

## NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City on Thursday, 27 September 2007 at 7.30pm

**PRESENT:** *Councillors A. Bardett (Chairman), Mrs A.G. Ashley (Vice-Chairman), D.J. Barnard, Liz Beardwell, David Billing, Judi Billing, John Bishop, Clare Body, John Booth, Tom Brindley, P.C.W. Burt, Paul Clark, J.M. Cunningham, Melissa Davey, Lee Downie, Tricia Gibbs, Jane Gray, Gary Grindal, Fiona Hill, T.W. Hone, A.F. Hunter, R.E. Inwood, Arthur Jarman, Sal Jarvis, S.K. Jarvis, David Kearns, Lorna Kercher, Joan Kirby, Marilyn Kirkland, I.J. Knighton, David Levett, Bernard Lovewell, Ian Mantle, H.M. Marshall, Alan Millard, M.R.M. Muir, Lawrence Oliver, Deepak Sangha, R.L. Shakespeare-Smith, F.J. Smith, Martin Stears, Mrs C.P.A. Strong, R.A.C. Thake and M.E. Weeks.*

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Chief Executive, Strategic Director of Customer Services, Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Democratic Services Manager and Senior Committee and Member Services Officer.*

#### 33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allison Dear, D. Miller, Mrs L.A. Needham and A.D. Young.

#### 34. MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor F.J. Smith, seconded by Councillor T.W. Hone, and

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 28 June 2007 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 35. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No additional items were presented for consideration by the Council.

#### 36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 37. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

##### (1) Doreen Beckett – Long Service Award

The Chairman advised that Doreen Beckett had commenced work with NHDC on 20 September 1982. She started working alongside her husband Alan Beckett (the recently retired Document Centre Manager) as a 'Stationery Officer' until 3 years later, with the introduction of Desk Top Publishing, she took the bold step into producing digital artwork for print.

As the years progressed and the nature of the workload changed, Doreen became increasingly involved with the financial aspects of the standalone business unit now known as 'The Document Centre'. She continued to provide the highest quality of financial administrative support, always achieving her targets. She still continued to provide vital cover on the Apple Mac machines when holidays occurred or peaks in workloads were experienced.

The Document Centre was currently progressing with a major upgrade of both their Apple Macs and their associated software resulting in a different, more progressive Mac Operator role being created. It was with great regret that Doreen has, after 25

years of service, chosen to decline the opportunity of retraining and at the end of November will retire, to spend more time with her husband Alan.

It was moved by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor David Kearns, and

**RESOLVED:** That the Council places on record its sincere thanks to Doreen Beckett for her long and valuable service to local government in North Hertfordshire, and wishes her all the best for her retirement.

**(2) The Living Room Project – Charity for Chairman’s Civic Reception**

The Chairman announced that his Charity for the Civic Service on 25 November 2007 would be the Living Room Project. Though based in Stevenage, this charity covered the North Hertfordshire area, and was for the rehabilitation of people with addictions. The project was established in 2000, and all of its staff were rehabilitated addicts.

**38. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No items were presented for consideration by the Council under public participation.

**39. ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET – 15 AUGUST 2007 – PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ORGANISATION DELIVERING THE MEALS ON WHEELS SERVICE IN NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE**

The Council considered the minute of the meeting of Cabinet held on 15 August 2007, in respect of proposed changes to the Organisation delivering the Meals on Wheels Service in North Hertfordshire (Minute 26 refers). A copy of the report considered by Cabinet was included with the agenda.

It was moved by Councillor Bernard Lovewell, seconded by Councillor Mrs J.I. Kirby, and

**RESOLVED:** That, in respect of the proposed transfer of the Meals on Wheels Service to a Social Enterprise Organisation, the additional budget requirement set out in 6.5 of the report to fund Option B (three year tapered grant) be approved.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To progress towards the development of a Social Enterprise to deliver a Meals on Wheels Service across Hertfordshire.

**40. ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET – 4 SEPTEMBER 2007 – ADOPTION OF THE GENDER EQUALITY DUTY FOR THE AUTHORITY**

The Council considered the minute of the meeting of Cabinet held on 4 September 2007, in respect of the proposed adoption of a Gender Equality for the Authority (Minute 38 refers). A copy of the report considered by Cabinet was included with the agenda, as were the following appendices:

Appendix A – NHDC Gender Equality Scheme;

Appendix B – Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan (incorporating target dates for each of the actions, as recommended by Cabinet on 4 September 2007).

It was moved by Councillor F.J. Smith, seconded by Councillor T.W. Hone, and

**RESOLVED:** That the Gender Equality Duty for the Authority, as contained in the report and Appendices A and B thereto, be adopted

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To comply with legislation in order to proactively manage diversity of needs according to gender more rigorously than in the past.

**41. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

**(1) In vessel composting**

In accordance with Standing Order 10.4(a), the following question had been submitted by Councillor Sal Jarvis to Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling):

“What is the currently anticipated date for the introduction of in vessel composting?”

In the absence of the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling, the Leader of the Council replied that there would be a Briefing session for all Members of the Council on 4 October 2007 to explain aspects of the new waste and recycling scheme, at which there would be an opportunity for further questions to the Portfolio Holder and officers. In respect of the question, the Leader of the Council stated that the in vessel composting facility which was being developed at Cumberlow Green on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council was expected to be available from Spring 2008.

Councillor Jarvis asked the following supplementary question:

“What plans does the Council have in place for the collection of in vessel waste between the introduction of the new scheme in October 2007 and the anticipated start of the Cumberlow Green facility in Spring 2008?”

The Leader of the Council replied that the Council had no plans in place for collection of in vessel waste between October 2007 and Spring 2008.

## **(2) Plastics recycling**

In accordance with Standing Order 10.4(a), the following question had been submitted by Councillor Lee Downie to Councillor Mrs L.A. Needham (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling):

“What plans are there for expanding the recycling of plastics in the future?”

In the absence of the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling, the Leader of the Council replied that there were many different types of plastic, many of which required different methods of recycling. Recycling targets were based on weight, rather than volume, and plastics, though high in volume, were low in weight. The use of the bring bank sites for plastic would be the current provision, although the Council would continue to work with the Herts Waste Aware Partnership with a view to expansion of provision for the collection of plastics.

Councillor Downie asked the following supplementary question:

“Why can't NHDC match the recycling performance of other nearby Councils in the amount of plastics they recycle through kerbside collection?”

The Leader of the Council commented that caution should be exercised when considering the claims of other Councils regarding their recycling figures.

## **(3) Every Child Matters**

In accordance with Standing Order 10.4(a), the following question had been submitted by Councillor Lee Downie to Councillor Tricia Gibbs (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Development and Rural Affairs):

“How is the Council meeting its obligations to young people under Every Child matters, particularly under the heading Enjoy and Achieve?”

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs replied that the Council had taken its obligations under the Every Child Matters agenda very seriously and worked in full cooperation with the lead agency for children and young people, Hertfordshire County Council, as it was required to do under Section 10 of the 2004 Education Act. The Council was also involved in information sharing, safeguarding children, the common assessment framework and the delivery of the programme known as 'Integrated Children's Services'.

In terms of leadership and management, the Portfolio Holder commented that the Council provided the Chairman of the North Hertfordshire District Children's Trust Partnership, a multi-agency group that had produced the first district wide Children and Young People's Plan in 2007/8. This District Plan, which linked into the countywide Children and Young People's Plan, sets out a number of priorities that were agreed earlier in the year by all the agencies involved. Some of these priorities

were 'top down' requirements by Government, whilst others were 'bottom up' and were proposed by locally based groups.

Under the Section 'Enjoying and Achieving', the Portfolio Holder explained that the Plan listed those activities and projects that were deemed to be important by the constituent agencies. They were, as one might expect, broad in ambition, but there was a process in place in which these could be implemented and monitored by the District Partnership. Such activities included the summer playscheme programme, the summer Youthoria activities and the successful application to the Big Lottery Fund.

However, the Portfolio Holder acknowledged that it had been recognised that there remained gaps in the provision of services to children and young people. For example, not all schools were linking into the remit of the District Children's Trust Partnership. Similarly, there may be other gaps where individual children and youth projects were not yet fully represented. Plans were in hand to bring about changes in the revision of the plan for 2008/9 to address any such gaps.

Councillor Downie asked the following supplementary question:

"Are there any plans to increase the existing budget of £20,000 for youth club projects?"

The Portfolio Holder replied that the budget was for youth development generally, and not specifically for youth clubs. The majority of youth clubs are run by volunteer staff, existing through fund raising and subscriptions. The Portfolio Holder was unaware of any proposals to increase the budget, but commented that it would no doubt be a consideration as part of the forthcoming Service and Financial Planning process for 2008/09 and beyond.

## **42. NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

### **Telephone Masts**

Due notice having been given in accordance with Standing Order 11.1, it was moved by Councillor P.C.W. Burt, and seconded by Councillor John Booth,

"That this Council is concerned at its present inability, through the planning process, to act in the best interest of local residents in relation to the proliferation of mobile telephone masts –

We would welcome any support our local Members of Parliament can give to providing local councils with greater powers to in this regard and in particular:-

- (1) To prohibit the development of any phone masts without planning permission.
- (2) To allow a local council to have regard to health risk on a precautionary basis.

That this Council therefore resolves to write to all MPs serving the area of the Council to ask for their active support."

As an amendment, it was moved by Councillor Marilyn Kirkland, and seconded by Councillor S.K. Jarvis, that item (2) of the motion be deleted. Following debate, both the mover and seconder of the motion agreed to its deletion.

As a further amendment, it was moved by Councillor J.M. Cunningham, and seconded by Councillor David Levett, that the following be added into the motion as a new item (2):

"To press that Planning Guidance be changed to ensure that, wherever possible, telephone masts be constructed on the basis that they can be shared between operators."

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

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

**RESOLVED:** That this Council is concerned at its present inability, through the planning process, to act in the best interest of local residents in relation to the proliferation of mobile telephone masts –

We would welcome any support our local Members of Parliament can give to providing local councils with greater powers to in this regard and in particular:-

- (1) To prohibit the development of any phone masts without planning permission.
- (2) To press that Planning Guidance be changed to ensure that, wherever possible, telephone masts be constructed on the basis that they can be shared between operators.

That this Council therefore resolves to write to all MPs serving the area of the Council to ask for their active support.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.

.....

Chairman