

## **MINUTES**

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH  
COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 8 June 2015  
AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

**COUNCILLORS:** Ashraf, Marriott, Caswell, Ansell, Aziz, Beardsworth, Bottwood, N Choudary, Eales, Eldred, Flavell, Golby, Gowen, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, King, Lane, Larratt, Lynch, Malpas, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Stone, Smith, Birch, Cali, Chunga, Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, Eales, Haque, Hill, Kilbride, Markham, McCutcheon, Russell and Shaw

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hadland declared a personal non-pecuniary interest as a Trustee of Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust.

Councillor Birch declared a personal non-pecuniary interest as a Trustee of Community Spaces, Northampton.

### **2. MINUTES.**

The minutes of the proceedings of the Meetings of the Council held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 15<sup>th</sup> April and the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2015 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

### **3. APOLOGIES.**

Apologies were received from Councillors Gowen, Larratt, Lane, Choudary and McCutcheon.

### **4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

The Mayor announced that a concert held at the Picturedrome on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2015 had raised £700 for Marie Curie and encouraged Councillors to attend the 'Blooming Great Tea Party, to be held in the Great Hall on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015 to raise funds also for the Charity. It was noted that all Members would have received an invite to the Civic Sunday ceremony on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and the Mayor looked forward to seeing them in attendance.

### **5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS**

Mr Norman Adams addressed Council and commented that whilst it was welcomed news that the Borough would be building 100 new Council Houses, it they would not be socially owned or rented; they may be 'affordable homes' but questioned whether they would be affordable to those receiving the minimum wage for example. He

further commented that percent of the allocation spent on the Disabled Facilities Grant were dismal.

Mr Justin Brown commented that he was one of 400 users of Shop Mobility in Northampton and stated that it was an essential service that offered people with disabilities some independence and due to funding cuts, it could be a service that would be closed by Christmas. He noted that austerity measures were impacting most on people with disabilities and submitted a petition with 275 signatures asking the Council to reconsider the grant that has been made to shopmobility

Ms Beverly Mennell spoke against the proposed cuts that would impact the shobmobility scheme and appealed for the Council to reconsider their business model and stated that the service was a vital need to those with a disability.

Mr Arthur Newbury expressed his disappointment that the Planning Committee had granted the application for a development of over 150 houses in the St David's area. He further commented that the new student flats in Kingsthorpe had created traffic issues with an increase in the number of cars.

Mr Clive Richards addressed Council and commented that he was speaking in favour of Motion i) that had been submitted by the Liberal Democrats. He stated that the practice of fox hunting was a very cruel and unnecessary 'sport' and voiced his support for there to be a ban of hunting on all Council land, should the ban be repealed. He commented that 80% of people wanted the ban to remain in place.

Mr Phil Leach commented that there had been a cut of £11,000 out of the Door to Door service, even though a previous Mayor had raised £45,000 for the charity. He further questioned how the Council could justify spending money of the Mayoral car, when these essential services were being cut.

Alderman Tony Clarke addressed Council and stated that people with disabilities were being further disabled by society and noted his shock at the decision to reduce funding. He commented that he had not seen evidence of the decision to reduce funding having been made by Cabinet nor had he found anything suggesting that an Equality Impact Assessment had been done. He further noted the juxtaposition of money having been spent on attracting shoppers to the Town Centre and then cutting funding to those providing shopmobility services in the Town Centre. He noted that two thirds of people supported the current ban of hunting with dogs and asked that Members be given a free vote, rather than whipped.

## **6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Mayor advised that 15 questions had been received from Councillors and members of the public 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 questions 1, Councillor Hibbert

confirmed that there were no backlogs in the Council's processing and approval of Disabled Facilities Grant and stated that it was necessary for the Council to distinguish between those who had correctly followed the process and those who had not.

In response to a supplementary question relating to questions 2, Councillor Hibbert commented that there was no subscribed timescale for the social lettings agency to be established as there were further options that needed to be examined thoroughly before implementing it.

In response to a supplementary comment raised relating to questions 15, Councillor Hibbert stated that he was unable to make comments on behalf of the MP for the area.

## **7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS**

Councillor Markham submitted her Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. She noted that since the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 the Council had implemented the Living Wage for employees of the Council. She expressed her thanks and appreciation to the Elections Team who had undertaken the most complex combined election ever. In response to questions asked, the Leader commented that it would be impossible for the Council to control whether the Living Wage would be paid to contracted staff. She explained that Councillors would be in receipt of the plans for the Greyfriars site once a full consultation has been conducted. Councillor Markham further explained that traffic in Northampton was an issue, but there were numerous reasons for it, including an increase in visitors to the Town Centre and a reduction in costs of parking, attracting people into the Town. It was noted that whilst additional costs had been incurred due to the creation of the seventh Cabinet Member position, the role of the Assistant to the Administration Political Assistant had been deleted and therefore a saving had been made. Responding to an invitation, Councillor Markham confirmed that she would gladly listen and meet with any Councillors wishing to address poverty in their areas.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated noting that the Council was preparing its account for the 2014/15 financial year which would be passed on to the Council's external Auditors in late June, before being reported to the Audit Committee in July. Councillor Hallam confirmed that there were no particular increases in the number of people claiming a single person discount, but that he was ensuring that those entitled to support and assistance would be in receipt of it and noted he would email to clarify his points and findings following the project being completed. Responding to questions asked Councillor Hallam explained that there were numerous measures in place to assist people in poverty, including the Credit Union.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member report and commented that there had been a burst water main in the Town Centre which had caused recent problems. He further noted that the restoration work at Delapre Abbey continued to progress and welcomed the commitment of Travis Perkins who had submitted a planning application to redevelop their headquarter buildings in Lodge Farm. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hadland confirmed that there was still some signage to

be erected on Abington Street and stated that officers and Members had received very positive feedback. He further commented that he would inform Members of the percentage of Affordable Homes that would be built in the new Dallington application for 3000 homes.

Councillor Eldred submitted his Cabinet Member report and highlighted that the CEFAP panel had met in late February 2015 to assess 49 applications received for the Partnership Grant 2015/16. In response to questions asked, he explained that it would be up to CEFAP to decide on where the funding would be allocated.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Cabinet Member report and thanked the work of his predecessor, Councillor Hallam, for the work he carried out during his time as the Cabinet Member. He commented that a new Town Centre route had been introduced for Neighbourhood Wardens who were engaging with street drinkers and beggars. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hallam confirmed that whilst he was concerned about the welfare of chickens on Council owned allotments, he had received a number of complaints about cockerels. Responding to further questions, Councillor Bottwood stated that the number of street wardens had been increased, but noted that there was limited funding. He noted that further consideration would be given in tackling the chewing gum problem and explained that whilst there had been issue with some recycling being blown away, the contract with EMS would last for another 3 years and that they had to continue to work within the constraints of the contract.

Councillor King submitted her Cabinet Member report and commented that she had been working hard on tackling crime within the Town Centre and noted that there would be an introduction of Street Watch areas. Responding to questions asked, she reported that the increased rise in overall violence was due to a change in the way that the crimes are reported to the Police and their recording practices. It was further noted that there had recently been a report completed for Scrutiny, the recommendations from which will be reported to Cabinet. She confirmed that she would attend a meeting with the Police about the decreased number of PCSOs in the Kingsheath and Spencer Wards.

Councillor Hibbert submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He explained that a funding bid, made by multi-agencies resulted in the Government awarding a one off sum of £434,000 to help improve services that provide refuge for victims of domestic abuse. It was also noted that there were 223 three storey Houses in Multiple Occupation (HIMOs) had been licensed under the Northampton's Mandatory licensing scheme. It was explained that there were no budget pressures on the Disabled Facilities Grant and the money had not been diverted elsewhere. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hibbert confirmed that they were looking at options to restrict the number of HIMOs in an area and that any future updates and information sharing would be brought to Council once the landlords forum had met.

## **8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS**

Councillor Stone, as Leader of the Labour Group stated that there was a need for the infrastructure of the Town to be addressed and improved and this could only be done with joined up working with the highways agency, the County Council and other

partnerships. She further noted that consideration was needed with regards to improving the town centre experience for all users of it, including shoppers, students and visitors and to offer an improved experience for bus users. She also stated that thought was needed in deciding the future of the Greyfriars site and questioned what steps could be taken to encourage the retention of graduates from the University. She commented that the Council had a duty of care to the residents of Northampton to address issue such as obesity, cleanliness of the Town Centre and argued the necessity to develop a strategy to prevent poverty and deal with current levels of child poverty.

In response, Councillor Markham stated that many of the issues and concerns raised by Councillor Stone had already been addressed in the Conservative Manifesto. She noted that there was a long term economic plan in place which would seek to address poverty, specifically child poverty and also noted that the Conservative had bought many students back into the Town through partnership working with the University and many were retained in the area as Northampton was providing opportunities for graduates.

Councillor Stone responded by stating that she looked forward to seeing a Town Centre that is well developed and emphasised the need to look after and retain the students of the Town. She further noted the importance of dealing with poverty as an urgent issue.

## **9. CHANGES TO STATUTORY DISMISSAL PROCEDURES - AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS**

Councillor Markham submitted a report that sought the approval of amendments to the Council's Standing Orders and delegation to the Monitoring Officer, the power to make any changes required to the Constitution.

Councillor Hallam seconded the report.

### **RESOLVED:**

1. That  
the amendments to the Council's Standing Orders as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved
  
2. That  
the power to make any changes required to the Constitution be delegated to the Monitoring Officer, to implement the decision of Full Council.

## **10. NOTICES OF MOTION**

Mr Norman Adams addressed Council and spoke of his strong feelings in support of the motion. He stated that fox hunting was a horrible 'sport' and that the Conservatives have tried to justify hunting as a means of valuable employment and further stated that he would like to see the ban remain in place and that there was a need to concentrate on more pressing issues.

i) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Meredith seconded:

This Council notes with concern the intention of the new Conservative government to revisit the fox hunting ban passed by Labour in 2004.

Council asserts that hunting with dogs for sport has no place in a civilised society, and resolves that it will never be allowed to take place on Council land.

Council further resolves to write to the Prime Minister stating our position to any repeal.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote:

There voted for the Motion: Councillors Ahsraf, Beardsworth, Birch, Cali, Chunga, Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, G Eales, T Eales, Haque, Marriott, Meredith, Russell, Smith and Stone.

There voted against the motion Aziz, Bottwood, Caswell, Eldred, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, J Hill, Kilbride, King, Lynch, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Shaw and Walker.

There abstained the Mayor and Councillor M Hill.

The motion was lost.

Alderman John Dickie addressed Council and stated that he was speaking in favour of the Motion. He commented that the Cabinet system was based on Westminster model but that it resulted in many Councillors becoming disenfranchised. He argued that it also diminished the quality of the debate and that Councillors were now being used as voting fodder and the Borough Council should extend democracy and revert to the Committee system.

ii) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Meredith seconded:

Council recognises that Democracy is struggling in Britain today, with citizens feeling alienated from their Government at every level, with almost a third of people failing to vote at all in May's elections.

Council further recognises that this Council could be more accountable to residents, ensuring that they have a real voice in the way their town is run.

Council therefore resolves to begin producing plans to return to the Committee system, meaning an administration, while retaining their current level of control, would be more accountable to opposition members and, therefore, the town's residents.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

iii) Councillor Marriot proposed and Councillor Russell seconded:

“The council applauds the excellent work of the Returning Officer and all his staff for conducting three elections at the same time with superb efficiency and excellent customer care.

However we note that there remains a democratic issue in this town in three areas and resolve the following:-

1. We need to do further work to ensure maximum numbers of our citizens are registered to vote, particularly with full implementation of IER.
2. In our next review of polling stations we must ensure equal access for voters without cars, those who need wheel chair access and those not able to walk very far.
3. The methodology process of consultation of the polling station review needs to be approved by General Purposes Committee before it is carried out.

We further urge the Administration to think about Democracy Week and how we can use that week to further the aims of democracy in our town”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

Council noted that the proposer of Motion iv) had agreed to incorporate the amendment submitted by the Conservative Group and agreed to the Motion being amended (as below)

iv) Councillor Ashraf to propose and Councillor Stone to second:

“This Council notes that the well-being of the people of our town is often inter-dependant on the services provided by Northamptonshire County Council and other organisations including this Borough Council. These services should not be provided in isolation but, where relevant, should be part of a close working partnership with Northampton Borough Council.

We therefore resolve to strengthen our partnership working around the following key issues:-

Planning for Sheltered Housing, Care Homes and End of Life Care.

Planning for the transitional needs of young people leaving care such as the housing needs.

Raising issues and awareness regarding the exploitation of vulnerable adults and children, through our Licensing function”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

v) Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Cali seconded:

“This Council notes that in April 2013 that Northamptonshire County Council set up a Sustainable Independent Living Scheme (SILS) due to the changes brought about by the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

This Council also notes that the purpose of SILS was to support vulnerable people to remain in or return to the community and sustain independent living. SILS was controlled through applications meeting the criteria so grants were given only to people under significant pressures such as people being rehoused after a period of homelessness.

However, this Council further notes that Northamptonshire County Council ceased the SILS with effect from 1st April 2015. There are no other sources of public service support of this kind and so people will have to turn to voluntary agencies, which are already under extreme pressures.

This Council believes that the closure of the SILS could result in increased poverty and personal debt.

This Council therefore asks the Chief Executive to write to Northamptonshire County Council calling for the reinstatement of SILS or temporary reinstated whilst a long-term satisfactory solution is found”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

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

None

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified