

By email

5 August 2022

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader, West Northamptonshire Council
One Angel Square
Angel Street
Northampton
NN1 1ED

Dear Councillor Nunn,

I have been requested by the board of directors to write to the Council further to its letters dated 7 April and 7 July 2022 and also further to the Zoom meeting held with Council representatives on 27 June 2022.

The directors wish to record by way of a complaint the failure of the Council to respond to correspondence. In particular, the absence of a reply to an important letter dated 7 April 2022, almost four months ago, is unacceptable.

The Trust is a local community interest group which is concerned only with protecting the interests and future of NTFC and, frankly, it deserves better.

I have to record as a long-standing adviser to the Trust board that the failure to reply to correspondence is a repetition of its experience with the former Northampton Borough Council where several lengthy and important letters went unanswered.

The reasonable expectation with the creation of WNC was that things would improve, lessons would be learned but seemingly not.

With our correspondence ignored I also have to record that the significant concerns of the Trust board as to what has been agreed with the club's owners remain unchanged.

In my letter to Stuart Timmiss of the Council, dated 7 April 2022, I asked him to evidence his assertions that I was incorrect in the comments I made about the U-turn of WNC in dropping NBC's "no stand, no land" stand first policy.

Once again I invite the Council to demonstrate that the concerns of the Trust board are unfounded. Please explain why silence continues to be observed on this point. I would add that this is a matter of significant public interest and importance. Should the Council seek to decline disclosure on the grounds of "commercial confidentiality" this will be completely unacceptable.

Mr Timmiss made reference at the 27 June meeting to "handcuffs" being put in place for the completion of the stand but did not explain what these may be. Formally, in the public interest, we request full details.

After all, you have made great play of openness and transparency in the matter. This is not the experience of the Trust. The Trust board finds the approach of the Council unresponsive, unhelpful and, given the troubled history of the land in question, irrational.

What the Trust board requires to be put in place is an unconditional irrevocable personal guarantee from the club's present owners that the East Stand will be finished to an agreed specification and an unequivocal public commitment from the Council to enforce that guarantee in the event of default.

We also require completion to be within a much shorter period of time. We fail to see why 5 years is needed to finish something that should have been done by the owners many years ago. It seems to the Trust board that what our owners ask from the Council they get and the board questions why this should be the case.

I now need to turn to matters arising from the meeting held on 27 June 2022. It is apparent that shortly following the meeting there was a leak to external parties of what was discussed as regards the ACV land and the joint venture proposal with Goodwill Solutions CIC.

We do not know the source of the leak and we are not making any allegations against the Council.

What we do know is that our forecast that Kelvin Thomas would seek to interfere in the establishment of the Trust's relationship with Goodwill Solutions proved to be accurate.

We also know that one of the persons who contacted Goodwill Solutions (not Kelvin Thomas in this context) told its CEO that if his company proceeded with the Trust (a) funds from the Council that may be available to Goodwill Solutions (or, presumably, its registered charity) may become unavailable to it in the future and (b) the company's relationship with the Council would or could be adversely affected.

Whoever it is who stooped to such low conduct, and I am not suggesting it is anyone from the Council, is a disgrace.

Despite the problems we are encountering with you over your decisions affecting the football club and its assets the Trust seeks a constructive and lasting relationship with the Council and all its constituent political parties.

We are part of Northampton and, unlike distant offshore owners whose aspirations do not necessarily coincide with our own concerning the disposal of the club's assets and the destination of the proceeds of sale, we are here to stay in the long term and intend to play a continuing role in promoting professional football and sports in our community.

We have advised you previously of the Trust's plans to establish an infrastructure fund, the purpose of which would be to raise and deploy funds in improving Sixfields Stadium and the football club's infrastructure more generally.

The Trust's Chairman wrote to James Edmunds of the Council's Democratic Services and raised the subject in the context of a remodelling of the wider Council-Trust relationship.

We look to the Council as the ultimate owner of Sixfields Stadium and the freeholder of the adjoining land to protect and safeguard the interests of the football club, its supporters and the people of Northampton.

We do not consider that what is proposed with CDNL is acceptable or satisfactory and so we have to question the Council's decisions in this regard and the decision making process.

I have been reviewing the Council's constitution and specifically the section titled "Principles of Decision Making", clause 1.22 generally and 1.22 (d), (e), (g) and (k).

The Trust needs to be satisfied as to compliance of the Council with these provisions.

Regards,

John

John Morgan
Legal adviser to NTFC Supporters Ltd

Cc
Anna Earnshaw, Stuart Timmiss, Simon Bowers, James Aldridge