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## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### COUNCIL

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF  
ON TUESDAY, 13TH JANUARY, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

### MINUTES

**Present:** *Councillors: Keith Hoskins MBE (Chair), Sadie Billing (Vice-Chair), Clare Billing, Ian Albert, Daniel Allen, Amy Allen, David Barnard, Ruth Brown, Cathy Brownjohn, Val Bryant, Rhona Cameron, Jon Clayden, Ruth Clifton, Sam Collins, Mick Debenham, Emma Fernandes, Steve Jarvis, Tim Johnson, Chris Lucas, Sarah Lucas, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Bryony May, Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Michael Muir, Lisa Nash, Sean Nolan, Steven Patmore, Louise Peace, Vijaiya Poopalasingham, Martin Prescott, Emma Rowe, Claire Strong, Tamsin Thomas, Tom Tyson, Paul Ward, Laura Williams, Alistair Willoughby, Stewart Willoughby, Claire Winchester, Dave Winstanley, Donna Wright and Daniel Wright-Mason.*

**In Attendance:** *Isabelle Alajooz (Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer), Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Anthony Roche (Chief Executive) and Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager).*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting there were 2 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

#### 61 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

*Audio recording – 1 minute 07 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Chalmers, Matt Barnes, Elizabeth Dennis, Joe Graziano, Sean Prendergast, Tina Bhartwas and Dominic Griffiths.

#### 62 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

*Audio recording – 1 minute 44 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

#### 63 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Audio recording – 1 minute 48 seconds*

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) The Chair reminded Members that the Council had declared both a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency. These are serious decisions, and mean 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 advised that the normal procedure rules in respect of debate and times to speak will apply.
- (5) The Chair advised that 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution did not apply to this meeting. A comfort break would be held at an appropriate time, should proceedings continue at length.

*N.B. Councillor David Barnard left the Chamber at 19.32.*

#### 64 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 22 seconds*

There was no public participation.

#### 65 ELECTION OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 27 seconds*

Councillor Laura Williams proposed Councillor Val Bryant as Leader of the Council. This was seconded by Councillor Nigel Mason.

*N.B. Councillors Steven Patmore, Sam Collins entered the Chamber and David Barnard returned to the Chamber at 19.35.*

As part of the Debate, Councillor Ralph Muncer noted that his Group had voted to defend democratic processes in removing the previous leader. He noted that whilst the Conservatives would not support the nomination, they would not oppose it either, and would take the same action to remove the new Leader if the will of Council was not listened to.

Having been proposed and seconded, and following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That Councillor Val Bryant be elected as the Leader of the Council.

In response to being elected Leader of the Council, Councillor Val Bryant noted that:

- She wanted to thank Councillor Daniel Allen for his work as previous Leader of the Council and the Council staff for navigating through the difficult weeks since the vote of no confidence.
- She would be the continuity candidate and would continue with the Council Plan and Council Delivery Plan in place.
- The work of Officers at the Council was the reason why objectives in the Council Plan were still being achieved and work delivered.
- Councillor Sean Nolan would be the new Deputy Leader of the Council.

Councillor Claire Strong congratulated Councillor Bryant on her election and noted it was right for her to take over as previous Deputy Leader. It was important that the will of Council was adhered to, as the consequences of losing the confidence of the Chamber were now known.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm

Chair