

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 28 October 2013 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Caswell, Ansell, Aziz, Begum, Bottwood, I Choudary, N Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Flavell, Ford, Glynane, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Lane, Larratt, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Mason, Mennell, Nunn, Oldham, Palethorpe, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Stone, Wire DL and Yates.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2013 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Capstick, Eales, Lynch, Meredith and Strachan.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that the Poppy Ball had had to be cancelled and asked people to wear poppies and to give generously to the poppy appeal.

The Mayor then announced that tickets were selling well for the Charity Gala Dinner on 29 November 2013, although there were still some tickets available.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Leach addressed Council about changes to legal aid which he said would impact on dignity and fairness locally and nationally. He referred to a post card campaign being sent to Government about the changes.

Mr De Rosario addressed Council regarding the reduction in the number of rubbish sacks to two per household when some families used three or more.

Mr Adams addressed Council stating that the decision on the Council's housing stock should be based on a ballot of all tenants, not on the views of the Tenants Panel.

Mr Brooks addressed Council stating that it was one of the few councils to use zero hour contracts. These contracts were currently under review by the government. They made working arrangements difficult for people it and he asked that their use be re-

considered.

Mr Seamark had registered to address the Council but withdrew.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that four questions had been received from Councillors and that they, and the answers, had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution.

Questions asked and answers given were as tabled (included in an updated agenda on the website).

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to Question 1. Councillor Markham stated that she was reviewing the arrangements to bring more void properties back into use more quickly.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to Question 2. Councillor Markham stated that the situation regarding emergency accommodation was not ideal. Families were only placed outside the Borough when there was an on-going case of domestic violence or if the property was insufficiently large. A report last year had stated that the Council was one of the best local authorities in the country regarding this issue.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to Question 3, Councillor Mackintosh stated that he had previously had correspondence on this matter and would take up the matter with the Member outside the meeting.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to Question 4, Councillor Mackintosh stated that the Council would be working with partners, including Northamptonshire County Council, and committing £40,000 over a three year period.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Each Cabinet Member gave a presentation of their respective portfolios, which had been circulated in the agenda.

Councillor Mackintosh submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He commented on the progress of the regeneration projects, particularly the bus interchange, the refurbishment of the Grosvenor Centre starting in November 2013 and the demolition of the Greyfriars complex to begin in March 2014. He also referred to the recent visit by the Prime Minister to Northampton and the new home to be found for Northampton Athletics Club when development commences at Sixfields.

In response to questions from Members Councillor Mackintosh stated that:

- Companies should be encouraged to come to and invest in the Borough. Any questions regarding their employment practices such as zero hour contracts should be addressed to those companies and not to the Council.
- The Enterprise Zone was bringing investment and job growth into Northampton. There had been 122 jobs created in Q1 & Q2 this year. Many companies had told him it was refreshing to have an administration they could

work with.

- He had publicly thanked officers and Members for their work at a recent regeneration event and was happy to do so again at this meeting.
- He agreed to respond by email to Councillor Davies' enquiry about the number of new businesses setting up in the Enterprise Zone.

Councillor Markham submitted her Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. She referred to the recent visit by the HRH the Duke of Gloucester to Oasis House, the relocation of Call Care, the success of the Estate Services apprentice scheme and seeking residents' opinions and ideas on SCATE (Safe, Clean and Tidy Estates). She also referred to the Tenants Panel's preference for an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to manage the housing stock, which would be considered by the Housing Options Panel and then Cabinet and full Council.

In answer to questions Councillor Markham stated that:

- It would not be appropriate to make any statement or decision on the housing stock options at this stage. The views of the Tenants Panel reflected the scoring of the options. A report would be presented to a special meeting of the Cabinet on 4 December and a decision made at full Council on 9 December 2013.
- There was currently no decent homes work underway in Kingsley Ward. Any queries by tenants regarding works or contractors should be raised with Ward Councillors or the Council direct.
The Supporting People funding was currently under review, with the aim of continued funding after April 2014.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He referred to the new refuse and recycling rounds introduced in September which had favourably changed the views of many residents, the request from residents for 7,000 new recycling containers, and the Northamptonshire Waste Partnership's visit to schools with a collection vehicle.

In answer to questions Councillor Hallam stated that:

- Packaging was an issue for companies rather than the Council but he would encourage a reduction in the amount of packaging.
- The detail of the refuse and recycling contract was agreed at the Tender Acceptance stage by the previous administration.
- There had been 7,000 requests for recycling containers since the introduction of the new refuse and recycling rounds. Requests had previously been at under ten per week.

Councillor Eldred submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He referred to the various events held or being held in Northampton, the switch on off the Christmas lights scheduled for 21 November, the forthcoming "Strictly Shoes" event, the "my Favourite Shoe" coming up in January 2014, the Leisure trust awards and grants made under the Councillor Community Fund.

In answer to questions Councillor Eldred stated that:

- He was aware of the significance of Richard III to Northampton and that a replica of the king's head was currently on display in Northampton Museum until January 2014.
- He had agreed to answer 10 written questions supplied direct by Councillor Glynane.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He stated that it was proposed not to increase the Council Tax for 2014/15 and work was underway on the budget setting process which would involve some difficult decisions. He referred to the Revenues and Benefits team achieving accuracy figures of 97% and 99% in areas of their work, which was excellent, particularly in view of the changes made and transfer to LGSS.

In answer to a question Councillor Bottwood stated that decisions to be taken by Northamptonshire County Council would impact on the level of Council Tax charged, but he could only respond regarding the levels proposed by the Borough.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He referred to the selection of three artists commissioned to provide displays in the North Gate Bus Station and the Council supporting the transfer of land at Midsummer Meadow to create an access route to the University's proposed new campus.

In answer to questions Councillor Hadland stated that:

- Refurbishment of the existing Grosvenor Centre facilities would begin in October 2013 at a cost of £3m.
- The redevelopment of the Grosvenor Centre and Greyfriars was a complicated issue, but work with the owners continued.
- Additional cars were coming into the town, but the existing cameras were not capturing all of the footfall in the town centre. A camera would be installed to capture the footfall before and after the opening of the North Gate Bus Station.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Mason stated that she was deeply concerned regarding the cost of living and the benefit changes, especially the benefit cap. She stated that 25% of children were living in poverty in Britain and rickets was now on the rise once more in malnourished children. The Chief Medical Officer had called this situation shameful. Councillor Mason stated that the welfare reforms were stalled and not working and that this was negatively affecting family life, particularly with rising fuel costs. The bedroom tax in particular was affecting vulnerable people and families, particularly disabled people, and leading to rent arrears. Working people were being affected by the welfare reforms and not just those on benefits. She stated that the Labour party would challenge fuel companies on prices and abolish the bedroom tax.

Councillor Mackintosh responded, stating that the welfare system had trapped families on benefits and it was helpful to fix welfare limits to encourage people into work. He considered that there should be a safety net to support those who needed

help and referred to working tax credits to help those who were in work and needed support.

9. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE PLACES AND CONSULTATION APPOINTMENTS

Councillor Wire DL submitted a report asking Council to confirm the appointment of Councillor Mason as Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, following the resignation of Councillor Davies as Deputy Leader, and the appointment of Councillor Mason to the Police and Crime Panel and the Appointments and Appeals Committee to replace Councillor Davies in each case.

Councillor Mason seconded adoption of the report.

RESOLVED:

That the appointments to Committees and Consultation Appointments, as set out in the report, be confirmed.

10. NOMINATION TO NORTHAMPTON HOPE CENTRE

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report asking the Council to nominate the appointment of Councillor Markham to the Northampton Hope Centre Charity as a trustee.

Councillor Hadland seconded adoption of the report.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Markham be nominated to be appointed to the Northampton Hope centre Charity as a trustee for a period of three years.

11. PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT NORTHAMPTON NORTH SUE, LAND OFF A43 KETTERING ROAD

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report seeking authority from Council to devolve this Council's decision making authority as local planning authority to Daventry District Council (DDC) in respect of the cross-boundary outline planning application for the development at Northampton North SUE, A43 Kettering Road.

Council debated the appropriateness of devolving the whole application to DDC, or whether to maintain planning consideration for the small parcel of land to the south of the site.

Councillor Mackintosh moved adoption of the report.
Councillor Hadland seconded adoption of the report.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote:

There voted for the proposal: Councillors Ansell, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Flavell, Ford, Golby, Hadland, Hibbert, Hill, King, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Oldham, Parekh, Patel and Sargeant.

There voted against the proposal: Councillors Aziz, Beardsworth, Begum, N Choudary, Conroy, Davies, Glynane, Gowen, Mason, Mennell, Palethorpe, Stone, Subbarayan and Wire DL.

There abstained: the Mayor and Councillors Larratt and Yates.

RESOLVED:

That agreement be given to devolve this Council's decision making authority as local planning authority to Daventry District Council as set out in the report.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

i) Councillor Mackintosh proposed and Councillor Hadland seconded:

“Council welcomes the announcement that Cosworth Engineering is planning to build a new Centre of Excellence in Northampton, creating around 70 new jobs and up to 200 additional jobs for their suppliers.

The announcement is further evidence that, through the Northampton Alive programme, an increasing number of firms see Northampton as the perfect place to invest and do business.

Next year will mark Cosworth's 50th anniversary in the Borough, and this Council notes the positive contribution this prestigious company has made to our local economy, and its commitment to our towns future.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

ii) Councillor Glynane proposed and Councillor Conroy seconded:

“Council notes that:

- The recent commitment by the Government to maintain the existing post office network and to invest £1.34m in the service will mean that none of the current offices across Northampton will face programs of closure.
- Government is now looking at rolling out the trial scheme championed by Sheffield City Council and the National Federation of Sub Postmasters. This scheme established the scope to deliver a wide range of Public Services through local Post Offices thus underpinning their viability as a key community resource.

Council therefore resolves:

- To confirm its support for local Post Offices and to recognise the key part they play in communities across the district and

- To ask the Chief Executive to examine the Sheffield trial scheme and report back to Council on how our services could be delivered through the Post Office network across the district thus improving their viability and bringing our services closer to local communities.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was .carried.

iii) Mr Adams addressed Council and stated that more homes were needed in the right places. He stated that the reason people objected to new homes was the percentage of affordable housing and that people did not want social housing near their homes.

Mr Huffadine-Smith addressed Council and stated that speculative builders had pushed up house prices to unsustainable levels, where they were well beyond the income of local people. He asked the Council to think outside the box and consider schemes like park homes, which were a quarter the price of a traditional house.

Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Glynane seconded:

“Council notes that:

- We are not building enough homes in England.
- Rising house prices mean the dream of home ownership is beyond the reach of millions and the size of a mortgage deposit alone stops many would-be first-time buyers from getting on the housing ladder.
- More and more people are therefore being pushed into the private rented sector and as demand rises there, so too do the rents.
- One in 12 families in England is now on a social housing waiting list.
- The average house price in the East Midlands is over £161,000 – over 8 times the average household income in the region.

Council believes that:

- We need to build more of the right homes, in the right place, at the right price.
- Too often private developers try and force high density housing on huge sites that will cripple local infrastructure, causing vast public opposition to the idea of increasing the housing supply.
- All too often the people who actually need homes are missing from local debates.

- Councils need to take an active role in making the case for building more homes locally in a sensible, sustainable manner that is beneficial for communities as well as individuals.

Council resolves to:

- Support the Yes to Homes campaign and commits to increasing the delivery of the right homes, in the right place, at the right price in Northampton.
- Organise Housing Hearings to help local people, community groups and businesses to give evidence on the need for more homes, and will report the finding of these hearing to this council meeting.
- Work with Yes to Homes supporters, local groups and organisations to actively make the case for new homes and explain the benefits of new homes for the whole community.
- Investigate the reasons why people object to new homes and will produce a strategy for removing or mitigating these concerns.

Further resolves to:

- Inform local people through local media of this decision.
- Write to local MPs, informing them of this decision.”

Councillor Markham proposed and Councillor Oldham seconded an amendment to the motion:

“Delete:

Council resolves to:

- Support the Yes to Homes campaign and commits to increasing the delivery of the right homes, in the right place, at the right price in Northampton.
- Organise Housing Hearings to help local people, community groups and businesses to give evidence on the need for more homes, and will report the finding of these hearing to this council meeting.
- Work with Yes to Homes supporters, local groups and organisations to actively make the case for new homes and explain the benefits of new homes for the whole community.
- Investigate the reasons why people object to new homes and will produce a strategy for removing or mitigating these concerns.

Further resolves to:

- Inform local people through local media of this decision.
- Write to local MPs, informing them of this decision.”

Replace with:

Council resolves to:

Continue to work with tenants, developers and communities to make sure that the right types of housing are built in the right place, and to increase the amount of affordable housing in the borough.”

Amended motion to read:

“Council notes that:

- We are not building enough homes in England.
- Rising house prices mean the dream of home ownership is beyond the reach of millions and the size of a mortgage deposit alone stops many would-be first-time buyers from getting on the housing ladder.
- More and more people are therefore being pushed into the private rented sector and as demand rises there, so too do the rents.
- One in 12 families in England is now on a social housing waiting list.
- The average house price in the East Midlands is over £161,000 – over 8 times the average household income in the region.

Council believes that:

- We need to build more of the right homes, in the right place, at the right price.
- Too often private developers try and force high density housing on huge sites that will cripple local infrastructure, causing vast public opposition to the idea of increasing the housing supply.
- All too often the people who actually need homes are missing from local debates.
- Councils need to take an active role in making the case for building more homes locally in a sensible, sustainable manner that is beneficial for communities as well as individuals.

Council resolves to:

Continue to work with tenants, developers and communities to make sure that the right types of housing are built in the right place, and to increase the amount of affordable housing in the borough.”

Council debated the amended motion.

Upon a vote the amended motion was carried.

iv) Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Wire DL seconded:

“This Council welcomes the UK-wide campaign to end ‘legal loan sharking’.

This Council believes that the lack of access to affordable credit is socially and economically damaging. Unaffordable credit is causing a myriad of unwanted effects such as poorer diets, colder homes, rent, council tax and utility arrears, depression (which impacts on job seeking behaviour) and poor health.

This Council further believes that unaffordable credit is extracting wealth from the most deprived communities.

This Council notes it is the responsibility of all levels of government to try to ensure affordable credit for all, and therefore pledges to use best practice to promote financial literacy and affordable lending in Northampton. This will help to ensure that wealth stays in the local economy. This Council also pledges to promote based community organisations offering access to affordable credit, like Northampton Credit Union, and promoting saving in our town.

This Council asks the Chief Executive to write to the relevant Secretary of State saying this Council calls on the government to introduce caps on the total lending rates that can be charged for providing credit. In addition, this council calls on central government to give local authorities the power to veto licences for high street credit agencies where they could have negative economic or social impacts on communities.”

Councillor Eldred proposed and councillor King seconded an amendment to the motion:

“Delete:

This Council asks the Chief Executive to write to the relevant Secretary of State saying this Council calls on the government to introduce caps on the total lending rates that can be charged for providing credit. In addition, this council calls on central government to give local authorities the power to veto licences for high street credit agencies where they could have negative economic or social impacts on communities.

Amended motion to read:

“This Council welcomes the UK-wide campaign to end “legal loan sharking”.

This Council believes that the lack of access to affordable credit is socially and economically damaging. Unaffordable credit is causing a myriad of unwanted effects such as poorer diets, colder homes, rent, council tax and utility arrears, depression (which impacts on job seeking behaviour) and poor health.

This Council further believes that unaffordable credit is extracting wealth from the most deprived communities.

This Council notes it is the responsibility of all levels of government to try to ensure affordable credit for all, and therefore pledges to use best practice to promote financial literacy and affordable lending in Northampton. This will help to ensure that wealth stays in the local economy. This Council also pledges to promote based community organisations offering access to affordable credit, like Northampton Credit Union, and promoting saving in our town.”

Council debated the amended motion.

Upon a vote the amended motion was carried.

- v) Mr Adams addressed Council and congratulated the Council on the decision to remove Council tax reductions on empty properties. He asked the Council to let properties out for a number of years and to recycle the money.

Councillor Gowen proposed and Councillor Mason seconded:

“This council believes that empty properties that could be made habitable for housing should be logged with a property street doctor. There is a national empty property doctor.

This Council proposes to set up a local one on line to encourage people to log empty properties near them.

This Council will plan for bringing a percentage back into use every year either through negotiations with landlords or by CPOs.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

- vi) Mr Adams who had registered to address Council withdrew.

It was proposed by Councillor Mason and seconded by Councillor Palethorpe:

“This Council believes it is unacceptable to have families living in emergency accommodation for longer than 6 weeks. This council also believes that all emergency accommodation needs to be registered, risk assessed and visited on a regular basis to ensure basic standards are met and maintained.

This Council will ensure, wherever possible, families are placed in emergency accommodation near to their wider family, friends and the children's schools to ensure the best outcomes for all."

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

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

None.

The meeting concluded at 8:35 pm