

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 10 June 2013

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Lane (Chair), Councillors Brian Sargeant (Vice Chair), Tony Ansell, Joy Capstick, Mick Ford, Brendan Glynane, Elizabeth Gowen, Phil Larratt, Matt Lynch, Lee Mason, Nilesh Parekh, Suresh Patel, Winston Strachan and Sivaramen Subbarayan

Councillor David Mackintosh	Leader of the Council
Councillor Mary Markham	Cabinet Member (Housing)
Councillor Tim Hadland	Cabinet Member (Planning, Enterprise and Regeneration)
Councillor Alan Bottwood	Cabinet Member (Finance)
Councillor Mike Hallam	Cabinet Member (Environment)
Councillor Brandon Eldred	Cabinet Member (Community Engagement)

Officers	Steve Elsey	Head of Public Protection
	Mick Tyrrell	Contract Manager
	Richard Birchett	Interim Head of Landlord Services
	Julie Seddon	Director of Customers and Communities
	Tracy Tiff	Scrutiny Officer
	Nicola Brindley	Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2013 were approved and signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

Councillor Suresh Patel declared an interest in item 16 Report back from NBC's representative to NCC's Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee as the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, NCC.

Councillor Joy Capstick declared an interest in item 14 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/2014 as a Board Member for WNDC.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES CONTRACT ACTION PLAN

Councillor Mike Hallam and Steve Elsey, Head of Public Protection presented a briefing note on the Environmental Services Contract Action Plan to the Committee for consideration.

Councillor Phil Larratt considered that the standards that Enterprise provided had dropped and in particular Kingsthorpe and East Hunsbury, the grass had been getting too long. Once it had been cut the grass cuttings had been left all over the footpath which presented a risk to the elderly. Councillors Winston Strachan and Jamie Lane also reported a problem in their wards where the grass was high and none of the edges had been cut. In some areas residents had been tidying up after them.

Councillor Lee Mason advised that litter had been caught in the long grass in her wards and rubbish in the alleyways was also a general issue.

Councillor Mike Hallam urged Councillors to log problems with the Contact Centre so evidence could be collected if they needed to enforce penalties with the Services Provider.

In response to a question from Councillor Phil Larratt, Mick Tyrrell confirmed that there were discussions due with the Service Provider on the A45 maintenance but the status quo remained of the suspension of litter due to the accident. The A45 licences and training should start to progress as normal and they had been working with the National Traffic Management provider improvement plan. There had been no change on how that operated.

Steve Elsey advised that there were five areas of dispute with the Service Provider and as the contract was vast and complex each party interpreted it to their own advantage. Some of the issues were serious contractual issues and should remain to be discussed in private in case it escalated to the legal process.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

6. TREE AND SHRUB MAINTENANCE

Councillor Mike Hallam and Mick Tyrell presented the Tree and Shrub Maintenance report to the committee and elaborated thereon.

Councillor Mike Hallam confirmed that it was a complex process and they had a clear policy in place. The in-house and Enterprise processes were the same.

Councillor Tony Ansell reported that Abington Park was under maintained as it did once have sixteen gardeners and now only had two. Councillor Phil Larratt reported a lack of regular maintenance in the young trees.

Councillor Mike Hallam confirmed that if regular maintenance was a problem then to escalate it to him to deal with.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

(A) RENT COLLECTED AS A PROPORTION OF RENT OWNED DWELLINGS (HI 12) AND RENT ARREARS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE ANNUAL DEBT (H1 13)

Councillor Mary Markham and Richard Birchett Interim Head of Landlord Services presented a report on management of rent arrears and elaborated thereon.

Richard Birchett confirmed that two extra members of staff had been employed in April to reduce the amount of tenants in arrears and this had decreased in the last 12 months.

Councillor Mary Markham confirmed the process was that people were flagged when they were two weeks in arrears and were encouraged to open bank accounts and pay by direct debit. They had been working with the Department of Work and Pensions and hoped to tackle the problem early to give people the financial advice when they needed it.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

(B) CLEANLINESS OF OPEN SPACES/ PARKS

Councillor Mike Hallam and Mick Tyrrell attended the meeting and provided a briefing note on the Cleanliness of Open Space and Parks. Councillor Mike Hallam advised that he was proud of the open spaces and parks in Northampton and it was the second largest outside of London. He referred to the performance table on section 3 of the report and advised that the graffiti and fly tipping had shown a large improvement and had reduced by 6%. The targets for 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 had improved and the investment in Park Rangers for Delapre Park had been successful and would be rolled out in the other parks.

Councillor Matt Lynch reported problems with long grass and weeds in his ward and was slightly disappointed with the service provided.

Councillor Tony Ansell expressed concerns of the grass cutting in Abington Park.

Councillor Mike Hallam urged Councillors to log any concerns with the Contact Centre and if required it could be escalated to him. Evidence and data was required to impose any penalties to the contractors.

Mick Tyrrell confirmed that the data was collated four times a year and the cumulative gave the year end figures. It was based on the criteria for highways.

In response to a question from Councillor Elizabeth Gowen, Mick Tyrrell confirmed that the targets for fly tipping were high and demanding and were achieved by proactive crews on the road to clear the graffiti. The targets were 24 hours for racist and 5 days for non-offensive graffiti. The scores were only let down by graffiti in alleyways as it was not always seen. Private residents could contact the Centre and report graffiti on their property which would be removed if they signed an indemnity form.

Councillor Ford reported that the clean up had been completed well after the Beer Festival at Delapre Park and the Northampton Carnival although he had still received complaints of litter in the surrounding streets.

Councillor Mike Hallam confirmed that feedback was important and at the next big event of Alive at Delapre Park it would be noted to clear the surrounding streets as well.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

(C) CAR CRIME

Councillor David Mackintosh and Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities addressed the Committee and presented a report on the general overview of the vehicle crime problem in Northampton.

Councillor David Mackintosh elaborated there on and confirmed that they had been working with the Police and urged people not to leave valuables on show. There had also been a trend of car parts being stolen which included catalytic converters which were on show and easy to access.

In response to a question from Councillor Brendon Glynane, Julie Seddon confirmed that work had been carried out with regard to the light switch off in the county and they were unable to establish a fair link between car crime and the light switch off.

AGREED: That the update is noted.

(D) PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY ABSENCES MANAGEMENT DATA

Councillor Alan Bottwood presented a report to the Committee on the Performance Management Scrutiny Absences Data.

Councillor Lane suggested that the report was not required to continue to be presented to the Committee on a regular basis but to be monitored.

Councillor Larratt agreed that they were close to Management Targets but to keep an overview on it.

AGREED: That the report be noted and continued to be monitored via the performance monitoring report. Separate reports on absence management data are not required at Committee.

8. LICENSING FUNCTION PERFORMANCE

Councillor Mike Hallam and Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities presented the Licensing Function Performance report to the Committee.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

9. MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACCEPTED RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE FOLLOWING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTS

(A) NEIGHBOURHOOD MODEL

This item was removed from the Overview and Scrutiny Monitoring Work Programme 2013/2014.

(B) COUNCILLOR EMPOWERMENT FUND

Councillor Brandon Eldred and Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities presented the Councillor Empowerment Fund report to the Committee.

Councillor Joy Capstick congratulated the Council administration team on distributing the money quickly when it was requested.

Councillor Winston Strachan found the process of requesting the money and obtaining signatures time consuming when it should be completed by email.

Julie Seddon agreed that this could be incorporated into the process.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

(C) LEASE BETWEEN NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL, NORTHAMPTON FOOTBALL CLUB AND RUGBY AND NORTHAMPTON ATHLETICS CLUB

Councillor Tim Hadland presented the report to the committee and confirmed that the difficulties between the athletics and football club had subsided and everyone was relatively happy with the lines of communication open to them. He requested that officer recommendation of Enterprise Loan Panel was too restrictive and be changed to Enterprise Funding in general.

AGREED: That the report be noted and this item be removed from the Overview and Scrutiny Monitoring Work Programme 2013/2014.

10. O&S ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13

The O&S Annual Report was presented to the Committee.

The Chair advised that he would present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/2013 to full Council on 15 July 2013.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

11. SCRUTINY PANELS

(A) SCRUTINY PANEL 1- IMPROVING THE TOWN'S PARKS

Councillor Elizabeth Gowen confirmed that there had been research on how they could work with the organisations in the community. Councillor David Palethorpe had joined the panel and the next meeting is due to be held on 1st July 2013. A reminder would be sent to Councillors inviting them to join the panel and if they knew of any organisations in the area which dealt with parks and open spaces then to let her know.

Councillor Joy Capstick reported of issues in her ward of play equipment being vandalised and there was no maintenance or repair insurance in place. She confirmed that she was going to escalate it to the Audit Committee to clarify the situation of indemnity insurance.

AGREED: (1) That the Scope of the Review be approved.

(B) SCRUTINY PANEL 2- RETAIL EXPERIENCE

Councillor Matt Lynch presented the report to the Committee. He thanked everyone for their hard work and the Council had taken up the recommendations which would make the town a more vibrant place in the future.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed he would present the report to Cabinet and await their response.

Councillor Tim Hadland suggested that it would be beneficial to update recommendation 6.1.8 of the final report to read:

Promote the Enterprise funding to the retail sector, Northampton BID and the University of Northampton.

AGREED: That the report be approved subject to the update of recommendation 6.1.8.

12. SCRUTINY PANEL 3 - INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS AND SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

Councillor Phil Larratt presented the report and confirmed that the Panel had achieved its objectives of the Review. He highlighted the funding gap of £439.6 million which Cabinet needed to review. There was an issue with the North West bypass and the impact on the local area as well as the A45 not meeting standards and not enough funds available.

He gave thanks to all those involved in the project.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that he would present it to Cabinet on 17th July 2013.

AGREED: That the report be approved.

13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTING AND MONITORING WORKING GROUP

It was agreed that the membership to the Overview and Scrutiny Reporting and Monitoring Working Group be confirmed:-

- Councillor Leslie Marriott be replaced by Councillor Jamie Lane as Chair.
- Councillor Beverley Mennell be replaced by Councillor Suresh Patel
- Councillor Danielle Stone be replaced by Councillor Sivaraman Subbarayan.

AGREED: Councillors Jamie Lane, Suresh Patel and Sivaraman Subbaryan join the Overview and Scrutiny Reporting and Monitoring Working Group.

14. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2013/2014

Councillor Jamie Lane suggested that questions be put to the Planning Department with regards to WNDC and if the answers were not satisfactory then they could be scrutinised.

Councillor Joy Capstick advised that there was uncertainty of the stage of the successor of the WNDC in September and they needed to have capacity to raise any issues. The scope management was urgent and the timetable of O&S 3 had the capacity to proceed afterwards.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that they would scope at the next meeting and would then proceed from there.

Councillor Phil Larratt advised that there was insufficient knowledge of the ownership of street lighting at NBC and we would miss an opportunity to obtain an upgrade.

Councillor Jamie Lane requested a report on the ownership of NBC's street lighting to be brought to the next meeting.

AGREED: That the ownership of NBC's street lighting and the successor of the WNDC be discussed at the next meeting.

(A) SCRUTINY PANEL 2 - MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING (INCLUDING HIMOS)

Councillor Joy Capstick agreed to Chair Scrutiny Panel 2 and requested an invite to go to the Councillors to sit on the panel.

AGREED: Councillor Joy Capstick to Chair Scrutiny Panel 2 and an invite be sent to Councillors to join the Panel.

15. MONITORING WORK PROGRAMME 2013/2014

AGREED: That the report be noted.

16. REPORT BACK FROM NBC'S REPRESENTATIVE TO NCC'S HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Matt Lynch presented a short report advising that NCC's Health, Adult Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee (formally Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee) had agreed that it be recommended to Northamptonshire County Council's full Council that voting co-optees from districts and borough Councils be appointed for 2013/2014. Should

NCC's full Council approve this, Councillor Lynch would attend future meetings and provide briefings to this Committee.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

17. POTENTIAL FUTURE PRE DECISION SCRUTINY

Councillor Phil Larratt requested a report on street lights in NBC's housing stock.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that a report will be collaborated to come to Committee.

18. URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 19.55