

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 22 July 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Nunn (Chair); Councillor Larratt (Deputy Chair); Councillors Eldred, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert and King

1. APOLOGIES

None.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2020 were agreed and signed by the Chair.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

None.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

6. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

None.

7. FINANCE MONITORING TO 31 MAY 2020 AND UPDATED IMPACT FROM COVID-19

Councillor Eldred, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted his report and noted a current overspend relating to Covid-19 of £2.541m and explained that the full allocation of funds from central government had not yet been released. The appendix attached to the report highlighted areas that had been impacted by Covid-19 and Councillor Eldred advised that a further report would be brought to Cabinet in August which would be more refined and take into account underlying cost pressures and recent government announcements on additional funding. £35.1m had been distributed via BEIS (Business Energy and Industrial Strategy) grants to 2,917 local businesses; approximately 200 further businesses in Northampton were potentially eligible for assistance and work was ongoing to contact them. Councillor Eldred noted recommendation 2.3 of the report which sought to increase the Councillor Community Fund expenditure by £2,000; this would allow the Council to help community and other smaller groups that did not qualify for any government grants and had missed out on summer fundraising activities. This scheme would run for 3 months, starting in August.

Councillor Stone expressed concern around the wellbeing of employees during the pandemic and asked Cabinet to be mindful of staff capacity issues and how best to support staff. She congratulated the council for their efforts in housing rough sleepers during the pandemic but lamented the loss of council funds to do so; she stated that the money should have come from central government. Councillor Stone further expressed concern around recommendation 2.3; she believed that a proper assessment should precede allocation of funding. Councillor Stone also suggested that the additional funding may result in staff reductions.

Councillor Eldred noted that the budget had been free of staff cuts for 2 years and that there were no plans to reduce staff levels for the remainder of the Council's life. He commented

that the Small Grants Panel convened very infrequently; elected members knew best which community groups in their wards would be most in need of financial assistance. He further noted that the Council had received £20,000 to assist with housing rough sleepers and additional funding was expected

Councillor Hibbert confirmed that “additional strands of funding” relating to housing had been announced by the government and assured Members the Council would be applying for them.

Councillor Eldred expressed his gratitude and thanked his fellow Cabinet Members and officers for their continued support and hard work during the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet:

- 2.1 Noted the contents of the report and noted that future reports will set out the actions being taken by Corporate Management Board (CMB) to address issues arising.
- 2.2 Note the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the general fund for the financial year 2020/21 as set out at appendix 1.
- 2.3 Approved an increase to the Councillor Community Funds expenditure, by £2,000 per councillor.

8. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

Councillor Hibbert, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted his report and explained that the charges specified in recommendation 2.1 (b) would not be paid by an applicant but would form part of the grant approval. The updated Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy also included several discretionary grants alongside mandatory grants which would provide a broader range of financial assistance to those in need.

Councillor Smith expressed her pleasure that additional support would be available for those who needed it. She advised that communication between agencies would be vital and that this would need to be embedded within the new unitary authority. Councillor Smith asked that the new scheme be communicated so that potential applicant and their carers were aware of their options, and sufficient support given in applying for the scheme.

Councillor Hibbert noted that NPH had a separate fund for disabled grants; this scheme was aimed at disabled tenants in private accommodation. He advised that the main agencies in Northampton were aware of the scheme and that the Housing Department were happy to help assist with applications.

The Private Sector Housing Manager thanked Councillor Smith for her comments and advised that an officer in the department worked closely with Northampton General Hospital dealing with the discharge process. The 15% charge related to the discretionary activities the Housing Department would undertake so there was a need to act as a contractor would. This scheme would cover all other social rented accommodation, as well as private rented accommodation.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet:

- 2.4 Approved the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy with effect from 1 August 2020; and
- 2.5 Approves the Grant Agency Service's charges of:
 - (i) 15% of the value of the works (plus VAT) where the works are specified, procured and supervised to completion; and
 - (ii) £250 (plus VAT) where assistance is provided by the Council to support an application that is subsequently not progressed.

9. GUILDHALL - ROOF REPLACEMENT

Councillor Hadland, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted his report and explained that the roofs were leaking in several places, causing damage to the historic fabric of the building; the report set out the mechanism for ensuring they were repaired, as well as improvements to allow for easier access to the roofs for future repairs and maintenance.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approved the roof works to the Guildhall roof pursuant to paragraph 3.3.4 of the report;
- 2.2 Delegated authority to the Economic Growth and Regeneration Manager, in consultation with the Borough Secretary and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise to appoint a contractor for the Guildhall roof replacement works following the completion of a tender process; and
- 2.3 Approved the appointment of a legal advisor if specialist construction law advice is required

10. GUILDHALL - PIPE/ASBESTOS WORKS

Councillor Hadland, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted his report which sought approval for necessary works to the Guildhall's boilers and Building Management System.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet:

- 2.1 Delegated authority to the Economic Growth and Regeneration Manager, in consultation with the Borough Secretary, Chief Finance Officer and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise to appoint the contractor for the Guildhall boiler and associated works following the completion of the tender process; and
- 2.2 Approved the appointment of a legal advisor if specialist construction law advice is required

11. REVIEW OF PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) 2017

Councillor King, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted her report and explained that public consultation had taken place from 17th December 2019 to 10th March 2020; recommendations were based around responses which would form the new PSPO. An Enforcement and Operational Plan was also being considered which would better utilise Wardens and other enforcement agencies alongside the Police.

Councillor Stone stated that Neighbourhood Wardens and Park Rangers were the best officers to enforce the policies recommended in the report as their roles combined community engagement, education and enforcement, but believed that there were capacity issues within those departments. She expressed concern around people spitting, especially given the nature of transmission of Covid-19, and people riding bicycles on footpaths.

Councillor King advised that the Council were making strides with regard to encouraging residents to live a more active lifestyle and pushing a green agenda but noted that enforcement relating to cycling on footpaths was a power that the Police had so it could not be included in the PSPO. She advised that spitting was included in the PSPO and suggested that further communication could be looked into.

Councillor Larratt noted that Northamptonshire County Council had a map of cycleways around Northampton which showed a need for development, however this was not being pursued. He further noted that maintenance of cycleways was an area of concern. He questioned whether there was a way of devolving cycle enforcement from the Police to the Council.

Councillor King confirmed that work had started with the Legal Department with regard to delegation of powers for cycling on pavement; this would form part of the Enforcement and Operational Plan.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet:

- 2.1.1 Resolved to make a PSPO which prohibits only the activities recommended in paragraphs 3.2.6, 3.2.8, 3.2.11, 3.2.17, 3.2.20, 3.2.23 and 3.2.27 and 3.2.30 of the report for a period of three years, after taking into account the results of the recent public consultation.
- 2.1.2 Delegated to the Borough Secretary, in consultation with the Chief Executive, the authority to draft a PSPO including only the prohibitions recommended by the paragraphs described at 2.1.1 so as to ensure the enforceability of those prohibitions included in the final Order which will be made in accordance with the same resolution.
- 2.1.3 Resolved to delegate to the Borough Secretary the authority to comply with all legal steps and processes required by Chapter 2 of Part 4 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 for the Council to make a PSPO in accordance with the resolution at paragraphs 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above
- 2.1.4 Delegated to the Chief Executive authority to enforce a PSPO made in accordance with the resolution at paragraph 2.1.1 and to authorise appropriately trained persons to issue fixed penalties of £100 to any person committing an offence under section 67 of the Act.

12. PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) - MARBLE ARCH

Councillor King, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted her report and advised that the

PSPO had been highly beneficial in assisting the Police and Neighbourhood wardens tackle antisocial behaviour in the area.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet:

- 2.6 Delegated the Chief Executive to undertake a 12 week statutory public consultation in the terms set out in Appendix 4 on the proposal to renew the Public Spaces Protection Order (Appendix 1 of the report) that allows the gating of the public highway known as Marble Arch that runs from Ash Street to Barrack Road.
- 2.2 To receive a further report, following completion of the statutory public consultation, to consider any representations received and, if appropriate seek approval of the renewal, for a further 3 years, of the Public Spaces Protection Order.

The meeting concluded at 6:44 pm