



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at The Great Hall at The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Thursday 29 June 2023 at 5.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor John Shephard (Chairman)
Councillor Jo Gilford (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Ann Addison
Councillor Jamal Alwahabi
Councillor Anthony S. Bagot-Webb
Councillor Fiona Baker
Councillor Dermot Bambridge
Councillor Harry Barrett
Councillor William Barter
Councillor Sally Beardsworth
Councillor Phil Bignell
Councillor Lizzy Bowen
Councillor Adam Brown
Councillor Michael Brown
Councillor Muna Cali
Councillor Alan Chantler
Councillor Imran Ahmed Chowdhury BEM
Councillor Stephen Clarke
Councillor Maggie Clubley
Councillor Fiona Cole
Councillor Raymond Connolly
Councillor Karen Cooper
Councillor Daniel Cribbin
Councillor Janice Duffy
Councillor Paul Dyball
Councillor Gareth Eales
Councillor Terrie Eales
Councillor Alison Eastwood
Councillor Louisa Fowler
Councillor Terry Gilford
Councillor Matt Golby
Councillor André González De Savage
Councillor Andrew Grant
Councillor Mike Hallam
Councillor Enam Haque
Councillor Jonathan Harris
Councillor Cheryl Hawes
Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Councillor James Hill
Councillor Nigel Hinch

Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere
Councillor Mark Hughes
Councillor Rosie Humphreys
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 Charles Manners
Councillor Peter Matten
Councillor Ian McCord
Councillor Dennis Meredith
Councillor Colin Morgan
Councillor Charles Morton
Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Councillor Kevin Parker
Councillor Suresh Patel
Councillor Bob Purser
Councillor Wendy Randall
Councillor Emma Roberts
Councillor Sam Rumens
Councillor Sue Sharps
Councillor David Smith
Councillor Zoe Smith
Councillor Laura Stevenson
Councillor Danielle Stone
Councillor Winston Strachan
Councillor Nick Sturges-Alex
Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz
Councillor Mike Warren

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Rufia Ashraf
Councillor Azizur Rahman
Councillor Rebecca Breese
Councillor Pinder Chauhan
Councillor Paul Clark
Councillor Julie Davenport
Councillor Penelope Flavell
Councillor Rupert Frost
Councillor Rosie Herring
Councillor Jake Roberts
Councillor Cathrine Russell
Councillor Lisa Samiotis

Councillor Brian Sargeant

Officers:

Anna Earnshaw (Chief Executive)

Cath Whitehead (Director of Legal & Democratic and Monitoring Officer)

Paul Hanson (Head of Democratic and Elections)

Tracy Tiff (Deputy Democratic Services Manager)

Ed Bostock (Democratic Services Officer)

121. **Declarations of Interest**

None advised.

122. **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th May 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

123. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chairman announced the sad passing of former Northampton Borough and Northamptonshire County Councillor Alderman Mike Boss, who served on Northampton Borough Council from 1995 to 2011 and served as Mayor of Northampton in 2002-2003. He served as a member of Northamptonshire County Council from 1988 to 2005 and served as Chairman of the Council in 2003/2004 and was also Chair of the Development Control Committee from 2003-2005. The family of Alderman Boss invited those who knew him to attend his funeral.

The Chairman then led Council in a minute's applause in honour of Alderman Boss.

124. **Public Participation**

(1) There were no requests to submit petitions.

(2) The Chairman advised of 4 requests to address Council.

Jean Lineker addressed Council in respect of item 12 and stated that she was happy to see integrated care coming together but voiced concern around GPs making incorrect diagnoses and subsequent incorrect treatments, and also around cancellations of cancer treatment. She believed that consultants worked faster for private patients.

Mr Kerr addressed Council in respect of item 9. He stated that the Bill of Rights was not "ancient law" but was still current legislation and was being abused. He further stated that public trust was being eroded by poor decision-making by the Council.

Tiff Cotterill addressed Council in relation to item 7 (Report of the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education) and commented that her 4-year-old autistic son had an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) which took 46 weeks to complete; the legal timeframe for completion of an EHCP is 20 weeks. There was still no funding

attached to the EHCP. She stated that West Northants Council only delivered 10% of EHCPs within the legal timeframe. Ms Cotterill's son was offered a place at Hunsbury Meadows SEN unit in February, but received a phone call several days prior and was told that he would be unable to start school in Sept because the building would not be completed, and he would have to wait until October, but still no fixed date was given. Ms Cotterill stated that the Council fined and prosecuted parents who did not get their children into school but unlawfully denied others their education. She further commented that families were given different versions by the Council as to why their children were unable to start school in September.

Gwyn Roberts addressed Council in relation to Motion 1 and advised that he was representing Northamptonshire Carers, a local charity which supported unpaid carers. He explained that there were approximately 32,000 unpaid carers in West Northamptonshire. He commented that all employers should support the 1 in 8 of the workforce which were juggling paid work with caring responsibilities; this would allow employers to have accurate absence data, as many unpaid carers were currently forced to take sick leave when providing care. Mr Roberts also supported the motion's proposal for a summer roundtable and stated that Northamptonshire Carers would be keen to be involved.

The Chairman thanked the speakers for their contributions.

125. **Opposition Priority Business**

An amendment to the motion was proposed by Councillor Larratt and seconded by Councillor Bagot Webb. The Labour Group confirmed that they would accept the amendment.

Amended motion to read:

"The West Northamptonshire Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2025 Priority 3 Improving Connectivity states: 'We will improve the quality of our roads and the timeliness of pothole assessment and the associated repairs process.' It will result in 'improved road quality' and 'Our roads repair programme will be a beacon of efficiency'.

Urban and rural roads in West Northamptonshire are in a poor state, due to potholes and surface degradation, worsened by bad weather conditions. This presents potential hazards to road users. It is recognised that WNC inherited from the predecessor Northamptonshire County Council an inadequate budget and poorly managed Highways contract.

After two years of the new authority, even with the additional 'short-term fixes' for 2023/24 of £1.8 and £1m funds identified by the Government and West Northants Council respectively, the level of investment is inadequate. However, an additional £400k is being invested in new technology to improve efficiency and quality.

Therefore, to achieve the objectives set in the Corporate Plan, this Council invites the Leader of the Council to instruct the Cabinet Member for Highways to:

1. Publish a plan to specify where the additional £2.8M will be spent.
2. Work with Kier, so that they reach the required performance level, specified within the contract, by the due date. If this is not met, bring a report to Cabinet, with options as to the way forward.
3. Note that the scrutiny oversight group continues to monitor contract performance against specification, and will regularly report to Place scrutiny, who in turn will report to Cabinet.”

Members commented on the amended and made the following comments:

- The Council was not spending enough money to even maintain roads at the moment.
- Responses were getting better but wait times for work to be done were not yet improving.
- The Active Travel scheme did not include any plans to make meaningful improvements.
- The Council needed to find ways to end the current contract early if contractors were not performing to the required standard.
- Budgets should be separate – it did not make sense that social care and highways were funded from the same budget.
- The recent Scrutiny site visit to Kier was very useful and it was hoped that the new equipment performed as expected.

Upon a vote, the motion as amended was carried.

126. **Cabinet Reports and Record of Decisions Taken by Council**

Cabinet Members each highlighted the salient points of their reports. Members made comments and asked questions and the following points were raised:

- Solar panels on warehouse roofs was an idea that was being pushed for.
- The Council found out “late in the day” that Hunsbury Meadows SEND school would not be completed; empty classrooms had been identified at Chiltern which were being refurbished to accommodate SEND children. The Council wanted the Schools Team to contact every parent before communications went out.
- A full youth work programme had not yet been put together as full funding was not yet available. The plan was to reach young people who did not go to youth groups, etc., and a full report would be forthcoming.
- The Council had recently appointed 2 new dedicated SEND officers.
- Regarding the illegal use of scooters, a report was due out soon and reassurance was given that it would come to Council.
- A number of workshops regarding health impact assessments had recently taken place over previous weeks.
- Individual care providers were worked closely with to help to improve the quality of care that they provided.
- Funding applied for new youth groups which would not affect any established groups.
- The Chief Executive had set up weekly meetings to study all school developments to ensure that they were working to their respective timescales.

RESOLVED:

Council noted the Cabinet Member reports and the decision records from 11 April 2023 and 13 June 2023.

127. **Annual Report and Summary of Performance 2022/23**

Councillor Nunn presented the report which sought Members' consideration of the West Northamptonshire Council Annual Report for 2022/23. The report provided a review of each directorate's work, achievements and challenges during year two as a unitary authority and a summary of the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan and other key strategies and policies. The report also set out the Council's direction of travel for the year ahead by summarising key priorities for 2023/24.

Councillor A Brown seconded the report.

Council debated the report and made the following comments:

- It would be useful if the figures contained the number of homelessness preventions that the Council did not succeed in.
- The report noted "at least" 230 places at the Tiffield site, however the original Cabinet report and subsequent reports stated that there were 250. It was suggested that an inaccurate picture was being painted. The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education confirmed that 250 places were available, however 230 were being advertised since some children required more space and it was important that this space be available if the situation arose.
- It was suggested there was information missing from the report; information relating to social value, active travel should be included, as confirmed at Cabinet.
- The figures should include how many people, and not just households, were on the Council's housing waiting lists.
- A question was asked around how essential services were faring with the increase in single-person accommodation in the town centre.
- There did not seem to be any vision in place shaping.
- Digital versions of the Annual report would be more sustainable, there was no need for glossy hard copies to be distributed at the meeting.
- Measures within the report were devoid of context and there were no comparators, so it was not possible to see how WNC performed in relation to the rest of the country.
- The report was not seen as representative of many rural areas within West Northants.
- It was disappointing that there was no information relating to the Councillor Covid Funding; it would have been useful to hear about the benefits of this funding, particularly in deprived areas.
- Social value was a component of the Council's procurement process.
- 1 third of people on the Council's housing waiting list were looking for 1-bedroom accommodation.
- Quarterly performance monitoring reports were seen by Cabinet which included comparators to national figures.

RESOLVED:

Council:

1. Noted the detailed content of the WNC Annual Report 2022/23 in Appendix A of the report and the progress directorates have made against plans, objectives, and commitments during the Council's second year; and
2. Noted the key priorities for 2023/24 and potential challenges ahead.

128. Updates to the Constitution

Councillor Patel presented the report which sought to enable Council to consider the recommendations made by the Democracy and Standards Committee in relation to proposed updates to the Constitution in relation to the structure and operation of the Council's Planning Committees.

Councillor Grant seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- Members were pleased that the changes relating to remote participation had been made and urged those responsible that the technology be looked at to iron out existing problems.
- Regarding the change to consultations, it was explained that there were some previous consultations that would have benefitted from Cabinet Member input first, and Cabinet having sight of proposals prior to consultation would increase transparency and accountability
- There still seemed to be confusion around the start times of meetings; clear decisions were needed.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Noted and approved the updates to the Constitution as set out in Section 5 of the report; and
- b) Delegated to the Monitoring Officer the power to make these amendments and any consequential amendments that may be necessary.

129. Update to Political Balance and Committee Places

Councillor Hallam presented the report which asked Council to review the changes to the political balance of the Council and approve changes to the membership of committees.

Councillor Nunn seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- Thanks were given to Councillor Bambridge for his work on the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee over the past 2 years.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Noted the change to the distribution of seats held by political groups on the Council and determined the allocation of seats on committees to the groups as listed in Section 5 of the report; and
- b) Appointed members to the committees listed in Section 5 of the report below to give effect to the wishes expressed by the political groups to which the seats had been allocated.

130. Chief Officer Fixed Term Appointment and Remuneration

Councillor Hallam presented the report which sought approval for a proposed remuneration package in excess of £100,00 for nine Tier 3 Assistant Directors (WNC Local terms) and one Strategic Manager (on TUPE pay, terms and conditions), as a result of agreement of the 2023/24 Local Pay Award. The report also sought approval for the appointment of an interim Director of Children's Services (DCS) for a fixed term duration, with a proposed remuneration package in excess of £100,000.

Councillor Nunn seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- It was concerning that there was a lack of consistency within the Children's Service, and that the appointment had been made before this report had come before Council.
- The reason for the appointment was due to the need to have more oversight of the Children's Trust.
- It would be unreasonable to arrange an extraordinary meeting of the Council to confirm the appointment, days before a pre-existing meeting.
- The Chief Executive confirmed that the post was interim and made to give the DCS (Director of Children's Services) the statutory powers to be permanently involved. If a decision was made to make the post permanent, the proper processes would be followed.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Approved the proposed remuneration over £100,00 for the listed Assistant Directors/Strategic Manager
- b) Approved the proposed fixed term appointment of the DCS and remuneration over £100,000.

131. Integrated Care Northamptonshire - Outcomes Framework

Councillor Golby presented the report which sought to update members on the process undertaken to prioritise metrics for the Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN) Outcomes Framework, and the resulting agreed metrics.

Councillor Cribbin seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- Ambition was good, but some members questioned how these ambitions would be put into practice, as well as how the Council would be measuring the outcomes.
- There should be KPIs for the whole directorate; this had been asked for previously at Scrutiny meetings.
- It would be beneficial to see the priorities that LAPs had chosen, and how they fit into outcome frameworks. It would also enable the Council to hold the LAPs to account.
- It was pointed out that the Council could already measure the number of children with an EHCP without a school place, and the number of children with an EHCP and the length of time it took them to get a school place; this data could help the Council understand whether the outcomes for them “living their best lives” had been hindered by the Council not being able to offer them a place. It was requested that this be looked at with a view of making it a direct ambition.
- Regarding access to the best available education and learning, there should be a measure that included school exclusions.
- There were concerns regarding the home-school transport consultation and the outline proposals around changes to fees and structures. Depending on what was agreed following the consultation results, this should be looked at as a measure also.

RESOLVED:

Council:

1. Noted the priority metrics agreed by Integrated Care Northamptonshire as part of its initial Outcomes Framework.
2. Noted the multi-agency process undertaken to prioritise metrics for the Outcomes Framework.

132. **Motions**

Motion 1

Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Humphreys seconded:

“Background

Last month, the Career’s Leave Bill, championed by Liberal Democrat MP Wendy Chamberlain was passed and will shortly become law. Millions of people care for loved ones, doing everything from day-today physical caring, washing, dressing and feeding for those who cannot care for themselves, to things like shopping for a

household elderly relative. Yet far too many unpaid carers go without adequate support and struggle to balance caring responsibilities and work.

Earlier this month (5th June – 9th June) it was Carers Week.

Research has revealed that 19 million people in the UK have provided unpaid care but have not been identified as carers. Many simply see themselves as a parent, partner or friend.

This means millions of carers could have missed out on vital support. This figure equates to approximately 73%.

Research also shows that providing unpaid care has had a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of 8 million people in the UK. Too often caring comes at the cost of carers own health. 31% of those who have provided unpaid care have said that their own health and wellbeing had suffered as a result of their caring role. This is an issue that has been flagged through the engagement process of the Health & Wellbeing strategy in our own area of West Northamptonshire.

More must and needs to be done both at a national and local level.

Resolution

This council therefore resolves to convene a roundtable, during Parliament's Summer recess, with our local MP's, a cross-party members group, unpaid carers from across our council area and WNC council officers to understand the problem specifically within our own area and explore what further can be done to recognise and improve the situation for unpaid carers who ultimately save local authorities and the state millions of pounds."

Council debated the motion and the following comments are made:

- Work was ongoing through various groups to help support the West Northants carer strategy.
- It was suggested that the motion be referred to the Adult Social Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- Some members felt that referrals to Scrutiny were a way to avoid awkward conversations in a public forum.
- Some members felt that the roundtable should take place, and any findings should go to Scrutiny.
- Some members expressed disappointment that the administration did not propose an amendment to the motion so that it could be carried at the meeting.
- There was concern that the motion would be "kicked into the long grass" if it was referred to the Adult Social Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Golby proposed that the motion be taken to Adult Social Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Nunn seconded the proposal.

Councillor E Roberts proposed an amendment to the proposal to refer the motion that would see the motion go to the very next meeting of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee if Councillor Golby's proposal was agreed. In responding to the debate on the proposal, Councillor Golby advised that he proposed the matter be referred to the next available meeting of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Upon a vote, the proposal to refer the motion to the Adult Social Care and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee was Carried.

Motion 2

Councillor Hawes proposed and Councillor Barrett seconded:

“This Council is shocked by recent incidents of knife crime in West Northamptonshire.

Partners in the CSP include; West Northants Council, Northants Police, Probation Service, Integrated Care Board and the Fire Service, as well as including Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation (NHS) Trust, Office of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Youth Offending Service, Voluntary and Community and Faith Sector Organisations, Registered Housing Providers, Northamptonshire Children's Trust and the University of Northampton

Further notes, that the Government of this day announced that it would amend the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that serious violence is an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships, and by making sure they have a strategy in place to tackle serious violence.

This Council will therefore:

1. Continue to acknowledge and promote the ongoing work of the Community Safety Partnership.
2. Bring forward initiatives to promote community engagement on community safety.
3. Recognise the value of taking a public health approach, to continue to bring forward the production of a Serious Violence Strategy as required under The Serious Violence Duty by January 2024
4. Note the recent Serious Case Reviews and develop an action plan from the recommendations that have come forward.
5. Recommend that West Northamptonshire Council observe the date of the first visit of the Knife Angel, the national monument against violence and aggression, to our region, and from this point forward mark a program of 'Anti-knife and violence crime' events each spring, that reflect our commitment to tackling this problem, that has an adverse effect on our communities.
6. Encourage all Councillors to commit to becoming an 'Anti Violence Champion' by signing or re-signing a pledge.

Council debated the motion and the following comments were made:

- Work should be done with schools at all levels to highlight the dangers of knife crime.
- In response to a suggestion that Community Safety Partnership meetings should be held in public, it was noted that these meetings disclosed confidential information and would not be effective in a public forum.
- The Council should be bolder in what it did for communities and go further in providing resources for the voluntary and community sector.
- It was suggested that more could be done by the Community Safety Partnership to make itself more transparent whilst not compromising the parts that required confidentiality.
- Much more investment was needed in youth services

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

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

None advised.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____