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Northamptonshire
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council

Held at 6.00 pm on Thursday 31st August, 2023 in the Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, NN17 1QG

Present:-

Members

Councillor Barbara Jenney (Chair)	Councillor Lora Lawman (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jean Addison	Councillor Ian Jelley
Councillor Valerie Anslow	Councillor Matt Keane
Councillor Ross Armour	Councillor Graham Lawman
Councillor Paul Bell	Councillor Anne Lee
Councillor Charlie Best	Councillor Paul Marks
Councillor Matt Binley	Councillor Dorothy Maxwell
Councillor David Brackenbury	Councillor Peter McEwan
Councillor Wendy Brackenbury	Councillor John McGhee
Councillor Scott Brown	Councillor Zoe McGhee
Councillor Cedwien Brown	Councillor Andy Mercer
Councillor Leanne Buckingham	Councillor Gill Mercer
Councillor Lyn Buckingham	Councillor Macaulay Nichol
Councillor Lloyd Bunday	Councillor Jan O'Hara
Councillor Jon-Paul Carr	Councillor Dr Anup Pandey
Councillor Robin Carter	Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood
Councillor Melanie Coleman	Councillor Mark Pengelly
Councillor William Colquhoun	Councillor Harriet Pentland
Councillor John Currall	Councillor Roger Powell
Councillor Dez Dell	Councillor Elliot Prentice
Councillor Scott Edwards	Councillor Simon Rielly
Councillor Jonathan Ekins	Councillor Russell Roberts
Councillor Emily Fedorowycz	Councillor Mark Rowley
Councillor Jim Hakewill	Councillor Jason Smithers
Councillor Clive Hallam	Councillor Joseph John Smyth
Councillor Ken Harrington	Councillor Mike Tebbutt
Councillor Helen Harrison	Councillor Michael Tye
Councillor Kirk Harrison	Councillor Malcolm Ward
Councillor Larry Henson	Councillor Malcolm Waters
Councillor David Howes	Councillor Andrew Weatherill
Councillor Philip Irwin	Councillor Kevin Watt
Councillor Bert Jackson	

Officers

George Candler (Chief Executive (Interim)), Adele Wylie (Executive Director of Customer and Governance and Monitoring Officer/Deputy Chief Executive (Interim)), and Ben Smith (Head of Democratic Services).

Also in attendance

Ciaran McLaughlin (Director of Grant Thornton), Susan Hamilton (Interim Director of Public Health)

250 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Allebone, Jennie Bone, Mark Dearing, Helen Howell, King Lawal, Richard Levell, Steven North, Geoff Shacklock, David Sims, Chris Smith-Haynes, Sarah Tubbs, Keli Watts and Lee Wilkes.

251 Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2023

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22nd June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to an amendment to minute 247, as follows:-

That the third paragraph relating to Motion 2 – Kettering Leisure Village be amended as follows (added words are in bold for reference only):-

‘An amendment to the motion was proposed by Cllr Helen Howell and seconded by Cllr Anup Pandey to delete the final sentence (**which had stated ‘A viable business case needs to be urgently created and a budget agreed, prior to the advised closure date of the 3rd July 2023.**) in its entirety and replace it as follows:-‘

252 Declarations of interest.

The Chair asked those members who wished to do so to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda.

The following interests were declared:-

Name of Councillor	Minute Number	Interest	Reason for Declaration
Cllr Lyn Buckingham	262 Motion 4 (River Nene)	Personal Interest	As a campaigner for waterways over a number of years
Cllr Dez Dell	262 Motion 2 (Alfred East Art Gallery)	Disclosable Interest	As a member of the Committee for the Friends of Kettering Art Gallery and Museum, so undertook to leave the room at the commencement of the debate, and to not take part in either the debate or vote.
Cllr Paul Marks	262 Motion 2 (Alfred East Art Gallery)	Personal Interest	As a member of the Friends of Kettering Art Gallery and Museum
Cllr Anne Lee	262 Motion 2 (Alfred East Art Gallery)	Personal Interest	As a former committee member of the Friends of Kettering Art Gallery and Museum

253 Chair's Announcements

The Chair made the following announcements:-

Civic Duties

It had been a very busy few weeks on civic duty with the Chair and Vice Chair having the pleasure of being out and about in the area, with a full diary in the coming weeks as well.

The Chair and Vice Chair were looking forward to being part of some very enjoyable and interesting events within North Northamptonshire.

254 Leader's Announcements

The Leader made the following announcements:-

Derek Lawson MBE

The Leader was very saddened to learn of the death of Derek Lawson MBE, the past mayor and longest serving member of Higham Ferrers Town Council.

He had enjoyed a long career in local government, which had included election to the Higham Ferrers Borough Council in 1964. He had served on the successor Town Council for 57 years and amassed a wealth of knowledge and experience.

He was the mayor of Higham Ferrers on three separate occasions, 1966-67, 1977-78 and 1999 to 2000. He was the Leader of the Council for five years.

Derek was also a member of East Northamptonshire District Council for 20 years, where he was Chairman in 1987-88, and Northamptonshire County Council for 40 years where he was also the chairman in 2007-08.

He was also Vice-Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel which was part of the Northamptonshire Police Authority before the position of Police and Crime Commissioner was created.

A long list of further achievements included being chairman of the Board of Governors at both The Ferrers School and the Henry Chichele School in Higham Ferrers. He was also the Chairman of the Towards a Safer Higham Panel and was involved in the campaign for Yes to Rushden Lakes and Chowns Mill Roundabout. Derek was also heavily involved in the preparation of the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan.

For his years of commitment to local government, Derek was awarded an MBE in 2017 in recognition of his years of service and dedication to the town. Derek was also presented with an honorary Freeman of Higham Ferrers in 2022.

In noting his impact on the Town Council and the local government landscape could not be understated, the Leader requested that a one-minute silence be observed to mark the passing of Derek Lawson, MBE.

[Councillors, Officers and members of the public paid their respects in silent tribute]

Women's England Football Team

The Leader wished to acknowledge the success of the women's England football team in reaching the final of the European Championships. He hoped their performances would inspire women and girls to play football up and down the country, noting that there had been a big increase in women playing locally.

255 Public Participation

The following members of the public made statements to Council:-

- i) Chris Stanbra – in support of the preparation of a sound business case before any disaggregation changes were made to the way in which libraries were run.
- ii) Clerk Mitchell – in support of the Alfred East Art Gallery project being progressed with a view to reopening the Art Gallery by the summer of 2024.

A copy of the public statements submitted to Council are filed with these minutes, as Appendix A.

256 Executive Presentations

The Leader confirmed that there were no Executive presentations to be made on this occasion.

257 Auditors' Annual Report 2021/22

Consideration was given by Council to the Auditors Annual Report 2021/22 for North Northamptonshire Council which had been produced by the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, and following consideration by the Audit & Governance Committee on 14th August 2023. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked as 'Agenda Item 8'.

Councillor Andrew Weatherill moved and Councillor Jonathan Ekins seconded a motion to move the recommendations in the report.

Ciaran McLaughlin, a director of Grant Thornton, then presented the report to Council and answered a number of questions from councillors.

During questioning and subsequent debate, it was principally noted that the report was a final interim report, which would remain interim until the completion of the Council's financial statements' audit for 2021/22.

Overall, the Council was seen as being in a positive position given that the audit covered the first year of operation as a new authority. The three amber ratings around the main headings of financial sustainability, governance arrangements and use of resources was seen as in line with the majority of authorities across the country and compared favourably with any of the new authorities that had been created over the last two years.

Whilst a number of improvement recommendations were contained in the report, it was emphasised that these were centred around improving the arrangements of the authority, rather than identifying any significant weaknesses.

Following conclusion of the debate, the motion was voted upon, with 58 councillors in favour, 2 against, and 4 abstaining.

The motion was **approved**.

Resolved:-

That Council notes the Auditors Annual Report 2021/22 at Appendix A to the report.

Reasons for Decision:

To note the work of Council and the Audit & Governance Committee in exercising its duties and responsibilities to consider reports of the external auditor.

Other Options Considered:

No alternative options considered. It is important for the authority to consider its governance and assurance arrangements and to respond to recommended improvements to its practice.

[Councillor Andrew Weatherill left the meeting at this point and did not return.]
[Councillor Clive Hallam entered the meeting at this point.]

258 Approval of Pay Structure and Terms and Conditions

Consideration was given by Council to a report seeking approval of the pay structure and terms and conditions of employment for adoption by North Northamptonshire Council. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked 'Agenda Item 9'.

Councillor Jason Smithers moved and Councillor Lora lawman seconded a motion to move the recommendations in the report.

During debate of the motion it was noted that whilst the Council workforce had been on interim pay terms and conditions since April 2021, the national pay award had been paid to all employees during 2021-22 and 2022/23, as well as pay increments, regardless of whether it was a contractual entitlement. £7.4m had also been set aside for the 2023/24 pay award and for implementing the pay and grading proposals.

It was further noted that the approval of the Council's pay and grading arrangements would be an important step in the authority becoming an employer of choice, with councillors emphasising the need to attract and retain the best talent.

Councillors also emphasised how a strong and stable workforce was fundamental to the successful achievement of the Council's vision and priorities.

At the end of the debate a recorded vote was requested and accepted, which was as follows:-

In favour (57)

Cllrs Valerie Anslow, Ross Armour, Paul Bell, Matt Binley, David Brackenbury, Wendy Brackenbury, Cedwien Brown, Scott Brown, Lyn Buckingham, Lloyd Bunday, Jon-Paul Carr, Robin Carter, Melanie Coleman, John Currall, Dez Dell, Scott Edwards, Jonathan Ekins, Jim Hakewill, Clive Hallam, Ken Harrington, David Howes, Barbara Jenney, Matt Keane, Philip Irwin, Bert Jackson, Ian Jelley, Kirk Harrison, Helen Harrison, Larry Henson, David Howes, Graham Lawman, Lora Lawman, Anne Lee, Dorothy Maxwell, Paul Marks, Peter McEwan, John McGhee, Andy Mercer, Gill Mercer, Macaulay Nichol, Jan O'Hara, Anup Pandey, Tom Partridge-Underwood, Mark Pengelly, Harriet Pentland, Roger Powell, Elliot Prentice, Russell Roberts, Mark Rowley, Jason Smithers, Joseph Smyth, Mike Tebbutt, Michael Tye, Malcolm Ward, Kevin Watt and Keli Watts,

Against (1)

Cllr William Colquhoun

Abstentions (3)

Jean Addison, Emily Fedorowycz and Zoe McGhee

The motion was **approved**.

Resolved:-

- a) That approval be given to the adoption of North Northamptonshire Councils Pay Structure at Appendix B to the report;
- b) That approval be given to the adoption of North Northamptonshire Councils Terms and Conditions at Appendix C to the report.

Reasons for Decisions:

- *Implementing a new pay structure and terms and conditions for North Northamptonshire Council is an important decision that will help to further, shape our workforce now and in the future.*
- *Decisions relating to new pay and grading arrangements have significant financial implications for the council and whilst these have been built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan, approving the adoption of these proposals is a decision for Council, in accordance with the Constitution.*

Alternative Options Considered:-

- *Continuing to employ people on 'interim' terms and conditions.*
- *Starting the pay structure at a lower pay point and decreasing the pay differential between pay bands.*

259 Northamptonshire Youth Justice Plan 2023/24

Consideration was given by Council to a report which set out the contents of the Youth Justice Plan for the Northamptonshire Youth Justice Service, for 2023/24. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked 'Agenda Item 10'.

Councillor Scott Edwards moved and Councillor Macaulay Nichol seconded the motion to move the recommendations in the report.

During debate it was noted that there was a lot of positive feedback on the work that the Youth Justice team had been undertaking, especially in relation to tackling repeat offending. The work being undertaken by local area partnership detailed in the Plan was also seen as positive.

It was emphasised that developing the prevention and diversion services for young people through early help was of vital importance in order that they were not criminalised.

Following conclusion of the debate, the motion was voted on, with 60 in favour, 0 against and 0 abstaining.

The motion was **approved**.

Resolved:-

- a) That approval be given to the content of the Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 at Appendix A to the report;
- b) That the Northamptonshire's Youth Offending Service's priorities for 2023/24 be noted, as set out in the plan.

Reasons for Decisions:

- *To accord with the constitution of the Council where the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Policy Framework that is decided by Full Council.*
- *To provide strategic direction to the Youth Offending Service that is delivered by Northamptonshire Children's Trust.*

Alternative Options Considered:

None - As well as being a requirement of statute, the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and approval by the Council is therefore required.

260 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022/23

Consideration was given by Council to the Director of Public Health's statutory Annual Report for 2022/23. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked as 'Agenda Item 11'.

Councillor Helen Harrison introduced Susan Hamilton, the interim Director of Public Health to present her annual report, who subsequently answered questions on a range of topics.

Councillor Helen Harrison then moved and Councillor Wendy Brackenbury seconded a motion to move the recommendations in the report.

During questioning and subsequent debate, the public health team was praised for the work it undertook, including its ambitions, vision and priorities for improving public health across North Northamptonshire.

Susan Hamilton was also thanked personally for her work in steering the public health team as interim director.

Particular concerns raised were the current waiting lists for doctors and dentists in North Northamptonshire. Although it was noted that GP appointments and dentistry were commissioned and dealt with by the Integrated Care Board, rather than Public Health or within the council's other service areas, it was considered the Council should seek to exert its influence where possible.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Management Board would be meeting shortly to decide on priorities for the scrutiny workplan over the coming months, which was expected to include in its topics, the scrutiny of GPs and dentistry.

Following conclusion of the debate, the motion was voted on, with 57 in favour, 0 against and 5 abstaining.

The motion was **approved**.

Resolved:-

That the contents of the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022- 2023 and the recommendations made within it, attached as Appendix A to the report, be noted.

Reason for Recommendations –

- *To accord with legislation or the policy of the council. This is a statutory requirement of the Director of Public Health role.*

Alternative Options Considered:-

- *None as this is a statutory requirement of the Director of Public Health role. The North Northamptonshire Public Health team was formed during the period covered by this report. Establishing the priorities for improving public health in North Northamptonshire was a key focus of 2022-23 and provides the focus of this report.*

261 Capital Programme and Revenue Budget Update 2023/24

Consideration was given to a report requesting approval for a virement of a capital scheme in excess of £0.5m, new borrowing in relation to a capital scheme, and the use of the Transformation Reserve to fund one-off revenue implementation costs. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked as 'Agenda Item 12'.

During debate it was noted that the new equipment in relation grounds maintenance would be more environmentally friendly than the old equipment, with electric vehicles and equipment to be used where possible. It was also noted that the new Education Case Management System would assist parents and guardians in navigating their way through the process of seeking school places for their children.

Following conclusion of the debate, the motion was voted on, with 61 in favour, 0 against and 0 abstaining.

The motion was **approved**.

Resolved:-

- a) That approval be given to the funding for the following changes to the capital programme:
- i) Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement Scheme – approve a budget in 2023/24 of £3.298m for phase 2 of the Refugee Resettlement Scheme funded through £1.298m from the Local Authority Housing Grant and a virement of £2m from the Housing and Homelessness prevention capital programme to the Resettlement capital programme to meet the match funding requirement for the grant.
 - ii) Environmental Services ground maintenance equipment – approve a budget in 2023/24 of £445k for the replacement of grounds maintenance equipment funding from borrowing.
- b) Approval be given to the funding for the following changes to the revenue budget:
- i) Education Case Management System (ECMS) – approve a revenue budget of £1.362m in 2023/24 for the procurement and one-off implementation costs of a new ECMS funded through use of the Transformation Reserve, and approve the inclusion of ongoing revenue costs of £131k in 2024/25 and £142.5k in 2025/26 into the MTFP.

Reasons for Recommendations:

These are set out in greater detail within section 5 of the report, but can be summarised as:

- i) To support the housing provision in North Northamptonshire;*
- ii) To support the achievement of corporate plan objectives; and*
- iii) To improve service provision in relation to children, young people, parents and carers*

Alternative Options Considered:

- i) Alternative options in relation to the Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement Scheme can be summarised as follows:-*
 - Do nothing – if the Council does not participate in this programme, it will not receive the funding allocation and the challenge of finding onward settled accommodation for refugees will remain;*
 - Commit to delivering a smaller number of homes – whilst this may be easier to achieve, the government grant allocation will reduce proportionately and less homes will be acquired into our temporary accommodation stock. Ultimately fewer additional homes will be available to the Council to use as affordable housing for our residents in the longer term.*

- ii) *Alternative options in relation to Environmental Services Grounds Maintenance Equipment can be summarised as follows:-*
- *External grants were explored but are not available for plant equipment. The option of leasing new equipment was considered, but not deemed to represent value for money and therefore borrowing is the most cost-effective funding source. The other alternative option would be to not approve this scheme. However, this would have an adverse impact on meeting service needs and the achievement of NNC's corporate objectives.*
- iii) *Alternative options considered for the ECMS can be summarised as follows:-*
- *Do nothing;*
 - *Apply for a variation with the current supplier, subject to this option being available under the current contract and such modification satisfying the Public Contracts Regulations 2015; Reprocure the current system through a direct award; or Build a bespoke system for the Education Service. More detail in relation to alternative options considered by the Executive in respect of the three schemes are set out in the reports presented on 12th July and 17th August 2023, as referenced in Section 8 of this report.*

262 Guillotine Motion

Councillor Jason Smithers, in noting the substantive business of the meeting had now been completed, moved that the guillotine not be extended beyond the three hour time limit for the meeting. Councillor Andy Mercer seconded the motion.

In accordance with meeting procedure rules, the motion was not debated and was immediately put to the vote.

A recorded vote was requested and accepted, which was as follows:-

In favour (37)

Cllrs Paul Bell, Matt Binley, David Brackenbury, Wendy Brackenbury, Cedwien Brown, Lloyd Bunday, Jon-Paul Carr, Robin Carter, Melanie Coleman, John Currall, Scott Edwards, Jonathan Ekins, David Howes, Bert Jackson, Kirk Harrison, Helen Harrison, Philip Irwin, Ian Jelley, Clive Hallam, Graham Lawman, Lora Lawman, Dorothy Maxwell, Paul Marks, Andy Mercer, Gill Mercer, Macaulay Nichol, Anup Pandey, Tom Partridge-Underwood, Harriet Pentland, Roger Powell, Russell Roberts, Mark Rowley, Jason Smithers, Joseph Smyth, Mike Tebbutt, Malcolm Ward, and Malcom Waters.

Against (21)

Cllrs Jean Addison, Valerie Anslow, Ross Armour, Charlie Best, Scott Brown, Lyn Buckingham, Leanne Buckingham, William Colquhoun, Dez Dell, Emily Fedorowycz, Jim Hakewill, Matt Keane, Anne Lee, Peter McEwan, John McGhee, Zoe McGhee, Mark Pengelly, Elliot Prentice, Simon Rielly, Kevin Watt, Keli Watts,

Abstentions (1)

Cllrs Barbara Jenney,

Resolved:-

That in accordance with meeting procedure rule 10, the meeting conclude at 9.00pm, three hours after its commencement, the substantive business of the meeting having been concluded.

263 Motions on Notice

Motion 1 – Housing and Homelessness

Councillor Valerie Anslow moved and Councillor Lyn Buckingham seconded the motion as set out on the agenda for the meeting.

Following an initial period of debate the guillotine was reached and so the meeting was concluded.

[Note:- At this point of the meeting, in accordance with meeting procedure 10.3 the following outstanding items of business were adjourned to the next ordinary meeting of Council are:-

- *Motions on Notice*
 - *Motion 1 – Housing and Homelessness*
 - *Having been in mid-debate at the conclusion of the meeting would serve as the first substantive agenda item at the next ordinary meeting of Council.*
 - *Motion 2 – Alfred East Art Gallery*
 - *Motion 3 – Library Services*
 - *Motion 4 – River Nene*

 - *Councillor Questions]*
-

264 Councillor Questions

[This item was adjourned until the next ordinary meeting of Council]

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

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Item 6. Public Participation (i) Public Statements Received

Statement 1 – Chris Stanbra

Good evening councillors. A special good evening to the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member with responsibility for Libraries to whom this statement is directed. I am here tonight to speak in support of the motion on the library service proposed by Cllr Hakewill and seconded by Cllr Best. You have a long agenda tonight. Please keep in mind what's been said by members of the public by the time it comes to the debate.

I am speaking in a personal capacity but should make you aware that I am a volunteer at Danesholme Library, a community managed library in Corby. I invite all of you to pop in when the library is open, and if any of you would like to become a volunteer at Danesholme Library, see me afterwards.

Cllr Hakewill's motion is very clear in its call for a "clear, compelling, financially sound, and customer-service-oriented business case" before any disaggregation changes are made to the way our libraries are run. Who could disagree?

It has been estimated by your council colleagues in West Northants that disaggregation of the library service could end up costing that council increased revenue costs of either ninety five thousand pounds per annum or two hundred and five thousand pounds per annum depending on which option is chosen. Similar costs would surely be incurred in North Northants, possibly more as we don't have a central library or a distribution base for books in the North as both of these are located in Northampton and we would surely have to set up and pay for such facilities.

The leaders of this council make a virtue of financial probity and prudent budgeting. Surely you will all want to ensure that any decision to incur increased revenue costs is backed up by the business case that Cllrs Hakewill and Best are calling for and that it has been "subjected to wide public consultation" as called for in the motion. I urge you to support the motion as written. Thank you.

Statement 2 – Cllr Clark Mitchell, Kettering Town Council

Firstly, chair thank you for letting me speak, I understand there was confusion over the 9am Monday deadline so I do appreciate you allowing this.

I am here to day to ask council to support Cllr Lee's motion in full I will explain why however if you were at the scrutiny panel on Tuesday you will have heard a lot if what I am about to say already.

I was on the planning committee back in January 2021 that first approved the new build element of the GLaM project (gallery library and museum) I'm really proud of the fact that I am able to say I voted for this project because it is a fantastic opportunity for the town of Kettering and the region of North Northamptonshire, when open it will increase footfall which will boost the town centre and the new business hub will give the people who work in the town a fantastic facility to support themselves, the officers and executive of KBC deserve thanks for getting the grant from SEMLEP that made this possible. I know its frowned upon to mention names but they know who they are. Well done.

I didn't expect to have to be here speaking about it, I thought it would have opened and been great but unfortunately here we are over two years down the line and it is only the library (a statutory service) that is open.

This got me concerned enough to send in an FOI asking about the conditions put on the funding. It was after all the Gallery, Library and Museum project, I wanted to know if there was a risk that the funding could be with held. The answer I got did not alleviate these fears.

I asked (amongst other things)

If NNC were to fail to achieve these conditions could you advise of any funding that would need to be returned and to whom.

The answer I got was.

The Get Building Fund committed £3m via SEMLEP. It is not clear at this point what might have to be repaid if some elements are delayed or not opened. BIPC will be opening in 2023 so, for example, this element of the criteria would have been fulfilled.

I Then asked

Are there any other grant conditions that would require NNC to repay any or all of the funding received?

The grant is dependent on milestones for the build being met, which has been achieved. Also dependent on outputs being delivered as agreed in the monitoring and evaluation procedures, there remains a risk if these are not achieved that there could a claw back of part of the grant already received.

These answers really worry me, there is a risk (albeit small) that if this facility doesn't open fully the money could all be called back by SEMLEP and then the residents of this region end up with nothing. I have already been told that the museum may never reopen.

I asked Tuesday's scrutiny panel to chase up the answers to what the risk to NNC actually is and what mitigations are in place but the easiest way to stop any risk is to get the facility fully open as quickly as possible and give Kettering the cornerstone of its heritage quarter that it deserves.

Please support Cllr Lee's motion and once again thank you for your time.

End of Public Statements

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