



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at The Great Hall at The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Thursday 22 February 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor John Shephard (Chairman)
Councillor Jo Gilford (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Ann Addison
Councillor Rufia Ashraf
Councillor Jamal Alwahabi
Councillor Azizur Rahman
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 Alan Chantler
Councillor Pinder Chauhan
Councillor Nazim Choudary
Councillor Imran Ahmed Chowdhury BEM
Councillor Paul Clark
Councillor Stephen Clarke
Councillor Fiona Cole
Councillor Raymond Connolly
Councillor Daniel Cribbin
Councillor Julie Davenport
Councillor Paul Dyball
Councillor Penelope Flavell
Councillor Louisa Fowler
Councillor Rupert Frost
Councillor Matt Golby
Councillor André González De Savage
Councillor Andrew Grant
Councillor Mike Hallam
Councillor Enam Haque
Councillor Lauryn Harrington-Carter
Councillor Jonathan Harris
Councillor Cheryl Hawes
Councillor Rosie Herring
Councillor Stephen Hibbert

Councillor James Hill
Councillor Nigel Hinch
Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere
Councillor Mark Hughes
Councillor Cecile Irving-Swift
Councillor David James
Councillor Koulla Jolley
Councillor Paul Joyce
Councillor Andrew Kilbride
Councillor Jamie Lane
Councillor Phil Larratt
Councillor Daniel Lister
Councillor Malcolm Longley
Councillor Charles Manners
Councillor Peter Matten
Councillor Ian McCord
Councillor Dennis Meredith
Councillor Colin Morgan
Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Councillor Kevin Parker
Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor Bob Purser
Councillor Wendy Randall
Councillor Jake Roberts
Councillor Lisa Samiotis
Councillor Brian Sargeant
Councillor David Smith
Councillor Zoe Smith
Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms
Councillor Carl Squires
Councillor Laura Stevenson
Councillor Danielle Stone
Councillor Nick Sturges-Alex
Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz
Councillor Mike Warren

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Rebecca Breese
Councillor Muna Cali
Councillor Maggie Clubley
Councillor Karen Cooper
Councillor Janice Duffy
Councillor Gareth Eales
Councillor Terrie Eales
Councillor Alison Eastwood
Councillor Terry Gilford
Councillor Rosie Humphreys
Councillor Anna King
Councillor Greg Lunn
Councillor Charles Morton

Councillor Emma Roberts
Councillor Sam Rumens
Councillor Cathrine Russell
Councillor Sue Sharps
Councillor Winston Strachan

Officers:

Anna Earnshaw (Chief Executive)
Sarah Hall (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Martin Henry (Executive Director – Finance and Section 151 Officer)
Paul Hanson (Head of Democratic & Elections)
Tracy Tiff (Democratic Services Manager)
Ed Bostock (Democratic Services Officer)

165. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

166. **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

167. **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Kate Ironside, Senior Lecturer in Journalism & Media from the University of Northampton, who was in attendance with some of her students to observe the meeting.

The Chairman noted the retirement of Vice Lord Lieutenant Morcea Walker and thanked her for her dedication, vitality and commitment.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Carl Squires, who had been elected to serve East Hunsbury & Shelfleys ward on 8th February.

The Chairman announced that nominations were open for the Alderman scheme; a number of nominations had already been made and Members were welcome to make more. There would be an extraordinary Council meeting prior to the annual meeting, specifically for the making of Aldermen.

168. **Public Participation**

- 1) There were no requests to present petitions.
- 2) The Chairman advised of 3 requests to address Council.

Dave Pearson, on behalf of Clean Air Northamptonshire, addressed Council in relation to Item 8. He commented that Public Health England estimated that 102 people died each year in Northampton due to air pollution. He noted that the Council

appointed an air quality officer only after DEFRA began a disciplinary process against the Council, stating that it was only protecting residents when threatened with legal action and ministerial sanction.

Tina Matthew, on behalf of the 1000 Voices Campaign, addressed Council in relation to Item 8. She commented that the budget made little reference to investment and action on cleaning Northampton's air and stated that the Council's inaction continued to affect the county's worst-off residents.

Councillor Jane Birch, on behalf of Northampton Town Council, addressed Council in relation to Item 8. She voiced concern around the proposals to lease, rent, sell off and repurpose important heritage buildings in Northampton. Councillor Birch advised that millions of pounds spent on regeneration would mean nothing if residents did not feel like the town was theirs, and the Guildhall was a major symbol of the town. She urged the Council not to terminate its lease with the Town Council and enter negotiations with it instead.

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

169. **Updates to the Constitution**

Councillor Kilbride presented the report which sought Council's consideration of the proposals of the Democracy and Standards Committee in relation to updates to the Constitution.

Councillor Hinch seconded the report.

Council debated the report and made the following comments:

- The updated were a rational and logical next step towards not having to stand while sitting and removed a burden from people with disabilities, hidden and not.
- Some felt that the Democracy and Standards Committee should be taken out of the political balance calculations.

RESOLVED:

Council approved the recommendations of the Democracy and Standards Committee relating to updates to the Constitution as set out in Section 5 and delegates power to the Monitoring Officer to make these changes and any consequential changes to the Constitution.

170. **Changes to Political Balance and Committee Places**

Councillor Kilbride 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 Grant seconded the report.

Council debated the report and made the following comments:

- Members congratulated Councillor Squires on his election.

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;
- b) Noted the appointment of members to the committees listed in Section 5 of the report in accordance with the wishes expressed by the political groups to which the seats have been allocated.

171. **2024-25 Final Budget 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 Holland-Delamere proposed an amendment to the budget. He recognised the constraints due to a decade of underfunding by central government and noted that for the past 3 years the Council had been dependent on contingencies to ensure the budget remained balanced. He stated that the budget contained limited preventative transformation and lacked imagination.

The Labour budget amendments were modest but aimed to set the scene for a future bolder approach to improve services. The proposals included a modular housing pilot scheme to alleviate the Council's housing shortage, employing more Neighbourhood Wardens, piloting innovative transport schemes, introducing no-idling zones and investing in new traffic management systems, and launching a "Play Streets" scheme.

Councillor Purser seconded the amendment and commented that the amendment would allow the Council to deliver social housing at a much faster rate than previously.

Council debated the amendment and made the following comments:

- It was noted that the Cabinet had recently approved a contract to assist in enforcing environmental crimes in the area; it was suggested that Neighbourhood Wardens were more effective at working with residents to deal with the root issues behind environmental crime.
- Public transport was not fit for purpose, particularly for vulnerable residents; the 3rd Labour amendment would allow more people to be able to use active transport.
- Investment in the latest technology was needed to clear congested school runs and rush hour backlogs.

- The Clean Air and Climate Change Summit later in year was sure to highlight issues and it was hoped that collaborative working would lead to an action plan.
- Schools were being asked to fill a gap in services; Covid should not be used as an excuse for a lack of services, according to Ofsted. £5,000 for play equipment would support early childhood development.
- Children regularly saw litter and vermin during their walks to school across the town. The Children's Trust were having to fill the gap where the Council failed to provide a service.
- Capital spending on modular housing was something that the administration was already committed to.
- The pilot housing scheme would not be eligible for Homes England funding.
- Legislation prevented wardens being used as a means of generating income so the 2nd Labour amendment could not be supported by the administration.
- The amendments seemed to be pre-empting the outcomes of the Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plan; an integration strategy was currently being worked on and it was suggested that Members wait for the outcomes of these.
- Regarding the 4th Labour amendment, it was suggested that a piece of work be done to see where "no idling zones" had been successful elsewhere.
- The Labour amendment was a Northampton-centric motion. It did not seem to have any ambition and suggested that the opposition were happy with 97% of the budget.
- Regarding the 5th Labour amendment, play for children was critical for development; town and parish councils should explore this, alongside local area partnerships, in supporting resident engagement.

Councillor Holland-Delamere responded to the debate and commented that the proposed amendments were small; this was due to 14 years of cuts to local authority funding. He stated that decisions seemed to be made in quiet corners and things were not shared with the wider council.

At the conclusion of the debate, recorded votes were taken on each of the Labour group amendments.

There voted for amendment 1:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Flavell, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Purser, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz

There voted against amendment 1:

Councillors Addison, S. Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Davenport, Dyball, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herrin, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman,

Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren

The amendment was lost.

There voted for amendment 2:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Flavell, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Purser, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz

There voted against amendment 2:

Councillors Addison, S. Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Davenport, Dyball, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herrin, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren

The amendment was lost.

There voted for amendment 3:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Flavell, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Purser, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz

There voted against amendment 3:

Councillors Addison, S. Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Davenport, Dyball, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herrin, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren

The amendment was lost.

There voted for amendment 4:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Flavell, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Purser, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz

There voted against amendment 4:

Councillors Addison, S. Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Davenport, Dyball, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herrin, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren

The amendment was lost.

There voted for amendment 5:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Flavell, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Purser, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz

There voted against amendment 5:

Councillors Addison, S. Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Davenport, Dyball, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herrin, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren

The amendment was lost.

Councillor Harris proposed an amendment to the budget and highlighted the core proposals, which were the use of school counsellors, A home retrofit advice partnership scheme, recruitment of an additional staff member for the Sustainability Team, acceleration of the modular homes temporary accommodation project, investment in signage to further develop the Brampton Valley Way as a linear park, a funding project for LAP's to further their health and wellbeing agendas, and a feasibility study into Film and TV Production/Economic Development.

Councillor Beardsworth seconded the amendment.

Council debated the amendment and made the following comments:

- NPH was part of the national modular home pilot schemes which had made good progress in achieving energy savings; there was good local knowledge.
- The Direct Schools grant was forecast to overspend, so the Council would be unable to secure adjusted funding in respect of the school counsellor amendment.
- The administration was committed to the strengthening of the Sustainability Team.
- A budget amendment was not necessary in order to secure funding required for extra resourcing, in respect of modular housing; this work was already underway.

- The Council owned 167 open spaces and parks and had a good record on what had been delivered in its first 3 years.
- The focus on LAPs was welcomed and the intent behind the proposal was recognised, however the administration could not support the amendment due to cost pressures.
- It was difficult to say if a study into Film and TV Production/Economic Development would result in an action plan; more scoping would be needed.
- There was little point in LAPs if they did not have the required budgets.
- The amendment highlighted the point that net zero aspirations must be properly funded.

Councillor Harris responded to the debate and looked forward to further conversations with Cabinet Members.

Councillor Longley responded to the debate and urged Members to contact himself or the Chief Finance Officer with any ideas that may lead to a business case being developed in the future.

There voted for amendment 1:

Councillors Alwahabi, Barrett, Beardsworth, Bowen, Chauhan, Choudary, Clark, Connolly, Fowler, Haque, Harris, Hawes, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, Meredith, Purser, Randall, Roberts, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against amendment 1:

Councillors Addison, Ashraf, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Brown, Chantler, Clarke, Cole, Cribbin, Dyball, Frost, Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Herring, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There abstained on amendment 1:

Councillors Davenport, McCord, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson.

There voted for amendment 2:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, Meredith, Purser, Randall, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against amendment 2:

Councillors Addison, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Connolly, Cribbin, Davenport, Dyball, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herring, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, Kilbride, Lane, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, McCord, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, J Roberts, González De Savage, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There voted for amendment 3:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, Meredith, Purser, Randall, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against amendment 3:

Councillors Addison, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Connolly, Cribbin, Davenport, Dyball, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herring, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, McCord, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, J Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There voted for amendment 4:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Davenport, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Meredith, Purser, Randall, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against amendment 4:

Councillors Addison, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Dyball, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herring, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, J Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There voted for amendment 5:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Davenport, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Meredith, Purser, Randall, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against amendment 5:

Councillors Addison, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bowen, Brow, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Dyball, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herring, Hibbert, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, J Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There voted for amendment 6:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Davenport, Haque, Harris, Hinch, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Meredith, Purser, Randall, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against amendment 6:

Councillors Addison, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Dyball, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herring, Hibbert, Hill, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Rahman, Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There voted for amendment 7:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Choudary, Clark, Davenport, Dyball, Haque, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Meredith, Purser, Randall, González De Savage, Z Smith, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against amendment 7:

Councillors Addison, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Herring, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, Roberts, Sargeant, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

The amendments were lost.

Councillor McCord proposed an amendment to the budget which focused mainly on highway maintenance, which would be funded by reducing the contingency to restore the highways maintenance budget to £2m.

Councillor Clark seconded the amendment.

Council debated the amendment and made the following comments:

- According to the RAC, Northamptonshire had some of the worst roads in the country. Money from the contingency should not be needed to repair the county's roads but highway funding from central government had been drastically reduced over the years.
- Pavements were also in a very poor state across the county.
- There were currently no issues with the pothole machine or materials.
- Additional HS2 money would be forthcoming; there was an understanding that the Council would be receiving £18m over the next decade, and a plan was being worked on how the money would be spent.
- Residents judged the Council on visible services such as waste removal and highway maintenance. Since the Council did not have the funds to run the pothole machine at full capacity, it was suggested that it be rented out when not in use.

Councillor McCord responded to the debate and thanked Members for their words of support.

Councillor Longley responded to the debate and commented that the Council had relied heavily on its reserves in previous years; budget amendments proposing spends from reserves were not feasible for this reason.

There voted for the amendment:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Bambridge, Barrett, Beardsworth, Bowen, Choudary, Clark, Davenport, Haque, Harris, Hawes
Keith Holland-Delamere Jolley, Joyce, Manners, McCord, Meredith, Pritchard, Purser, Randall, J Roberts, Z Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Squires, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against the amendment:

Councillors Addison, Bagot-Webb, Bake, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Brown, Chantler, Clarke, Connolly, Cribbin, Dyball, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Herring, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Rahman, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There abstained:

Councillor Chauhan.

The amendment was lost.

Councillor Davenport made commented that the cost-of-living crisis continued to put pressure on the Council. She voiced concern around retrospective purchase orders, noting that 27% of the Councils purchase orders were retrospective but that this figure did not include the Children's Trust, whose retrospective purchase orders were between 49-60%. Councillor Davenport believed that further savings could be made if the culture within the Children's Trust was investigated.

Council debated the substantive budget and made the following comments:

- The budget did nothing to address the issues faced by residents, who were paying more for less since local government reorganisation.
- Members welcomed £4m for flood resilience and urged the Council to move forward with flood resilience projects.
- Most budget pressures were due to central government not acting on major policy areas, including housing, children's, and adult's services.
- Investment into ICT infrastructure should be a higher priority and spending should be increased.
- The administration was relying on the private sector to fill gaps in social services, so private sector charging the Council more; money spent on agency fees was extortionate.
- Northampton's heritage was being undermined and the town and its people were being betrayed.

- The country was facing a housing crisis, a crisis in terms of children's health, a cost-of-living crisis, and a rise in loss of wellbeing, and the budget continued this in the same vein.
- Modern slavery was attached to private enterprise and a question was asked around scrutinising the Council's supply chain.
- The prevention of children going into care was the best way to stop the issues related to the Children's Trust.
- It was noted that the Constitution did not require business cases for budget amendments or alterations.
- Councillors with ideas for flood alleviation projects were urged to come forward so that the ideas may be taken to the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.
- The cost of care was crippling local authorities across the country.
- The administration had delivered balanced budgets since its inception and made £90m savings.
- The administration was not ideological about outsourcing; it was creating its own capacity in Children's Services.
- Several capital projects were delivering both cost and carbon savings.

Councillor Longley responded to the debate and commented that the Council had a good relationship with the Children's Trust and weekly meetings with the Trust and Members took place and acknowledged the need for more work to be done in this area.

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

Councillors Addison, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Davenport, Dyball, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Hawes, Herring, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley Manners, Matten, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Rahman, J Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There voted against the substantive budget:

Councillors Harris, Squires.

There abstained:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Choudary, Clark, Haque, Holland-Delamere, Jolley, Joyce, McCord, Purser, Randall, Z Smith, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Approved the 2024-25 Budget for West Northamptonshire set out in the report, as recommended by Cabinet at the meeting held on 13 February 2024, including:

- I. an estimated net revenue budget of £889.5m (£414.5m excluding Dedicated Schools Grant) as set out in Appendix A of the report.
 - II. an average Band D Council Tax of £1,778.25 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 as detailed in Appendix D of the report.
 - IV. Dedicated Schools Grant budget of £475m as detailed in Section 7 and Appendix E of the report.
 - V. Capital Strategy as set out in Appendix F1 and 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) Noted the final tax base for West Northamptonshire at 142,664.60 Band D equivalent properties, as set out in paragraph 5.92 of the report.
- c) Approved the following further recommendations from Cabinet to Full Council on 22 February 2024, to ensure that the revenue and capital budget and all associated financial policies can be delivered from 1 April 2024 and also to ensure there is 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 2024-25 as a result of final confirmation of the local government finance settlement, or as a result of unforeseen commitments; in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance.
 - II. To delegate authority to the Executive Director - Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to amend the capital programme for 2024-25 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 5.108 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 £10.0m if required in the year.
 - VI. To note the Executive Director Finance has delegated authority to amend fees and charges.
- d) For the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG):
- I. Notes the provisional allocations and planned usage of the DSG for 2024-25 pending the final DSG settlement.
 - II. Following consultation with the Schools' Forum, delegates authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services to determine the DSG 2024-25 schools funding formula, high needs funding arrangements

and the Early Years Funding Formula in line with Department for Education guidance.

- e) Considered the Section 25 statement of the Chief Finance Officer detailed in section 8 of the report.
- f) Approved the recommendation from Cabinet to Council to 'top up' the Council Tax hardship fund by £150,000 to be funded from one off earmarked reserves at the discretion of the Executive Director – Finance.
- g) Approved the Recommendation from Cabinet to Council for the implementation of the proposed Care Leavers discount for 2024/25 as detailed in 5.94-5.97 of the report.
- 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) Delegated authority to the Executive Director – Finance to take the necessary steps to introduce the new premiums on long term empty properties and second homes at the earliest opportunity as set out in paragraphs 5.99 to 5.101 of the report.

172. **Housing Revenue Account Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan**

Councillor Longley presented a report which set out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Final Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan for West Northamptonshire Council and sought Council's approval of the HRA revenue and capital budget 2024-25 and sought to set out the future years' projections to 2028-29.

Councillor A Brown seconded the report.

Council debated the report and made the following comments:

- The increase would be immense for some residents. However, the recommendations would be supported, or the Council would not be able to borrow to buy additional council houses.
- Members looked forward to upcoming work on modular houses.
- A new regulatory regime was coming in and would be focusing on damp and mould issues, repairs, tenancy satisfaction, etc.

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

Councillors Addison, Alwahabi, Ashraf, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barrett, Barter, Beardsworth, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, Brown, Chantler, Choudary, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Davenport, Dyball, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Haque, Harris, Hawes, Herring, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Holland-Delamere, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Jolley, Joyce, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Meredith, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Purser, Randall, J Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, Z Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Squires, Stevenson, Stone, Sturges-Alex, Tarasiewicz, Warren.

There abstained:

Councillors Clark, McCord.

RESOLVED:

Council approved:

- a) The HRA revenue budget for 2024-25 of £65.49m.
- b) An average maximum rent increase of 7.7% per dwelling, in line with the legislation and the government's amended national rent standard, to take effect from 1 April 2024.
- c) An average maximum increase of 7.7% in garage rents and commuter surcharges to take effect from 1 April 2024.
- d) An average increase of 7.7% in tenants and leaseholders service charges with effect from 1 April 2024.
- e) The HRA capital programme for 2024-25, noting the future year estimated commitments, and proposed sources of finance.
- f) The total management fee of £84.441m for NPH to deliver the HRA and General Fund services in scope (including capital programme) for 2024-25.
- g) The setting of the working balance at £6m, with the assessed minimum level of £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 2024-25 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.

173. 2024/25 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 2024-2025.

Councillor Nunn seconded the report.

Council debated the report and made the following comments:

- Labour would be reluctantly supporting; this was a large increase, people wanted to see more for their money.
- Clarification was requested around empty homes and how much the Council was charging.
- Some Members felt that some services would be pushed out to parishes and precepts increased.

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

Councillors Addison, Alwahabi, Ashraf, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barrett, Barter, Beardsworth, Chowdhury, Bignell, Bowen, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Choudary, Clarke, Cole, Connolly, Cribbin, Davenport, Dyball, J Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Haque, Harris, Hawes, Herring, Hibbert, Hill, Hinch, Holland-Delamere, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Jolley, Joyce, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Meredith, Morgan, Nunn, Parker, Pritchard, Purser, Randall, J Roberts, Sargeant, González De Savage, D Smith, Z Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Squires, Stevenson, Stone, Sturges-Alex, Tarasiewicz, Warren.

There abstained:

Councillors Clark, McCord.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Noted that the Cabinet agreed the Council Tax Base for 2024-2025 on 13 February 2024:
 - For the whole Council area as 142,664.6 (item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1991, as amended (the “Act”) and;
 - For dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates as shown in Appendix B of the report.
- b) Approved the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2024-2025 (excluding Parish Precepts but including Special Expenses) as £253,693,325.
- 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 6.2 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 2024-2025 for each part of its area and for each category of dwellings.
- f) Noted Appendix E of the report which set out in detail how the charge was 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 2024-2025 was not deemed to be excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- h)

174. Urgent Business (previously agreed with the Chairman)

None.

Council - 22 February 2024

The meeting closed at Time Not Specified

Chair: _____

Date: _____