



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at The Forum, Towcester, NN12 6AF on Tuesday 12 July 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Chair)
 Councillor Adam Brown (Vice-Chair)
 Councillor Fiona Baker
 Councillor Rebecca Breese
 Councillor Matt Golby
 Councillor Mike Hallam
 Councillor David Smith

Also
Present: Councillor Jamal Alwahabi
 Councillor William Barter
 Councillor Jonathan Harris
 Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere
 Councillor Bob Purser
 Councillor Emma Roberts

Officers Councillor Phil Larratt
 Councillor Daniel Lister
 Gillian Baldock, Political Assistant to the Conservative Group
 Simon Bowers, Assistant Director - Assets and Environment
 Alison Golding, Assistant Director - Human Resources
 Paul Hanson, Democratic Services Manager
 Chris Kiernan, Interim Director of Children Services
 Sofia Neal-Gonzalez, Democracy Officer (Minutes)
 Jed Scoles, Political Assistant to the Labour Group
 Mitchell Thomason, Transformation Project Manager
 Chris Wales, Chief Information Officer

26. **Apologies**

Councillor Daniel Lister and Councillor Phil Larratt

27. **Declarations of Interest**

None

28. **Minutes**

RESOLVED: That the minutes from the Cabinet meeting on the 14th of June 2022 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

29. **Chair's Announcements**

None

30. **Urgent Business**

None

31. **Revenue Monitoring, Provisional Outturn 2021-22 and 2022-23 Financial Outlook**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report.

Councillors made the following comments.

- What was the current situation with staffing in the Planning Department following the recent recruitment drive?
- It was queried whether the council could reduce its energy usage to adhere to its climate strategy.
- It was queried how much cost pressures would increase should the staffing strategy work due to previously vacant posts being filled.
- It was noted that the council still used a large amount of agency staff, was there a way to reduce this?
- The Children's Trust had balanced their books by drawing down reserves, was there a way the council could keep an eye on the spend in that area?
- The Adult Services budget was under pressure. It was queried whether the council was being overly ambitious in the savings it wished to deliver in this area.
- The risk reserve was just over £40 million, what was the accuracy of this of this fund.
- The robustness of the Council's debt write off process was queried.

Councillor Malcolm Longley made the following comments.

- It was agreed that there were inflationary pressures, and that best practice should be used when looking at energy spending.
- The Children's Trust was a noted risk due to the council not having control.
- There are write-offs every year and these happen for a variety of reasons.

Councillor Mike Hallam advised that over the last 6 weeks every department has met with HR and Finance to go over and discuss their vacancies. The planning department was found to be of concern and there have since been over 100 applications to vacancies within that department.

Councillor Rebecca Breese advised that within the planning department there were currently now 7 Development Control Officers and 3 Planning Policy vacancies.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet.

- a) Noted the provisional outturn position for 2021-22.**
- b) Approved the use of contingency budgets requested in section 5.83 and service carry forward requests in Appendix B**

- c) **Approved the agreed debt write-off requests that are greater than £25,000 as detailed in section 8.**
- d) **Noted the financial risks and issues identified for 2022-23.**

32. **General Fund Capital and Housing Revenue Account Capital Monitoring, Provisional Outturn 2021-22 and Revised Capital Programme for 2022-26**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report.

Councillors made the following comments.

- An update of the legacy Section 106 money issue was requested.
- It was important for WNC to ensure that any capital projects met all the corporate objectives.
- The need for a new fit for purpose traveller site was noted.

Councillor Malcolm Longley made the following comments.

- The council had a limited income but all attempts to hit targets would be made.
- There was no danger of losing the legacy Section 106 money.
- It was advised that a traveller site was not currently on the agenda.

Councillor Rebecca Breese advised that there had been a plan for a traveller site, but it had been deemed not appropriate.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet.

- a) **Noted the 2021-22 provisional capital outturn position for WNC general fund and HRA.**
- b) **Noted the proposed capital carry forwards for the GF capital programme which are required as a result of rephasing in the 2021-22 programme. These are detailed in appendix A.**
- c) **Noted the proposed capital carry forwards for the HRA capital programme which are required as a result of rephasing in the 2021-22 programme. These are detailed in appendix B;**
- d) **Noted the revised GF capital programme for 2022-26 (appendix C) including the new schemes which had been added to the programme since the 2022-23 budget was approved in February 2022.**
- e) **Noted the revised HRA capital programme for 2022-26 (appendix D) including the new schemes which have been added to the programme since the 2022-23 budget was approved in February 2022.**

33. **Proposal to establish a 50 place Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) unit for pupils with a primary need of Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) at Hunsbury Park Primary School, Northampton**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Fiona Baker presented the report. It was advised that consultation had now been concluded with various groups having been contacted for their views. There had been some local issues raised regarding traffic.

Members were reminded that the school would enable WNC to fulfil its statutory duty in this area.

A councillor welcomed the report and advised that the views from residents with regards traffic were important, the council would need to create a traffic policy for this. Councillor Fiona Baker advised that this issue was being investigated.

RESOLVED:

- a) **Approved the establishment of a 50 place SEND unit for pupils with a primary need of ASC at Hunsbury Park Primary School, Northampton.**
- b) **Noted the responses received during the 4 week period of consultation on the proposal that was conducted in May/June 2022.**
- c) **Delegated responsibility to Director of Children's Services, in conjunction with the relevant portfolio holder to enter into all necessary contracts related to the delivery of the proposed SEND unit.**

34. Digital, Technology & Innovation Strategy 2022 - 2025

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Mike Hallam presented the report. Members were advised that this strategy does not mean a commitment to being completely paper free.

A councillor made the following comments.

- Modernisation of systems was welcomed.
- It was queried how the existing data would be moved and how the back up data was cleaned.
- An update on the Microsoft 365 contract renewal was requested.
- Would the servers remain in the UK?

Councillor Mike Hallam advised that data is cleaned to the standard that is required at a local authority. Currently the servers were still in the UK and although highly likely that they would remain so, all options would be looked at.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet approved the Digital, Technology & Innovation Strategy 2022-2025 and supports its implementation across the Council.

35. Pay and Grading Proposal

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Mike Hallam presented the report and advised that there had been a lot of discussion with the unions on this matter.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was requested that good communication continue to happen as the council needed to retain staff.
- It was noted that as of yet not all jobs have been matched into the new structure.

- What mitigations were in place should the budgetary implications go over the 5%? It was queried whether this had been costed?

Councillor Mike Hallam made the following comments.

- Staff would have 2 years of full pay protection.
- There had been extensive formal budget mapping carried out.
- It was advised that there had been good communication with the unions on this matter.

The Chief Executive advised members that these proposals would only affect new WNC employees, older staff from past authorities were protected by TUPE regulations.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet.

- a) Noted the proposal made to the Trade Unions in respect of the new pay structure and the remaining 'day one' terms and conditions.**
- b) Noted the forward implementation plan.**
- c) Noted the budget implications.**

36. **West Coast Partnership**

The Chair presented and moved the report. He invited Councillor William Barter, Assistant Cabinet Member for Rail, to comment on the report in the absence of Councillor Larratt.

Councillor William Barter made the following comments.

- The Department for Transportation had shown an attempt to deal with some of the issues the council has raised.
- There were more opportunities available to the council should they be pushed for.
- It was advised that the report itself was a list of things the council would like to see happen.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was important to integrate all parts of public transport into this.
- Connectivity of rural transport was important, the lack of accessibility at the Long Buckby station was an example of this.
- Looking at more park and rides would help get the council to net zero and ease the amount of traffic on the roads.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet agreed the aspirations for future rail services as set out in paragraph 8 for the purposes of continuing discussions with West Coast Partnership (WCP).

37. **Health Protection Service, Food & Feed Standards Service, Spray Paint Enforcement and the Tobacco Enforcement Plans 2022-23**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor David Smith presented the report, members were advised that this report was required to be produced on an annual basis.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was noted that this was a very important report on a subject that was often under-recognised.
- It was queried whether the council had the capacity to do the work that the report advised needed to be done.
- After having to divert staff from this area to deal with export certification due to Brexit, could the council reclaim anything from central government?
- The food poisoning statistics within the county were worrying.

Councillor David Smith made the following comments.

- It was advised that there had been a 10% drop in income in food outlets which could be the reason for the increase in food poisoning cases.
- There were Covid recovery plans in place, the Food Standards Agency had recognised a need for this.
- There was a large amount of legislation to work through within regulatory services but there was a strong team in place for this.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- a) Approved the Health Protection Service Plan for the year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.**
- b) Approved the Food & Feed Standards Service Plan for the year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.**
- c) Approved the Spray Paint Enforcement Plan for 2022-23**
- d) Approved the Tobacco Enforcement Plan for 2022-23**

38. **Improvements to Property Access Control System**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report.

A councillor noted that it was disappointing to find the access system at One Angel Square had become outdated so quickly.

RESOLVED: Cabinet approve a new capital budget of £80k in 2022/23 to upgrade the existing One Angel Square access control system and change the Guildhall system to unify access across Northampton corporate offices

39. **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

The Chair presented the report and noted that the creation of nature recovery strategies would make running the process easier.

Councillors made the following comments.

- The importance of WNC taking the lead in the counties nature reserves was noted.

- Could there be links with housing developments, schools, and community groups?
- It was queried whether the employment of local people would serve the community better, this way the council could build up its own expertise.
- Could this also involve the Sustainability and Oversight group?
- It was noted that £16,000 had already been received, what had this been spent on?
- It was important for work to also be done within urban areas; this had been shown to have a positive effect on mental health.
- The use of certain types of herbicides had been known to have a negative effect on biodiversity and wildlife.

Councillor Adam Brown noted the concerns over the use of herbicides would be discussed with the portfolio holder.

RESOLVED: Cabinet agreed that West Northamptonshire Council accepted appointment as the responsible authority for the local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) for West Northamptonshire.

40. **Asset Disposal**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report. Members were advised that this was a 'tidy up' operation.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was noted that estate shops were a crucial part of the community for many people. Some had even provided delivery services during lockdown for at risk people.
- Many of the shops needed repairs.
- What would happen should the tenants not be able to afford to buy?
- Was this a one off or would parishes be allowed to purchase further assets?

Councillor Malcolm Longley advised that this would not be a one off and further assets could be made available to parishes.

The Assistant Director Assets & Environment noted that maintenance had been a key issue and was being addressed.

RESOLVED: That authority was given to the Assistant Director of Assets & Environment to:

- 1. Transfer the assets listed within Appendix A to the relevant parish councils on the basis set out in the report.**
- 2. Consider, in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder and the Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste Portfolio Holder, any objections to disposals of open space following publication of the intention to dispose required by Section 123(2A) of the Local**

- Government Act 1972 and either proceed with each affected disposal or cease that disposal.**
- 3. Offer the freehold of each shop listed in Appendix B for transfer to the current tenant at the price established by a current Red Book valuation commissioned by the Council from an independent consultant, and if that offer is accepted to proceed with the disposal. Any disposal is to contain a restrictive covenant (or similar) to ensure that the ground floor of each property currently used for retail remains in commercial use.**
 - 4. Following the completion of a 'best and final' offer process, negotiate and agree terms for a lease and agreement for lease for a battery energy storage facility (BESF) on the Council's land at Booth Meadow, Northampton as set out in the report, and enter into any documentation required to implement this.**
 - 5. In consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder agree terms for the disposal of land off the A45 London Road, Daventry as set out in the report, and enter into any documentation required to implement this.**
 - 6. Dispose off-market the land off Warwick Street, Daventry as set out in the report.**

It is further recommended that:

- 1. It is noted that investment would be required to replace the income provided by the estate shops in accordance with budget item 2223- B6-019. 2. The Assistant Director Assets & Environment was authorised, in consultation with the Executive Director Finance, Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer, and the Finance Portfolio Holder, to authorise and agree terms for lettings for BESFs similar to those proposed for Booth Meadow, and that the Constitution be amended accordingly. 3. Cabinet acknowledged the competitive bidding process for the land off the A45 London Road, Daventry that has been undertaken by the other landowners is suitable to achieve best consideration from the disposal.**

41. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

The Chair presented the report and noted that the fund was a relatively flexible one. The council needs to submit its Investment Plan by the 1st of August 2022, this had been done with the help of various stakeholders. The final submission will be presented at the September cabinet meeting.

Councillors made the following comments.

- There was a concern that the £5.4 million would be over 3 years, would this be enough?
- Northants had ranked poorly on air quality, investing in green and cycle ways could help in this area.
- This funding would be received in 3 tranches, had there been some thought on how the council would prioritise recipients of the fund.
- An update on the Active Travel – Billing Road project was requested.

Councillor Adam Brown advised that he had raised concerns over the 'business support measures to drive employment grades' and whether this would be employment growth in the generic sense. Since then, assurances had been given that this would be a targeted employment grade.

RESOLVED: RESOLVED: Cabinet.

- a) Noted the progress of developing the WNC UKSPF Investment Plan, including data analysis, review of feedback from the Member engagement, focus group workshops and online survey consultations, provided as an appendix to this report.**
- b) Noted that an Investment Plan to secure this funding must be developed, including which interventions will be funded per annum**
- c) Noted that under existing delegated powers, officers would submit the UKSPF Investment Plan by 1st August 2022 to the DLUHC and update Cabinet in September**

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____