

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 25 January 2016 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

PRESENT: HER WORSHIP THE MAYOR Councillor Flavell (in the Chair).

COUNCILLORS: Malpas, Ansell, Ashraf, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Cali, Caswell, Choudary, Chunga, Davenport, Duffy, Eales, Eales, Eldred, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, Hill, Kilbride, King, Lynch, Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Sargeant, Smith, Stone and Walker

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hadland declared a personal non pecuniary interest in Item 14 as a Trustee of the Sir Thomas Whites' Northampton Charity and Henry and Elizabeth Lineham Fund.

Councillor Birch declared a personal non pecuniary interest in Item 8 – Opposition Group Business as a Director of Community Spaces, Northampton.

Councillor Meredith declared a personal non pecuniary interest in Item 6 as an allotment holder.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14th December 2015 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Culbard, Gowen, J Hill, Larratt, Lane and Shaw.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that on Christmas day, she had visited the Gosset Ward at the Northampton General, a neonatal intensive care unit caring for new-born babies who require some form of special high dependency or intensive care nursing.

The Mayor informed Council that on the 19th January 2016 she had attended the football match between Mk Dons and Northampton Town at Stadium:uk.

On the 22nd of January 2016, the Mayor explained that she had delivered a short speech to the University of Northampton to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. The Mayor went on to invite all Councillors to a short civic ceremony to be held in the

Courtyard on the 27th January 2016 at midday which would be followed by an evening event at 6.30pm in the Great Hall.

The Mayor reminded Members that her fashion show was planned to be held on Thursday 10th March in the Great Hall at 7pm to raise money for the Mayors Charity and tickets were due to be released soon for just £10 each.

The Mayor congratulated the Deputy Mayor on his recent wedding and wished them future happiness together.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Councillor Stone spoke on behalf of residents and congratulated them on their continued hard work.

Lisa Bradshaw spoke as a resident of Vernon Walk on the Bouverie Estate and commented that parking in the area was a big concern to local residents. She also submitted a petition on the matter. She described how visitors and staff at the hospital were parking on residential streets which was exacerbated parking issues further by parents parking to drop children off at the local school. She commented that there were 2 NBC owned carparks in close proximity that were under-occupied when residents were struggling without yellow lines of resident permits.

Beverley Mennell commented that the recent news events with regards to flooding had been a concern to her and asked that a plan be put into place should Northampton be at threat of flooding and asked that the river Nene be dredged. She went on to congratulate the Cabinet Member for Housing for cracking down on rogue landlords and improving private sector housing for residents.

Arthur Newbury commented that there were many abandoned shopping trollies around the Town which was a blot on the landscape and asked the Council to push for an agreement, potentially through the introduction of a new bye-law to ensure the supermarket chains collect their trollies.

Kathy Webster stated that she had been a resident of Tower Hill Close for a number of years but that recently the street lights had been turned off due to the fact the road had not been adopted. She stated that it had left residents feeling unsafe and vulnerable and commented that residents had paid their council tax and yet, due to their road not being adopted, were not receiving value for money.

Tony Mallard commented that John Mallard OBE had been born in Northampton before moving to Edinburgh where he was Professor of Medical Physics at the University of Aberdeen from 1965 until his retirement in 1992. He is known for his and his colleague's work in the development of radionuclide imaging, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and, in particular, positron emission tomography and it was requested that Northampton acknowledged his work.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 11 questions had been received from Councillors and members of the public 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 states, supplementary questions were asked – detailed below:

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to question 5, Councillor Eldred stated that there were currently no plans for Delapre Alive returning.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to question 6, Councillor Hadland confirmed that he was unhappy that a development on the fringe of Northampton Borough could build a development with no affordable housing.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to question 8, Councillor Bottwood stated that he would look at getting the postcodes of housing estates next to allotments advertised on allotment notice boards to ensure that the emergency services can locate people.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

The Leader of the Council submitted her Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. It was noted that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced the draft Local Government Settlement for consultation on the 18th December 2015 and is a key document to implement the latest Comprehensive Spending Review. She noted that there was a need for the County Council to also, but they were not in a position to know what combined savings would be. It was noted that there were ongoing criminal investigations into the Sixfields loan and an audit of it would also be undertaken by KPMG. The Leader informed Council that on the 29th January 2016 she would be taking part in the Big Sleep-Out, which would be raising funds for Northampton Hope Centre and informed Members that Councillor James Hill and Councillor Eldred would also be taking part and urged everyone to donate and raise awareness.

In response to questions asked, the Leader stated that she would consider the social impacts of cuts to services as well as the financial ones and outlined the services that had already been transferred to the One Stop Shop, such as Credit Union. She confirmed that a recent Audit and Cabinet report had outlined the ongoing costs of the loan to NTFC and that this had been made available to the public at public meetings and therefore open and transparent. The Leader confirmed that there was a budget for training members and that this was also applicable to Audit members. She shared concerns about the budget impact on the County Traveller Unit but explained that there were ongoing discussions to discuss the County Council cut to the Unit.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report and noted that the consultation on the draft Budget 2016/17 was well underway and there had been some positive contributions during that time. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hallam explained that people who were suffering from hardship or were not managing their finances well were being referred to the One Stop Shop for debt management advice which would contribute to people managing and maximising their incomes.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated further by stating that the footfall and car parking usage had increased over the Christmas period. It was noted that St Giles Street had won the Best British High Street and that a meeting was planned with the owners of buildings on Gold Street to look at improving the appearance of some of the buildings on the street. Responding to the concerns raised by the submitted petition, Councillor Hadland commented that NBC were not the responsible authority for on street parking issues but stated that he would look at the usage of the Borough Council owned car parks. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hadland explained that all the proceeds from the sale of Sekemkha was still with the Council. He explained further that the Fish street premises had been marketed and a sale agreed. He further concurred with comments from Councillor M Hill that the gateways into Northampton all needed to be aesthetically pleasing.

Councillor Hibbert submitted his Cabinet Member report and explained that on the 5th February 2016 a workshop would be held to inform the development of Northampton multi agency Rough Sleepers Strategy. It was noted that in December 2015 the Council had hosted 4 focus groups to get the views from a wide range of stakeholders to feedback on the Council's new approach to regulating private sector housing. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hibbert explained that when examining the number of homelessness cases, the cause and the demographics would be looked at. He further explained that there had been no Council houses built as they were still waiting for planning permission but there would be 100 built once permission had been granted. He also explained that the establishment of a Social Lettings Agency would help those who were in receipt of benefits.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Cabinet Member report and stated that he concurred with the views expressed by Mr Newbury and commented that any abandoned trollies identified by the Council would result in the supermarkets being contacted by the Council. He reported that over the weekend of the 4th -6th March 2016 a monumental litter pick would be carried out supporting members and members of the public in tidying areas to make the Town more pleasant. In response to questions asked Councillor Bottwood explained that he would be happy to meet with Councillor Meredith outside the chamber to discuss concerns relating to the lake at Thorplands. He also informed members that should they require a schedule for weeding, he would pass the information on to them.

Councillor King submitted her Cabinet Member report and commented that the crime figures were not dissimilar to those of the previous year. It was noted that there had been a Hate Crime Consultation at Wootton Hall and the Pensioners Forum had enjoyed a day trip to the Houses of Parliament.

At this point of the meeting, the Mayor advised that the 45 minutes allocated to Cabinet Member Presentations had been reached.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Birch stated that the Labour Groups' vision was for a fair and diverse community. She questioned how the administration was going to achieve this during the time of austerity. She commented that Local Government was very much affected by cuts to the budgets and suggested that it was the poorest people in society were being hit the hardest, especially the vulnerable. She noted that the cuts that the County Council had to make would result in the Borough having to act as a buffer to help those most affected people who would experience severe cuts to services that they relied on; cuts to bus services affecting elderly people, resulting in isolation. Cuts to Youth services, which would result in an increase in the numbers of young people who are disengaged. She noted that voluntary groups were doing a lot to help, but that fundraising during times of austerity posed its own problems. She went on to note that she considered there to be more robust partnership working and a need to build resilience.

Councillor Eldred responded by stating that the administration were dedicated to working with people in the Town and explained that each Member of the Council were given £3000 to spend on various causes to improve the lives of residents and groups. He further stated that there was continued work with various groups and agencies to improve the lives and conditions of disadvantaged people and work was also being carried out by numerous parish Councils to promote and provide children's activities.

Councillor Birch commented that she was delighted with some of the work that was being carried out and the supportive comments from Councillor Eldred but reported that she was concerned about the future faced by some residents,

9. STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Councillor Sargeant submitted a report that sought approval for the Statement of Licensing Policy, following the five yearly review required by the Licensing Act 2003 to be adopted.

Councillor M Hill seconded the report.

Councillor Stone reported that she had objected to the Sex Establishment Venues being in the town centre, close to areas with faith buildings and schools during the consultation. She therefore withdrew from the meeting before the debate ensued.

Councillor Sargeant commented that no objections had been submitted by the Police.

RESOLVED:

That the Policy attached to the report be approved for publication as the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy under Section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 for the five year period commencing 1st February 2016

At this point of the meeting, Councillor Stone re-joined the meeting.

10. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Councillor Hallam submitted a report that sought Council's approval of the proposed amendment to the Local Tax reduction scheme from a 21% reduction in support in 2015/16 to a 29% reduction in 2016/17.

Councillor Patel seconded the report.

Councillor Beardsworth questioned how and why the administration could justify expecting the poorest in society to pay more and reported that they had a social responsibility to look after the most disadvantaged and vulnerable and stated she was opposed to the report.

Councillor Stone commented that the Administration should not champion that they have frozen Council Tax as this was in effect a rise in Council Tax for some people.

Councillor Davenport stated that she had been alarmed by the effect the amendment would have on people.

Councillor Meredith expressed his disappointment with the proposed amendment and stated that he lived in area that was affected by poverty and that this would further exacerbate and create hardship for the poorest.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote;

There voted for the recommendation: Councillors Ansell, Aziz, Bottwood, Eldred, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, M Hill, Kilbride, King, Lynch, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant and Walker.

There voted against the recommendation: Councillors Ashraf, Beardsworth, Birch, Cali, Choudary, Chunga, Davenport, Duffy, G Eales, T Eales, Haque, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Russell, Smith and Stone.

There abstained the Mayor.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendation contained in the Cabinet report attached to the agenda be endorsed no later than the 31st January 2016

11. COUNCIL TAXBASE

Councillor Hallam submitted a report that sought the approval of the tax base for 2016/17.

Councillor Patel seconded the report.

Councillor Stone commented that the freeze on Council Tax affected the worst off in

society rather than the wealthy and suggested it was not financially prudent nor did it protect citizens.

RESOLVED:

That Council approve the tax base for 2016/17 at 64,357.94 Band D equivalent properties and associated parish tax bases within this report.

	2016/17	2015/16
Billing	2,626.96	2,506.72
Collingtree	513.97	506.88
Duston	5,447.94	5,358.06
Great Houghton	287.50	284.39
Hardingstone	782.38	761.18
Upton	2,617.14	2,181.34
Wootton, Wootton Fields & Simpson Manor	2,927.45	2,889.67
East Hunsbury	3,412.11	3,368.24
West Hunsbury	1,624.70	1,602.17
Hunsbury Meadow	505.36	489.23
Northampton (Unparished)	43,612.52	41,978.93
Total tax base	64,357.94	61,926.81

12. CHANGES TO OUTSIDE BODIES AND CONSULTATION APPOINTMENTS

The Mayor advised that the report was no longer needed and asked for Council to agree that the Item be withdrawn.

RESOLVED:

That the Item be withdrawn.

13. APPOINTMENTS OF NOMINATIVE TRUSTEE - THE CHARITY OF HERVEY AND ELIZABETH ELKINS

Councillor Markham submitted a report which sought Council's approval to appointment a person to the Charity of Hervey and Elizabeth Ekins. She thanked Mrs Greenwell for her long service to the charity and proposed that Councillor Larratt be appointed.

Councillor Patel seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

That Council appointed Councillor Larratt as a Trustee to the Charity of Hervey and Elizabeth Elkins to replace Mrs Margaret Greenwell as Northampton Council's representative.

14. APPOINTMENTS OF TRUSTEE - SIR THOMAS WHITE'S NORTHAMPTON CHARITY AND HENRY AND ELIZABETH LINEHAM FUND

Councillor Markham submitted a report that sought Councils approval for the appointment to the Charity of Sir Thomas White's Northamptonshire Charity and Henry and Elizabeth Lineham Fund.

Councillor Patel seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

That Mr Mike Wilkinson and Councillor Anna King be appointed to the Sir Thomas White's Northampton Charity and Henry and Elizabeth Lineham Fund as Northampton Borough Council's representative.

15. REPORT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN

Councillor Markham submitted a report that informed Council of the findings by the Local Government Ombudsmen (LGO) of fault causing injustice in respect of a complaint made by a member of the public.

Councillor Hadland seconded the report.

Councillor McCutcheon commented that to be found at fault on any issue by the LGO was a serious matter, but on four different accounts was shocking. He commented that there needs to be a demonstration that there was no prejudice and an informal code was needed to ensure better mechanisms to prevent any further findings.

Councillor Beardsworth commented that she would have liked the report to have been reported back to the Planning Committee and expressed her concern at the findings.

Councillor Meredith echoed the concerns of Councillor McCutcheon.

Councillor Hadland commented that the report and recommendations are concerned with process and stated that the Council valued heritage in the County.

RESOLVED:

Council is recommended to:

- 2.1 That the LGO's finding of fault on the part of the Council causing injustice, as set out in the Report of LGO at Appendix 1 of the report be noted
- 2.2 That the recommendations of the Local Government Ombudsman as set out in the Report of the LGO at Appendix 1 be noted; and
- 2.3 That action taken to date and the further actions proposed in order to

implement the recommendations of the LGO be approved and noted

16. NOTICES OF MOTION

i) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Meredith seconded:

“This Council notes the ongoing problems regarding traffic and capacity at the new bus station and on the Drapery.

Council further recognises the fundamental importance of effective transport links within the town centre.

Council therefore requires a full report on Northampton’s capacity to manage bus and coach services, including expectations of growth over the next 10 years, before any building plans are considered on the Greyfriars site”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

ii) Councillor Meredith to propose and Councillor Beardsworth to second:

“Council recognises the importance of open spaces to the health and wellbeing of residents.

Council further recognises that the Southfields Sports Field has served this purpose well in its community.

Council therefore recognises Southfields Sports Fields as a park, and will treat it on an equal basis to other parks from this point forward.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

iii) Councillor Davenport to propose and Councillor McCutcheon to second:

“This Council notes that Northamptonshire County Council is responsible for the adoption of roads in the town.

The problem of roads not being adopted is a real problem for some of our residents.

They have to put up with roads in very poor condition.

This Council asks the Administration to do whatever they can to get the County council to adopt all roads in the town.

When the Administration does discuss these matters with Northamptonshire County Council they advocate a Section 38 agreement which is supported by a bond or cash

deposit. This bond or cash deposit can be called upon if the developer goes into liquidation or otherwise defaults on their responsibilities”.

Councillor Markham then moved and Councillor Hallam seconded; “That the question be now put”.

The motion was carried.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

iv) Councillor Ashraf to propose and Councillor Russell to second:

“This Council believes that residents should not be expected to use their living rooms as bedrooms.

This Council also believes overcrowding is a serious problem in some households in our town. Living in overcrowded houses impacts on personal welfare and is particularly detrimental to a child’s education.

This Council further believes the statutory definition of overcrowding is too low and so we need much stronger criteria. This Council notes that the Administration has been looking into this.

This Council resolves to do what it can to help alleviate overcrowding in homes by going beyond our statutory duties. This Council further resolves to fundamentally review the Allocations Policy to ensure residents are not living in overcrowded conditions”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

17. 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 9.41pm