



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at The Forum, Towcester, NN12 6AF on Tuesday 13 September 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Chair)
 Councillor Adam Brown (Vice-Chair)
 Councillor Fiona Baker
 Councillor Matt Golby
 Councillor Mike Hallam
 Councillor Phil Larratt
 Councillor Daniel Lister
 Councillor Malcolm Longley
 Councillor David Smith

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)
 Simon Bowers, Assistant Director - Assets and Environment
 Jane Carr, Director of Communities & Opportunities
 Stuart Lackenby, Executive Director - Adults Communities and
 Wellbeing
 Sarah Reed, Executive Director - Corporate Services
 Paul Hanson, Democratic Services Manager
 Jed Scoles, Political Assistant to the Labour Group

42. **Apologies**

Councillor Rebecca Breese

43. **Declarations of Interest**

None

44. **Minutes**

The minutes from the Cabinet meeting on the 12th July 2022 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

45. **Chair's Announcements**

The Leader paid tribute to the queen. He made reference to the fact that only essential meetings would be held during the period of mourning as a mark of respect.

46. **Urgent Business**

None

47. **Recommendations submitted by Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

The Chair invited Councillor Rosie Herring to speak in her role as the Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Herring summarised the findings of the committee to members and noted that the process should also be seen as a learning experience.

Councillor Adam Brown advised that he would be happy to go back to Northampton Partnership Homes to discuss any lessons to be learnt.

Councillors made the following comments.

- The consultation of ward councillors early in the process was important, this should happen going forward.
- It was queried why the highways scrutiny paper had not been included on the agenda.

RESOLVED:

- a) The consultation process for Levelling Up - Round 3 was reviewed in order that early in the consultation process all ward Members and the voluntary sector were included as consultees (recommendation from Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee).**
- b) Cabinet recognised the need to improve performance from the current position of 47% of children in care receiving an initial health assessment within 28 days of entering care (recommendation from People Overview and Scrutiny Committee).**
- c) Cabinet looked into issues arising from the change of use of Riverside House from office space to housing that have affected its continued suitability as a site for outpatient renal dialysis, in order to support effective partnership working.**

48. **Youth Justice Plan 22/23**

At the Chair's invitation councillors made the following comments.

- The report was full of information and very accessible.
- It was noted that more youth services were required in the county, specifically youth workers.
- Although there had been an uplift in spend and investment in this area it was barely above inflation.
- Out of 173 councils WNC had the 14th lowest spending on youth services and was above average on custodial sentences.
- Could there be clarification as to how many children were living in poverty within the county.

Councillor Fiona Baker presented the report and advised Cabinet that the Youth Justice Service took a child first/whole family approach. Members were advised youth violence was a concern and that a pilot programme to address the issue was due to begin, starting in Wellingborough.

RESOLVED: Cabinet recommended to Council the approval of the Youth Justice Plan 2022-23.

49. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023-24

At the Chairs invitation councillors made the following comments.

- Had any KPIs been put into place in order to measure effects?
- It was suggested the relevant systems were complex, which in turn made it more difficult for residents to cope.

Councillor Adam Brown noted that the council would continue to prioritise those who were less well off, this had been a cross party consensus.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet;

a) Noted the contents of this report

b) Approved the proposed LCTRS for 2023-24 as outlined in the report.

c) Recommended to Council a no change LCTRS for 2023-24.

50. Establishing a new 250 place, 'all-through' special educational needs and disability (SEND) School for pupils with autistic spectrum condition (ASC), with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and severe learning difficulties (SLD) at Tiffield St John's site, Tiffield, West Northamptonshire.

At the Chair's invitation councillors made the following comments.

- It was important to know how long the journey time to the school would be for the pupils.
- There was an increasing need for SEND places across the county.
- It was queried whether there were plans to broker the school or would it remain within the local authority.

Councillor Wendy Randall then read out a statement on behalf of the West Northants SEND action group.

Councillor Fiona Baker presented the report and noted that there was a huge demand for specialist places and a historic lack of investment in the area. She advised that children currently placed in a setting would not be expected to move to the new school. A recommendation as to the preferred trust to run the school had been put to the Department for Education.

RESOLVED: Cabinet;

- a) **Noted that the selection process for the new school involves the Council putting forward a recommendation to the DfE for the preferred trust, following a rigorous selection process.**
- b) **Noted the linked paper, 'St John Tiffield property arrangements' on the use of the St John's Tiffield Site, St. John's Road, Tiffield, NN12 8AA for the new school.**
- c) **Agreed in principle borrowing up to £10,000,000 to make up the shortfall for the cost of building the new school, which is up to £23m, with delegated authority to the s151 officer to amend the capital programme once full feasibility works are completed. Note that the remaining cost of the build will be met through capital grant funding received by the Council.**

Note: the estimated building and capital required would be subject to construction cost inflation. This has been estimated at one per cent per month currently. Compounded, this could be as much as 13-14 per cent a year. Delay in construction work will lead to further risk of cost rises.

51. Hackney Carriage (Taxi) Tariff Fare Increase

At the Chair's invitation councillors made the following comments.

- It was queried whether there could be more meetings of the licensing committee.
- Many Hackney Carriage drivers had been vocal in their concerns about the rising cost of fuel.

Councillor David Smith presented the report and advised that this would bring forward the harmonisation of tariffs across the county, which had already been in the plan. Members were advised that the tariffs would be set to the maximum amount and drivers may decide to charge less.

RESOLVED: Cabinet considered the proposed WNC Hackney Carriage Tariff table of fares at Appendix B and resolved to vary the three existing hackney carriage tariff fare tables currently in force in the WNC taxi licensing area accordingly.

52. Award of Transitional Contract for Highway Professional Services

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Phil Larratt presented the report and advised that the new contract would be with KIER, WSP would no longer be part of the contract going forward. Members were advised that the majority of the funding would be Section 106 money.

RESOLVED: Cabinet agreed to award a transition contract to WSP via an appropriate framework to mitigate the financial and reputational risks to the Council and potential delays. The value of the proposed contract would be above £500,000.

**53. Decision taken by the Leader of the Council under urgency procedures:
Renewal of Microsoft 365 licences**

At the Chair's invitation a councillor made the following comments.

- What was the WNC budget for IT?
- It was queried whether the council has an IT renewal policy.
- Could there be clarification as to what error had occurred?

Councillor Mike Hallam advised that the error had not been one of authorisation rather than procurement as Cabinet had not been given the required time to approve the new contract. All IT service budgets were centrally managed.

RESOLVED: Cabinet noted the decisions taken by the Leader of the Council set out at Appendix A.

54. Cost of Living increase: How West Northamptonshire Council is supporting residents

At the Chair's invitation councillors made the following comments.

- No timescale had been given for the working group, this should happen soon due to the urgency of the situation.
- Members were advised of the Resolution Foundation and a report they had released on this subject.
- Could a petition be made to central government to request a 6 month review of benefits.
- It was questioned whether the impact of Brexit should be provided within in each report.
- The children living in poverty figures are different to those mentioned in the youth justice report.

Councillor Mike Hallam made the following comments.

- The working group discussions were already underway, it was agreed that this was urgent.
- Thanks and acknowledgement were given to the voluntary sector for all the work they do.
- A deadline could be added to the covid-fund, this would free up more capital, but would need to be looked in to.
- There had been unprecedented help from central government.

RESOLVED:

a) Noted the contents of the report

b) Tasked the all-party Anti-Poverty Working Group to oversee the actions planned for the next year and support the development of other interventions that respond to local need

55. Exclusion of the Press and Public

56. **Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Risk Based Verification**

Minutes exempt from publication

57. **Budgets for death management and related services**

Minutes exempt from publication

58. **Management of St John's Tiffield site**

Minutes exempt from publication

59. **Towns Fund: Four Waterside and Marefair Business Case and Delivery Strategy**

Minutes exempt from publication

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____