

**ANNUAL COUNCIL  
25 MAY 2023**

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF REPORT: KEY DECISIONS - ANNUAL REPORT ON CASES OF SPECIAL URGENCY**

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST / SUSTAINABILITY / A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Council of any occasions over the past year where the provisions relating to “Special Urgency” have been used in connection with the publication of an intention to make a Key Decision, as required by legislation.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To comply with Regulation 19 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 (“the Regulations”).

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 None.

**5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- 5.1 None.

**6. FORWARD PLAN**

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 came into force on 10 September 2012. The Regulations, inter alia, revised the procedures for publicity in connection with Key Decisions.
- 7.2 A Key Decision means an executive decision which is likely –
- (a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
  - (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority.
- 7.3 The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, Regulation 9(2) requires that at least 28 clear days notice is given by the Council before a Key Decision is made. This requirement is ordinarily met at North Herts Council by the regular publication of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.
- 7.4 Regulation 10 requires that, where the publication of the intention to make a Key decision under regulation 9(2) is impracticable, that decision may only be made –
- (a) where the proper officer has informed the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee or, if there is no such person, each member of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee by notice in writing, of the matter about which the decision is to be made;
  - (b) where the proper officer has made available at the offices of the relevant local authority for inspection by the public and published on the relevant local authority's website, if it has one, a copy of the notice given pursuant to sub-paragraph (a); and
  - (c) after five clear days have elapsed following the day on which the proper officer made available the notice referred to in sub-paragraph (b).
- 7.5 In cases of Special Urgency, Regulation 11 requires that where the date by which a key decision must be made, makes compliance with regulation 10 impracticable, the decision may only be made where the decision maker has obtained agreement from -
- (a) the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee; or
  - (b) if there is no such person, or if the Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee is unable to act, the Chair of the relevant local authority; or
  - (c) where there is no Chair of either the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee or of the relevant local authority, the Vice-Chair of the relevant local authority, that the making of the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.

- 7.6 Regulation 19(1) requires that the Executive Leader must submit to the relevant local authority at such intervals as may be determined by the relevant local authority a report containing details of each executive decision taken during the period since the last report was submitted to the authority where the making of the decision was agreed as urgent in accordance with Regulation 11.
- 7.7 As contained within the Council's Constitution it is stated that the Executive Leader will submit a report annually to Council on the Cabinet decisions taken under the special urgency provisions.
- 7.8 Regulation 19(2) requires that a report submitted for the purposes of Regulation 19(1) must include –
- (a) particulars of each decision made; and
  - (b) a summary of the matters in respect of which each decision was made.
- 7.9 Regulation 19(3) requires that the Executive Leader must submit at least one report under Regulation 19(1) annually to the relevant local authority.

## **8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1 In 2022/23, the following Key Decisions required the Special Urgency procedure outlined in Regulation 11 to be invoked:

### **8.2 Subject Matter: Write Off of Rent Arrears**

**Decision:** That Cabinet approved up to £76,000 of debt owed by Hammersmatch Builders Limited ("Hammersmatch") is written-off. This will only be written-off if the purchase of the head leasehold interest by the Council is successful, and only to the extent that the outstanding debt is not covered by an adjustment to the purchase price.

**Decision Taker: Cabinet**

**Date of Decision: 21 June 2023**

**Reason for Urgency:**

The matter was brought to the Council's attention on Friday 10 June and requires an immediate decision from Cabinet. Waiting until the next ordinary meeting of Cabinet would impact on this project and could lead to the loss of commercial opportunity.

### **8.3 Subject Matter: UK Shared Prosperity Funding**

**Decision:** To approve the submission of the Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Decision Taker: Anthony Roche – Managing Director**

**Date of Decision: 28 July 2022**

**Reason for Urgency:**

The deadline for submission of the investment plan to Government is 1 August 2022. Therefore, there would be insufficient time for call-in of the decision prior to its implementation.

Reference to the investment plan will be made in reports to various Committees through September, which is expected to be prior to any Government approval of the plan and therefore the commencement of spending any allocated funds.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was unavailable and therefore, under point 15.15 of the Constitution, the Vice-Chair of the Committee was consulted and agreed this was an urgent decision.

**8.4 Subject Matter: Careline In House Provision for Complex Installation and Maintenance**

**Decision:** That Cabinet approved the addition of complex installations and maintenance to Carelines in-house service from 01 April 2023.

**Decision Taker: Cabinet**

**Date of Decision: 13 December 2022**

**Reason for Urgency:**

The options regarding the Careline In House Provision for Complex Installation and Maintenance is commercially sensitive under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The current contract is due to end in March 2023 and due to the timescales, the decision cannot practicably be delayed to the next Cabinet meeting on 31 January 2023.

*N.B – This item was included on the Forward Plan within required timeframe on 7 October 2022. However, the 5 day notice of Part 2 was not provided in time for this item and therefore Special Urgency was required.*

- 8.5 All Notices of Special Urgency can be viewed on the Council’s Website here: [Notices of Urgent Decisions | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/urgent-decisions)

**9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 This report is a requirement of the Council Procedure Rules as set out in Part 15.16.3 of the Council’s Constitution which provides that the Leader of the Council will submit an annual report to the Council on Cabinet decision taken in the circumstances set out in 15.15 (special urgency) in the preceding year. The report will include the number of decisions so taken and a summary of the matters in respect of which those decisions were taken.
- 9.2 The requirements of the Regulations are set out in the main body of this report.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. In the event of the use of Special Urgency procedures, financial (and other) implications would be considered in the decision-making process and reported to Full Council.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There are no direct risk implications arising from this report.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 This is a noting report, the intention of which is to ensure transparency of decision making. Considerations with regards to equalities implications, in relation to each decision, will have been set out in the reports concerned.

- 12.3 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” policy do not apply to this report.

## **14 HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 There are no human resource implications.

## **15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1. Considerations with regards to environmental implications, in relation to each decision, will have been set out in the reports concerned.

## **16. APPENDICES**

- 16.1 None.

## **17. CONTACT OFFICERS**

### **Author**

- 17.1 James Lovegrove, Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager  
[James.Lovegrove@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:James.Lovegrove@north-herts.gov.uk)

### **Contributors**

- 17.2 Melanie Stimpson  
Democratic Services Manager  
[melanie.stimpson@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:melanie.stimpson@north-herts.gov.uk)

**18. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

18.1 None.