

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 28 April 2014 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Marriott, Caswell, Ansell, Aziz, Beardsworth, Begum, Bottwood, Capstick, I. Choudary, N Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Flavell, Ford, Glynane, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, King, Lane, Larratt, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Mason, Mennell, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Stone and Strachan

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hadland declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 – Cabinet Member Reports and Motion x) as former Member of WNDC and a current Member of the WNDC Audit and Risk Committee.

Councillor Capstick declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 – Cabinet Member Reports and Motion x) as former Member of WNDC and a current Member of the WNDC Audit and Risk Committee.

Councillor Strachan declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Motion vi) as a member of credit Union.

Councillor King declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Motion vi) as a member of credit Union.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 10th March 2014 and the minutes of the adjourned meeting of the 24th February 2014 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Davies, Eales, Gowen, Palethorpe, Wire, Subbarayan, Yates and Conroy.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that during the last year he had spent time with his Chaplain and explained that he had been made aware that the Chaplain and congregation had been collecting 5 pence pieces which had been used to put towards the purchase of rehydrating salts for children affected by, and dying from, diarrhoea and dehydration in parts of the world where treatment was insufficient. The Mayor noted that in the past year there had been numerous charitable activities money raised for good

causes around the town and further afield.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mrs Sibley addressed Council and stated that she thought it improper for dogs to be allowed to be kept in Council owned flats. She noted that a number of residents had let their dogs out and had subsequently not cleared up after them, which was against the law and asked the Council to address the issue.

Mr Leach addressed Council and stated that the recent chalk event on Abington Street had demonstrated that there was major opposition to de-pedestrianisation.

Mr Nichols addressed Council and noted that there was a need to make the town centre more desirable to tourists and residents and urged that the Council re-install the fire baskets that were formally in place at the top of Abington Street, the Central Library be cleaned up and empty shops made to look more aesthetically appealing.

Mr Townsend addressed Council and commented that he was concerned about a potential increase in road accidents once Abington Street was opened. He noted that it was a Health and Safety concern and suggested that it would result in people shopping elsewhere and driving tourism out of the Town Centre.

Mr Wishart addressed Council and urged the Administration to reconsider de-pedestrianising Abington Street as it would impinge on the accessibility for disabled people, wheelchair users and children and commented that the findings of the recent study undertaken by the University of Northampton had found that the opening up of the street to traffic would have no positive significant economic or environmental impact on the Town Centre.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 8 questions had been received from members of the public and Councillors and that the answers had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution.

Questions and answers given were as tabled (included in an updated agenda on the website) unless where stated, supplementary questions were asked – details below.

In response to a supplementary question relating to Question 2, Councillor Hallam explained that the Council had no jurisdiction over fly tipping in private alleyways but that the Council worked with residents to resolve such issues.

Councillor Mason asked a supplementary question as to how the mistake of the Guildhall Office had ceased supplying Fair Trade products, to which Councillor Mackintosh declined to comment.

In response to a supplementary question relating to Question 8, Councillor Mackintosh commented that the de-pedestrianisation of Abington Street would bring life and vitality back to the Town Centre to ensure that it is prosperous in the future.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

At this point, each of the Cabinet Members made a presentation of their respective portfolios that had been circulated with the agenda.

Councillor Mackintosh submitted his Cabinet Member report and commented that the free parking had made a positive difference to the number of visitors to the town. It was noted that 100 new Council houses were going to be built and explained that over the Easter weekend, work had begun on the demolition of the Greyfriars building with a bridge connecting to the Grosvenor Centre having been removed. It was further reported that the restoration project of Delapre Abbey was underway and that the Administration were committed to the protecting heritage assets in Northampton.

In response to a question, Councillor Mackintosh confirmed that the removal of the Virgin Media cables would not result in extra cost and that the relocated site of the Francis Crick statue would be revealed at a later date. With regards to the old Greyfriars building and future developments, Councillor Mackintosh noted that there was continuing work with the Grosvenor Centre but that they were awaiting the outcome of the Rushden Lakes hearing before any announcements would be made. Responding to a further question, it was noted that some progress had been made with regards to the domestic violence and that the administration recognised the terrible situation faced by victims of domestic violence.

Councillor Markham submitted her Cabinet Member report and explained that Cabinet had recently agreed to the creation of an ALMO Shadow Board and noted that Cabinet had also agreed to the additional Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation. She explained that the Decent Homes Programme was on-going and that whilst there had been a number of issues, these were being dealt with and were inevitable due to the size of the programme. In response to a question asked, Councillor Markham commented that a review board comprised of Councillors was not necessary as a Service Improvement Board had already been established. In response to further questions, it was confirmed that there were currently 20 people in Bed and Breakfasts, 3 of whom had made themselves intentionally homeless, three-quarters of the budget for Discretionary Housing Payments had been spent, but that there had been no appeals in the past 3 months. Responding to a further question, Councillor Markham clarified that more residents were being offered housing affordable to their individual circumstances, so that those who could afford to pay, would do so. With regards to a question asked relating to HIMO's, she commented that she envisaged that there would be few problems collecting the licence fee.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Members report and noted that the free parking scheme had been well received and that there had been an overall increase in usage which was a success. It was noted that hundreds of jobs had been created within the Enterprise Zone which largely as a function of the rate relief scheme which had been implemented in the zone. In response to a question asked, it was reported that there was no fool proof measure to prevent members of the public from interfering with the Market Place fountain.

Councillor Eldred submitted a report and commented elaborated thereon. In response to a question asked, Councillor Eldred reiterated that there were currently no plans to sell of any further artefacts, but that it may be a consideration in the future.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Members report and noted that the Council were continuing to work with Anglian Water to restore the water levels at Bradlaugh Fields. In response to a question, Councillor Hallam commented that he would be happy to attend a meeting of the Racecourse Park Management Committee and further noted that 2 Park Managers were being recruited which would help deal with anti-social behaviour in parks and that multi agency working was underway to deal with those issues. Councillor Hallam confirmed that he would be helping to assist all parks in Northampton as part of Northampton in Bloom. In response to a further question raised, it was noted that the budget for tree cutting in the Eastern District would be confirmed and that the Cabinet Member would become more involved in resolving the concerns expressed by the Ward Member. Responding to a further question, Councillor Hallam asked that he be invited to the 'Friends of Thornton Park' meeting which would allow for him to develop contacts and deal with concerns raised.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Cabinet Members report and elaborated thereon. In response to a question asked, he commented that there were no performance figures that he was particularly concerned about and should there be in the future, that he would discuss his concerns with Cabinet Members and relevant Officers.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Stone commented that recent events, including the 1 Billion Rising for Justice, International Women's Day, Mothering Sunday and the upcoming election should be a reminder of important role that women in society play. She noted that only one third of elected Councillors were women and stated that there was a democratic deficit which continued to affect women. She noted that changes brought to Welfare Reform had massively affected women and had resulted in women having lost out both in their employment and in the home and stated that the impact of this had resulted in the number of children living in poverty in Northampton increasing. She stated that it was a huge issue and that it was within the gift of the local authority to empower and support women.

Councillor Mackintosh commented that the administration had introduced a number of women-centric events, which included the women's forum and that support had been given to events that supported women's issue including the 1 Billion Rising for Justice and International Women's Day.

Councillor Stone commented that it was the Labour Group who had asked for the Women's Forum to be re-instated and that the administration had voted against a recent motion from Labour requesting people be paid the living wage.

9. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report that sought the approval of the Calendar of Meetings for 2014/15.

Councillor Markham seconded adoption of the report.

RESOLVED:

That the calendar of meetings for 2014/15 be approved.

10. PINEHAM BUSINESS PARK

Councillor Hadland submitted a report that sought to devolve the Council's decision making authority as local planning authority to South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) with regards to the cross boundary outline planning application for the development Pineham Business Park.

Councillor Mackintosh seconded adoption of the report.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's decision making authority as local planning authority be devolved to South Northamptonshire Council as set out in the report.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

- i) Councillor Eldred proposed and Councillor Larratt seconded that:

“This Council recognises the importance of the town's three sports clubs and celebrates having cricket, football and rugby teams in Northampton.

Despite years of delays under the Liberal Democrats, this Council is pleased that, under Conservative control, we have now seen developments agreed at Sixfields Stadium, Franklin's Gardens and the County Ground.

This Council welcomes the positive attitude demonstrated by all the clubs and their help in promoting the town and wishes them every success for the coming seasons”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

- ii) Councillor Hadland proposed and Councillor Nunn seconded:

“This Council welcomes the announcement by leading financial company Experian that Northampton is the number one place in Britain to do business.

The company released its findings in March outlining the four key areas it measured with the number of start-ups, rate of insolvencies, level of financial health and business turnover.

Council recognises that Northampton achieved top marks for turnover, start-up and insolvency rates and dropped just one point for financial strength.

Council welcomes this report which recognises the important partnerships with

leading businesses, public authorities and the local enterprise partnerships as part of the Northampton Alive programme”.

Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Mason seconded an amendment:

That the last paragraph be removed and amended, so that the motion now reads:

“This Council welcomes the announcement by leading financial company Experian that Northampton is the number one place in Britain to do business.

The company released its findings in March outlining the four key areas it measured with the number of start-ups, rate of insolvencies, level of financial health and business turnover.

Council recognises that Northampton achieved top marks for turnover, start-up and insolvency rates and dropped just one point for financial strength.

However, this Council is concerned that being number one for business as quoted by Experian relies on

- i) Under-employment in the town where employees work on zero hour contracts.
- ii) The proliferation of jobs in warehousing and low wage local economy
- iii) Employment for many workers being subsidised by the state where employers paying less than the minimum wage are forcing workers to apply for benefits.”

Council debated the amended motion.

Upon a vote the amended motion was lost.

Council debated the original motion.

Upon a vote the original motion was carried.

- iii) Councillor Markham proposed and Councillor Oldham seconded that:

“This Council recognises the benefit of Tenant Engagement which, which has been absent for many years.

This Council has benefited since opening the doors and introducing not only the Tenant Panel but also the additional six service improvement panels.

This Council is committed to continue to engage with tenants and recognises the added value it brings to the authority”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

iv) Councillor Markham proposed and Councillor Bottwood seconded:

“Council congratulates this administration’s commitment to the creation of new council houses in Northampton, and welcomes the announcement that this Conservative administration will be building 100 new council houses at Dallington Grange.

This project will bring the first significant development of new council homes in our town for two decades, and as one of the largest in the country, will put Northampton at the forefront of the creation of new council homes.

Council also welcomes the Government’s efforts to address the national housing shortage, increase the supply of affordable housing and to help people get on the housing ladder”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

v) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Glynane seconded :

The Conservative election manifesto of 2011 made several pledges, including “Northampton needs a Council that listens and delivers what the people want; not one that is out of touch.”

Council therefore calls upon the administration to deliver on this manifesto promise as a priority.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

vi) Councillor Eldred proposed and Councillor King seconded:

‘Council welcomes the opening of the new Northamptonshire Credit Union access and information point at the Guildhall One Stop Shop. The new access point will make it easier for people in Northampton to use the services offered by the Credit Union and help those experiencing financial difficulties.

‘Council supports the work of Northamptonshire Credit Union and their efforts to help those experiencing financial hardship, and to give people alternatives to loan sharks and pay day lenders.’

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

vii) Councillor Markham proposed and Councillor King seconded:

'Preventing abuse and domestic violence is a high priority for this Administration.

'Council notes that the Borough Council is working closely with relevant organisations in Northampton that deal with issues around abuse and domestic violence, and that officers from the Borough Council are working proactively with Northamptonshire County Council on this issue.

'Council supports the work of these associated organisations, and notes that the Administration will continue to monitor this situation to see what further support can be given to help victims of domestic violence.'

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

viii) Councillor Mason proposed and Councillor N Choudary seconded:

This council is committed to ensuring that all people can live free of fear of violence at home, and is totally opposed to the domestic violence that led to women in our county making 12,000 complaints to the police in the last year for which figures are available

This council is aware of the difficulties that agencies working with women who are victims of domestic abuse are facing.

This council recognises that this is a safeguarding issue and resolves to work with the relevant agencies in the town to find local solutions to these difficulties.

This council further resolves to work with county wide agencies to develop a strategy for support that meets the needs of the women and the children at risk of abuse and who are victims of abuse.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

ix) Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor N Choudary seconded:

This Council notes the proliferation and concentration of betting shops is contributing to community decline, especially the decline in valued community assets like pubs. England's poorest spend £13bn a year on the gambling machines in these shops according to a study published by the Campaign for Fairer Gambling. The ongoing spread of betting shops has also been linked to gambling addiction and crime.

This council also notes that gambling machines in the Betting Shops and in pubs is adding to the vulnerability of our local communities.

This Council therefore resolve to write a letter to Central Government asking them to create a separate planning use class for betting shops so that local authorities have new powers to address the problem.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

x) Councillor Capstick proposed and Councillor Stone seconded:

“This Council notes that the WNDC finished on 31st March. This Council believes ongoing WNDC projects must still be monitored to ensure their completion. This Council resolves to establish a working party to monitor the progress on the completion of the WNDC legacy projects. The working party would receive bi-monthly reports of progress and in turn the Working Party reports back to Full Council”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

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

None.

The meeting concluded at 9.36pm