



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at The Forum, Towcester, NN12 6AF on Tuesday 7 December 2021 at 6.00 pm.

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

Substitute
Members:

Also Councillor Julie Davenport
Present: Councillor Jonathan Harris
 Councillor Dennis Meredith
 Councillor Bob Purser
 Councillor Danielle Stone

Apologies
for None
Absence:

Officers Jane Carr - Director of Transformation
 Anna Earnshaw - Chief Executive
 Alison Golding - Assistant Director - HR
 Paul Hanson - Democratic Services Manager
 Martin Henry - Executive Director of Finance
 Luiza Morris-Warren - Assistant Director - Customer Services
 Sofia Neal-Gonzalez - Democracy Officer (minutes)
 Rebecca Peck - Assistant Chief Executive
 Sarah Reed - Executive Director for Corporate Services
 Stuart Timmiss - Executive Director of Place & Economy
 Catherine Whitehead - Monitoring Officer
 Lucy Wightman - Joint Director of Public Health - North and West
 Northamptonshire Councils

68. Apologies

None Received

69. **Declarations of Interest**

None Received

70. **Minutes**

Agreed the Minutes of the meeting held in public on the 9th November 2021.

71. **Chair's Announcements**

None

72. **Urgent Business**

None

73. **Corporate Plan Performance Report – 2021-22 Q2**

The Chair, Councillor Jonathan Nunn presented the report and invited Cabinet members to give an update on their portfolios.

Councillor Phil Larratt made the following comments.

- There were now fewer outstanding road repairs.
- Embracing new technologies was an important way forward.
- The loss of trees had been noted, with a net loss of 140 on WNC land, this was worrying, and steps were being taken to find out why this had happened, storm damage was thought to be a factor.
- There had been an increase in electric car charging points which was welcomed, it was noted that rural areas were also seeking charging points.

Councillor Matt Golby discussed the various figures available in the report and noted that they were what was expected for the services the council provides. Cabinet was reminded that we were only in Q2 of this new council.

Councillor Fiona Baker noted that there were some delays in the adoption process, with 20 family currently waiting, the Cabinet was informed that this due to court delays and as such was out of the Council's hands.

Councillor Adam Brown noted that there were currently 200 homes in the construction phase, and various housing options were being created.

Councillor Rebecca Breese was happy with report and had nothing further to add.

Councillor Lizzy Bowen advised that there was now a dedicated support link for businesses on the website.

Councillor Malcolm Longley noted that the Council was slightly ahead on cash collection.

Councillors made the following comments:

- It was noted that a working group had been created to look at tree planting, could councillors be given the date of publication of this plan.
- Were the road repairs mentioned only potholes or had it included all works.
- It was queried if there was an overall target for charging points provided.
- The improvement of life chances had been mentioned, it was noted that there were significant discrepancies with life expectancy between different groups.
- Did the 45 days assessment that was mentioned include contextual safeguarding as historically it had not been.
- It was noted that the number of safeguarding referrals seemed high, could members be advised about who were making these referrals.
- Research had taken place on personal care budgets, was there currently any information on this.
- It was noted that WNC currently had 74 apprentices, it was asked if these included any care leaver programmes.
- It was queried whether the wiring that was due to take place would have a detrimental impact on the look of residential streets. It was mentioned that previous removal of paving slabs and subsequent tarmacking had destroyed the aesthetic of some streets.
- Clean and Green streets was important, but there were problems with the implementation of this, it was queried whether the answer to this would be through inter-agency work.
- Thanks was given to portfolio holders who had been active with regards to the current problem with the loss of trees.
- It was questioned whether WNC would need expert advice on the manner and number of trees that would be planted and were.

Councillor Phil Larratt made the following comments in response to some of the queries.

- It was agreed that the tree issue was one of concern and was being looked in to. The scrutiny working group would complete their work in the spring of 2022, their findings would then come to cabinet.
- It would be important to get any tree policy right to stop people taking matters into their own hands.
- It was advised that any tree planting would take place within the planning process, there would be a cost to this process which the council would deal with when required.
- A meeting was due to take place to check progress made into correcting storm damaged trees.
- With regards to the electric car charging points, it was important to not rush this project as battery technology was changing significantly.
- The damage done to some roads and pavements with the removal of slabs had been unacceptable, work had been suspended in that area and a meeting had been requested.
- With regards to Green and Clean, some areas were more difficult to maintain, and would investigate inter-agency work.
- There was a great need for more CCTV, the Cabinet was informed that this was on route.

The Executive Director of Place & Economy noted that the Woodland Trust had been mentioned in the report as a partner. The Cabinet was advised that there were also several organisations and grants that WNC could benefit from.

Councillor Fiona Baker made the following comments in response to queries made.

- It was noted that there had been many questions which would require data, as such she would need to contact the Children's Trust for further information.
- The 45 days assessment did include contextual safeguarding.
- The police and schools were the main referrers for Safeguarding issues.
- The apprenticeships included 3 extra care leavers.
- Further answers would be given over email once they had been investigated.

Councillor Matt Golby advised that he would take away the question regarding the personal care budget to investigate the query.

Councillor Adam Brown advised that in addition to the 200 homes mentioned there were a further 215 in the pre-production stage and 341 at planning stage.

The recommendations were put to Cabinet.

74. **2021 Employee Survey Results and Draft People Strategy**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Mike Hallam presented the report copies of which had been previously circulated.

Cabinet was advised that the results would be available early next year. When WNC is over two and a half years old it was hoped that it would be added to the Best Companies list and excellent work was being done to make this happen.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was queried how the results of the survey would be fed back to staff.
- What sort of guidance and support would be given to managers?
- What measurements were planned for the subculture that was mentioned in the report?

The Executive Director of Corporate advised that the transformation team had been approached about creating bespoke work for each area. The measuring of the arrangements in place would occur with best practice in mind.

Councillor Mike Hallam noted that response numbers had always be expected to be low for the first survey.

The Chair stated that the success of the council would have much to do with staff engagement.

Recommendations were put to Cabinet.

75. **Blueprint Change – Director of Public Health**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Matt Golby presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Councillor Golby said that he wished to recognise the work that had been undertaken by the current Director of Public Health, Lucy Wightman, specifically with the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The committee was informed that the blueprint would now allow WNC to have a designated Director of Public Health separate from North Northants Council.

Recommendations were put to Cabinet.

76. Customer Experience Strategy 2021-24

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Mike Hallam presented the report copies of which had been previously circulated. The Cabinet was informed that the desire was to provide a customer experience that was the same throughout West Northants. This would include how members of the public communicated with the council, whether in person, over the phone, over the internet or via the post.

Recommendations were put to the Cabinet.

77. Bus Lane Enforcement Update

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Phil Larratt presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. It was noted that bus lanes and public transport play an important role in the council's carbon objectives. Discussions had taken place as to where to place the enforcement camera,

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was important for the public to be aware of what lanes they can and cannot use and this should be fair.
- The fines had created large financial problems for some members of the public.
- The camera had been responsible for £800,000 income for the council through fines, it was queried whether the council should rely on residents breaking the law to increase its finances.
- Could payment plans be looked at as a way to help residents pay off any debts.

Councillor Phil Larratt made the following points.

- The importance of clear signage would be considered.
- He could not comment on decisions made by the previous council.
- He wished to make it clear that the Council did not rely on members of the public breaking the law to increase its funds.
- He would investigate the possibility of a payment plan.

Recommendations were put to the Cabinet.

78. Transformation Update Quarter 2 2021/22

The Chair, Councillor Jonathan Nunn presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. The report presented a summary of the projects that were

taking place, some were still in draft form. It was advised that various projects had been created since vesting day.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was requested that the Council ensured that not everything be digitised to increase accessibility. The difficulty of the keypad system to advise the council of any missed bin collection was given as an example of this.
- It was advised that at times the amount of information from the transformation team was a bit overwhelming.
- The report had mentioned 'potential savings', would this be the priority of the Council, or would it be service outcomes?
- Would it be possible to see how WNC are co-designing transformation, as well as what the added social value was?

Councillor Mike Hallam made the following comments in response to some of the queries raised.

- It advised that the phone system had been heavily mentioned in the last report and was a top priority.
- It was noted that some members of the public were more digital than others and that it was important to be able to communicate with people in the correct way.

The Chair agreed with the importance of service outcomes.

The recommendations were put to Cabinet.

79. **Northampton Towns Fund - Skills and Social Enterprise Development Fund**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Lizzy Bowen presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Cabinet was advised that this project would draw down £500,000 from the Towns Fund and would be the third business case to have come to Cabinet. The project would be subject to the local assurance framework and had been independently assessed. It was announced that Northampton had been accredited as a social enterprise town which was a positive. It was stated that if the recommendations were not agreed we would lose the funding, Cabinet was reminded that WNC was not required to provide any additional finance and there had also been extensive consultation.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was also important for the Council to tackle problem areas within the town.
- The bid Golden Ticket competition that was taking place in the town centre was a positive way to engage the public.

The recommendations were put to Cabinet.

80. Vehicle Maintenance, South Area Waste and Cleansing Service

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Phil Larratt presented the report copies of which had been previously circulated. The report explained the arrangements for a new fleet of waste vehicles.

The recommendations were put to Cabinet.

81. Northampton Railway Station Multi Story Car Park Proposal

The Chair advised that three of the appendices to this report were exempt and as such any conversation around this would need to proceed in a closed meeting.

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Lizzy Bowen presented the report. The report was explained in detail and the committee was advised that the project was a very complicated one. It was noted that there was a clear need for more parking at the train station, this extra parking would be the catalyst for further development. It was advised that the Executive Director of Place & Economy and the Executive Director of Finance had met with key funding investors to attain the best deal for this project. It was advised that many of the top bids had committed to the Council's green causes, this had been a key criterion. The recommendations were then discussed.

Councillors made the following comments.

- The loss of the Buckton Fields park and ride was a disappointment.
- It was important for WNC to think green when choosing an investor.
- It was requested that the parking charges be sensible and fair.
- Would there be charging points for electric cars available?
- It was queried whether WNC would be creative with the design of the new car park, an urban habitat was given as an example.
- It was questioned whether there had been any discussion about the building of social housing on that site.
- It was noted that the giving of delegated powers would be a concern due to the size of the project.
- The construction would occur in the middle of one of the most historic areas of Northampton, this should not be overlooked.

Councillor Lizzy Bowen made the following comments in response to the queries raised.

- The loss of the park and ride had been noticed and a way forward was under review.
- It was confirmed that WNC would choose a green investor.
- The idea of a more creative design was noted as something to investigate.
- With regards to social housing, it was confirmed that all options were on the table.
- Councillors were assured that the delegated powers would not be granted to one person alone but various and there would be consultation with colleagues.
- It was advised that this option had been the less risky of the two available.

Councillor Adam Brown advised that he was not aware of any discussions regarding NPH housing on that land.

Councillor Phil Larratt requested that appropriate disabled parking and accessibility be provided on the new site, it was then confirmed that there was a plan in place for this.

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

- Should there be any change in the direction of the project it would return to Cabinet.
- Any risks had been explained in the report, without WNC underwriting the project it could not go ahead.
- It was advised that any work carried out on Network Rail land would be challenging.

The recommendations were put to Cabinet.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____