

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 16 September 2013 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Caswell, Ansell, Aziz, Begum, Bottwood, Capstick, I. Choudary, N Choudary, Duncan, Eales, Eldred, Flavell, Ford, Glynane, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Lane, Larratt, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Mason, Mennell, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Palethorpe, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Stone, Strachan, Wire DL and Yates

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Eales declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Motion vi) – as a Royal Mail employee and would not therefore take part in the debate or vote. The Motion would be proposed by Councillor Stone and seconded by Councillor Palethorpe and this had been duly notified in writing to the Chief Executive prior to the meeting

Councillor Stone declared a personal interest in Motion vi) as a shareholder in Royal Mail

Councillor Capstick declared a personal interest in Motion vi) as a shareholder in Royal Mail

Councillor Wire declared a personal interest in Motion vi) as a shareholder in Royal Mail

Councillor Palethorpe declared a personal interest in Motion vi) as a shareholder in Royal Mail

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 15th July 2013 were agreed and signed by the Mayor

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Beardsworth, Mason, Gowen, Subbarayan, Golby, Davies, Hill and Conroy.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that the forthcoming civic ceremonies which included a reception for the Northamptonshire Cricket Club on the 27th September 2013 to celebrate their winning the 'Friends Provident Twenty 20 Trophy' and a successful

season in the league. It was noted that a Special Council meeting would be held on the 5th October 2013 to award the Honorary Freedom of the Borough to the Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and that another Special Council meeting would be held on the 28th November 2013 to install Honorary Alderman of the Borough of Northampton.

The Mayor further announced a number of charity events that would be held including the Poppy Ball, a curry night and the Mayor's Annual Charity Gala Dinner on the 29th November 2013 and invited members to attend. He mentioned that he had attended the Gold Awards for Duke of Edinburgh at St James' Palace and congratulated all of those who had achieved their awards. The Mayor offered his congratulations to the children (12 years and under) who had represented Northampton and winning the regional Swimming Gala. They would now attend the national final to be held in Corby in November

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Leach presented a petition to Council and commented that the petition submitted, sought to change the Council's Policy on petitions.

Ms Sarti addressed Council and explained that she was asking Members to support Womb Awareness month in October and requested that Councillors wear an item of peach clothing in support of the charity.

Mr Adams addressed Council and referred to the recent comments made by Grant Shapps on Raquel Rolnik, United Nations special rapporteur on housing, and the comments she had made on the bedroom tax and stated that a letter in support of her comments be sent to government.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

Questions asked and answers given were as tabled (included in an updated agenda on the website).

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to Question 1, Councillor Bottwood commented that there was continued work to achieve the minimum numbers of empty homes as possible.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to Question 2, Councillor Markham commented the figures produced in the tabled answer should be used as a guide as not all receipts had been processed and that further money would continue to be spent on Disabled Facilities Grants.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to Question 4, Councillor Eldred commented that there was still 3 weeks until the first Women's' Forum and an agenda and notification would be sent out in due course.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to Question 5, Councillor Hallam commented there had been an acceleration of services and that a legal notice had been raised with Enterprise to ensure grass cutting was completed and that work was being undertaken to ensure long term actions were completed.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to Question 6, Councillor Mackintosh commented that some of the zero-hour contract staff employed by the Council was done so for a summer period or for specific events and there was no other conceivable option for such work.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to Question 8, Councillor Mackintosh commented that the departure of the Director of Housing was as part of an on-going journey to improve the Council.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

At this point, each of the Cabinet Members made a presentation of their respective portfolios that had been circulated with the agenda.

Councillor Mackintosh submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He commented that he was pleased by the number of visitors attracted to the town by the numerous events held over the summer months and commented that the trialling of two hour free parking had been successful and the results were currently being considered. He further noted that the expansion of Church's Shoes in Northampton, agreed at Cabinet on the 11th September 2013, would ensure new jobs would be created and retained within the Enterprise Zone.

Councillor Markham submitted her Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. She explained that with regards to Decent Homes, the extension of Phase Two was underway and that contractors were working to full capacity. With regards to the Fraud Initiative, Councillor Markham explained that since the report had been written there were a further five cases of fraud currently being investigated. In response to a question asked, Councillor Markham commented that with regards to empty garages, work had been recently been undertaken to clean up those areas affected and that officers had already dealt with the query being referred to. Responding to a further question, it was noted that there were currently 20 families being housed in bed and breakfast accommodation, one of which had been there for more that the ascribed period of six weeks, but that they would be housed within the week.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He commented that from the 16th September 2013 refuse would be collected in green sacks, of which there would be a limit of two per household per week. It was explained that Enterprise was not to collect any less waste, but that the waste would be collected in a different way. He noted that there some residents had shown concerns about the changes to recycling but many were pleased about the changes and noted that as Cabinet Member for Environment, he was determined to meet the challenges that lay ahead. In response to a question, Councillor Hallam commented that it would never be possible to get rid of black sacks completely but that there was a commitment to reducing waste and increasing levels of recycling. Councillor Hallam also responded to another question by stating that where and when it became possible for black sacks to be replaced by wheelie bins, this would be done through

funding from Enterprise.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He expressed his appreciation for the hard work that had been undertaken by the volunteers during the Heritage weekend and it was noted that the Friends of Delapre Abbey had raised funds for the restoration of the greenhouse. It was noted that on the 11th September 2013 businesses on Wellingborough Road had been invited to attend a forum to discuss establishing a Business Improvement District (BID). It was reported that 28 businesses had attended the meeting and he thanked both Councillors Ansell and Nunn for their work on this. In response to questions raised, Councillor Hadland confirmed that to ensure that the water feature in Delapre Park remained vandal-proof, a delay had occurred in getting it up and running but he hoped that it would be resolved soon. He further noted that there were on-going discussions with the Premier Inn hotel (soon to be situated on Swan Street) regarding parking at St Johns car park.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He commented that the year-end audit of the 2012/13 Statement of Accounts had been completed.

Councillor Eldred submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He noted the success of the Alive@Delapre event and stated that the event would be taking place again next year. He commented that the Waterfront Festival had taken place on the 5th and 7th 2013 July which had been a success. He further commented that the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery had held a number of events and exhibitions and subsequently had reported an increase in footfall. In response to a question, Councillor Eldred stated that he would contact Councillor Eales with information relating to the Kingsheath Boxing Club. Responding to a further question, Councillor Eldred commented that he was not aware how much had been spent on the legal proceedings with regards to the Sekhemka statue but commented that the sale was still going ahead.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Eales commented that he had concerns over the 2 green sacks, per household, per week policy and should be revisited. He noted that whilst he supported the notion of limiting the amount of refuse sacks, he was concerned about knock on effects and suggested that there may be an increase in fly tipping as a result of the restriction. He further questioned whether or not residents would be allowed to request extra green sacks at certain times and how the number of green sacks put out by residents who lived in flats would be calculated by Enterprise. He commented that communication with residents needed to be crystal clear with residents as there had been considerable confusion. He argued that waste collections had continued to fall short and had continued to get worse since it had been taken out of house and taken over by Enterprise. He further questioned the cost of pulling out of the contract with Enterprise.

Councillor Hallam responded by noting whilst Councillor Eales may want to see the service bought back in house and the removal of a bag limit, the implications of doing so would be considerable and implausible and explained that there was not a way in

which a contractor would remove a clause.

9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2012-13

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report that outlined performance in relation to its borrowing and investment strategy for 2012/2013.

Councillor Bottwood seconded adoption of the report.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the Council's treasury management performance for 2012-13.

10. AMENDMENTS TO NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report which sought Council's appointment of Councillor Bottwood as a substitute member to the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee.

Councillor Hadland seconded adoption of the report.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Bottwood be appointed as a substitute member of the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee to replace Councillor Hill.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

i) Councillor Ansell proposed and Councillor Sargeant seconded:

"On behalf of the residents of Northampton, Council congratulates Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge following the birth of their son Prince George of Cambridge on 22nd July.

The safe delivery of Prince George has been met with joy by millions of people across the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and the rest of the world.

As the newest member of the Royal Family and the third in line to the throne, Prince George represents the future of this country's monarchy, and Council wishes to record its best wishes on this happy occasion".

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

ii) Councillor Mackintosh proposed and Councillor Eldred seconded:

"Council congratulates Northamptonshire County Cricket Club on their historic victory over Essex and Surrey on Saturday 17th August to win the T20 final, their first one-day trophy since 1992. Northampton's three professional sports clubs are a huge source of pride and prestige for our town, who put Northampton on the map both domestically and internationally.

The Steelbacks win at Edgbaston not only makes us proud here in Northampton, but

also symbolises our town's commitment to excellence, achievement and success. To congratulate the Steelbacks following their win, celebrations will take place in the town on 27th September".

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

iii) Councillor Strachan proposed and Councillor Begum seconded

"This Council notes that next year Northampton Rail Commuters will face an increase of 4.1 per cent, which is above inflation.

The Council further notes that wage growth has either been very low or stagnate in recent times.

This Council believes that the increase gives further hardship on rail commuters who will now see their disposable income squeezed further. This is bad news for shops in Northampton who will likely see a drop in demand for goods and services.

The Council requests the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport and local MPs saying Northampton Borough Council is opposed to this inflation busting hike in rail fares. Brian Binley MP, from Northampton Rail Users Group, has already made known his displeasure at the increase and this Council hopes he continues to publically speak out against this increase".

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried

iv) The motion was withdrawn

v) Councillor Palethorpe proposed and Councillor Aziz seconded:

"This Council notes the Olympics were a fantastic success for Great Britain last year.

The Council further notes that an 'Olympic legacy' has been created which gets young people involved in Sports.

The Council believes that the Olympic legacy here in Northampton is under threat with the withdrawal of the Discretionary Rate Relief for our local grass roots sports clubs.

Upon the submission of an amended motion, Council agreed to debate the amended motion:

'This Council notes the Olympics were a fantastic success for Great Britain last year. The Council further notes that an 'Olympic legacy' has been created which gets young people involved in Sports.

'The Council notes the Cabinet has already pledged to review the Discretionary Rate Relief for Sports Clubs and Working Men's Clubs at the forthcoming budget in February 2014, and that on 19th August the Leader of the Council wrote to local community sports clubs informing them of how they can apply.'

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried

Having declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Motion vi) Councillor Eales left the Council Chamber for the duration of the debate.

vi) Mr Joyce addressed Council and commented that the privatisation of Royal Mail would lead to the deterioration of postal services and noted that privatisation could result in the franchising of many parts of the service. Having made profits of £403 million in the last year it was clear to people that this was and should remain as a public limited company.

Mr Bosworth addressed Council and stated that he held the fundamental belief that Royal Mail should be 100% public owned and that to privatise it would be tantamount to disposing of 400 years of heritage. He commented that the debate was being framed as failing service, but noted that profits had increased and that the workforce were embracing modernisation. He stated further that implications of privatisation would be huge and that opinion polls had clearly shown that public ownership of Royal Mail remained extremely popular.

Mr Batterham addressed Council and commented that a recent 'yougov' poll had shown that 67% of people were opposed to the sell off and noted that there was wholesale opposition to the sale of Royal Mail. He further commented that if privatised, the likelihood would be that companies would come in and break up the company with the possibility of franchising parts of it which could lead to an increase in zero-hour contracts being offered to staff.

Mr Adams addressed Council and stated that he considered it necessary for a statement to the Labour party stating that Royal Mail should not be privatised.

Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Palethorpe seconded:

"This Council recognises that the Royal Mail is part of the fabric of our nation and believes that plans for its privatisation will lead to high prices, a loss of jobs and a reduction in services for the people who need those services the most. Therefore we resolve that Northampton Borough Council should formally sign the "Save our Royal Mail" petition to put pressure on the Government to reverse its decision and protect the country's postal services; and that the Leader of the Council should write to the Secretary of State for Business and Enterprise conveying the terms of this Resolution".

Council debated the Motion.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote:

There voted for the motion, Councillors Aziz, Begum Capstick, N Choudary, Mennell, Palethorpe, Stone, Strachan and Wire.

There voted against the motion, Councillors, Ansell, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Ford, Glynane, Hallam, Hibbert, Lane, Larratt, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant and Yates.

There abstained: The Mayor.

The motion was lost.

Councillor Eales re-entered the room.

vii) Councillor Glynane proposed and Councillor Meredith seconded:

The Council Notes that:

- The substantial drop in footfall through the town centre is of serious concern
- Numbers of empty shops in the town centre are at their highest since records began
- Both of these trends are contrary to clear beginnings of a national economic recovery
- The current administration's priorities for the town centre have demonstrably failed, threatening jobs and businesses based in Northampton town centre.

The Council believes that:

- Further work on the town centre, and further allocation of funds, should be focused on improving the core offer of the town centre – including but not limited to, beautification, events, etc.
- The demolition of the now empty Greyfriars building should be considered a priority
- A firm start date from Legal and General for work on the Grosvenor centre is now required, as progress and surety seems to have stalled since the current administration took control.
- There can be no higher priority than safeguarding and expanding job opportunities and economic vigour in Northampton

The Council Further Notes that:

- The fountain was thoroughly enjoyed by local people, particularly during warm weather, and having it switched off over this summer may well have

contributed to the drop in footfall.

- Similar style fountains exist, work and are extremely popular and entirely in other town and city centres across the Country, where they are properly maintained.
- The potential threat of the Rushden Lakes development means it is more essential than ever that the town centre is an attractive location

The Council Therefore Resolves:

- To fix the fountain, that they have allowed to fall into disrepair, in time for next summer
- To immediately begin the process of deconstructing Greyfriars
- To increase their focus on beautification of the town centre
- To work harder to draw and create attractive events on the space on the market square successfully opened up by the last administration
- To make a reversal in the trends of falling footfall and shop vacancy within 12 months a confidence issue in the portfolio holder and leader of the Council

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

xiii) The motion was withdrawn.

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

None.

The meeting concluded at 8.52