

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK**COUNCIL**

**Minutes from the Meeting of the Council held on
Thursday, 24th August, 2023 at 5.30 pm in the Town Hall,
Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn**

PRESENT: Councillor M Wilkinson (Mayor)
Councillors B Anota, T Barclay, M Bartrum, A Beales, P Bland, R Blunt, F Bone,
A Bubb, A Bullen, R Coates, Mrs J Collingham, S Collop, R Colwell, C J Crofts,
S Dark, M de Whalley, T de Winton, P Devulapalli, A Dickinson, S Everett,
D Heneghan, P Hodson, H Humphrey, A Jamieson, B Jones, C Joyce, A Kemp,
P Kunes, S Lintern, B Long, J Moriarty, C Morley, S Nash, J Osborne, T Parish,
J Ratcliffe, S Ring, C Rose, J Rust, A Ryves, S Sandell, S Squire, M Storey,
D Tyler and A Ware

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Beal, S Bearshaw,
J Bhondi, J Kirk, A Lawrence, J Lowe, D Sayers and Mrs V Spikings

C:31 **PRAYERS**

Prayers were led by Rev Canon Ling

C:32 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

C:33 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors J Ratcliffe and A Ware declared non pecuniary interests in CAB30 and 32 as Council appointed Directors on the West Norfolk Housing Company Board.

Councillor Bone declared a non pecuniary interest in the Notice of Motion 12/23 on the Pride event, as secretary of the event.

C:34 **MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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The Mayor reported receipt of an email from Councillor Squire explaining that it transpired that Cllr Ring was not a member of Hunstanton Advisory Group as she had believed was the case. She confirmed that she didn't intend to mislead the council as she had made the comment in good faith.

C:35 URGENT BUSINESS

None

C:36 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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- 1) The Mayor invited Ms Julia Irving to ask her public question as follows:

“It is now almost universally acknowledged, that most of the trees planted in spring 2022 at Lynnsport are, in fact, not 'dormant ' , but dead ; what are the councils plans to make use of this space and do these plans enhance and preserve the established ecology of the area in the most environmentally and socially responsible manner?”

Councillor de Whalley gave the following response:

“Thank you for your question and justifiable concern regarding the Lynnsport trees. I, along with two other fellow cabinet members, met with community representatives earlier in the summer to discuss the future of the site. After careful consideration, it has been agreed that additional replacement tree planting has been stopped as survival rates are too low to be viable. Living trees will be maintained. Dead whips will be tidied up with tree guards recovered and stored for future use. The remaining wildflower meadow is now doing well and will be managed as such with mowing and removing taking place later this year.

This winter the Council is concentrating on a smaller scale project to plant a Community Orchard off Wisbech Road and Winfarthing Avenue.

The Council is reviewing its tree planting strategy in light of the lessons learnt and I am seeking Forestry Commission support and guidance to identify and plant more suitable sites in the future.”

The Mayor invited any supplementary question.

Ms Irving asked that given the failure of the planting what were the plans for the next tree planting adheres to the woodland strategy (policy TP9) to ensure that careful attention is given to site provision for newly planted trees have a sustained programme of maintenance.

As there was difficulty hearing the question Councillor de Whalley undertook to answer the question in writing.

C:37 **BUSINESS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

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Council was invited to ask Questions of Chairs - except Cabinet for the period up to the previous Council meeting.

There were no questions.

C:38 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COUNCIL BODIES**

i **Cabinet: 1 August 2023**

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Councillor Parish proposed the recommendations from Cabinet on 1 August 2023 separately. These were seconded by Councillor Moriarty.

CAB26: Staff Pay Award 2023-24

Councillor Joyce proposed the following amendments to CAB26:

1b) For those earning up to and including the equivalent of £38,500, a flat rate non-consolidated cost-of-living payment of £750pa (pro rata for part time employees) to be paid to all permanent employees and temporary staff (with a contract specifying a duration of 12 months or more) who were in post on 1st April 2023; with an amount tapering from £750 down to zero to be paid to those earning between £38,501 and £53,500; and for those earning £53,501 or above to not receive any of the non-consolidated amount. This payment to be paid in 12 monthly instalments with effect from April 2023.

c) Refer the following to the next Corporate Performance Panel for further investigation: The top points of all grades (not individual salaries) are increased by the maximum applicable percentage increase (10.38%) with effect from 1st October 2023. This will not have an immediate financial impact but will assist with future recruitment and retention.

Councillor Joyce spoke in support of his amendment explaining that he felt the amendment would assist with the recruitment and retention of staff. He considered that senior staff would prefer to lose the one off £750 payment in order to pay the lower paid staff. He commented that there was a shortage of some staff with a number of vacancies being carried.

Councillor Dark seconded the amendment. He drew attention to the meeting of Corporate Performance Panel which had considered the matter. He commented that whilst the Panel did not have many

members present at the end they agreed unanimously to vote against the recommendations. He considered that the real money gap between grades was increasing. With regard to the £750 one off payment he considered that the senior staff did not need the additional payment as he considered it was increasing the differential between grades. He did not agree with the increase of the top of senior grades as he considered there was not sufficient evidence presented.

Councillor Parish did not accept the amendment and suggested that the amendment could have been submitted as 2 separate amendments.

Councillor Ryves stated that as all staff worked together as a team they should get the same reward. He didn't believe that the recommendations from the Panel were discussed by the cabinet.

Councillor Rust stated she would vote against the amendment as she felt it was demeaning to the work of senior staff, and said they were not worthy of a pay rise. She reminded members that peoples pay was commensurate with the work carried out and the qualifications held for those roles. She reminded members that there was difficulty recruiting to senior staff positions in particular.

Councillor Beales commented that he was surprised that the Labour and Conservative Leaders were speaking against the workforce. He drew attention to the fact that at the Cabinet meeting Councillor Parish had asked questions on all those things raised at the Panel meeting and had responses. He reminded members that 2 conservative members had spoken at Cabinet on the item.

Councillor Ring spoke against the amendment, reminding members that they did not know what individual financial situations or the impact of the cost of living were on staff. He considered the amendment was divisive, and a deliberate attempt to cause a division between staff.

Councillor Lintern informed members that the vote at the Panel was not a unanimous vote as stated by Councillor Dark.

Councillor Squire drew attention to the fact that the amendment demonised senior staff who had paid for their education and had years of experience and that Councillors relied on their advice to take decisions. She considered that members should value all the staff as the amendment could incite officers to seek a different job.

Councillor Kemp considered that the money should be channelled back to the lower paid.

Councillor Ratcliffe stated her disappointment that the amendment was not made as 2 amendments. She drew attention to the fact that amendment did not include that the money clawed back from the

higher earners be channelled to the lower paid. She would not be accepting the amendment.

Councillor Morley corrected the perception of Councillor Darks comments regarding the Panel recommendations. He had gone into Cabinet questioning the award proposed, but following the significant debate at Cabinet had agreed with the recommendations.

Councillor Osborne drew attention to comments made on respect, he also commented that the amendment did not change the pay rise element. He considered that the cost of living payment was felt by many people, but the impact on the higher paid was not as severe, therefore he considered the tapering was sensible.

The small amounts of money saved would help schemes such as the council tax support scheme.

Councillor Moriarty drew attention to the ability of the conservative members to comment and ask questions at cabinet. He drew attention to Councillor Dark's comments regarding the position the council was in, to which he drew members attention to the fact that the proposals had been fully discussed with Unison and supported by them.

Councillor Long suggested that the Panel meeting should have had the item as a single item agenda. He commented that he valued all staff and hoped to give the best in terms of pay as possible. He would support the amendment.

Councillor Sandell stated that there was no evidence base that raising all scales would help retain staff.

Councillor Jones stated that the proposal was asking for the grades to be looked at.

Councillor de Winton reminded members that staff did not work for us because they loved working for the council but because they needed to feed their families and were trained for the work. There was a shortage of people in all areas. Pay and terms and conditions were important. He commented that if the package the Cabinet had come up with didn't work then we would have vacancies.

Councillor Devulapalli voted against the amendment at the Panel meeting. She considered that it was important to attract and retain staff with skills and qualifications. Trade unions had been consulted and were happy with the proposals. She considered staff had waited long enough for the pay award and the discussions were harmful.

Councillor de Whalley confirmed that 95% of Unison members who responded voted to accept the award. He commented that if the ability to recruit staff was compromised, Cabinet would be held responsible.

Councillor Parish reminded members that the discussions with Unison commenced in March and they were happy with the proposed award. The initial discussion with Unison on Councillor Joyce's amendment was not supported but there was not time to fully consult members. He reminded members that they did not know the financial circumstances of individuals. He stated that comments had been made to him by senior opposition members that they considered senior staff were paid too much compared with the allowances paid to members. He considered that the delay to the pay award which was agreed with unison, and the administration would not be helpful in the recruitment of new staff or the retention of the existing staff. He considered the debate had harmed recruitment.

On moving to the vote on the amendment, the amendment was lost.

The debate then moved to the substantive motion.

Councillor Moriarty commented that members were always looking at the recruitment of staff. He wanted staff to feel welcome and an asset to the council.

In summing up Councillor Parish reminded members that in the minutes of Cabinet he had listened to all the debate at Cabinet and drew attention to the fact that there was a wider piece of work to be done on pay and conditions. He had agreed with Unison that discussions would commence for the following year.

On being put to the vote the recommendations were approved.

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CAB28: Appointment of representatives to inquorate parishes

Councillor Dark supported the recommendations.

Councillor Ryves asked Council to recognise some of the issues suffered by Parish Councillors and clerks. He asked for a wider support of parishes by the Borough Council.

Councillor Long drew attention to the fact that there was an option to provide buy in legal services for parishes who were bodies in their own right. Many parishes consulted with NALC.

Councillor Lintern drew attention to the abuse that many parishes and clerks received. She hoped that the Council would work on an agenda which had support for parishes if not the numbers of parish councillors would continue to drop.

Councillor de Winton drew attention to the good support his parish had received from the Legal team when required. There had been several incidences at parish level. He drew attention to the need to make

being a councillor more attractive. The behaviour by the public or by some parish councillors was not acceptable so there should be the ability to suspend abusive councillors.

Councillor Kemp drew attention to the abuse councillor suffer. She considered that training and support should be given.

Councillor Moriarty commented that Borough Councillors had an obligation to attend Meetings where possible and support parishes.

Councillor Blunt asked that Borough Councillors be given guidelines interest wise should they be appointed onto the parishes.

Councillor de Whalley welcomed any way to simplify and support parishes.

Councillor Parish drew attention to the forthcoming Corporate Plan which included matters of interest to parishes. He also informed Councillors that there would be a meeting for parish councils to discuss such issues.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

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CAB30 and 32: Local Authority Housing Fund – Round 2

The proposals in the recommendations were welcomed, and on being put to the vote the recommendations were agreed.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting on 1 August 2023 be approved.

At 19.00 Council adjourned and reconvened at 19.11.

C:39

NOTICES OF MOTION

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- i) Councillor Everett proposed the following Notice of Motion (11/23), seconded by Councillor Dark.

This Council notes the Department of Transport and train operators are pushing ahead with plans to close local Railway Station ticket offices.

This Council further notes a rail prospectus carried by Norfolk County Council indicated for many people the absence of station staff and ticket offices acted as a barrier to using the railway.

This Council shares the concerns of Norfolk County Council that these closures could affect the most vulnerable people in society, who rely on ticket office staff to help them and who could struggle to use ticket machines.

Therefore, this Council agrees to lobby all local Members of Parliament to stop the closure of local ticket offices and to support Norfolk County Council in lobbying to stop the closure of all ticket offices in Norfolk.

In proposing his motion Councillor Everett spoke in support of his Motion drawing attention to the much used and popular service which did more than just selling tickets, and the fact that its proposed closure was discriminating against those who were not able or willing to use the ticket machines. He drew attention to the complexity of the ticketing machines. Ticket office staffing was not regulated so rail companies were reducing those costs and leaving vulnerable people without their assistance.

In seconding the motion Councillor Dark spoke in support of the motion and drew attention to the fact that the County Council had taken a view on the proposed closures. He hoped all would get behind the Motion.

Councillor Bone drew attention to the fact that the ticket staff made the rail service much more accessible to all and were a vital service as the electronic booking system was very complex.

Councillor Rust encouraged people to participate in the campaign to save the ticket offices and respond to the consultation. She considered that the rail company had not done its equality impact assessment on the proposals, as their removal impacted on the safety of lone women and vulnerable passengers, and the elderly. She raised that the office was being closed by stealth as when staff were sick or had left the job they closed them rather than replacing them. She drew attention to the fact that the Council had already issued a statement in support of the ticket offices.

Councillor Long as Chair of the Norfolk Rail Group at the County Council condemned the timing of the consultation in the middle of the summer holidays, he explained that there hadn't been time to call a meeting of the Group, but that a response had been sent by the County Council in line with this motion submitted. He suggested that Parliament and the Minister be lobbied on it.

Councillor de Whalley drew attention to the requirement to shift from cars from a carbon reduction point of view. He considered that by shutting ticket offices it drove people to cars.

Councillor Ring commented that the ticket office was needed, he drew attention to the fact that not only people with disabilities bought tickets from the ticket office as these people helped the travelling public.

Councillor Colwell commented that it was about profit hungry companies making closures. He agreed that MPs should be lobbied and the rail operators.

Councillor Collingham raised the issue that the only way to park on the rail station was to use a smart phone, which was totally unacceptable, even if someone was IT literate, as phone batteries often died and many people weren't able to use it.

Councillor Parish supported the motion and drew attention to the letter being sent from District Leaders. He drew attention to the continuing conversion at shops to self service which he was not in support of.

Councillor Ryes encouraged the further promotion of the consultation and supported the motion.

Councillor Devulapalli drew attention to the fact that the Rail Operators did not need to cut costs. She considered the proposed closures outrageous and scandalous.

Councillor Joyce drew attention the fact that without ticket office staff there may not be staff present on the station. He gave an example of his good experience of using the ticket office.

Councillor Collop drew attention to the fact that better deals could be found through the ticket office.

On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

RECOMMENDED: That the Motion be approved.

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- ii) Councillor Osborne proposed Notice of Motion (12/23), seconded by Councillor Bartrum:

This Council believes in equality for all regardless of natural or cultural origin, and supports equality, diversity and inclusion being at the heart of its policies and procedures.

This Council seeks to support all organisations that share these same values.

And the Borough to include promotions of Pride events alongside others held in West Norfolk annually.

In proposing his Motion, Councillor Osborn spoke in favour of the motion and spoke of the progress made for the equality for LGBTQ people and the number of crimes against them. He drew attention to the support of Pride in the area.

In seconding the Motion Councillor Bartrum supported the Pride event.

Councillor Colwell spoke in support of the Pride Event and celebrated the inclusivity and equality of the event. He suggested the Council should support, embrace and sponsor the event.

Councillor Bone confirmed that as secretary of the Pride Event he wouldn't vote on the motion. He drew attention to the significant importance of the inclusivity for the town of the Pride event. He drew attention to his experiences growing up. He considered that having pride on the listing of events sent a message to all of the inclusivity of the area.

Councillor Ratcliffe spoke in support of the Motion and stated she would be proud if the Council spoke clearly in support of Pride.

Councillor Rust as an original supporter of Pride stated that the Motion was not asking for funding but support by the Council.

Councillor Kemp spoke in support of the promotion and potential funding of the Pride event.

Councillor Joyce drew attention to the change in society and encouraged the Council to put Pride on its agenda.

Councillor Parish drew attention to the change in society over the years towards the acceptance of LGBTQ people. He encouraged support for the motion.

Councillor Sandell supported the Motion.

Councillor Morley in supporting the motion drew attention to the changes in attitude over time and fortunate position of living in this country where diversity and equality was embraced.

Councillor Ring thanked Councillor Osborne for bringing the Motion, and expressed astonishment that the Pride event was not included on the Council's list of events.

Councillor Dark commended the experiences being brought to the meeting which enlightened the issues people faced. He commented that the Motion was what should already be happening.

Councillor Long commented that he didn't know why it wasn't already on the list of events.

By way of clarification and summing up Councillor Osborne clarified that the motion was not seeking funding for the event, but the council had provided other support, for which he thanked everyone for their assistance.

On being put to the vote the motion was agreed. Councillor Bone did not vote.

RECOMMENDED: That the Motion be approved.

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iii) Councillor Kemp proposed the following Notice of Motion (13/23), seconded by Councillor Nash:

Getting It Right in West Norfolk
Strategic Infrastructure in West Norfolk Motion

This Council believes in the right infrastructure, in the right place, at the right time. More than 13,000 new homes will come forward in the Local Plan, 4,000 in West Winch, West Norfolk's largest ever development.

So, this Council affirms its responsibility and intent, to do its utmost to influence and achieve timely delivery of the right strategic infrastructure underpinning new development, including doctor's and dentist's surgeries, sufficient hospital beds in the new QEH rebuild, necessary roads and cycle paths, energy efficient homes and Biodiversity Net Gain.

The Council will write to the Highways Authority to request a strategic highway assessment of the impact of new development on the circulation of traffic around King's Lynn and West Norfolk, including the A10 and the A149.

In proposing her Motion Councillor Kemp spoke in favour of it drawing attention to the funding stages that the road building for the new West Winch road had to go through before it was built and drawing attention to the difficulty some residents had in getting across the road and the increase in costs to transport and business with the traffic delays along the road.

In seconding the Motion Councillor Nash considered the motion common sense to demonstrate proactivity and conscious of the needs of the community. He considered that the design of the road was concerning with the roundabouts which slowed down traffic. The issue of additional traffic if introduced before the road was built was of the most concern. He hoped that the council would do everything in its power to ensure sufficient and sustainable infrastructure was planned and ensured from the start of the project.

Councillor Moriarty proposed the following amendment:

That the last paragraph be deleted and replaced with "that the Council will work with the County Council including the Highways Authority and National Highways as appropriate to support the delivery of the right

strategic infrastructure required to support the new development around Kings Lynn and West Norfolk.

He explained that the Local Plan Inspectors requested a review of the technical note on transport evidence – summarise the results and findings of traffic and transport modelling to assess the impact of the development, to explain the recommended transport infrastructure schemes and other interventions, to draw together and summarise the transport strategy's programmes and measures relevant to the Plan and the West Winch area and to outline any other evidence which the local authority consider to be relevant.

The Council then commissioned NCC consultants to prepare a technical note which showed the impact of the development proposed in the plan and the West Winch Growth Area. Councillor Moriarty informed members that at the request of the Inspectors the document was still confidential but was due to be released for consultation purposes in the next 2 weeks for a six week period. He hoped Councillor Kemp would accept the amendment.

Councillor Parish seconded the amendment.

Councillors Kemp and Nash accepted the amendment.

The substantive motion was now amended.

Councillor Blunt confirmed that he was going to propose the same amendment and had spoken to Councillor Kemp earlier in the day. He was supportive of the proposal. He stressed it was a bigger issue than West Winch with the gridlock on occasions in the town centre. He encouraged all to work with the highway authority to continue to work on traffic issues in the area.

Councillor Dark sought confirmation from Councillor Kemp of the groups support. Councillor Kemp explained that she had sent it to a number of different recipients.

Councillor Lintern considered that the motion was critical as infrastructure needed to be secured and was an area where it needed to be right.

Councillor Joyce made reference to S14 where the highways authority didn't permit use of a road which brought about the Kings Lynn Area Transport Strategy. He concurred on the issue of traffic gridlock in the town. The Local Transport Infrastructure Plan needed to be agreed. He supported the Motion.

Councillor Parish supported the motion. The issue of the crossing at West Winch would require traffic calming measures to be carried out within 12 months. The Authority was ensuring the right infrastructure was in place. He reminded members that the road and developments

were chicken and egg situation, that there would be no funding for the road without development. He reminded members of the hard work taking place to ensure the correct things were in place.

Councillor Ratcliff expressed concern about the infrastructure in place for some development in Downham Market and drew attention to the difficulties making conditions which did not comply with national guidelines.

In order to ensure a vote was taken within the 3 hour time period Councillor Parish proposed moving to the vote which was seconded by Councillor Lintern. On being put to the vote this was approved.

On being put to the vote, the Motion, as amended was approved.

RECOMMENDED: That the Motion as amended be approved.

C:40

CABINET MEMBERS REPORTS

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Councillor Parish presented the Cabinet Members reports en masse.

Councillor Squire gave an update on the fly tipping in the Borough which showed it was up by 12 %. The Clean Neighbourhood Officers had since taken up posts. She reported on a fly tipping incident where the innards from suspected illegally butchered and possibly rustled cattle was dumped along the A17. She confirmed there was a multi-agency approach to investigating the incident.

Councillor Joyce drew attention to the level of meat shoplifted.

As the meeting had reached its 3 hour point, the Mayor closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm