



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at The Great Hall at The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Thursday 30 November 2023 at 5.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor John Shephard (Chairman)
Councillor Jo Gilford (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Ann Addison
Councillor Rufia Ashraf
Councillor Jamal Alwahabi
Councillor Azizur Rahman
Councillor Anthony S. Bagot-Webb
Councillor Harry Barrett
Councillor William Barter
Councillor Sally Beardsworth
Councillor Phil Bignell
Councillor Lizzy Bowen
Councillor Rebecca Breese
Councillor Adam Brown
Councillor Michael Brown
Councillor Muna Cali
Councillor Alan Chantler
Councillor Pinder Chauhan
Councillor Imran Ahmed Chowdhury BEM
Councillor Paul Clark
Councillor Stephen Clarke
Councillor Maggie Clubley
Councillor Raymond Connolly
Councillor Daniel Cribbin
Councillor Janice Duffy
Councillor Paul Dyball
Councillor Alison Eastwood
Councillor Penelope Flavell
Councillor Louisa Fowler
Councillor Rupert Frost
Councillor Terry Gilford
Councillor Matt Golby
Councillor André González De Savage
Councillor Andrew Grant
Councillor Mike Hallam
Councillor Enam Haque
Councillor Jonathan Harris
Councillor Rosie Herring
Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Councillor James Hill

Councillor Nigel Hinch
Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere
Councillor Mark Hughes
Councillor Rosie Humphreys
Councillor Cecile Irving-Swift
Councillor David James
Councillor Koulla Jolley
Councillor Paul Joyce
Councillor Andrew Kilbride
Councillor Anna King
Councillor Jamie Lane
Councillor Phil Larratt
Councillor Daniel Lister
Councillor Greg Lunn
Councillor Charles Manners
Councillor Peter Matten
Councillor Ian McCord
Councillor Dennis Meredith
Councillor Colin Morgan
Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor Bob Purser
Councillor Wendy Randall
Councillor Emma Roberts
Councillor Jake Roberts
Councillor Sam Rumens
Councillor Cathrine Russell
Councillor Lisa Samiotis
Councillor Brian Sargeant
Councillor Sue Sharps
Councillor David Smith
Councillor Zoe Smith
Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms
Councillor Laura Stevenson
Councillor Danielle Stone
Councillor Winston Strachan
Councillor Nick Sturges-Alex
Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz
Councillor Mike Warren

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Fiona Baker
Councillor Dermot Bambridge
Councillor Nazim Choudary
Councillor Fiona Cole
Councillor Karen Cooper
Councillor Julie Davenport
Councillor Gareth Eales
Councillor Terrie Eales
Councillor Malcolm Longley

Councillor Charles Morton
Councillor Kevin Parker
Councillor Suresh Patel

Officers:

Anna Earnshaw (Chief Executive)
Cath Whitehead (Director – Legal & Democratic and Monitoring Officer)
Paul Hanson (Head of Democratic & Elections)
Tracy Tiff (Deputy Democratic Services Manager)
Ed Bostock (Democratic Services Officer)

152. **Declarations of Interest**

None advised.

153. **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th September 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

154. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chairman announced that the following awards were won at the Public Finance Awards 2023:

- The WNC Finance Team was awarded Finance Team of the Year - Councils and Local Services
- The Fund Accounting and Investment Team, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Pension Fund was awarded with the Achievement in Financial Reporting and Accountability.

The Chairman asked Council to note the following dates:

- 7th December, 6pm: Northamptonshire Children's Trust briefing, the Atrium, One Angel Square
- 13th December, 2pm: "Angels in Angel" Christmas performance, the Atrium, One Angel Square

The Chairman presented Councillors Addison and Gonzalez de Savage with past Chairman Badges.

The Chairman asked if it was the wish of Council to propose the suspension of standing orders in order to allow Members to remain seated while speaking. He advised that the Constitution would be reviewed in the future to propose to make this change permanent.

Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Barrett seconded that standing orders be suspended.

Upon a vote, the proposition was agreed.

155. **Public Participation**

The Chairman advised of 6 requests to address the meeting.

Dave Pearson, on behalf of Clean Air Northamptonshire, addressed Council in relation to Motion 3. He stated that the Government's tree planting targets had been repeatedly missed, and that the Council's failure to appoint a tree officer and the removal of mention of a tree officer from the motion was indicative of the low priority given to the issue. He highlighted the importance of a local transport plan that would reduce traffic and a tree planting programme to sequester air pollution. Mr Pearson expressed disappointment with the quality of debate on air pollution at the last Council meeting, commenting that it "descended into party politics".

Jake Blackburn addressed Council in relation to item 10. He stated that in relation to the ongoing trial of former MP David Mackintosh and Howard Grossman, if the jury decided that the evidence provided by a WNC councillor under oath was to be disbelieved, this would raise concerns regarding probity and could be a breach of the WNC Code of Conduct. Given the scope of the circumstances, Mr Blackburn believed an enquiry should be held into the conduct of the councillor in question and that they should be suspended from their council duties until such enquiries had taken place.

Tina Matthews, on behalf of the Umbrella Fair Organisation's "1000 Voices" campaign, addressed Council in relation to Motion 3. She stated that WNC was not doing enough in terms of the level of action required to have a significant impact on air quality and believed that the Council should consider the recommendations of Mobilising Primary Care in Islington on Air Pollution; 1 key recommendation was that in the absence of a public awareness campaign about the health harms of air pollution, future rollouts should be supplemented by local communications campaigns to help solidify messages about air pollution. Ms Matthews further stated that the Council was not equipping residents with the knowledge required to take appropriate action to prevent harm to themselves. The Council should keep talking about levels of pollution, put pressure on the Government and local authorities to act, stop burning fossil fuels, and aim for more sustainable transport systems.

Ryan Michlig addressed Council in relation to Motion 1. He commented that vapes were intended to be used as smoking cessation devices and were dangerous in the wrong hands. There had been a change in the market since the Covid pandemic with more single use vapes being made available. He stated that underage use was a big problem, but specialist sellers in town did not sell to underage users. More education was needed, and Mr Michlig suggested that the Council should be speaking to children in schools to alert them to the harms of vaping.

Gordon Kerr addressed Council in relation to Motion 3. He commented that there was no balanced scientific view on the veracity on the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and questioned where funding for a new tree officer would come from.

Toby Birch, on behalf of Community Spaces Northampton, addressed Council in relation to Item 7 - Report of the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Engagement & Regulatory Services. He commented that there had been ongoing

discussions with residents and councillors about developing Southfields Community Centre to accommodate the needs of the entire community. A local pre-school used the only hall during termtime which prevented access for other groups during the day. He advised that no progress had been made since a meeting with several Cabinet Members in October 2021, but the needs of the local community were growing, especially among the elderly and isolated. He asked that the Council take urgent action into the possibilities of developing the site.

156. **Opposition Priority Business**

Councillor Purser proposed and Councillor Randall seconded:

“This council’s Corporate Plan states we have “the ambition for our residents to live in good housing in places which are clean and green. So that everyone has access to affordable, safe, quality, accommodation, and security of tenure.”

A target was set of to produce 500 units of social housing during the lifetime of this Council. Current house building is not meeting the needs of those on our housing list. Developers repeatedly negotiate a reduction in social and affordable housing targets from the Council’s policy, meaning the social housing target will likely be missed.

This council notes:

- There are currently 4,452 families on our housing register waiting list and a further 600 households currently in temporary accommodation, according to the latest Cabinet papers
- There are 1,950 homeless households and 5,850 households in overcrowded accommodation according to the Anti-poverty Strategy.
- Significant key brown field social housing projects, namely The Clock House and Avenue Campus, have recently been deemed not financially viable and significant funds have been returned to HM Treasury
- Around 4,000 homes across West Northamptonshire lie empty and unused, according to the latest data

The personal cost of living in overcrowded or temporary accommodation to family life is significant, including living stress, depression, and child underdevelopment.

This council therefore calls on the Leader and Cabinet to:

- Request the Cabinet Members for Housing, Finance, and Planning to redouble their efforts to identify the requirements needed to create a pipeline for planned, affordable and deliverable housing
- Identify those houses that are unoccupied and explore what opportunities there are to work with owners to bring them back into use.
- Consider using Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) powers granted by the Housing Act 2004 to take control of unoccupied properties and make them available for those in need of housing

Council debated the motion and the following comments were made:

- It was essential for developers to provide the necessary infrastructure when constructing large housing developments.

- Northampton Borough Council built 8 homes in 20 years under administrations ran by different parties; WNC have built many more since its creation.
- Figures showed that there were around 4,000 empty homes in the West Northants area and the DLUC website showed that 50% of these were council tax exempt homes; the Council could not act against those.
- It was suggested that the Council's actions did not match its vision. NPH should be empowered to build more.
- It was suggested that the Council not comparing itself to other similar authorities was akin to checking its own homework.
- The Council's own planning officers needed to be challenging viability assessments in every instance.
- Health and Wellbeing was one of the Council's priorities, but it was not looking after vulnerable people. Central government needed to change and provide much more support to local authorities.
- If a home was empty and eligible for use by the Council, it should be brought into use.
- Homes in Northampton were cheaper than the surrounding areas; some Members did not accept that mortgages were unaffordable for the majority of people with the help available.
- 20% developer profit was less of a problem than overpaying for land in the first instance, which was then paid for by the reduction of affordable housing provision later on.
- A viable plan to deliver affordable social housing was being worked on. Between various housing associations and NPH, 1,054 homes had been built across West Northamptonshire. The Local plan would be supported by the Housing Strategy and many of the issues raised could be addressed through these.
- It was felt that the Council had not pursued the options available to it to alleviate the housing shortage. Other councils were having success bringing empty homes back into use; Leicester City Council bought 197 empty homes between April 2022 and March 2023 and brought them back into use.

Upon a vote, the motion fell.

157. **Cabinet Reports and Decision Records Taken by Cabinet**

Cabinet Members each highlighted the salient points of their reports. Members made comments and asked questions and the following points were raised:

- Regarding the attendance of the Monitoring Officer at the ongoing trial of former MP David Mackintosh and Howard Grossman, the Leader confirmed that senior officers worked independently and had the freedom to make decisions on how best to spend their time to meet their objectives.
- Updates on the Landlord Incentive Scheme were available on the Council's website.
- Discussions around a Clean Air and Climate Summit had been discussed at the cross-party Sustainability Working Group and further communications with interested members and groups would be forthcoming.

- Regarding the Sixfields Stadium East Stand, work was due to be completed soon; no further Cabinet decisions were required, appeals had been dismissed, and only minor matters remained.
- The new A5 roundabout opened on Friday 24th November. The Council was working closely with national Highways and Persimmon to get the A43 junction opened quickly, and the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste was confident following discussions that things would progress quickly.
- Regarding the recent speed limit change to Towcester Road, there had been an issue with lighting of the road signs which caused issues.
- A meeting was due to take place with officers regarding flooding issues in Far Cotton and members would be briefed in due course.
- Concerns were identified through the Active Travel consultation regarding the Abington Park Crescent/King Edward Road/Park Avenue South junction. The Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste had met with officers and ideas would be put to ward members.
- Congestion in the town centre was difficult to manage; the town centre's roads were based on the medieval design of the town which was not fit for modern traffic levels. There were no plans to implement a low emissions zone in the town centre.
- Various scenarios had been offered in respect of possible solutions to traffic issues in Kingsthorpe, but none had been met with approval by Kingsthorpe residents.
- The Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Leisure confirmed his ongoing commitment to working with those involved with the creation of the Ecton Brook Community Hub. He assured Members that he would meet with the Cabinet Member for Finance to ensure that next year's budget had earmarked funds, where available, for the project.
- The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy was in its final stages; stakeholder and collaboration events would be taking place in January and was due to go to Overview and Scrutiny in February, and then to Cabinet. The Structural Changes Order dictated that it must be in place by 1st April 2024 and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Leisure assured Members that it would be.
- There was a uniform approach to community managed libraries; where they were occupying former district or county council spaces, they paid market rents less a 40% deduction. It was noted that local parish and town councils had a large role in keeping these libraries open.
- The Housing Partnership Board worked with major registered providers within West Northamptonshire. To date, Futures and Grand Union Housing had not been successful in securing housing decarbonisation funds; the Council would continue to press them to upgrade their housing stock.
- The new Licensing Policy would be brought to the Licensing committee in January; consultation responses would be reflected within it.
- The Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Engagement and Regulatory Services agreed that the Home Office did not handle the closure of the Westone Manor contingency hotel well. The Council had fed its concerns in respect of this back to the Home Office.

- Gratitude was expressed for the residents and volunteers of Crick for welcoming and providing support for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Southfields Community Centre was not fit for purpose; this was a challenging site; the administration was looking at what else could be done in the area.
- The Market Square was on track for completion in the summer of 2024.
- The Council was working with the museum to make sure anything of interest during the Market Square works would be available for display.
- A new planning application submitted for Market Walk did not include a “pod hotel”.

RESOLVED:

Council noted the Cabinet Member reports and the decision records from 10 October and 14 November 2023.

158. **Youth Justice Plan**

Councillor Hughes proposed the report which provided details of progress made against agreed outcomes for Children and Young People. The report outlined priorities, alongside potential future challenges for the partnership over the coming year. The Youth Justice Plan highlighted the partnership arrangements and budget position for the Youth Offending Service.

Councillor Fowler seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- Members commented that it would be useful to have more information on outcomes for young offenders in their later years; did they become adult offenders?
- It was important that the Council had a view of entire picture; how much research was done into the impacts on young people of different demographics.
- More emphasis was needed on prevention, not only intervention.
- It was good to see progress; engagement in prevention in some areas saw reduced antisocial behaviour.

RESOLVED:

Council approved the content of the Youth Justice Plan for 2023/24.

159. **Annual Report of Northamptonshire Children's Trust**

Councillor Fowler proposed the report which sought to update Council on the progress of the 2022/23 Annual Review of the Service Delivery Contract (SDC) between Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT) and West and North Northamptonshire Councils which included the 2022/23 Annual Report.

Councillor Hughes seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- There was concern that the Council may have waited too long to intervene with the Children's Trust.
- It was hoped that cross-party communication could be sent to the Government to urge them for better funding for adults and children's social care.
- Over the last 5 years class sizes had grown and teachers faced ever more complex issues. Many children did not want to go to school; class sizes needed to be reduced.
- There was concern that the report did not include a section on diversity and inclusion.
- It was difficult to see how pressures would ever reduce since the issues were reflected nationally.
- There was a good sense of moving forwards in the report.
- The £2.2m overspend mentioned in the Cabinet Member for Finance report was the forecast for the year, and not the year to date. This included the anticipated Children's Trust overspend. The recent collaboration with the Trust had given the Council much more confidence around its finances.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Noted that the Annual Report contained at Appendix 1-11 of the report was completed in line with the service delivery contract.
- b) Noted that KPI's in the SDC remained the same since the start of the contract with NCT and that the KPIs would be reviewed during 2024/25
- c) Noted that any changes to the SDC would need to be agreed by all parties, brought back to a future Joint Committee meeting for approval and, once approved, be implemented by a Change Control to the SDC.

160. **Updates to the Constitution**

Councillor Hinch proposed the report which Council's consideration of the proposed recommendations of the Democracy and Standards Committee in relation to updates to the Constitution and the revised member complaints procedure.

Councillor Kilbride seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- Some Members had concerns regarding the removal of anonymity due to perceived power imbalances.
- Some Members felt that the changes within the report were seen as positive step forwards.
- £25 could buy a bottle of alcohol.
- Officers should be encouraged to respond to complaints from residents. At present, they did not.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Approved the recommendations relating to updates to the Constitution as set out in Section 5 of the report
- b) Approved the revised Member Complaints Procedure at Appendix 2 of the report; and
- c) Delegated to the Monitoring Officer the power to make these amendments and any consequential amendments that may be necessary.

161. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-2025

Councillor Nunn proposed the report which provided Council with an update on the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) for the financial year 2023-2024 and asked Members to approve a no change scheme for the financial year 2024-2025 in line with the recommendation from Cabinet.

Councillor A Brown seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- A question was asked in relation to the Hardship Fund and whether, financial challenges notwithstanding, the Council would have funds to fill the gap now that the fund was being properly utilised.
- It was confirmed that there was a chance to make alterations at the draft budget meeting. Members were assured that the Council was not at risk of running out of money halfway through the year.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Noted the contents of this report
- b) Approved a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the financial year 2024-2025 as set out in the report including amending the LCTRS Regulations for pensioners in line with the uprating announced by DLUHC and uprating the working age Regulations in line with those announced by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
- c) Gave delegated authority to the Executive Director, Finance to make any changes to the LCTRS regulations up to and including 31 January 2024 in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

162. Acquisition of Former Bus Depot

Councillor Lister proposed the report which sought to notify Council of the decision taken by the Leader of the Council to approve the acquisition of the Former Bus Depot in Northampton for a regeneration scheme.

Councillor Nunn seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- It was important to retain the heritage of the former bus depot and retain its frontage in some form.

- It was hoped that due diligence had been carried out and would not cost so much to deliver that the project would have to be given to a third party.
- The development would give St James the boost it needed, but the Council should be mindful of the flooding issues in the area.

RESOLVED:

Council noted the decisions taken by the Deputy Leader of the Council set out at Appendices A and B of the report.

163. **Motions**

Motion 1

Councillor Russell proposed and Councillor Jolley seconded:

“The popularity of vapes (e-cigarettes) among young people has risen noticeably since the introduction of disposable vapes; one in nine underage children in the UK use them as of April 2023, compared to one in thirteen in 2021. In West Northamptonshire, 5% of school pupils reported using vapes (e-cigarettes) regularly last year, with almost half of year 10 girls admitting having tried them.

Vapes (e-cigarettes) were not designed for recreational use. Short term effects of vaping can include vomiting, sweating, dizziness, and difficulty breathing. But health experts warn that the excessive use of vapes (e-cigarettes) by children could be linked to lung collapse, lung bleeding and air leak. Last year, there were 15 hospitalisations of children aged under 10 due to vaping-related illnesses in the UK.

Trading Standards West Northamptonshire are working to capacity to tackle illicit sales of vapes (e-cigarettes) to children, including seizing over 5,000 disposable vapes since April. But they, and this council, are restricted in their powers of enforcement by the current lack of legislation.

This Council recognises:

- Youth vaping is becoming a national public health issue, with the extent of the damage to our Children’s health still unknown
- Current government plans to end youth vaping as part of its Smoke Free Generation, which includes the reduction in the number of appealing flavours available, regulating colourful and attractive eye-catching packaging, and moves to close legal loopholes around giving free vape (e-cigarette) samples to under 18s.
- The strenuous efforts of West Northamptonshire Trading Standards within existing legislation in combating illegal vape (e-cigarette) sales and
- West Northamptonshire Public Health in educating young people and families on the consequences of youth vaping

And resolves to invite:

- The encouragement of West Northants residents to take part in the government’s open consultation on its anti-smoking and youth vaping plans by the deadline of 6 December 2023

- The Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the pressing need for tighter restrictions on the marketing of vape products, their availability to underage children, and for more powers to be given to local authorities to confront and issue on-the-spot fines for traders found selling to children
- Officers to increase communications to the public on the Council's ongoing efforts, alongside Public Health and Trading Standards, to tackle underage use of vape products
- The Cabinet Members for Community Safety and Wellbeing to work with Public Health in accelerating and expanding current plans on educating young people and the wider public on the consequences of youth vaping."

Council debated the motion and made the following comments:

- The protection of children was a priority for the Council. A new licensing policy should be brought in, strong monitoring would help to address the problem.
- The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education recently attended the Youth Summit and engaged in productive dialogue with young people about the dangers of vaping.
- There was lots being done on this issue as was mentioned in the report of the Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration.
- Cessation and therapy groups for children would be greatly beneficial.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

Motion 2

Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Humphreys seconded:

"Council Notes:

Four years ago, this government pledged to ban Section 21 no fault evictions. The Renters Reform Bill, promised in the Conservative 2019 election manifesto, was debated in the Commons for the first time last month. It has since been announced that the no fault ban will be indefinitely delayed until reforms to the justice system have been implemented.

Ministry of Justice data show no-fault evictions in England between April and June this year increased by 41%, compared with the same period in 2022. Due to high interest rates and mortgage reaching unaffordable rates many landlords with financial pressures are selling their properties. Others take advantage of the scarcity of rented housing and use a Section 21 notice to evict tenants and relet on a high rental return.

According to the Ministry of Justice between April and June 2023 2,228 households were evicted by bailiffs through no fault of their own following a Section 21 notice. No fault evictions have made the prospect of a stable home impossible for England's 11 million private renters and the uncertainty and disruption is causing misery and hardship to families. This Council, like most, is reporting significant pressures to find alternative accommodation. Pressure on its temporary accommodation budget is

another direct consequence of our local housing crisis, where demand for decent, affordable housing completely overwhelms available supply.

The 16th Housing Minister since 2010 has recently been appointed, six of which were appointed in 2022 alone. Such a high turnover cannot contribute to solving this nation's housing emergency.

Council resolves to:

1. Write to the Housing Minister to express concern that banning no fault evictions have been delayed indefinitely.
2. Write to local MPs requesting that they raise concerns with the Housing Minister as to this indefinite delay.
3. Commission an urgent review, either via a task and finish group or officer led, to quantify the impact that no fault evictions is having in West Northants in order to make recommendations to mitigate the problem."

Council debated the motion and made the following comments:

- There were a number of housing related announcements in the Autumn Budget, including un-freezing of the LHA rate, extended "thank you payments" for the Homes for Ukraine sponsors, and announced extra funding for local authorities for homeless prevention.
- Whether or not the motion was accepted, the Council should come together and let the Government know that their refusal to ban no-fault evictions was harming West Northamptonshire residents.
- This was not an issue that could be resolved by the local authority, but the Council had a responsibility to keep pushing back at the Government.
- There was a lack of clarity around the rules of the Landlord Incentive Scheme.
- If Members were benefitting from the Landlord Incentive Scheme, the proper declarations must be made.
- The administration being of the same political party as those in Government would speak from a stronger position if it was to voice its displeasure in respect of no-fault evictions.

Upon a vote, the motion fell.

Motion 3

Councillor Joyce proposed and Councillor Holland-Delamere seconded:

"Our parks in West Northamptonshire are amongst the best maintained in the country. We recognise the positive affect that our green spaces have on our mental health and wellbeing and the benefits of access to a stress-free environment. We would like to commend and acknowledge the contribution that Friends of park groups, park rangers and volunteers have had, also highlighting ongoing voluntary work which has proved invaluable in maintaining our parks. With the predicted rise in global warming the trees and plants of parks cool the air and control the temperature and absorb carbon dioxide and other harmful gases reducing air pollution. We believe that now is the time to preserve them for today and future generations for the benefit of local communities and ensure that their existing boundaries are defined and free from any future developments or changes.

This council therefore recognises:

- The protection of our Parks and green spaces for today's and future generations as a priority.
- The positive support of Friends of parks groups, park rangers and volunteers in maintaining our parks and thanks them for their service to our communities.

And resolves to request the Cabinet:

- Aim to ensure all parks in the WNC area continue to be maintained at current levels and, where possible, improved.
- Aims to ensure our parks will not be redeveloped on beyond their current purpose.
- Finalise and publish the council's Parks Development Strategy as soon as possible.
- Proceed with all haste the recruitment of the Tree Protection Officer and Nature Recovery Strategy Officer.
- Request the above officers, once in position, conduct a survey of our parks and green spaces to identify areas for improvement in biodiversity and public use."

The Chairman notified Council that an amendment to the motion had been received and copies of it had been circulated to Members.

Councillor Larratt proposed and Councillor Kilbride seconded the amendment:

"Our parks in West Northamptonshire are amongst the best maintained in the country. We recognise the positive effect that our green spaces have on our mental health and wellbeing and the benefits of access to a stress-free environment. We would like to commend and acknowledge the contribution that Friends of Park groups, Park Rangers, LIVE, Community Payback and volunteers have had, also highlighting ongoing voluntary work which has proved invaluable in maintaining our parks. With the predicted rise in global warming the trees and plants of parks cool the air and control the temperature and absorb carbon dioxide and other harmful gases reducing air pollution.

It is important that we continue to preserve them for today and future generations for the benefit of local communities and ensure that their existing boundaries are retained.

This council therefore recognises:

- The protection of our Parks and green spaces for today's and future generations as a priority.
- the positive support of Friends of Parks groups, Park Rangers, LIVE, Community Payback and volunteers in maintaining our parks and thanks them for their service to our communities.

And resolves to request the Cabinet:

- Aim to ensure all parks in the WNC area continue to be maintained at current levels and, where possible, improved.

- Aims to ensure our parks and open spaces will primarily be used for their current purposes and only developed to provide facilities associated with that use within their existing boundaries.
- Finalise and publish the council's Park Development Strategy and Nature Recovery Strategy as soon as possible.

Councillor Joyce, as the proposer of the motion, accepted the amendment.

Council debated the amendment and made the following comments:

- Open spaces were important and becoming even more so as populations increased. The Council should do all that it could to ensure they persevere.
- Members requested that the cross-party Sustainability Group were given the opportunity to input and have oversight of works being developed in this area
- It was noted that the PSPO in respect of dog fouling that was approved by Cabinet in October 2022 did not cover Brackley; Members asked that Brackley be included.
- It was noted that Parklands trees which were planted nearly 50 years ago had not maintained and had "taken over" the park due to their size.
- Money must be invested in the area's green spaces.

Upon a vote, the motion as amended was carried.

164. **Urgent Business (previously agreed with the Chairman)**

None advised.

The meeting closed at 8.58 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____