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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, District Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth
on Thursday, 23rd February, 2023 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Sam North (Chair), Daniel Allen (Vice-Chair), Ian Albert, Amy Allen, David Barnard, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, James Denselow, Morgan Derbyshire, Jean Green, Chris Hinchliff, Terry Hone, Keith Hoskins, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Chris Lucas, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Gerald Morris, Ralph Muncer, Michael Muir, Lisa Nash, Sean Nolan, Tom Plater, Richard Thake, Tamsin Thomas, Tom Tyson, Phil Weeder, Alistair Willoughby, Val Bryant and Terry Tyler

IN ATTENDANCE: Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Tom Marsh (Electoral Services Manager) and Eleanor Hopcraft (Committee, Member & Scrutiny Officer)

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

180 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 1 second

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carol Stanier, Kay Tart, Faye Frost, Juan Cowell, Sam Collins, Clare Billing, George Davies, Ian Moody and Raj Bhakar.

181 MINUTES - 19 JANUARY 2023

Audio Recording – 3 minutes 24 seconds

Councillor Sam North, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg seconded, and after a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19 January 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

182 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 19 seconds

There was no other business notified.

183 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 26 seconds

(1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;

- (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) 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.
- (4) The Chair clarified the rules of debate for Members.
- (5) The Chair advised that for the purposes of clarification that 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution did not apply to this meeting.
- (6) The Chair advised that the Chair's Civic Event scheduled for 19 March 2023 had been cancelled.
- (7) The Chair advised that the North Herts Heroes Award Ceremony would take place on Friday 3 March 2023 and would be available to watch on the North Herts Council YouTube page.
- (8) The Chair advised that the Council meeting scheduled for 30 March 2023 had been moved to 18 April 2023.
- (9) The Chair asked Members to promote the requirement of Photo ID for voting using the flyers and posters provided

184 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 8 minutes 0 seconds

There was no public participation at this meeting.

185 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Audio recording – 8 minutes 11 seconds

There were no questions submitted by Members.

186 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Audio recording – 8 minutes 20 seconds

There were no motions submitted.

187 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio Recording – 8 minutes 26 seconds

8a) Referral from Cabinet on 31 January 2023 – Revenue Budget 2023/24

The Chair advised that this referral would be taken with Item 10 'Revenue Budget 2023/24'.

8b) Referral from Cabinet on 31 January 2023 – Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury)

The Chair advised that this referral would be taken with Item 11 'Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury)'.

8c) Referral from Overview and Scrutiny on 24 January 2023 – Women’s Safety Charter

Councillor David Levett presented the referral and advised that it was vital that the Council continued to support the work of the Community Safety Partnership and other partner agencies, particularly on the delivery of the Women’s Safety Charter.

Councillor Dennis-Harburg thanked Councillor Levett and those involved in the creation of the Women’s Safety Charter and commented that it would be an important piece of work for the Council.

Councillor David Levett proposed and Councillor Dennis-Harburg seconded, and after a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council continued to support the work of Community Safety Partnerships and other partner agencies and work on the delivery of a Women’s Safety Charter alongside these agencies.

REASON FOR DECISION: To highlight and enable Full Council to consider the important work of the Community Safety Partnerships and other partner agencies as well as the delivery of a Women’s Safety Charter alongside these agencies.

188 PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Audio Recording – 11 minutes 45 seconds

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Leader of the Council presented the item and advised:

- The Pay Award for 2023/24 was not yet agreed, the current statement was based on 2022/23 rate. Recommendation 2.2 sought delegation for the statement to be updated following the agreement of the Pay Award.
- NHDC were part of National Pay Negotiation, so were not allowed to make payments that are outside that pay bargaining.

In response to a question from Councillor Ralph Muncer, the Service Director – Resources advised that a pay offer had been submitted to the Unions and it was less than 12.7%, which would be covered by Councillor Albert under agenda Item 10 regarding the budget.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg proposed, Councillor Ruth Brown seconded, and after a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Council approved the 2023/24 Pay Policy Statement attached at Appendix 1.
- (2) That Council delegated 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 included 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.

189 REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24

Audio Recording – 16 minutes 36 seconds

Thursday, 23rd February, 2023

The Chair advised that he would invite Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, as Leader of the Council, to introduce the item and would then invite Councillor Ian Albert to present the report. The Chair noted that he had granted Councillor Albert permission to speak for longer than five minutes on this item.

The Leader of the Council made an introductory speech on the Revenue Budget 2023/24.

Councillor Ian Albert presented the Revenue Budget to Members, and proposed an additional recommendation to the Revenue Budget. This was seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg.

Councillor Claire Strong thanked Councillor Ian Albert for his speech, and noted some concerns regarding the Budget, including increase in parking charges, the renewal of waste and leisure contracts and funding for Churchgate.

The following Members also took part in the debate:

- Councillor Alistair Willoughby
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Tom Plater
- Councillor Steve Jarvis
- Councillor Gerald Morris
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Chris Hinchliff
- Councillor Amy Allen
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg

Councillor Ian Albert commented that it was important that Member's Allowances increased. Playgrounds would not be closed under the budget. The administration wanted to work cross-party with the opposition and with residents to create a plan for Churchgate.

Having been proposed by Councillor Albert and seconded by Councillor Dennis-Harburg, the motion was put to a vote.

The results of the vote were as follows:

YES	:	23
ABSTAIN	:	2
NO	:	12
TOTAL	:	37

The individual results were as follows:

Cllr Sam North	ABSTAIN
Cllr Adem Ruggiero-Cakir	YES
Cllr Alistair Willoughby	YES
Cllr Amy Allen	YES
Cllr Chris Hinchliff	YES
Cllr Chris Lucas	YES
Cllr Claire Strong	NO
Cllr Daniel Allen	YES
Cllr David Barnard	NO
Cllr David Levett	NO
Cllr Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg	YES
Cllr Gerald Morris	NO
Cllr Ian Albert	YES
Cllr Ian Mantle	YES

Cllr James Denselow	YES
Cllr Jean Green	NO
Cllr Keith Hoskins	YES
Cllr Lisa Nash	YES
Cllr Mandi Tandi	NO
Cllr Michael Muir	ABSTAIN
Cllr Morgan Derbyshire	NO
Cllr Nigel Mason	YES
Cllr Philip Weeder	YES
Cllr Ralph Muncer	NO
Cllr Richard Thake	NO
Cllr Ruth Brown	YES
Cllr Sean Nolan	YES
Cllr Sean Prendergast	YES
Cllr Simon Bloxham	NO
Cllr Steve Jarvis	YES
Cllr Tamsin Thomas	YES
Cllr Terry Hone	NO
Cllr Terry Tyler	YES
Cllr Tom Plater	YES
Cllr Tom Tyson	YES
Cllr Tony Hunter	NO
Cllr Val Bryant	YES

As such it was:

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Noted the position on the Collection fund and how it will be funded.
- (2) Noted the position relating to the General Fund balance and that due to the risk identified a minimum balance of £2.5million was recommended.
- (3) Noted the net revenue savings that are likely to be required in future years, combined with the Chief Finance Officer's commentary on the reliability of estimates and the resilience index.
- (4) Approved the revenue savings and investments as detailed in Appendix B.
- (5) Approved a net expenditure budget of £18.123m, as detailed in Appendix C.
- (6) Approved a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, which was in line with the provisions in the Medium term Financial Strategy.
- (7) Approved that the revenue investment for leisure centre condition surveys (as detailed in Appendix B, reference R13) and £10k of the consultancy and legal support for the leisure contract (as detailed in Appendix B, reference R37) is brought forward so that it can be spent in 2022/23.
- (8) Approved an additional revenue investment (for 2023/24 only) to create a Community Wealth Fund of £100k to support the local community in delivering projects that have wider community benefits.
- (9) Noted the staff resourcing issues that the Council faces, particularly in relation to planning and the strategic implementation of the Local Plan. Council further notes that Cabinet and the Head of Paid Service will look at options to make use of available resources (such as carry-forward of unspent salary budgets) to support the delivery of key Council functions and priorities.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure all relevant factors are considered in arriving at a budget and Council Tax level for 2023/24. To ensure that the budget is aligned to Council priorities for 2023/24 as set out in the Council Plan.

N.B Councillor David Barnard left the meeting at 20.56 and did not return.

190 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (INTEGRATED CAPITAL AND TREASURY)

Audio Recording – 100 minutes and 46 seconds

The Chair drew attention to the point raised by Councillor Michael Muir in the previous agenda item, and clarified that the line referring to Weston Hills, Baldock referred to a car park on Chalk Hills, Baldock.

The Chair invited Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance and IT to present. Councillor Albert thanked the Chair and presented the report entitled 'Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury)' and advised Members of the details included within the report.

The following Members asked questions

- Councillor Richard Thake
- Councillor Gerald Morris

In response to questions, the Service Director – Resources advised that:

- The decision concerning accounting standards was delegated to the Service Director – Resources.
- There was a similar payback on solar PV across all Leisure Centres.

Councillor Steve Jarvis provided details on the ways in which the Council was looking at future alternatives to gas boilers. He highlighted that some of the alternatives such as PV panels were not yet viable.

Councillor Ian Albert proposed and Councillor Dennis-Harburg seconded and after a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Council:

- (1) Approved the adoption of the Investment Strategy (as attached at Appendix A as amended), including the capital programme and prudential indicators. This incorporates the changes referenced in paragraph 5.4.
- (2) Approved the adoption of the four clauses in relation to the Code of Practice on Treasury Management (as detailed in Paragraphs 8.11 to 8.16).

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (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 Council's compliance with the CIPFA code of practise on Treasury Management, the Local Government Act 2003, statutory guidance from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the CIPFA Prudential Code. As well as determining and managing the Council's risk appetite in respect of investments.

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The meeting closed at 9.26 pm

Chair

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