

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH
HELD AT SWANSPool HOUSE, WELLINGBOROUGH
ON TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER 2015**

Present: The Mayor (Councillor B Graves) and Councillors Abram, Allebone, Anslow, Aslam, Bailey, Bell, Bone, Carr, Ekins, Emerson, Francis, Gough, Griffiths, Hallam, Harrington, Henley, G Lawman, L Lawman, Maguire, Morrall, Partridge-Underwood, Patel, Scarborough, Simmons, Skittrall, Stevenson, Walia, Ward, M Waters, V Waters, Watts and York.

Officers present: Mr J T Campbell (Chief Executive), Mrs L Elliott (Head of Finance), Miss J Thomas (Head of Planning and Local Development), Miss S Lyons (Solicitor, District Law), Mr G Betts (Mayor's Sergeant) and Mrs C A Mundy, (Democratic Services Officer).

(Before the meeting commenced a minutes silence was held in memory of former Councillor, Paul Ainge, who had died.)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beirne, Lloyd and Scanlon.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the council's code of conduct and the council's constitution, no declarations were made.

3. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING OF 13 OCTOBER 2015

The minutes of the council meeting held on 13 October 2015 were received.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the council meeting held on 13 October 2015 be confirmed and signed.

4. QUESTIONS/PETITIONS/REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

A question had been received from Mr P Battye, an elector, to the leader of the council, Councillor Paul Bell as follows:

"Can the leader of the council assure me, given the expected harsh winter ahead of us, that the council will do all that is humanly possible to open the necessary buildings to ensure nobody in Wellingborough has to sleep out in the open, or in makeshift shelters, over this coming winter?"

The leader responded to the question as follows:

“The council operates a severe weather emergency protocol (SWEP) during the colder months. This comes into force when temperatures of zero degrees or less are forecast for three consecutive nights.

“The council has worked in partnership with the Salvation Army to devise a project to provide temporary shelter for those people who are sleeping rough or bed and breakfast accommodation is used for those clients who contact us out of hours. We make a financial contribution for our referrals to the Salvation Army. The scheme applies to everyone in the borough and not just those clients who the council would have statutory duty towards. The scheme is a humanitarian response on behalf of the council to all those who are without shelter during periods of extreme cold.

“The council has an obligation but not a statutory duty to find accommodation for people who are street homeless and will use both the Salvation Army scheme and its arrangements with hotels and bed and breakfast providers to ensure nobody in Wellingborough has to sleep out in the open or in makeshift shelters, when temperatures drop to zero degrees or below after an initial three nights.

“The project has been running successfully for the last two years and will run again this year. In 2014/15 SWEP came into force for 19 nights during which there were a total of 68 placement nights with the Salvation Army as different individuals stayed on different nights. Twenty people signed up for at least one night and 15 people actually attended on at least one night. The total cost to the council was £950 for the 19 nights.

“The Salvation Army trained their volunteers back in October and they will run the scheme from their buildings in Wellingborough.

“The referral forms from the council and Daylight Centre are being prepared and the scheme is ready for the implementation of SWEP.

“Each year the council does a rough sleeper estimate for DCLG. This took place on 12 November 2015 and for Wellingborough was reported as seven which is an increase of two on last year. This is an estimate, and undertaken on a given day, of homeless people who access homeless services in the town.”

Mr Battye asked a supplementary question as to whether the council would look beyond its statutory duty to ensure that no people were sleeping rough.

Councillor Bell clarified that there were 13 empty buildings in the town and that the Wellingborough and District Council of Churches was working together with the Salvation Army to provide night time accommodation for all those sleeping rough who wished to have it.

(Councillor Bell declared a personal interest as he attended the Mill Road Baptist Church, which was part of the Council of Churches.)

RESOLVED that this be noted.

5. MINUTES TO NOTE

The minutes of the following meetings were received:

Planning Committee	7 October 2015
Planning Committee	11 November 2015
Licensing Sub-Committee	9 October 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the above be noted.

6. SERVICES COMMITTEE – 19 OCTOBER 2015

The minutes of the Services committee of 19 October 2015 were received.

Councillor Bailey made reference to minute 4 – Local Plan update particularly regarding his, and Councillor Ward's, disappointment over the committee's decision that it was not necessary for officers to consult further with them and that it was sufficient for them, as ward councillors, to pass comment at the consultation stage. He also made reference to the next Services Committee meeting, to be held on 7 December, and the report relating to the Local Plan which contained a number of inaccuracies regarding Finedon.

The chairman noted Councillor Bailey's comments and asked that he notify officers directly of any inaccuracies so they could be resolved.

Reference was made to minute 7 – Parking Strategy Advisory Group. Councillor Scarborough asked for assurance from the leader that charging for parking would not be looked at by the advisory group. Councillor Bell confirmed that there was no intention to look at car parking charges during the next four years.

The recommendation contained within the minutes was put to council and declared carried.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Councillors Anslow, Ekins, G Lawman, Scanlon and Skittrall be appointed to the Parking Strategy Advisory Group for a period of 12 to 18 months;
- (ii) The Services Committee minutes of 19 October 2015 be adopted.

7. RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 21 OCTOBER 2015

The minutes of the Resources committee of 21 October 2015 were received.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Resources Committee of 21 October 2015 be adopted.

8. MOTION FROM COUNCILLORS GOUGH AND SKITTRALL

Localism, Planning and Appeals

Councillors Gough addressed the meeting and proposed the following motion, with Councillor Skittrall also addressing the meeting and seconding the motion:

Council notes:

That a number of communities in the borough have engaged positively in the planning process through the Localism Act (2010) by developing Neighbourhood Plans in order to provide a positive vision for growth in their community. Officers at this council have contributed significant time and resource towards the emerging North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. The council also note the hard work of officers in developing the new Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough which seeks to provide a practical and positive vision for growth for the Borough.

However, there have been a number of examples in which decisions on planning matters made by this council have been successfully challenged by developers despite significant opposition to them as well as such appeals being in conflict with existing planning policies. Such examples include areas such as Earls Barton and Isham. There have also been a number of other appeals that have been successfully defended but where not all aspects of the appeal have been dismissed. For example, Bozeat and Irchester.

Council believes:

That it is right that this council positively plans for growth in order to provide for the housing needs of this borough.

That the urban extensions of Stanton Cross and Glenvale Park at Wellingborough North are key components in a positive growth agenda for Wellingborough. It is also right that the villages of this borough should have a certain level of development, but such need should be identified and delivered with the support and input of local communities. That the current rate of house building within the borough is not constrained by a shortage of land with planning consent.

Planning appeal decisions such as those in Earls Barton and Isham threaten the borough's plan led approach, and as a result undermine the government's policies of localism and neighbourhood planning.

Although there is a need for local councils to have land available for development that can be consented and built on, the five year land supply as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework cannot be fully controlled by local authorities and can be hampered by developers who either refuse to build or are unable to build for various reasons.

A number of councillors spoke in support of the above, sharing their concerns over the current situation and the disappointment around some of the decisions being made by the Planning Inspectorate, particularly when there were emerging local plans and a referendum taking place.

The motion, as follows, was put to the meeting and unanimously declared carried.

That the council write to the Members of Parliament for Wellingborough & Daventry to:

- (i) express the council's concern on the following issues:
 - Lack of local accountability in planning appeal decisions;
 - The faults in the current definition of a five year housing supply;
 - The potential of planning appeal decisions to undermine emerging Neighbourhood Plans, so that such appeals should not be decided when plans are at an advanced stage and certainly not when a Neighbourhood Plan is awaiting a referendum or a local plan is awaiting an examination;
- (ii) Request a meeting between a delegation from the council and ministers at DCLG to highlight these concerns and ask for a review into these matters.

RESOLVED that:

The council write to the Members of Parliament for Wellingborough & Daventry to:

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 - Lack of local accountability in planning appeal decisions;
 - The faults in the current definition of a five year housing supply;
 - The potential of planning appeal decisions to undermine emerging Neighbourhood Plans, so that such appeals should not be decided when plans are at an advanced stage and certainly not when a Neighbourhood Plan is awaiting a referendum or a local plan is awaiting an examination;
- (iii) Request a meeting between a delegation from the council and ministers at DCLG to highlight these concerns and ask for a review into these matters.

9. CORRESPONDENCE, COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE DIRECTION OF THE MAYOR OR THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING

The Mayor informed members that there would be an Art Exhibition held in the offices on Friday 4 December 2015.

On Thursday 17 December 2015 he and the mayoress would be inviting employees for a Christmas drink in the parlour to which members were also invited.

RESOLVED that these events be noted.

Mayor

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.