



Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Council Chamber, The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester, NN12 6AD on Tuesday 13 June 2023 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 Phil Larratt
Councillor Daniel Lister
Councillor Malcolm Longley
Councillor David Smith

Also Present:

Councillor Sally Beardsworth
Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere
Councillor Rosie Humphreys
Councillor Bob Purser
Councillor Wendy Randall

Officers:

Anna Earnshaw, Chief Executive
Rebecca Peck, Assistant Chief Executive
Martin Henry, Executive Director - Finance (Section 151 Officer)
Catherine Whitehead, Director of Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Stuart Lackenby, Executive Director - People Services & Deputy Chief Executive
Sarah Reed, Executive Director - Corporate Services
Stuart Timmiss, Executive Director - Place, Economy and Environment
Paul Hanson, Head of Democratic and Elections
Kathryn Holton, Committee Officer

1. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

2. Minutes

The minutes of Cabinet on Tuesday 11 April 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Chair's Announcements

There were none.

4. **Report from Overview and Scrutiny Committee (if any)**

There were no reports from Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

5. **Corporate Plan - Quarterly Performance Report**

The Chair presented the report and summarised the salient points. The end of year provided an opportunity for a refresh, so some new indicators would be added and others, such as Covid related indicators, removed.

Cabinet members made the following comments:

Councillor Longley advised that there had been a £302k overspend. Despite pressures, the budget had effectively been balanced.

Councillor Brown noted that visitors to leisure centres exceeded targets. Library visits were well above target and museums exceeded targets by 1%. Housing delivery was below target, although this was being addressed by the new Chief Executive at NPH. Affordable homes continued to exceed the target.

Councillor Larratt reported that the Queen's Green Canopy had delivered a good result. Trees planted on WNC land were up 277 in Q4 and there were 150 more trees planted than lost over the whole year.

Councillor Baker highlighted that the figures for the Children's Trust were for the whole county, not just West Northants. Work was ongoing to provide figures for West Northants, which would be expected by Ofsted.

Councillor Golby advised that the CQC inspection format would commence in August and KPIs might change to align with that in future.

Councillor Breese reported that success rates against national targets in planning for both major and household applications would be reported. There was still some backlog but the picture was improving.

Councillors made the following comments:

- The report on museums was welcomed as museums were important in the cultural life of the community. What had happened to the leather collection?
- The number of houses needed to be increased and attempts by developers to argue down affordable housing numbers resisted. More houses were needed, not just flats.
- Secondary school absence rates and exclusions would be helpful. This needed to be monitored.
- Concern was expressed about the number of vacant posts in Cllr Larratt's area.

- Home to school transport was only free for those who qualified up to age 16 whereas education/training was compulsory to age 18. The cost of bus passes was much greater in rural areas.
- Referrals actioned within 2 working days was underperforming – were there enough staff to improve this?
- Children subject to a Child Protection Plan for the second time had not gone down.
- Concern was expressed at the high level of those not in education or training (NEET).
- A highways plan would be useful to enable members to respond to queries from residents.

The Executive Director Place stated that concern regarding vacant posts was accepted. A project management approach was being followed to identify issues in recruitment which would be followed through.

Councillor Brown made the following comments:

- The need to continue to deliver a housing mix was recognised – a third of those on the list were waiting for 1-bed accommodation and flats were an effective way of delivering that. The officers' briefing on planning/housing had been positive.
- The leather collection was due to be transferred later in the year and would have a specialist part-time curator.

The Executive Director People made the following comments:

- A task force of head teachers, police and community representatives led by the Assistant Director Education was addressing the issue of increased exclusions and suspensions.
- The 2 working days indicator for referrals was a priority. All red-rated referrals were seen within 1 day.
- The target for NEET was 5.5%, so the current rate of 2% was well below this.

Councillor Larratt advised that the recent home to school transport consultation was only up to age 16. WNC had a statutory responsibility to pay for those who qualified for free transport.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet noted the content of the appendix covering the final quarter of 2022-23.

6. **Household Support Fund 4**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Golby presented the report and summarised the salient points. The public health team were thanked for a detailed and thorough report. £5.199m was to be distributed between April 2023 and March 2024. This would be targeted towards children in poverty, vulnerable households and voluntary sector grants.

Councillors made the following comments:

- What would happen when the funding came to an end? There needed to be alignment with the Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- Housing support was welcomed, but this was not a long-term solution.
- What about hungry children over the summer holidays – particularly those who did not receive benefits?
- It was tragic that foodbanks were normalised. Additional funding was needed.
- Thanks were expressed to the voluntary sector and staff that delivered services.

Councillor Golby recognised the challenges and the need to make services more sustainable when funding came to an end. Government was being lobbied. Communities needed to be supported in partnership with voluntary organisations. There had been 52,000 visits to warm spaces between January and March 2023, including a high number with mental health issues.

Councillor Brown noted that communication between local and national government was improving. The government had listened to feedback and funding was now in place until March 2024.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Approved the recommended plan for distribution of the allocated £5,199,257 HSF4, as set out in section 6 of the report.
- b) Agreed that any under-spend and/or unclaimed support vouchers in a particular category of spend may be re-allocated to other categories based on need and demand as agreed by the Director of Public Health and Cabinet Member.
- c) Noted the proposed consultation period and pilot to explore use of support vouchers to access Food Clubs/Larders.

7. **Proposal to extend the age-range at Croughton All Saints CE Primary School**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Baker presented the report and summarised the salient points. The opportunity for funded 3 year olds to join the school would help to sustain its future. Any school wanting to lower its age range would be supported and it was good to preserve village schools.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet approved the proposal to lower the admissions age range at Croughton All Saints CE Primary School, from 4 years to 3 years, to enable the school to offer FEEE to three-years-olds from September 2023.

8. **Decision taken by the Leader of the Council under urgency: LAHF programme**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Brown presented the report and summarised the salient points. It had not been possible to bring this report to the April meeting of Cabinet. The LAHF funding could have been passed to NPH to refurbish homes but this would have put undue pressure on the HRA and on NPH. WNC had asked the government if a hybrid approach could be taken with RP partners funding as many properties as possible with NPH and the HRA as a fall-back position. The

government funding would act as a subsidy going forward because the council would retain rights to the house after the first tenant moved out. This would help the council meet the wider need in the long term.

Councillors made the following comments:

- The report was welcomed to assist those in need – although it would not be enough.
- Did Futures and Grand Union have the capacity to deliver and an understanding of the communities in order to be able to deal with them sensitively?
- What would the criteria be for allocation? Many Afghan refugees had been in hotels for 2 years.
- Why were new houses on Welford Road not being brought into use?

Councillor Smith advised that there had been 380 Afghan refugees in hotels who were moving on to other areas.

Councillor Brown made the following comments:

- Grand Union had previously dealt with Syrian refugees.
- The Futures housing project on Welford Road had had issues with a sub-contractor. Until the Section 278 Agreement had been fulfilled the project could not be delivered. It was right to hold developers to account.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet noted the decisions taken by the Leader of the Council set out in the Appendix.

9. **Procurement and implementation of Adult Social Care Case Management System**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Golby thanked the Assistant Director of Discharge to Assess Services, presented the report and summarised the salient points. The current system was due to end in March 2025 and a new system needed to be implemented. This would give the opportunity to access social care records electronically.

Councillors welcomed the report and asked whether the new system would be ready to go with teething problems sorted before the deadline.

The Executive Director People advised that the system would be up and running by January 2024 when data transfer would begin. Phase 2 would be implemented in September 2024.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Agreed to proceed with the replacement of the Adult Social Case Management, at an estimated contract cost, including supplier implementation (£300,000), hosting, and annual fee costs, of up to £2,500,000 as outlined in section 7.
- b) Noted that in addition to the above costs a further £1.018m of costs would be incurred to implement the new system.

- c) Subject to consideration at the transformation board, supported the use of Transformation Funds, at an estimated cost of £1,318,000 to fund the total implementation costs.
- d) Noted that the ongoing costs of £367,000 per year were anticipated to be met from existing budgets and savings associated with the new system but if, following procurement, there was a shortfall the difference would be built into the 2025-26 budget.
- e) Approved the use of the Crown Commercial Services RM (6259) Vertical Application Solutions (VAS) Framework Lot 2c to purchase the system to ensure compliance with the relevant procurement requirements.
- f) Delegated authority to the Executive Director of People Services in liaison with the Lead Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, to take any further decisions and actions required to award the contract and implement the Case Management System.

10. **Reablement Commissioning Intentions**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Golby presented the report and summarised the salient points.

A Councillor welcomed the plan to support people for longer in their own homes.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet

- a) Approved the procurement and implementation of a framework for the purchasing of additional capacity of reablement home care services, to be introduced from 18 October 2023.
- b) Approved the duration of the framework to be 2 years with an optional break at the end of year 1 and an inclusive option to extend for a further period of up to 12 months; resulting in a framework for a maximum duration of 3 years.
- c) Approved the commencement of a competitive procurement process.
- d) Approved the delegation of authority to the Executive Director for People Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the above resolutions.

11. **Disposal of London Road, Daventry**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Longley presented the report and summarised the salient points. This would enable the council to co-operate with other land owners to dispose of a small area of low-grade agricultural land.

A Councillor noted that the London Road approach to Daventry currently had a scrapyards and a disused hotel. Would warehouses be added to this area? Concern was expressed about the climate impact and the number of warehouses.

The Executive Director Place advised that at this stage the land was simply being packaged for sale and promotion. It would be subject to future planning applications and due process.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet authorised the Assistant Director Assets & Environment in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder to agree terms for the disposal of land off the A45 London Road, Daventry and complete any documentation required to implement this, in accordance with the constitution and the following:

- a) A hybrid promotion agreement with GC No. 19 Limited or another company associated with Godwin Developments should be entered into to promote and facilitate the disposal of the Site via the open market.
- b) Should the agreement not be achieved for any reason or elapse, disposal would be directly via the open market.
- c) The consideration should not be less than the pro-rata minimum purchase price or such a figure that reasonably represents market value.

12. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

In respect of the following item the Chairman moved the resolution set out below, on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information (information regarded as private for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1972) would be disclosed to them: The Committee is requested to resolve: "That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act of the descriptions against each item would be disclosed to them"

13. **Update to the Northampton Railway Station Multi Story Car Park Proposal**

This item was discussed in private.

DECISION TAKEN

That Cabinet:

- a) Noted the work undertaken since the cabinet report of December 2021.
- b) Approved the terms as set out in the private Appendix A for entering into an Agreement for Headlease and subsequent Headlease, Agreement for Underlease and subsequent Underlease and an Agreement for Sub-Underlease and subsequent Sub-underlease of the new MSCP at Northampton Railway Station.
- c) Delegated authority to the Director of Communities and Opportunities in consultation with Chief Finance Officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth and Economy to take the final decision, take all necessary steps and complete the necessary documentation related to the new MSCP at Northampton Railway Station subject to (d) below
- d) Agreed that the Council should only proceed with the proposed lease arrangements subject to the overall business case continuing to show a profit for the Council. This will be assessed prior to entering into the agreements by the Head of Major Project and Regeneration.

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The meeting closed at 7.40 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____