MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF
THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH
HELD ON TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2020


Officers present: Mrs L Elliott (Managing Director) Mr S Darcy, (Executive Director/S151 Officer), Mrs K Denton, Mr A Piper, Mrs V Jessop, Mr E Symons (Assistant Directors) Mr B Gill, (Monitoring Officer), Mrs C A Mundy, (Senior Democratic Services Officer), minute taker, Mrs F Hubbard (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Mrs E Robinson (Democratic Services Support Officer) as meeting producers.

The mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for the technical issues which had delayed the start of the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies had been received from Councillors Beirne, Emerson, Graves, Patel, Simmons, Walia, Ward and Watts. (8)

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, the following declarations were made:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Councillor</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aslam</td>
<td>Partnerships &amp; Performance Committee 9 11 2020 Minute 5 – Presentation by the Victoria Centre.</td>
<td>Registerable interest – sits on Victoria Centre Management Committee.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henley</td>
<td>Partnerships &amp; Performance Committee 9 11 2020 Min 4 – Presentation from Glamis Hall Resources 16 11 2020 Min 3 High Street/ Jacksons Lane</td>
<td>Other – is an active volunteer for One Wellingborough based at Glamis Hall and the Victoria Centre Personal – had known one of the speakers for several years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Lawman</td>
<td>Partnerships &amp; Performance Committee 9 11 2020 Min 5 – Presentation Victoria Centre</td>
<td>Personal – is the NCC representative on the management committee of the Victoria Centre.</td>
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3. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING OF 20 OCTOBER 2020

The minutes of the council meeting held on 20 October 2020 were received.

It was proposed by Councillor Griffiths and seconded by Councillor Partridge-Underwood that the minutes be confirmed. On being put to the vote this was declared carried.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the council meeting of 20 October 2020, be confirmed and signed.

4. QUESTIONS/REPRESENTATIONS/PETITIONS RECEIVED FROM THE PUBLIC

The mayor welcomed Mr Andrew Powles, Mr Robert Jeffrey and Mr Ian McFaul of Keepmoat Homes, who had requested to speak. He informed the meeting that agenda item 7 - High Street/Jacksons Lane site would be discussed immediately after the speakers had addressed the meeting, as all were speaking in relation to this item.

Local resident, Mr Jeffery, spoke about his concern over the decline of business in the town centre and felt that the development of the Jackson Lane site for housing would exacerbate such decline, particularly with the reduction in car parking. The refurbishment of Tresham College and the new housing development at Glenvale Park, would increase traffic entering Wellingborough from the North of the town, and there would be a need for additional car parking. He referenced the 4,000-signature petition objecting to the proposal and the public meeting held in May 2018, when a public consultation and drop-in sessions were promised and was disappointed that this had not been arranged by the leader of the council.

Mr Powles, of Wellingborough Civic Society then addressed the meeting expressing opposition to the proposal to sell the land because of the impact on car parking at this site, which would be reduced by 60%. The suggestion that this shortfall in car parking would be found in other areas of the town was misjudged as this would not be possible. He referenced the car parking studies undertaken in 2016 and again in 2018 and considered these to be inadequate. An alternative suggestion to use the Swansgate car park was not suitable or convenient for those travelling from the North of the town, or those using the church and other facilities in the High Street area. In relation to the proposed housing development he noted that there were allocated spaces for each home equating to one and a half spaces per property which indicated that some residents would be expected to utilise the public car parking spaces. He considered that this development was not appropriate for the site.
Mr I McFaul, Technical Director, Keepmoat Homes addressed the meeting. He explained how Keepmoat had been working with the council for over 14 years and that Keepmoat was the preferred developer of the site. Keepmoat’s aim was to revitalise town centres and bring them back to life, both in regard to the daytime and night-time economy. He expected the proposed homes to be occupied mostly by young, first time buyers generally under 35. The site would help to meet Wellingborough’s target of 350 new homes per year and the site was included in the council’s five-year housing land supply. The demand for car parking had been considered and there would be enough car parking spaces, with over 200 being available for public use. Shopping habits had considerably changed over recent years and the Covid-19 pandemic had accelerated such change, with a move to on-line shopping. The revitalisation of town centres required active, sociable people living in the heart of the town who would spend their money locally in neighbourhood shops, cafes and restaurants.

The mayor thanked the speakers and asked the leader of the council to present the report.

5. HIGH STREET/JACKSONS LANE SITE

The annexed circulated report of the director was received in relation to the options for the High Street/Jacksons Lane site, which had recently been discussed at an additional resources committee meeting held on 16 November 2020.

Councillor Griffiths presented the report, and in doing so asked that it be noted, for the purpose of clarity, that neither himself or his deputy, Councillor Partridge-Underwood had attended meetings or had any dealings with Keepmoat Homes; only officers of the council had been in discussion directly with the developer.

He also referenced the comments made by the speakers in relation to the public meeting and the promise he made at that meeting to hold a public consultation and drop-in sessions, and explained that this had unfortunately been unable to happen due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

In recent years this brownfield town centre development site had been earmarked as being appropriate for a housing scheme, with a view to regenerating the town centre. A housing development on this site would ensure that more people lived in the centre of the town which in turn would impact on businesses and the hospitality sector once the pandemic restrictions were lifted. Reference had been made to mixed-use development on the site with interest having been shown by the retail or commercial sector. No firm offers or expressions of interest had been received by council officers for this site. A housing scheme, along with car parking, was the only viable option for the site.
A recent report to an additional resources committee had been considered at length and the recommendation, from that committee, was before council and was proposed by Councillor Griffiths and seconded by Councillor Partridge-Underwood.

The mayor thanked Councillor Griffiths and opened the report and recommendation for debate.

Councillor L Lawman addressed the meeting, she had considered the comments made by speakers, along with additional information and proposed an alteration to the recommendation as follows:

“This council proposes not to sell the site at this time and allow the new North Northamptonshire unitary authority to look at all future options for this important town centre site”.

The mayor asked the proposer and seconder if they were happy to accept this alteration. Both confirmed that they were.

The proposed alteration was seconded by Councillor Skittrall. This alteration became the substantive motion before council for discussion and debate.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Managing Director, Mrs Elliott, clarified that the motion before council was not to sell the site and to allow the new North Northamptonshire unitary authority to decide on the future options for the site.

Members considered the motion, with many agreeing that this site needed to be developed. Members, however, felt that the concern of the speakers, at this meeting, previous meetings and at the public meeting; along with all who had signed the petition, needed to be listened to and that many valid points had been made.

It was noted that the local plan had designated the area for housing and a suitable housing scheme would help to revitalise the town centre. The design of the current scheme was, however, considered to be poor and objections from English Heritage had been received, as the location was near to the conservation area; it was felt that a much better design could have been proposed.

The new North Northamptonshire Council would have its own housing stock and it may wish to consider building its own homes, which would comply with the ‘decent homes standard’, on this site.

Some members considered that further investigation around mixed-use development on the site, to include commercial and retail businesses, was needed to ensure that the site was not purely residential.

It was cautioned that since 2003 there had been many suggestions for future use of this site including a car dealership, supermarket, shopping centre, flats,
multi-storey car park and housing. It was highly unlikely that commercial use would be viable on this site.

There was also some concern over the sale price for the land, which was considered a little low, and also over the section 106 monies, but it was felt that it was more important for the scheme to be the right scheme for Wellingborough.

It was reiterated that those travelling from the North of the town would not wish to drive through the town centre’s one-way system to park in the Swansgate car park. There was insufficient on-street car parking in this area, and where on-street spaces were available, most were utilised by residents. Many groups used the church facilities and playgroups in the area and needed to park for drop-off and pick-ups and car parking was of prime importance to many people.

Members had some sympathy for Keepmoat who had been involved with the project for many years but considered that the proposed scheme was not the right one for this town centre site near to the conservation area.

A request for a recorded vote was made by Councillor Henley and seconded by Councillor Maguire and being put to the vote declared carried.

The mayor put the motion to the vote, as follows:

“this council proposes not to sell the site at this time and allow the new North Northamptonshire unitary authority to look at all future options for this important town centre site”.

The following votes were cast:

For: Councillors Abram, Allebone, Aslam, Bell, Bone, Ekins, Gough, Griffiths, Hallam, Harrington, Henley, G Lawman, L Lawman, Maguire, Morrall, Partridge-Underwood, Scanlon, Scarborough, Skittrall, Stevenson, M Waters, Weatherill and York (no. 23)

Against: None (no. 0);

Abstain: None (no.0);

Absent: Councillors Beirne, Emerson, Graves, Patel, Simmons, Walia, Ward and Watts (no. 8).

(NB: Councillors Anslow, Francis and V Waters lost connectivity and were unable to cast their vote (3))

The motion was declared carried with 23 votes in favour, no votes against, no abstentions, three councillors who lost connectivity and eight councillors who were absent.
RESOLVED that the site, at High Street/Jaksons Lane, will not be sold at this time, to enable the new North Northamptonshire unitary authority to look at all future options for this important town centre site.

6. MINUTES TO NOTE

The following minutes were received to note:

Planning Committee 7 October 2020
Planning Committee 4 November 2020
Licensing Sub-Committee 19 October 2020

RESOLVED that the above minutes be noted.

7. PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 9 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the partnerships and performance committee of 9 November 2020 were received.

Councillors Aslam and Maguire referred to minute 4, presentation from Glamis Hall and minute 5, presentation from the Victoria Centre and raised an issue over the content of the minutes, which they felt did not truly reflect the meeting. They asked that it be noted that the Labour councillors on the committee had also expressed their thanks and support to Glamis Hall and the Victoria Centre, and were disappointed that the minutes did not fully reflect this, and instead referenced the comments made by the leader of the council. Councillor Aslam also felt that reference to his thanks to the Muslim Community had been omitted from minute 5.

Councillor Scarborough considered that the issue with the minutes, was that one councillor, who was not a committee member, had requested to speak and that his comments had particularly been referenced in the minutes, whilst other councillors’ names had not been specifically mentioned.

Councillor Skittrall, the vice-chairman, who had chaired this meeting, responded to the concerns raised and confirmed that he had requested specific reference to be made to the thanks expressed by the said councillor and felt that this, along with the thanks of the whole committee, had been reflected in the minutes, but noted the comments of the Labour group.

All members agreed that the tireless work of both Glamis Hall, the Victoria Centre and the One Wellingborough project had been much appreciated, during the pandemic. It was agreed that the minutes were brief but covered and reflected the discussion adequately.

Councillor Skittrall moved the adoption of the minutes, which was seconded by Councillor V Waters. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.
Councillors Aslam and Maguire voted against the adoption of the minutes.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the partnerships and performance committee of 9 November 2020 be adopted.

8. **SERVICES COMMITTEE – 10 NOVEMBER 2020**

The minutes of the services committee of 10 November 2020 were received.

Councillor Aslam referenced minute 8, housing allocation policy, and thanked officers for the update to the policy which was much appreciated.

The Chairman, Councillor G Lawman also informed council that changes to the SWEP policy now included reference to the wind-chill factor and that this had been implemented recently due to the weather conditions.

It was proposed by Councillor G Lawman and seconded by Councillor Harrington that the minutes be adopted. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the services committee of 10 November 2020, be adopted.

9. **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 16 NOVEMBER 2020**

The minutes of the additional resources committee of 16 November 2020 were received.

Councillor Weatherill referenced minute 3, High Street/Jacksons Lane, page 398, third paragraph that referenced a valuation, contained in the exempt papers to the report. He questioned whether this was a formal valuation and therefore considered that this paragraph needed to be amended to reflect this.

Councillor Griffiths clarified that this would be checked and if appropriate amended accordingly. Councillor Griffiths also reflected on the healthy debate that had taken place during the meeting tonight and the decision that had been made, which meant that the recommendation contained within the minutes had fallen and would therefore not be voted on.

The monitoring officer clarified that this was the case.

Councillor Griffiths proposed that the minutes be adopted, without the recommendation, and this was seconded by Councillor Partridge-Underwood. On being put to the vote the adoption of the minutes, without the recommendation, was declared carried.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the additional resources committee of 16 November 2020 be adopted, without the recommendation contained therein.
10. RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 18 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the resources committee of 18 November 2020 were received.

Councillor Griffiths proposed the adoption of the minutes and this was seconded by Councillor Partridge-Underwood. On being put to the vote the minutes of the resources committee of 18 November 2020 were declared adopted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the resources committee of 18 November 2020 be adopted.

11. AUDIT COMMITTEE – 24 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the audit committee of 24 November 2020 were received.

Councillor Henley referenced the audit of the accounts and asked when sign-off would take place. The chairman, Councillor Weatherill, expressed his disappointment that the audit was yet to be concluded, a meeting would be arranged as soon as all the outstanding aspects of the audit had been finalised.

Councillor Weatherill moved the adoption of the minutes and this was seconded by Councillor Bell. On being put to the vote the audit committee meeting of 24 November 2020 was declared adopted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the audit committee of 24 November 2020 be adopted.

12. CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP UPDATE

The annexed circulated report of the managing director was received in relation to the work of the climate change working group to deliver the council’s climate change strategy.

Appended to the report were the following:

Appendix A Northamptonshire climate change strategy (2020-2023);
Appendix B the Borough Council of Wellingborough climate change strategy action plan – progress within the borough;
Appendix C Notes from the climate change working group meeting held on 15 September 2020

Councillor L Lawman proposed the motion contained within the report and this was seconded by Councillor Harrington. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.
RESOLVED that:

(i) the partnership approach, being taken to deliver the Northamptonshire climate change strategy (2020-2023), be noted;
(ii) approval be given to the action plan and the progress made being noted;
(iii) the progress from the climate change working group be noted.

13. WELLINGBOROUGH BEREAVEMENT SERVICES - APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS TO THE BOARD

The annexed circulated report of the managing director was received to propose changes to the membership of the Board of Wellingborough Bereavement Services (WBS) Ltd following the redundancy of the managing director role at the borough council.

Councillor Griffiths proposed the motion contained within the report and this was seconded by Councillor Partridge-Underwood. In doing so they also expressed the thanks of the council to all involved with the crematorium and the kindness and dignity afforded to the bereaved and their families, especially during this year with the Covid-19 pandemic. Each year a candlelight memorial ceremony was held at the crematorium, this year the ceremony had been recorded and would be available on-line for the public to view. Councillor Maguire thanked the council for their support and the crematorium staff for their kindness and hard work this year.

RESOLVED that approval be given to the appointment, with effect from 1 January 2021, of Mr A Piper, Assistant Director (Corporate Landlord) to the Board of Wellingborough Bereavement Services Ltd.

14. CALCULATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2021/22

The annexed circulated report of the section 151 officer was received in relation to the council tax base for the financial year 2021/2022.

The tax base figures for the parish councils’ and Wellingborough town, were appended to the report.

Members questioned the relatively small increase in property numbers and whether this would reflect on the receipt of the new homes bonus monies. It was agreed that a member briefing note would be issued to all members in this regard.

Councillor Griffiths proposed the motion within the report, which was seconded by Councillor Partridge-Underwood. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.
RESOLVED that:

(i) approval be given to the amount calculated by the Borough Council of Wellingborough, as the council tax base for the year 2021/2022, as being 25,535 (band D equivalent);

(ii) approval be given to the council tax bases for the parish councils and Wellingborough town.

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

The leader of the council addressed the meeting and expressed his thanks to Mrs Elliott, who was attending her last meeting as managing director.

He praised Mrs Elliott for her leadership, work ethic, achievements, can-do attitude, patience, caring and sense of humour, all of which had ensured that the Members and employees had felt happy and secure and that the residents of the borough had achieved an excellent service from the council. This was reiterated by the leader of the opposition. Both wished her every success and happiness in the future. This was endorsed by all members who were sad to see her leave the authority.

Mrs Elliott responded that she had been very grateful for her time with the borough council, she greatly appreciated the opportunity afforded to her and praised her colleagues for their support and work ethic; and thanked members for their support and kind words, which were very much appreciated.

The mayor thanked all for their attendance, wished everyone a Merry Christmas and happy and healthy 2021 and closed the meeting at 9.45pm.

Mayor