

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

12<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024

## CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS AND WASTE: COUNCILLOR PHIL LARRATT

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**Report Title** The Establishment of West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum

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### Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

<b>Monitoring Officer</b> (for West and joint papers)	Sara Hall	14/02/2024
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### List of Appendices

**Appendix A** – Proposed Terms of Reference for West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum.

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet’s approval to establish a Local Access Forum for West Northamptonshire and to agree the Terms of Reference for the forum.

## 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 Following the disaggregation of the Highways and Transport functions which includes the functions relating to Public Rights of Way, it is necessary to consider whether the Council should withdraw from the previous Northamptonshire Local Access Forum which covered the whole of Northamptonshire and as a result establish a Local Access forum for West Northamptonshire. This course of action is recommended along with a proposal for the Terms of Reference for the new West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum.

## 3. Recommendations

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- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Agree that West Northamptonshire should withdraw from Northamptonshire Local Access Forum - the previous joint arrangement with North Northamptonshire.
  - b) Agree to establish the West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum.
  - c) Agree the proposed Terms of Reference for the West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum

## 4. Reason for Recommendations (NOTE: this section is **mandatory and must be completed**)

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- *The future Council (or customers) will receive the maximum benefit from the option proposed*
- *As a result of withdrawing from the previous arrangement it is possible for West Northamptonshire to establish a Local Access Forum that will represent the residents and organisations of West Northamptonshire.*
- *The Terms of reference are required in order to ensure that there is an appropriate level of governance in place within which the Forum will operate.*

## 5. Report Background

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- 5.1 Local Access Forums (LAFs) are established under [sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000](#) and are governed by [The Local Access Forums \(England\) Regulations 2007](#).
- 5.2 As a local authority, the Council is the Appointing Authority for the LAF in West Northamptonshire.
- 5.3 Under the regulations the Council has the power to:
- establish a new LAF
  - merge a LAF with another to create a joint forum
  - change the area covered by a LAF
  - withdraw from a joint forum arrangement
- 5.4 Previously in Northamptonshire there has been a single LAF to cover the whole geographic area. It is proposed that West Northamptonshire formally withdraws from the joint

arrangement that has been in place and establishes a LAF for West Northamptonshire. In reality this has already taken place as there are now separate meetings for the WNC and NNC with a brief co-ordination meeting between the two.

- 5.5 As a result of establishing a new LAF it is necessary for Cabinet to agree new Terms of Reference that will apply to the West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum. Proposed Terms of Reference are included at Appendix A.
- 5.6 Discussions have taken place with North Northamptonshire Council who have decided to also withdraw from the previous joint arrangement.

## **6. Issues and Choices**

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- 6.1 The Council, in reality has, little option but to follow the recommendations as NNC are proposing to withdraw from the current arrangement and so for West Northamptonshire to remain within a Local Access Forum that considers a wider geography than it is able to have influence over would make little sense.
- 6.2 By establishing the West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum, the Council will be able to ensure that the forum concentrates on issues that are of importance to West Northamptonshire residents and businesses.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **7.1 Resources and Financial**

- 7.1.1 There is little financial impact associated with the operation of the LAF with officer time required for attendance and secretarial duties.
- 7.1.2 The additional cost of a WNLAF is therefore restricted to the cost of the secretarial duties as this was previously shared between WNC and NNC and now will be borne by each council individually for their own meetings – however this is not a significant sum as meetings take place quarterly.

### **7.2 Legal**

- 7.2.1 Local Access Forums (LAFs) are established under [sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000](#) and are governed by [The Local Access Forums \(England\) Regulations 2007](#).
- 7.2.2 To form a LAF for West Northamptonshire the Council needs to agree new Terms of Reference in support of the new LAF for and under which the Council will remain the Appointing Authority.
- 7.2.3 The new LAF (if approved) will ensure a focus on issues pertinent to West Northamptonshire residents and business.

### **7.3 Risk**

- 7.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

#### **7.4 Consultation and Communication**

7.4.1 No consultation has taken place in relation to this report.

7.4.2 West Northamptonshire Council's Corporate Communications team will share the outcome of the cabinet's decision and the next steps with the community and key stakeholders via the Council's established channels.

#### **7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 The subject matter of this report has not been considered by Overview and Scrutiny.

#### **7.6 Climate Impact**

7.6.1 There are no direct impacts relating to the climate as a result of the existence of the WNLAf or the proposed Terms of Reference. However the Forum is able to have a positive impact on footpaths and bridleways through its role as a consultee which in turn may have a positive impact on active travel.

#### **7.7 Community Impact**

7.7.1 There are no differential impacts on any communities within West Northamptonshire as a result of this report.

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### **8. Background Papers**

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8.1 Appendix A – Proposed Terms of Reference for West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum.