

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 4 November 2019 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

PRESENT: HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR Councillor Choudary (in the Chair).

COUNCILLORS: Malpas, Ansell, Ashraf, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Cali, Caswell, Choudary, Chunga, Davenport, Duffy, G Eales, T Eales, Eldred, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, Joyce, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, B Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Sargeant, Kilby-Shaw, Smith, Stone, Walker and Roberts

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ashraf declared a personal and non-pecuniary interest as a board member of Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH).

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2019 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Markham, Flavell and Graystone. It was explained that Councillors Golby and Hallam would be arriving late.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced to Council the sad passing of Roger Rumsey, who previously chaired the Northampton Pensioner's Forum, and offered his condolences to Mr Rumsey's family.

The Mayor reported that his Gala Dinner, held over the weekend, was a success, and approximately £2,500 had been raised for The Lowdown. He thanked Members for attending. Weather permitting, the Mayor would be taking skydiving tomorrow and asked Members to donate if they had not already. He reminded Members of the upcoming Remembrance Day event on Sunday 10th November and asked them to reserve seats at All Saints Church through the Mayor's Office.

The Mayor welcomed 25 students from Northampton University who had come to observe the meeting.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

None.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that one question had been received and that the answer had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution.

Questions and answers were given as tabled and there were no supplementary questions.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn submitted his report as the Leader of the Council and congratulated the Mayor on his Gala Dinner. He updated Members on work being carried out with regards to Unitary Status including the Structural Changes Order and the integration of Health and Social Care. The Town Centre Masterplan had been adopted as a Council document but presently did not contain any detail; this would be developed around upcoming consultations; it was anticipated that the Market Square would be looked at first. Councillor Nunn explained that timelines had been extended; a submission to MHCLG was now required by 31st January 2020, with a full business case to be submitted by the end of April and an announcement expected in the summer of 2020. Councillor Nunn further explained that the private sector were responding positively, noting a recent apartment development on Wellingborough Road and stated that this showed there was increasing demand for professional living accommodation in the town centre. He further noted the recent CityFibre's £40m investment in the town and hoped that Members took the time to speak with them before the meeting. Councillor Nunn also noted discussions that had taken place regarding the Guildhall road block and Sol Central whose owners had secured a new occupier.

In response to questions, Councillor Nunn confirmed that he would work with the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to have the Community Governance Review minutes published on the Council's website and circulated amongst Members. He explained that the Joint Committee would have more work to do following changes to the Structural Changes Order. He further explained that where Members sat as both unitary and borough/district/county councillors for a final year, they would be given a choice as to which allowance they would take. Responding to further questions, Councillor Nunn stated that Unitary Status would be a matter for the government to decide after the General Election. With regard to the design workshops, Councillor Nunn stated that cross party consultation would continue as it worked well and was unique to NBC. Councillor Nunn further stated that the town relied upon the vital contribution that the voluntary sector gave and that the strong links between NBC and the voluntary sector would continue.

At this juncture the Mayor invited Councillor Kilbride to congratulate residents and volunteers in his and Councillor Malpas' ward for their hard work and awards won in both Northampton and East Midlands in Bloom.

Councillor Larratt presented his report as Deputy Leader and highlighted several events that would be taking place over the Christmas period, including the light switch-on and Frost Fair.

In response to questions, the Deputy Leader confirmed that there was a desire to include Northampton in the East/West Rail scheme; as a concept, it was not originally

envisaged to serve Northampton. With regard to the Oxford corridor, the Deputy Leader advised that talks had taken place around services between Northampton, Swindon and Bristol.

In response to a question around the ongoing Community Governance Review consultation exercise, the Deputy Leader stated that he was not previously aware of any issues surrounding the length of the consultation period and would look into any issues with urgency. He further stated that he understood issues around letter-drops in Far Cotton and Delapre to be resolved. He noted that the upcoming General Election and local government reorganisation had no impact on the creation of parish councils.

Councillor Hibbert submitted his report as the Cabinet Member for Housing and highlighted key areas of work, including further development with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper's Strategy. He reminded Members that the Council would be carrying out its rough-sleepers count and asked them to volunteer, if able. He noted that the Telecare Services Association had assessed the Call Care team as "outstanding" and an example of best practice in a number of areas, following a 2 day audit.

In response to a question, Councillor Hibbert confirmed that following the Rough Sleepers Count, a position statement would be published confirming the number of people believed to be sleeping rough on any one night, ensuring that the number of rough sleepers will be set in context. He further confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the Hope Centre to extend its opening hours during SWEP.

Responding to a question regarding enforcement, Councillor Hibbert advised that the Enforcement team had been making surprise house calls through the use of court warrants

Responding to a question around HMO licences, Councillor Hibbert confirmed that a property with an existing licence would automatically be renewed on 1st February 2020, subject to no enforcement action. Any unlicensed properties from 1st February would be subject to enforcement action.

Councillor Hill submitted his Cabinet Member report as the Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning. He explained that in October Cabinet approved, for public consultation, the Council's proposal to introduce a Borough wide Article 4 Direction for houses in multiple occupation (HMO). He further announced that planning permission had been granted to redevelop the former Angel Hotel on Bridge Street and thanked officers for their work on bringing the project forward.

In response to questions, Councillor Hill confirmed that there were sufficient officers to deal with unauthorised building works. In respect of Belgrave House, Councillor Hill advised that NPH were dealing with issues, however this fell under the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise. Councillor Hill advised that recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panel would be considered as part of reserved matters applications in respect of the university.

Councillor Hill confirmed that the 319 inspections carried out by Building Control had been undertaken since April 2019.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet member report as the Cabinet Member for Environment and stated that the enforcement officers issued a total of 455 Fixed Penalty Notices during September and October. He gave his thanks to all of the community groups and volunteers that took part in Bloom. Councillor Hallam advised that a new CCTV camera was now in operation in the town centre and would be instrumental in providing evidence for prosecutions relating to fly-tipping and noted that additional areas were being considered for more CCTV coverage.

In response to questions, Councillor Hallam confirmed that there was generally an 8 day turnaround for bulky waste collections and noted that bookings had increased by 50% compared to the same time last year. He further confirmed that the next Climate Change Forum would be taking place on 12th November.

Councillor Hadland advised that parking in council-owned, town centre car parks would be free in the run-up to Christmas, on Saturdays commencing 23rd November and evenings commencing 19th December.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Haque made a statement on “Regeneration” and expressed his enthusiasm for the Northampton Forward document, and his reservations that the current administration would make it a reality. He questioned how his experience as a politician and a business man, as well as coming from a BAME community, could contribute towards the regeneration of the town and inform debates. He stated the need for creating well paid jobs for local people, green businesses, renewable energy, future-proofed buildings that are more energy efficient and an integrated transport system to help minimise the use of cars. Councillor Haque stated that the Council was not doing enough to support small-to-medium enterprises; many that he had spoken to struggled with parking, business rates and more. He suggested the creation of an SME Forum where issues could be debated and solutions identified. Councillor Haque further suggested that BAME communities, which make up 15% of Northampton’s population, had skills and talents that were currently underutilised. He noted that Northampton’s demographic was an ageing one, however the town’s BAME community tended to represent a younger demographic. He asked why a Multicultural centre had not been included in the Town Centre Masterplan, stating that it would benefit the entire town. BAME communities brought other benefits, including extended families providing child and adult social care within families, taking pressure off the state.

In response Councillor Hadland acknowledged the important part that SMEs played in the local economy and explained that they were supported through schemes such as the business incentive scheme. The Vulcan Works development will support approximately 60 new businesses. He noted that an exhaustive consultation had been undertaken in relation to the Town Centre Masterplan and had hoped that Councillor Haque would have fed into it, to make sure that the broadest facilities were available for all communities. Councillor Hadland commented that as the town grew in confidence, it would encourage inward investment, with developers and investors

feeling like Northampton was a place worth investing in, and worth bringing high-quality jobs to.

Councillor Haque stated that “actions speak louder than words” and highlighted several unfinished projects, including 4 Waterside, Greyfriars and the incomplete east stand at Northampton Town Football Club. He further pointed out that Horizon House had been empty for a number of years and that the new bus station was polluting the town centre. He stated that with Northampton Forward, the Council had the best opportunity to finance the project and make a real difference in the town.

9. NOTICES OF MOTION

i) Councillor King proposed and Councillor Hallam seconded:

“7 in 10 young people have experienced cyberbullying. 26% of young people who have been cyberbullied report feeling suicidal.

Whether you are in the public eye or not, you cannot get away from social media and it is ruining a lot of people’s lives.

Building on the excellent BBC’s documentary ‘Odd One Out’, featuring Little Mix star Jesy Nelson, this Council believes that there is a real need to talk more about cyberbullying, how this is making us feel and how to tackle it.

NBC is proud to say that we held a primary school event on 16th October and has two more planned for this academic year 2019-20: 11th February and 5th June 2020, all focussing on various community safety messages, including online safety.

Based on the feedback from the young people, the Council has this year also added the topic of cyberbullying and 540 year six’s will have attended the events and received this informal education.

This Council further commits to launching its secondary school programme covering cyberbullying, with the first one taking place on 24th November at Weston Favell secondary and this being rolled out to Northampton International Academy and other secondary schools before the end of the academic year.

We live in a social media obsessed world and people say things without realising the devastating effect on young lives and families. This Council is fully committed to leading the way in showing that bullying is not ok.

Lowdown offer free counselling and advice to young people aged 12-25yrs across Northampton. The following link provides information and guidance for young people facing these issues <http://thelowdown.info/issues/cyberbullying/>“

Council debated the motion.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote:

There voted for the motion: Councillors Ansell, Aziz, Beardsworth, Bottwood, Caswell,

Davenport, G Eales, Eldred, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, King, Lane, Larratt, Malpas, B Markham, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant and Walker.

There voted against the motion: Councillor Duffy

There abstained: Councillors Choudary, Ashraf, Birch, T Eales, Haque, Joyce, Marriott, McCutcheon, Russell, Roberts and Stone.

The motion was carried.

ii) Councillor Marriott proposed and Councillor Stone seconded:

“This council notes with dismay the recent 1% increase in interest for loans from the Public Works Loan Board. This comes at a time when all councils, including NBC, were looking to increase their building of social housing in order to address the housing crisis.

The 1% increases the risks attached to regeneration and development and creates the need for revision of existing plans and business cases. We note this has led to, for example, a delay in borrowing for the Berkley house rebuild.

We therefore call on the council to join with the LGA to make representation to the government to have this decision reversed.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

iii) Councillor Joyce accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Ashraf.

Council agreed to the altered motion below:

“This council congratulates Norwich Council for winning the Stirling Architecture Prize for its recently developed housing estate, Goldsmith Street, comprised of almost 100 ‘ultra-low-energy homes’

This is the first time in the 23-year history of the Stirling prize that it has been awarded to social housing.

“A modest masterpiece” is how the RIBA Stirling prize judges described the project, designed by London firm Mikhail Riches with Cathy Hawley, representing “high-quality architecture in its purest most environmentally and socially conscious form”. The 105 creamy-brick homes are designed to stringent Passivhaus environmental standards, meaning energy costs are around 70% cheaper than average. The walls are highly insulated, and the roofs are cleverly angled at 15 degrees, to ensure each terrace doesn’t block sunlight from the homes behind, while letterboxes are built into external porches, rather than the front doors, to reduce any possibility of draughts.

Immense thought has gone into every detail – from the perforated brick balconies to the cleverly interlocking staircases in the three-storey flats at the end of each terrace – to ensure that every home has its own front door on the street. The back gardens look on to a planted alley, dotted with communal tables and benches, while parking has been pushed to the edge of the site, freeing up the streets for people, not cars.

This year's choice sends a clear message that, despite government cuts, it is eminently possible for brave councils to take the initiative and build environmentally sustainable social housing.

We call on NBC to be brave and develop an ambitious long-term sustainable housing plan.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

iv) Councillor B Markham proposed and Councillor Beardsworth seconded:

“The administration is in the process of preparing a draft budget for 2020/21 which it will consider at the cabinet meeting on the 11th December 2019. This comes at a time when local government finances are being squeezed and this council is facing a deficit of £750,000+ in the current year.

In November 2014 the cabinet approved the purchase of Albion House for a sum up to £0.5M. The building has not been brought into productive use and this council believes the benefit of maintaining ownership of this under-utilised asset needs to be reconsidered.

The council requests that as part of the budget preparation, process, the Administration considers the disposal of Albion House to provide vital finance to protect vital public services.

If the administration decides not to dispose of this under-utilised asset, because it has a firm plans for the building then they should declare those plans and report back to the Council meeting on the 9th. December.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

10. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE MAYOR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.

None.

The meeting concluded at 8:40 pm