

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH
HELD AT SWANSPool HOUSE, WELLINGBOROUGH
ON TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2015**

Present: The Mayor (Councillor B Graves) and Councillors Abram, Allebone, Aslam, Bailey, Bell, Carr, Ekins, Emerson, Francis, Gough, Griffiths, Hallam, Harrington, G Lawman, L Lawman Lloyd, Maguire, Morrall, Partridge-Underwood, Patel, Scanlon, 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), Mrs B Lawrence (Head of Resources), Miss J Thomas (Head of Planning and Local Development), Miss S Lyons (Solicitor, District Law), Ms S Gibson (Mayor's Sergeant) and Mrs C A Mundy, (Democratic Services Officer).

The Mayor welcomed Mr L Goff, Miss L Goff, Mr P Bateman, Mrs S Bateman and Mr D Smith to the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anslow, Beirne Bone and Henley.

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 21 JULY 2015

The minutes of the council meeting held on 21 July 2015 were received.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the council meeting held on 21 July 2015 be confirmed and signed.

4. PRESENTATION OF A PAINTING TO MR GOFF

The mayor presented a painting entitled 'Christine's Saturday Swans' to Mr L Goff. Mr Goff had originally painted it for his wife Christine, and it had been entered into the Wellingborough Art Competition, winning third place. The painting was of sentimental value to Mr Goff and was now being returned to him. Mr Goff thanked the Mayor and in turn presented him with a replacement painting depicting the embankment.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

5. LONG SERVICE AWARD FOR MRS S BATEMAN

The Mayor presented Mrs S Bateman with her long service award, and a gift of vouchers, for 25 years service to the council.

RESOLVED that the long service award and congratulations of the council to Mrs Bateman be noted.

6. RETIREMENT AWARD FOR MR D HAYNES

The Mayor reported on the retirement award for Mr D Haynes who was not present at the meeting. Mr Haynes had joined the council in August 1983 and had recently retired from the council. Mr Haynes had already been presented with his certificate and received gift vouchers.

RESOLVED that the retirement award and congratulations of the council to Mr Haynes be noted.

7. QUESTIONS/PETITIONS/REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

No questions, petitions or requests to address the meeting had been received.

RESOLVED that this be noted.

8. MINUTES TO NOTE

The minutes of the following meetings were received:

Planning Committee	8 July 2015
Planning Committee	5 August 2015
Planning Committee	9 September 2015
Licensing Sub-Committee	5 August 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the above meetings be noted.

9. SERVICES COMMITTEE – 14 SEPTEMBER 2015

The minutes of the services committee of 14 September 2015 were received.

The chairman asked that it be noted that Councillor Gough was also in attendance at the meeting as an observer.

Councillor Scarborough made reference to minute 9 – Equality Objective 2016-2020 and moved that this item be referred back to Services Committee.

He considered that the motion put to the council meeting on 21 July, and subsequently referred to services committee, had only partly been dealt with in the report to services committee on 14 September 2015. The motion was as follows:

“Recognising Wellingborough’s diverse and ever changing population and the council’s duty to sustain and promote good community relations and to challenge prejudice, as is required by the Equality Act 2010, Wellingborough Council agrees to instigate a wide ranging community consultation to determine how best to improve community participation and involvement in challenging prejudice, and to refresh progress in delivering the equality and diversity responsibilities of the council and its related providers of contracted out services”.

He referred to the proposed equality objective outlined in the report to services committee “to continue to promote equality through the provision of services that are fair and accessible to all”.

It was proposed that, in accordance with the Equality Act, this objective be published for public consultation, but Councillor Scarborough’s view was that this failed to challenge prejudice as stated in the motion. He considered that the bulk of the motion had not been discussed adequately by the services committee.

He was also concerned that the equality objective would not meet the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010, as he considered that it was not measurable or quantifiable. He particularly referred to the guidance available from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Councillor Emerson seconded Councillor Scarborough’s motion to refer the consideration of the motion and the equality objective back to the services committee.

(Councillor Walia joined the meeting at 7.15pm.)

The chairman responded to Councillor Scarborough’s points, explaining that 6.7 of the report to services committee stated that feedback from the consultation process would be used to recommend the final wording of the objective to members, and would inform an action plan to be used to set more detailed targets to measure the success of the objective to ensure it remained Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timebound (SMART).

The chairman indicated that it was his understanding that, whilst the council had a duty to give “due regard” to tackling prejudice and promoting understanding, the general equality duty was not a duty to achieve a result, but rather to have due regard to the need to achieve these goals in a conscious and considered way.

He noted that the report referred to the expectation that the adoption of an effective equality objective would promote good community relations and challenge prejudice. It was therefore considered that the points raised in the motion had been covered therein and by the services committee.

Councillor Scarborough reiterated that whilst the report referred to consultation on the objective, he considered that there needed to be more

consultation on the wording of the objective before it went out to consultation, hence his request for it to be referred back to the services committee.

The chairman replied, informing council that it would be reasonable to ask officers to move the consultation forward within the agreed timescale and then bring back a report in March 2016 after consultation had ended, rather than refer it back to an earlier meeting of the committee. The report to services committee in March 2016 would detail the results of the consultation and propose the final equality objective to be adopted.

The Mayor put the motion, to refer this item back to the next services committee to the meeting. On this being put to the vote the motion was declared lost with seven votes in favour and twenty three against.

Councillor Gough spoke in relation to minute number 16 – Neighbourhood Planning. He expressed his delight that the neighbourhood plan had now reached the referendum stage and thanked colleagues, officers and the late councillor Peter Wright, who had all worked tirelessly to ensure that the plan came to fruition. Councillor Maguire also commended the work of all those involved with the plan in Earls Barton and thanked Councillor Gough for his kind words about his late colleague Peter Wright.

The chairman thanked his fellow councillors and also made reference to the hardworking volunteers and officers who had helped with the Earls Barton plan and were continuing to work on other plans that were moving forward.

He moved the adoption of the services committee minutes of 14 September 2015; this was seconded by Councillor Harrington and on being put to the vote declared carried.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the services committee of 14 September 2015 be adopted.

10. RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2015

The minutes of the resources committee of 16 September 2015 were received.

Reference was made to minute 7 – Land and Property Issues and the recommendation contained therein which was proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Griffiths.

Councillor Scarborough commended the action, considering this to be a good way forward for the future, and fully supported the recommendation.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was declared carried.

Reference was also made to minute 11 – Future Service Delivery Models and the recommendation therein which was proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Griffiths.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was declared carried.

The chairman moved the adoption of the minutes of the resources committee of 16 September 2015 and this was seconded by Councillor Griffiths and on being put to the vote declared carried.

RESOLVED that approval be given to:

- (i) The following objectives for a property asset strategy forming the basis of a detailed report to members in due course:
 - (a) Property acquisitions or disposals will be considered by the council only if there is a clear business case which demonstrates that the proposed action will:
 - (i) Provide revenue income for the council or one of its wholly owned companies; or
 - (ii) Reduce existing revenue costs, and thereby demonstrate best value; and
 - (iii) Contribute to the regeneration, redevelopment and improvement of the borough.
 - (b) In order to support the council's overall objectives, land or property will be identified within the strategy as intended for operational, investment or community use;
- (ii) the strategy for shared services and collaborative working being progressed;
- (iii) authority being given to the chief executive and head of finance, in consultation with the monitoring officer, to progress the creation of a wholly owned local authority trading company to deliver the bereavement services provided at the crematorium;
- (iv) the creation of a further wholly-owned local authority trading company to deliver the residential rental services for the converted operational borough properties and other potential residential units in the borough's possession, subject to further reports to the resources committee.
- (v) the minutes of the resources committee of 16 September 2015 being adopted.

11. MINUTES TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT

The minutes of the following meetings were received:

Partnerships and Performance Committee
Audit Committee

21 September 2015
22 September 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the above meetings be adopted.

12. MOTION FROM COUNCILLORS SCARBOROUGH AND EMERSON

Transition to Individual Electoral Registration

The following motion had been received from Councillors Scarborough and Emerson as follows:

“Council notes:

“The Electoral Commission’s findings in its report into the transition to individual registration (IER) and, in particular, the finding that 1.9 million of the current entries on the electoral register are only being retained under the transitional arrangements from the previous household registration system, which represents 4% of all register entries. The Electoral Commission has previously estimated that the number of people not correctly registered at their current address is around 7.5 million across the UK.

“The Government wants to end the transitional arrangements and fully implement IER 12 months early. The Electoral Commission, however, has warned that there is “a risk that a considerable number of eligible voters could be removed from the register before the significant set of polls scheduled for May 2016 if the transition to IER is brought forward.

“Council believes:

“That the Government’s proposal for the introduction of IER remains poorly thought out and implemented, running the risk that voters could be disenfranchised as part of this process.

“That the end of the transitional arrangements before IER is fully implemented should remain December 2016 as stated in law and should not be brought forward to December 2015.

“Council resolves:

“to take every possible step to ensure that as many local residents as possible are registered to vote.

“To write to the government to express our concerns and to ask for additional resources that ensure that local residents are not disenfranchised from the democratic process.”

Councillor Scarborough spoke on the motion. He then proposed the motion which was seconded by Councillor Emerson.

Councillor Gough addressed the meeting. He concurred that this was a very important issue and that it was essential for every effort to be made to ensure that IER was fully implemented. He had investigated this further and received assurance from the government that additional funding would be made available if it was needed by local authorities.

He proposed the following amendments to the above motion, which were seconded by Councillor L Lawman.

- After paragraph 4 to include additional paragraphs 5 and 6 as follows:

“It is also noted, however, that there were over 400,000 more entries on the registers used for the general election in May than when IER was introduced last year.

“This council also notes the hard work of officers to register unverified voters and improved the retention rate of electors.”

- To add the following after “Council believes”:

“That the government’s proposal for the introduction of IER should be commended for its part in tackling electoral fraud.”

- To replace the paragraphs after “Council resolves:” with the following:

“To continue reasonable steps to ensure that as many local residents as possible are registered to vote.

“To write to the Members of Parliament for Wellingborough and Daventry to commend the government’s efforts to tackle electoral fraud and to seek what funding is available to local authorities that can be accessed, should this borough qualify.”

Councillor Scarborough responded to the proposed amendments and confirmed that he was agreeable to additional paragraphs 5 and 6, but that the paragraph under ‘Council believes.....’ was not appropriate. He confirmed that the first paragraph under ‘Council resolves’ was acceptable but that the final paragraph was not.

The Mayor put the amendment to the motion to the meeting. The amendment was declared carried with twenty three votes in favour and seven against, and this became the substantive motion.

The Mayor asked if anyone wished to add anything further to the debate before he put the substantive motion to the vote.

Councillor Scarborough said that he would be unable to support this motion as he considered that the actions of the government could not be commended and that the implementation period of five months was too short notice and would disenfranchise a considerable number of people.

The Mayor put the substantive motion to the meeting and this was declared carried with twenty three votes in favour and seven votes against.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Council continue to take reasonable steps to ensure that as many local residents as possible are registered to vote;
- (ii) a letter be sent to the Members of Parliament for Wellingborough and Daventry commending the government's efforts to tackle electoral fraud and to seek whatever funding is available to local authorities that can be accessed, should the borough qualify.

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

The Mayor had received a request from the Leader of the Council who wished to make some amendments to membership of committees and outside bodies.

Councillor Bell proposed the following amendments:

Services Committee - Councillor V Waters be replaced by Councillor Gough.

Health and Well Being Forum - Councillor Graves to be replaced by Councillor Scanlon.

Wellingborough Homes Board - It be noted that Councillor Bone had resigned from Wellingborough Homes Board and that a replacement would be agreed at the next council meeting.

This was seconded by Councillor Griffiths on being put to the vote declared carried.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Councillor Gough replaces Councillor V Waters on Services Committee;
- (ii) Councillor Scanlon replaces Councillor Graves on the Health and Well Being Forum;
- (iii) It be noted that Councillor Bone had resigned from Wellingborough Homes Board and that a replacement would be agreed at the next council meeting.

Mayor

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.