



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Council Chamber, The Guildhall, St Giles Street, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Tuesday 8 June 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Present: Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Chair)
Councillor Adam Brown (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Fiona Baker
Councillor Rebecca Breese
Councillor Matt Golby
Councillor Phil Larratt
Councillor Malcolm Longley
Councillor David Smith

Also Present: Councillor Julie Davenport
Councillor Gareth Eales
Councillor Dennis Meredith
Councillor Emma Roberts
Councillor Sam Rumens
Councillor John Shephard

Apologies for
Absence: Councillor Lizzy Bowen

Officers: Ed Bostock, Democratic Services Officer
Jane Carr, Transformation Director
Anna Ernshaw, Chief Executive
Paul Hanson, Democratic Services Manager
Martin Henry, Chief Finance Officer
Stuart Lackenby, Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Sofia Neal-Gonzalez, Democratic Services Officer (minutes)
Rebecca Peck, Assistant Chief Executive
Sarah Reed, Corporate Executive Director
Stuart Timmiss, Executive Director of Place & Economy
Cath Whitehead, Monitoring Officer
Lucy Wightman, Director of Public Health

1. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members

Councillor Bowen sent apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet approved the minutes from the Shadow Executive meeting of the 20th April and signed as a true and accurate record.

4. **Chairman's Announcements**

There were none.

5. **Corporate Plan**

The Chairman presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. He invited comments from the members who were present.

- It was noted that the report was well presented but the question of whether the Plan could be more ambitious was raised.
- The re-opening of the London to Bedford Rail line was mentioned as something that would be positive for Northampton, as well as improving travel to London.
- It was noted that the closure of sure start centres had had an adverse effect on vulnerable children and families.
- It was noted that the construction of a new secondary school in Daventry had drawn concerns with regard to the use of green space. It was asked why more work had not been done with the current schools in the area, instead of constructing a new one.
- Concern was raised regarding how long care plans took to be provided for Adults returning home after a stay in the hospital.
- It was suggested that a supplementary document detailing the journey of the new Council would be helpful.
- It was suggested there was a crisis with regards to housing with many poorer families living in overcrowded conditions.
- It was asked whether the Heritage Board would be restarted.
- The Social Value Act 2013 was discussed, with emphasis placed on how the Council could benefit from it.
- It was noted that lack of parking for students had increased the amount of students parking in the side roads of Far Cotton and this had become an issue for residents. It was asked whether Section 106 could be used to mitigate these issues.

The following responses were issued by the relevant Cabinet members.

- Consultation had and would be occurring regarding the re-opening of rail lines and the Council would continue to be a part of the East–West rail consortium. It was agreed that Northampton's rail connectivity could be improved.

- The Cabinet was informed that the Mayor of Bedford had asked for the Council to be involved in supporting the re-opening of the Northampton to Bedford Rail Line. The Council had written in support of this.
- It was agreed that the closure of the sure start centres had had an impact on troubled families. It was noted that the Council had been awarded grants to help with this, which was being looked in to.
- A new Assistant Director would be starting in July and would review school place sufficiency.
- The points relating to a shortage of suitable housing were noted.
- With regards to the anti-poverty strategy it was noted that it was important to find a way to engage with all Councillors on this issue.

The Chairman advised that the Heritage board had been paused due to Covid-19, but there was due to be a meeting very soon.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet;

1. Approved the Corporate Plan subject to further review, consultation and stakeholder engagement on the detailed implementation of the priorities within the services, and
2. Delegated to the Chief Executive final approval in Consultation with the Leader

6. Future Northants Transformation Task & Finish Group Output

At the Chairman's invitation Councillor Golby presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. The task and finish group had started work about a year ago with a wide review of the Councils future transformation. There had been an early review conducted alongside North Northants Council with good partnership collaboration and good value for money. It was advised that there had been an added focus on long term growth and transparency. Councillor Golby thanked Jane Carr and her team for all their hard work.

The Chairman agreed that the Task and Finish Group had undertaken a vital piece of work.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet;

1. Endorse the agreed Transformation Priority Plan timeline to disaggregate the hosted services between North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council.
2. Endorse the principles of transformation as laid out in section 4.5 (a) to (l), inclusive.

7. School Minor Works Budget 2021-22

At the Chairman's invitation Councillor Baker presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. Approval was requested to use the school condition funding; it was advised that this money had been a grant from the Department of Education to the Council for this use. The report advised that 8 schools would be surveyed and repaired.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet;

1. Approved the 2021/22 'School Minor Works' budget to rectify condition issues in WNC maintained schools, ensuring the Council continues to fulfil its statutory obligation of maintaining its school estate;
2. Noted that WNC's allocation of 'School Condition Allocation' funding for 2021/22 had been confirmed by the DfE at £1,629,546 and agreed that this grant funding would be utilised as WNC's 'School Minor Works' budget for 2021/22;
3. Noted that any works undertaken under the 'Schools Minor Works' budget would be delivered as part of a rolling programme of conditions surveys at maintained schools in the Local Authority;

8. Commissioning Residential and Nursing Care Services for Older People

At the Chairman's invitation Councillor Golby presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. The Committee was informed that the current contract ends on the 31st August 2021 with no option to extend, and that there will be a new Interim DPS framework put into place.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was asked whether there were any council run care homes. There had been 2 in Daventry but both had been closed down. It was noted that there had been an increase in the cost to families and the council during this time.
- It was suggested that there was a lack of space for Dementia patients which then required them to remain in hospital when not necessary.
- It was asked why the associated risk had been noted as red and what that entailed.
- There had been no mention of the ethical care charter which ensured that those who worked within the care sector followed the required procedures.

Councillor Golby advised that scrutiny was welcomed which could help to add value.

Stuart Lackenby the Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing made the following comments.

- The goal was to enable people to continue to live in their own homes as much as possible.
- Providers could be added or removed depending on which services were required.

- It was noted that this was a long-term approach and that some fee levels were not in line with the Council's needs. The Council needed to be confident that the fee rates match up to the care provided.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet;

1. Noted the commissioning activity to date along with ongoing intentions to commission and procure residential and nursing care services for the future.
2. Approved for delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for Adults Communities and Wellbeing to undertake a procurement exercise to secure and implement an interim Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) framework to commence the 1 September 2021 for a period of 12-months.
3. Approved the proposed fee rate inflationary uplift of 2.65% for 2021-22 to support market delivery cost pressures.

9. **National Bus Strategy**

At the Chairman's invitation Councillor Larratt presented the report copies of which had been previously circulated. The report advised that the funding for some bus services was coming to an end. The Government published the 'Bus Back Better' bus strategy, which had dispersed £3billion of funding in order to help the bus industry recover. In order to access this funding it would be necessary for the council to establish partnerships with bus strategies, this commitment needs to be made by the end of June, with the bus service improvement plan published by the end of October. The Government expects this to then be delivered by January 2022.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was asked whether having a council run service could be considered.
- It was asked whether the current bus station would have the necessary capacity for extra services.
- A cross party working group to try and realise this project was suggested.

Councillor Larratt advised that he would be happy to consider a cross-party working group, and noted that the idea of franchising had been dealt within the report, but, it was felt that it would be unsuitable for West Northants.

The Executive Director of Place & Economy, Stuart Timmins made the following comments.

- Franchising had been looked at with regards to scale and capacity, it was advised that nothing was off the table regarding this possibility.
- The Government had been clear on the required partnership. It would, however, be up to the council to determine what that would look like going forward.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet;

1. Noted the challenges faced by the bus industry due to COVID-19 and the funding that is being provided by the Government and Council to ensure that bus services continue to operate, as set out in Section 5 of this report;
2. Noted the publication of Bus Back Better, the National Bus Strategy for England, as summarised in Section 6 of this report;
3. Committed to the formation of an Enhanced Partnership under the Bus Service Act 2017, for the reasons set out in Section 7 of this report; and
4. Agreed that delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Highways & Waste Services to prepare an Enhanced Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan to be brought back to Cabinet for approval

10. **Proposed redevelopment of the former Avenue Campus to provide affordable housing**

At the Chairman's invitation Councillor Brown presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. The Avenue Campus housing project had been a legacy issue, Northampton Borough Council proposed purchasing the site, but this had not concluded before vesting day. It had been proposed that this purchase should occur through the housing accounts and using New Homes England Funding. It was advised that 170 new homes were planned for this site, and that a significant amount of legal due diligence work was underway. The team in charge of this project had developed financial appraisals of the scheme.

The Cabinet then resolved to hold part of the meeting in private in order to discuss the appendix attached to the report, the content of which was exempt from publication.

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act would be disclosed to them.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet;

Delegate to the Executive Director for Place, Economy and the Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Housing, the completion of the acquisition of the University of Northampton's Avenue Campus in St George's Avenue, Northampton Avenue Campus excluding the Newton Building to enable development to be taken forward as described in this report

11. **Updates to the Constitution**

At the Chairman's invitation Councillor Brown presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. Cllr Brown proposed that the second recommendation be altered to remove the approval of changes under Part 8, paragraph 7, in order to maintain consistency with the discussion that had taken place at the Full Council.

RESOLVED:

1. The changes to the Constitution already made by the Monitoring Officer under her delegated power be noted.
2. The proposed changes to the Constitution set out in Appendix 1 be agreed, aside from the changes under Part 8, paragraph 7.
3. Delegated power be granted to the Monitoring Officer to amend the Constitution to give effect to the agreements for joint arrangements with LGSS (Cambridgeshire, Bedford, Milton Keynes) Northampton Partnership Homes and North Northamptonshire Council.
4. A further review of the Constitution and Member Officer Protocol be carried out by the Democracy and Standards Committee and referred to a future meeting of Council.

12. Appointments to Partnership Organisations

The Chairman presented the report and in lieu of a report read out the recommendations which were then agreed by Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That in lieu of a report, Cabinet was asked to note that the Leader will inform Democratic Services of the Appointments to Partnership Organisations.

13. North West Relief Road

At the Chairman's invitation Councillor Larratt presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. The report stated that the scheme would provide the necessary infrastructure for new residents in the areas and lessen any travel time. The business case for the proposal had been strong. Councillors made the following comments;

- It was suggested that travel times may not be helped by this road. It could make travel worse and as such would be of no benefit to Northampton.
- It was suggested that the Council had been backed into a corner over this issue, considering that the project had gone £20 million over budget and could possibly be more.
- It was noted that there was a need for an orbital road but that this road should be viewed as an access road, and as such should not be part of the orbital road project.

- Clarification was requested with regards to where the section 106 money had been taken from. If money had been borrowed this would be a concern for residents, and could impact the Council's budget.
- It was advised that there had been some confusion from residents as to purpose of the road.
- It was unclear how some residents would use part of the route.
- It was hoped that Audit and/or Scrutiny would take a look at this item and include it in their work plan.
- It was asked whether any money had been signposted to go into the neighbouring communities.

Councillor Larratt made the following comments in response.

- It was advised that there was a requirement to deliver the relevant housing to the area and as such the project was needed.
- The air quality and amount of congestion and pollution had been taken into account.
- It was noted that a bid was being put forward. If the bid were not successful then a report would come back to Cabinet for further discussion.
- He had been informed that the relief road was essential to the development of Dallington Grange.

Stuart Timmiss Executive Director of Place and Economy made the following comments.

- Section 106 funding had been agreed and was assigned for this project, with a fair level of commitment.
- If the development was over a certain number of houses then the Council would get funding for this.
- Scrutiny of the project was welcomed.
- Going forward, work would be undertaken with The Executive Director of Finance and his team in order to look at what further plans could be put into place.
- The priority of the orbital road development was noted with regard to infrastructure.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet;

1. Noted continued progress to deliver the Northampton North West Relief Road;
2. Supported the capital investment required to complete this scheme as set out in Section 6.1 of this report and required to proceed to construction including forward funding against future S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy payments;
3. Agreed to progress a bid to the Levelling Up Fund for £20 million;

4. Noted SEMLEP's proposed conditions on the continued financial support from the Local Growth Fund as set out in Section 5.2

14. **Urgent Business**

There was none.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____