



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Cabinet

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

Present	Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Chair) Councillor Adam Brown (Vice-Chair) Councillor Fiona Baker Councillor Rebecca Breese Councillor Matt Golby Councillor Mike Hallam Councillor Phil Larratt Councillor Daniel Lister Councillor Malcolm Longley Councillor David Smith
Also Present:	Councillor Jamal Alwahabi Councillor Dermot Bambridge Councillor Sally Beardsworth Councillor Nigel Hinch Councillor Mark Hughes Councillor Rosie Humphreys Councillor Ian McCord Councillor Bob Purser Councillor Wendy Randall Councillor Emma Roberts Councillor Danielle Stone
Apologies for Absence:	None
Officers	Anna Earnshaw, Chief Executive Rebecca Peck, Assistant Chief Executive Catherine Whitehead, Director of Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer) Audra Statham, Assistant Director - Finance (Accountancy) Stuart Lackenby, Executive Director - People Services Sarah Reed, Executive Director - Corporate Services Stuart Timmiss, Executive Director - Place Ashley Leduc, Assistant Director - Commissioning and Performance Ben Pearson, Assistant Director - Education Jed Scoles, Political Assistant to the Labour Group Paul Hanson, Democratic Services Manager Kathryn Holton, Committee Officer

90. **Declarations of Interest**

None

91. **Chair's Announcements**

None

92. **Minutes of the meeting of 23 September 2022**

The minutes from the Cabinet meetings on 23 September 2022 and 11 October 2022 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

93. **Reports from O&S: Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tree Policy and Strategy for West Northamptonshire Council**

The Chair explained that due to a family emergency Cllr Chauhan was unable to be present, so the item would be deferred to the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

This item was deferred to the next meeting of Cabinet in December 2022

94. **Any other items from Overview and Scrutiny (including call-ins)**

a) Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – recommendations in respect of the Highways and Transport Contract

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Bambridge as Chair of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined the report and highlighted the importance of pre-scrutiny in respect of major contracts.

Councillor Larratt thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for the work done. A report would be brought for consideration in due course.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet noted the recommendations of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee and undertook to consider a report on the issue at a future meeting.

b) Outcome of the Call-In of the Cabinet Decision of 11 October 2022 – Item 13 Office Optimisation Stage 1 building adaptations budget and disposal

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor McCord as Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined the report.

Councillors made the following comments:

- Clarification was needed regarding the CCTV system which was linked to Lodge Road.
- Communication was key – members had felt uninformed.

- Concern had been raised about the number of desks in the Abbey and members requested to see a floor plan.
- Staff morale at Daventry was low, due in part to poor communication.
- Would the Lodge Road car park be sold/leased with the building? The car park was also used by visitors to the Leisure Centre.
- Did any staff or public attend the meeting in Daventry at which the call-in was discussed?

Councillor McCord advised that he did not believe any staff or members of the public attended the meeting on 7 November 2022.

Councillor Longley advised that WNC had an excess of property and selling or leasing Lodge Road would result in a serious financial saving. The situation regarding the car park would depend on what happened to the building.

Councillor Smith and the Executive Director, Place assured members that plans would not adversely impact the CCTV network.

Councillor Lister challenged the assertion that staff morale was low and advised that all staff had been met with individually. Councillor Hallam offered to meet with affected staff.

Councillor Nunn advised that a floor plan for the Abbey would be issued to members and a briefing could be arranged if necessary. It would not have been appropriate to issue the plan during the thinking process.

The Chief Executive advised that issues around travel and DSE equipment had been addressed with relevant staff.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- a) Decided to proceed with the decision on the basis that the matters highlighted by Scrutiny did not require further consideration and to proceed on the basis of the original decision.
- b) Accepted the recommendation requiring all councillors to be provided with the desk plans for the Abbey.
- c) Noted the comments relating to CCTV and confirmed the wish of Cabinet to secure the best possible outcome for residents of Daventry.

95. **Rural England Prosperity Fund**

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

- WNC had many transport 'deserts'.
- Support for a single project should be considered.
- Rural transport connectivity was in crisis. Community buses were a good step forward.
- Designated quiet lanes would be both beneficial and inexpensive.
- Cabinet needed to ensure projects met Council objectives as well as the funding requirements.
- Projects should be generated locally, benefit locals and add social value.

Councillor Larratt advised that the funding was for capital projects only. Connectivity needed to be improved particularly for young people needing access to education and social activities and older people needing access to healthcare. Rural areas were already experiencing problems and these were beginning to impact urban areas too.

Councillor Brown noted that with £1.4m only a limited amount could be achieved. Projects needed to have lasting impact.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Noted UK Government had advised WNC as the Lead Authority for REPF (£1,367,953.00 for a two-year provisional maximum allocation and the requirement to develop a REPF addendum to the UKSPF Investment Plan
- b) Endorsed the approach to develop the REPF Investment Plan by sourcing evidence and liaising with internal and external stakeholders, as well as Councillors
- c) Noted WNC must submit the Rural Fund addendum by 30 November 2022

96. **SEND Strategy Development**

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

- Did the needs assessment for the SEND delivery plan factor in schools and teachers? Were staff adequately trained to meet SEND provision and were there suitable spaces in mainstream schools for delivery of provision?
- When looking at stakeholders, were the police being considered?
- Section 6.5 referred to school-based staff – what type of staff were they?
- A consistent guidance document for providers would be helpful. Was everything provided by the Department for Education to support these providers in the long term?
- Why were Educational Psychologist assessments not being completed on time?
- Were WNC meeting the demands and obligations of EHCPs?
- The admissions at 6.1 were welcomed by many families.
- Transparency and accountability were not evident. The SEND Accountability Board minutes could not be accessed and it did not function in the interests of co-production.
- There was a lack of provision for certain SEND profiles; lack of data on children and their needs risked failing to meet them.
- People Overview and Scrutiny Committee should scrutinise SEND delivery. Mistakes should be learned from in order to move forward.
- It was encouraging to see steps being taken to listen to SEND parents and their children. This had been a very difficult time with shortage of school places, a collapse in respite, issues with transport etc.
- An equalities impact assessment would be helpful.
- Was there any mother tongue provision for SEND families?
- Was there any after school and holiday provision?
- Disposal of assets should not be undertaken without local mapping of need. Provision needed to be local.

- Suitable provision was needed for all children.

Councillor Baker outlined the report and advised that this was being brought to Cabinet for information. The three main reasons for delayed response had been lack of capacity in the team (which had now been addressed); a significant increase in demand for statutory assessments and a lack of capacity to complete statutory assessments – particularly Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy. All children were being assessed in respect of the provision of new school places to ensure the provision would be appropriate for their needs. The Board would be made up of school representatives, parents and officers. It was planned that the vice-chair would be a parent, ensuring scrutiny at the highest level.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- a) Supported the development of a three year SEND Delivery Plan as outlined in this report in paragraph 6.3.
- b) Supported the new governance structure highlighted in this report in paragraph 5.8.
- c) Agreed to receive timely updates about progress in relation to the development of a new SEND Delivery Plan and Co-production Charter as outlined in the report.

97. **Abington Park Facilities**

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

- It was important to recognise that there were other parks which should not be neglected.
- It was hoped that the new facilities would be vandal-proofed.

Councillor Longley introduced the report and noted that the facilities would be fully funded from CIL money.

Councillor Brown advised that it was important that the final design met the needs of residents and had separate female changing rooms to encourage women's and girl's sport.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- a) Approved a capital budget of £1.2m in 2023/24, funded from CIL, to remove the existing and provide replacement public welfare facilities at Abington Park East, and recommended to Council that the budget be amended accordingly.
- b) Authorised the procurement of services and works, award and completion of contracts to facilitate the works subject to consultation with and the approval of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure, and the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways & Waste.

98. **Social Care Charging Reform Update**

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

- Concerns were expressed about whether reforms would be sufficient to meet the needs of a rapidly ageing population.
- Reform of social care was desperately needed but many of the changes have made it more difficult for public sector delivery.
- How would the fee be calculated? It was a blanket fee which penalised those who needed support the most.
- Were the public being consulted on the level of the fee, or whether it should be implemented at all?
- Was the fee payable once or would it be charged each time a person approached WNC to arrange care?
- Clarity was requested because the fee was stated to cover only administrative costs but a financial benefit was also referred to.

Councillor Golby introduced the report which provided an update on social care reform. The changes would require WNC to arrange care for self-funders if they so wished. This would result in significant extra work for WNC.

The Assistant Director, Commissioning and Performance confirmed that the £141 charge was a one-off fee based on officer time, which would be applied each time care was accessed. The consultation was not related to the level of the fee, but as to whether or not it should be applied. The £28k referred to in Section 7.1.3 was not actually a benefit, it would be covering costs.

The Executive Director, People Services advised that there would be a benefit to self-funders of WNC brokering care on their behalf. Capital would be eroded more quickly for those who arranged care directly as WNC could secure a better deal.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- a) Agreed to the Council consulting with the public for 28 days in respect of the new Self-funder Arrangement Fee. Feedback obtained from the consultation period will be provided to cabinet for decision making in February 2023.
- b) Acknowledged the changes required to the Fees and Charges Policy because of social care reform and the impact these reforms will have to the Council and the residents of West Northamptonshire.
- c) Noted the utilisation of the 2022/23 DHSC Fair Cost of Care and Market Sustainability fund.

99. **Director of Public Health Annual Report**

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

- The report was commended as excellent and well-written.
- How did obesity levels outlined in the report compare with other areas?
- Hospital admissions for trips and falls could be reduced by repairing pavements. Clarification was requested as to whether falls were inside or outside the home.
- In addition to the impact of Covid, children's development was hindered by lack of interaction due to parental mobile phone use.
- Early intervention was needed to reduce hospitalisation from intentional self-harm.

Councillor Golby introduced the report which documented the journey over the pandemic and was for noting ahead of publication. The WNC team were focussing on the increased levels of self-harm and falls. Obesity had been an issue and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment would help inform future policy.

Councillor Brown noted that it might be more appropriate to report suicide attempts rather than suicides.

The Executive Director, People Services advised that the next iteration of the ICS Strategy would be coming to Cabinet in December. This would explain how all were collaborating against health inequalities. There would also be a new outcomes framework providing better monitoring.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- a) Noted the contents of the report and recommendations made.
- b) Also noted the progress made with regard to the recommendations in the previous annual report.

100. **Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report**

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

- The report was comprehensive and the 'Dad pad' was a brilliant idea.
- Gun crime was becoming a big problem and help was needed for hard to reach youths.
- The report did not reflect lessons learned from serious case reviews
 - Staff dealing with poverty become inured
 - Has staff turnover in health visiting been resolved?
 - The threshold at which MASH became involved needed to be lower
 - Case work needed to keep up when families moved
 - Training was needed in parental alcohol abuse.
- Were children safe? Seven serious case reviews indicated a problem.
- Was the safeguarding policy being implemented? Benchmarking of referrals against other authorities would be useful.
- Would a briefing on contextual safeguarding be useful?
- Domestic abuse made no reference to children.
- Were there enough frontline staff?
- Concerns were expressed around home educated children.
- What support was provided for gypsy and traveller families?

Councillor Baker introduced the report and noted that the partnership had focused on taking positive action early enough to protect children, supporting those at risk of exploitation and working to support staff.

Councillor Baker and the Executive Director, People Services made the following comments:

- The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner was supporting a project to work with hard-to-reach young people.

- Some of the points arising from serious case reviews would be put forward to the independent scrutineer.
- There was a national shortage of Health Visitors, although the situation was improving.
- There was significant audit activity around thresholds of decision making in respect of referrals to MASH.
- Early help services were involved in cases which did not get referred to MASH.
- A protocol was in place for transfers from one authority to another.
- Alcohol misuse was a significant factor which frontline staff needed to recognise and deal with.
- As corporate parents WNC aimed to ensure children were as safe as possible. There had been significant assurance work with NCT which was beginning to generate positive results.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- a) Received the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's Annual Report 2021-22 (Appendix A) and noted the findings.

101. **Economising on mobile telephony**

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

- Would a penalty be payable?
- It was suggested that the contract be looked at by Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillor Hallam outlined the report which provided an opportunity to renegotiate the existing telecoms contract with an estimated 56% reduction in price. In the circumstances he considered that there would be no particular value from additional scrutiny.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- a) Delegated authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for HR & Corporate Services to award and enter into a renegotiated contract with our existing supplier.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____