

# NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

## MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices,  
Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City  
on Wednesday, 18th July, 2018 at 7.30 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors John Bishop (Chairman), Jean Green (Vice-Chairman), Ian Albert, Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Clare Billing, Brown, Val Bryant, Paul Clark, Sam Collins, Julian Cunningham, Bill Davidson, Steve Deakin-Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Sarah Dingley, Faye Frost, Nicola Harris, Cathryn Henry, Terry Hone, Mike Hughson, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Bernard Lovewell, Ian Mantle, Jim McNally, Paul Marmont, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Lisa Nash, Lynda Needham, Sue Ngwala, Oliver, Mike Rice, Martin Stears-Handscomb, Claire Strong and Michael Weeks

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources) and Hilary Dineen (Acting Committee and Member Services Manager)

**ALSO PRESENT:**

*At the commencement of the meeting approximately 4 members of the public, including 1 registered speaker.*

### 20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Barnard, Judi Billing, Gary Grindal, Simon Harwood, Ben Lewis, Janine Paterson, Deepak Sangha, Val Shanley and Terry Tyler.

### 21 MINUTES - 17 MAY 2018

It was moved by Councillor Lynda Needham, seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, and

**RESOLVED:** That, subject to Councillor Helen Oliver's name being corrected in the list of those present and the penultimate sentence of Minute 2 being amended to read "Councillor John Bishop then read and signed the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office and the Chairman (Councillor Alan Millard) placed the chain of office upon him.", the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 17 May 2018 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### 22 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No additional business was presented for consideration by the Council.

### 23 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) **Long Service Awards**

The Chairman paid tribute to Mark Scanes and Christina Corr, each of whom had each worked for the Council for 25 years or more as follows:

**(i) Mark Scanes**

25 years ago, Mark joined the Council as an Enforcement Officer in the then Legal and Administration Department. In 1990 he was “poached” by the Revenues and Benefits Service and joined as a Recovery Officer as part of an expanded Team to deal with the implementation of the Community Charge.

In 1992, Mark decided on a career change and became a management trainee, where, through his studies, he became an active member of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation where he served a term as Branch Chairman.

Mark’s next move was to become our Business Rates expert and he was heavily involved in the migration of the Rating system from the old mainframe platform to UNIX in 1998.

Mark’s organisational and management skills were put to good use in the lead up to the Transfer of the Council’s Housing Stock to North Hertfordshire Homes in 2003, when he carried out the role of Project Manager.

Having shown his aptitude for working with systems, Mark became Systems and Technical Manager in 2002 and as such he is responsible for the management of Revenues and Benefits application systems, including implementation of modules and upgrades, ensuring the system’s integrity and management of the annual billing process, which produces around 57,000 Council Tax Bills, and over 4,000 Business Rates Bills, with a combined collectable debit of over £140M and around 8,000 Benefit calculations.

Mark’s other main area of responsibility is the Income Management System, which administers all the Council’s incoming payments. Mark is also responsible for completing the department’s statutory returns, the most important of which is the annual Housing Benefit Subsidy Return, which is then subjected to intense scrutiny by external auditors.

Mark has been instrumental in developing multiple payment options for the Council’s customers, including payments using swipe cards, Debit and Credit Cards as well as promoting more traditional methods such as Direct Debit, where now the Council collects 80% of its Council Tax by Direct Debit, which has significantly reduced collection costs.

Mark is active at National User Groups, serving on the Northgate Revenues Product Group and he is Chairman of the CIVICA National and Strategic Working User Group.

Mark is a very active and valued member of the Team and his work over the years has significantly benefitted both customers and the Council.

**(ii) Christina Corr**

Christina began her career at NHDC on 11 September 1989 as a Benefit Assistant. Her progression to Benefits Assessor came within a few months.

As the Revenues and Benefits service merged Christina was asked to head Benefits Verification team. Christina lead the introduction of the software that allows Benefits Officers to access the Department of Work and Pension website to help speed up decision making on Housing Benefit applications

In 2001 Christina moved into the Systems and Technical Team as a Senior Technical Officer.

For many years Christina was the key lead officer in preparing the Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim and liaising with internal and external auditors to ensure its successful completion.

During this period Christina also became responsible for Housing and Council Tax Benefit (as it was known then) Appeals and become so proficient that she was seconded for two years to Broxbourne Borough Council to provide expert advice on Appeals.

Latterly Christina has been responsible for the Council's efforts to provide better joined-up working with the Department of Work and Pensions by taking responsibility for Single Housing Benefit Extract and Housing Benefit Debt Recoveries.

Christina is a valued member of the Team and her work over the years has benefitted both customers and the Council.

Councillor Lynda Needham stated that it was clear that both these members of staff worked in departments that had an excellent reputation within this Authority.

## **(2) 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.

It was moved by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Lynda Needham and it was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** That the Council places on record its sincere thanks to Mark Scanes and Christina Corr for their long and valuable service to local government in North Hertfordshire.

## **24 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Council was addressed by Mrs Kay Tart, Co-Founder of Hitchin Parents Against School Cuts.

Ms Tart thanked the Chairman for allowing her the opportunity to make this presentation.

She advised that Hitchin Parents Against School Cuts was a non-party political action group set up in response to the Government cuts to the education budget and stated:

We are parents of children at Purwell Primary school and we were first made aware of the detrimental effect of the decrease in funding in our local school when our Headteacher sent a letter home last year to let us know about the changes that we would notice as a result of this.

Following the recent publication of an article in the Comet in which secondary school Headteachers from Hitchin and North Hertfordshire had spoken out, concerned about the cuts and the need for action, we decided to establish this group to raise awareness of the serious effects of the funding cuts, and to express our concerns about the very real and current impact on school staff and children.

We formed our group just over four weeks ago and in the first two weeks, we gathered more than 1200 members in our Facebook group, a membership consisting of local parents, grandparents, carers and others in our community, including school staff.

Our group has the following aims:

1. To hold events to help spread awareness of the serious impact the funding cuts are having on our local schools.
2. To speak up in support of school staff and school leaders from schools in Hitchin, North Hertfordshire and across the country.
3. To generate support and involvement from parents, grandparents, carers, school leaders, teachers and support staff and anyone else who opposes the Government cuts to the education budget.
4. To advocate for the education budget to be restored, so that schools receive the funding they need to support every child.

We believe that parents are a powerful voice in the campaign against school funding cuts, and we stand in support of teachers, school leaders, our children and grandchildren and their schools.

We have been encouraged by the depth of feeling and the number of parents in our community who feel as we do about the effects of the Government cuts.

The support and interest in our group has developed rapidly, and our group grows daily.

As part of our united action, we have contacted all the headteachers in Hitchin, both primary and secondary, advertising a number of upcoming events, and inviting parents from their schools to get involved. The response has been very positive.

The first of these events was an Action Day with a market stall in Hitchin town square on Saturday 14th July, during which we spoke to members of the public to raise awareness and to build further support. We collected over 300 signatures on a petition asking our MP, Mr Bim Afolami, to bring this issue further up the political agenda and have since launched this petition online, where we expect it will gather many more signatures.

We are in the process of organising a schools' drive, and we have asked local schools for a list of items and resources that they are desperately short of so that we as a group can gather donations of these items as a way of supporting them.

We have invited all headteachers, school staff, parents and others in our town to an open meeting planned for the 3rd of October, to be held at Purwell School. We have extended the invitation to our MP, and he is aware of our group and the ways in which we are taking action. A large number of our group have already sent him emails and letters expressing our concerns, and several of our members were at the meeting Mr Afolami attended on Thursday, 5th July at The Priory School.

The government would like us to believe that our local schools are coping. They're not, and they need our help to raise awareness and gather further support. Head teachers have to make impossible decisions about where to spend their budgets. We were told by a school governor at our Action Day that the board of governors to which he belonged were working to save pennies on some items, so dire was the situation. We have also been told about local schools running out of resources like exercise books and glue sticks, which teachers have been providing out of their own salaries.

We feel very strongly that the current generation will not receive the education to which they are entitled if funding for state education does not improve. We were really pleased to hear that there would be a motion proposed this evening regarding education funding and hope that the council will support our group and campaign by lobbying the government, and by bringing this serious issue further up the funding agenda.

The Chairman thanked Ms Tart for her presentation.

**25 ITEM REFERRED FROM FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE: 18 JUNE 2018 - FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18**

The Council considered the Minute of the meeting of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee held on 18 June 2018, in respect of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2017/18. A copy of the report considered by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee was included with the agenda.

The Chairman of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (Councillor Hone) presented the report.

He advised Members of the role of the Committee, which had statutory functions such as to approve the Council's Statement of Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement and the Committee has the opportunity to challenge the financial risks of the Authority.

He thanked the Members and Substitutes of the Committee for their participation in the work of the Committee.

The report included an extensive list of items that they had considered during the year demonstrating that their responsibilities were quite extensive, with some referrals made to Cabinet and onto Council.

It was moved by Councillor Hone, seconded by Councillor McNally and

**RESOLVED:** That the Annual Report of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee 2017/18 be noted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To comply with the requirements of the Council's Constitution.

**26 ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET: 19 JUNE 2018 - RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE AND ANNUAL REPORT ON RISK MANAGEMENT 2017/18**

The Council considered the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19 June 2018, in respect of the Risk Management Update and Annual Report on Risk Management 2017/18. A copy of the report considered by the Cabinet was included with the agenda, as were the following appendices:

Appendix A - Corporate Risks

Appendix B - Annual Report on Risk Management 2017-18

The Executive Member for Finance and IT (Councillor Cunningham) introduced the report. He advised that Council was being asked to approve the Risk and Opportunities management report for 2017/18 and drew attention to the following:

The Council had a long standing formal approach to the identification and management of Risk in our operations with the most recent iteration of this approach being the Risk and Opportunities Management Strategy 2017/2020. This strategy required an annual report to Council on the operation of the system.

All managers within the Council were responsible for the proper identification and management of the risks and opportunities relevant to their operations and the system was overseen by the Controls, Risk and Performance Manager and the Risk Management Group.

Reports on the operation of the system were received quarterly by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee who referred changes and issues to Cabinet.

This report covered the following areas:

Section 3

Outlined changes to the major corporate risks during the year and the resultant actions taken.

Section 4

Highlighted the general approach to managing these risks.

Section 5

Covered the way in which the Council mitigated some of the risk through insurance and identified changes to the nature of our insurance during the year.

Section 6

Was an important section covering business continuity plans and was especially apposite during the year under review as the Council transferred its main operations from Town Lodge back to the DCO.

It was intended to update the resilience plan during the coming months now that this transfer was complete.

Section 7

Noted a couple of Health and Safety issues arising as part of the transfer of staff back to DCO that had since been addressed.

Sections 8 and 9

Considered the recommendations of SIAS as part of their review of the functioning of the service during 2016/17.

One of these, relating to the review of the structure of the Risk Management Group, remained outstanding, but would now be dealt with following the completion of the Senior Management Restructure.

Risk Management was critical to the effective management of any organisation and the Council had an effective Risk Management regime in place.

It was moved by Councillor Julian Cunningham, and seconded by Councillor Lynda Needham, that the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

Following debate, and upon being put to the vote, it was

**RESOLVED:** That the Annual Report on Risk and Opportunities Management 2017/18, as set out at Appendix B to the report, be approved.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To comply with the Risk and Opportunities Management Strategy, which stipulates that an Annual Risk Management report is taken to Council.

**27 ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET: 19 JUNE 2018 - REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2017/18**

The Council considered the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19 June 2018, in respect of the Revenue Budget Outturn 2017/18. A copy of the report considered by the Cabinet was included with the agenda.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT (Councillor Cunningham) introduced the report.

He advised that Cabinet approved the decrease in the final budget for the year of £422,000.

Cabinet also agreed to an increase in the budget set for 2018/19 of £346,000, largely made up of items carried forward from last year together with some relatively small variances on the original budget estimates for the year.

He assured members that Cabinet was concerned always about carry forward requests as was the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. Such requests were only authorised where Cabinet were satisfied that robust plans were in place to utilise the monies allocated.

The tables contained in the report were only those identified during the current reporting period and Table 1 on page 44 identified adjustments that had previously been agreed.

It was for Council to approve the transfer of £1.070m (net) to earmarked reserves and the major items contributing to this transfer were various government grants covering the payment of Housing and Council Tax reliefs and Homelessness. These were essentially funds that come and go through the reserve and the actual amounts held were largely down to timing differences between the time received and time paid out.

The only specific item was the £400,000 net increase in the Housing Planning Delivery Reserve. This was largely monies transferred from planning application fees received and was held against the costs of future work on the delivery of our local plan and dealing with appeals against planning decisions. Cabinet were of the view that it was necessary to build up this reserve as we go through the local plan process to ensure that we were best placed to facilitate actual delivery.

It was moved by Councillor Julian Cunningham, seconded by Councillor Lynda Needham, and following brief debate, and upon being put to the vote, it was

**RESOLVED:** That the net transfer to earmarked reserves of £1.070 million, as identified in Table 7 of the report, be approved.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To ensure that changes to the Council's balances are monitored and approved.

**28 ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET: 19 JUNE 2018 - ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2017/18**

The Council considered the Minute of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19 June 2018, in respect of Annual Treasury Management Review. A copy of the report considered by the Cabinet was included with the agenda, as was the following appendix:

Appendix A - Annual Treasury Management Review 2017-18

The Executive Member for Finance and IT (Councillor Cunningham) introduced the report.

He advised that it was part of the governance regime laid down by CIPFA that the Council was required to adopt a Treasury Management Report each year and to regularly report to Council regarding the operation of the adopted code and this was the final report for 2017/18.

The main highlights of the report were set out in the executive summary.

He assured Members that steps had been taken to avoid the recurrence of the minor breaches identified at Paragraph 1.3 of the report.

Much of the report followed a defined format and was concerned with Council's borrowing requirement and debt position.

Other than some minor historic borrowing, the Council had no outside debts and was still in possession of capital that could be used to fund its activities, mainly from the transfer of the Council's housing stock and the sale of various assets over the years, hence there was a negative capital financing requirement.

The generality of the treasury operation was unchanged from previous years, with funds available being invest in banks and building societies and some amounts in other Local Authorities.

Rigorous steps were taken to ensure to check the credit worthiness of other local authorities.

These investments were also primarily short term, although the Council did have some funds invested for long periods.

Whilst this report was largely technical, as the Council's position changed and borrowing became more prevalent, the input into this report would be very different, as the Government had, along with CIPFA, introduced further requirements into this code

It was moved by Councillor Julian Cunningham, and seconded by Councillor Lynda Needham, that the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

Upon being put to the vote, it was

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the actual 2017/18 prudential and treasury indicators be approved; and
- (2) That the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2017/18 be noted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To ensure the Council's continued compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the Local Government Act 2003 and that the Council manages its exposure to interest and capital risk.

**29 COUNCIL CONSTITUTION (CONFIRMATION OF AMENDMENTS) & FURTHER MINOR PROPOSED CHANGES**

The Council considered the report of the Service Director - Legal and Community and Monitoring Officer in respect of Council Constitution (Confirmation of Amendments) and Further Minor Proposed Changes. The following appendix was submitted with the report:

Appendix A – Delegated Decision 31 May 2018

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Needham) introduced the report.

She advised that this report followed on from the Annual Review report considered by Council on 10 April 2018.

It had been agreed that minor amendments associated with the Senior Management Restructure would be completed under delegated powers, since then further minor amendments were required, as detailed in Paragraph 8.3 of the report.

It was moved by Councillor Lynda Needham, and seconded by Councillor Julian Cunningham, that the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

Following brief debate, and upon being put to the vote, it was



**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the amendments made under delegated decision (with the agreement of the Leader) that came into effect on 1 June 2018 (as per Appendix A) be noted;
- (2) That the further minor amendments at paragraph 8.3 of the report be agreed.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:** To ensure the Council meets its statutory obligations and continues to improve its working practices.

**30 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b), five questions were submitted by Members by the deadline date for questions set out in the Council's Constitution.

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(f) – Maximum Number of Questions:

“A Member may ask only one question under 4.8.11(b) or 4.8.11(c) except with the consent of the Chairman of the Council, committee or sub-committee. The maximum number of questions that may be asked at any meeting of the Full Council is three. If there are multiple parts, then each will be treated as an individual question for the purposes of this Rule and if the number of questions exceeds three the questions to be asked shall be determined by ballot to be conducted by the Proper Officer. Any outstanding questions unable to be asked should be addressed in writing to the Proper Officer for a written response to be provided to all Members.”

Accordingly, a ballot was conducted on 13 July 2018 and the three questions set out below were selected at random. In accordance with the Constitution, written answers will be provided to all Members in respect of the questions that were unsuccessful in the ballot.

**(A) Waste Contract**

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b), the following question had been submitted by Councillor Lisa Nash to Councillor Michael Weeks (Executive Member for Waste, Recycling and Environment):

“What does the Council plan to do after the 3 month start up period of the waste contract should the delivery of the contract still be unsatisfactory?”

Councillor Weeks replied that, after the three month start up period, Council would be enforcing the performance monitoring framework in the contract.

This would result in performance related deductions where the contractor failed to meet performance targets.

The Council would also explore enforcing contractual remedies outside the performance monitoring framework.

Officers would take advice and guidance from Legal Services, because it was important to ensure that the Council acted lawfully and secured the best outcomes for the District.

As with all contractual problems, the Council would evaluate all the options, and this would include balancing factors such as costs, risks, effectiveness, legality and timescales.

In the meanwhile, the Council continued to work with the contractor to resolve the current issues.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Nash asked:

“How would this be reported back to Council?”.

Councillor Weeks asked the Monitoring officer to respond on his behalf.

The Monitoring Officer advised that issues would try to be resolved within the contractual dispute resolution mechanism within the contract. It was unlikely that this was something that would be reported in public, and if a report was necessary, it would likely be Part 2.

Councillor Needham pointed out that this was a joint contract and as such we would have to ensure that our partners were kept informed as well as Members of this Council.

### **(B) Rail Services**

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b), the following question had been submitted by Councillor Steve Jarvis to Councillor David Levett (Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise and Transport):

“Given the high number of commuters who live in the District, what action has NHDC taken to lobby for an adequate rail service?”

Councillor Levett replied that North Herts District Council had no direct control over rail services and no statutory duty to lobby on behalf of those who use it.

However, if the Council were to pass a resolution to do so, then it would do everything it could for those users.

In the meantime, NHDC had facilitated a number of meetings between MPs, Rail user groups and rail operators from the time of the initial consultations through to the present time and continued to do so.

The latest meeting would be held on 19 July 2018 where NHDC had assisted in organising a meeting between Letchworth Rail Users Group, Rt Hon Sir Oliver Heald MP and representatives from Govia.

### **(C) Air Quality**

In accordance with Standing Order 4.8.11(b), the following question had been submitted by Councillor Sam Collins to Councillor Bernard Lovewell (Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health).

“Given the high death rate due to poor air quality in this Country and with the North Herts & Central Beds Local Plans and HCC’s LTP4 what action do the Council plan to take to reduce the risk to local residents?”

Councillor Lovewell replied that, he agreed that poor air quality was a serious public health concern, however in North Hertfordshire there was a generally good and improving level of air quality.

Having said that, there were two hotspots in the District, both of them in Hitchin, where the levels of nitrogen dioxide marginally exceeded the prescribed limits set by the Government being Stevenage Road \*The Three Moorhens) and Paynes Park.

The readings taken at Paynes Park and submitted to the Government were currently below the limit prescribed.

In respect of what actions the Council could take to reduce the risks to residents, this was very comprehensively set out in the Air Quality Action Plan which was published in January 2018 following a public consultation. This Plan was on the NHDC website and had been for the last 6 months.

If after reading the document you still had concerns or queries, Councillor Lovewell stated that he would be pleased to discuss them. He would also arrange a meeting with the Council's expert, David Carr, to have a discussion on this subject.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Collins commented that the document mentioned was produced in January 2018 which was before the Local Plans for Central Beds or North Hertfordshire had completed the process they were going through and the County Council LTP4. He asked whether poor air quality was being fully considered as part of planning applications currently being processed, such as the project at Highover Farm and other large developments, as those would have a significant impact and exacerbate the problems and this did not seem to be covered in the Action Plan.

Councillor Lovewell stated that he begged to differ as the matter was well covered in the document. There was an Air Quality Policy (Policy P4), which had been accepted in the Local Plan. The Council also published guidance to support the implementation of this Policy.

It was therefore very firmly written into the policy to be considered when any planning application is considered.

Councillor Lovewell agreed that the increase in housing and the possible expansion of Luton Airport would put extra pressure on air quality, but there was a lot of work being undertaken regarding this.

The following questions were unsuccessful in the ballot, and will be dealt with by way of a written response from the Executive Members to all Members of the Council:

#### **14/15 BRAND STREET, HITCHIN**

Councillor Paul Clark to Councillor Tony Hunter (Executive Member for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs):

"How Long will the CPO process take to secure 14/15 Brand Street?"

#### **PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

Councillor Ruth Brown to Councillor David Levett (Executive Member for Planning, Enterprise and Transport):

"Has Parking Enforcement Officer capacity been reduced in the last 12 months?"

*Note: The responses to the two questions requiring a written response are attached as Appendix A to these Minutes*

### **31 NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

#### **(A) Plastic Free Letchworth**

Due notice having been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12, it was moved by Councillor Michael Weeks and seconded by Councillor Lynda Needham:

“That this Council pass a motion which supports the principle of an initiative entitled “Plastic Free Letchworth”, which is committed to plastic free alternatives, to be extended to include any other Towns or areas in North Herts without the matter needing to be the subject of a separate resolution, should any other areas wish to subscribe to such an initiative.

In agreeing such a motion, it is noted that such an initiative would have no specific cost implications for the Council.

Further, the motion seeks the approval to nominate a Member to the Letchworth Strategic Group, once this has been established (subject to the normal governance checks with the body prior to this being confirmed).”

Following debate and upon being put to the vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:**

That this Council supports the principle of an initiative entitled “Plastic Free Letchworth”, which is committed to plastic free alternatives, to be extended to include any other Towns or areas in North Herts without the matter needing to be the subject of a separate resolution, should any other areas wish to subscribe to such an initiative.

In agreeing such a motion, it is noted that such an initiative would have no specific cost implications for the Council.

Further, it approves the nomination of a Member to the Letchworth Strategic Group, once this has been established (subject to the normal governance checks with the body prior to this being confirmed).

**(B) Single Use Plastics**

Due notice having been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12, it was moved by Councillor Sam Collins and seconded by Councillor Paul Clark that:

“Council Instructs the Chief Executive to produce an action plan to:

- a) Minimise the Council's use of plastics and to eliminate the use of single use plastics by the end of 2019.
- b) Require all of the council's suppliers and contractors to remove single use plastics from their products and packaging as soon as possible, but within 5 years.
- c) Work with local businesses and retailers to
  1. eliminate the use of single use plastic within the local authority area
  2. reduce the use of plastic in packaging and work towards the removal of plastic from packaging
  3. encourage them to require their suppliers to remove plastic from their products and from packaging.

We also call on the Council to work with other public bodies and large employers to inform people of the environmental damage caused by plastics and promoting the reasons for using the alternatives.”

It was moved by Councillor Michael Weeks and seconded by Councillor Lynda Needham that Part A of the motion be amended to read:

“Minimise the Council's use of plastics and to eliminate the use of single use plastics and replace with sustainable alternatives as soon as possible.”

Following debate and upon being put to the vote, the amendment to Part A of the motion was carried.

It was moved by Councillor Sam Collins and seconded by Councillor Paul Clark that Part A of the motion be amended to read:

“Minimise the Council's use of plastics and to eliminate the use of single use plastics and replace with sustainable alternatives by 2022.”

Following debate and upon being put to the vote, the amendment to Part A of the motion was carried.

It was moved by Councillor Michael Weeks and seconded by Councillor Lynda Needham that Part B of the motion be amended to read:

“Request all of the council's suppliers and contractors to remove single use plastics from their products and packaging as soon as possible.”

The Service Director – Legal and Community advised that the Council would not be able to pre-qualify contractors regarding their use of single use plastics, unless it was relevant to the performance of that contract. This also applied to the evaluation stage as this could only be used if it related to the performance of the contract.

Following debate and upon being put to the vote, the amendment to Part B of the motion was carried.

The whole motion as amended was put to the vote and it was:

**RESOLVED:**

That the Chief Executive be instructed to produce an action plan to:

- a) Minimise the Council's use of plastics and to eliminate the use of single use plastics and replace with sustainable alternatives by 2022.
- b) Request all of the council's suppliers and contractors to remove single use plastics from their products and packaging as soon as possible.
- c) Work with local businesses and retailers to
  1. eliminate the use of single use plastic within the local authority area
  2. reduce the use of plastic in packaging and work towards the removal of plastic from packaging
  3. encourage them to require their suppliers to remove plastic from their products and from packaging.

The Council will also work with other public bodies and large employers to inform people of the environmental damage caused by plastics and promoting the reasons for using the alternatives.”

**(C) Rail Users**

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Helen Oliver declared that she would be chairing the Rail Users Group meeting on 19 July 2018. Having sought advice, this was not such as to prevent her from taking part in the debate and vote as she was not a member of that group.

Due notice having been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12, it was moved by Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg and seconded by Councillor Daniel Allen that:

“This Council recognises the continued problems residents are facing travelling on the rail network through the District. It is unacceptable that passengers have suffered two months of disruption. It welcomes the work of the local Rail Users Groups to highlight the issues and will continue to work with them to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

This Council agrees to lobby all local MPs, the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Govia Thameslink Railway to ensure rapid progress towards an acceptable level of service.

We will further press for the parties to conduct a thorough “lessons learnt” exercise to avoid even more disruption at the next timetable change point in December 2018”.

Councillor David Levett asked that the proposer agree to add the words “continue to” after the words “This Council agrees to” at the second paragraph so that it read:

“This Council agrees to continue to lobby all local MPs, the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Govia Thameslink Railway to ensure rapid progress towards an acceptable level of service.”

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg accepted the proposed amendment.

Following debate and upon being put to the vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:**

That this Council recognises the continued problems residents are facing travelling on the rail network through the District. It is unacceptable that passengers have suffered two months of disruption. It welcomes the work of the local Rail Users Groups to highlight the issues and will continue to work with them to achieve a satisfactory resolution.

This Council agrees to continue to lobby all local MPs, the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Govia Thameslink Railway to ensure rapid progress towards an acceptable level of service.

**(D) Garden Waste**

Due notice having been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12, it was moved by Councillor Lisa Nash and seconded by Councillor Ruth Brown that:

“Council notes that those residents who have paid for the garden waste collection service did not initially receive the service for which they paid and believes that they should be offered the option of a refund or an extension of the service period at no additional cost to reflect this.”

It was moved and seconded that the motion be amended to read:

“Council notes that those residents who have paid for the garden waste collection service did not initially receive the service for which they paid. Council commits to consideration of appropriate redress to reflect this.”

Following comprehensive debate and upon being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:**

That Council notes that those residents who have paid for the garden waste collection service did not initially receive the service for which they paid.

That Council commits to consideration of appropriate redress to reflect this.

**(E) Education Funding**

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Kate Aspinwall declared an interest in that she worked for Herts for Learning who were directly affected by this issue.

Prior to the item being discussed Councillor Val Bryant declared an interest in that she was a teacher at Knights Templar School, Baldock, who were directly affected by this issue.

The Service Manager – Legal and Community advised that on the information provided at the meeting as this was a potential disclosable pecuniary interest, Councillor Kate Aspinwall and Councillor Val Bryant should leave the room for the duration of the debate and vote.

Councillors Aspinwall and Bryant left the room.

Due notice having been given in accordance with Standing Order 4.8.12, it was moved by Councillor Helen Oliver and seconded by Councillor Sue Ngwala: that:

“This Council notes the concern expressed recently by head teachers in North Herts and the recent communication to all Councillors from a group of parents regarding the effects of funding reductions on the education of children in our schools, leading to basic provisions being unavailable.

It welcomes and supports the initiative of these parents and agrees to raise these concerns with the County Council and Department of Education.”

An amended motion was tabled at the meeting. It was moved by Councillor Helen Oliver and seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn:

That the first paragraph of the above motion be replaced with:

“This Council note the serious concerns raised by the Hitchin parents’ group and recent correspondence from North Herts Head Teachers as to the profound effects of school funding cuts on staffing levels as well as basic resources.”

Following debate and upon being put to the vote, the amended motion was carried unanimously.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED:**

That this Council note the serious concerns raised by the Hitchin parents’ group and recent correspondence from North Herts Head Teachers as to the profound effects of school funding cuts on staffing levels as well as basic resources.

It welcomes and supports the initiative of these parents and agrees to raise these concerns with the Department of Education.

The meeting closed at 9.32 pm