



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at Great Hall, The Guildhall, St Giles Street, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Wednesday 22 February 2023 at 5.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage (Chairman)

Councillor John Shephard (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Rufia Ashraf

Councillor Jamal Alwahabi

Councillor Azizur Rahman

Councillor Anthony S. Bagot-Webb

Councillor Fiona Baker

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 Imran Ahmed Chowdhury BEM

Councillor Paul Clark

Councillor Stephen Clarke

Councillor Maggie Clubley

Councillor Raymond Connolly

Councillor Karen Cooper

Councillor Daniel Cribbin

Councillor Julie Davenport

Councillor Janice Duffy

Councillor Paul Dyball

Councillor Alison Eastwood

Councillor Louisa Fowler

Councillor Matt Golby

Councillor Andrew Grant

Councillor Mike Hallam

Councillor Enam Haque

Councillor Jonathan Harris

Councillor Cheryl Hawes

Councillor Rosie Herring

Councillor James Hill

Councillor Nigel Hinch

Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere

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 Malcolm Longley
Councillor Greg Lunn
Councillor Peter Matten
Councillor Ian McCord
Councillor Dennis Meredith
Councillor Charles Morton
Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Councillor Kevin Parker
Councillor Suresh Patel
Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor Bob Purser
Councillor Wendy Randall
Councillor Emma Roberts
Councillor Jake Roberts
Councillor Sam Rumens
Councillor Lisa Samiotis
Councillor Brian Sargeant
Councillor Sue Sharps
Councillor David Smith
Councillor Zoe Smith
Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms
Councillor Danielle Stone
Councillor Winston Strachan
Councillor Nick Sturges-Alex
Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz
Councillor Mike Warren

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Ann Addison
Councillor Dermot Bambridge
Councillor Muna Cali
Councillor Alan Chantler
Councillor Pinder Chauhan
Councillor Gareth Eales
Councillor Terrie Eales
Councillor Rupert Frost
Councillor Jo Gilford
Councillor Terry Gilford
Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Councillor Rosie Humphreys
Councillor Charles Manners
Councillor Colin Morgan
Councillor Cathrine Russell
Councillor Laura Stevenson

89. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

90. **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

91. **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reminded Members of the following upcoming events:

- Members Information Day, 4th March
- International Women's Day, 8th March

He also noted that boxes had been placed on Members' desks with information cards relating to street violence and encouraged Members to disseminate the cards amongst local residents. The Chairman reminded Council that it had been 12 months since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and that a service would be taking place in the Guildhall on Friday. He asked Members to attend

92. **Public Participation**

- 1) The Chairman advised of 3 requests to present petitions.

Karen Badcock and Sandie Maitland presented a petition in relation to the road surface around Limehurst shops which had deteriorated significantly over the years, causing accessibility issues and injuries to some residents.

Julie Teckman presented a petition in relation to the proposed car parking charges which she stated would affect town centre footfall. She was concerned that the plans were counterproductive as they were pushing people to shop elsewhere.

Martin Gorrod presented a petition in relation to funds for rural transport services, specifically the 59/60 bus route.

- 2) The Chairman advised of 6 requests to address Council.

Jean Lineker addressed Council in relation to item 6 and expressed concern around highway disrepair and the lack of disabled access to her property which she needed as a person with limited mobility.

Sandra Moxon of Brixworth Parish Council addressed Council in relation to item 6 and expressed concern around the proposed cuts to public funding for bus transport in rural areas, stating that the cut contradicted the Conservative Party's own intentions.

John Hunt of Spratton Parish Council addressed Council in relation to item 6 and expressed concern around the loss of the 59/60 bus route. He stated that the need for rural transport was essential. Mr Hunt could not see signs of support from local or central government despite promises from both to support better rural transport.

Anya Willis of Re:Store Northampton addressed Council in relation to item 6 and expressed concern around the proposed increase in car parking charges which she believed would be detrimental to the health and prosperity of Northampton. Increased parking charges would be a hindrance to many needing to access voluntary services such as food banks and community projects.

Daniel Soan of Northampton Town Council addressed Council in relation to item 6 and asked that the Council give consideration to the way that it communicated the pressures it faced in the future, as many residents may not be aware of how an increase in demand and cost could put serious pressures on services such as Children's and Adults social care.

Mark Mullen, Operations Manager for Northampton BID, addressed Council in relation to item 6 and expressed concern around the proposed increase in parking charges. He noted that parking charge increases in 2017 were followed by a significant reduction in town centre footfall and was worried that the same would happen in 2023.

The Chairman thanked the members of the public for their contributions.

93. **Final Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan**

Councillor Longley presented the report which set out the Final Budget for 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan for West Northamptonshire Council. The report incorporated feedback from the budget consultation, relevant public consultations, and the scrutiny process. He gave his thanks to staff who had contributed to the budget and highlighted the salient points within the report.

Councillor Parker seconded the report.

Councillor Stone proposed an amendment to the budget. She said that the Labour Group welcomed the learning that took place during the pandemic and was keen on continuing to work collaboratively with the administration to respond to the needs of the public.

The amendment put forward by the Labour Group would focus on; a radical approach to housing - reducing waiting lists through increased investment in social housing, increased investment in temporary accommodation and supported housing; investment in youth, including a partnership with OnSide to assist with fundraising to build Youth Zones; becoming a centre for local expertise; tackling air pollution – creating no idling zones outside of schools, hospitals and retail areas, running an awareness scheme, training for schools; creating bicycle repair units in each major town in West Northamptonshire, and; the Big Switch – a community project that enabled residents to collectively switch to the cheapest energy tariff available by

inviting providers to underbid each other and provide a collective group of residents with energy.

Councillor Randall seconded the amendment and stated that it was designed to improve lives of residents, drive economic growth, save council money. She asked Members across the floor to put aside their differences and work together to provide hope and positivity for residents.

Members debated the amendment and made the following comments:

- The administration was already examining the extent to which borrowing was feasible and pushing for additional affordable and social housing wherever possible.
- Data from studies of community switches in the last 10 years showed success in helping a significant number of households considered “vulnerable consumers”. The Big Community Switch concept supported the sustainable place strategy and the Council’s Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- The number of households on the Council’s housing waiting list had increased by 1,000 in 12 months; the growth in housing need was increasing faster than the growth in stock.
- State of the art youth services were imperative to ensure that every young person felt valued, safe and empowered.
- Whilst there was no money in the budget to fund Youth Zones, the administration was willing to engage with OnSide.
- Similar projects to the bicycle unit proposal were already funded in Northampton - this could be something a charity could apply for through the Community Fund in other parts of West Northamptonshire.
- That children were being born and growing up around high levels of air pollution was very concerning - the proposals to engage young people in schools would be key to tackling the issues faced in respect of air pollution.
- There was currently not enough investment in young people taking place.
- Many council houses had been lost through the Right to Buy scheme.
- Supported groups of people would not survive without additional assistance.
- There were some good ideas in the Labour amendment, but these should follow due process, be reviewed by scrutiny committees, etc.
- The administration was already working to improve services for young people, including the creation of a Youth Partnership Board to promote the development of a West Northamptonshire-wide youth offer. As part of this, 2 capital bids were currently being supported for submission to the National Youth Investment Fund.
- There was interest from the administration to have several of the proposals (idling, bicycle units, air pollution) reviewed by cross-party groups.
- The proposals relating to housing may be in breach of the Council’s procurement rules.

Councillor Stone responded to the debate and commented that the Council did not invest in prevention in youth services, it would see escalating costs that it would have to meet in adult services.

Councillor Longley responded to the debate and stated that minor items, such as the proposal for bicycle units, would have been better discussed outside of the meeting, and would likely have made some progress.

At the conclusion of the debate, there voted for the amendment:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Davenport, Duffy, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, Meredith, Purser, Randall, E Roberts, Samiotis, Sharps, Z Smith, Stone, Strachan, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against the amendment:

Councillors Bagot-Webb, Baker, Barter, Chowdhury BEM, Bignell, Bowen, Breese, Brown, Brown, Clark, Clarke, Clubley, Cole, Connolly, Cooper, Cribbin, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Hawes, Herring, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Matten, Morton, Nunn, Parker, Patel, Pritchard, Rahman, J Roberts, Rumens, Sargeant, Shephard, D Smith, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There abstained:

Councillor McCord.

The amendment was lost.

Councillor Harris proposed an amendment to the budget and commented that the proposals were progressive, people-focussed and sought to address cuts and fee increases for residents. Proposals included a transformation investment of £1.5m over 3 years to provide upstream investment for Children's Services; loan-based, warm homes schemes for poorly insulated homes; bus protection for existing routes until solutions for sustainable alternatives that met people's needs had been found; repurposing of covid grants to support food club and food bank networks in the area; "Fitness Saturdays", including free parking periods; maintaining the budget to purchase new books for libraries across West Northamptonshire, and; simplification of the Council Tax Support Fund process. Councillor Harris stated that these were moderate but sensible amendments which would maintain services and make transformational change.

Councillor Beardsworth seconded the amendment.

Members debated the amendment and made the following comments:

- The library service maintained a number of digital subscriptions that were not well used – it was those where the bulk of savings were identified. The library's management team confirmed that their ability to purchase new books would not be affected.
- Family hubs were vital for vulnerable residents – new hubs were being opened in the near future in Daventry, Towcester and Northampton, despite not securing funding.
- The administration had created the Best Start for Life Partnership Board which brought together activities impacting on early help, including the Youth Offer,

Public Help 0-19 services, and the extension of the Flourishing Babies program for a further year.

- 70% of young people came to the Children's Service through neglect. More work into prevention was needed to stop young people ending up in the care system.
- If young people were not given the chance to flourish, they would not be equipped to contribute to society later in life.
- The proposals in the main budget sought to look after children and young people in a fiscally responsible way.

Councillor Harris responded to the debate and stated that he would take the proposals in the amendment for review by scrutiny. He noted that tax take prior to Brexit had reduced by approximately £40bn, and the profits made by energy companies were offset by tax breaks. This meant that there was less money filtering down to local authorities.

Councillor Longley responded to the debate and commented that the Council would never be keen to become a money lender, however, he appreciated some of the ideas in the Liberal Democrat amendment and would have follow-up talks with officers.

At the conclusion of the debate, there voted for the amendment:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Davenport, Duffy, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, Meredith, Purser, Randall, E Roberts, Samiotis, Z Smith, Stone, Strachan, Tarasiewicz

There voted against:

Councillors Bagot-Webb, Baker, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, Breese, A Brown, M Brown, Clark, Clarke, Clubley, Cole, Connolly, Cooper, Cribbin, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Hawes, Herring, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Matten, Morton, Nunn, Parker, Patel, Pritchard, Rahman, J Roberts, Rumens, Sargeant, Shephard, D Smith, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There abstained:

Councillors McCord, Sharps.

The amendment was lost.

Councillor McCord proposed an amendment to the budget and advised that he wished to remove point 3 of the amendment as it had been accepted by the administration. The Independent amendment was focussed on the double-charging of collection of green waste. It also proposed that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee investigate the £3m "near miss" in preparation of the draft budget and report back to Council with recommendations on improving the robustness of budget preparedness, and to reduce the contingency by £0.728m. Councillor McCord noted that green waste collection uptake was declining in Northampton and suggested that the charge increase was in line with a WNC culture of "Northampton

first". There had been an increase in fly-tipped green waste since charges were brought in. He stated that it was important for the Council to establish a reputation for financial competence. Councillor McCord did not believe that the Council had any financial control over the care services, particularly the Children's Service, and believed it would use much of the contingency.

Councillor Sharps seconded the amendment.

Members debated the amendment and made the following comments:

- The Liberal Democrat Group were in support of the removal of the Park Run concession at country parks and later charging for country park car parks.
- It was pointed out that a previous manifesto written by Councillor McCord sought to protect rural towns' car parks and not Northampton's.

Councillor McCord responded to the debate and commented that bus services in rural areas, especially those under threat, should always be considered when discussing car parking charges.

At the conclusion of the debate, there voted for the amendment:

Councillors McCord, Samiotis, Sharps.

There voted against:

Councillors Alwahabi, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Barter, Chowdhury BEM, Bignell, Breese, A Brown, M Brown, Clark, Clarke, Clubley, Cole, Connolly, Cooper, Cribbin, Duffy, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Haque, Hawes, Herring, Hill, Hinch, Holland-Delamere, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Jolley, Joyce, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Matten, Morton, Nunn, Parker, Patel, Pritchard, Purser, Rahman, Randall, J Roberts, Rumens, Sargeant, Shephard, D Smith, Z Smith, Stone, Sturges-Alex, Tarasiewicz, Warren

There abstained:

Councillors Beardsworth, Davenport, Harris, Meredith, E Roberts.

The amendment was lost.

Councillor Davenport commented that she was not happy with increased charging for bulky waste collections as she felt that this would exacerbate existing fly-tipping issues.

Members debated the substantive budget and made the following comments:

- The budget relied too heavily on assumptions and lacked political leadership that would put communities first.
- The budget was not driven by policy issues.
- There was a need to increase revenue.
- The additional money for Highways would only cover things that the Council was not able to do last year.

- There was nothing in the Medium-Term Financial Plan that related to projected costs around the new crossing at the Rushmere Road junction. Was the Active Travel scheme ambitious enough to reduce air pollution in West Northamptonshire?
- With the cost of delays to social care reform set to be higher than the forecast from government, the Medium-Term Financial Plan was at risk and only worked by applying council tax increases for the next 4 years.
- There was concern around footfall in Northampton town centre whilst regeneration works took place on the Market Square.
- There was no solution for transport links for those who relied on public transport.
- It was suggested that the Council should compensate market traders for loss of income during the Market Square regeneration.
- The budget was moving the Council in the right direction – a wider discussion should take place around spending on Children’s and Adult Services.
- The Integrated Travel Strategy needed looking at as a whole.
- West Northamptonshire got a raw deal in terms of funding and the administration should continue to lobby the Government.
- A community hub was needed in the Talavera ward to help tackle the issues there.
- Members of the Cabinet were thanked for their engagement with the scrutiny process.
- Too much money was being spent fighting parents in tribunals – this could have been spend employing several SEND officers.
- The budget was squeezing residents during the cost-of-living crisis. Costs were rising nationally and locally but services were not increasing.
- The Government’s “oven ready” social care reform deal was yet to come so children would continue to suffer.
- Members would be requesting that the section of the Constitution that automatically increased councillor allowances in line with the staff pay agreement be reviewed.
- A review was underway into subsidies for rural bus services.
- There was a structural increase in funding for Adult Social Care; it would make a significant difference in the level of care provided.
- Equalities impacts were not sufficiently considered in Cabinet reports and in the budget. More cross-examination was needed, and a wider range of partners should be consulted (food banks, LGBTQ+ groups, etc.).
- With regard to the Council’s ambition to reach net zero carbon emissions, it did not make sense to keep the target but not fund it, and there did not seem to be funds allocated to this target within the budget.
- Radical transformation was not happening fast enough.
- There were no significant savings identified in any of the amendments to the budget.

Councillor Longley responded to the debate and thanked Members for their contributions. He advised that he would follow up with Members around specific points outside of the meeting.

At the conclusion of the debate, there voted for the substantive budget:

Councillors Bagot-Webb, Baker, Barter, Chowdhury BEM, Bignell, Bowen, Breese, A Brown, Clark, Clarke, Clubley, Cole, Connolly, Cooper, Cribbin, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Hawes, Herring, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Matten, Morton, Nunn, Parker, Patel, Pritchard, Rahman, Roberts, Rumens, Sargeant, Gonzalez De Savage, Sharps, Shephard, Smith, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There voted against:

Councillors Alwahabi, Beardsworth, Duffy, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, Purser, Randall, E Roberts, Samiotis, Z Smith, Stone, Strachan, Tarasiewicz.

There abstained:
Councillor McCord.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Approved the 2023-24 Budget for West Northamptonshire set out in the report, as recommended by Cabinet at the meeting held on 13 February 2023, including;
 - i) an estimated net revenue budget of £827.195m (£383.517m excluding Dedicated Schools Grant) as set out in Appendix A of the report.
 - ii) an average Band D Council tax of £1,693.73 for West Northamptonshire Council, which represents an average increase of 4.99%. (2.99% increase in 'core' Council Tax and 2% Adult Social Care precept).
 - iii) fees and charges schedule as detailed in Appendix D of the report.
 - iv) dedicated schools grant budget of £443.7m as detailed in Appendix E of the report.
 - v) the Capital Strategy as set out in section 7 and Appendix F1 of the report, and Capital Proposals as set out in Appendix F2 of the report.
 - vi) the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy set out in Appendix G of the report.
 - vii) the Treasury Management Strategy set out in Appendix J of the report.
 - viii) setting the authorised limits for borrowing as set out in Appendix F1 section 8.13 and 8.14 of the report.
- b) Approved the following further recommendations from the Cabinet to Full Council on 22 February 2023, to ensure that the revenue and capital budget and all associated financial policies could be delivered in a safe and legal manner from 1 April 2023 and also to ensure there was flexibility to manage the overall budget in the year:
 - i) To delegate authority to the Executive Director - Finance to manage any variation in budget prior to the start of 2023-24 as a result of final confirmation of the local government finance settlement, or as a result of unforeseen commitments; in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder.

- ii) To delegate authority to the Executive Director - Finance in consultation with the portfolio holder for Finance to amend the capital programme for 2023-24 going forward so that it accurately reflects issues such as slippage on current year projects that will need to be added to the programme, any amendments made to existing capital programmes, adjustments to accommodate any future use of capital receipts policy and for any other reason where the capital programme needs to be adjusted.
 - iii) To note the use of reserves as summarised in the table contained at paragraph 5.105 of the report.
 - iv) To delegate authority to the Executive Director - Finance to employ earmarked reserves for the purposes they were set up for including the release of the risk reserve if required.
 - v) To delegate authority to the Executive Director – Finance in consultation with the portfolio holder for finance to release the general contingency fund of £10.9m if required in the year.
 - vi) To note the Executive Director – Finance has delegated authority to amend fees and charges.
- c) For the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG):
- i) Noted the allocations and planned usage of the DSG for 2023-24.
 - ii) Following consultation with the Schools Forum, delegated authority to the Executive Director - People to determine the DSG 2023-24 schools funding formula, high needs funding arrangements and the Early Years Funding Formula in line with Department for Education guidance.
- d) Considered the Section 25 statement of the Chief Finance Officer detailed in section 8 of the report.
- e) Noted that following consideration of the budget consultation exercise and ongoing dialogue with local business leaders and other interested stakeholders Cabinet agreed to amend the final budget proposals recommended to Council so that the car parking fees and charges tabled at the meeting are adopted in place of the car parking charges contained in the previously published fees and charges schedule.
- f) Noted that Cabinet recommended as part of the final budget proposals to full council that free parking be provided for blue badge holders at the Council's Country Parks.
- g) Noted that following consideration of the budget consultation exercise Cabinet agreed to amend the final budget proposals recommended to Council to include the creation of a highways fund of £1m to be funded through re-purposing one off reserves.
- h) Noted the consultation feedback on the budget in Appendix H of the report.
- i) Noted the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Appendix I of the report.
- j) With the addition of the budget allocation contingencies for the continuation of the bus subsidy as set out in the proposed amendment of Councillor Harris at point 3, subject to a decision by Cabinet, and with the addition of the proposal for free parking on Saturday mornings until 10:30 as detailed in the amendment moved by Councillor McCord at bullet point 3. Any additional cost of these 2 additional elements will be met from contingencies.

94. **Housing Revenue Account Final Budget 2022-23 and Medium-Term Financial Plan**

Councillor Longley presented a report which set out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Final Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan for West Northamptonshire Council and sought Council's approval of the HRA revenue and capital budget 2023-24 and sought to set out the future years' projections to 2027-28.

Councillor A Brown seconded the report.

Councillors debated the report, and the following comments were made:

- The inclusion of Ecton Brook Care Home was good to see in the report and included a much-needed community centre.
- The 7% rent increase was pragmatic; any more would have been unaffordable.
- The Hardship Fund was welcome; work was needed to ensure it reached those who needed it most.
- There was concern around the lack of affordable housing that private developers were providing.
- Members gave thanks to Northampton Partnership Homes who were seen as more than "just" a landlord.

At the conclusion of the debate, there voted for the recommendations:

Councillors Jamal Alwahabi, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Barter, Beardsworth, Bignell, Bowen, Breese, Brown, Clark, Clarke, Clubley, Cole, Connolly, Cooper, Cribbin, Duffy, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Haque, Harris, Hawes, Herring, Hill, Hinch, Holland-Delamere, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Jolley, Joyce, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Matten, McCord, Morton, Nunn, Parker, Patel, Pritchard, Purser, Randall, E Roberts, J Roberts, Rumens, Samiotis, Sargeant, Gonzalez De Savage, Sharps, Shephard, D Smith, Z Smith, Stone, Strachan, Sturges-Alex, Tarasiewicz, Warren.

RESOLVED:

Council approved:

- a) The HRA revenue budget for 2023-24 of £61.19m.
- b) An average maximum rent increase of 7% per dwelling, in line with the legislation and the government's amended national rent standard, to take effect from 3 April 2023.
- c) An average maximum increase of 10% in garage rents and commuter surcharges to take effect from 3 April 2023.
- d) An average increase of 10% in tenants and leaseholders service charges with effect from 3 April 2023.
- e) The HRA capital programme for 2023-24, noting the future year estimated commitments, and proposed sources of finance.
- f) The total management fee of £32.8m for NPH to deliver the services in scope for 2023-24.
- g) The setting of the minimum working balance at £5m, informed by the outcome of the latest financial risk assessment.

- h) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance to transfer monies to/from earmarked reserves and the working balance, should that become necessary during the financial year.
- i) That authority be given to the Executive Director of Finance to update the prudential indicators in the Treasury Management Strategy reported to Council.
- j) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Finance in consultation with the portfolio holder for Finance to amend the capital programme for 2023-24 going forward so that it accurately reflects issues such as slippage on current year projects that will need to be added to the programme, any amendments made to existing capital programmes, adjustments to accommodate any future use of capital receipts policy, and for any other reason where the capital programme needs to be adjusted.

95. 2022-23 Council Tax Calculations and Council Tax Resolution

Councillor Longley presented a report which detailed the calculations for the amounts of Council Tax for West Northamptonshire Council for the financial year 2022-2023.

Councillor Parker seconded the report.

Councillors debated the report, and the following comments were made:

- The Labour Group would not be supporting the report; the Council was overly reliant on council tax as a revenue stream. Council tax should be abolished in favour of a property tax and business rates should be abolished in favour of more progressive means of taxation.
- Residents were not happy with an increase in council tax when they did not see an improvement in the services the Council provided.
- There had been a legacy of low council tax in West Northamptonshire which had not helped the Council's financial situation.

At the conclusion of the debate, there voted for the recommendations:

Councillors Bagot-Webb, Baker, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, Breese, A Brown, Clark, Clarke, Clubley, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Hawes, Herring, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Matten, Morton, Nunn, Parker, Patel, Pritchard, J Roberts, Rumens, Sargeant, Gonzalez De Savage, Sharps, Shephard, D Smith, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There voted against:

Councillors E Roberts, Samiotis.

There abstained:

Councillors Alwahabi, Beardsworth, Duffy, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Purser, Randall, Z Smith, Stone, Strachan, Tarasiewicz.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Noted that the Cabinet agreed the Council Tax Base for 2023-24 on 20 December 2022:
 - i) For the whole Council area as 142,060.8 (item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1991, as amended (the "Act") and;
 - ii) For dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates as shown in the attached Appendix B of the report.
- b) Approved the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2023-24 (excluding Parish Precepts but including Special Expenses) as £240,612,639
- c) Approved the additional Council Tax Resolutions as set out in Appendix A of the report.
- d) Noted that Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwelling in the Council's area as shown in the table at 6.3 of the report.
- e) Approved that, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in Appendix D of the report as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2023-24 for each part of its area and for each category of dwellings.
- f) Noted Appendix E of the report which sets out in detail how the charge is made up for each town and parish council area and by Council Tax band.
- g) Noted that the Council's basic amount of Council Tax for 2023-24 is not deemed to be excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

96. Purchase of the long leasehold interest in six houses in Brackley

Councillor Longley presented the report which sought approval for the purchase of the long leasehold interest of six residential properties in Brackley, currently used by the Council to provide a residential service to Adult Social Care customers.

Councillor Golby seconded the report.

Upon a vote, the recommendation contained within the report was agreed.

RESOLVED:

- a) That a capital budget of £2.132 million be created to acquire the long leasehold interest in the six residential properties in Brackley referred to in the report and refurbish them.

97. Appointment of Agency Workers

Councillor Hallam presented the report which sought approval for a proposed remuneration package in excess of £100,000 for an agency worker.

Councillor Nunn seconded the report.

Members debated the report and made the following comments:

- The Council should develop its own staff instead of relying on temporary staff and agency workers.
- Highly paid agency staff appointments should go through Council.
- It was explained that the £100,000 figure contained in the report was cumulative; a person would be recruited to work on a project then another may come along and so the contract would be extended.

Upon a vote, the recommendation contained within the report was agreed.

RESOLVED:

- a) Council approved the proposed remuneration.

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

There was no urgent business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____