



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at One Angel Square, Angel Street, Northampton, NN1 1ED on Thursday 23 September 2021 at 6.00 pm.

Present

- Councillor Ann Addison (Chair)
- Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Rufia Ashraf
- Councillor Jamal Alwahabi
- Councillor Azizur Rahman
- Councillor Anthony S. Bagot-Webb
- Councillor Fiona Baker
- Councillor William Barter
- Councillor Sally Beardsworth
- Councillor Phil Bignell
- Councillor Lizzy Bowen
- Councillor Rebecca Breese
- Councillor Adam Brown
- Councillor Michael Brown
- Councillor Muna Cali
- Councillor Alan Chantler
- Councillor Pinder Chauhan
- Councillor Nazim Choudary
- Councillor Imran Ahmed Chowdhury BEM
- Councillor Stephen Clarke
- Councillor Maggie Clubley
- Councillor Fiona Cole
- Councillor Raymond Connolly
- Councillor Karen Cooper
- Councillor Daniel Cribbin
- Councillor Julie Davenport
- Councillor Janice Duffy
- Councillor Paul Dyball
- Councillor Gareth Eales
- Councillor Terrie Eales
- Councillor Alison Eastwood
- Councillor Louisa Fowler
- Councillor Rupert Frost
- Councillor Jo Gilford
- Councillor Terry Gilford
- Councillor Matt Golby
- Councillor Andrew Grant
- Councillor Mike Hallam
- Councillor Enam Haque
- Councillor Lauryn Harrington-Carter
- 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 David James
Councillor Koulla Jolley
Councillor Andrew Kilbride
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 Jake Roberts
Councillor Sam Rumens
Councillor Cathrine Russell
Councillor Brian Sargeant
Councillor Sue Sharps
Councillor John Shephard
Councillor David Smith
Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms
Councillor Laura Stevenson
Councillor Danielle Stone
Councillor Winston Strachan
Councillor Nick Sturges-Alex
Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz
Councillor Mike Warren

30. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bambridge, Barrett, Clark, Flavell, Herring, Irving-Swift, Joyce, King, Pritchard, Samiotis and Z Smith.

31. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Hinch, Kilbride and Frost declared interests as board members for Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH).

Councillor Aziz declared an interest in respect of Item 13 (Motion 6) as the owner of a company managing HMO properties.

Councillors Gonzalez De-Savage, Haque, Harris and Hill declared interests in respect of item 10 as members of the Strategic Planning Committee and indicated that they would not take part in the debate or vote.

32. Minutes of Council

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor McCord noted that he had been appointed to the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee but had not been invited to its most recent meeting. He asked that proper procedures be adhered to following his appointment.

The Chairman advised that this would be looked into.

33. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman advised of several upcoming events, including her Tea Party taking place at The Forum, Towcester. Members were asked to contact the Chairman's assistant if they would like to help out at the event.

Other events included:

- The Chairman's Civic Service on 24th October, 4pm
- Carol Service on 12th December at All Saints Church, further information to follow.

34. Public Participation

(1) The Chairman advised of 1 request to submit a petition.

Councillor Meredith submitted a petition relating to proposed development at Thorplands Brook Park.

(2) The Chairman advised of 5 requests to address the Council.

Danielle Bird, on behalf of Climate Action West Northamptonshire, addressed Council in relation to Item 13 (Motion 8). She welcomed the Action Travel Strategy in the report of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste and suggested that it be developed in conjunction with key institutions such as the university. She stated that aside from a small cycle network, connectivity around the

county was non-existent. She questioned whether funding from the Department for Transport would help to develop an Air Quality Action Plan.

Sally Pagano, a local resident, addressed Council in relation to Item 13 (motion 6) and stated that local residents felt ignored by Planning officers regarding concerns around Houses in Multiple Occupation.

Jane Frost, Chair of Semilong and Trinity Neighbourhood Plan, addressed Council in relation to Item 13 (Motion 6) and voiced concerns around the changing face of communities in the area, due in part to the prevalence of HMOs. She warned that communities were in danger of collapsing and urged the Council to act now.

Jane Wood, Chair of Climate Action West Northamptonshire, addressed Council in relation to Item 13 (Motion 8) and congratulated the Council for its target to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. She questioned whether cutting down trees at Thorplands Brook Park was the right thing to do and urged the Council to carefully consider any decision to permanently remove open green spaces and noted that cutting down any trees would only add to the size of the task of reaching carbon neutrality. Ms Wood urged the Council to reconsider the proposals.

Rachel McGrath, a charity sector professional addressed Council in relation to Item 13 (Motion 9) and asked that when Members attended the Anti-Poverty Workshop on 20th September, as part of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, consideration be given to contacting the government and requesting that the cut to the Universal Credit uplift be reversed.

There was 1 written question from a member of the public. A written response was circulated at the meeting.

35. **Written Questions**

22 questions had been received from Councillors and the answers had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution.

Questions and answers were given as tabled unless where stated, supplementary questions were asked as detailed below.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 2, it was confirmed that private e-scooters were illegal; an enforcement campaign would be taking place in due course; a similar campaign was recently undertaken by Essex Police which proved to be very successful, having confiscated a large number of illegally ridden, privately-owned e-scooters.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 3, Council heard that robust recruitment for social workers was underway. Negative publicity from certain local news outlets were putting potential social workers off from working for the Children's Trust.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 5, it was confirmed that an update relating to social care recruitment would be brought to Council in 6 months.

In response to a supplementary question in relation to question 6, it was advised that a timescale relating to dropped kerbs would come in due course, but it was noted that the issue was much more widespread than Thorplands.

In response to a supplementary question in relation to question 7, it was advised that regular meetings with contractors took place and that contractors were being worked with closely to recruit additional HGV drivers.

In response to a supplementary question in relation to question 9, it was advised that the number of walk-ins were up, but that any suggestions on improvements were always gratefully received.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 10, it was confirmed that St. Edmunds hospital site was now on the ratings list and work was underway to identify how much was owed in back rates.

In response to a supplementary question in relation to question 12, it was advised that monthly meetings took place with the Children's Trust to discuss any financial issues.

36. Announcements by the Leader of the Council

There were no announcements by the Leader on this occasion.

37. Cabinet Member Reports and Record of Decisions Taken by the Cabinet

Councillor Nunn presented his report as Leader of the Council and highlighted the salient points. In response to questions, the Leader confirmed that the Democracy and Standards Committee was the key driver behind the boundary review; he and the Chief Executive had a preliminary meeting and were pleased with the level of input councillors and local residents had.

Councillor Bowen confirmed that she intended to meet with opposition group leaders to discuss regeneration in its entirety.

Councillor Brown presented his report as Deputy Leader and highlighted the salient points. In response to questions, he advised that he had not yet had sight of the amended Tree Policy and would chase it up with officers. He would be happy to arrange a meeting with interested Members. Museum visitor numbers were tracked but it was unclear whether they were coming from inside or outside Northampton. The environment would be a priority when developing the Housing Strategy; it was noted that NPH were currently undergoing a grant funded scheme of retrofitting properties with insulation at significant cost; it was important that future homes be built to be as environmentally friendly as possible. It was not the intention of the housing policy that ex-offender housing all be placed in close proximity and

Councillor Brown confirmed that he would look into where those residents were being placed and what could be done to mitigate any issues that arose.

Councillor Baker presented her report as Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education and highlighted the salient points. In response to questions, Council heard that the Corporate Parenting Board included opposition Members as well as the Assistant Director for Looked After Children and the Strategic Manager for Corporate Parenting, and that it had met twice already and were due to meet next week. Holiday activities were a success, and more were planned for the October and Christmas holidays; information was being sent out to foster carers etc. so that they were aware what was available for their children to attend.

Councillor Larratt presented his report as Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste and highlighted the salient points. He apologised to any affected by Cliftonville roadworks on Monday 20th September; daily monitoring was now taking place and improvements made where possible. He acknowledged concerns raised about the bus lane enforcement camera in St James and advised that this was being looked into. In response to questions, it was advised that a Bus Improvement update would be brought to the next Cabinet meeting which would include the provision for delegated authority to make future amendments if necessary. A scheme relating to Rushmere Road would be funded through Active Travel; plans were in the process of being drawn up. Councillor Larratt praised the Northants Litter Wombles and other community groups and noted that contracts were in place to deal with the issue of litter and fly tipping as well as enforcement procedures to ensure that work was being completed to specification. It was advised that the 3rd phase of the Cliftonville corridor may be forthcoming, however due to a lack of support, not in the way it was originally planned. The North West Relief Road was needed to deliver proposed housing on Dallington Grange and the Northern Orbital Road remained an aspiration to ease congestion issues on the A45.

38. **Youth Justice Plan**

Councillor Baker presented a report which sought Council's approval of the Youth Justice Plan 2021/22 and performance summary for 2021/22. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 there is a statutory requirement to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan which must provide specified information about the local provision of youth justice services. The Youth Justice Board provides guidance about what must be included in the plan and recommends a structure for the plan.

Councillor Lister seconded the report.

Members commented that the report seemed to be intrinsically linked to the Anti-Poverty Strategy; it was suggested that a person or persons from the deprived areas mentioned in the report be in attendance at next week's Anti-Poverty workshop. Concern was also raised over the number of Operations Manager vacancies.

Members discussed the report.

RESOLVED:

Council approved the Youth Justice Plan 2021/22 and performance summary for the period 2020/21.

39. **Planning policy, conservation areas, local lists and Article 4 Directions - suggested approach for decision making**

Councillor Breese presented a report which sought Council's approval for an approach to making decisions on the various stages of preparing and adopting planning policy and related documents, designating conservation areas, adding buildings to the local list, and making article 4 directions.

Councillor Hill seconded the report.

It was advised that the Terms of Reference and committee representation would be finalised over the following days and climate change policy would feature further along in the policy's development. It was Councillor Breese's intention that the Planning Policy Committee membership be cross-party.

Members discussed the report.

RESOLVED:

Council:

1. Agreed the approaches to the preparation of planning policy and related documents, designation of conservation areas, adding buildings to the local list and making article 4 directions as set out in the report
2. Delegated to the Head of Planning & Climate Change Policy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Built Environment & Rural Affairs:
 - (a) Responses to consultations on local plans from neighbouring authorities and production of Statements of Common Ground
 - (b) Responses to consultations on other planning policy documents from neighbouring authorities
3. Cabinet will delegate to Planning Policy Committee relevant responsibilities relating to Planning Policy when that committee has been established.

40. **Changes to Committee Places**

Councillor Hallam presented a report to Council which sought approval for changes to the membership of committees as requested by political groups.

Councillor Patel seconded the report.

Councillors requested that climate impacts be considered across all council reports.

Members discussed the report.

RESOLVED:

Council appointed members to the committees listed in Section 4 of the report to give effect to the wishes expressed by the political groups to which the seats were allocated.

41. **Afghan Refugee Update**

Councillor D Smith presented a report which sought to update Council on Afghan resettlement and relocation in West Northamptonshire.

Councillor Nunn seconded the report.

Councillors congratulated staff who had worked hard to make sure the needs of those most in need were met; West Northamptonshire Council was proud to be a welcoming authority.

Members discussed the report.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Noted the use of existing powers and delegation to;
- b) Support central Government's Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and welcome Afghan Locally Employed Staff (ALES) who have worked for UK and risked their lives alongside British forces in Afghanistan and are now relocating to the UK with their families following NATO's decision to withdraw military forces from Afghanistan.
- c) Support Central Government's Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) which will provide vulnerable refugees from Afghanistan and those put at risk by recent events in Afghanistan with a route to safety.
- d) Support officers to work collaboratively with Police, Fire, Northamptonshire Children's Trust, North Northamptonshire Council, Public Health Northamptonshire, other health partners and the local community and voluntary sector to provide a co-ordinated response to the Government's appeal to provide support to affected adults and children under ARAP and ACRS currently being provided with short-term "holding accommodation" in West Northamptonshire.
- e) Support the assessment of the likely long term support needs of this group of people alongside the availability of local services to inform the scale of the Councils offer to permanently resettle households in West Northamptonshire under the ARAP scheme.

42. **Motions**

Motion 1

Councillor Ashraf proposed and Councillor Purser seconded:

“This Council notes:

- That analysis of the 2019 Local Election results by the Fawcett Society found that only 35% of councillors in England are women, up 1% since 2018. Of the seats that were up for election in 2018, 38% went to women, up just 3 percentage points on 2014 when these seats were last contested;
- As of October 2020, 27 councils have passed the LGA Labour Group’s Parental Leave policy, and an additional 9 councils have their own parental leave policy in place;
- That the role of a councillor should be open to all, regardless of their background, and that introducing a parental leave policy is a step towards encouraging a wider range of people to become councillors, and is also a step to encourage existing councillors who may want to start a family to remain as councillors;
- That parental leave must apply to parents regardless of their gender, and that it should also cover adoption leave to support those parents who choose to adopt.

This Council resolves:

- To adopt the parental leave policy drafted by the LGA Labour Group’s Women’s Taskforce to give all councillors an entitlement to parental leave after giving birth or adopting;
- To ensure that councillors with children and other caring commitments are supported as appropriate;
- To notify the LGA that this council has passed a motion at full council to adopt the parental leave policy.

Councillor Hallam proposed and Councillor Chauhan seconded an amendment.

Amended motion to read:

“This Council notes:

- That analysis of the 2019 Local Election results by the Fawcett Society found that only 35% of councillors in England are women, up 1% since 2018. Of the seats that were up for election in 2018, 38% went to women, up just 3 percentage points on 2014 when these seats were last contested;
- As of October 2020, 27 councils have passed the LGA Labour Group’s Parental Leave policy, and an additional 9 councils have their own parental leave policy in place;
- That the role of a councillor should be open to all, regardless of their background, and that introducing a parental leave policy is a step towards encouraging a wider range of people to become councillors, and is also a step to encourage existing councillors who may want to start a family to remain as councillors;

- That parental leave must apply to parents regardless of their gender, and that it should also cover adoption leave to support those parents who choose to adopt.

This Council resolves:

- To adopt a parental leave policy to give all councillors an entitlement to parental leave after giving birth or adopting;
- To ensure that councillors with children and other caring commitments are supported as appropriate;
- To notify the LGA that this council has passed a motion at full council to develop a parental leave policy.

Council debated the amendment.

Upon a vote, the amendment was agreed and became the substantive motion.

Council debated the substantive motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was Carried.

Motion 2

This motion was withdrawn from the agenda prior to the meeting.

Motion 3

Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Alwahabi seconded:

“The Authority recognises the many challenges faced by care leavers. We have shown our commitment to them by taking away the burden of council tax for all care leavers until they reach the age of 25 years. We now commit to the provision of one year’s free broadband for all young people leaving care, for the first 12 months.”

Council debated the motion.

Councillor Baker proposed that the motion be referred to the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee for review.

Councillor Brown seconded the proposition.

Upon a vote, the proposition to refer the motion to the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee was Carried.

Motion 4

Councillor Alwahabi proposed and Councillor Haque seconded:

“WNC is a new authority and committed to change and transformation where it will benefit our most vulnerable residents. The Pandemic has highlighted the need for

more IT resources for children living in disadvantaged circumstances. WNC commits to recycling all unwanted IT devices and handing them over to a local charity for refurbishment and redistribution for West Northants children, young people, and care leavers.”

Councillor Hallam proposed and councillor Sturges-Alex seconded an amendment.

Amended motion to read:

“WNC is a new authority and committed to change and transformation where it will benefit our most vulnerable residents. The COVID-19 Pandemic has highlighted the need for more IT resources for children living in disadvantaged circumstances. WNC commits to recycling all unwanted IT devices where due consideration has been given to the Council’s Lifecycle Management plan and where these can properly have personal data and software licenses wiped, making use of appropriate local charities for refurbishment and redistribution for West Northants children, young people, and care leavers.”

Council debated the amendment.

Upon a vote, the amendment was agreed and became the substantive motion.

Council debated the substantive motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was Carried.

Motion 9

Councillor E Roberts proposed and Councillor Randall seconded:

This Council is committed to an anti-poverty strategy by understanding impacts and taking real action to lift people out of poverty. It also believes that the Government should stop the planned cut in Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit. Over 19,000 people receive Universal Credit in Northampton alone - in nearly 24% of all families in the area. This is the eighth highest number in the whole of the East Midlands.

This Council notes figures from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which show that 6.2 million families across the UK will feel a £1,040 hit to their yearly incomes almost overnight and 500,000 people – among whom 200,000 are children – are at real risk of falling into poverty and deprivation.

This Council therefore RESOLVES to join charities, local support groups and residents in writing to the Government expressing its deep concern and calling for Government to make the £20 uplift to Universal Credit permanent and extend it to legacy benefits, in light of the overwhelming evidence of the negative impact this will otherwise have on many within the authority’s area

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was Carried.

Motion 6

Councillor Purser proposed and Councillor Russell seconded:

“In the light of continuing concern by local residents on the growth of HiMOs, and their impact on local communities, West Northants Council will set up a review of the criteria for approval and report back by April 2022.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was Carried.

Motion 7

Councillor Harris proposed and Councillor Beardsworth seconded:

“The White Ribbon campaign is at the forefront of campaigning to both end domestic violence and change attitudes to ensure that not only the act but any and all attitudes that condone domestic violence are eradicated.

This Council Meeting notes that

- ONS figures show that almost one in three women aged 16-59 will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime; that two women a week in England and Wales are killed by a current or former partner; that over half a million women are raped or sexually assaulted each year and that a YouGov poll shows that a third of girls have experienced sexual harassment in schools.
- the global pandemic has led to more women and girls being vulnerable to domestic abuse and, according to a BBC news report last July, the initial three months of the first national lockdown saw an 80% increase in calls to the National Domestic Abuse Hotline.
- that, according to crime-survey and other government data, victims disproportionately come from those groups which already experience inequality and additional challenges in our society, including those who are mixed-race, have disabilities, or are transgender.
- and, as we reflect on the end of the delayed UEFA Euro 2020 tournament, previous research by Lancaster University showed that reported domestic abuse incidents increase whenever any of the home nations play in a major tournament, and the effect is particularly large on the days when those teams lose. This Council Meeting further notes that
- White Ribbon UK is the leading charity with a mission to end male violence against women and part of the global White Ribbon movement which arose from a campaign started by men in Canada in 2004
- White Ribbon Day is marked annually on 25th November, the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women, by encouraging men and boys to pledge never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women and to make this public by wearing a white ribbon on the day and a week or two afterwards
- White Ribbon UK operate a system of female Champions, male Ambassadors and Youth Advocates, as well as having specific materials to support primary

and secondary schools, all with the aim of encouraging men to take the pledge and help to eradicate male violence against women.

This Council Meeting believes male violence against women can never be condoned and West Northamptonshire Council should do everything in its power to ensure women are safe. As part of this, the council should facilitate and encourage participation by councillors, staff and schools in the White Ribbon Campaign.

This West Northamptonshire Council therefore resolves to

- encourage all male Councillors to take the White Ribbon pledge, never to take part in, condone or stay silent about violence against women.
- undertake as soon as practicable the steps necessary to achieve White Ribbon accreditation, joining the large number of public sector bodies which have already done so and as part of this, appoint a male Councillor as an Ambassador;
- mark White Ribbon Day on 25th November each year with a fundraising event; and encourage participation among council staff and local primary and secondary schools.
- liaise with the Police and Crime Commissioners office to understand better the issues that exist in West Northamptonshire and if necessary, establish a cross-party working group to develop a strategy to build awareness of the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion Fell.

Motion 8

Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Humphreys seconded:

“Fraser Park is an area that is cherished by local residents who say it is one of the few safe outdoor spaces they have. This area has also recently been identified as one of the five ‘left behind’ areas in Northamptonshire. According to these findings, these communities are likely to experience a range of adverse outcomes, according to evidence presented to the APPG. This includes lower levels of educational attainment, reduced employment opportunities and a higher rate of ill health.

‘Left behind’ neighbourhoods are also noted as having lower levels of community spaces, cultural, educational, leisure and green assets than other deprived areas. It would seem entirely illogical to even consider allowing development on such an openspace given these factors.

The proposal to build 125 affordable homes on the site put forward by Northamptonshire Partnership Homes (NPH) comes at a time when the importance of such open spaces for residents, especially those in urban areas, has grown in its relevance and significance as a result of our experience during the COVID pandemic.

Whilst this proposal was included as part of the Northampton Borough Council local plan, which was supported Pre-COVID, circumstances have changed and the significance of maintaining these types of spaces for both leisure and environmental reasons has grown significantly.

The Conservative manifesto for the West Northants election clearly states “Parks and other green spaces are much valued by residents as a vitally important amenity. We will continue to maintain them to a high standard.....” and the West Northants Corporate plan states that the council will “Maintain our parks and green spaces to a high standard and make them an amenity for all”. Building on this green space breaks these promises.

This council notes that, whilst there is no doubt a need for additional social housing, it is equally important to protect and preserve green spaces for residents especially in urban settings.

West Northamptonshire council therefore resolves to:

- Review the decision to build on Fraser Park.
- Actively explore alternative brown field locations for the 125 proposed homes.
- Form a task and finish group to include all elected West Northamptonshire council members representing the area, local community groups, members of Northampton Town Council, actively supported by council officers to develop a local business plan with the community to identify and implement an action plan.
- Develop a four-year investment plan for the area.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion Fell.

Motion 5

Councillor G Eales proposed and Councillor Duffy seconded:

“West Northants Council believes planning works best when developers and the local community work together to shape local areas and deliver necessary new homes; and therefore calls on the Government to protect the right of communities to object to individual planning application.”

Councillor Harris proposed and Councillor Humphreys seconded an amendment.

Amended motion to read:

“West Northants Council believes planning works best when developers and the local community work together to shape local areas and deliver necessary new homes; this council therefore will communicate with Government by writing to relevant Government ministers to ensure that the rights of communities and individuals are protected regarding objections to planning applications.”

Council debated the amendment.

Upon a vote, the amendment was agreed and became the substantive motion.

Council debated the substantive motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was Carried.

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

There was no urgent business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 10.10 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____