

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth on Thursday, 2 November 2006 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: *Councillors Mrs C.P.A. Strong (Chairman), Mrs A.G. Ashley, D.J. Barnard, Liz Beardwell, David Billing, Judi Billing, Monica Bloxham, Simon Bloxham, Tom Brindley, Paul Clark, J.M. Cunningham, Tricia Gibbs, Gary Grindal, Fiona Hill, T.W. Hone, A.F. Hunter, R.E. Inwood, Sal Jarvis, Steve Jarvis, David Kearns, Joan Kirby, I.J. Knighton, David Levett, Lawrence McNamara, H.M. Marshall, D. Miller, Elliot Needham, Mrs L.A. Needham, Lawrence Oliver, M. Paterson, Diane Proudlove, Deepak Sangha, D. Sheard, F.J. Smith, Martin Stears, R.A.C. Thake, M.E. Weeks, Sarah Wren and A.D. Young.*

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

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Bardett (Vice-Chairman), P.C.W. Burt, Melissa Davey, Jane Gray, Lorna Kercher, Marilyn Kirkland, Bernard Lovewell, M.R.M. Muir and R.L. Shakespeare-Smith.

54. MINUTES

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

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the extraordinary and scheduled meetings of the Council held on 21 September 2006 be approved as true records and signed by the Chairman.

55. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No additional items were presented for consideration by the Council.

56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor I.J. Knighton declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 – Item referred from Appointments Board: 5 October 2006: Appointment of Independent Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee – as the successful applicant was the former Headmaster of his children's school.

Councillor M.E. Weeks declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 – Item referred from Appointments Board: 5 October 2006: Appointment of Independent Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee – as the successful applicant was the former Headmaster of his children's school.

Councillor S.K. Jarvis declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 – Item referred from Appointments Board: 5 October 2006: Appointment of Independent Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee – as he knew the successful applicant.

Councillor A.D. Young declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 – Item referred from Appointments Board: 5 October 2006: Appointment of Independent Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee – as the successful applicant was a personal friend.

Councillor Paul Clark declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10 – Item referred from Cabinet: 17 October 2006: Council Accommodation Strategy – as he was on the Trustee Board of the Citizens' Advice Bureau, one of the existing occupants of the Grammar School site.

Councillor Sarah Wren declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10 – Item referred from Cabinet: 17 October 2006: Council Accommodation Strategy – as she was on the Trustee Board of RELATE, one of the existing occupants of the Grammar School site.

Councillor David Billing declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10 – Item referred from Cabinet: 17 October 2006: Council Accommodation Strategy – in view of his role as a Member of Hertfordshire County Council, the landowners of the Grammar School site.

Councillor A.F. Hunter declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10 – Item referred from Cabinet: 17 October 2006: Council Accommodation Strategy – in view of his role as a Member of Hertfordshire County Council, the landowners of the Grammar School site.

Councillor R.A.C. Thake declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 10 – Item referred from Cabinet: 17 October 2006: Council Accommodation Strategy – in view of his role as a Member of Hertfordshire County Council, the landowners of the Grammar School site.

57. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Revenues & Benefits Service – Charter Mark Award

The Chairman was delighted to announce that the Council's Revenues and Benefits Service had recently been awarded a Charter Mark. Charter Mark was awarded for Customer Service Excellence. To be successful required the submission of a substantial amount of documentary evidence followed by a two day inspection, at which the Assessor met staff, partners and customers. The Assessor scored the Service against six elements, each of which had a number of criteria.

The Assessor looked for evidence that the Service puts its customers first and was striving for continual improvement in the way in which it delivered its service. The Assessor also looked for supporting evidence from customers, partners and staff that it did deliver what it said it delivered. In the case of the Revenues & Benefits Service, the Assessor was particularly impressed by the evidence given by customers and partners.

This award complemented the Quality Management Award that the Revenues & Benefits Service achieved in 2002 and was further evidence that the Council puts service to customers at the top of its priorities.

The Chairman invited Sarah Gibbs (Revenues & Benefits Service Manager), Mark Scanes (Systems & Technical Manager), Debbie Duxbury (Directorate Quality Manager), & Anna Meakin (Quality Support Officer) to come forward to receive the award.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Planning & Transport both paid tribute to the achievements of staff in the Revenues & Benefits Service.

58. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

59. INTERIM REPORT ON THE AUTHORITY'S CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONSIDERATION OF SIGNING UP TO THE NOTTINGHAM DECLARATION

The Head of Policy, Partnerships & Performance submitted an report on the Council's contribution to Climate Change and consideration of signing up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. The following Appendix was submitted with the report:-

Appendix 1 – Identification of areas of Authority activity which can impact on climate change and considerations for the future.

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing & Environmental Health introduced the report and accepted a proposal to revise one of the recommendations in order to reflect the fact that, as well as the potential costs to the Council of signing up to the Nottingham Declaration, the report to Cabinet in December 2006 would also include details of any potential savings.

It was moved by Councillor Sarah Wren, seconded by Councillor R.A.C. Thake, and

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the background and policy agenda for the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change be noted;
- (2) That it be noted that additional work to determine the potential resources required is underway;
- (3) That it be noted that the issue will be reported to Cabinet on 19 December 2006, including details of any potential savings to the Council.

REASON FOR DECISION: To respond to the request made by Council on 21 September 2006, and to comply with service and financial planning procedures.

60. STANDARDISATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Head of Legal & Democratic Services submitted a report in respect of public participation arrangements at meetings of the Council and its Committees, and seeking consideration of issues relating to timing of contributions. This matter was deferred at the meeting of the Council held on 21 September 2006.

The Portfolio Holder for Policy proposed that the current arrangements for the timing of public contributions at meetings, as detailed in the report, should remain unchanged, acknowledging the fact that Committee Chairmen would be able to exercise their discretion to vary these arrangements.

It was moved by Councillor A.D. Young, seconded by Councillor F.J. Smith, and

RESOLVED: That no changes be made to the current arrangements for public participation at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

REASON FOR DECISION: To preserve the status quo in relation to public participation at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

61. ITEM REFERRED FROM APPOINTMENTS BOARD – 5 OCTOBER 2006 – APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT VICE-CHAIRMAN OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Council considered the minute of the meeting of the Appointments Board held on 5 October 2006, in respect of the appointment of the Independent Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee (Minute 5 refers).

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

RESOLVED: That Mr Peter Chapman be appointed to the position of Independent Vice-Chairman of the Council's Standards Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with a recommendation of the Standards Board for England that there should be at least two Independent Members on each Local Authority's Standards Committee.

62. ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET – 17 OCTOBER 2006 – COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

The Council considered the minute of the meeting of Cabinet held on 17 October 2006, in respect of the Council Accommodation Strategy (Minute 89 refers). A copy of the report considered by Cabinet was included with the agenda.

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

RESOLVED:

- (1) That a provision of £7.75 million be made in the Capital Programme to enable the necessary work for Option 2B (Extension and Refurbishment of the Grammar School Site) to commence, in order to ensure delivery of the office accommodation project by 2010 at the latest;
- (2) That funding of £4.75 million be provided under the prudential borrowing rules to meet the shortfall after the application of capital receipts from the sale of the surplus office sites.

REASON FOR DECISION: Option 2B, Extension and Refurbishment of the Grammar School Site, offers longer term advantages regarding return on investment and service efficiencies and on balance provides a better return on capital cost and whole life cost.

63. ITEM REFERRED FROM CABINET – 17 OCTOBER 2006 – PLANNING OBLIGATIONS – DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT AND ASSOCIATED SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL AND STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Council considered the minute of the meeting of Cabinet held on 17 October 2006, in respect of the Planning Obligations Draft Supplementary Planning Document and associated Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Minute 85 refers). A copy of the report considered by Cabinet was included with the agenda, as were the following appendices:

Appendix 1 – Supplementary Planning Guidance Planning Obligations, incorporating proposed changes.

Appendix 2 – Representations to Planning Obligations SPD Consultation Draft (April 2006).

Appendix 3 – Representations to SA/SEA Final Report on the Planning Obligations SPD Consultation Draft (April 2006).

It was moved by Councillor R.A.C. Thake, and seconded by Councillor F.J. Smith, that the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

As an amendment, it was moved by Councillor Sal Jarvis, and seconded by Councillor S.K. Jarvis that the following additional recommendation be added:

“(3) That a mechanism be established to ensure effective monitoring and review by Members of planning obligation receipts and their use.”

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

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

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted;
- (2) That the Head of Building and Control, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transport, be authorised to agree any minor typographical and textual amendments needed to the SPD document prior to its finalisation and publication.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that there is guidance on how to interpret existing policy and how it relates to current Government guidance.

64. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

No questions had been submitted by Members.

65. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Due notice having been given in accordance with Standing Order 11.1, it was moved by Councillor David Billing and seconded by Councillor David Kearns:

“That Council acknowledges that public transport in North Hertfordshire is in a disastrous state of decline. There is still no integration between rail and bus timetables, access or fares, rail stations are still not accessible by physically disabled people, fares often encourage car use instead, buses are not planned for the users’ convenience, and bus routes and schedules are bizarre and constantly reducing. While this is mainly due to the continuing effects of bus de-regulation and under-investment by private rail companies, there is more that this Council can be doing.

Therefore, the Council resolves to take urgent, forceful and coherent action to explore and use all means at its disposal to improve significantly and rapidly public transport in and to/from North Hertfordshire, for example exploiting its powers related to the wellbeing of the community, and the opportunities provided by the County’s Network Review and the County’s Northern Hertfordshire Transport Plan. To this end, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport should bring a focused, determined and imaginative plan, and specific proposals, to the Cabinet meeting in December 2006.”

During the ensuing debate, an amendment was moved by Councillor Paul Clark, and seconded by Councillor Robert Inwood, that the whole of the second paragraph after the words “...the Council resolves to...” be deleted and replaced with:

“...use the financial contribution it makes to public transport in North Herts and its powers relating to the wellbeing of the community to secure more cost effective public transport that better meets the needs of the community.”

Upon being put to the vote, this amendments was lost.

Following further debate, and upon being put to the vote, the substantive motion was lost.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

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Chairman