

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Gernon Road,
Letchworth on Thursday, 27 July 2006 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: *Councillors Mrs C.P.A. Strong (Chairman), A. Bardett (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. A.G. Ashley, Liz Beardwell, David Billing, Judi Billing, Monica Bloxham, Simon Bloxham, Tom Brindley, P.C.W. Burt, Paul Clark, Melissa Davey, Tricia Gibbs, Ms F.R. Hill, T.W. Hone, A.F. Hunter, David Kearns, Marilyn Kirkland, Ian Knighton, David Levett, Bernard Lovewell, H.M. Marshall, D. Miller, M.R.M Muir, Elliot Needham, Mrs L.A. Needham, Lawrence Oliver, M. Paterson, Diane Proudlove, Deepak Sangha, F.J. Smith, Martin Stears, R.A.C. Thake and Sarah Wren.*

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

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D.J. Barnard, J.M. Cunningham, Jane Gray, Robert Inwood, Sal Jarvis, S.K. Jarvis, Lorna Kercher, Joan Kirby, Lawrence McNamara, Derek Sheard, M.E. Weeks and A.D. Young.

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Annual meeting of the Council held on 16 May 2006 and the meetings of Council held on 5 June 2006 and 27 June 2006 be approved as true records and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment to the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting:-

“Replacement of the name of Councillor Lawrence Oliver for the name of Councillor Derek Sheard on the membership of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee, as detailed in Appendix C to the Minutes”.

27. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No additional items were presented for consideration by the Council.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

29. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) Councillor Lynda Needham

It was with great pleasure that the Chairman presented an engraved jug and glasses and a framed copy of the Council's resolution of thanks to Councillor Lynda Needham, past Chairman of the Council, as a mark of recognition of her term of office.

The Chairman invited Councillor Needham to present a cheque for £2,467.36, the amount raised during 2005/06 for her chosen charity, to Jenny Lupton of the Garden House Hospice. Jenny Lupton thanked Councillor Needham for her hard work in fund raising for the Hospice during her term of office.

(2) **Presentation to the Careline Team**

The Chairman announced that the Council's Careline Centre had become one of only fifty organisations nationally to be awarded accreditation by the Telecare Services Association (TSA) for compliance with their Code of Practice for alarm operators.

The Centre, at Harkness Court in Hitchin, provided a community alarm service for around 1,100 vulnerable and older people throughout North Herts. It also served around 19,000 more people under contract with 40 other councils and housing associations across five counties.

The Code of Practice was launched in June 1998 by ASAP (renamed to TSA in 2006) to:

- ◆ encourage high standards of operation;
- ◆ ensure excellent customer service; and
- ◆ provide a method of benchmarking.

It had since become the industry standard, and the Council should be proud that the NHDC Careline Centre was one of the first to achieve this standard. The latest survey of Careline customers showed 88% as describing the service they received as either good or very good. The rigorous independent audit for TSA had confirmed that the underlying systems, procedures, facilities and standards were also first class.

The Chairman was delighted to offer her warmest congratulations to everyone on the Careline Team on this admirable achievement, and was pleased to present the TSA Accreditation Certificate to Maria MacQuillin (Assistant Manager) and Tina Welch (Acting Manager).

(3) **Debbie Duxbury – Long Service Award**

The Chairman advised that Debbie Duxbury had joined NHDC in 1981 to work in Internal audit. Debbie worked in Audit until 1997, when she joined the newly expanded Benefits Team as a Benefits Assessor. This was in the lead up to the massive changes in Benefits, when all claims had to be re-assessed under completely different rules. Debbie eventually became a Senior Benefits Officer and passed her IRRV Benefits Technician qualification.

When Benefits merged with Revenues in 1997, and the new Service looked into obtaining a Quality Management Registration, Debbie took a keen interest in that and eventually became the Council's Quality Manager. She was ideally suited to this role as she always puts the customer first and had a logical approach to dealing with any difficult situation.

Debbie had enhanced her skills on the Quality front and was now tasked with promoting good practice throughout the Finance & Regulatory Services Directorate. Debbie was a well known and respected member of staff.

It was moved by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor T.W. Hone, and

RESOLVED: That the Council places on record its sincere thanks and appreciation to Debbie Duxbury for her long and valuable service to Local Government in North Hertfordshire.

(4) **Retirement of Chief Engineer**

The Chairman invited Councillor F.J. Smith, Leader of the Council, to pay tribute to Pete Marshall, the Council's Chief Engineer, who would be retiring at the end of August 2006. Councillors Judi Billing and Mrs L.A. Needham supplemented the comments made by the Leader of the Council and wished Pete all the best for his retirement.

It was moved by Councillor F.J. Smith, seconded by Councillor Judi Billing, and

RESOLVED: That the Council places on record its sincere thanks to Pete Marshall for his long and valuable service to Local Government in North Hertfordshire, and wishes him all the best for his retirement.

(5) **Flooding in Royston**

The Chairman announced that the overnight flooding in Royston had resulted in the Royston Town Hall being used as a Reception Centre for those members of the public affected by the rising waters. The Chairman commended the Strategic Director of Financial & Regulatory Services and the emergency planning team for their prompt response to the crisis.

30. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

31. ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET – 25 APRIL 2006 – ADOPTION OF HERTFORDSHIRE LICENSING ENFORCEMENT PROTOCOL

The Council considered the minute of the meeting of Cabinet held on 25 April 2006, in respect of adoption of a proposed Hertfordshire Licensing Enforcement Protocol (Minute 209 refers). A copy of the report considered by Cabinet was included with the agenda, as was the following appendix:-

Appendix A – Hertfordshire Licensing Enforcement Protocol Draft v.5

It was moved by Councillor Sarah Wren, seconded by Councillor F.J. Smith, and

RESOLVED: That the Hertfordshire Licensing Enforcement Protocol, Version 5, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be adopted.

REASON FOR DECISION:

- (1) The aforementioned Enforcement Protocol aims to co-ordinate the enforcement activities of a number of relevant regulatory bodies in Hertfordshire. Effective co-ordination will reduce potential enforcement inconsistencies and promote the transparent regulation of licensed premises;
- (2) The publication and adoption of such an enforcement protocol is strongly encouraged by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport;
- (3) The Council's Statement of Licensing Policy clearly indicates that such an enforcement protocol will be forthcoming;
- (4) To effectively exercise the duties and responsibilities contained within the Licensing Act 2003.

32. ITEM REFERRED FROM JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE – 8 JUNE 2006 – STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES FORUM

Councillor Judi Billing declared a personal interest in this matter, in view of her role in helping to develop the concept of Strategic Human Resources Forums at the Improvement & Development Agency (IdEA).

The Council considered the minute of the meeting of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee held on 8 June 2006, in respect of a proposal to amend the Terms of Reference of that Committee to include the establishment of a Strategic Human Resources Forum (Minute 7 refers). A copy of the report considered by the Joint Staff Consultative Committee was included with the agenda, as was the following appendix:-

Appendix A – Setting up a Strategic HR Forum

The proposed revised Terms of Reference for the Joint Staff Consultative Committee were tabled at the meeting.

It was moved by Councillor Tricia Gibbs, seconded by Councillor T.W. Hone, and

RESOLVED: That the Terms of Reference of the Joint Staff Consultative Committee be amended to include the establishment of a Strategic Human Resources Forum.

REASON FOR DECISION: A Strategic Human Resources Forum will enable Members to become involved with HR policies at a strategic level.

33. ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET – 27 JUNE 2006 – HITCHIN MARKET TRADERS ASSOCIATION BUSINESS PLAN

The Council considered the minute of the meeting of Cabinet held on 27 June 2006, in respect of the Hitchin Market Traders Association Business Plan (Minute 17 refers). A copy of the report considered by Cabinet was included with the agenda.

It was moved by Councillor I.J. Knighton, seconded by Councillor T.W. Hone, and

RESOLVED:

- (1) That a £10 charge for any stall on a Tuesday market, £15 for any stall on a Saturday market and casual traders to pay the same as licensed traders for a trial period of six months be approved;
- (2) That, in principle, the potential loss of c£31k be underwritten for the same period of six months.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable Council to review the agreed policy of aiming to reduce subsidies, and to approve the expenditure as an addition to the Budget.

34. ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET – 25 JULY 2006 – THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2007-2012

The Council considered the minute of the meeting of Cabinet held on 25 July 2006, in respect of the adoption of the Financial Management Strategy 2007-2012 (Minute 44 refers). A copy of the report considered by Cabinet was included with the agenda, as was the following appendix:-

Appendix 1 – Financial Strategy 2007-2012

Councillor T.W. Hone, Portfolio Holder for Finance, referred to a number of minor amendments that Cabinet wished to make to the Strategy. He also referred to a document which provided an approximate reconciliation between the 2005/06 actual

budget and the 2006/07 estimates, and advised that this would be despatched to all Members of the Council in the next edition of Members' Information Service.

In response to a question, Councillor Hone agreed to give further consideration to amending Paragraph 3.8 of the Strategy from "The Authority operates a system of priority-led budgeting" to "The Authority operates the principle of priority-led budgeting".

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

RESOLVED: That the Financial Strategy 2007-2012 outlined in Appendix 1 to the report, and as amended, be adopted and communicated to officers as the medium term financial framework for the Service and Financial Planning process.

REASON FOR DECISION: The adoption of a Financial Strategy and communication of the contents of the strategy will assist in the process of forward planning the use of Council resources and in budget setting for 2007/2008 to 2011/2012 culminating in the setting of the Council Tax precept in February 2006.

35. ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET – 25 JULY 2006 – STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Council considered the minute of the meeting of Cabinet held on 25 July 2006, in respect of the adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement (Minute 49 refers). A copy of the report considered by Cabinet was included with the agenda, as were the following appendices:-

- Appendix 1 – Inspector's Report
- Appendix 2 – Amended Statement of Community Involvement

It was moved by Councillor R.A.C. Thake, seconded by Councillor F.J. Smith, and

RESOLVED: That the amended Statement of Community Involvement, as attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be adopted.

REASON FOR DECISION: The Council is required to accept the Inspector's binding report and adopt the Statement of Community Involvement as amended.

36. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

No questions had been submitted by Members.

37. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

No motions requiring notice had been submitted by Members.

The meeting closed at 8.39p.m.

Chairman