

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 27 October 2014 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Caswell, Ansell, Beardsworth, Bottwood, I. Choudary, N Choudary, Conroy, Duncan, Eales, Eldred, Flavell, Ford, Glynane, Golby, Gowen, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, King, Larratt, Mackintosh, Malpas, Mason, Mennell, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Stone and Yates

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Glynane declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in Motion iv) as his daughter owns a property in St James Ward.

Councillor Beardsworth declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in Motion i) as she had a relative employed by the Council.

Councillor Patel declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in Motion iv) as having a business in St James.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 15th September 2014 were agreed and signed by the Mayor, following an amendment to record Councillor Ashraf as being in attendance and Councillor Ford as having sent his apologies.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Aziz, Begum, Capstick, Strachan, Subbarayan, Davies, Eales, Markham, Palethorpe, Lynch and Lane.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that a delegation of Chinese business people had recently visited and had gifted the Mayor with a book, which Councillors were invited to view in the Mayor's Parlour. He further noted that on Saturday 25th October 2014 he had attended a Royal British Legion event at the Royal and Derngate, which has been a success. He reported that Councillor Capstick, who had suffered injury through a recent accident, was making good progress and sent her best wishes on behalf of the Council and wished her a speedy recovery.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Brown addressed Council and commented that whilst there had been much development in the town with regards to new houses being built and expansions of

retails centres, he questioned what was being done about the impact that this would have on small businesses and asked what was being done with regards to the loss of accreditation for the museum. He stated that the administration knew about the price of everything, but the value of nothing. He further stated that trust and confidence in any authority was essential and the only way to regain the two would be for the Leader to resign.

Mr Mallard addressed Council and referred to recent pictures and an article in the Herald and Post that highlighted the issue of human excrement that blighted the alleyways of Northampton. He commented he found it difficult to comprehend the impression that students and visitors of Northampton must get, when witnessing scenes reminiscent of medieval times and argued that there needed to be more investment in providing free facilities for people to use to avoid a worsening situation.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 7 questions has 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 – detailed below:

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 1, Councillor Mackintosh explained that the changes to terms and conditions were very clear and that he would be happy to meet Councillor Beardsworth to discuss them more in depth.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 2, Councillor Mackintosh explained that with regards to unpaid sick leave, there would be no impact on the pensions of the employees.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 3, Councillor Mackintosh explained that the changes to the terms and conditions were not dissimilar to those offered in the private sector.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Mackintosh submitted his Cabinet Member report and noted that Penny Mordaunt MP had visited Northampton on the 2nd October 2014, visiting Project Angel, Vulcan Works and developments on Guildhall Road. It was also reported that international visitors had also been welcomed to Northampton, specifically the Mayor of Shangrao City in China and his delegates. In response to questions raised, the Leader explained that no one had been recruited to the post of Head of Regeneration and Major Projects but that they would continue to seek recruiting to the position through the Appointments and Appeals Committee. He also noted that there had been a proposal for a power generating facility to be accommodated at Westbridge but that it would have to be part of a detailed planning application and process should it progress further.

In response to further questions, Councillor Mackintosh commented that the fireworks to be displayed in Becketts Park had been paid for jointly by the Council, Heart FM and the University of Northampton. It was noted that whilst the fireworks had cost in the region of £20,000, this was insignificant in terms of the amount of money that had been saved, specifically in relation to £1 million saved from cutting senior manager post at the Council. He also commented that the administration enjoyed laying on community events for residents to enjoy and were aware that fewer people had money to spend on expensive individual fireworks and noted that organised professional displays were safer overall.

In the absence of Councillor Markham, Councillor Mackintosh submitted her report and elaborated thereon. Responding to questions asked Councillor Mackintosh explained that they were aware of the concerns being expressed about Little Cross Street and that the problems faced would be addressed even if it is after the transfer to Northampton Partnership Homes. Responding to further questions, Councillor Mackintosh confirmed that the issue of some areas being subject to HIMO restrictions was due to legal reasons but that they would continue to monitor the situation,. He suggested that anyone with concerns contact the Cabinet Member who would update and inform them on any progress. In response to a question asked relating to the bankruptcy of the contractor employed to address the issues in Little Cross Street, the number of voids and the number of people housed in bed and breakfast, Councillor Mackintosh confirmed that Councillor Markham would respond to the detailed questions asked in due course.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member report and commented that the administration had shown commitment to offering development to young people from all backgrounds, by offering opportunities in the UK's first National Training Academy for Rail with numerous apprenticeships and training opportunities being offered. Responding to questions asked, Councillor Hadland commented that there were a number of high profile companies, such as Cosworth who were attracting high quality jobs in the region. He noted that that due to the private ownership of the St Edmunds site, the Council were limited in their abilities to develop the site, but informed Council that a planning application, from the current owners was anticipated and that any progress with regards to the site would be relayed to members, in due course. Responding to further questions, Councillor Hadland commented that the rising cost of the Greyfriars demolition was partly due to the estimates, but that the trial was exhaustive and extensive, the cost of which was coming from the Capital Programme which would not have an impact on the General Fund, and that there had been no increase in Council Tax. In response to a question, Councillor Hadland explained that the widening of pavements to allow spaces for outside café tables was not comparable to the cafes that were along Abington Street and explained that pedestrians and traffic would not be conflicted.

Councillor Eldred submitted his Cabinet Member report and explained that the street fair had been opened on Saturday morning, by the Mayor and noted that a number of the rides had been reduced in price to make it more accessible to those on a restricted income. He thanked Heart FM and the University of Northampton for their partnership works to the Becketts Park fireworks display. It was noted that the

German Market would be making a return to Northampton Town Centre. He thanked Councillor King and the LGBTQ forum for their involvement in promoting the 'Straight Allies' campaign, which was the focus for International Coming Out Day.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Eldred explained that £14 million was being invested in Museums and measures being taken to look at the possibility of linking up the Shakespeare experience; his granddaughter having been a resident on Northampton. Responding to further questions, it was confirmed that any progress involving Parish Splits would be monitored and reported back to future Council meetings and that someone from the authority would write an article for LINK magazine.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Mason commented that there had been much debate about devolution recently with the Scottish Referendum and stated that it was about giving local communities the opportunities to direct themselves. She commented that Northampton was a big town and argued that the current centralised political economy was not fit for purpose and suggested that public services should be delivered at the lowest level to best serve its people. She noted that Northampton was suffering from a current housing crisis and argued that they should, as an authority, be able to set their own council tax and to make education more accountable and voiced the opinion that Northampton be granted City and Unitary status.

Councillor Mackintosh stated that he was pleased that the issue of devolution was being debated at a local and national level and commented that he supported the Cabinet who were currently looking at having English votes for English laws which he commented the Labour party were fundamentally against. He noted the Conservatives wanted people to have a view on matters, especially European involvement and this was reflected in their commitment to have a referendum on the issue. It was further noted that there had been more parish councils created in Northampton as a way of encouraging local democracy and participation at a local level.

In response, Councillor Mason commented that residents in a number of areas of Northampton had been given the opportunity to comment on Parish Councils by way of an Advisory Poll on 15th November 2012 and noted that there had been a very low turnout.

9. NOTICES OF MOTION

- i) Councillor Mackintosh proposed and Councillor Marriott seconded that:

“Council recognises the 825th anniversary of Northampton's Royal Charter as a significant anniversary in the town's history.

On this occasion chooses to confer the honour of the Freedom of the Borough of Northampton on three citizens who have worked hard for the town.

Keith Barwell OBE for his services to The Saints, the restoration of the Charles Rennie Mackintosh house at 78 Dergate and support for the town;

Brian Binley, Member of Parliament, for his long-standing support for Northampton as a County Councillor and MP, and for his role in the regeneration of the town;

Alderman John Dickie as a former Leader of Northampton Borough Council and longstanding supporter of the town;

In recognition of these achievements, and their long service to the people of Northampton, this Council resolves to award the three citizens the Freedom of the Borough and to hold a special meeting for the award ceremony."

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

ii) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Conroy seconded:

"This Council recognises the exceptional contribution to the town provided by the hard work of our staff.

This Council further recognises that staff are more effective and feel more valued when they are treated fairly and properly by the administration and this Council as a whole.

Unfortunately, this Council is also forced to recognise that though upcoming changes to their terms and conditions, hardworking staff are being forced to pay for the mistakes of his administration –from out of control borrowing, to failed projects. Council therefore resolves that no further negative changes will be made to staff terms and conditions for the foreseeable future".

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

iii) Councillor Glynane to proposed and Councillor Beardsworth seconded:

This Council notes the motion passed at NCC last month calling for the County Council to "work with Borough and District Councillors and officer to develop an integrated cycling policy which raises the profile and priority of cycling...and ensures the interests and safety of cyclists.

This Council resolves to take the lead in making our town centre friendly for non-car users, to make every effort to ensure success of the County Council's new 'joined up' plan".

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

vi) Ms Hope addressed Council and commented that she was glad to see cross party working and hoped that this motion would be successful when previous

attempts to address the matter had been brushed aside. She also wished the Council luck with gaining agreement from Northamptonshire County Council as she had experienced difficulties in the past.

Councillor Ashraf amended her motion that had been printed on the agenda to read as follows:

“This council recognises the exceptional parking problems that residents and tenants regularly encounter in St James as a result of match day parking. But the problems in St James are not only match day parking. The people coming into St James taking up residents’ and tenants spaces include people coming into the area to work and some people parking at the flats and walking to the station to avoid the parking charges there. This council therefore resolves to do the following:

1. Look into the possibility of issuing tenants in NBC homes that have allocated parking areas with free parking permits. The properties considered would be: Cordwainer House, Stitchman House, Stirup House, Lapstone House, Eyeletter House, Abbey House, Melbourne House, Devonshire House, although this list is not exhaustive. This measure would ensure that premium allocated parking is not occupied by people from the outside area. This should be supplemented with sufficient enforcement to tackle inappropriately and incorrectly parked vehicles.
2. This council also agrees to consult with Northamptonshire County Council, the Police and Highways to look at the possibility of extending free parking permits into other parts of St James, Upton, Duston and other parts of the town which may then replace the current parking permit scheme which is presently under review and thus remove the need to financially penalise the people of St James simply because people from the outside area come to park in St James, as a successful sports club is located on their door step.
3. This Council resolves to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out a detailed investigation to look at these options for Cabinet to consider.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

iv) Councillor Mason proposed and Councillor Marriot seconded:

This Council regrets that funding for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) has been reduced by Central Government.

This Council notes that a consultation is currently underway about changes to the CTRS. The consultation ends on the 09 November 2014.

This Council further notes that under the current scheme working age claimants can only claim a maximum discount for 85% of their Council Tax. The Conservative Administration is proposing to reduce

this to somewhere between 80% and 75%.

This Council believes that the fairest and most prudent option would be to make no changes to the CTRS as the poorest and most vulnerable are already suffering hardship through the benefit reforms and a cost of living crisis.

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 9.36pm