

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 14 July 2014 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

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

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hibbert declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 11 – 'Northampton Partnership Homes- Delegation' as a Shadow Board Member.

Councillor Bottwood declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 11 – 'Northampton Partnership Homes- Delegation' as a Shadow Board Member

Councillor Hadland declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Motion i) as a Member of Northampton Town Centre BID.

Councillor Capstick declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 – Cabinet Member Reports, as a current Member of the WNDC Audit and Risk Committee.

Councillor Mason declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 11 – 'Northampton Partnership Homes- Delegation' as a Shadow Board Member.

Councillor Beardsworth declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 11 – 'Northampton Partnership Homes- Delegation' as a Shadow Board Member.

Councillor N Choudary declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 11 – 'Northampton Partnership Homes- Delegation' as a Shadow Board Member.

Councillor Hadland declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 7 – Cabinet Member Reports, as a current Member of the WNDC Audit and Risk Committee.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on the 32nd June 2014 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Parekh, Davies and Conroy.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that on Saturday 28 June the 9th/12th Royal Lancers paraded through the town centre as the regiment returned to the UK after months serving in Afghanistan. He thanked everyone who had attended and shown their support in welcoming back the soldiers.

The Mayor also welcomed Councillor Ashraf to the Council, having been elected to represent St James' Ward on the 3rd July 2014.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mrs Susan Edwards addressed Council and commented that the recent sale of the Sekhemka statue had brought national shame on the Council. She commented that the Administration had stated that the statue was owned outright by the Council and questioned the validity of the statement. She further expressed her disappointment that members of the public were not listened to and not properly consulted about the sale of the statue, specifically in regards to the substantial petition that had been submitted to the Council.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor announced that no questions had been submitted by either members of Public or Councillors.

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 report and expressed his appreciation to the people who welcomed the return of the Lancers and noted that to mark Armed Forces Week, flags had been flown outside of the Guildhall. It was noted that it had been a busy month specifically in relation to regeneration projects and noted that there had been numerous successful events held, including the Delapre Beer Festival and the Grand Prix event.

In response to questions asked, the Leader confirmed that it had been agreed that a new heating and air conditioning unit would be installed in the Northgate Bus Station in mid-October 2014 and that he would not be attending a meeting with the Meridian Bus Service representative and suggested that issues relating to the bus Service be directed to County Council. It was further noted that Northampton had been nationally recognised in a report as one of the best places in the UK for new small and medium sized businesses. Responding to a statement that footfall in the town centre had fallen by 16% in 3 years, the Leader commented that since the Administration had introduced free parking, there had been a 37% increase in car park usage, and that Business Incentive Scheme had been introduced to assist in improving the business environment in the Town Centre. Responding further to concerns raised about the charging for toilet facilities in the Bus Station, Councillor Mackintosh explained that

there were numerous free toilet facilities in the town centre and that charging for such amenities was standard at most public transport centres.

Councillor Markham submitted her Cabinet Member report and noted that the designation for additional licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMO) had been made on the 3rd July 2014 and that the public notice would run for a 6 week period. It was noted that a pre ALMO team had been established and as part of the Decent Homes contract, Savills had been bought in to pre-survey all properties that had yet to be started. Responding to a question, it was explained that the number of families using their living room as a bedroom was currently unknown but that those figures could be collated and sent to Councillor Stone as requested. It was confirmed that the Decent Homes helpline had been set up and there had been a dramatic decline in the number of calls being made to the number which was indicative of an improved situation. In response to further questions it was confirmed that the number of people in B & B's was 28, 3061 on the waiting list for Council housing and 161 in overcrowded accommodation and 96 voids. Councillor Markham stated that in order to implement the additional licensing, it was necessary to follow the correct legal process which would be lengthy and time consuming but essential. Responding to concerns expressed, it was confirmed that anyone claiming to be homeless would need to present themselves at the One Stop Shop and this advice should be given by all Councillors who deal with homelessness cases. Responding to a request made by Councillor Lane, it was noted that updated information with regards to homelessness issues, could be circulated to members in the future.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member report and noted that significant and dynamic changes had been made to allow for small and medium sized enterprises (SME) to flourish in the town centre which had been reflected in the local survey undertaken by a Think Tank that rated Northampton in the top ten. It was explained that Cosworth were expanding and was just one of a number of companies that were developing people through training and development.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Beardsworth commented that with the recent announcement that the development of Rushden Lakes would be going ahead and the termination of the contract with Legal and General, the administration were taking Northampton backwards. She stated that the loss of the £300 million investment as a consequence of the termination of the Development Agreement could impact the future of the Town Centre and stated that the administration were doing a disservice to the residents and tax payers of Northampton and urged the administration to look at the long term effects that their decision making would have on the Town. She stated that the Town was going back in time and not being taken forward. She further suggested that the administration had rushed into building the North Gate bus station and that as a consequence, it had been ill thought out and problematic from the start.

Councillor Mackintosh responded by stating that it was unrealistic to consider that Legal and General were going to be forthcoming with their investment. With regards to taking the town forwards, Councillor Mackintosh suggested that this would not be a shared opinion especially in respect of a number of companies that had seen

progressive steps taken to develop, specifically the Saints, Cobblers, Carlsberg and Cosworth.

Councillor Beardsworth suggested that residents of Northampton were unhappy with numerous projects that had been undertaken and that there had been a distinct lack of communication and consultation with people.

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2013/2014

Councillor Lane, as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, submitted a report and thanked panel members, the Committee and the Scrutiny Officer for the work that they had completed and work currently being undertaken. It was noted that 3 new panels had been established and members of the public and councillors had inputted on the topics.

Councillor Sargeant seconded the report.

Councillor Glynane commented that he welcomed the report and stated that he was pleased with the result of the Call in that had been conducted with regards to the Disposal of Land – off Blackthorn Road.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14 be noted.

10. UPDATE ON GREYFRIARS DEVELOPMENT

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report to update Council on the recent planning appeal decision regarding the Rushden Lakes development and the implications for the proposed development at Greyfriars. He explained that the decision to terminate the development agreement between the Council and Legal and General (L & G) was mutual and beneficial to all involved.

Councillor Hadland seconded the report.

Councillor Marriott commented that it had been disappointing that there had been such little progression with L & G in the past 14 years, and agreed with the termination of the agreement, which he noted should have been done sooner.

Councillor Palethorpe commented that he was pleased with that an alternative developer or partner be found and suggested that any future development and progression be discussed cross party.

Councillor Beardsworth stated that the promised investment that was proposed by L & G was as a result of continued work carried out by the Liberal Democrats and that the termination of the agreement was, in effect, undoing years of hard work.

Councillor Mennell stated that there was a need to move forwards with the matter and that any decision or agreement reached would need to be transparent. Councillor Capstick urged the administration to listen to the views and opinions of residents and

consult with them and Councillors on any future developments.

Councillor Meredith reiterated the support for cross party involvement and suggested that other areas that have been successfully developed be visited in order to gain knowledge and develop a positive way forward.

Councillor Glynane questioned how much it had cost the Council to terminate the contract and urged the administration to examine what went wrong in the agreement to ensure that it would not happen in future.

Councillor Subbarayan asked for figures relating to what further resources would be needed to ensure that the site be ready for future development and questioned what gains and losses were being made by terminating the agreement.

Councillor Mackintosh commented that there was a commitment to moving forward and would look at potential developments of the Grosvenor Centre and that with ownership of the Greyfriars site, expansion and development of the town centre would be possible to offer a positive and competitive retail experience.

RESOLVED:

1. That the current position regarding the termination of the Development Agreement with Legal and General (L&G) be noted.
2. That it be delegated to the Leader and Chief Executive to agree the final details of the termination of the Development Agreement.
3. That it be delegated to the Leader and Chief Executive any initial expenditure that is required to fund alternative plans in advance of a further report to Cabinet.

11. NORTHAMPTON PARTNERSHIP HOMES - DELEGATION - APPOINTMENT OF A MANAGING DIRECTOR

Councillor Markham submitted a report which sought the approval of the appointment of a Managing Director for the Housing ALMO at a salary level of £100,000 or more.

Councillor Mackintosh seconded adoption of the report.

Councillor Mason commented that the Labour Group welcomed the report.

Councillor Beardsworth commented that the Liberal Democrats supported the recommendations as it would enable the recruitment of someone with suitable expertise in the area.

RESOLVED:

1. That, in principle, the setting of the salary package for the ALMO Managing Director (or whatever Post description is finally agreed) in excess of £100,000.00 as required by the Council's pay policy be agreed.
2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the Leader of the Council in his capacity as the chair of the Appointment and Appeals committee:
 - i) The power to appoint to the ALMO Managing Director post and all associated activities such as agreeing the Job Description, Person Specification and Interview Process and
 - ii) To determine the specific level of salary package for the ALMO Managing Director following the conclusion of an appropriate salary evaluation process.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

- i) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Glynane seconded that:

"This Council welcomes the initiative by Northampton BID to clean up the Town Centre ("Clean up day" Wednesday, July 2nd) and proposes that this Council support their effort by looking at what other Councils around the Country are doing to tackle litter".

Councillor Hadland proposed and Councillor Hallam seconded an amendment:

The amended motion read:

"This Council welcomes the initiative by Northampton BID to clean up the town centre ("Clean up day" Wednesday, July 2nd) and recognises the work done by this Administration to improve the town centre, and therefore proposes that this Council support their effort by looking at what other Councils around the Country are doing to tackle littering as part of the work being carried out by the Keep Northampton Tidy Panel of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee".

Council debated the amended motion.

The amendment was debated.

The amendment was duly carried to become the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was debated, voted upon and carried.

Mr Jones addressed Council and commented that Victoria Street had inadequate facilities for the arrival and departure of National Express buses which operated on a 24 hour basis. He commented that it would be positive if passengers could be encouraged to visit the town centre.

Mr Bricher addressed Council and noted his support for the motion. He commented that long distance coaches, such as National Express, potentially faced delays and asked that service users be provided with information, seating and shelter.

ii) Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Marriott seconded that:

“This Council notes that Victoria Street has been designated the location for the arrival and departure for the National Express and other long distance buses.

This Council therefore resolves to utilise part of the car park in Victoria Street to develop amenities such as a transit area, information board, disabled friendly access and facilities and toilets for the bus users.

This Council further resolves to investigate the possibility to adapt an empty unit on the Drapery to provide a passenger centre and transit area.”

Councillor Hadland proposed and Councillor Mackintosh seconded an amendment:

The amended motion read:

“This Council notes that Victoria Street has been designated the location for the arrival and departure for the National Express and other long distance buses.

This Council recognises the Administration’s plans announced in May to utilise part of the car park in Victoria Street to develop amenities. The Administration will consider issues such as a transit area, information board, disabled friendly access and facilities and toilets for the bus users.

This Council is also already working with businesses on the Drapery to provide a passenger centre and transit area.”

The proposed amendments were accepted and became the substantive motion.

Council debated the substantive motion.

Upon a vote, the substantive motion was carried.

iii) Councillor N Choudary proposed and Councillor Stone seconded that:

“This Council notes Northampton Carnival Arts Consortium is a small group of dedicated and hard- working volunteers who spend hours of their own free time bringing to the town a great inclusive multicultural event.

This Council gives its support to the Northampton Carnival Arts Consortium and recognises their fantastic work.

This Council therefore asks the Cabinet to work with them from this September to ensure plans are put in place for 2015 in a timely and responsible manner, having

due regard to the venue, route and support for fundraising.”

Councillor Eldred proposed and Councillor Mackintosh seconded an amendment:

The amended motion read:

“This Council notes Northampton Carnival Arts Consortium is a small group of dedicated and hard-working volunteers who spend hours of their own free time bringing to the town a great inclusive multicultural event. This Council gives its continued support to the Northampton Carnival Arts Consortium and recognises their fantastic work. This Council therefore asks the Cabinet to work with them from this September to ensure plans are put in place for 2015 in a timely and responsible manner, having due regard to the venue, route and support for fundraising.

This Council calls on the Northampton Carnival Arts Consortium to finalise and submit their proposals including road closures to Northamptonshire County Council and agreements on venues with Northampton Borough Council by the end of December 2014 to allow for proper planning and to avoid last minute problems.”

The proposed amendments were accepted and became the substantive motion.

Council debated the substantive motion.

Upon a vote, the substantive motion was carried.

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

None.

The meeting concluded at 9.47pm