

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Hitchin Town Hall, Brand Street, Hitchin SG5 1JE
on Thursday, 8th July, 2021 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Daniel Allen, David Barnard, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, Adam Compton, George Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Morgan Derbyshire, Sarah Dingley, Faye Frost, Jean Green, Gary Grindal, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Ian Moody, Michael Muir, Lisa Nash, Sue Ngwala, Sam North, Sean Prendergast, Mike Rice, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Carol Stanier, Claire Strong, Mandi Tandi, Richard Thake and Tom Tyson

IN ATTENDANCE: Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), and William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)

ALSO PRESENT: At the commencement of the meeting approximately 1 member of the public, including registered speakers.

1 WELCOME

Audio Recording – 0 seconds.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer welcomed everybody to the meeting and gave advice on the following:

- Social Distancing and Masks
- Recordings
- Voting
- Change of Venue

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer advised that the order of business was changed and that due to the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair the first item to be taken was the election of a member to chair the meeting.

2 ELECTION OF A CHAIR

Audio Recording – 1 minute 30 seconds.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer called for nominations for a Chair of the meeting.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed, Councillor Paul Clark seconded and upon the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Councillor Keith Hoskins be elected to Chair this meeting of the Council.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 3 minutes 24 seconds.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kate Aspinwall, Val Bryant, John Bishop, Juan Cowell, Jim McNally, Gerald Morris, Kay Tart, Terry Tyler and Michael Weeks.

4 MINUTES - 26 MAY 2021

Audio Recording – 4 minutes 10 seconds.

The Chair, Councillor Keith Hoskins proposed, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 26 May 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

5 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 40 seconds.

There was no other business notified.

6 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 48 seconds.

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) 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.
- (4) 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.
- (5) The Chair reminded members of the Hitchin and Letchworth Area Committees that meetings of their committees had been called to commence once the business of the Council had concluded.
- (6) The Chair advised that no comfort break would be taken unless members requested one.

7 LONG SERVICE AWARD - LIZ WATSON

Audio Recording – 6 minutes 28 seconds.

The Chair announced that Liz Watson, Revenues Officer, had been working for North Hertfordshire District Council for 25 years.

Liz started working within the Revenues Recovery Team at NHDC on 10 June 1996.

Over the years Liz had gained an extensive knowledge of Revenues as well as representing the Council in the Magistrates Court.

Liz was always available to assist other team members, when required and had, over the past few years increased her knowledge of dealing with Business Rates, which had proved to be valuable when assisting our businesses to claim grants during the current pandemic.

Liz was an adaptable and flexible member of the Team, often being asked to cover tasks within the service area at short notice.

She had gained a wealth of knowledge an experience over the years and was certainly not only a valuable asset to the Revenues Team, but the Council as a whole.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, extended her gratitude to Liz for her service to the Council.

It was proposed by the Chair, Councillor Keith Hoskins, seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, and upon the vote:

RESOLVED: That the Council place on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Liz Watson for her long and valuable service to Local Government.

8 RETIREMENT OF HILARY DINEEN

Audio Recording – 7 minutes 55 seconds.

The Chair announced that Hilary Dineen, Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager, was retiring after having worked for North Hertfordshire District Council for 14 years.

Hilary joined the Council in December 2007, which was quite a career change, having previously worked in the mental health service and also a bank. This, as many of us know, was as a Committee and Member Services Officer, although Hilary progressed to the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager in 2019.

Although Hilary does not officially finish until towards the end of August, this was in fact Hilary's last Full Council meeting before she retired.

As Hilary had been a familiar face to Members, some of whom would have known Hilary since she started in 2007, we wanted to acknowledge this as well as the service she has given to both the Authority and to Members.

On behalf of all of the Members the Chair wished Hilary a very happy retirement and thanked her for the help and support she had given to us all over the years.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, expressed her gratitude for Hilary's valuable service to the Council.

The following Councillors gave further thanks to Hilary:

- Councillor Paul Clark
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Judi Billing
- Councillor Richard Thake

Councillor Keith Hoskins proposed, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and upon the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Council place on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Hilary Dineen for her valuable service to Local Government.

9 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 18 minutes 15 seconds.

There was no public participation.

10 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES: INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) END OF YEAR REVIEW 2019/20

Audio Recording – 18 minutes 34 seconds.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the referral from Cabinet regarding the Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) End of Year Review 2019/20 along with the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Capital Programme Detail including Funding 2020-21 Onwards
- Appendix B – Treasury Management Update

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and upon the vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the actual 2020/21 prudential and treasury indicators be approved;
- (2) That the annual Treasury Report for 2020/21 be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) That Members are able to monitor, make adjustments within the overall budgetary framework and request appropriate action of Services who do not meet the budget targets set as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.
- (2) That changes to the Council's balances are monitored and approved.

11 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES: REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2020/21

Audio Recording – 22 minutes 42 seconds.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the referral from Cabinet regarding the Revenue Budget Outturn 2020/21 with the following amendments:

- Where Recommendation 1 refers to 'Table 8,' it should instead refer to 'Table 9,'

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and on the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Council approves the net transfer to earmarked reserves, as identified in table 9, of £11.464million.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) That members are able to monitor and make adjustments within the overall budgetary framework and request appropriate action of Services who do not meet the budget targets set as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.
- (2) That changes to the Council's balances are monitored and approved.

12 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES: ANNUAL REPORT ON RISK MANAGEMENT

Audio Recording – 27 minutes.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the referral from Cabinet regarding the Annual Report on Risk Management.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and upon the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report on Risk Management be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) The responsibility for ensuring the management of risks is that of Cabinet.
- (2) This Committee has responsibility to monitor the effective development and operation of Risk Management.

13 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

Audio Recording – 29 minutes 30 seconds.

The Service Director – Resources advised he was presenting the report in the absence of Councillor Kate Aspinwall as she had sent apologies for this meeting.

The Service Director – Resources presented the Annual Report of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee alongside the associated referral.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded and on the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To enable the Committee to consider the report before it is presented to Full Council.
- (2) To provide Full Council with assurance as to the effectiveness of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

14 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT – ANNUAL REVIEW

Audio Recording – 31 minutes.

The Monitoring Officer presented the report entitled Constitutional Amendment – Annual Review along with the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Schedule of proposed changes
- Appendix B – Delegated Decision 1 June 2021

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed and Councillor Paul Clark seconded that the recommendations in the report be accepted.

The following Councillors asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Judi Billing

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed, Councillor Paul Clark seconded the following amendment:

“That the proposed amendment to Section 4.8.16(e) on voting contained in Appendix A to the report be omitted.”

Upon the vote the amendment was carried.

The following Councillors asked questions:

- Councillor Simon Harwood
- Councillor Richard Thake

The Monitoring Officer responded to questions accordingly.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed, Councillor Paul Clark seconded and it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the constitutional amendments in Appendix A to the report be approved with the following amendment:

The proposed amendment to Section 4.8.16(e) on voting be omitted.

- (2) That the changes made to the Constitution to section 14 in respect of Executive Portfolios (Leader’s decision previously noted at Council on 26 May) be noted;
- (3) That the changes made under Delegated Decision 1 June, in respect of Area Committees, as set out in Appendix B be approved.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure the Constitution remains up to date, and continues to improve its working practices where legally possible.

15 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2020/2021

Audio Recording – 39 minutes 40 seconds.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2020/21.

Councillor David Levett proposed, Councillor Claire Strong seconded and upon the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2020/2021 be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Council to consider the report of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the work of that Committee in the 2020/2021 Civic Year.

16 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Audio Recording – 41 minutes 33 seconds.

The Chair of the Standards Committee presented the Annual Report of the Standards Committee

The following Councillors asked questions:

- Councillor George Davies
- Councillor Simon Harwood

The Monitoring Officer responded to questions accordingly.

Councillor Judi Billing proposed, Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and upon the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report of the Standards Committee be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: In line with recommended good governance practice to report the work of the Standards Committee to the full Membership, to promote and maintain high standards of conduct and to demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical values.

17 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Audio recording – 51 minutes 40 seconds.

There were no motions put on notice in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12

18 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Audio recording – 51 minutes 45 seconds.

There were no questions submitted by Members in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b).

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm