

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

Meeting held in the Spirella Ballroom, Icknield Way, Letchworth Garden City on Thursday, 18th May, 2017 at 7.30 pm

MINUTES

PRESENT: Councillor Alan Millard (Chairman)

Councillors Ian Albert, David Barnard, Clare Billing, Judi Billing, John Booth, Paul Clark, Julian Cunningham, Bill Davidson, Steve Deakin-Davies, Elizabeth Dennis, Sarah Dingley, Jane Gray, Jean Green, Gary Grindal, Nicola Harris, Simon Harwood, Steve Hemingway, Cathryn Henry, Fiona Hill, Terry Hone, Tony Hunter, Lorna Kercher, David Levett, Bernard Lovewell, Ian Mantle, Paul Marment, Jim McNally, Lynda Needham, Janine Paterson, Frank Radcliffe, Mike Rice, Deepak Sangha, Ray Shakespeare-Smith, Harry Spencer-Smith, Martin Stears-Handscorn, Richard Thake, Terry Tyler and Michael Weeks

IN ATTENDANCE: David Scholes (Chief Executive), Norma Atlay (Strategic Director of Finance, Policy and Governance), Anthony Roche (Corporate Legal Manager) and Ian Gourlay (Committee and Member Services Manager)

ALSO PRESENT: 6 members of the public, including family of the incoming Chairman

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Bishop, Faye S. Frost, Steve Jarvis, Ben Lewis, Sandra Lunn, Gerald Morris, M.R.M. Muir, Valentine Shanley, Adrian Smith and Mrs C.P.A. Strong.

2 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2017/18

Nominations were invited by the retiring Chairman (Councillor John Booth) for the election of the Chairman of the Council to hold office until the next annual meeting of the Council in 2018.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Alan Millard be elected Chairman of the Council to hold office until the next Annual Meeting of the Council in 2018.

Councillor Alan Millard then read and signed the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the Chairman (Councillor John Booth) placed the chain of office upon him. Councillor Millard thanked the Council for his election as Chairman and took the Chair. He informed the Council that his consort for the year would be his wife, Maureen, and he invested her with her chain.

3 COUNCILLOR JOHN BOOTH - PAST CHAIRMAN

The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor John Booth for his service as Chairman during his term of office. He congratulated Councillor Booth on being a very able Chairman throughout his year of office, especially his chairing of some of the challenging Council meetings that had taken place during the year. He also thanked Councillor Booth's consort and wife, Helen, for the excellent refreshments she had provided following Council meetings held at the District Council Offices.

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Councillor Booth thanked Councillor Millard for his comments and for his support as Vice-Chairman during his time as Chairman. He commented that it had been a wonderful year, which he had thoroughly enjoyed.

Councillor Booth wished to record particular thanks to his wife and consort, Helen, and his Secretary, Amelia McNally, for their help and support during the Civic Year. He presented Helen and Amelia with bouquets of flowers as a mark of his thanks.

Councillor Booth was delighted to announce that, during his year in office, he had raised £1,080 for each of his chosen charities, namely Jackie's Drop-in Centre and the Hertfordshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre, both based in Letchworth Garden City. He invited Jackie Nealon (from Jackie's Drop-in Centre) and Mark Boscher (from the Hertfordshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre) to come forward and receive cheques for that amount.

It was moved by the Chairman, Councillor Alan Millard, seconded by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, and

RESOLVED: That the Council places on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to former Councillor John Booth for his services as Chairman of the Council during the past year.

4 APPOINTMENT OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2017/18

The Chairman asked for nominations for the appointment of Vice-Chairman of the Council to hold office until the next Annual Meeting of the Council in 2018.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, and seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, and

RESOLVED: That Councillor John Bishop be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council to hold office until the next Annual meeting of the Council in 2018.

The Chairman announced that Councillor Bishop had tendered his apologies for the meeting.

5 MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 11 April 2017 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) Declarations of Interest

The Chairman 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.

(2) New Councillor and Former Councillor re-elected

The Chairman congratulated and welcomed Councillor Sarah Dingley and welcomed back Councillor Ray Shakespeare-Smith following their by-election success at the Elections on 4 May 2017.

(3) Charities and Fundraising

The Chairman announce that his chosen charities for the year were Hitchin Helping Hands and Snappy Gs (a charity providing activities for young adults with learning disabilities), also based in Hitchin.

7 SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2017/18

The Council received a report of the Chief Executive on a proposed programme of ordinary meetings of the Council in 2017/2018.

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It was moved by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, and seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, that the programme of Council meetings for 2017/18 set out in the report be approved.

As an amendment, it was moved by Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, and seconded by Councillor Judi Billing, that the meeting scheduled for "Thursday, 31 August 2017" be replaced by "Thursday, 7 September 2017" to avoid meeting in the school holidays.

Following debate, a further amendment was moved by Councillor Frank Radcliffe, and seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham "That, for 2018/19 and future years, NHDC will avoid, wherever possible, arranging scheduled Council meetings during the school holidays."

Upon being put to the vote, this amendment was carried.

As a consequence, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis withdrew her earlier amendment.

Upon the substantive motion being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the following programme of ordinary meetings of the Council be approved for the Civic Year 2017/2018:

Wednesday, 19 July 2017;
Thursday, 31 August 2017;
Thursday, 23 November 2017;
Thursday, 18 January 2018;
Thursday, 8 February 2018;
Tuesday, 10 April 2018; and

- (2) That, for 2018/19 and future years, NHDC will avoid, wherever possible, arranging scheduled Council meetings during the school holidays.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable Members to agree a programme of ordinary meetings of the Council for 2017/2018.

8 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Council noted that the Leader of the Council for the period until May 2019 would be Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham.

9 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Council noted that the Leader of the Council had appointed Councillor Julian Cunningham as Deputy Leader for the 2017/2018 Civic Year.

10 APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE CABINET FOR 2017/18

The Leader of the Council presented a report which was tabled at the meeting, and which advised the Council of the proposed Cabinet Executive Members for 2017/2018. The report also contained details of the delegation arrangements for Executive Members, which would be incorporated into the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED: That it be noted that the following Members be appointed as Executive Members of the Cabinet for 2017/2018 responsible for the following areas, and with the delegations for inclusion in the Council's Constitution as detailed in the report tabled at the meeting:

Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham – Leader and Cabinet Chairman
Councillor Julian Cunningham – Executive Member for Finance & IT and Cabinet Vice-Chairman
Councillor Tony Hunter – Executive Member for Community Engagement & Rural Affairs
Councillor Jane Gray – Executive Member for Leisure
Councillor Bernard Lovewell – Executive Member for Housing & Environmental Health
Councillor Michael Weeks – Executive Member for Waste, Recycling & Environment
Councillor Ray Shakespeare-Smith – Executive Member for Policy, Transport & Green Issues

Councillor David Levett – Executive Member for Planning & Enterprise

11 TO APPOINT MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES FOR 2017/18

The Democratic Services Manager reported on the proposed allocation of places on the Council's Committees and other bodies for 2017/2018. He also tabled details of the political balance of Committees as required under the provisions of Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 which imposed a duty for the Council to review the representation of the different political groups on the Council's committees. He indicated the bodies to which the section applied and set out the proposed numbers of seats on these bodies and the suggested allocation of places that complied with the requirements of the law.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, and

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the seats allocated to each political party on the Committees to which Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 applied and the seats allocated to each political party on the bodies to which Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 did not apply be as set out in Appendix A to these Minutes; and
- (2) That Members be appointed to the various Committees and other bodies in accordance with the wishes of the individual groups, as detailed in Appendix B to these Minutes.

12 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES FOR 2017/18

The Council gave consideration to the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees (with the exception of Area Committees) for 2017/2018.

It was then moved by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, and

RESOLVED: That the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees for 2017/2018 be appointed in accordance with the details set out in the Appendix C to these Minutes.

13 ADJOURNMENT TO ENABLE THE APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN OF AREA COMMITTEES

The Chairman adjourned the meeting to enable the five Area Committees to meet to elect their respective Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen for 2017/2018.

The meeting was adjourned at 8.02pm.

The meeting was re-convened at 8.07pm.

14 KEY DECISIONS - ANNUAL REPORT ON CASES OF SPECIAL URGENCY

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham) submitted a report informing the Council of any occasions over the past year where the provisions relating to "Special Urgency" had been used in connection with the publication of an intention to make a Key Decision, as required by legislation.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that, during the 2016/2017 Financial Year, there had been one occasion upon which the "Special Urgency" powers had been used. The powers had been exercised by the Cabinet on 28 March 2017, in respect of decision concerning the acquisition of 14/15 Brand Street, Hitchin, in relation to the North Hertfordshire Museum Project at Hitchin Town Hall, as detailed in the report.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, and

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with Regulation 19 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

15 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Chairman Cathryn Henry) for the Civic Year 2016/2017 introduced the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which set out that Committee's activities over the year and the plans for continued improvement over the coming year.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented that the report was largely self-explanatory. She was honoured to have been re-appointed to the role of Chairman of the Committee for the 2017/18 Civic Year. Since taking up the role she had always endeavoured to keep the Committee abreast of emerging policy. She encouraged the Committee to be bolder and more insightful in its work over the coming year.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2016/2017 be noted.

16 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Standards Committee (Councillor Mike Rice) for the Civic Year 2016/2017 introduced the report, which set out that Committee's activities over the past year.

The Chairman of the Standards Committee advised that, previously, the Annual Meeting of the Council had received an oral report from him and previous Chairmen outlining the work of the Committee in the preceding Civic Year. In order to promote the work of the Committee and underline the importance of standards, the annual report would now be presented as a written report.

The Chairman of the Standards Committee stated that trust and confidence in Public office holders and institutions were important for the functioning of local authorities. All councillors were expected to live up to high standards of behaviour and demonstrating that they did so underpinned that confidence in local democracy. The document attached as Appendix A to the report sets out the work of the Committee and the Monitoring Officer during the 2016/17 Civic Year.

The Chairman of the Standards Committee commented that of particular note was the new Guide to the NHDC Code of Conduct, which provided a guide for Members as they carried out their roles and provided a source of reference when any alleged breaches. The guide could be found on the Council's website. Additionally, the complaints procedure had been reviewed, taking into account lessons learnt from dealing with a number of complaints since the introduction of the current standards regime in July 2012.

The Chairman of the Standards Committee advised that, looking ahead to 2017/18, it was intended to review the Member Code of Conduct and Register of Interests forms, to be reported to the Committee and then to Council if any changes were proposed.

The Chairman of the Standards Committee reminded Members of the training session which had been arranged for Wednesday, 24 May 2017 at 7.00pm and he encouraged them to attend.

The Chairman of the Standards Committee concluded by thanking the Independent Persons, Nicholas Moss and Peter Chapman, in assisting the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer. He also personally thanked the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer for the support and advice they had given the Standards Committee over the past year.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Annual Report of the Standards Committee, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be received and noted; and
- (2) That the issues being reviewed by the Standards Committee in 2017/18 be noted.

17 NOMINATION OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER BODIES FOR 2017/18

The Leader of the Council referred to the current position regarding District Council representatives on outside organisations, as detailed on the paper tabled at the meeting. The Political Groups had indicated those positions they wished to have allocated to them and there were a small number of issues to resolve. The Leader of the Council suggested that nominations be notified to the Democratic Services Manager in due course.

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It was moved by Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham, and seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, that the list of Nominations to Outside Organisations for 2017/2018 tabled at the meeting be approved.

Upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the list of nominations of representatives on Outside Organisations and Other Bodies for 2017/2018, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved; and
- (2) That Political Group Leaders notify the Democratic Services Manager of nominations to the remaining vacancies or any changes to the existing representatives on outside organisations

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
Thursday, 18 May 2017