

## **MINUTES**

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 7 March 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, Chunga, Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, Eales, Eldred, Golby, Gowen, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, Hill, Hill, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Sargeant, Stone and Walker

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

### **2. APOLOGIES.**

Apologies were received from Councillors G Eales, Choudary, Smith, Hadland and Lynch.

### **3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

The Mayor announced that on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February, she had attended an awards service for long service achievers of the 118 RECOVERY COMPANY 104 FORCE SUPPORT BATTALION REME. This was held at the Army Reserve Centre and was for military personnel involved in peace-making, anti-terrorism activities, humanitarian aid provision and other related operations.

The Mayor reminded members that her fashion show was to be held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March in the Great Hall at 7pm, to raise money for the Mayors Charity and a few tickets were still available from the Mayor's Office.

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Culbard to the meeting who had returned to Council following a time of illness.

### **4. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS**

There were no public comments or petitions.

### **5. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Mayor advised that nine 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 where stated, supplementary questions were asked, as detailed below.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 3, Councillor Markham responded that if Councillors had specific training needs, they should contact her and she would look at resolving training issues.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 7, Councillor Markham responded by stating that there were a number of reasons for the poor turnout of voters in student areas such as NNOL2 as some students could chose to register to vote at home or at the university residency.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 8, Councillor Bottwood responded by saying he was not fully briefed about the details of the historically deceased person found in undergrowth but that he would report them back to Councillor Meredith when he had further information on the matter.

## **6. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS**

The Leader of the Council submitted her Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. She noted the economic success of Northampton and reported that the Centre for Cities outlook had ranked Northampton as the highest performing town or city outside London for business start-ups and the second highest employment rate. She further announced that the Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning was leaving and thanked him for his word and reported that he would be leaving a real legacy in the Town. She reported that Cabinet had adopted new policies for the regulation and enforcement of standards in the private rented sector and noted the cross party support and backing from the Landlords Forum. The Leader thanked all the Councillors who had supported her at the Big Sleep Out and noted that she had raised £1,439 in donations, with a couple of late donations having increased the total amount.

In response to questions asked, the Leader stated that pollution in the town centre had been an area flagged up by Councillor Bottwood as being an issue to be referred to Overview and Scrutiny. Responding to a further query, the Leader stated that the Social Lettings Agency (SLA) should be in place by the end of September 2016. In response to another question, the Leader stated that she would be attending a number of meetings with Leaders of other Councils and the Chief Executive to discuss unitary council status.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report and noted that the Council was currently in a good financial position. He noted that as shown in the Medium Term Financial Plan that there were significant financial challenges that would face the Council and asked that if any Members had any suggestions to bridge the projected funding gap that they should speak to him so that they could be costed. In

response to a question asked, Councillor Hallam explained that all information relating to the Northampton Town Football Club loan had been made available in the Cabinet report.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. He stated that the mowing season was to start imminently and that it was hoped that there would be an increase in the number of parks awarded the green flag status to two additional parks. In response to questions asked, Councillor Bottwood confirmed that there would be a number of small events that would run alongside the Clean-Up for the Queen campaign. In response to a further question he stated that work was currently being undertaken to examine dredging the lakes at Thorplands and that the Council were engaged with a number of agencies to resolve the water flow issue.

Councillor Hibbert submitted his Cabinet Member report and commented that it was hoped that the new multi-agency Rough Sleepers Strategy would be published in June 2016. He noted that he had received very positive feedback from those Councillors who had received HIMO training. He spoke of the harrowing insight that had been provided for Councillors in raising awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation in Northampton and the training given to practical action that the Council could take. In response to questions asked Councillor Hibbert explained that a rough sleeps count was supposed to have been carried out in February but that it had been delayed, another one having been scheduled to take place in the very near future. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hibbert stated that the administration was looking into the provision of emergency accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. In response to a further question asked relating to safeguarding children in HIMOs, Councillor Hibbert stated that the matter of this was dealt with my multiple agencies. He further noted that the temporary accommodation provided by the Council as fit for purpose and that if any Councillor were aware of properties that were not should contact him immediately.

Councillor Markham, in Councillor Hadlands' absence, submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. In response to questions asked, the Leader confirmed that there was continued work with Network Rail for work to commence on the car park. With regards to work being undertaken at Greyfriars, it was noted that maps would be made available to the public in April 2016.

Councillor Eldred submitted his Cabinet Member report and explained that there were loads of events planned for 2016 including Music365, Race for Life and Diwali. It was further noted that the family of the artist Roberta Booth had donated "Earthworks 2", one of her critically acclaimed pieces of work to the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery. In response to questions asked, Councillor Eldred confirmed that the Citizens Advice Bureau would be moving into the 1 stop shop in the near future.

Councillor King submitted her Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. She explained that International Women's Day plans had been finalised that 4 winners had been shortlisted for the Inspirational Woman Award.

The Mayor, at this point, confirmed that period of time set aside for this item had been reached.

## **7. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS**

Councillor Russell made a statement as outlined on the agenda. She explained that work needed to be undertaken to make the Town safer. She noted that there had been some successes, such as the small decrease in serious acquisitive crime but reported that the overall crime figure had risen by 4.8% over the previous year. She reported that the volume of crime in Northampton was too high and that a stronger Police presence was a necessity. She noted that work was being carried out with victims of domestic violence and abuse but that there needed to be more education about substance and alcohol abuse to reduce levels of crime. She urged consideration of protecting funding in the voluntary sector and stated that there was a real problem of violent crime in Northampton.

Councillor King, as the relevant Cabinet Member stated that the administration echoed some of the concerns and priorities that she had highlighted. She reported that the implementation of the Public Spaces Protection Order would reduce crime and noted the excellent work carried out by the Community Safety Team.

In response to the comments made by Councillor King, Councillor Russell commented that her Majesties Inspectors of Constabularies had stated that the Police were committed to reducing crime and urged the administration to improve work with partner organisations to help reduce crim figures.

## **8. STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY**

Councillor Sargeant submitted a report that sought the adoption of the Statement of Gambling Policy following three yearly review required by the Gambling Act 2005.

Councillor M Hill seconded the report.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Policy attached to the report be approved for publication as the Council's Statement of Gambling Principles Policy under Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 for the three year period commencing 7th<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

## **9. CHANGES TO LABOUR GROUP AND APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES**

Councillor Russell submitted a report that sought to note changes to the Deputy Leader of the Labour Group and to agree to a change in Committee places.

Councillor Marriott seconded the report.

### **RESOLVED:**

That Council noted the announcement that Councillor Birch as the Deputy Leader of the Labour Group.

That Councillor Birch replaced Councillor G Eales on the Appointments and Appeals Committee

## **10. PAY POLICY STATEMENT**

Councillor Hallam submitted a report, required by the Localism Act 2011 that requires every local authority to annually publish a Pay Policy Statement.

Councillor Patel seconded the report.

### **RESOLVED:**

That Council approved the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2016/17 attached to the report at appendix 1.

## **11. EXEMPTION FROM CALL-IN AND URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

Councillor Markham submitted a report for Council to note the use of the special urgency procedure and the power contained in the Constitution to exempt an executive decision from Call –in when the decision being taken is urgent.

Councillor Hallam seconded the report.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report be noted.

## **12. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2016-17**

Councillor Patel submitted a report that sought Councils approval of the meeting cycle for 2016/17.

Councillor Oldham seconded the report.

### **RERSOLVED:**

That the meeting cycle for 2016/17 attached at appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

## **13. NOTICES OF MOTION**

The Mayor informed Council that all groups had agreed to change the wording of Motion i) which had been tabled and distributed to all Members.

- i) Councillor Haque proposed and Councillor Stone seconded:

“There are two major environmental issues affecting this town that we can deal with through action by the Borough council.

We therefore call on the administration to take action to:

Designate refuse sacks that are put out too early as a form of litter (before 7pm the night before). This will allow on the spot fines to be levied as a deterrent.

Work with the County Council to remove the build outs in roads. This will free space

for more parking and take away the sites presently used for fly tipping”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

Mr Phil Leach addressed Council and stated that he supported motion ii). He commented that accepting 50 families was not enough, and that Northampton should be welcoming refugees from war-torn countries, many of whom would go on to successfully contribute to society.

Mr Ron Mendell spoke in favour of motion ii) and stated that the submitted motion was not political but a humanitarian request to deal with the refugee situation. He urged the Council to work with multi-faith and other agencies which could reduce the financial costs to the Council.

Ms Kate Scott also spoke in favour of the motion and spoke of her experience having previously helped and supported Somalian refugees and urged all Members of the Council to support the motion.

Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Birch seconded:

“The Syrian Refugee crisis is a global crisis where we are witnessing the biggest movement and the biggest need for resettlement of people since the Second World War. This Borough must play its part in the Government’s resettlement programmes.

We resolve to work with the county to take 50 families over the next 4years.

Resettled families will receive all the support they need to find accommodation, school places, medical care and access to training and employment.

We propose to take 5 families in year 1, 10 in year 2, and 15 in year 3 and 20 in year 4”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote;

There voted for the Motion: Councillors Ashraf, Beardsworth, Birch, Cali, Chunga, Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, T Eales, Gowen, Haque, Marriot, McCutcheon, Meredith, Russell and Stone.

There voted against the Motion: Councillors Aziz, Bottwood, Caswell, Eldred, Golby, Hallam, Hibbert, J Hill, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Malpas, Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant and Walker.

There abstained the Mayor and Councillor Ansell.

The Motion was lost.

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

The Mayor reported to Council that a matter of urgency had arisen and needed to be considered at the meeting. The Mayor explained that a report had been circulated to them and a hard copy placed in front of them. The Mayor explained she had consented to the matter being placed on the agenda as a matter of urgency as there were meetings taking place that week with other local authorities to determine the position in Northamptonshire going forward.

Councillor Markham submitted a report which sought Council's support to the simplification of local government structures in Northamptonshire including a unitary council for Northampton.

Councillor Hallam seconded the report.

Councillor Beardsworth commented that for 20 years she had supported Unitary authorities and urged Councillors to consider saving money whilst working together without taking on other Council's budget deficits.

Councillor Stone commented that she supported the proposal.

Councillor Larratt stated that he was happy to support the proposal. He commented that one key aspect was allowing the Borough Council to have control over their destiny and there was a need for the authority to focus entirely on the needs of Northampton.

#### **RESOLVED:**

:

- 2.1 That work be carried out with other Councils in Northamptonshire to seek to propose a simplification of local government within Northamptonshire to include the creation of a smaller number of unitary councils carrying out the duties of existing Borough and District and County Councils, including a unitary council for Northampton.
- 2.2 That work be carried out with the other Councils in Northamptonshire, to identify and plan for areas in which services will be best delivered through sharing capacity between or across unitary councils or through a combined arrangement.
- 2.3 That work be undertaken with all Councils in membership of SEMLEP, and those of neighbouring LEP areas, to establish combined authority arrangements on matters requiring wide-area co-ordination and on which devolution proposals can be agreed with Government.
- 2.4 That resources be committed as necessary from the Council's Improvement Reserve to support the development of a robust business case for these proposals and to gain the necessary agreement of Government to the proposals

arising.

- 2.5 That authorisation be given to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to take such steps as are necessary to promote local government simplification in Northamptonshire including a unitary council for Northampton.

The meeting concluded at 8.52pm