



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at The Forum, Towcester, NN12 6AF on Tuesday 8 March 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Chair)
 Councillor Adam Brown (Vice-Chair)
 Councillor Fiona Baker
 Councillor Lizzy Bowen
 Councillor Rebecca Breese
 Councillor Matt Golby
 Councillor Mike Hallam
 Councillor Phil Larratt
 Councillor Malcolm Longley
 Councillor David Smith

Substitute
Members: None

Also
Present: Councillor Sally Beardsworth
 Councillor Phil Bignell
 Councillor Nigel Hinch
 Councillor Rosie Humphreys
 Councillor Ian McCord
 Councillor Ken Pritchard
 Councillor Bob Purser

Apologies
for
Absence: None

Officers Anna Earnshaw, Chief Executive
 Rebecca Peck, Assistant Chief Executive
 Martin Henry, Executive Director - Finance (Section 151 Officer)
 Catherine Whitehead, Director of Legal and Democratic (Monitoring
 Officer)
 Paul Hanson, Democratic Services Manager
 Sofia Neal-Gonzalez - Democratic Services Officer (minutes)
 Sarah Reed, Executive Director - Corporate Services
 Stuart Timmiss, Executive Director - Place and Economy

118. Apologies

None

119. **Declarations of Interest**

None

120. **Minutes**

That the minutes from the Cabinet meeting of the 15th of February 2022 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record

121. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reflected on events occurring in Ukraine and advised there was information on the WNC website with details on how to help.
Members were also reminded that it was International Women's Day.

122. **Urgent Business**

None

123. **Transformation Update Quarter 3 2021/22**

The Chair presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. It was noted that transformation projects would deliver the aggregation of services across West Northants.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was noted that the importance of technology had been discussed at the Members' Day event.
- It was queried whether there would be budgetary implications.
- How long would it take to achieve the goals set out in the report?
- It was important to remember that not every member of the public owns a computer or smart phone.
- The growth in the number of apprenticeships was very pleasing.

Councillor Mike Hallam advised that the council was recruiting various IT roles.

RESOLVED: Cabinet noted the report.

124. **Corporate Plan Performance Report – 2021-22 Q3**

The Chair presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. It was noted that the council had taken advice from outside agencies with regards the calculation of CO 2 emissions, this will soon be presented to Cabinet. Some of the new trees due to be planted for the Queen's green canopy would be on WNC land.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was noted that key things mentioned in the plan needed to be related to the outcome measures.
- It was important to measure how the changes would make a difference.

- The annual staff turnover had not changed since the last time the report had come to Cabinet.
- It was queried whether long covid had been considered when sickness absence was discussed.
- It was noted that there was a 28 week time frame for highways defects, such as potholes.
- Would there be electric car charging points for rural areas, specifically Long Buckby as there had been funding for it.
- It was queried where WNC stood in comparison to other authorities when it came to staff sickness and the promotion of staff wellness. Could these figures be shared more frequently?

Councillor Fiona Baker noted that a lot of work had been done in conjunction with the police on the Child Protection Plan.

Councillor Mike Hallam advised, with regards staff turnover, that a level of stability was needed but that it was also important to recruit new staff and for people to progress further in the careers. It was noted that Covid had created an enforced absence.

Councillor Phil Larratt advised that the figures mentioned in the report as related to Highways were accurate. Some defects would not qualify for urgent repair, such as smaller potholes. It was noted that this could change as the council moved forward, should finance change. There would be 18 electric car charging points added as part of the pilot programme, the council would investigate also adding them to rural areas. The council had been approached by a company with a view to installing electric car charging points, but they did not wish to go outside of Northampton.

The Chair advised that he would come back to members about sharing the data more frequently.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the content of the appendix covering the third quarter of 2021-22

125. **Organisation Structure Change**

The Chair presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

It was noted that Transformation teams would be embedded within various departments to present new ideas and opportunities. It was advised that the Assistant Director of Customer Service role would also now encompass Emergency Planning.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was noted that transformation was the key to making the new council work.
- It was queried how the council would drive the changes so that residents see the results.
- It was agreed that transformation would work better from within departments.
- It was queried where sustainability would sit within the structure, would the climate change goals move?

The Chief Executive advised that there would be a Transformation Board which would ensure that Directors were held to account within their departments. It was noted that in the future it was hoped that the transformation team would be self-funded.

The Chair advised that there would need to be changes across every department to work on carbon reduction.

RESOLVED: It was resolved that the Cabinet:

- a) Noted the changes to the Council's approach and changes to the Directorate structures and key roles as follows.
 - Creation of a new Directorate of Communities and Opportunities
 - The creation of a new Directorate of People encompassing Adult Services and Children and Education Services
- b) Noted the changes included in the Pay Policy including:
 - Removal of the Chief Officer post of Director of Transformation
 - Creation of the new Director of Communities and Opportunities post
- c) Noted the delegated responsibility to the Senior Appointments Committee for the permanent appointment of a Director of Communities and Opportunities once staff and union consultation has completed and interviews undertaken.

126. **Proposal to fund a Football Association standard, 3G sports pitch at the new free school to be delivered at Wantage Farm, Moulton**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Fiona Baker presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. It was advised that there would be no further involvement required from the council and no extra funding. The project would be of benefit to the school and go towards the promotion of the healthy living agenda. It was advised that there would be a residue of money, how best to use it was being investigated.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was queried whether the surfaces that would be used were safe and whether there had been research carried out, particularly regarding carcinogenic surfaces.
- It was queried whether NSB would allow their facilities to be used by the public.

Councillor Fiona Baker made the following comments in response.

- The issue of carcinogenic surfacing would be investigated.
- The school was a trust school and as such the council would have very little say on how they allow their facilities to be used.
- Members were informed that Councillor Baker would speak to schools regarding allowing the public to use their facilities at a price that is affordable.

Councillor Lizzy Bowen noted that NSB have an outstanding reputation for sports and have fed into well-known teams.

Councillor Phil Larratt requested that accessibility and costs be kept in mind. As some section 106 money would be used, the facilities should therefore be at the benefit of the public.

Councillor Matt Golby noted that this could be a piece of work for the council to undertake to encourage a better level of accessibility and affordability.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- a) Approved the expenditure required to deliver the 3G sports pitch at the proposed new school at Wantage Farm, Moulton at a cost of £641,046.
- b) Delegated responsibility to the Director of Children's Services in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education to make and authorise all necessary legal and financial agreements to ensure effective delivery of the proposed scheme.

127. **Disposal of Land at Sixfields, Northampton**

With the agreement of the Cabinet, the Chair proposed that this item be discussed first. At the Chair's invitation Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Councillor Longley made the following comments:

- He acknowledged a considerable amount of time and effort had been spent considering this issue, which was complicated by the various leases involved.
- He referenced the extraordinary council meeting that had taken place on 21st March, which had resulted in many good ideas and questions raised by members.
- The Council had sought to use its best judgement to maximise the returns for the Council and for residents.
- The site was subject to several leases and legal issues.
- Bids had been received from two interested parties, involving cash, overages, and other factors. One offer included the building of a stand. He referenced the fact that the value of bids had continued to increase as we moved towards a decision.
- He advised Cabinet that all items under consideration had been considered and advised that the Council had secured the best professional advice that it could.
- In coming to a recommendation, the Council had sought to balance the cash offers against the benefits that each offer provided and the certainty of a successful conclusion.
- He recommended that Cabinet accepted the bid from CDNL, which offered £2,050,000, an overage if the land was sold un-remediated, a buy-back on part of the land if the stand is not built, fewer legal complications and personal guarantees from the owners.
- He proposed an amendment recommendation C, so that it included consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.
- He advised Cabinet that he would approve the deal only if he were satisfied with the terms and conditions of the proposed deal.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was queried whether a review of the process should be conducted after this is concluded, this would help ensure that lessons were learnt.
- It was suggested that a masterplan should have been developed for the site, with preferred options outlined.
- The amount of transparency was appreciated.
- The building of the stand had been promised some time ago and as such it needed to be delivered.

Councillor Malcolm Longley agreed that it was important that lessons were learned.

The Chair thanked speakers for their comments. He advised Cabinet that the process had been officer led until there had been something to deliver to members. He acknowledged the process had been complex and referenced mistakes that had been made by a predecessor authority. He referenced helpful comments that had been made at the Council meeting (on 21st February) and that significant improvements had been made to the deal since that time.

Councillor Phil Larratt thanked the officers for the hard work they had put into the issue. He felt the public would be pleased to see progress being made.

Councillor Mike Hallam said he hoped to see the club do more of the local community work that they were known for.

RESOLVED: The Cabinet agreed to the disposal of the site to County Developments (Northampton) Limited and Northampton Town Football Club Limited as outlined in Appendix A subject to:

- a. The expiration of the Assets of Community Value moratorium period.
- b. Agreement from Homes England as required.

The Assistant Director Assets and Environment in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and the Portfolio Holder for Finance being satisfied that all necessary steps have been taken to proceed with the disposal

The meeting closed at 7.18 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____