OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2026

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Spotlight Review: Parking Strategy 2019-2031 - Draft Scope

REPORT OF: The Scrutiny Officer

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: All Priorities

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is to update Members on the progress towards establishing a Spotlight Review to assess whether North Herts Council's Parking Strategy 2019–2031 remains effective and fit for purpose considering changing travel patterns, climate priorities and development pressures.

It proposes that the core elements of the scope for the proposed group be endorsed including: the title, objectives of the review, the key lines of enquiry, timeframe and methodology.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

2.1. Review and comment on the draft scoping document as attached at Appendix 1.

2.2. Endorse the principles of the scope, attached at Appendix 1, and approve consultation with Group Leaders to appoint members and a Chair for the Spotlight Review.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To ensure that the final scoping document takes into account suggestions from Members and relevant Officers.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. At the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programming session on Tuesday 12 May 2026, Members agreed to investigate the effectiveness of the current Council Parking Strategy 2019–2031.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. This report has been submitted to the Committee prior to the appointment of any members and a Chair to the Spotlight Review, to allow for additional consultation with Members and relevant Officers.

5.2. The Director of Place and Transport Parking and Projects Manager have been consulted to help develop the scope.

6. FORWARD PLAN

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

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. At the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programming session on Tuesday 12 May 2026, Members agreed to investigate the effectiveness of the current Council Parking Strategy 2019–2031.

7.2. Following an internal restructure, the Place Director is recruiting for the revised Parking Services Manager post, whose responsibility will include undertaking any future updates to the Council's Parking Strategy.

7.3. Ahead of this, it has been considered by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and the Director of Place, that a Spotlight Review into the current Parking Strategy 2019-2031 would be beneficial to identify any necessary changes to meet the needs of the residents and businesses of North Hertfordshire, as well as North Herts Council itself.

7.4. The existing strategy was adopted in 2019 and is now more than halfway through its lifespan, while the context in which it operates has changed substantially.

7.5. The lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel and town-centre activity, stronger policy commitments on climate change and sustainable transport, planned development—including the Churchgate redevelopment in Hitchin—and evolving expectations from residents and businesses are creating new pressures on parking provision. It is therefore timely to test whether the strategy still reflects current practice, meets the needs of North Hertfordshire's communities and businesses, and provides a sound basis for future council decisions and investment.

7.6. Using council data and stakeholder evidence, the Spotlight review will examine implementation, parking provision and usage, local needs, financial sustainability and links to sustainable travel. The findings will inform an evidence-led update to the strategy and recommendations to Council.

7.7. The outline scope for the Spotlight review was discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on Tuesday 8 September 2026.

7.8. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has drafted the outline scope for the Spotlight review.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. Paragraph 6.2.7(u) of the Council's Constitution enables the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: *To appoint time limited task and finish groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet/Council/relevant Executive Member*.

8.2. Scrutiny reviews are known by different names depending upon the duration of the review. Often a Task and Finish Group spans several months, whereas a review that takes place in a day is called a Spotlight review or an inquiry day, but the scoping process, Member involvement and reporting process remain the same.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Overview and Scrutiny Committees were established by the Local Government Act 2000 (s.9) (amended by the Localism Act 2011).

9.2. Section 6 of the Council's Constitution set out the Council's obligations with regard to scrutiny.

9.3. A Spotlight review is an informal group, which undertakes scrutiny work, but is not covered by legislation. Section 6.2.7(u) of the Council's Constitution, however, permits the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to: *appoint time limited task and finish groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet.*

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. As detailed in Section 15, Human Resource Implications, the wider the reach, the more significant the impact on officer time in terms of report writing, data analysis and meeting attendance. Given recent funding pressures and the consequent reduction in officer numbers, significant requests to support scrutiny work will limit officer time available to spend on activities such as identifying and delivering cost reductions, income generation and project management.

10.2. Although not significant, a committee attendance allowance of £25.17 per officer per evening meeting is payable to officers in attendance. This is in addition to providing time off in lieu, or overtime as an alternative.

10.3. It is proposed that to limit the financial implications and impact on other workloads associated with this review that meetings be conducted during normal working hours and, where possible, are held remotely.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1. Good risk management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.

11.2. Effective overview and scrutiny of policy, administrative, service delivery and the scope and time frame for scrutiny interventions should be considered in the light of the potential impact of inappropriate scrutiny leading to decisions not being made, inappropriately made, or not made at the right time.

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. There are no known equalities implications or requirements that apply to this report. Effective scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable and open which ensures that the delivery of public services benefits all aspects of the community, where practical.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 The widening of the reach of scrutiny reviews has the potential to significantly impact on officer time in terms of the reprioritisation of already agreed projects, their scope or timetabling and resources. There is also the potential for additional resource requirements in relation to report writing, information collection and analysis and committee attendance. Delivery of service plans to achieve the Council's agreed Corporate Plan objectives might, therefore, be potentially negatively impacted. The input of relevant officers in consultation is therefore essential to ensure that the scope of the review remains deliverable with current resources.

16. APPENDICES

16.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Parking Strategy 2019 to 2031 Spotlight Review v1

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1. Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on Tuesday 8 September 2026, at which the Spotlight Review was discussed - Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 8th September, 2026, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council