

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 23 January 2017 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, Caswell, Choudary, Chunga, Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, T Eales, Eldred, Flavell, Golby, Gowen, Hadland, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, M Hill, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, B Markham, M Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Sargeant, Kilby-Shaw, Smith, Stone and Walker

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sargeant declared a personal non pecuniary interest in Motion iii) his partner works in the building trade in Northampton.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 12th December 2016 were agreed with an amendment to the omission of an 'N' on page 5 of the minutes of Councillor Nunn's name.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Chunga and Lane.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Firstly Tilly... She was born on the 21st November and is a Labrador/Retriever cross. The first sponsored puppy with the money raised from the Mayor's charity events such as Barn Dance, Gala Dinner and Auction. Tilly is named after the first Mayor of Northampton who took office under it's current title William Tilly. Tilly will be puppy walked in Northampton so will visit the Parlour regularly and attend future charity functions.

The Mayor has so far raised over £13,000 for Guide Dogs for the blind and sponsored two puppies – Tilly & Spencer and would like to thank everyone for their continued support.

Secondly the Mayor would like to mention Mayoress Tree Planting, letters have been sent out regarding Lynne's Tree planting ceremony. It will take place at 13:00 on Saturday 25th February at the Bernard Weston Pavillion in Billing.

Finally up and coming fundraising events are Fish & Chips Race Night on Sat 25th Feb which Cllr Patel has kindly arranged for the charity and also a Charity Luncheon at Raunds Football Club on Sunday 26th Feb. Charles Hanson the celebrity auctioneer will also be returning to Northampton by holding a Valuation Day in the Guildhall on Monday 6th March to raise money for Guide Dogs.

Civic events to mention would be the Holocaust Memorial events next week taking place on Thursday 26th Jan and Friday 27th Jan which Cllr Nunn has invited everyone to.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Martin Sawyer addressed Council and commented that whilst he was pleased to see that the Council had a Overview and Scrutiny Panel that would examine Air Quality, not enough was being done to address the high death rate on Northampton attributed to air quality which was considerably higher than the national average. He expressed concerns that the development of the Greyfriars site would increase the traffic congestion in the Town Centre and urged Councillors to educate themselves on the impact that air quality had on residents of the Town.

Mt Steve Miller stated that he was extremely concerned that the County Council had sold land to developers at Buckton Fields and expressed his concern that this could impact on the Kingsthorpe – which was an air quality management. He further noted that the steps that the Borough Council were taking in addressing such issues were being overshadowed by those made by the County Council and asked that the Borough Council should condemn the decision to sell the land at Buckton Fields without proper infrastructure being put in place first.

Mr Huffadine-Smith addressed Council and referred to the Cabinet Member reports of the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Housing and invited them to attend a meeting with outreach workers with his church in order for them to discuss ongoing concerns with regards to homelessness in the area. He further requested that the training and development that was being offered to Borough Councillors be extended to include Parish Councillors to promote and enhance collaborative working.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 3 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 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 3, Councillor Hadland stated that there were no firm dates that had been set, but that he would update members on any progress.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn, as Leader of the Council, submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He noted that good Governance had continued to be a high priority since the Governance Action Plan had been reported to Audit and that this had also continued through into the Executive Programme Board which was now meeting on a weekly basis. He further reported that he noted that there had been traffic issues and congestion in the run up to Christmas and stated that efforts were being made to ensure that this did not happen again and that there would be a focus on improving traffic flow which would contribute to better air quality in the town centre.

In response to questions asked, the Leader commented that there was extensive work going on within the Council including transformation team, recruitment and retention of apprenticeships. He disputed the suggestion that Northampton was a low wage- low skill Town and commented that this could be demonstrated by the location of many businesses such as Barclaycard, Cosworth and Avon. Referring to the Consultation that had been undertaken on the provision of Environmental Services, he explained that it was a quantities survey and that it had been sent out to many thousands of households and that written responses and emails had been received on the topic and fed into the consultation. The Leader, in response to a further question, commented that the enforcing laws on idling cars was not the most conducive way to solve air quality issues as this could be improved through generating a better flow of traffic and through the enforcement of other contraventions of the highway code.

Councillor Larratt, as the Deputy Leader of the Council, submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated further and noted the numerous Councillor Training sessions that had been programmed. In response to questions asked, Councillor Larratt commented that he would support any sports Club in the Borough including Thorplands 81 and would be happy to discuss any updates with the Ward Councillor. He further reported that he would examine the issue of lighting in underpasses and determine whether those were Borough Council owned and what improvements could be made.

Councillor Eldred, as the Cabinet Member for Finance, submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He noted that the recent consultation on Council Tax had shown that 40% of respondents were in favour of increasing the Council Tax higher than proposed amount. He further reported on the achievements of the Revenue and Benefits service with results in responding to calls from customers at over 92% over the past period. In response to questions asked, Councillor Eldred confirmed that the reduction in the period over which New Homes Bonus was paid from 6 to 4 years would have some implications on the budget.

Councillor Hibbert submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He thanked those who had taken part in the rough sleepers count and noted that there

had been over 50 applications for volunteers for the night shelter that would be open on the 6th February 2017. He confirmed, in response to comments of Mr Huffadine-Smith that he would meet with the outreach workers he referred to and suggested that they combine their efforts and work collaboratively. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hibbert explained that he was unaware of the amount of people squatting in Little Cross Street but that he would relay the information once it had been gathered. He further commented that there was a need for a distinction to be made between homeless people and street drinkers and beggars and further noted that the outreach team would be working alongside those at the Night shelter.

Councillor King submitted her Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. She noted that the Holocaust Memorial Event would be held on the 26th January 2017 in the Great Hall at 6pm. She further informed Council that the Inspirational Women's Awards winner would be announced during an International Women's Day event at the Guildhall on Saturday 4 March 2017. In addition to the award ceremony, the event would include fun workshops and information stands from local organisations and services. In response to questions asked, Councillor King commented that the role of the 'Virtual Shoe Officer' was responsible for the photography, online publication of the images and the provision of historical facts to promote the historical shoe industry. Further responding to questions, Councillor King stated that she would obtain a breakdown of crime figures and pass on to relevant Members and would look into problems that customers had reported with regards to the automated telephone service.

At this juncture of the meeting, the Mayor informed the Council that time restraints had drawn the Cabinet Member Presentations to a close.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Stone stated that the previous year had been difficult not only for the Council as a whole, but also for residents. She noted that there had been a public sector wage freeze for 2 years and that many people had experienced increased rents whilst at the same time being affected by the benefits cap and urged the Council to consider assisting those most affected to build resilience. She further commented that poor urban design had also impacted negatively on people's lives; she noted that there was a need for more affordable homes for that were energy efficient and close to shops and better public transportation links. She further commented that there was a need for an anti-poverty strategy to be adopted by the Council in order to assist the most disadvantaged and commented that there had been an increase in homelessness and the provision of B &B's for the most vulnerable and stated that there was a need for Northampton to be 'Cleaner, Greener and Safer'.

Councillor Hallam, the Cabinet Member for Environment, commented that an exercise should be undertaken to show to disparity of the Labour and Conservative group as he felt assured that opinion polls would reflect Conservatives favourably.

In response Councillor Stone stated that she was aware of the differences between the 2 groups but asked who would not be in favour of making Northampton 'Cleaner, Greener and Safer' and questioned who would not support the notion to protect the

most disadvantaged; she further commented that the Council needed to help those who were in structurally unsuitable houses in order to be a more inclusive and cohesive town for residents.

9. REPORT BACK FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE ON THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING ON THE 2ND NOVEMBER 2015

Councillor Golby, as the previous Chair of Audit, addressed Council and noted the progress that had been made since the report of PWC had been reported to the Audit Committee. He noted that a firm action plan had been put into place and that the Audit Committee were satisfied, having received assurances that satisfactory measures had been put in place. He noted that there was a new Chair of Audit Committee, who having been the previous Leader of the Council was fully aware of the commitment to improve Governance.

Councillor Beardsworth expressed concern that the new Chair of Audit may find it difficult to remain impartial, having had involvement in the processes.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

10. CHANGES TO CONSULTATION APPOINTMENTS

Councillor Patel proposed a report which sought confirmation of a change to the Consultation Appointments.

Councillor Oldham seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Stone replace Councillor Cali on the Community Enabling Fund Advisory Panel.

11. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

Councillor Eldred submitted a report which sought Council to note the Treasury Management activities and performance for period 1st April to 30th September 2016

Councillor Nunn seconded the report

Councillor B Markham stated that the report showed how and where the money was being invested and what the returns were, but asked that more financial resources be invested in housing.

RESOLVED:

That the Treasury Management activities and performance for period 1st April to 30th September 2016 report be noted.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr Huffadine-Smith addressed Council on Motion i) and congratulated Councillor

Stone and Beardsworth for their cross-party work. He spoke in support of the proposal, specifically the involvement of partnerships groups such as Residents Associations and Parish Councils.

i) Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Beardsworth seconded:

“This Council notes our current Environmental Services contract expires in 2018.

This Council believes our re-provisioned service in 2018 should be based on three fundamental principles-

1) Effectiveness and flexibility: the ability of an excellent service to adapt to changing needs and circumstances.

2) A Highly Responsive Service: deal constructively with complaints and suggestions from the general public such as promptly responding to fly tipping and graffiti.

3) Partnership: Resident Associations, Park Groups, the University, Colleges and Parish Councils to be involved in the design of the service and to be encouraged to help manage the service according to their needs.

This Council looks forward to the work being undertaken by the respective Scrutiny Group and asks them and the Cabinet to consider this motion.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

The Mayor commented that in accordance with the Constitution (Rule 9.7) he had received notification that there was an alteration to motion ii). The altered motion was tabled before Councillors.

RESOLVED:

That Council agreed to the alteration and pursuant to rule 25, standing orders be suspended to allow for 3 proposers to speak on the motion for no more than 5 minutes each for the duration of the debate of the motion.

The altered motion was tabled as below:

ii) Councillors McCutcheon, Nunn and Beardsworth proposed the motion:

“Northampton Borough Council remains committed to replacing the current two tier arrangements operating in Northamptonshire with Unitary Councils.

This Council, however, rejects Northamptonshire County Council’s plan for a single county-wide local authority, believing that it is essential that local government remains local. Making local government more remote would decrease accountability and public engagement.

Additionally, it was noted that the Northamptonshire County Council’s draft budget states a plan to achieve unitary status for 2019/2020 to save £10 million per annum. This Council would like to make

it clear that it is opposed to a County Council unitary authority.

We strongly believe that the best solution for the town is a Northampton unitary authority with a limited expansion of the borough boundary to incorporate the Northampton Growth Area as defined in the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

This Council will also ask our MPs to support us in this ambition.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried

iii) Councillor B Markham proposed and Councillor Meredith seconded that:

Council regrets that the 100 new council houses to be built at Dallington Grange , announced with great fanfare in March 2014, will not now be built by the original planned date. Councillors, from all parties remain committed to see these houses built as soon as practical.

Council notes that the £8.4 Million of Government grants achieved on the back of, the original proposal will be lost at the end of the 2017/18 Financial Year unless the council starts work on or can bring forward alternative proposals.

Therefore, as a matter of future policy, this council commits itself to bring forward and if at all possible start work on new council homes in the coming 12 months ensuring that this money will be used to provide homes for local families”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

In accordance with Part 4 of the Constitution, motion v) was withdrawn by the proposer of the motion.

iv) Councillor Beardsworth to propose and Councillor B Markham to second:

“This Council remains committed to replacing the current two tier arrangements operating in Northamptonshire with Unitary Councils.

Council however rejects Northamptonshire County Council's plan for a single county-wide local authority believing that it is essential that local government remains local. Making local government more remote would only decrease accountability and public engagement”.

v) Councillor King propose and Councillor J Hill second:

“Northampton Borough Council and its Community forums are delighted to work in partnership with many local diverse communities. We will continue to celebrate Diwali, Carnival, Chinese New Year and also remember Holocaust Memorial, Srebrenica Memorial, Black History Month, World Aids Day, International Women’s Day, International Men’s Day and challenge gender-phobia (International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia)”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried

vi) Councillor Larratt proposed and Councillor King seconded:

“This Council welcomes the recent establishment of a Parish Council Forum within the Borough. The Council recognises and supports the work of Parish Councils’ and what they do to support the community within their respective areas of the Borough. This Council, therefore, resolves to work closely with the Parish Councils within the Borough, supporting them in their work for the benefit of their communities”.

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.

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified