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## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Letchworth Garden City  
on Wednesday, 23rd March, 2022 at 7.30 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors: Councillor Val Bryant (Chair), Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, Sam Collins, George Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Morgan Derbyshire, Sarah Dingley, Keith Hoskins, Mike Hughson, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Jim McNally, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Sean Prendergast, Mike Rice, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Claire Strong, Mandi Tandi, Kay Tart, Richard Thake and Tom Tyson

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Steve Crowley (Service Director – Commercial) Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), Isabelle Allajooz (Legal Commercial Team Manager) James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and Louis Mutter (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)

#### 100 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

*Audio recording – 2:05*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Terry Hone, Gary Grindal, Lisa Nash, Raj Bhakar, Sam North, Simon Harwood, Carol Stanier, Terry Tyler, Juan Cowell, Faye Frost, David Barnard, Adam Compton and Jean Green.

#### 101 MINUTES - 10 FEBRUARY 2022

*Audio Recording – 3:00*

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 10 February 2022 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### 102 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

*Audio recording – 4:35*

There was no other business notified.

#### 103 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Audio recording – 4:45*

- (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 advised that the usual rules in respect of debate and times to speak would apply;
- (6) The Chair advised that there had been a change to the order of business and that items 10, 11 and 12 be taken before items 8 and 9;
- (7) The Chair advised that there was no longer a requirement for Members to stand while addressing the Council;
- (8) The Chair advised that the fundraiser in support of her chosen charities would be taking place on 22 May at The Orange Tree in Baldock, and that tickets would be available on the Council website.

#### **104 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*Audio recording – 8:30*

There was no public participation.

#### **105 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

*Audio recording – 8:35*

There were no questions submitted by Members

#### **106 NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

*Audio recording – 8:42*

There were 2 motions on notice submitted in accordance with Standing Orders 4.8.12 and 4.8.15(b)

##### **a) MOTION ON HYBRID MEETINGS**

The Leader of the Council presented the Motion entitled Motion on Hybrid Meetings and highlighted the following points:

- The pandemic created a lot of challenges for the Council, but also provided some good things that could be utilised going forward;
- Hybrid meetings would allow greater democratic outreach and allow those that have work commitments or health conditions to attend remotely;
- A number of absent Members would also have been able to attend if Hybrid Meetings were put in place;
- The Leader of the Council would like the Council to support the petition, which has been brought forward by the Association of Democratic Services Officers.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Judi Billing
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Daniel Allen
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Kate Aspinwall
- Councillor Mike Rice
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Mandi Tandi
- Councillor Sarah Dingley
- Councillor Amy Allen
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, as Leader of the Council proposed, and Councillor Judi Billing seconded and, following a vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Council:

- (1) Supports the petition launched by ADSO and LLG o 5 January with regard to remote and hybrid meetings;
- (2) Agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities calling on the Government to change the law to allow councils the flexibility to hold such meetings when they deem appropriate within agreed rules and procedures.

b) **MOTION SIMILAR TO ONE PREVIOUSLY REJECTED**

The Leader of the Council presented the Motion entitled Motion Similar to One Previously Rejected and highlighted the following points:

- This Council previously considered a Motion on the Churchgate Leasehold;
- There have been significant changes and developments since it was last considered;
- Members had the opportunity to attend a cross-party workshop where all of the information on Churchgate has been provided.

Councillor Dennis-Harburg, as Leader of the Council proposed, Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Full Council considers a report and recommendation on an offer to acquire Churchgate leasehold on its meeting on 23 March.

**107 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

*Audio recording – 1:37:10 (N.B. This item was taken after items 10,11 & 12)*

There were no items referred from other Committees.

**108 PAY POLICY STATEMENT**

*Audio Recording: 1:37:15 (N.B. This item was taken after items 10,11 & 12)*

The Leader of the Council presented the item entitled Pay Policy Statement.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg as Leader of the Council proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:**

(1) That Council approves the 2022/23 Pay Policy Statement attached at Appendix 1.

(2) That Council delegates the authority for revisions made in year to the Pay Policy Statement, 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 DECISION:** 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.

## 109 CHURCHGATE UPDATE

*Audio Recording: 40:30*

The Chair advised that the Leader of the Council, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, had been provided with additional time to present this item.

The Leader of the Council gave a detailed speech regarding the entitled Churchgate Update.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Sam Collins
- Councillor Keith Hoskins
- Councillor Judi Billing
- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Ruth Brown

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, as Leader of the Council proposed and Councillor Ian Albert seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That having considered the report, Full Council confirms that its position on respect of the future of the Churchgate Shopping Centre is: -

(1) That in principle the Council should purchase the leasehold interest for the Churchgate Shopping Centre, subject to the economic case for doing so.

(2) That any regeneration of Churchgate and the surrounding area must be a viable investment that maintains a return for the Council.

(3) That a Council led approach should be adopted where following consultation with the public and other stakeholders, the Council will come to a decision on what it considers is most appropriate vision for the future of the site.

(4) That the Council then decides how to deliver that vision for the site and any necessary delivery partners for the work.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** The previous developer led approaches for the regeneration of the Churchgate Shopping Centre, and often the surrounding area, have not produced a proposal that has met the aspirations of the Council to (at least) maintain its existing income through a sympathetically designed scheme that is financially viable and acceptable

## 110 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

*Audio recording – 1:08:45*

**Wednesday, 23rd March, 2022**

Councillor Val Bryant proposed and Councillor Sam Collins seconded and, following a vote, 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).

**111 CHURCHGATE UPDATE - PART 2**

Details of the debate decisions taken on this item are restricted due to the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

The meeting closed at 21:18 pm

Chair

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