

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK
COUNCIL

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Council held on
 Thursday, 2nd December, 2021 at 4.30 pm in the Assembly Room, Town
 Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ**

PRESENT: Councillor L Bambridge (Deputy Mayor in the Chair)

Councillors B Ayres, Miss L Bambridge, R Blunt, F Bone, C Bower, A Bubb, A Bullen, Mrs J Collingham, J Collop, S Collop, C J Crofts, S Dark, M de Whalley, I Devereux, A Dickinson, P Gidney, G Hipperson, A Holmes, Lord Howard, G Howman, B Jones, C Joyce, A Kemp, J Kirk, P Kunes, A Lawrence, B Long, J Lowe, C Manning, G Middleton, S Nash, E Nockolds, T Parish, S Patel, C Rose, J Rust, A Ryves, C Sampson, S Sandell, Mrs V Spikings, S Squire, M Storey, A Tyler, D Tyler and D Whitby

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Beal, J Bhondi, M Howland, C Hudson, H Humphrey, B Lawton, J Moriarty, C Morley, J Ratcliffe and M Wilkinson

C:54 **PRAYERS**

Prayers were led by Rev Canon Ling

C:55 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2021 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Deputy Mayor.

C:56 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

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Councillor P Kunes declared a pecuniary interest in CAB74 as he held a small number of shares in Rank Organisation. He did not vote thereon.

C:57 **MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None

C:58 **URGENT BUSINESS**

None

C:59 **DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS RELATING TO SECOND HOMES AND EMPTY DWELLINGS FOR 2022/2023**

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RESOLVED: That under Section 11A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as enacted by Section 75 of the Local Government Act 2003, Section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as enacted by Section 11 and Section 12 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and in accordance with the provisions of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003, the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 the Council determines:

1. That the council tax discount for Second Homes defined as being within Class A of the Regulations is set at 0% for 2022/2023;
2. That the council tax discount for Second Homes as defined by Class B of the Regulations is set at 0% for 2022/2023;
3. That the council tax discount for Empty / Unfurnished dwellings defined as being within Class C of the Regulations is set at 0% for 2022/2023;
4. That the council tax discount for Uninhabitable dwellings defined as being within Class D of the Regulations is set at the following for 2022/2023:
 - a. 25% for 12 months starting on the day the dwelling becomes uninhabitable; then
 - b. 0% once the 12 month period has expired;
5. That the Levy rate for Long Term Empty Dwellings as defined in the Regulations is set as follows for 2022/2023:
 - a. 100% for properties empty between two and five years,
 - b. 200% for properties empty longer than five years, and
 - c. 300% for properties empty longer than ten years;
6. That any period of occupation of fewer than six weeks shall be disregarded when calculating the maximum period of a reduction or the start date of the Levy;
7. That delegated authority be given for individual applications under s13a Local Government Finance Act 1992 be determined by the Revenues and Benefits Manager in consultation with the Council Leader and the relevant Ward Member/s.
8. In accordance with Section 11A(6) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as enacted by Section 75 of the Local Government Act 2003 and the Local Government Finance Act

2012, these determinations shall be published in at least one newspaper circulating in West Norfolk before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the date of the determinations.

C:60 **PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None

C:61 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COUNCIL BODIES**

i **Cabinet: 16 November 2021**

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Councillor Dark proposed and Councillor Middleton seconded each of the recommendations below:

CAB67: Corporate Business Plan

Council debated CAB67, where the Labour group confirmed they would not support the recommendations. Comments were made relating to the proposed Wisbech incinerator, progress on climate change, green space, and the level of reserves.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was approved.

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CAB74: Gambling Act 2005 – Update

On being put to the vote the recommendation was approved.

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CAB75: Requests for Variation of Numbers of Parish Councillors

On being put to the vote the recommendation was approved.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 16 November 2021.

C:62 **NOTICES OF MOTION**

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i) **Councillor A Ryves proposed the following Notice of Motion (8-21), this was seconded by Councillor Joyce:**

In proposing the Notice of Motion Councillor Ryves spoke in support of the motion informing Council that he had been in contact with the BID who had confirmed retailers would support the free parking.

"This Council recognises that the retail sector has been particularly badly hit by the pandemic.

This Council wishes to play its part in retaining an active local retail sector.

Therefore, this Council agrees that all car parks and on road parking spaces owned by this Council in Hunstanton and King's Lynn will operate a system of free parking from the hours of 9.00 AM to 5.00PM on each Sunday in the month of December and the first Sunday in January."

Council debated the motion it was pointed out that the proposal had not been costed and the implications for the authority not taken into account. It was noted that in the run up to Christmas the car parks would be busy anyway, and when the implications for the town of less car parking income were explained there was greater understanding of the need for the income.

Councillor Nash, seconded by Councillor Parish proposed an amendment to the Motion that the free parking on Sundays proposed above take place in January or February. Councillor Ryves accepted the amendment.

A debate was then held on the substantive. Attention was drawn to the additional footfall events brought to the town centre, comments made on the fact that relying on car parking income was outdated and other options such as visitors tax should be considered. It was suggested that a cost benefit analysis should be carried out. The effect the internet was having on retail was referred to and the fact that the Council relied on business rates. Attention was drawn to the fact that the corporate business plan intended to help boost the economy.

The fact that the proposal had not been discussed at Cabinet or Panels or costed was drawn attention to, if the free spaces were taken all day by the same cars it did not permit a high turnover. The incentive for people to come to town in the quiet winter months was drawn attention to.

In summing up Councillor Ryves drew attention to the reserves held and commended the proposal to Council.

On being put to the vote the Motion was lost.

RESOLVED: The Motion was lost.

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ii) Councillor A Kemp proposed the following Notice of Motion (9-21), seconded by Councillor de Whalley

In proposing the Motion Councillor Kemp drew attention to the fact that a number of households had no access to computers or phones and needed the computers to be able to access services.

This Council is committed to making its services as accessible as possible. The trend for transferring applications for more and more services, like Homechoice, online, is a barrier for people who most need them, but who are digitally excluded, whether through cost or disability.

The Council used to supply computers for public access in King's Court, but these have been taken away. Residents come into King's Court regularly, who are Homechoice clients, and want to check their benefits online, but are unable to do so. Residents are not permitted to use the computers near the Council reception that belong to the DWP.

Council will consider the benefit of recommending the reintroduction of computers for public use for specified purposes in the Council reception at King's Court, for inclusion within the forthcoming budget."

In responding to the proposer Councillor Dark clarified that the computers were removed due to the covid risk originally, but that the DWP computers were now spaced out into the area, but officers had offered phone support to anyone with housing queries in the office, when it was safe to do so they would be re-installed.

Council debated the motion where support for their reintroduction was made, along with encouragement for those coming into the building unable to access with computers to take up the option of phone assistance or if required appointment system, along with reassurance that they would be re-introduced in due course when space and safety permitted it to do so. Suggestions were made for the use of tablets and security wiping down keyboards.

Councillor Kemp summed up stating that she considered there was sufficient space and they were an important service for those seeking homes.

On being put to the vote the motion was lost.

RESOLVED: The motion was lost.

C:63 **CABINET MEMBERS REPORTS**

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Councillor Dark moved the Cabinet Members reports en bloc.

Cabinet Member's questions

Councillor Ryves asked Councillor Dickinson a question on the underwriting of the Guildhall funding and consequence it would have on future budgets. Councillor Dickinson confirmed that the money was in the capital programme, but it was hoped that it wouldn't need to be spent. Councillor Middleton confirmed a positive meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the business plan was being worked up with the Town Board.

Councillor Howman asked for information on the numbers of penalty charges cancelled or sent for recovery. Councillor Long agreed to send him some information.

In response to Councillor Spikings question on an update to Upwell cemetery, Councillor Long confirmed he had met with the parish who were looking at land adjacent to the current cemetery for an extension to it.

In response to a question from Councillor de Whalley, Councillor Middleton confirmed that an architect had not yet been appointed for the Guildhall project.

Following a question from Councillor Kemp regarding tree planting in the Winfarthing woods area, Councillor Kunes reminded Councillor Kemp that the land was allocated building land.

Councillor Bower asked Councillor Blunt the situation with Hunstanton Neighbourhood Plan and others in the Borough compared with the rest of Norfolk. Councillor Blunt confirmed that a lot of work had gone into the Hunstanton Plan which was at examination stage. He confirmed there were 11 fully adopted plans and 3 more in the pipeline. He confirmed the Borough's numbers were very good in comparison to some others in the county.

Councillor Rust asked the number of staff monitoring CCTV in order to make women and girls feel safe. Councillor Long confirmed that the numbers varied depending on the day and time and events, the recordings were held. He undertook to provide her with some figures.

Councillor Sandell responded to a question from Councillor Nockolds on the ECF Food for Thought grant that Lily had been awarded. She confirmed that the bid supported families in deprived areas on healthy eating on a budget. Freebridge were providing the facilities and COWA were providing support staff.

Councillor Kunes confirmed to Councillor Squire that he had misinterpreted the Task Group on urban wildlife for a Biodiversity Task Group.

Councillor Crofts asked Councillor Blunt what the timings were for the next CIL applications. Councillor Blunt confirmed it would open on 1 January to 1 February, with the scheme simplified since the previous

one. The round after that would be 1 July to 1 August. He undertook to email Councillors with information that had been provided to parishes.

Councillor Kunes undertook to investigate Councillor Parish's query as to whether it was permissible for log burners to be specified in a new build.

Councillor Devereux asked Councillor Blunt for information on a strategy document from Transport East. He confirmed that he had attended the launch of the draft document which covered all the transport needs the Eastern Region which would be open for consultation until 30 January 2022. He undertook to send councillors a link to the document.

Following a question from Councillor Kemp, Councillor Middleton confirmed that surveys were being carried out on the old Argos building as to its condition, and necessary steps would be taken for the scheme.

Councillor Nockolds asked on progress of the NORA site to which Councillor Lawrence confirmed that 2 offices and 2 light industrial units were being built, alongside the new IDB building. Interest had been shown in the buildings.

Councillor Lawrence confirmed to Councillor Ryves that he considered that the KLIC being fully let was a positive thing.

Leader's questions

Responding to Councillor Squire regarding opposition items being refused, Councillor Dark commented on those presented items at the meeting were not thought through.

Councillor Sampson asked about the MUCH consultation which was being carried out, to which Councillor Dark welcomed the £7m investment in King's Lynn, and reminded members that it was clear there were no plans to do anything detrimental with the old library building. He encouraged any evidence of the flats conversion which had been raised by a councillor to be brought forward.

In response to Councillor Ryves question as to the function of the KLIC building and whether it had failed, Councillor Dark commented that the commercially the building was doing very well.

In response to Councillor Joyce's comments on the Administration being heartless, Councillor Dark rebuked the comment and drew attention to the work carried out by to date.

In response to Councillor Kemp's comment on approaching the secretary of state to encourage a similar approach her to incineration

elsewhere in the country, Councillor Dark re-iterated that if and when a planning application came in it would be reflected on at that time.

In response to a question from Councillor Squire on whether the Borough council should improve its communications with parishes, Councillor Dark confirmed that any organisation should try to improve its communications.

Following a question from Councillor Howman regarding the concern by constituents about the future of the Gaywood library with the advent of the MUCH building in the town centre, Councillor Dark confirmed it was not a replacement for other libraries, and undertook to get clarification from the County Council.

C:64 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

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Councillor Ryves asked Councillor Collingham if the Regeneration and Development Panel would ask for a cost benefit analysis of the free parking proposed and lost in the motion earlier in the meeting. Councillor Collingham said it could be an item for a future meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.04 pm