 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR 20/21

Audio recording – 14 minutes 11 seconds

The Leader of the Council presented the report entitled Proposed Amendments to Performance Management Measures for 20/21 and drew attention to the following:

- There were two proposed amendments to targets propose, due to the effects of the pandemic on performance being:
  - MI LI015 - Number of visits to leisure facilities;
  - Reg 3 - Percentage of Environmental Health programmed inspections completed

Councillor David Levett, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the referral from the meeting of that Committee (7c) held on 19 January 2021.

He advised that the Committee had discussed public engagement at meetings and felt that viewing figures would clarify the level of those engaging with meetings.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet:

(1) That Cabinet considers and formally approves the proposed amendments to the PIs and any associated targets that will continue to be monitored throughout 2020/2021 by Overview & Scrutiny;
(2) That Cabinet consider instigating a "reporting only" figure of those viewing Council meetings on YouTube in order to gauge public engagement with virtual meetings.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg;
- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis;
- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb.

Comments from Members included:

- That public engagement should not stop at looking at the number of people viewing on YouTube;
- That investigation needed to take place regarding methods that could be used to engage with those viewing the meeting, as opposed to those within the meeting;
- Another issue raised at Overview and Scrutiny was to consider opening the outdoor pools earlier. This had been passed to officers for consideration.

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

RESOLVED:

(1) That the proposed amendments to the PIs and any associated targets that will continue to be monitored throughout 2020/2021 by Overview & Scrutiny be approved;

(2) That an additional "reporting only" figure of those viewing Council meetings, both live stream and video, on YouTube be reported to Overview and Scrutiny in order to gauge public engagement with virtual meetings.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that Performance Monitoring is effective and reflects the current national situation.

95 HITCHIN MARKET NEW CONTRACT

Audio recording – 25 minutes 9 seconds

The Executive Member for Enterprise and Co-operative Development presented the report entitled Hitchin Market New Contract.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Ian Albert.

Councillor Keith Hoskins thanked the Commercial Manager for the work undertaken in this respect.

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

RESOLVED: That the entering into of a new contract with Hitchin Markets Limited (HML) to operate Hitchin Market, for an initial period of one year with the option to extend on a year by year basis for a maximum of three years be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: To seek approval of the new contract going forward and to ensure Hitchin Market continues to operate.

96 THE COUNCIL'S PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Audio recording – 50 minutes 47 seconds

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled The Council's Procurement Strategy together with the following appendix:

- Appendix A - Procurement Strategy 2021-22.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT drew attention to the following:

- This was something where the Council could make a real difference;
- It aimed to support the local economy by supporting more localised procurement;
- The strategy sought to support the aims set out in the Council Plan;
- Considering supply chains;
- There was a Government green paper regarding procurement;
- Looking at how can encourage local suppliers to do business with the Council;

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the new Procurement Strategy 2021-22 at Appendix A be adopted with implementation from 1 April 2021.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure the Council's has an up to date Procurement Strategy. To formally support the ongoing development and modernisation of procurement and contract management within the Council with the aim of making further savings and supporting the local economy.

The meeting closed at 8.29 pm

Tuesday, 26th January, 2021

Chair