

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 12 December 2016 AT SIX THIRTY O’CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Ansell, Ashraf, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Cali, Chunga, Culbard, Davenport, G Eales, T Eales, Eldred, Golby, Gowen, Hadland, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, M Hill, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, B Markham, M Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Patel, Russell, Sargeant, Shaw, Smith and Stone

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7th November 2016 were agreed by the Mayor with the following amendments to Item 7 – Cabinet Member presentations, the Churches site mentioned is in St James’ Ward not St David’s as written.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Gowen, Choudary, Flavell, Walker, Caswell, Parekh and Duffy.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that Remembrance Sunday, held on 13th November had been well attended by Councillors and reported that on Monday 14th November the Mayoress and I went to support Poppy count. This year Northampton has raised over £122,000 with another £15,000 expected to come in from local supermarkets.

The Mayor further announced that the First International Men’s Day took place in Market Square on Friday 18th November. This was well supported by a number of Councillors and the local community and a week later the Mayor’s Gala Dinner was held at the Guildhall on Friday 25th November – raising money for the Mayors Charity Guide Dogs Northampton.

It was noted that the Mayor and Mayoress had visited a number of care homes from 5th – 9th December and were pleased to see the hard work and dedication that staff carry out supporting those in care. On Sunday 18th December – all Councillors were invited to attend Nine Lessons and Carols which would be taking place at All Saints’ Church.

The Mayor announced that Councillor Shaw was due to get married to Natasha on the 22nd December 2016, and on behalf of the Council wished him well on his wedding day.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Steve Miller addressed Council and commented that he was pleased to see the both opposition groups had submitted motions relating to the reduction of Air Quality and Pollution. He commented that whilst there had been reports that air quality around the bus station was not for consideration due to the fact that it was in a non-residential area. However, he voiced concern that those working in and near the station should also have a right to clean air. He further reported that even though there was a Low Emission Strategy, there was a need for pollution to be measured across the whole of the Town and not just in air quality management areas.

Mr Norman Adams voiced his concerns about the Councils diminishing housing stock and reported that since April 2012 392 homes had been sold off and 27 were closed for demolition and calculated that that the replacement rate was less than 5%. He requested that the Council start to deliver more homes and replace houses that have been sold through right to buy, and start building and replacing those sold like for like.

Mr Dave Willis commented that he had been an agent during the last election for the Labour candidate and questioned how the former Leader had received £30,000 payment without it being properly declared. He further questioned whether Mr David Mackintosh MP had been aware of the payments as he subsequently rushed through decisions to loan the Football Club money and alleged that he had brought his way into Parliament and lied his way into staying there. He requested that the Council pass a motion of no confidence in David Mackintosh MP.

Mr Hugh Legge commented that he was concerned about the way that the former Leader of the Council had sold off some of the valuable artefacts auctioned off and questioned whether this had followed the proper processes and expressed his disappointment that the museum had lost its accreditation through the sale of the Sekhemka statue.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 10 questions had been received from Councillors and from members of the public and that the answers had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution.

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

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 1, Councillor Hadland reported that the new system had been installed a year ago and that whilst it provided technical improvements there had been a loss of public facing service, but it was hoped that this would be reinstated as soon as possible.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 2, Councillor Hibbert commented that whilst he recognised there were some problems applying 'pay to stay', Cabinet were awaiting further instructions from the government and that they would not know the full details until that had happened.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 3, Councillor Hibbert gave assurance that 100 new Council homes were to be built but that the project was currently subject to due diligence.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 4, Councillor King confirmed that there had been no reduction in CCTV coverage.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn, the Leader of the Council, submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He noted the findings of the Internal Auditors Report and reiterated an apology to the residents of Northampton for the serious shortcomings that had been highlighted in the report. He referred to the Transformation Programme which had been conceived by the former leader of the Council, Councillor M Markham and noted the progress that was being made. The Leader explained that with regards to Unitary Status, it was an issue that remained on the national agenda. He noted the popularity of the concept of a Unitary Northampton with an enlarged boundary, but that the Government were seeking proposals from areas where all councils involved would need to reach an agreement with Northampton's neighbouring councils for boundaries to be extended.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Nunn commented that with regards to the Transformation Programme, any Councillor who wanted to gauge the effectiveness should speak to staff directly and in reference to Unitary Council, he stated that the Council had commissioned a piece of work to be undertaken which he anticipated would be shared with all group leaders at some time in the future. Responding to further questions raised, relating to the PwC report, Councillor Nunn stated that a Governance Action Plan was underway and assured Council that any future major projects would go through the proper process. Responding to a question asked about why extra funding for the Football Club loan had been taken under delegated powers, Councillor Nunn explained that he had not been a member of the Cabinet at that time but that he would enforce following proper procedures and recommendations would be referred back to Cabinet in the future.

Councillor Larratt submitted his Cabinet Member report elaborated further by noting that on Saturday 17th December 2016 a Christmas market would be held on the Market Square and that there would be a competition to see the most festive decorated stall. He further noted highlighted a number of Councillor Training sessions that had been diarised and referred to in the report and asked that should any of the members have any further ideas with regards to training sessions, they should contact him as working groups often benefited from further ideas from Councillors.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Larratt explained that whilst he had

sympathy with concerns raised with regards to the number of betting shops, he had no control over those present on the Market Square. He commented that he was concerned with the Markets traders and stalls and stated that the Market Advisory Group had been making progress although he questioned the attendance record of the Labour nominee. Responding to queries relating to street lighting, Councillor Larratt explained that they would need to work with the County Council to develop some heritage lighting. He further reported that he appreciated that a lack of lightings in some Council run-parks was concerning and stated that he would look at lights being provided as a matter of urgency and would take it up with the County Council.

Councillor Hadland, submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He noted that he had recently attended the Small Business Saturday event and reported that there had been a lot of positivity and optimism amongst local small businesses. Responding to questions asked, Councillor Hadland stated that he was not aware of the costs of the Danes Camp lift, but that he would find out and relay the information. He clarified that the loan to Delapre Abbey was to benefit the whole of the Town and that it would essentially be for the residents of the Town; referring to questions relating to transparency, Councillor Hadland confirmed that the details and figures were being analysed and would be considered in the New Year. In answer to further questions, Councillor Hadland explained that there was a big difference between neighbourhood plans and unitary plans and that the boundaries would be clarified in the future.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated further by commented that following a meeting with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, a scoping session would be held on the 4th January 2017 to look at the Environmental Services contract. He also reported that in 2017, the Council would be re-instating the Abington Park Train, which had previously been ruined by vandals and was previously a much loved feature of the park. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hallam stated that the timescales of the Low Emission Strategy had been published in the Scrutiny Papers and that the installation of additional litterbins would be extended to Kettering and Wellinborough Road in due course. Referring to the reversal of the Council's previous policy on damaged play equipment, he noted that he would clarify whether this would extend to areas including those occupied by Northampton Partnership Homes. He further noted that leaf blowers would be used in the Eastern area of Northampton. He thanked the previous Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Bottwood, for his work in securing new play equipment.

Councillor Hibbert submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated further by thanking all of the officers and the volunteers who had worked hard on the Nighshelter project. He commented that there had recently been a rough sleeper's count that had been undertaken with the help of volunteers and that 9 rough sleepers had been identified and commented that he considered the rough sleepers strategy to be working. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hibbert explained that he Social Lettings Agency would assist in getting the right homes for the right people and stated that whilst he did not want to house in neighbouring towns, it was preferable to people being homeless.

At this juncture of the meeting, the Mayor informed Council that time restrains had

drawn the Cabinet Member Presentations to a close.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Birch commented that there were real issues affecting residents of Northampton, one of which was residents earning below the national average and that they were struggling. She further reported that the GCSE pass rate had also fallen behind the national average and questioned why this had happened. She noted that Northampton was a County Town and that the Town itself had many architectural gems and good infrastructure being so close to M1 corridor as well as being well known for its past and present shoe production. She reported that the Town had all in the ingredients for a successful and vibrant place to live and work, but that it fell short; she stated that the role of culture and arts played an important part in enhancing Towns and enriching people's lives. Councillor Birch commented that to promote tourism through championing the arts could be hugely beneficial to the Town and improving its reputation, noting that the creative industries had grown nationally by 9.9%. She further noted that the creative industry was growing faster than any other sector and reported that the presence of the Royal and Derngate had increased tourism and urged the Council to invest in Culture and Heritage.

Councillor King responded by stating that a recently published article in the Guardian had shown that Northampton was the top place outside of London for Regeneration. She further explained that extensive work was being undertaken in Abington Park and Vulcan works, between the University and the Council.

Responding to Councillor King, Councillor Birch asked why, with all the regeneration, were people not staying in the Town and choosing to reside elsewhere. She reported that Northampton had lots of culture which enhanced the lives of many and stated that the arts removed barriers of religion and language and emphasised the need for the arts to be invested in to ensure that future generations and children had access.

9. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

The Leader proposed a report which sought Council's approval to amend the Constitution in respect of the Chief Executive's delegated power to disburse and manage grants to community and voluntary organisation through the partnership grant allocation process.

Councillor Larratt seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

That the amendment to the Constitution detailed in Appendix 2 or the report be approved.

10. REMUNERATION OF THE POST OF DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, ENTERPRISE AND PLANNING

Councillor Nun submitted a report which sought Council's approval to payment of a salary package in excess of £100,000 and to authorise the payment of a consolidated market supplement.

Councillor Hadland seconded the report.

Council debated the report.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That a pay package for the post of Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning at a fixed point of £124,000 per annum, (which included a consolidated market supplement of £14,897 per annum) be approved;
- 2.2 That the Council's current Pay Policy states that it was not the Council's normal policy to pay market supplements to Chief Officers be recognised, specifically approves the payment of a consolidated market supplement of £14,897 per annum to the Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning on this occasion for the reasons explained in this report.

11. EXTERNAL AUDIT CONTRACT PROCUREMENT

Councillor Nunn submitted a report which advised Council of the extension to the current appointment of KPMG as External Auditors to the Council and to agree the process for appointing external auditors for the audit of the 2018/19 accounts onwards.

Councillor Larratt seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

That Council accepted the proposal from Audit Committee that Northampton opt to join the national scheme for selecting external auditor appointments for the five financial years commencing 1st April 2018 being offered by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA), and for officers to formally respond by the deadline of 9th March 2017 to be part of the scheme

12. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE PLACES

Councillor Patel submitted a report that sought Councils approval for changes to Committee Places.

Councillor Oldham seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That Councillor Parekh replaced Councillor M Markham on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. That Councillor M Markham replaced Councillor Bottwood as Chair of the Audit Committee.
3. That Councillor Oldham replaced Councillor Parekh on the Audit Committee.

13. NOTICES OF MOTION

- i) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Meredith seconded:

This Council is concerned about the problems arising from traffic congestion in the Town Centre and in particular in The Drapery and surrounding streets since the opening of the Northgate Bus Station and the re-introduction of stops into the Drapery. The local newspaper has highlighted problems caused by grid-lock in The Drapery and our own air quality monitoring has raised concerns for public health.

With regeneration of the Greyfriars area due to begin next year, we call on this Council along with County Highways to carry out a review of traffic movements in and out of Sheep Street and Drapery area of the town aimed at reducing bottle-necks, improving air quality and enforcing traffic orders.

This should be the first stage of a comprehensive study of access and traffic movements within the A5123 inner ring-road.

Council debated the motion

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

The Mayor noted that the proposer of Motion ii) had agreed to incorporate the alterations of the motion and Council and agreed to the alteration (as below).

Mr Sawyer addressed Council on Motion ii) and commented that enforcement should only be considered as a last resort and that education would be a preferable option. He explained that the biggest cause of congestion was not idling engines, but congestion. He further reported that it was not mandatory for buses to have diesel engines as there were alternatives and stated that the same applied to Hackney carriages; he noted there would be costs incurred in the conversion of engine types but that it could potentially decrease pollution by up to 20%

- ii) Councillor Haque to propose and Councillor Ashraf to second:

This Council notes we have a serious issue in this town with air pollution. However, testing for air quality is restricted to 7 areas. We understand that there is a scrutiny group looking at this issue and that is very welcome.

One action we can take in the meantime is to seek powers under relevant regulations to enable the Council to enforce powers that prevent engines being kept running unnecessarily whilst the vehicle is stationary on a public road.

To keep a taxi, bus, commercial vehicle or a car idling is against the law and can incur fines of up to £20 or £40 if not paid with a timeframe.

Enforcement of this law will help reduce pollution at key points of the town.

This Council therefore agrees to develop an enforcement strategy with immediate effect.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

iii) Councillor Marriott proposed and Councillor Chunga seconded:

This Council notes that the Equality Act provides protections against discriminatory treatment based on the concept of 'Protected Characteristics.'

Currently workers with a terminal illness are not classified as having a Protected Characteristic and therefore have very limited legal protection against employers dismissing them due to illness.

This Council further notes that employers are therefore free to dismiss terminally ill workers once they have made 'reasonable adjustments' to the employee's job to assist with the illness. Council agrees that the last thing a terminally ill worker would need is the distress at the same time as facing up to a terminal illness is to have to fight for the right to continue working and not to face the indignity of being sacked.

In addition Council notes that the loss of death in service benefits to terminally ill workers sacked before death is a further distress at a time when security for a family for the future should be protected.

Therefore this Council agrees to support the TUC's 'Dying to Work Campaign' currently being developed in the Midlands and to support the lobbying of MP's to establish new legislation, currently being drawn up by the society of Labour Lawyers which;

- * Seeks to get terminally ill workers covered by Protective Rights at Work in line with those covered by Pregnancy / Maternity Rights.
- * Seeks to protect death in service benefits.
- * Seeks to allow workers with terminal illness to die in dignity.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

iv) Councillor Hallam proposed and Councillor King seconded:

This Council recognizes the frustration of local residents, when pieces of play equipment are damaged and then removed as opposed to being repaired. Council therefore resolves to adopt a new policy that play equipment will be repaired and replaced, as opposed to being removed when damaged and will formalize a budget for this as part of the 2017/18 budget setting process.

Council also recognizes the valuable contribution that play equipment can make to local communities and resolves to continue its work with Parish Council's, Residents Association's and Friends of Parks Groups to continue to identify funding for potential

new schemes to bring additional play equipment to our local areas.

Council debated the motion

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified