

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 8 December 2014 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Ansell, Aziz, Beardsworth, Begum, Bottwood, Duncan, Eldred, Flavell, Ford, Glynane, Golby, Gowen, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, King, Lane, Larratt, Mackintosh, Markham, Mennell, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Stone, Strachan and Yates

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Meredith and Councillor Rahman declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in Item 9 – Treasury Management Outturn 2013-14, as Allotment Holders.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the Meeting of Council held on the 27th October 2014 and the minutes of the Special Council Meetings held on the 15th and 18th November were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Malpas, Palethorpe, Eales, Capstick, N Choudary, Subbarayan and Conroy.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that his recent Gala Dinner had been greatly successful and thanked all the Councillors who had attended and noted that a large amount of money had been raised for the Mayor's Charity.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Justin Brown addressed Council and commented that at the previous Council meeting of the 27th October 2014, Councillor Mackintosh had referred to Northampton Borough Council as a holiday camp. Mr Brown noted that such comments showed the contempt the Leader had for working people, especially during a time when public sector workers were expected to work longer and harder for less money and asked for Councillor Mackintosh to make a public apology.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 2 questions had been received from 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) unless where stated, supplementary questions were asked – detailed below:

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 1, Councillor Hallam explained that there was not an 'acute shortage' and that they were currently awaiting grant funding in Kingsthorpe and Far Cotton.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 2, Councillor Hallam confirmed that he and officers were conducting weekly walkabouts and that they were doing what they could to address the issue.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Mackintosh submitted his Cabinet Member report and noted that it had been a very busy period and that the Town had recently seen a number of events organised to mark the 825th Anniversary of the Royal Charter. It was noted that the first act signed for the Alive at Delapre event had been announced and the Christmas Light switch on had been successful and well attended. He further explained that on Saturday 6th December 2014, Small Business Saturday had been marked and noted that the small businesses he had visited were pleased and their comments and feedback taken on board. Council were informed that the new Railway Station was near to completion and that a meeting had been arranged with Network Rail to discover why there had been a delay. It was noted that the draft Budget had been finalised and noted that a report would be presented to the General Purposes Committee with regards to the pay awards and that the living wage would be implemented to NBC staff from April 2015. It was also noted that Councillor Mackintosh had recently become a Patron of the Hope Centre.

In response to questions asked Councillor Mackintosh explained that with regards to the national increased use of foodbanks, everything was being done locally to ensure high levels of employment thus negating the need for foodbanks but offered his support of organisations involved in the provision of foodbanks. It was further explained that whilst there had been a decrease in crime compared to last year's figures, there was some concern with regards to how crime was recorded and assured Members that there would be continued work with the Police to ensure accuracy.

Councillor Markham submitted her Cabinet Member report and explained that the agreement with Northampton Partnership Homes was on target and that on the 25th and 26th November 2014 there had been a tenants meeting which had been successful, and thanked officers who had organised the event. She noted that there had been 206 new HIMO licensing applications had been received, with 967 addresses having been identified as needing to confirm their status as licensable. The positive progress of the Empty Homes Programme was also noted.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Markham explained a Decent Homes Hotline had been set up in order to address any problems that were being experienced by tenants. With regards to licensing of HMOs, it was explained that there had been a landlords meeting and enforcement letters had been sent out to those whom were known to have not applied for a license and urged Councillors who suspected, or knew of an unlicensed HMO to report it to the Council in order for it to be cross checked and necessary action taken.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Cabinet Member report and explained that the draft Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget for 2015/16 were in the final stages and taken to Cabinet on the 17th December 2014. It was reported that there had been progress on the loan to the University of Northampton and agreements of the loan build the new Waterdside Campus had been completed. It was further reported that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) would continue to assist low income families and that they were continuing to look at making the system fairer, whilst delivering a balanced budget.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Bottwood stated that the Administration had spent £600,000 on the free parking scheme which had been approved as part of the Revenue Account. Referring to allotment funds, Councillor Bottwood stated that the funding for that had been from an aggregated funding pot. He also commented that he would find out and relay information to relevant Councillors as to whether the leasehold money for Council properties had been arranged.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member report and noted that as of the afternoon, Abington Street had been opened up to traffic. It was further noted that Councillor Hadland and the Leader had recently visited the Cosworth factory on St James Mill Road which had led to the creation of numerous high tech jobs and apprentices' position. Referring to the 'Regeneration' section of his report, he confirmed that there would be 6 lifts in the new multi storey car park.

In response to questions, Councillor Hadland noted that the Planning Policy Statement would continue to be reviewed. He apologised for the disruption to residents of Guildhall Road in the previous week, but stated that the issue had been resolved after one night and the road had been fully re-opened. Councillor Hadland also noted that the Delapre Abbey project had benefitted the whole of the town and that the Friends of Delapre Abbey had also played an instrumental part in building a sustainable future for the Abbey in allowing more use of the Abbey Building through the proposed change of use of the 19th Century stable block to a café/restaurant to be presented to Planning Committee on the 16th December 2014.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Marriott stated that the Administration had not gone far enough to engage the general public in the consultation process on a number of important issues. He commented that the proposed Waste-Energy in St James should have gone to the Scrutiny Committee for further investigation prior to it going to Cabinet. He stated that whilst the de-pedestrianisation of Abington Street was in the Administrations

manifesto, the cost was not included and therefore the public had not been fully consulted with as the cost was not known to them. He further stated that the Northgate Bus Station had also lead to people feeling ignored. Cabinet meetings, he commented, were no longer an opportunity for public engagement and the budget rushed through and further commented that there had been a lack of consultation with Councillors over decisions affecting them, such as the Councillor Community Fund.

In response Councillor Mackintosh stated that the biggest public consultation exercise would be the election. He reported that the Conservatives had helped people by offering free parking, worked with the Saints and provided jobs through the Cosworth project. He further noted that the Councillor Community Fund was very much liked and had been used by many to help disadvantaged people in their local areas. He suggested that Councillor Marriott come up with an alternative or move aside to let the Conservative continue with transforming the Town.

Councillor Marriott noted that was in favour of the Council Community Fund, but considered there to have been inadequate consultation. He argued that the lack of consultation was making people feel disenfranchised and there was a real need for more community engagement.

9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2013-2014

Councillor Bottwood submitted a report which informed Council of performance in relation to its borrowing and investment strategy for 2013-14.

Councillor Mackintosh seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

That Council noted the treasury management performance for 2013-14

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr Craig Ryan addressed Council – Motion i) and commented that he lived with his wife and two small children in a first floor flat. He spoke of the struggle that he and his wife endured having to get two small children, shopping and pushchairs upstairs without access to lifts. He noted that the flat provided by the Council, had no garden and the nearest play area was a twenty minute walk away. He commented that he was concerned when his children played in the limited space within the flat that they may receive complaint from his neighbours and said that it would be logical to prioritise families with Housing needs. He reminded Council that since the motion related to children they should be aware that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that it applied to all children under the age of 18 and included their right to play.

i) Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Mason seconded:

“This Council recognises that living in a flat for families with children can be very difficult. It often inhibits play, and isolates families that rely on neighbourhood social networks. In particular many parents struggle to access their flat with pushchair,

shopping, toddlers and children.

Even where there is a lift available the lift can be out of order making life difficult.

This Council therefore resolves to work towards a situation where families with children under 5 are not put in flats above the 1st floor”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

Councillor Ashraf declared that under the relevant constitutional procedure Motion 2 had been amended to the motion below, which had amalgamated Motions 2 and 3.

ii) Councillor Ashraf proposed and Councillor Beardsworth seconded:

“This Council notes that Cabinet gave authority to enter into contractually binding arrangements that may lead to the disposal of land and buildings at Westbridge Depot for use in connection with a ‘waste to energy’ installation.

This Council is concerned that detailed and informative consultation (as set out in the ‘Consultation Toolkit’) has not been adequate. Also there was not sufficient information about the proposal and plans in the cabinet report.

Council further notes that the St. James’ area in particular suffers terrible traffic problems, with roads already overloaded by local businesses - and that other plants of this type have a waste lorry coming or going once every 3 minutes. Contrary to statements made by this administration, Council also notes that plants of this type have not been shown to produce any net power whatsoever, and while there are environmental benefits compared to landfill, these would be undermined by an urban location.

Council recognises the significant problems plants of these types have had around the Country and the world with spillage and leaks of toxic substances into the local area.

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Council recognises the significant problems plants of these types have had around the Country and the world with spillage and leaks of toxic substances into the local area.

Council therefore resolves that a full consultation must be taken out regarding all and

any further decisions about the possibility of this power plant, and that no further steps will be taken without:

1. A full business case
2. A clear, evidence based understanding of environmental benefits, risks and problems associated with developments of this type.
3. The full and informed consent of the people of St. James, Far Cotton and the surrounding areas.

Council further resolves that to ensure that these conditions are met in an open and transparent way, all further moves towards the proposed development must be ratified both at Cabinet and Full Council.

Council also asks to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to set up a Panel of councillors, which includes representatives from all political groups, to investigate the proposal more thoroughly and how public consultation on this issue can be improved”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

Having written to the Chief Executive, the proposers and seconders of the remaining motions were changed from the originals (printed on the agenda) to below.

iv) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Glynane seconded:

Council recognises the need for Northampton's road system to be dramatically improved. However, Council also notes with regret the frustration caused to motorists, residents, shoppers and businesses by the extreme amount of work being done simultaneously around the town centre over the past few months.

Given the already fragile position of many of Northampton's businesses following 4 disastrous years of a Conservative administration, Council recognises that something must be done to mitigate some of the damage caused.

Council therefore resolves to work more closely with the County Council to ensure that works in Northampton are planned and scheduled more effectively in future, and further resolves to reduce the business rates of Northampton town centre businesses by 5% in each of the months where work has been going on in Abington Street, the Victoria Promenade/ Cheyne Walk junction, the Carlsberg Roundabout or the Drapery. This discount will apply to the last year and until the end of these works”.

Councillor Mackintosh proposed and Councillor Hadland seconded an amendment.

The amended motion read:

“Council recognises the need for Northampton's road system to be dramatically improved. However, Council also notes with regret the frustration caused to motorists, residents, shoppers and businesses by the amount of work necessary around the town centre over the past few months for the regeneration of the town.

Council recognises that the businesses need support and resolves to continue the already established practice of asking the Valuation Office to consider the business rates of Northampton town centre businesses in each of the months where work has been going on in Abington Street, the Victoria Promenade/Cheyne Walk junction, the Carlsberg Roundabout or the Drapery where this has not already been considered”.

The proposed amendments were accepted and became the substantive motion:

Council debated the substantive motive.

Upon a vote, the substantive motion was carried.

v) Councillor Meredith proposed and Councillor Beardsworth seconded:

The Councils are in fact assets belonging to the town and to the communities surrounding them.

Often, the sale of assets happens because of pressures on the Council, rather than because of the needs of the local community.

As such, the capital receipts generated by the sale of assets should, where possible, be spent on improving facilities in the local area. Even where this is not possible, communities should have clear information of where money generated by the disposal of assets from their community is being reinvested by the Council.

Council therefore resolves to publish this information”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

11. 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 8.54pm