

Minutes of a meeting of the Council

Held at 6.00 pm on Thursday 7th March, 2024 in the Council Chamber, Corby Cube,
George Street, NN17 1QG

Present:-

Members

Councillor Barbara Jenney (Chair)	Councillor Lora Lawman
Councillor Jean Addison	Councillor Ian Jelley
Councillor Tim Allebone	Councillor Matt Keane
Councillor Ross Armour	Councillor King Lawal
Councillor Charlie Best	Councillor Graham Lawman
Councillor Matt Binley	Councillor Anne Lee
Councillor Jennie Bone	Councillor Richard Levell
Councillor David Brackenbury	Councillor Paul Marks
Councillor Wendy Brackenbury	Councillor Dorothy Maxwell
Councillor Scott Brown	Councillor John 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 Roger Powell
Councillor John Currall	Councillor Elliot Prentice
Councillor Alison Dalziel	Councillor Simon Rielly
Councillor Dez Dell	Councillor Russell Roberts
Councillor Emily Fedorowycz	Councillor Mark Rowley
Councillor Martin Griffiths	Councillor Geoff Shacklock
Councillor Jim Hakewill	Councillor Jason Smithers
Councillor Clive Hallam	Councillor Joseph John Smyth
Councillor Ken Harrington	Councillor Sarah Tubbs
Councillor Helen Harrison	Councillor Malcolm Ward
Councillor Larry Henson	Councillor Malcolm Waters
Councillor Helen Howell	Councillor Andrew Weatherill
Councillor David Howes	Councillor Keli Watts
Councillor Philip Irwin	Councillor Lee Wilkes
Councillor Bert Jackson	

Officers

Adele Wylie – Chief Executive
Sanjit Sull – Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Kamila Coulson-Patel – Chief Lawyer, Governance and Litigation
Ben Smith – Head of Democratic Services

311 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Valerie Anslow, Paul Bell, Mark Dearing, Scott Edwards, Jonathan Ekins, Peter McEwan, Zoe McGhee, Steven North, Harriet Pentland, David Sims, Chris Smith-Haynes, and Kevin Watt.

312 Minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2024 and 22nd February 2024

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Council held on 25th January 2024 and Budget Council meeting held on 22nd February 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the 22nd February 2024 minutes being amended to reflect the correct spelling of Cllr Elliot Prentice's forename, and to reflect that at minute 309 it was Cllr Hakewill rather than Cllr Fedorowycz who moved the Green Alliance amendment to the motion.

313 Declarations of interest.

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

No declarations were made.

314 Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed members, officers and members of the public to the meeting, announcing that the civic role continued to be very busy with two notable events having taken place.

- Firstly, a royal visit from Princess Anne, the Princess Royal to Wellingborough to recognise the work carried out by the charity 'Off the Streets' which aimed to eradicate knife crime in Northamptonshire.
- Secondly, representing the Council at a service of installation and welcome of the Right Reverend Deborah Mary Selin as the 39th Bishop of Peterborough Cathedral.

Other notable events attended included:-

- Holocaust services in Kettering and Rushden;
- County swimming championships in Corby;
- Indian Republic Day hosted by the Hindu Association in Wellingborough.

The Chair also reported that the Vice Chair had also attended events in Corby, Stanford, Wellingborough, Raunds and thanked her for her continued support.

315 Leader's Announcements

The Leader made a statement to Council, as follows:-

International Women's Day

'As many of you know, tomorrow is International Women's Day. This day marks not only achievements and progress of women worldwide but also services as a pointed reminder of the road ahead in pursuing gender equality.

As Leader of the Council I wanted to address you ahead of this significant day. Gender equality is not merely a matter of social justice, it's a foundation upon which a fair, inclusive and prosperous society is built. Our commitment to gender equality reflects our dedication to upholding the principles of equality, equity and justice for all members of our community.

Throughout history, women have been the backbone of society's pioneering change and driving progress. Despite this the struggle for equal rights, opportunities and representation persists. As a father to Michaela and Holly my two daughters, and a beautiful granddaughter Ruby, it has always been important for me to instil an attitude that just because you are a girl, you can't or shouldn't do something. I have always encouraged them to feel no limitations to what is possible. They have grown up to be inspiring, intelligent and amazing young ladies of which I am incredibly proud, and I am sure so will Ruby as she journeys on into her life.

Tomorrow provides the opportunity to mark progress in breaking down the barriers that hinder women's full participation in all aspects of public life. I am proud that North Northamptonshire Council welcomed its first female chair of the Council last year. I am also proud that the Council appointed its first female Chief Executive earlier this year. It's also worth noting that they are joined at the top table by Councillor Lora Lawman, our vice-chair, and Sanjit Sull, our monitoring officer, and Kamila Coulson-Patel, our deputy monitoring officer.

This year's International Women's Day theme is Inspire Inclusion and I am sure everyone in this room and colleagues throughout North Northamptonshire Council will agree that greater female representation at all levels of local government is both good and right.

So as we mark International Women's Day tomorrow, this Council can continue its splendid work in inspiring future generations of inclusion through our policies, debate and action. Together we can forge women's equity, celebrate women's achievements, raise awareness about discrimination and take action to drive gender equivalence.

International Women's Day belongs to everyone everywhere in pursuit of equity, every day, thank you.

Former Lord Lieutenant David Lang, CBE

I also wanted to take a few moments to say a few words about the former Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire David Lang who has sadly passed away. Mr Lang served as the Lord Lieutenant from 2014 to 2020 and many of you will know that he was recently acknowledged in the 2024 New Year's honours List where he was awarded the CBE by Her Royal Highness Princess Anne for his services to charity and philanthropy.

Without any doubt Mr Lang significantly and positively impacted the local area. He worked to support a wide array of charities and voluntary organisations and did a

tremendous amount of work to help promote enterprise and business in the area too. He played a vital role in establishing the Northamptonshire Community Foundation which has issued over £20m in grants to causes across the area. He also served as the County's High Sherriff and was Pro-Chancellor at the University of Northampton.

Mr Lane will be remembered at a private family service, but I understand there will be a public memorial service to be held later this year to celebrate his life. I propose that we hold a minute's silence as a mark of respect to David Lang, a remarkable person who was a force for good in the area and who will sadly be missed.

[Members, officers and the public stood in silent tribute to David Lang.]

Officer Terms and Conditions

Chair, I do have one further announcement to make. Members will recall that we agreed our new terms and conditions back in August 2023. This was a fantastic achievement for this authority, and they were developed to support our ambitions of being an employer of choice. Those colleagues who have joined us since vesting day will have moved into new roles since April 2023, have had their jobs evaluated under the new scheme and are now moving onto NNC pay terms and conditions.

In addition, all new recruits are being appointed to our new pay arrangements and this is enabling us to attract talent that will help us drive this fantastic Council forward. However this has left us with feelings of inequality and unfairness from some of our employees who transferred in to NNC on their previous employers' terms and conditions.

To give an example, our social workers who are on TUPE protected County Council terms and conditions and who have given our Council and the previous County Council long service will now receive less pay in some cases and less favourable terms and conditions than a new social worker joining the organisation. That is because the NNC pay band for our social worker role is higher than it was at the County Council. The resulting pay differential is quite simply not fair. Why would you come to a job where you're doing the same job and being paid less, it just doesn't make sense.

The situation we are in is not of our own making. It is a hangover of the local government reform in Northamptonshire. But just because we did not create the inequalities it doesn't mean we shouldn't fix them. We need to fix them, and we need to make sure everyone feels valued. We have always said that we would not be able to unilaterally move all employees to new pay terms and conditions but if we are truly to stick to our word of wanting to be an employer of choice and if we want to support our staff in the way that we say we do we can longer sustain differences that make some of our staff feel less valued than others.

We will therefore be offering every employee the opportunity to voluntarily move onto the new North Northamptonshire terms and conditions. This will give those employees who would receive preferential pay terms and conditions if they were to move on to our terms the opportunity to do so. This will enable more fairness and it will move us closer to the 'one council' approach that we are striving for. This will support our ambition to be an employer of choice.

Clearly a significant amount of work was undertaken to achieve the implementation of the pay and grading and this will also be a huge undertaking. We need to manage expectations regarding the timeline for staff, how and when we start this implementation and relevant details will be communicated to staff by officers.

This is a fantastic piece of work from officers and I hugely applaud them for that. It will make our Council so much fairer for all grades within the authority.

Thank you.

316 Public Participation

Two members of the Public were invited to speak before Council, having registered their interest under public participation procedure rules.

Martin Toms made a statement urging the Council to do as much as it could to preserve and enlarge the forest and other green spaces within North Northamptonshire to ensure that residents and other users would derive benefits well beyond the cost of maintaining them.

James Town also made a statement in favour of green spaces, stating that green spaces were essential for promoting community wellbeing and nurturing both physical and mental health. By investing in the creation and maintenance of green infrastructure, he stated that policymakers, urban planners, and communities could create vibrant, liveable environments that support the holistic well-being of individuals and enhance the quality of life for generations to come.

A public question to Council in accordance with meeting procedure rule 16 had also been received from Mr Nick Shaw, who was unable to attend the meeting in person. The question and answer received were therefore taken as read, having previously been circulated, a copy of which is attached to these minutes at Appendix A.

317 Executive Presentations

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

318 Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

Council considered a report seeking approval of the Pay Policy Statement attached at Appendix A and which asked Council to note that a package of new pay, terms, and conditions of employment and associated pay and employment policies for North Northamptonshire Council were still to be agreed.

Cllr Jason Smithers moved and Cllr Lora Lawman seconded the recommendations in the report.

Following a short debate, the motion was voted on, with 59 councillors in favour, 2 abstaining and 0 against.

Resolved:-

That Council:-

- a) Approves the Pay Policy detailed in Appendix A of the report; and
- b) Delegates to the Chief Executive the making of any in-year amendments to the Pay Policy Statement that may be required to complete the Pay Data and Chief Executive Remuneration relative to other Council Employees after 1st April 2024, when the Green Book pay award is agreed.

Reasons for Decision: -

- *It is a statutory requirement under the Localism Act 2011 for the Authority to approve and publish a Pay Policy Statement;*
- *Due regard has been given to the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and associated guidance issued or approved by the Secretary of State, in setting out this Pay Policy Statement.*

Alternative Options Considered:-

- *It is a statutory requirement that Council approves and publishes a Pay Policy Statement and therefore no alternative options were considered.*

319 Political Balance on Council Committees

Council considered an addendum report setting out a number of additional changes to Group appointments following the issuing of the original report on 28th February 2024. The addendum report encompassed both the contents of the original report and those changes notified to the Monitoring Officer since that date. A copy of the report is filed with the report at item 9 on the agenda for the meeting.

Cllr Jason Smithers moved and Cllr Matt Keane seconded the recommendations in the addendum report to Council.

It was noted that following recent changes to the political makeup of the Council, there were now four political groups, with the Conservative Group holding 52 seats, the Labour Group 17 seats, Green Alliance Group 4 seats and Independent Alliance Group 4 seats. One seat remained vacant.

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

Resolved:-

That Council:-

- a) Approves the revised distribution of seats across the political groups for ordinary committees and area committees, as set out in Addendum Appendix A, recommendations a) and b);
- b) Notes the following changes in the leadership arrangements of the recognised political groups for the municipal year 2023/24:-

- Deputy Leader of the Green Alliance Group – Councillor Charlie Best;
 - Leader of the Independent Alliance Group – Councillor Cedwien Brown;
 - Deputy Leader of the Independent Alliance Group – Councillor Jim Hakewill.
- c) Notes that in accordance with the Council’s Scheme of Delegation, any changes to places on committees arising from the new political balance will be made by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the leaders of the political groups represented on the Council.

Reason for Decisions: –

- *To ensure that the revised political balance of the Council is applied to the governance structure of the Council, in accordance with law and approved guidelines contained in the Council Constitution.*

Alternative Options Considered:-

- *None, as the revised political balance calculation is required to be reported to full Council under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.*

320 Motions on Notice

Motion 1 – Green Spaces

Cllr Emily Fedorowycz moved and Cllr Dez Dell seconded the following motion to Council.

“This Council believes that every North Northants resident should have access to green spaces and recognises the importance of public access to these spaces for community well-being. This Council strives to achieve and advocate for “everyone to have access to green space or water within a 15-minute walk from their home as set out in the National Environmental Improvement Plan. This Council further acknowledges the benefits of green spaces for physical and mental health.

This Council resolves:

- 1. To ensure all North Northants residents have easy access to quality green spaces*
- 2. Will take steps to protect and enhance our green infrastructure.*
- 3. To explore integration of access to green spaces as part of the development of the Urban Green Space Strategy*
- 4. That the relevant EAP is made aware of the opportunity to apply to be a new national forest, and consider if this aligns with our strategy for green spaces.”*

During debate, the importance of maintaining and improving access to green spaces was raised by all councillors speaking on the motion.

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

Resolved:-

This Council believes that every North Northants resident should have access to green spaces and recognises the importance of public access to these spaces for community well-being. This Council strives to achieve and advocate for "everyone to have access to green space or water within a 15-minute walk from their home as set out in the National Environmental Improvement Plan. This Council further acknowledges the benefits of green spaces for physical and mental health.

This Council resolves:

1. To ensure all North Northants residents have easy access to quality green spaces
2. Will take steps to protect and enhance our green infrastructure.
3. To explore integration of access to green spaces as part of the development of the Urban Green Space Strategy
4. That the relevant EAP is made aware of the opportunity to apply to be a new national forest, and consider if this aligns with our strategy for green spaces.

Motion 2 – Fostering

Councillor Jim Hakewill moved and Cllr Charlie Best seconded the following motion to Council:-

“This council welcomes the improvements achieved by Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Fostering Agency to being rated as “Good” following Ofsted’s January 2024 inspection.

As corporate parents it is reassuring that our friends and colleagues at the Trust are succeeding in protecting and enriching the lives of children and recognising the amazing role of Foster carers.

This Council calls on the Leader of the Council to write to the Chief Executive of the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust to reinforce the Councils commitment to supporting it in continuing to move forward positively.”

During debate, councillors spoke about the benefits of fostering to improving the lives of looked after children and gave thanks to foster carers for their commitment to the children of North Northamptonshire was heard.

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

Resolved:-

This Council welcomes the improvements achieved by Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Fostering Agency to being rated as “Good” following Ofsted’s January 2024 inspection.

As corporate parents it is reassuring that our friends and colleagues at the Trust are succeeding in protecting and enriching the lives of children and recognising the amazing role of Foster carers.

This Council calls on the Leader of the Council to write to the Chief Executive of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust to reinforce the Councils commitment to supporting it in continuing to move forward positively.

321 Councillor Questions

The Chair noted that 18 councillor questions had been received for this meeting in accordance with meeting procedure rule 17.

Each of the 18 questions were asked and responded to, as well as supplementary questions and answers, where requested.

A full copy of the questions and responses made, as well as any supplementary questions and responses, are filed with these minutes at Appendix B.

322 Close of Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, the Chair thanked members, officers and the public viewing the meeting both in person and online for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm