

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 19 July 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Nunn (Chair); Councillor Larratt (Deputy Chair); Councillors Hadland, Hallam and Hibbert

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eldred and King.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 21st June 2017 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

3. INTENTION TO HOLD PART OF THE MEETING IN PRIVATE

The Leader explained that Item 14 – Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone: Proposed Purchase of Land at St. Peter's Way – had a private appendix which would be discussed in private.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hallam declared a personal pecuniary interest in respect of Item 8 - Private sector housing enforcement – Civil penalties and rent repayment orders, as a private sector landlord.

Councillor Hadland declared a personal pecuniary interest in respect of Item 8 - Private sector housing enforcement – Civil penalties and rent repayment orders, as a private sector landlord.

6. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were none.

7. COUNCIL GARAGE SITES AND THE ALLOCATION AND MANAGEMENT OF COUNCIL GARAGES

Councillor Stone addressed Cabinet and stated that she supported the recommendations within the report and noted that she welcomed the prospect of reaching a position of increasing the housing stock. She expressed her support for the proposed consultation with Ward Councillors and residents on future developments.

Councillor Hibbert, as the responsible Cabinet Member, stated that the strategy would ensure optimal use of garages at 187 sites across the borough. He explained that once a review of the garages had been undertaken a number of options would be considered and where the need for development was identified, a report would be brought back to Cabinet for approval.

RESOLVED:

That the Council Garage Sites Strategy (Appendix A of the report) and Council Garages Policy (Appendix B of the report) be approved.

8. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ENFORCEMENT – CIVIL PENALTIES AND RENT REPAYMENT ORDERS

Councillor Stone stated that she had concerns that the number of people living in the private rented sector was rising at an alarming rate and commented that whilst it was important to have a policy to deal with rogue landlords more needed to be done to address the diminished powers of Local Authorities with regards to building regulations. She questioned whether there was the capacity to adequately enforce the proposed policy.

In response to the comments from Councillor Stone, Councillor Hibbert explained that the Housing & Planning Act 2016 had introduced new powers for Local Authorities to impose civil penalties to rogue landlords rather than being required to prosecute. The introduction of civil penalties and extended rent repayment orders would allow the Council to challenge irresponsible landlords and improve standards in the private sector and ensure private rented accommodation is safe, well managed and properly maintained.

He expressed his confidence in the enforcement team and that money generated could, if necessary, be used to increase staffing levels. It was noted that the work undertaken by the Council had been recognised by other local authorities and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

The Leader stated that he welcomed the report and commented that private sector had increased significantly and emphasised the importance of the Council being able to regulate it.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Private Sector Housing Civil Penalties Policy (attached to the report as Appendix A) be approved with effect from 1 August 2017;
2. That the amended Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (attached to this report as Appendix B) be approved with effect from 1 August 2017; and
3. That the amended Private Sector Housing Fees & Charges Policy (attached to this report as Appendix C) be approved with effect from 1 August 2017.

9. LOCAL CONNECTION CHANGES TO THE HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

Councillor Stone addressed Cabinet and congratulated officers on the report. She stated that it was a step in the right direction but felt that it could have gone further. She commented that the Council were already providing services to people on the edge of the borough's boundaries, and that they should be within them.

Councillor Hibbert, as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report and elaborated thereon. He acknowledged concerns regarding boundary issues and their wider impact on the unitary discussion. It was noted that new affordable housing within the Northampton Related Development Area (NRDA) initially be offered to people on the NBC housing list, then subsequently to Daventry and South Northamptonshire Councils, potentially with 1770 extra homes for applicants from Northampton.

The Leader offered his thanks to Councillor Stone and congratulated officers on the report, stating that boundaries were continuing to be looked at.

RESOLVED:

1. That (with effect from the date that Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire District Council have formally approved and signed the nominations agreement in favour of Northampton Borough Council) changes to the definition of 'local connection' and the criteria for awarding priority working and community contribution stars in the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme (as set out in Section 3.2 of this report) in order to reflect the fact that the Scheme applies to the whole of the NRDA – rather than just the Northampton Borough – and to enable people who have a local connection with the NRDA to join Northampton's Housing Register and have their applications assessed and prioritised in accordance with the same fair, transparent criteria; be approved and
2. That (with effect from the date that Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire District Council have formally approved and signed the nominations agreement in favour of Northampton Borough Council) the inclusion of the three tier Cascading Nominations Agreement (the 'Cascade') as an Appendix to Northampton's Housing Allocations Scheme (the 'Scheme') in order that this flexible agreement can sit alongside the Scheme and any housing allocation that is made in accordance with the Cascade will not be a breach of the Scheme be approved

10. TRANSFER OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE LAND AT BELLINGE, NORTHAMPTON

Councillor McCutcheon addressed Cabinet and commented that should the borough's boundaries expand, proper measures needed to be put in place to ensure that parish councils would continue to control their own governance arrangements. He also suggested that it be emphasised that facilities in open spaces be accessible to all of the borough's citizens.

Councillor Hadland, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report and elaborated thereon. He commented that by devolving public open spaces to parish councils local residents would have the greater interest and influence in their local communities and facilities. It was also explained that the disposal of public open spaces would be advertised and any objections received would be fully considered.

Councillor Larratt informed the Cabinet that a Parish Council Forum had been established and was working well.

RESOLVED:

1. That the transfer, at nil premium, of the freehold interest in the land having an area of approximately 5,106 square metres shown within the area edged red on the Plan at Appendix 1 (known as Bellinge Public Open Space) for its continued use as public open space for recreational activities be approved "in principle".
2. That the advertisement of the proposed disposal of the public open space in accordance with the requirements of Section 123 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and for any representations to be reported back to Cabinet for consideration be authorised.
3. That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning be authorised to agree the terms of the transfer, including

the imposition of a restrictive user covenant, on a freehold basis.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES RE-PROVISION – PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor Smith voiced her concern of the potential cost and viability of the new contract and questioned the role that parish councils would play in the new contract. She further raised concerns about the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in analysing the Environmental Services contract and questioned why there had been a lack of progress reports and asked for assurances to be given that members of the public be consulted throughout the entire process.

Councillor Hallam as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report and elaborated thereon and noted that he had not been involved in the Overview and Scrutiny process to ensure that he did not jeopardise transparency during the procedure. In response to concerns raised, he commented that he had asked that a progress report be brought to Cabinet on a quarterly basis and noted that the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) process had to come to an end and that they were now ready to advance to the next stage of the tendering process.

The Leader commented that has supported the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and welcomed the work that had been undertaken to examine every aspect of the procurement process.

RESOLVED:

That progress with the environmental services re-provision process be noted.

12. FINANCE MONITORING – PERIOD 2 2017/18

Councillor Stone addressed Cabinet and expressed concerns with regards to progress and timescales in relation to the St James Mill Road link-up. She noted progress that had been made in the Enterprise Zone but questioned the figures relating to the creation and type of jobs mentioned within the report. She further expressed her concerns about the robustness of the Asset Management department and questioned why funding allocated for the museum had been

Councillor Hadland noted that progress with the St James Mill Road project was ongoing which had involved an extensive amount of planning and that financial progress would commence imminently.

In the absence of Councillor Eldred, the Leader submitted a report and commented that issues with Network Rail had been dealt with and a clearer update was anticipated in due course. With regards to the Enterprise Zone, it was noted that information would be made available for Councillors at a later date. The Leader further explained that the Asset Management department was currently in the process of a departmental restructure and that permanent recruitment would be completed within the near future. In reference to the museum, the Leader noted that talks with contractors were underway and that a progress update was expected imminently and reported that due to extenuating circumstances the opening of the museum had to be delayed.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

13. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OUTTURN REPORT

Councillor Birch commented that whilst there were some successes in the report, she expressed concerns on the absence of figures on rent demands. She questioned whether promotion and education of environmental targets would be part of the new contract and asked if fly-tipping and unobtainable targets contributed to missed environmental targets. Councillor Birch suggested that spikes in serious crime could be attributed to reduced police presence on the streets as comparatively it was at a different level compared to the rest of the county. She asked for reassurance that the companies carrying out work on the university site were local and that the Council had the means to ensure successful outcomes for its upcoming projects.

Councillor Larratt, as the relevant Cabinet Member, submitted a report and thanked officers for their work. He gave reassurances that Cabinet Members would address areas that were failing to meet the expected performance targets within their portfolios. He noted that additional resources were being brought in to deal with the issue of temporary accommodation. Councillor Larratt explained that crime figures would be disseminated to the Police and Crime Panel which Councillor King was a member, who were aware of the need for cross party working in order to see a reduction in crime figures.

Councillor Hadland noted that some of the new construction jobs created were temporary but explained that should construction in the town persist, further opportunities could be created.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the performance report and appendix 1 of the report be noted.

14. LAND OFF ST PETER'S WAY: EVALUATION OF BUSINESS CASE

Councillor Stone commented that she was impressed with the work Northampton Partnership Homes had carried out and commented that the proposal would ensure that Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) staff could look forward to a brighter future in new premises.

Councillor Hadland as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report and commented that through exhaustive research and due diligence, a business case had been put together and that the solution would not only provide good accommodation for Northampton Partnership Homes but develop a key site within the Enterprise Zone.

The Leader echoed comments made and commented that the Westbridge site represented a great opportunity for development and job creation.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That it be acknowledged that Northampton Partnership Homes had confirmed, by an approved minute of their Board, that they would relocate to the National Grid Site B and pay a commercial rent;
- 2.2 That the forecast financial analysis that Value for Money had been demonstrated in relation to the General Fund for Option 1 NBC build office accommodation at National Grid Site B be welcomed;
- 2.3 That it be accepted and understood that based on forecast financial analysis for

Option 1 the proposed relocation would represent an additional cost to the Housing Revenue Account;

- 2.4 That the proposed purchase on the basis that Northampton Partnership Homes would produce operational efficiency savings to offset the forecast additional revenue cost to the HRA from its Management Fee be approved;
- 2.5 That the Director of Planning, Regeneration & Enterprise acting in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Cabinet Members for Planning Regeneration & Enterprise and Finance be authorised to complete the purchase of the site from National Grid.

15. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Chair moved that the public and Press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that there was likely to be disclosure to them of such categories of exempt information as defined by Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 as listed against such items of business by reference to the appropriate paragraph of Schedule 12A to such Act.

The Motion was Carried.

16. LAND OFF ST PETER'S WAY: EVALUATION OF BUSINESS CASE - PRIVATE APPENDIX

The meeting concluded at 7:00 pm