

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 16 December 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Nunn (Chair); Councillor Larratt (Deputy Chair); Councillors Eldred, Hadland, Hallam, J Hill and Hibbert

APOLOGIES: Councillor King

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Anna King.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2020 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

3. INTENTION TO HOLD PART OF THE MEETING IN PRIVATE IF NECESSARY

The Leader explained that due to the confidential nature of the appendices relating to agenda items 17-20, they would be considered in private. However, the decisions relating to these items would be made in public.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were no deputations or public addresses.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

6.A RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - FOOD POVERTY

Councillor Lane as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined the report and thanked Councillor Meredith for chairing the Scrutiny Panel, together with all those who had contributed. The purpose of the panel had been to examine the extent of food poverty and to review its impact and concentration across the Borough. 16 recommendations had been made, which Cabinet were encouraged to look at urgently.

Councillor Roberts stated that the recommendations were well thought out and urgently required. Councillor Roberts wanted to ensure that vouchers enabling children to access food during school holidays were issued in good time for Christmas as there had been logistical problems during October half term, with some families still waiting for vouchers in November and December.

The Leader confirmed that vouchers would be issued in time for Christmas. Councillor Hill, as a school governor, reported that some parents had already received vouchers.

Councillor Lane pointed out that although the discussion had focused on child food poverty, this was just one element of the report.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet noted the report and recommendations.

6.B RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - GANGS AND KNIFE CRIME

Councillor Lane as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined the report and thanked Councillor Walker for chairing the Scrutiny Panel, together with all those who had contributed.

Councillor Walker stated that the panel had investigated NBC's role in tackling knife crime. There had been comprehensive evidence which had required a complex response. Excellent work was being undertaken, for example the boxing club. It was hoped that an update could be provided at the January meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Birch as a member of the Scrutiny Panel endorsed Councillor Walker's comments. There were many organisations doing similar work in the town and collaboration and signposting was needed. Sporting activities were important for engendering team spirit and following rules and needed to be extended. The safeguarding summit following the tragic situation in St David's where a young person died, recognised the need for professionals and volunteers to work together. Councillor Birch requested that the useful work done by Scrutiny Panels be passed to the unitary council.

Councillor Lane noted that a comprehensive and useful archive of Overview and Scrutiny reports was available online.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet noted the report and recommendations.

7. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 1 JULY 2020 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

Councillor Larratt as the relevant Cabinet Member presented his report and noted that performance had been impacted by the pandemic. However, staff were to be praised for the performance which had been maintained. Highlights included an improvement in missed bins corrected within 48 hours and in fly tipping removal performance. The number of missed bins had increased partly due to Covid related driver shortages and footfall in the town centre continued to be low.

Councillor Stone expressed concern for staff working under the pressures of Covid, Brexit and the transfer to a unitary council.

Councillor Stone noted that there had been fly tipping in her ward which had not been picked up despite reminders – it was a new development and families were moving in. Councillor Larratt agreed to ensure that new areas were included on the database.

In respect of the Enterprise Zone, Councillor Stone stated that the Economic Development Strategy for the town centre needed to be realistic. Councillor Larratt agreed to look at improving the narrative on this.

Councillor Stone also requested a timeline for provision of car parking at the station, which the Leader advised was pressing ahead and an update would be provided.

The Leader recognised the efforts of all staff at this difficult time, and requested that thanks be recorded.

RESOLVED:

2.1. Cabinet reviewed and noted the contents of the performance report (Appendix 1).

8. FINANCE MONITORING TO 30 NOVEMBER 2020

Councillor Eldred as the relevant Cabinet Member outlined the finance monitoring report to the end of November 2020 which showed a slight underspend. Details of cost pressures and lost income due to Covid were shown in the Appendix to the report. Grants of around £1million had been given to 603 businesses and money was available for other qualifying businesses.

There were two additional recommendations to defer the University of Northampton's loan repayment for one year, guaranteed by the Treasury and to award grants to Community Centres.

Councillor Stone considered the grants to Community Centres to be very timely and helpful. It was important that these centres remained strong.

Councillor Stone was grateful for the positive outcome of the meeting between local people and officers regarding repair works at Billing Road cemetery.

Councillor Stone questioned whether the schemes in the Development Pool awaiting approval would be honoured by the new unitary council. The Leader advised that, although NBC would not be setting a budget this year, a budget exercise had been undertaken and the priorities identified had been forwarded to the Section 151 Officer of the shadow authority.

Councillor Stone considered that the loan to the University of Northampton had been handled well and with due diligence. It was important that the public could see that this was different from the Sixfields loan, not least since the University had assets and the loan was underwritten by the Treasury.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet noted the contents of the report and noted that future reports will set out the actions being taken by Corporate Management Board (CMB) to address issues arising.

2.2 Cabinet noted the amendments to the general fund capital programme as set out at paragraph 3.6.1.

2.3 Cabinet approved the award of grants to Community Centres as set out in paragraph 3.9.2.

2.4 Cabinet approved the deferral of a loan repayment of £8.5M by one year as set out in paragraph 3.8.1 to 3.8.5 by agreeing to:

2.4.1 Vary the terms of the original loan agreement that was entered into between the Council and the University of Northampton ("UoN") on 10 March 2016 to:

- a) extend the term of the loan by one year so that the repayment date of 10th March 2021 is changed to 10th March 2022;
- b) refer to [any] revised interest rate (as set out in paragraph 3.8.5) that will apply to the balance of the loan payable by the University to the Council,

that is outstanding on 10th March 2021; and

- c) make any other amendments related to the deferral.

2.4.2 The Council [re]borrowing £8.5 million from the Public Works Loan Board (“PWLB”) to repay outstanding principal due in March 2021 from the Council to PWLB, which the Council will repay using the equal loan repayment amounts received from the UoN during the extension period to the original loan agreement.

9. ASSET MANAGEMENT DISPOSALS

Councillor Hadland as the relevant Cabinet Member presented his report outlining the disposal of assets by NBC. The Leader expressed appreciation for the work which had been carried out.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet delegated authority to the Acting Director of Economy and Assets, in consultation with the Borough Secretary, Chief Finance Officer and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise to agree the terms and conditions and complete the disposals of the following property and land:-

2.1.1 Albion House

- To facilitate a major centre for leather to be established in Northampton the site will be sold by private treaty to an established charitable foundation.
- The foundation has experience and financial credibility to refurbish the site and is committed to incorporate the Leather Museum, the Conservation Centre, the major leather Livery Companies and the well-established education departments and design schools within the University and colleges.
- The site will be sold at market value determined by an independent RICS registered valuer.
- The building will be sold as seen with the leases remaining in place but with the licence to occupy terminated and the site cleared of council storage material.
- The buyer to pay for council’s reasonable professional fees.

2.1.2 Sub Station Land, Vulcan Works

- To transfer the proposed substation site to Western Power at a nominal fee for the location of a permanent electricity substation for powering the council owned property named Vulcan Works, supporting the Council owned project.
- The Council have agreed to be responsible for Western Powers reasonable legal costs and disbursements which are accounted for as part of the project budget.

2.1.3 Sub Aqua Club

- To sell the building and land to by private treaty to the current tenant at market value as determined by a RICS registered valuer.
- The buyer to pay for council’s reasonable professional fees.

2.2.1 Cabinet approved the use of £70,000 of capital receipt money to be used as match

funding towards the development of a mountain bike centre and general outdoor facility at Delapre.

10. 41-45 ABINGTON STREET - ASBESTOS REMOVAL AND SOFT STRIP OUT

Councillor Hadland as the relevant Cabinet Member outlined the report regarding appointment of a specialist contractor for asbestos removal from the old Marks & Spencer building for which the council had acquired the freehold.

The report also provided an update on the Towns Fund - £1million from that fund would be used for the asbestos removal. Councillor Hadland gave credit to the team who had undertaken considerable work in a short time to achieve this.

Councillor Hadland advised that the result of the Future High Streets Fund was expected soon – possibly before Christmas.

The Leader suggested a member update would be helpful, which could be open to all in West Northamptonshire.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 Cabinet delegated authority to the Acting Director of Economy and Assets, in consultation with the Borough Secretary, Chief Finance Officer and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise to appoint the contractor for the asbestos removal and associated works following the completion of the tender process, ensuring that the external grant monies are spent within the funding period.

11. ANNUAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING STATEMENT

Councillor Hill as the relevant Cabinet Member presented the report which outlined the financial contributions collected through the Community Infrastructure Levy and S106 obligations associated with Planning decisions, and agreed the projects to which money collected through the Community Infrastructure Levy could be allocated.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 Cabinet approved the contents and recommendations of the Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement and the allocation of funds collected through the Community Infrastructure Levy.

12. NORTHAMPTON LOCAL PLAN PART 2: SUBMISSION

Councillor Hill as the relevant Cabinet Member presented the report which informed Cabinet of the response following the second round of consultation for the Local Plan Part 2. Councillor Hill had been impressed with the changes officers had made reflecting stakeholders' concerns and was confident the document would be acceptable for submission.

Councillor Stone stated that whilst completion had taken some time, the Local Plan Part 2 had become better as a result, for example, acknowledging the need for temporary sites for gypsies and travellers. However, she would have liked to have seen a more holistic view of the heritage of the town.

Councillor Larratt was pleased to see that disused rail lines had been protected.

Councillor Hadland advised that work was in hand for the wider joining of heritage assets.

The Leader expressed thanks to the Director of Planning and Sustainability and the team.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet:

2.1.1 noted and agreed the response to the second round of consultation on the Proposed Submission version of the Northampton Local Plan Part 2.

2.1.2 agreed the Schedule of Proposed Minor Modifications to the Northampton Local Plan Part 2.

2.1.3 agreed that the Submission version of the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 be referred to Council for approval and submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination by a Planning Inspector under Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended.

2.1.4 agreed that the Director of Planning and Sustainability be given the authority to update the Schedule of Proposed Minor Modifications, in consultation with the Borough Secretary and the deputy Cabinet member for Planning to the Northampton Local Plan Part 2 prior to its consideration by full Council.

2.1.5 agreed that the Director of Planning and Sustainability be given approval to submit the Plan and any necessary supporting documentation required for Submission.

13. CARBON NEUTRAL NORTHAMPTON STRATEGY

Councillor Hallam as the relevant Cabinet Member presented his report and noted that whilst 2020 had been a challenging year, lockdown had resulted in lower CO₂ emissions.

Councillor Stone believed that lessons needed to be learned and action needed to be taken to improve air quality, such as creating car-free zones around schools and hospitals. Councillor Stone expressed concern that disadvantaged groups were adversely affected, since they were most likely to live in areas with poor air quality, for example, the gypsy and traveller site.

Councillor Hallam advised that the 10-year plan would evolve over time. The immediate priorities were to capitalise on the positives from the pandemic.

The Leader confirmed that the report would be taken to Council in January 2021 as promised.

RESOLVED:

2.1.1 Cabinet supported the Carbon Neutral Northampton Strategy direction of travel and agreed that it be taken to full Council for noting.

2.1.2 Cabinet recommended that West Northamptonshire Council considers the CNNS when it develops its own sustainability strategy.

14. BARRACK ROAD CONSERVATION AREA ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION

Councillor Hill as the relevant Cabinet Member presented his report seeking approval for the confirmation of the Barrack Road Conservation Area Article 4 Direction 2020.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed the confirmation of the Barrack Road Conservation Area Article 4 Direction 2020.

15. CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSED VARIATION TO THE NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER 2020

Councillor Hallam as the relevant Cabinet Member presented the report seeking public consultation on a proposal to vary the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to create a prohibition against walking dogs off lead within an area of Upton Country Park. This had been proposed following incidents of dogs attacking sheep. The consultation would include all local parish councils.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet:

- 2.1. Delegated to the Director of Customers and Communities the authority to undertake the required statutory consultation, publicity and notification as required by section 72 of the Act with regard to a proposal to vary the PSPO so as to create a prohibition against dogs being walked off lead within the area of Upton Country Park known as "Phase 2", which is outlined in red on the plan appended to this report as Appendix 2.
- 2.2. Resolved to receive a further report, once the necessary statutory consultation, publicity and notification has been carried out, which will include the responses received in response to those processes, in order to decide whether to approve or reject the proposed variation to the PSPO.

16. PROPOSED RENEWAL OF A PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER - MARBLE ARCH

In the absence of Councillor King, the Leader presented the report seeking renewal of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) authorising the gating of Marble Arch for a further three years. There had been significant anti-social behaviour prior to gating.

Councillor Larratt suggested that the public highway status of Marble Arch should be removed. The Director of Customers and Communities confirmed that this was in hand.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet:

- 2.1 Resolved to renew the existing PSPO which authorises the gating of the public highway known as Marble Arch for a further period of three years.
- 2.2. Authorised the Borough Secretary to complete all of the statutory processes as required by the Act in order to renew the existing PSPO.

21. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Chair moved that the public and Press be excluded from the next part of the meeting on the grounds that there was likely to be disclosure to them of such categories of exempt information as defined by Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 as listed against such items of business by reference to the appropriate paragraph of Schedule 12A to such Act.

Items 17-20 were to be considered in private session, but following this, Cabinet would reconvene so that the decisions relating to these items could be made in public.

The Motion was Carried.

17. DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AFFORDABLE RENTED HOUSING IN SOUTHBRIDGE EAST

Councillor Hibbert as the relevant Cabinet Member outlined the report relating to the development of new affordable rented housing in Southbridge East.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet:

- Approved the transfer of ownership of the parcel of land in Trenerly Way, Southbridge East (previously known as Area E5 and edged in red on the plan in Appendix A, attached to this report) from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account, at a total cost of £1, in order to provide affordable rented housing that will be let to eligible households on the Housing Register;
- Approved the use of the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme to redevelop the transferred parcel of land (edged in red on the plan in Appendix A, attached to this report) to provide 28 affordable rented homes, subject to planning consent;
- Delegated to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, the Chief Finance Officer and the Borough Secretary, the authority to determine the rent levels and service charges for the new affordable rented homes; and
- Delegated to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, the Borough Secretary and Northampton Partnership Homes, the authority to develop and approve a Local Lettings Policy that determines how the homes are allocated.

18. NEXT STEPS ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMME (NSAP) FUNDING 2020/21

Councillor Hibbert as the relevant Cabinet Member outlined his report. The application for government funding to increase the supply of housing for rough sleepers had been successful and agreement for the purchase and refurbishment of properties was now sought.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet:

- Noted the outcome of Northampton's successful application for Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding for 2020/21;

- Approved the release of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme funds that the government has provided to enable Keystage Housing to establish a 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' Hub in Northampton and International Lighthouse CIC to continue its work with non-UK nationals who are sleeping rough;
- Approved the purchase and refurbishment of 15 one-bedroom homes and 3 five-bedroom houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), through the Housing Revenue Account, in order to provide supported housing for people who have been sleeping rough and are rehoused through local move-on initiatives;
- Approved the expenditure of up to £1.265m to be funded from the additional £50m borrowing envelope approved by Full Council in order to complete the purchase and refurbishment of the 15 one-bedroom homes and the 3 HMOs;
- Delegated to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing and the Chief Finance Officer, the authority to determine the rent levels and service charges for the 15 one-bedroom homes and each of the rooms in the 3 HMOs; and
- Delegated to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing and Northampton Partnership Homes, the authority to develop and approve a Local Lettings Policy which will determine how the homes are allocated and define how the one-bedroom homes and HMOs will be managed.

19. PURCHASE OF NEW HOMES FOR USE AS AFFORDABLE RENTED HOUSING

Councillor Hibbert as the relevant Cabinet Member presented his report seeking approval for the acquisition of 85-89 Lion Court, Southbridge in order to increase the supply of affordable rented housing.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet:

- Approved the use of the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme to purchase the apartment block known as 85-89 Lion Court, Southbridge (edged in red on the plan in Appendix A), at a cost described in Exempt Appendix B, in order to provide 44 affordable rented homes that will be let to eligible households on the Housing Register;
- Ratified the 'in principle' bid that Northampton Partnership Homes had made, on the Council's behalf, for the apartment block known as 85-89 Lion Court, Southbridge at the price described in Exempt Appendix B;
- Delegated to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, the Borough Secretary, the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, to undertake appropriate due diligence and, if then satisfied with the results of this exercise, to acquire the property known as 85-89 Lion Court, Southbridge;
- Delegated to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing and the Chief Finance Officer, the authority to determine the rent levels and service charges for the new affordable rented homes; and

- Delegated to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing and Northampton Partnership Homes, the authority to develop and approve a Local Lettings Policy that determines how the homes in 85-89 Lion Court are allocated.

20. PURCHASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON'S AVENUE CAMPUS, INCLUDING THE NEWTON BUILDING

Councillor Hibbert as the relevant Cabinet Member outlined the report proposing the acquisition and development of Avenue Campus for affordable housing and potentially some temporary accommodation. A follow up report would be presented in January 2021.

Councillor Hibbert shared an email from Councillor Markham congratulating all officers and members for working imaginatively in bringing the various housing schemes to fruition and for being willing to work together.

Councillor Stone also expressed her support for these projects.

The Leader voiced thanks to the University of Northampton for giving additional weight to the social value during the tender process.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet:

- Approved the acquisition of the University of Northampton's Avenue Campus (including the Newton Building) in St George's Avenue (edged in red in the Site Plan on Appendix A, attached to this report), at a cost described in Exempt Appendix B, through the Housing Revenue Account, in order to increase the supply of affordable housing;
- Ratified the 'in principle' bid that Northampton Partnership Homes had made, on the Council's behalf, at a cost described in Exempt Appendix B, for the acquisition of the University of Northampton's Avenue Campus (including the Newton Building) in St George's Avenue;
- Delegated to the Borough Secretary, in consultation with the Director of Housing and Wellbeing, the Chief Finance Officer, the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, authority to secure specialist external legal advice in relation to the proposed acquisition and to agree the provision of professional legal fees in the sum of £25,000 in connection with the proposed transaction, but excluding Stamp Duty Land Tax (if applicable);
- Delegated to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, the Borough Secretary, the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing, to undertake appropriate due diligence and, if then satisfied with the results of this exercise, to acquire the University of Northampton's Avenue Campus and Newton Building; and
- Agreed to receive further reports on the housing proposals for the Avenue Campus site (including the tenure, funding and phasing of the new homes) and the use of the Newton Building, for consideration and approval.

The meeting concluded at 7:35 pm

