

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES,
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON TUESDAY, 17TH DECEMBER, 2019 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors Martin Stears-Handscomb (Chairman), Paul Clark (Vice-Chairman), Ian Albert, Judi Billing, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Gary Grindal, Keith Hoskins, Steve Jarvis, Ruth Brown, Ian Mantle and Sean Prendergast*

In Attendance: *David Scholes (Chief Executive), Anthony Roche (Deputy Chief Executive), Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Ian Fullstone (Service Director - Regulatory), Howard Crompton (Service Director - Customers), Vaughan Watson (Service Director - Place), Nigel Smith (Strategic Planning Manager), Geraldine Goodwin (Revenues Manager), Andrew Mills (Service Manager - Greenspace), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), Peter Lapham (Interim Property Consultant) and Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager)*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting Councillor Sam Collins and approximately 3 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

59 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 30 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Helen Oliver, Carol Stanier and Kay Tart.

60 MINUTES - 31 OCTOBER 2019

Audio Recording – 43 seconds

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2019 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman.

61 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 1 minute 15 seconds

There was no other business notified.

62 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 1 minute 20 seconds

(1) The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting;

- (2) The Chairman advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded;
- (3) The Chairman reminded those present that the Council had declared a Climate Emergency. This was a serious decision and meant 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.
- (4) The Chairman 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;
- (5) The Chairman asked that Officers announce their name and their designation to the meeting when invited to speak;
- (6) The Chairman advised that he was changing the order of items and would be taking Item 13 - Introduction of Charges for Use of Greenspaces at the end of the agenda.

63 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Review of Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum

Audio recording – 2 minutes 41 seconds

The Chairman advised that, repeating the words of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when considering this subject, he would ask that speakers act courteously and with respect and refrain from personal remarks or disrespect to any person.

Ms Jackie McDonald thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address Cabinet and she made a verbal presentation as follows:

- She created the Future of Hitchin Town Hall and Museum social media group in February 2016;
- This was a campaigning pressure group that sought to bring about a lasting resolution to the unopened facility;
- The project was fraught with controversy, delay and a breakdown in communication between Hitchin Town Hall Ltd, John Robinson and the Chief Executive;
- It was obvious that Mr Robinson had too much sole responsibility and consequently failed to manage the project properly;
- He failed to deal with problems as they arose and made it difficult for HTH Ltd to attend meetings;
- A wall was built across the stage and listed building consent was retrospectively applied for;
- The Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council were out of their depth with the project;
- HTH Ltd and Hitchin Initiative were kept in the dark about progress on the project;
- She thanked HTH Ltd and HTH Finance for securing 14/15 Brand Street;
- Much more could have been done to keep community groups informed;
- Hopefully lessons had been learnt.

The Chairman thanked Ms McDonald for her presentation.

The Chairman advised that two further members of the public, Mr David Leal-Bennett and Mr Stephen Pike, had had registered to speak although they indicated that they were unable to attend this evening.

The Local Plan

Audio recording – 7 minutes 51 seconds

Mr Roger Lovegrove thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a verbal presentation as follows:

- He was aware that it was hoped that the Local Plan would be adopted early in the new year;
- NHDC should consider deleting the 5 proposed new estates on the outskirts of Stevenage, Hitchin, Luton, Letchworth and Baldock;
- NHDC should consider developing a new town in place of these estates;
- The new estates would be unlikely to meet current sustainability expectations;
- Since the Local Plan was initiated in 2017 a lot had changed including;
 - Parliament had declared a climate emergency;
 - NHDC had declared a climate emergency;
 - Extinction Rebellion had woken everyone up to the need to take urgent action regarding climate change more seriously;
 - NHDC had a number of new Councillors;
 - Parliament had 109 new Conservative MPs;
 - The new Government came to power on a manifesto of climate change
- The sites were chosen for what could be built in the timescale rather than any measure of sustainability criteria;
- There was a new Oxford – Cambridge rail line planned;
- Most occupants of the new estates would likely be commuters and would likely have 1 or 2 cars per household. This would increase parking problems locally and cause more issues at the bottleneck on the A1 at Welwyn;
- In a new town residents could be within walking distance of a town centre and train station and be more conducive to social housing;
- A new town could be built in Ashwell, but a better site would be Tempsford in Bedfordshire;
- The A1M and rail bottlenecks at Welwyn had not been mentioned in NHDCs response to the EEH Outline Transport Strategy Consultation;
- NHDC should ask the Government for an extension to the Local Plan in order to plan, in conjunction with Bedfordshire a new sustainable town.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lovegrove for his presentation.

64 ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Audio recording – 14 minutes 37 seconds

A Item Referred from Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 23 October 2019 – Review of the Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project

The Chairman advised Members that the report considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had an Appendix B – Comments of the Senior Management Team attached which, having discussed the matter with the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive and considered terms of reference and recent practice, was convinced that this was presented to the Committee in good faith based on the most recent practice. This was not a normal Task and Finish Group and therefore he felt that the appendix was inappropriate in this case and therefore would not be considered by Cabinet.

There was a more collaborative way of working and therefore it was not expected that this issue would occur again in the future.

The Terms of reference in respect Task and Finish Groups needed to be reviewed.

The two registered speakers had circulated a paper to Members of Cabinet which referred to the Appendix previously mentioned. As the Appendix was not being considered it was not appropriate to consider the circulated paper.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the referral from the meeting of the Committee held on 23 October 2019 regarding the Review of the Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project.

He thanked the Panel members and the Independent Chairman for the work they had undertaken.

The Committee spent a great deal of time considering the report of the Panel and made the following recommendations:

1. That the Report of the Hitchin Town Hall Review Panel, (Appendix A) be reviewed and the recommendations, as contained in part D of the report, be accepted.
2. That the following recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be considered:
 - (i) When reviewing the recommendations of the Hitchin Town Hall Review Panel the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be taken into account, particularly the way in which the Council works with Community Groups/Partners;
 - (ii) Ensure that a robust system of mediation is established;
 - (iii) That an effective intervention process is put into place that results in suitable progressive remedial action following any mediation;
 - (iv) That dedicated Project Management is put in place that is adequately resourced as recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - (v) That a summarised version of the recommendations, (Part D of the Report) is incorporated into all large briefing documents to enable the production of a Code of Conduct which could inform any future projects;
 - (vi) That a clear Intervention Protocol is written and adopted within a reasonable timescale, and included within the Terms of Reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (a separate stand-alone paragraph that the Committee will understand to be the process followed when it is deemed necessary for a decision regarding a project is "called in"); and
 - (vii) That the Council's Procurement Procedures are reviewed as part of the review of the Constitution and continue to be followed and updated regularly to ensure it is adequately robust.

The Chairman invited Mr John Richardson (Independent Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum) to address Cabinet.

The Independent Chair advised that:

- He was grateful for the generally positive response to both the process and the content;
- The Panel did not make judgements on some of the divisive issues;
- The recommendations were, in some ways, pushing at an open door and stating the obvious;
- The recommendations were based on evidence at the hearings taking into account perceptions, values and views.

The Chairman thanked Mr Richardson and the Panel for their work.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Paul Clark;
- Councillor Judi Billing;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis.

Members were keen that the recommendations were carried forward and acted upon.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb, seconded by Councillor Paul Clark and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Report of the Hitchin Town Hall Review Panel, (Appendix A) be noted and the recommendations, as contained in part D of the report, be accepted;
- (2) That the following recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be accepted:
 - (i) That the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, particularly the way in which the Council works with Community Groups/Partners be noted;
 - (ii) That a robust system of mediation be established;
 - (iii) That an effective intervention process that results in suitable progressive remedial action following any mediation be put into place;
 - (iv) That dedicated Project Management that is adequately resourced, as recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be put into place;
 - (v) That a summarised version of the recommendations, (Part D of the Report) be incorporated into all large briefing documents to enable the production of a Code of Conduct which could inform any future projects;
 - (vi) That a clear Intervention Protocol be written and adopted within a reasonable timescale, and included within the Terms of Reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (a separate stand alone paragraph that the Committee will understand to be the process followed when it is deemed necessary for a decision regarding a project is "called in"); and
 - (vii) That the Council's Procurement Procedures be reviewed as part of the review of the Constitution and continue to be followed and updated regularly to ensure it is adequately robust.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To enable Cabinet to comment on and consider the recommendations regarding the review into Hitchin Town Hall and District Wide Museum Project.

B Referral from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee – 5 December 2019- Draft Budget 2020/21

RESOLVED: That the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 December 2019 regarding the Draft Budget 2020/21 be considered with Item 9 (Minute 67 refers).

C Referral from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee – 5 December 2019 - Second Quarter Revenue Monitoring 2019/20;

RESOLVED: That the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 December 2019 regarding Second Quarter Revenue Monitoring 2019/20 be considered with Item 10 (Minute 68 refers).

D Referral from Finance, Audit and Risk Committee - Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Mid-Year Review 2019/20.

RESOLVED: That the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 December 2019 regarding Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Mid-Year Review 2019/20 be considered with Item 11 (Minute 69 refers).

65 STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

Audio recording – 37 minutes 36 seconds

The Executive Member for Planning and Transport presented the report entitled Strategic Planning Matters together with the following appendix:

- Appendix A – NHDC response to EEH Outline Transport Strategy Consultation.

The Executive Member for Planning and Transport advised Cabinet that:

- NHDC had responded to the Inspectors comments regarding the Local Plan. His reply was expected in January 2020 and additional hearings would likely take place in March 2020;
- In response to Mr Lovegrove's comments (Minute 64 refers), The Inspector was now in control of the Local Plan and therefore no action could be taken;
- The development of a new settlement was considered during the Local Plan process, however there was a long lead time to a new settlement;
- The Cabinet Panel on the Environment had requested that NHDC respond objecting to the proposal for expansion of London Luton Airport;
- London Luton Airport had given an extension to the Consultation period and Cabinet was asked for permission to respond objecting to the expansion;
- A large amount of traffic for London Luton Airport passed through North Herts.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Steve Jarvis;

In response to questions the Executive Member for Planning and Transport advised;

- That the response to the consultation regarding London Luton Airport would be put on the Council's website;
- If London Luton Airport chose to continue with their proposals there would be an opportunity for more detailed responses to consultations;
- That all opportunities to develop policies taking into account climate change issues would be taken.

It was proposed by Councillor Paul Clark, seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report on strategic planning matters be noted;
- (2) That the submission in Appendix A be noted:

- (3) That the use of Conservation Area Character Statements for Ashwell, Barkway, Barley, Bendish, Codicote, Croft Lane, Ickleford, Norton, Reed, Roe Green, Rushden, Sandon, Southern Green, Wallington, Whitwell and Therfield, as listed in paragraph 8.4.2 of this report as material considerations in decision making for planning applications and in the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans be endorsed;
- (4) That the Strategic Director – Regulatory, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport, be requested to respond to the consultation regarding the expansion of London Luton Airport on behalf of the Council stating that NHDC objects to the proposals for expansion.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To keep Cabinet informed of recent development on strategic planning matters and progress on the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

66 PRESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINERS REPORT

Audio recording – 47 minutes 33 seconds

The Executive Member for Planning and Transport presented the report entitled Preston Neighbourhood Plan Examiners Report together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A - Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan – Independent Examiner’s Report;
- Appendix B - Schedule of the examiner’s proposed modifications and responses.

It was proposed by Councillor Paul Clark, seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb and

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the examiner’s report for the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan should be noted;
- (2) That following the inclusion of the Examiner’s proposed modifications and one minor modification set out in paragraph 4.2 to the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan, as set out in Appendix B, be approved to proceed to a referendum;
- (3) That the Counting Officer be instructed to conduct a referendum on the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan;
- (4) That the decision to “make” the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan be delegated to the Service Director – Regulatory in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: To progress the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan, enable a referendum to take place and, if more than 50% of those voting in favour of the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan to “make” the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

67 DRAFT BUDGET 2020/21

Audio recording – 48 minutes 25 seconds

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Draft Budget 2020/21 together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A - Full list of Revenue Savings and Investments;
- Appendix B - Comments on new Revenue proposals from budget workshops;
- Appendix C - Full proposed Capital Programme.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT proposed that recommendation 2.1 be amended to read:

“That Cabinet note the funding forecasts for 2020/21 onwards, and that (especially significant for 2021/22 onwards) these will be subject to change”

He further advised that:

- There was a one-year settlement for 20/21 giving a degree of certainty for that year, however this meant some uncertainty for future years;
- This was the first draft of the budget a further report would be considered by Cabinet in January 2020;
- The capital programme (excluding property investment acquisitions) could be afforded without a need to borrow;
- There was a need for the Council to start to plan now for future projects;
- As the opportunity for any further efficiencies is expected to be very limited, it is proposed that this will include a review of all current spend identifying those areas which are discretionary services or services that are delivered in excess of the statutory requirement.

The Chairman drew attention to the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 December 2019 and noted that no additional recommendations to those in the report had been made.

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn;
- Councillor Judi Billing;

Councillor Judi Billing proposed that R26 – Additional Community Engagement Officer post be removed from the New Revenue Pressures and Investment Proposals (Appendix B).

It was moved by Councillor Ian Albert, seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet note the funding forecasts for 2020/21 onwards, and that (especially significant for 2021/22 onwards) these will be subject to change;
- (2) That the comments made at the budget workshops in regard to the draft budget be noted;
- (3) That the comments made at the budget workshops in regard to the inclusion of the capital investments in the draft budget be noted;
- (4) That the risk in relation to the timing of capital receipts and that this might result in a need to borrow for capital purposes, which would result in additional revenue costs to those already reflected be noted;
- (5) That it be noted that Council Tax increases for 2020/21 will be in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (i.e. the maximum amount allowed without the need for a local referendum).
- (6) That it be approved that the funding surplus in 2020/21 be transferred to a funding equalisation reserve. This reserve will then be released in future years to help balance the budget;

- (7) That the need to start budget planning for 2021/22 (and beyond) early in the new financial year (2020/21) and the proposed process be noted;
- (8) That R26 – Additional Community Engagement Officer post be removed from the New Revenue Pressures and Investment Proposals (Appendix B).

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that all relevant factors are taken in to consideration when arriving at a proposed budget for 2020/21, to be considered by Full Council on 6 February 2020;
- (2) To ensure that the medium term impacts of decisions are considered, and how a balanced budget will be set for future years.

68 SECOND QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING 2019/20

Audio recording – 1 hour 2 minutes 10 seconds

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Second Quarter Revenue Monitoring 2019/20.

The Chairman drew attention to the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 December 2019 and noted that no additional recommendations to those in the report had been made.

It was moved by Councillor Ian Albert, seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report entitled Second Quarter Monitoring 2019/20 be noted;
- (2) That the changes to the 2019/20 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a £360k decrease in net expenditure be approved;
- (3) That the changes to the 2020/21 General Fund budget, as identified in table 3 and paragraph 8.2, a £188k increase in net expenditure be noted. These will be incorporated in the draft revenue budget for 2020/21;
- (4) That the write-off of the debtor invoice of £130,566.75 raised to CoinCo International PLC in January 2015, as explained in paragraph 8.3 be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS: Members are able to monitor, make adjustments within the overall budgetary framework and request appropriate action of Services who do not meet the budget targets set as part of the Corporate Business Planning process.

69 INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) MID-YEAR REVIEW 2019/20

Audio recording – 1 hour 5 minutes 31 seconds

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Mid-Year Review 2019/20 together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A - Capital Programme Detail including Funding 2018/19 onwards;
- Appendix B - Treasury Management Update.

The Executive Member for Finance and IT proposed that recommendation 2.4 be amended to read:

“Cabinet recommends to Council that it is asked to note the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2019.”

He thanked the Service Director – Resources and his tem for all of their work regarding the budget and finances of the Council.

The Chairman drew attention to the referral from the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 5 December 2019 and noted that no additional recommendations to those in the report had been made.

It was moved by Councillor Ian Albert, seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the forecast expenditure of £5.886million in 2019/20 on the capital programme, paragraph 8.2 refers, be noted;
- (2) That the adjustments to the capital programme for 2019/20 onwards as a result of the revised timetable of schemes detailed in table 2, increasing the estimated spend in 2020/21 and beyond by £1.369million be approved;
- (3) That the position of the availability of capital resources, as detailed in table 3 paragraph 8.6 and the requirement to keep the capital programme under review for affordability be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the position of Treasury Management activity as at the end of September 2019 be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) Cabinet is required to approve adjustments to the capital programme and ensure the capital programme is fully funded;
- (2) 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.

70 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME (CTRS) 2020/2021

Audio recording – 1 hour 8 minutes 28 seconds

The Executive Member for Finance and IT presented the report entitled Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) 2020/2021.

He thanked the Service Director Customers, the Revenues Manager and their team for all of their work regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and its management and noted the high number of responses to the consultation on this subject.

It was moved by Councillor Ian Albert, seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the CTRS position relating to this and previous financial years be noted;

- (2) That it be noted that a full review of the CTRS is underway and that further recommendations for changes to the Scheme will be presented to Cabinet in 2020 for implementation in 2021/2022.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (1) The following proposed changes to the CTRS for 2020/2021:
- A) That a de minimis amount of £2.50 per week be introduced for reductions in entitlement, with no de minimis amount for increases in entitlement;
 - B) That any payments made under the Windrush Compensation Scheme be disregarded for the purposes of CTRS.
- (2) That the level of Scheme funding to be allocated to the Parish, Town and Community Councils will be the same as 2019/2020 (£38,885).

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that the Council complies with the requirement to ensure that a Scheme is in place by 11 March 2020.

71 LAND OFF TEMPLARS LANE, PRESTON

Audio recording – 1 hour 15 minutes 6 seconds

The Executive Member for Enterprise and Cooperative Development presented the report entitled Land Off Templars Lane, Preston together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A - Location Plan of Land to be Declared Surplus;
- Appendix B – Ownership and previously Sold Land;
- Appendix C - S.123 Local Press Advertisement;
- Appendix D – Title of the District Council's Land HD498282;
- Appendix E – Title of Howard Cottage HA Land HD533173;
- Appendix F - Parish Council Response.

It was moved by Councillor Keith Hoskins, seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscorn and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the land off Templars Lane, Preston be declared surplus to the District Council's requirements and then placed on the open market for sale on a subject to planning basis for residential development;
- (2) Following receipt of offers for the land identified in Appendix A, the decision to accept an offer is delegated to the Service Director for Resources, in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and IT. Offers will be evaluated against alternative development options.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To provide a financial receipt to help fund the District Council's capital programme;
- (2) Marketing the land on the open market will maximise interest from developers and satisfy the requirements to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable.

72 LAND AT THE GREEN, NEWNHAM

Audio recording – 1 hour 16 minutes 24 seconds

The Executive Member for Enterprise and Cooperative Development presented the report entitled Land at the Green, Newnham together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A - Location Plan of Land to be Declared Surplus;
- Appendix B – S.123 Local Press Advertisement;
- Appendix C – Settle HA Title;
- Appendix D – Parish Council Response.

It was moved by Councillor Keith Hoskins, seconded by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the land at The Green, Newnham be declared surplus to the District Council's requirements and then placed on the open market for sale on a subject to planning or unconditional basis for residential development;
- (2) Following receipt of offers for the land identified in Appendix A, the decision to accept an offer is delegated to the Service Director for Resources, in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and IT. Offers will be evaluated against alternative development options.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To provide a financial receipt to help fund the District Council's capital programme;
- (2) Marketing the land on the open market will maximise interest from developers and satisfy the requirements to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable.

73 INTRODUCTION OF CHARGES FOR THE USE OF GREENSPACES

Audio recording – 1 hour 17 minutes 10 seconds

Prior to the item being considered Councillor Paul Clark declared a declarable interest in that he was one of the Council's representatives to the King George V Playing Fields User Group. He was also the Vice President of the Hitchin Rugby Club that played at the King George V Playing Fields. He advised that he would not take part in the debate or vote and would leave the room for the duration of the item.

Prior to the item being considered Councillor Judi Billing declared a declarable interest in that she was a member of the Cabinet Sub-Committee (Council Charities). She advised that she would not take part in the debate or vote and would leave the room for the duration of the item.

Prior to the item being considered Councillor Steve Jarvis declared a declarable interest in that he was a member of the Cabinet Sub-Committee (Council Charities). He advised that he would not take part in the debate or vote and would leave the room for the duration of the item.

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Prior to the item being considered Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg declared a declarable interest in that she was a member of the Cabinet Sub-Committee (Council Charities). She advised that she would not take part in the debate or vote and would leave the room for the duration of the item.

Prior to the item being considered Councillor Ian Albert declared a declarable interest in that he was one of the Council's representatives to the King George V Playing Fields User Group. He advised that he would remain in the room and take part in the debate and vote.

Councillors Billing, Clark, Dennis-Harburg and Jarvis left the room.

The Service Manager Greenspaces presented the report entitled Introduction of Charges for the Use of Greenspaces together with the following appendix:

- Appendix A – Proposed process for managing the charging of Multi Use Games Areas and Events.

The Service Manager Greenspace advised that:

- Clubs would pay for use, however when not in use by a club the space would be free to use for members of the public;
- NHDC incurred the cost of maintaining the areas and floodlighting;
- This was an opportunity to reflect the current economic situation and generate approximately £10,000 of income;

The following Members asked questions and took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ian Albert;
- Councillor Keith Hoskins;
- Councillor Gary Grindal.

In response to questions the Service Manager – Greenspace advised that:

- Policies were already in place to charge fairs;
- NHDC would rely on the honesty and integrity of football clubs however, Grounds Maintenance would be challenging groups that they see using an area;
- Historically bookings were after work therefore did not generally have bookings before 5pm on weekdays;
- The proposals would not affect current practices regarding charging for football pitches.

Members were concerned that the areas be free to use, particularly for school children, late afternoon and early evening on weekdays.

It was proposed by Councillor Keith Hoskins that bookings only be taken after 6pm on weekdays.

It was moved by Councillor Martin Stears-Handscomb, seconded by Councillor Ian Albert and:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the introduction of charges for the hire of multi use games areas and for the use of public open spaces for events at weekends and after 6pm on weekdays be approved as detailed in paragraphs:

- 10.2a One off public events in parks and open spaces;
- 10.2b Hire of Multi Use Games Areas;
- 10.2c Fitness Groups use of parks and open spaces;

- (2) The introduction of Fees and Charges for the hire of the Muga at King George V Recreation Ground at weekends and after 6pm on weekdays will only be adopted upon the approval of the Cabinet Sub - Committee (Council Charities).

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) The introduction of charges for the use of Muga's will help manage demand and off set the ongoing running costs especially in relation to the use of the flood lights;
- (2) The charging for events that use our public open spaces will help offset the administrative costs of issuing a Land Licence for each event and contribute towards ongoing maintenance costs of each location;
- (3) Many of our open spaces are used for private businesses for their own commercial purposes such as fitness groups and dog walking companies. These businesses are using the open spaces free of charge and are not currently contributing towards the maintenance of the public open spaces that they use.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

Chairman