



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at Great Hall, The Guildhall, St Giles Street, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Thursday 24 February 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present Councillor Ann Addison (Chair)

Councillor Rufia Ashraf
Councillor Jamal Alwahabi
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 Rebecca Breese
Councillor Adam Brown
Councillor Michael Brown
Councillor Alan Chantler
Councillor Pinder Chauhan
Councillor Imran Ahmed Chowdhury BEM
Councillor Paul Clark
Councillor Stephen Clarke
Councillor Maggie Clubley
Councillor Raymond Connolly
Councillor Karen Cooper
Councillor Daniel Cribbin
Councillor Paul Dyball
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 Lauryn Harrington-Carter
Councillor Jonathan Harris
Councillor Cheryl Hawes
Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Councillor Nigel Hinch
Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere
Councillor Mark Hughes
Councillor Rosie Humphreys
Councillor Cecile Irving-Swift

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Councillor David James
Councillor Koulla Jolley
Councillor Andrew Kilbride
Councillor Anna King
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 Charles Morton
Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Councillor Kevin Parker
Councillor Suresh Patel
Councillor Ken Pritchard
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 Zoe Smith
Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms
Councillor Laura Stevenson
Councillor Danielle Stone
Councillor Nick Sturges-Alex
Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz
Councillor Mike Warren

Apologies
for
Absence:

Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage
Councillor Azizur Rahman
Councillor Muna Cali
Councillor Fiona Cole
Councillor Julie Davenport
Councillor Janice Duffy
Councillor Gareth Eales
Councillor Terrie Eales
Councillor Penelope Flavell
Councillor Enam Haque
Councillor Rosie Herring

Councillor James Hill
Councillor Paul Joyce
Councillor Colin Morgan
Councillor Lisa Samiotis
Councillor Winston Strachan

Officers

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aziz, Cali, Davenport, Duffy, G Eales, Gonzalez de Savage, Herring, Hill, Joyce, Samiotis, Haque, Morgan, and Strachan. Councillor M Brown would be arriving late.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

3. **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of Council held on 2nd December 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

4. **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's Announcements on this occasion.

5. **Public Participation**

Jane Wood of Climate Action West Northamptonshire addressed Council and asked how the outcomes from the October 2021 Climate mini summit had been progressed, and also asked how the consultation had fed into and influenced the 2022-23 budget. Regarding the investment policy, she asked what progress had been made towards developing and implementing an ethical and responsible investment policy. A new study showed that big oil companies' decarbonisation strategies were dominated by pledges rather than concrete actions. She noted that in July 2021, the Cabinet agreed to a proposal made by the Environment Task and Finish Group to procure 100% green energy for its property portfolio, with effect from October 2021 or as soon as possible thereafter, also including an increase of £50,000 in the 2022-23 budget. She asked if this had been included, if so, how it was being spent.

Ken Ritchie addressed Council and stated that when responding to the budget consultation, it was difficult to take a view with the information provided. He stated that research carried out by the LGA predicted over 1 million new jobs in the low carbon and renewable energy sectors, making them sectors with the greatest potential for growth. Mr Ritchie stated that he could not see anything in the budget that would give West Northamptonshire an edge or any funds to train local entrepreneurs who wanted to develop their own green enterprises.

Kate Simpson, Chair of Northampton's Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, addressed Council and noted that less than one third of West Northamptonshire's

residents voted in the last local election; she believed this was due to anger and disillusionment because residents knew they would be facing cuts, increased council tax and fees, regardless of who they voted for. She welcomed the Council's use of its reserves and the lack of cuts in the budget but stated that this was only because there was nothing left to cut. Ms Simpson implored Council to bring back services that had been cut over the last few years, including libraries, after school clubs, childcare services, elderly respite and domestic violence support. She asked that the Council give consideration to the Zero Cuts People's Budget compiled by working class people from West Northamptonshire, including several low paid essential workers, students, and people with disabilities.

6. **Final Budget 2022-23 and Medium Term Financial Plan**

Councillor Longley submitted a report which sought approval for the final budget 2022-23 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:

- The first year of West Northamptonshire Council had been a year of discovery. The latest forecast for 2021-22 suggested there would be a small underspend.
- The £5m contingency would be maintained.
- He believed the budget setting process had been as open as it could be.
- The Council was mandated to harmonise Council Tax within three years.
- The next budget for the Council was £342.32m (excluding Dedicated Schools Grant).
- This included allowance for increased demand on service and payment of all staff above the foundation living wage to £10 per hour.
- Capital investment would be available for proposals that could reduce revenue expenditure.
- He summarised the key points of the budget for each council service.

Councillor Rumens seconded the report and commented that the Council was in a difficult position, but it was working on generating additional funds through transformation; this was the best thing to be done to improve the lives of residents.

Councillor Stone proposed an amendment to the budget, which had been tabled prior to the meeting. She noted that CIPFA, FSA and the LGA recommended reserves of 5%; 10% was prudent given the current circumstances. The amendments proposed by the Labour Group would alleviate hardship, grow community resilience and provide the Council with a platform for growth and ensure the wellbeing of communities.

Councillor Barrett seconded the amendment and highlighted the prevalence of food bank use both nationally and locally. He noted that the Council had the resources to end the need for food banks in the town and lamented the reliance of the voluntary sector to help those most in need.

Members debated the amendments. At the conclusion of the debate, there voted for the amendments:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Baker, Barrett, Beardsworth, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Humphreys, Jolley, Meredith, Purser, Randall, E Roberts, J Roberts, Sharps, Z Smith, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against the amendments:

Councillors Bagot-Webb, Bambridge, Barter, Bignell, Bowen, Breese, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Clarke, Clubley, Connolly, Cooper, Cribbin, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, T Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Hibbert, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Matten, McCord, Morton, Nunn, Parker, Patel, Pritchard, Rumens, Russell, Shephard, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There abstained:

The Chairman Councillor Addison, Councillor Manners.

The amendment was lost.

Councillor Harris proposed and an amendment to the budget, which had been tabled prior to the meeting. Proposed were increased investment to Children's Services, funds for proper development of early action around climate initiatives, and for climate standards training. Reorganisation of the Transformation Team was also proposed. The amendment also included the proposal that the Council become an accredited White Ribbon Organisation and to further develop community-based programmes in the prevention of violence against women and girls, funded by requesting that HS2 pay for at least 50% of the cost of the proposed HS2 Warden. Also included was the freezing of country park charging for 12 months to pilot the effects of shorter-term parking terms.

Councillor Beardsworth seconded the amendment and highlighted the importance of increased spending on Children's Services. Extra spending and training around climate change were also essential.

Members debated the amendments. At the conclusion of the debate, there voted for the amendment:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Humphreys, Jolley, Meredith, Purser, Randall, E Roberts, Russell, Sharps, Z Smith, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There voted against the amendment:

Councillors Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Bignell, Bowen, Breese, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Chowdhury, Clark, Clarke, Clubley, Connolly, Cooper, Cribbin, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, T Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Hibbert, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Manners, Matten, Morton, Nunn, Parker, Patel, Pritchard, J Roberts, Rumens, Sargeant, Shephard, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There abstained:

The Chairman Councillor Addison, Councillor McCord.

The amendment was lost.

Councillor McCord proposed and an amendment to the budget, which had been tabled prior to the meeting. He stated that getting rid of the charge for garden waste collection was the right thing to do; there was no need to double-charge residents for what was a core service.

Councillor Sharps seconded the amendment.

Members debated the amendments. At the conclusion of the debate, there voted for the amendments:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Cooper, Harrington-Carter, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Humphreys, Jolley, McCord, Meredith, Pritchard, Purser, Randall, E Roberts, Russell, Sharps, Z Smith, Tarasiewicz

There voted against the amendments:

Councillors Bagot-Webb, Baker, Barter, Bignell, Bowen, Breese, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Chowdhury, Clark, Clarke, Connolly, Dyball, Eastwood, J Gilford, T Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Haque, Hawes, Hibbert, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Manners, Matten, Morton, Nunn, Parker, Patel, J Roberts, Rumens, Sargeant, Shephard, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson Stone, Warren.

There abstained:

The Chairman Councillor Addison, Councillors Bambridge, Clubley, Fowler, Frost.

The amendment was lost.

Council debated the recommendations contained within the report. The following points were raised during the debate:

- The Council should not increase council tax without improving services and meeting the needs of residents.
- The Council should be better funded by the Government.
- The budget should align with the ambition to be an excellent council, including its ambition to tackle poverty and climate change.
- Residents were being affected by the rising cost of living and found it difficult to access the hardship fund.
- The Council should not maintain reserves at such high levels if those funds could be used for service provision.
- Commitments to tackle the Council's carbon footprint would cost tens of millions of pounds.

- Further investment in housing, homelessness prevention and staff was welcomed.

There voted for the recommendations:

The Chairman Councillor Addison, Councillors Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Bignell, Bowen, Breese, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Chowdhury, Clark, Clarke, Clubley, Connolly, Cooper, Cribbin, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, T Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Hibbert, Hinch, Hughes Irving-Swift, D James, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Manners, Morton, Nunn Parker, Patel, Pritchard, J Roberts, Rumens, Sargeant, Sharps, Shephard, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There voted against the recommendations:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Humphreys, Jolley, McCord, Meredith, Purser, Randall, E Roberts, Russell, Z Smith, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There abstained:

Councillor McCord.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Approved the 2022-23 Budget for West Northamptonshire set out in the report, as recommended by Cabinet at the meeting held on 15 February 2022, including
 - i. an estimated net revenue budget of £753.490m (£342.318m excluding Dedicated Schools Grant) as set out in Appendix A.
 - ii. an average Band D Council tax of £1,613.23 for West Northamptonshire Council, which represents an increase of 2.99%. (1.99% increase in 'core' Council Tax and 1% Adult Social Care Precept).
 - iii. Noting the Council Tax rebate of £150.00 for all Band A-D Council Tax payers and a further discretionary amount of funding for properties in Bands E-H. The details of this scheme are yet to emerge and more information will be provided once it is available.
 - iv. Noting the balance of the WNC Council Tax hardship fund and encouraging residents to apply for such funding if they are facing financial hardship.
 - v. Fees and Charges schedule as detailed in Appendix D
 - vi. dedicated schools grant budget of £411.2m as detailed in Appendix E
 - vii. the Capital Strategy as set out at paragraphs 6.118-6.136 and Appendix F1, and Capital Programme as set out in Appendix F2.
 - viii. adoption of the changes to the 2021-22 capital strategy and MRP policy as outlined in paragraph 6.127
 - ix. the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy set out in Appendix G

- x. the Treasury Management Strategy set out in Appendix J
 - xi. setting the authorised limits for borrowing as set out in the table at paragraph 6.143
- b) Approved the following further recommendations from the Cabinet to Full Council on 24 February 2022, to ensure that the revenue and capital budget and all associated financial policies can be delivered in a safe and legal manner from 1 April 2022 and also to ensure there is flexibility to manage the overall budget in the year:
- i) Delegated authority to the Executive Director - Finance to manage any variation in budget prior to the start of 2022-23 as a result of any unforeseen commitments; in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder.
 - ii) Delegated authority to the Executive Director - Finance in consultation with the portfolio holder for Finance to amend the capital programme for 2022-23 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) Approved the review of reserves as summarised in the table contained at paragraph 6.105
 - iv) Delegated 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) Delegated authority to the Executive Director – Finance in consultation with the portfolio holder for finance to release the general contingency fund of £9.8m if required in the year.
 - vi) Delegated authority to the Executive Director – Finance in consultation with the portfolio holder for Finance to amend Fees and Charges if required in 2022-23
 - vii) Delegated authority to the Executive Director – Finance to finalise and agree all outstanding financial policies and strategies in order to ensure that the Council has the policies in place by 1 April 2022
- c) For the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG):
- i) Noted the allocations and planned usage of the DSG for 2022-23, and
 - ii) Following consultation with the Schools Forum, delegated authority to the Executive Director for Children’s Services to determine the DSG 2022-23 schools funding formula, high needs funding arrangements and the Early Years Funding Formula in line with Department for Education guidance.
- d) Considered the Section 25 statement of the Chief Finance Officer detailed at paragraphs 7.1-7.42 of the report.
- e) Noted the consultation feedback on the budget in Appendix H
- f) Noted the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Appendix I
- g) Included provision in the budget for the minimum hourly rate to be increased above the Foundation Living Wage of £9.90 to £10.00 per hour for all Council staff recognising that the final award is subject to the collective bargaining with the recognised trade union representatives. It is recommended that the

additional costs are funded through the base budget contingency contained within the final budget proposals contained within this report.

7. Housing Revenue Account Final Budget 2022-23 and Medium Term Financial Plan

Councillor Longley presented a report which set out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Final Budget 2022-23 and Medium-Term Financial Plan for West Northamptonshire Council and sought Council's approval of the HRA revenue and capital budget 2022-23 and sought to set out the future years' projections to 2026-27.

Councillor A Brown seconded the report.

Council debated the recommendations contained within the report. The following points were raised during the debate:

- Increasing rents by 4.1% would have a serious impact on residents who were also facing increased fuel bills.
- It was acknowledged that the increase would allow for an increased investment in social housing.
- New social housing stock should be constructed to be as energy efficient as possible.
- The Labour Group had some concerns but would vote in favour of the Housing Revenue Account Final Budget.
- The proposed rent increase was not an easy decision, but assurance was given that residents in receipt of Universal Credit Housing Benefit would see that benefit rise in line with the increase.

There voted for the recommendations:

The Chairman Councillor Addison, Councillors Alwahabi, Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barrett, Barter, Bignell, Bowen, Breese, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Chowdhury, Clark, Clarke, Clubley, Connolly, Cooper, Cribbin, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, T Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Hibbert, Hinch, Holland-Delamere, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Jolley, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Manners, Matten McCord, Morton, Nunn Parker, Patel, Pritchard, Purser, Randall, E Roberts, J Roberts, Rumens, Russell, Sargeant, Sharps, Shephard, D Smith, Z Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Stone, Sturges-Alex, Tarasiewicz, Warren.

There voted against the recommendations:

Councillor Meredith.

There abstained:

Councillors Beardsworth, Harris, Humphreys.

RESOLVED:

Council approved:

- a) An average maximum rent increase of 4.1% per dwelling, in line with the legislation and the government's national rent standard, to take effect from 4th April 2022.
- b) The HRA budget for 2022-23 of £56m expenditure detailed in Appendix 1.
- c) The HRA capital programme for 2022-23, including future year estimated commitments, and proposed sources of finance, as set out in Appendix 2.
- d) The proposed service charges listed in Appendix 3.
- e) The Total Fees proposed for NPH to deliver the services in scope for 2022-23 detailed in Appendix 4.

8. **2022-23 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 2022-2023.

Councillor Rumens seconded the report.

Council debated the recommendations contained within the report. The following points were raised during the debate:

- The question of how the hardship fund was publicised was raised, so take-up could be improved.
- The Labour Group would not support this item.
- Concern was expressed about the impact of council tax harmonisation on Daventry residents.

There voted for the recommendations:

The Chairman Councillor Addison, Councillors Bagot-Webb, Baker, Bambridge, Barter, Bignell, Breese, A Brown, Chantler, Chauhan, Chowdhury, Clark, Clarke, Clubley, Connolly, Cooper, Cribbin, Dyball, Eastwood, Fowler, Frost, J Gilford, T Gilford, Golby, Grant, Hallam, Harrington-Carter, Hawes, Hibbert, Hinch, Hughes, Irving-Swift, James, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, Lister, Longley, Lunn, Manners, Matten, Morton, Nunn, Parker, Patel, Pritchard, J Roberts, Sargeant, Sharps, Shephard, D Smith, Solesbury-Timms, Stevenson, Sturges-Alex, Warren.

There voted against the recommendations:

Councillors Alwahabi, Ashraf, Barrett, Beardsworth, Harris, Holland-Delamere, Humphreys, Jolley, Meredith, Purser, Randall, E Roberts, Russell, Z Smith, Stone, Tarasiewicz.

There abstained:

Councillor McCord.

RESOLVED:

Council:

1. Noted that the Cabinet agreed the Council Tax Base for 2022-2023 on 21 December 2021:
 - For the whole Council area as 139,604.04 (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 the attached Appendix B
2. Approved the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2022-2023 (excluding Parish Precepts but including Special Expenses) as £225,213,425
3. Approves the additional Council Tax Resolutions as set out in Appendix A of this report
4. Note 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 6.4 below:
5. Approves that, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts shown in Appendix D as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2022-2023 for each part of its area and for each category of dwellings.
6. Notes Appendix E which sets out in detail how the charge is made up for each town and parish council area and by Council Tax band.
7. Note that the Council’s basic amount of Council Tax for 2022-2023 is not deemed to be excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

9. **Pay Policy Statement**

Councillor Hallam presented a report which is produced in accordance with the requirements of Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011. The Local Authority was required to update it annually and it sets out pay for the directly employed workforce (excluding schools).

Councillor Chauhan seconded the report.

Upon a vote, the recommendations contained within the report were agreed.

RESOLVED:

Council approved the Pay Policy Statement for 2022-23.

10. **Future Appointment of External Auditor**

Councillor Longley presented a report which set out proposals for appointing an external auditor to the Council for the accounts for the five-year period from 2023/24.

Councillor Irving-Swift seconded the report.

Upon a vote, the recommendations contained within the report were agreed.

RESOLVED:

Council accepted Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

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

There was no urgent business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 9.55 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____