



**West  
Northamptonshire  
Council**

## **Cabinet**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Council Chamber, The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester, NN12 6AD on Tuesday 19 September 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 Janice Duffy  
Councillor Jonathan Harris  
Councillor Rosie Herring  
Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere  
Councillor Rosie Humphreys  
Councillor Peter Matten  
Councillor Kevin Parker  
Councillor Ken Pritchard  
Councillor Bob Purser  
Councillor Wendy Randall  
Councillor Emma Roberts

### **Officers:**

Anna Earnshaw, Chief Executive  
Rebecca Purnell, 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  
Lisa Hyde, Director of Transformation (NNC)  
Neil Cox, Assistant Director - Safeguarding and Wellbeing  
Paul Hanson, Head of Democratic & Elections  
Kathryn Holton, Committee Officer  
Josh West, Political Assistant to the Labour Group

32. **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

33. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

34. **Chair's Announcements**

There were none.

35. **Report of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Scrutiny review of child and adolescent mental health and the risk of self-harm – ICB update**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Herring thanked everyone for their efforts and the recommendations which had been taken on board. Concerns were expressed around the timescale for CAMHS referral (previously advised as 2 years, now 9 weeks), non-alignment of ICB services to the LAPs and the apparent lack of urgency from NHFC and the ICB.

The Executive Director People noted that CAMHS was not where it should be nationally and needed to have an increased priority to avoid significant future problems.

Councillor Golby acknowledged the points made and agreed to raise the profile of child and adolescent mental health through the Health and Wellbeing Board.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet:

- a) Noted the update provided by the Executive Director People
- b) Supported regular updates being provided to the West Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board on improvements in child and adolescent mental health and the risk of self-harm.
- c) Thanked the Chair of the Scrutiny task and Finish panel and its membership for its work to support better outcomes for children and young people.

36. **Corporate Plan Performance Report - 2023-24 Q1**

The Chair presented the report and advised that there had been an increase in the number of measures reported on such as adaptations to regulatory changes and more in-depth reporting for adults and children. Some Covid measures had been removed. Highlights included an increase in leisure centre visits and fewer young adults in care homes compared to other East Midlands areas.

Councillors made the following comments:

- Why had there been a reduction in the number of electric car charging points, which was well below average?
- Why was revenue from fixed penalty notices for environmental crime less than last quarter?

- EHCPs should be completed within 20 weeks by law. Only 4.8% meeting this target was shocking. How many children were waiting for an EHCP and how many had waited over 20 weeks?
- Why had no new council homes been built in the last quarter and the number of affordable homes gone down?
- The additional indicators were welcomed.
- Fly-tipping indicators were not helpful without knowing the reason for the reduction in fly-tipping prosecutions.
- It was concerning that housing benefit application time had worsened. What IT and staffing were being put in place to resolve this?
- It would be interesting to know which metrics were national and which were decided by WNC.
- Breastfeeding indicators had been removed which was disappointing.
- Planning caseloads were too high.

Councillor Breese advised that recruitment was underway for planning. Customer communication was important and improving.

Councillor Brown pointed out that housebuilding numbers were not consistent each quarter – some quarters were fallow. 60 units had been delivered at Riverside and 12 more would follow later in the year.

Councillor Golby advised that he would ask for an update on breastfeeding figures.

Councillor Baker acknowledged that the EHCP % was not where it should be – the challenges in meeting the 20-week target were because of outside reports.

Councillor Larratt noted that the EV charging points which had been removed were provided by the private sector. WNC had been awarded money towards EV charging and new points were being installed.

Councillor Smith agreed to look at the reduction in FPNs, which seemed odd given that the resource had remained the same.

Councillor Longley stated that systems were being brought together which had resulted in a short-term worsening of housing benefit application time.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Agreed the changes to the performance metrics for 2023-24, and
- b) Noted the content of the appendix covering the first quarter of 2023-24

### 37. **Revenue Monitoring Period 4 - Financial Year 2023-24**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Longley presented the report and noted that the biggest variance related to the Children's Trust. He advised that he had been invited to sit on the financial board of NCT which would help.

Councillors made the following comments:

- The Children's Trust overspend needed to be focussed on because it was significant and not sustainable.
- Was the DSG forecast overspend due to SEND?
- Spending on temporary accommodation could be reduced if more houses were built.
- Why was WNC continuing to invest in Qatar?

Councillor Longley stated that WNC aimed to get the most for taxpayers' money and that investment in Qatar had been agreed by Scrutiny.

Councillor Brown acknowledged the need for more housing, which was being pursued.

Councillor Baker pointed out that NCT was run in partnership with North Northants Council and negotiation with them was therefore required before taking action. Placement costs were being brought down.

The Executive Director People advised that all children known to WNC were included in the SEND numbers, even if they were out of school. Where needs were complex and children were not in school the costs were higher. WNC's overspend in this area was relatively low compared to others both regionally and nationally.

The Chair pointed out that the Council worked hard to keep the budget on track.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Noted the forecast outturn position for 2023-24 and associated risks
- b) Noted the deliverability assessment of West Northamptonshire Council savings requirement for 2023-24 summarised in section 7 and detailed in Appendix B
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Director – Finance in consultation with the portfolio holder for finance to apply any budget virements required to effectively manage the overall budget.
- d) Noted the Treasury Management update in Appendix C.

**38. Period 4 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Monitoring Report 2023-24**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Longley presented the report and outlined the salient points.

A Councillor made the following comment:

- It was concerning that two major NPH capital projects had fallen through resulting in money being returned to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Councillor Brown stated that it was important to put on record that the reasons for non-viability of the two schemes were different and complex. He was happy to discuss as required.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Noted the latest capital monitoring position for the General Fund and HRA.

- b) Noted the new capital schemes and changes to the Capital Programme since the report that was considered by Cabinet in July 2023.
- c) Approved the proposed budget virements and reprofiling outlined in section 9 and detailed in Appendix B.

39. **Care Experienced to be seen as a Protected Characteristic**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Baker presented the report seeking agreement to treat care experience as a protected characteristic. She had received several statements from care leavers and read out one from Louise sharing her personal experience.

Councillors made the following comments:

- The report was welcomed.
- Cabinet were asked to revisit their position on adopting socio-economic duty.

Councillor Baker stated that she would thank the care leavers who had sent information.

The Chair agreed to reflect on and revisit the apparent paradox in decision-making.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Agreed to 'support and treat care experienced as if it were a Protected Characteristic' until such time it becomes legislation.
- b) Recognised that care-experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination.
- c) Recognised that Councils have a duty to put the needs of disadvantaged people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration.
- d) Agreed 'To Adopt the Corporate Parenting Principles' until such time it becomes legislation.

This will mean:

- Agreeing that future decisions, services, and policies made and adopted by the Council should be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic.
- Agreeing that in the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council includes care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a protected characteristic in services and employment.
- Continuing to proactively be seeking out and listening to the voices of care-experienced people when developing new policies based on their views.
- Formally calling upon other bodies to treat care experienced as a Protected Characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.
- Formally calling upon all other bodies who work closely with children in care and care leavers to adopt corporate parenting principles for children in care and care leavers until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.

40. **Procurement and Implementation of Education Services Case Management System**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Baker presented the report requesting that the current contract was extended to allow time for proper procurement of a new case management system.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Agreed to proceed with the procurement of a Case Management System for Education Services in WNC, at an estimated contract cost, including licences, hosting, and annual fee costs, of approximately £280,000 per annum for two years, as outlined in Section 7.
- b) Approved the use of KCS Managed Services Businesses Solutions (Y20023)/ an appropriate framework to purchase the system to ensure compliance with the relevant procurement requirements.
- c) Delegated authority to the Lead Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, in liaison with the Executive Director of People Services, to take any further decisions and actions required to implement the Case Management System and award contracts in relation to this.

41. **Proposal for Hunsbury Park SEND unit to operate in part from Chiltern Primary from October 2023**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Baker presented the report and outlined the salient points.

Councillors made the following comments:

- What were the construction constraints referred to in 2.2 and why was this not reported earlier?
- There had been issues with communication on progress with families which needed to be improved.

The Executive Director Place agreed to look at lessons which could be learned. He was confident in the timely delivery of the project and weekly meetings were taking place with developers. Any delays would be communicated to parents.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Approved the creation of 55 new Hunsbury Park SEND places, for children with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) of which 45 places will operate from an annex site at Chiltern primary school, Northampton and a further 10 will be created on the Hunsbury Park site.
- b) Noted the responses received during the 4-week consultation period on the proposal.

42. **Leisure Centre Procurement Approval**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Brown presented the report seeking agreement to procure new leisure contracts for the Council's leisure service facilities in the Northampton and Daventry areas which were due to expire in March 2026.

Councillors made the following comments:

- Would it be possible to carry out some work in-house, for example to reduce the estimated £200k for legal and professional advice?
- The current provider in Northampton had given very good social value, for example, wellbeing walks, which were important in deprived areas. This should be prioritised in the procurement process.

Councillor Brown pointed out that the budget for legal services was the maximum anticipated and that in-house resources would be used where possible. Obtaining the best value for the taxpayer was key. The future delivery priority was for contracts to reflect the needs of the communities being served.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Approved procurement of a new leisure services contract(s) covering Daventry Leisure Centre, Moulton Leisure Centre, Daventry Sports Park, Danes Camp Leisure Centre, Mounts Baths and the Lings Forum Leisure Centre or replacement facility.
- b) Created a revenue budget of £160k for the purposes of conducting condition surveys as set out in the report.
- c) Noted the Director of Communities and Opportunities to undertake the procurement of specialist consultants for legal and other professional advice associated with the procurement as and when required.
- d) Approved a revenue budget of up to £200k for legal and other professional advice associated with the procurement.

43. **Northampton Towns Fund – 35-45 Abington Street asbestos removal and demolition**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Lister presented the report seeking approval for asbestos removal from the old BHS building, using money from the Towns Funds grant.

Councillors made the following comments:

- Concern was expressed about the inflation of building costs.
- Opportunities to improve the public realm should be planned into the project.
- Were confirmed developers in place to take on the site once asbestos removal had been completed?
- Why were WNC taking the risk on this project when the private sector had more resources?

The Executive Director Place pointed out that the project was not currently viable in commercial terms and needed to be de-risked by WNC. This would be done using the Towns Fund grant. Inflation had increased costs, but the project should still be able to deliver. There was interest in the site and confidence that the market would pick up.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Noted the update to works undertaken by Officers from April 2022 onwards.
- b) 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 to

enter the necessary Contracts, Warranties and Bonds for all related works for the removal of asbestos and the demolition of all the buildings required across the site.

#### 44. **Sustainability Report 2022/23**

The Chair presented the report which represented a significant step for sustainability pledges. There was a cross-party working group and emissions reporting was now available.

At the Chair's invitation Clare Robertson-Marriott addressed Cabinet. She believed the sustainability report needed to refer to the urgency of the situation, for example by using the term 'climate emergency'. The public needed to be informed of the basics, such as the fact that a temperature rise of 1.5 degrees would still give extreme weather events. The three themes – economic, social and environmental – were good, but needed integration. The emphasis on nature and wildlife was good and important.

Councillors made the following comments:

- Why had gross emissions increased by 3.4%?
- Was a record kept of the number of trees removed?
- Offences involving public e-scooters were not being dealt with and it was disappointing that communications from residents had been ignored.
- The work of the team was commended; the report was comprehensive and good progress had been made.
- Was any information available setting out the Council's approach to the upcoming changes in net gain legislation?

The Chair pointed out that the total emissions now included additional items such as working from home and materials usage, so the figure was higher. Tree removal was difficult to measure.

Councillor Larratt advised that the tree strategy was in progress. The right tree in the right place was important. The issues around Voi scooters were being followed up and a member briefing was scheduled for 11 October.

The Executive Director Place stated that work was in progress regarding the changes in biodiversity legislation.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Agreed to publish the Annual Sustainability Report for 2022/23
- b) Noted that the report is retrospective and is not making any new commitments.

#### 45. **Assistive Technology Framework**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Golby presented the report. He had visited the team based in the Guildhall and had been impressed with the work being done.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:



- a) Approved the establishment of a framework to allow West Northamptonshire Council to procure a range of assistive technology goods and services from appointed suppliers.
- b) Gave delegated authority to the Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing to establish the Assistive Technology Framework to procure goods and services from appointed suppliers where not already delegated.

46. **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

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

Councillors made the following comments:

- The strategy was an excellent piece of work and the commitment to it was welcomed.
- The challenge was delivery of the strategy.
- Links with other strategies, such as the Anti-Poverty Strategy were needed.
- Inclusion of local rather than generic photographs in the report would be good.

Councillor Golby pointed out that although the links with other strategies might not be explicit, the strategies did work together.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Endorsed and supported the approval of the Draft West Northamptonshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

47. **Variation of The Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) (Dog Control and Prohibition of Smoking in Public Places) 2022**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Smith presented the report seeking approval to extend the Public Spaces Protection Order which had been introduced in Daventry and South Northants in 2022 to areas of Northampton. Monitoring would rely on reporting by the public.

Councillor Brown noted that although it had not been possible to include a requirement to keep dogs on leads on marked sports pitches within this order, he would continue to recommend that this be introduced.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Approved the variation to the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to also cover the Northampton area of West Northamptonshire Council administrative area and include the requirement that dogs must be on leads at all times at Upton Country Park Phase 2 and also in Northampton Town Centre and for the varied Order to remain in force for the remaining term until October 2025. Maps showing the extent of the variation to cover the Northampton area and also Upton Country Park Phase 2 and Northampton Town Centre are appended to this report as Appendix D-J.
- b) Resolved that the draft varied PSPO at Appendix C shall be made by the Council.

48. **The closure of Boniface House, Brixworth**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Golby presented the report. The Boniface care home operated by WNC was under-occupied, outdated and did not provide adequate facilities. Following consultation, it was proposed to close the facility and move residents locally.

A Councillor made the following comments:

- The primary concern was for existing residents and staff. Relocation needed to be carefully considered so that local relatives could still visit.
- Consideration needed to be given to the site and whether it could be used as a community facility rather than disposed of. Although Brixworth had other community facilities they were well-used and additional space could be beneficial.
- What future plans were there for residential care? Home care was not appropriate for everyone.

Councillor Golby noted the point about community facilities and advised that potential care schemes were currently being evaluated.

The Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Wellbeing acknowledged the issues for residents and carers. There had been positive dialogue and a well-planned process with the aim of providing the best option for residents.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet

- a) Approved the commencement of safe closure programme with immediate effect, which would support residents to move to alternative residential care accommodation within the area.
- b) Approved the commencement of formal consultation with affected staff members on their redeployment into other council services in accordance with established HR policies and processes.

49. **Health Protection Service, Food & Feed Standards Service, Spray Paint Enforcement and the Tobacco Enforcement Plans 2023-24**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Smith presented the report bringing the statutory plans before Cabinet as required by legislation. There had been a spike in use of vapes over the last 18 months and it was hoped that central government would move to ban disposable vapes.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Approved the Health Protection Service Plan for the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- b) Approved the Food & Feed Standards Service Plan for the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- c) Approved the Spray Paint Enforcement Plan for 2023-24
- d) Approved the Tobacco Enforcement Plan for 2023-24.

50. **Procurement of WNC Security Services**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Longley presented the report seeking approval to provide security contracts to replace those inherited from the legacy councils. Option 5 as outlined in the report was currently preferred.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

a) Approved the procurement of contracts for security services.

51. **Coroner's Service contractual spend**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Hallam presented the report seeking approval for the procurement of new short-term contracts to support HM Coroner in meeting her statutory duty.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

a) Approved the proposed procurement of contracts to deliver a range of services to support HM Coroner to deal with sudden, unnatural, violent, or unknown deaths.

The meeting closed at 9.07 pm

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_