

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 9 December 2013 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

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

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Oldham declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in Item 9 – Housing Options Review as a Council tenant.

Councillor Conroy declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in Item 9 – Housing Options Review as a Council tenant.

Councillor Mennell declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in Item 9 – Housing Options Review as a Council tenant.

Councillor Ford declared a personal & pecuniary interest in Motion v) – as his wife is the catering manager at Delapre Tea Rooms.

Councillor Capstick declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in Item 7- Cabinet Member Presentations – as a board member of WNDC.

Councillor Hadland declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in Item 7- Cabinet Member Presentations – as a board member of WNDC.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 28th October 2013 were agreed, and signed by the Mayor, subject to the following members being included in the attendance list:

Councillor Conroy
Councillor Beardsworth
Councillor Hill
Councillor Davies
Councillor Golby
Councillor King

The minutes of the meeting of special Council held on the 28th November 2013 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Subbarayan, Larratt and Gowen.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor commented that there was a book of condolences that would be available for Councillors and members of the public to sign in memory of Nelson Mandela. The Mayor offered his congratulations to the Leader of the Council in his successful bid to become selected to stand as a Member of Parliament for Northampton South. He also thanked Councillor Davies for her hard work with regards to the food bank and thanked those who had made donations.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Newbury addressed Council as the Chairman of St David's residents association. He commented that with recent housing developments, the infrastructure in the area was unable to withstand the increased number of vehicles and that improvements in the area were much needed.

Mr Shah commented that he wanted the Council to focus on the long term implications of having an ALMO and requested that they consider establishing the ALMO for 10 years which would be subject to yearly reviews. It was noted that there was a need for openness, transparency and continued tenant involvement and asked that there be protection put in place to ensure a continuation of the ALMO should there be a change in Administration.

Mr Mallard addressed Council and commented that he agreed with the recommendation to approve the implementation of the Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and stated that the Tenant's Panel had shown dedication of joined up working and noted that the Council had the opportunity to continue with, and promote, improvements to Social Housing.

Mr Humphris commented that he believed that the ALMO was the best option for the Council as it would provide overall control of the stock, but from the ALMO. He stated that the estimated cost of a ballot was no longer a viable option.

Mr Whitehead commented that all associated parties had worked exceptionally hard in carrying out the review and stated that in terms of a ballot, many tenants would prefer the option but noted that the ALMO should proceed regardless of whether a ballot was conducted.

Ms Bennet commented that it was only after the completion of tenants panel review that the cost of a ballot was realised, having received further information. She commented that out of 236 residents consulted only 2 of them were in favour in having a ballot. She also requested that safeguards be put in place to ensure the future of the ALMO regardless of the administration and thanked all the political parties for their cross party support.

Ms Daley commented tenants needed to have a dedicated housing service and that there had been other numerous successful ALMO's, and noted that they should be autonomous, with which would come positive change. She further commented that the Council and ALMO should work together in partnership and that new homes should be built and agreement reached between the partners on how to proceed and ensure social housing continues to expand.

Ms Linekar stated that she was happy to support the recommendations within the report and thanked everyone who had been involved and dedicated their time and effort whilst undertaking the review. She expressed some concerns with regards to the cost of setting up the ALMO, whether rents would be increased and questioned if there would be any redundancies of Council staff as a consequence of the ALMO. She thanked Councillor Markham for her support and dedication in undertaking the review.

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6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that eleven questions had been received from members of the public and Councillors 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)

In response to a supplementary question asked, relating to question 2, Councillor Hadland confirmed that the fire escape routes for the Greyfriars were irrelevant as it did not refer to the original question.

In response to a supplementary question asked, relating to question 3, Councillor Markham confirmed that a report containing information about Disabled Facilities Grant was going to Cabinet on the 11th December 2013.

In response to a supplementary question asked, relating to question 4, Councillor Eldred confirmed that they were at the final stages of the legal investigations and that progress was being made as quickly as possible.

In response to a supplementary question asked, relating to question 5, Councillor Eldred confirmed that the offer to store the Sekhemka statue by the Northampton Museum had been declined as there had not been adequate alarms or CCTV in place at the time.

In response to a supplementary question asked, relating to question 6, Councillor Eldred confirmed that all Councillors would be informed of the selected auction house to be used for the sale of the Sekhemka, by email.

In response to a supplementary question asked, relating to question 7, Councillor Eldred confirmed that any written reports referring to the Deed of Gift would be published.

In response to a supplementary question asked, relating to question 10, Councillor Hallam confirmed that the Winter Maintenance Programme had started and commented that he would be in attendance at the next resident's association meeting.

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 commented that he would be announcing the draft budget later in the week. In response to comments made, Councillor Mackintosh stated that he was pleased with the Community Covenant scheme and the poppy appeal. He commented that with regards to Community Safety, he was continuing to work with the Police and Crime Commissioner and noted that Serious Acquisitive Crime was on a downward trend. In response to a question raised, Councillor Mackintosh commented that funding had been agreed for the demolition of Greyfriars and that the Fire Service would be consulted during this period.

Councillor Markham submitted her Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. In response to a question with regards to Disabled Facilities Grant, she stated that no one had been left in desperate need and that emergencies had been dealt with promptly and subsequently additional money had been released.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. In response to a question, the Cabinet Member commented that he was in continued negotiations with Legal and General and that action was being taken on the demolition of Greyfriars. In response to a further question, Councillor Hadland commented that there were sufficient resources when the Council would take over a number of assets, with the closure of WNDC.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. In response to a question, he commented that there was an increase in the amount of recycling being carried out, but that further work was needed in moving some residents over from black to green bin bags. He also responded to a further question by stating that static dog fouling signs were ineffective and there were moves to increase the number of temporary signs erected.

Councillor Eldred submitted his Cabinet Members report and elaborated thereon. He offered his congratulations to Councillor Ansell on coming second in the

'Northampton Strictly Come Dancing' competition. He also confirmed that there would be a reduction in pitch fees for football league teams.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He offered his congratulations to the Revenue and Benefits service having been nominated for two national Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation awards. In response to a question asked, the Cabinet Member commented that he did not have the figures before him with regards to the load to the Northampton Football Club and Saints but he would forward that information.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Stone commented that she believed that work should pay and that the number of working families in poverty had massively increased. She questioned how many Council Officers were becoming increasingly worse off and how many more were using services such as payday loans and pawn shops to subsidise their wages. She commented that a motion had previously been submitted to Council asking for the 'Living Wage' to be introduced but had been unsuccessful. She suggested that a small increase in Council Tax could be an option of implementing the Living Wage and stated that Officers should be proud of their employment with the Council.

The Leader, in response, stated that there had been a significant number of reductions in senior management, from 21 to ten and that even during austere times; the administration would be announcing a balanced budget.

Councillor Stone commented that the suggestion of increasing Council Tax was just one option that should be considered and that public sector workers deserved to be well looked after and given a decent wage.

9. HOUSING OPTIONS REVIEW

Councillor Markham submitted a report that sought to approve the establishment of an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to manage the Councils housing stock. She noted that there were 6 options which examined the future of the council housing stock and it was agreed that the ALMO was the preferred option as it was the most stable and sustainable.

The Leader of the Council thanked the speakers for their contributions, work and involvement in the review. He further thanked all parties for the cross party work that had been demonstrated during the review and seconded adoption of the report.

Councillor Wire DL stated that on behalf of the Labour Group, they fully supported the recommendations.

Councillor Beardsworth commented that the Liberal Democrats were also fully supportive of the ALMO and asked that it be protected for as long as possible, regardless of the administration.

Councillor Palethorpe expressed his delight and the work undertaken during the review and noted that when this had previously been considered, there had only been

two options, and stated that the conclusion of the review was testimony to the hard work of those involved and thanked Councillor Markham for her work.

Councillor Mennell commented that she was happy to support the report and recommendations as a member of UKIP and as a Council tenant.

Councillor Mason commented that she was impressed with the work carried out by all involved and looked forward to seeing the development of the ALMO, and commented that there was still a need to provide more social housing.

Councillor Hadland paid tribute to the work undertaken by Councillor Markham who had gained the trust and understanding of the tenants and officers involved in the review.

Councillor Markham thanked everyone for their comments and gave thanks to the dedication shown throughout the review.

RESOLVED:

That Council endorsed the recommendations contained in the Cabinet report attached to the agenda.

Councillor Markham commented that the next steps of establishing an ALMO would involve further collaborative working and cross party support and stated that the ALMO would be set up within the next 12 months. She confirmed that D Robertson would be Programme Board Director, G Davies would be Interim Managing Director of the project and PS consultants would continue to work on the implementation of an ALMO.

10. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REPORT 2013-2014

Councillor Bottwood submitted a report which sought Councils endorsement of the Treasury Management activities and performance.

Councillor Mackintosh seconded adoption of the report.

RESOLVED:

That Council endorsed the treasury management activities and performance for the period 1 April to 30 September 2013.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

i) Councillor Hope, Northamptonshire County Council addressed Council and commented that the cost of £3 million of opening up Abington Street to traffic was an extravagant waste of money and urged the cross party support of the motion.

Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Palethorpe seconded:

“This Council notes that this Conservative Cabinet wants to open up the top section

of Abington Street to road traffic next year.

This Council believes sufficient public consultation has yet to be carried out whether this is actually what the general public want for the town centre. Nor have the Conservative Cabinet provided a proper rationale for this decision.

This Council further believes opening up the top section of Abington Street would be a retrograde step for the town centre and puts the interests of the car and associated traffic problems ahead of pedestrians. This Council opposes the opening up of the top end of Abington Street until proper consultation has taken place”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote:

There voted for the motion: Councillors Beardsworth, Capstick, N Choudary, Conroy, Davies, Glynane, Mason, Mennell, Meredith, Palethorpe, Stone, Strachan and Wire DL

There voted against the motion: Councillors Ansell, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Flavell, Ford, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, King, Lane, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Patel, Sargeant and Yates.

There abstained the Mayor and Councillor Hill

The motion was lost.

ii) Councillor Mason proposed and Councillor Palethorpe seconded:

“This Council notes that the Conservative Cabinet carried out low key consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Northampton Borough Council is proposing to reduce the maximum amount of discount a person can receive each year. In 2014/15 the proposal is to reduce the maximum amount of discount a person can receive to 85% of their Council Tax bill, which may then be reduced to 64% in 2015/16.

This Council believes these proposals are iniquitous as they harm the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in Northampton. In order to fill any shortfall this Council should look seriously at revenue raising measures”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote:

There voted for the motion: Councillors Beardsworth, Capstick, N Choudary, Conroy, Davies, Glynane, Mason, Mennell, Meredith, Palethorpe, Stone, Strachan and Wire DL

There voted against the motion: Councillors Ansell, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Flavell, Ford, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, King, Lane, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Patel, Sargeant and Yates.

There abstained the Mayor

The motion was lost.

There was a change in the proposer and seconder of Motion iii) the Chief Executive having been duly notified in writing prior to the meeting.

iii) Councillor Capstick proposed and Councillor Stone seconded:

“This council recognises that local government workers’ earnings have fallen by 18% since 2010 and that over 500,000 across the country now earn less than the Living Wage outside of London of £7.65 pence an hour. We recognise that this has placed many of our employees in financial hardship.

This council notes and supports calls by Government, Shadow Cabinet Ministers and MP’s from all parties for action on low pay, for a significant increase in the National Minimum Wage and for the Living Wage.

This council therefore resolves to:

- support the 2014-15 NJC pay claim by UNISON, GMB and Unite
- call upon the LGA to support the claim and lobby government for funding for it.

This council further resolves to call upon the Chancellor and Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government to ensure that funding is made available for councils to meet the NJC pay claim for a minimum increase of £1 an hour to:

- achieve the Living Wage for the lowest paid and
- begin to restore the earnings of the rest of the workforce”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote:

There voted for the motion: Councillors Beardsworth, Capstick, N Choudary, Conroy, Glynane, Mason, Meredith, Palethorpe, Stone and Strachan

There voted against the motion: Councillors Ansell, Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Flavell, Ford, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, King, Lane, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Patel, Sargeant and Yates.

There abstained the Mayor

The motion was lost.

iv) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Meredith seconded:

“This Council recognises that:

- It, and its members, are here to serve the people of Northampton, not be served by them.
- That often, service users and local residents have a far better understanding of local services and the needs of their local communities than Council officers, or even Councillors – particularly as not all Councillors are as engaged as they should be with their wards, as the current fiasco at Blackthorn Workshops shows.
- With these facts in mind, the Council has procedures for consultation laid out in consultation documents.
- Unfortunately, these procedures have been, at times, ignored.

This Council therefore resolves that:

- Cabinet decisions should demonstrate Consultation in line with the Council’s own consultation document at all times. “

Council debated the motion.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote:

There voted for the motion: Councillors Beardsworth, Captsick, N Choudary, Conroy, Davies, Glynane, Mason, Mennell, Meredith, Palethorpe, Stone and Strachan.

There voted against the motion: Councillors Bottwood, Caswell, I Choudary, Duncan, Eldred, Flavell, Ford, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, King, Lane, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Patel, Sargeant and Yates.

The motion was lost.

Having declared a personal and pecuniary interest, in Motion v) Councillor Ford left the Council Chamber for the duration of the debate.

v) Councillor Glynane to propose and Councillor Conroy to second:

“The Delapre tea rooms are a beloved institution in the local area. The tea rooms, run by the Friends of Delapre Abbey, have been established for a number of years, and run by people who have a passion for the abbey and community, often volunteering substantial amounts of time with no expectation of return. That it has become a social and community hub, where many people from across the town meet

This Council therefore resolves that:

During the works at Delapre Abbey, there will be proper provision in place to ensure an uninterrupted service, protecting the tea rooms customer base, and allowing what has become an essential community facility to keep serving the town”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

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

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 9.31pm