

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 11 December 2017 AT SIX THIRTY O’CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Graystone, Joyce, Malpas, Ansell, Ashraf, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Cali, Caswell, Choudary, Culbard, Duffy, T Eales, Eldred, Golby, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, Kilbride, Larratt, B Markham, M Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Kilby-Shaw, Smith, Stone and Walker

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the Council meeting held on the 6th November 2017 were agreed with the following amendment;

Page 4, paragraph 10 of Item 7 of the above meeting to be corrected to Cabinet member presentations: Councillor Hibbert confirmed that the number of HIMOs on the Council’s online register was currently 884.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Chunga, Russell, Hadland, King, Flavell, Lane, Davenport and Oldham.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that ‘The 9 Lessons in Carols’ would be held at the All Saints Church on Sunday 17th December 2017 at 6pm for any Councillors who wished to attend.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

There were none.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 20 questions had been received from Councillors and members of the public and that the answers that had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution.

Questions and answers were given as tabled (included in an updated agenda on the Council’s website) unless where stated, supplementary questions were asked and

answers given as below:

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to question 8, Councillor Nunn, in the absence of Councillor Hadland explained that the designs of the town centre museum was ongoing.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to question 16, Councillor Hallam explained that any financial targets set by government would have to be met by the Council or the contractors.

In response to a supplementary question asked relating to question 17, Councillor Hallam explained that 3 fixed penalty notices were issued to businesses for waste offences and that the new environmental enforcement service would see this hasten in the future.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn, as the Leader of the Council, submitted his report and elaborated thereon. In response to questions asked Councillor Nunn explained that with regards to Greyfriars, the arrangement with the developers had ceased and although disappointing, it would provide the council with the opportunity to drive a new project through which could include the provision of much needed housing. He further responded to questions asked by explaining that during the rough sleepers count, 13 rough sleepers had been identified and noted that homelessness was an extremely complex issue and noted that some of those people who were sleeping rough did not always engage with services offered by the Council.

Councillor Larratt submitted his Cabinet Members report and elaborated thereon and thanked the Councillors who had participated in the IT 'Casework' training. He further reported that the installation of the heritage lighting on St Giles Square, George Row, Mercers Row, Wood Hill and Fish Street had been installed and the project completed.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Larratt explained that analysis of attendance was being undertaken for the Councillor Development Briefings. He noted that he was working hard to improve relations with all market traders.

Councillor Hibbert submitted his Cabinet Member report and thanked those who had participated in the borough-wide count of rough sleepers. He commented that there would be an expansion to the Housing Enforcement Team and further noted that the Government had confirmed that from April 2018, the definition of Mandatory HMOs would be extended to include all properties that are occupied by at least 5 people who are unrelated. In response to questions asked, he confirmed that dogs were not allowed at the Hope centre. He further reported that the Social Lettings Agency would be going 'live' and suggested that questions asked about Right to Buy be directed to Northampton Partnership Homes. Councillor Hibbert acknowledged that during the Liberal Democrat leadership of the Council, 8 Council houses had been built.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon and noted that due to the adverse weather conditions there may be a delay in bin collection services. IN response to questions asked, Councillor Hallam noted that an action plan for Air Quality Management would be produced and further noted that environmental enforcements would be Borough-wide.

Councillor Eldred submitted his Cabinet Member report and in response to questions asked he explained that under the current Government, Northampton had the lowest unemployment rate since the late 1970's and noted that as such, less people were claiming through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. He further reported that the administration were considering ways to put extra money into the Discretionary Housing Payment fund in the future.

Councillor Hill, as the Assistant Cabinet Member of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning, in the absence of Councillor Hadland, elaborated on the report and commented on the success of the 'Small Business Saturday' event that had recently been held. In response to questions asked, the Leader stated that comparable footfall figures would be produced in the future to ensure deeper meaning to the figures provided. The Leader also reported that since the University of Northampton had pulled out of the Vulcan Works project, an application had been made to the EU. The Leader further explained that the area around the proposed St James Mill Link Road was currently being cleared and that process would be evident in the next few months.

Councillor Nunn, as the Leader of the Council, in the absence of Councillor King, elaborated on the relevant report and commented there were measures in place to assist people who would be affected by Universal Credit. He confirmed that he would happy to involve refugees in organisation of Refugee Week.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Beardsworth compared being made homeless to being bereaved as it had often lead to the loss of a family home, high levels of physical and mental distress and the consequences had resulted in some people feeling isolated and vulnerable as they have had to move away from their families and friends in order for them to be housed by the Council in other districts. She stated that 'Shelter' had reported that when people were housed in temporary accommodation, it affected them both physically and mentally and noted that 128,000 children were going to spend Christmas in temporary accommodation and commented that there was no longer a housing crisis but a housing catastrophe. Councillor Beardsworth proposed that more innovative thought needed to be put into resolving the housing shortage and questioned whether the Council had become too risk averse and slow-moving in addressing the homelessness issue.

Councillor Hibbert commented that progress was being made and that a report would be submitted to Cabinet in January 2018 which would explain Northampton Partnerships Homes' approach to dealing with some of the issue posed by those living in temporary accommodation. He reported that they had been pushing ahead with house building and noted that 90 social houses had been built since they had

been in administration. With regards to homelessness, Councillor Hibbert explained that processes were being put into place to ensure that applications and appeals would be sped up.

In response, Councillor Beardsworth commented that when the Liberal Democrats were in administration they had taken on one of the worst run Councils in the Country and had managed to build a small number of grade 5 Council houses. She suggested that the administration consider using Albion House as a means of alleviating housing shortages and further noted that they had proposed the use of modular buildings and pop-up villages; she further commented that the Lib Dems had advocated the first garage scheme in Northampton and asked that the administration had vision and drive in going some way to resolve the housing problems.

9. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Councillor Eldred proposed a report which sought Council's approval that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) remain at a 35% reduction in 2018/19. He explained that efforts were being made to examine the possibility of reducing it further in the future.

Councillor Graystone seconded the report.

Councillor Stone commented that the only good thing was that there was a freezer in the reduction but suggested that more could be done to help those who most needed it.

Councillor Beardsworth questioned how many people had fallen into 'rates arrears' and Councillor B Markham commented that although it was good news that it was being reported that more people were in getting into work but questioned whether the application criteria had changed and thus skewing the figures.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendation contained in the Cabinet report be endorsed no later than the 31st January 2018.

10. TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW, HUNSBURY MEADOWS

Councillor Larratt proposed a report which sought Council's approval of the Terms of Reference following the submission of a petition presented by Hunsbury Meadows Parish Council to undertake a Community Governance Review.

Councillor Nunn seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

That Council approved the Terms of Reference as set out in the report and receive a

further report on the result of the consultation and other relevant matters for final recommendation and approval at a future meeting of Council

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

Councillor Haque, as the proposer of the motion accepted an alteration to the motion submitted by the Conservative Group.

Upon a vote, Council accepted the alteration of the motion.

i) Councillor Haque proposed and Councillors Smith seconded:

This Council notes the new contractor for Environmental Services will be announced in January 2018. A new contractor will take over the running of Environmental Services from June 2018.

This Council believes that Residents, Resident Associations and Parish Councils understand best the environmental challenges in their area such as fly tipping hot spots and overgrown grass verges. They should be able to fully share their views with both the Contractor and Borough Council so that information can be acted on promptly and effectively.

This Council therefore commits to positive and productive collaboration with Residents, Resident Associations and Parish Councils. Further to the new Contractor being chosen, the Cabinet will ask Overview and Scrutiny to determine the most effective process for the sharing of the views of members of the public and community groups with the Contractor and report back before June 2018.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

Councillor McCutcheon, as the proposer of the motion accepted an alteration to the motion submitted by the Conservative Group.

The Liberal Democrat Group withdrew their amendment.

Upon a vote, Council accepted the alteration of the motion.

ii) Councillor McCutcheon proposed and Councillor Stone seconded:

This Council notes that the Greyfriars site remains undeveloped and notes that Cabinet agreed on 6th December 2017 to end the arrangement with the development partner in light of legal advice due to issues relating to the delivery of the housing elements of the scheme.

Council welcomes the opportunity that the ending of the agreement provides, allowing further consideration to be given to the infrastructure requirements and leisure element of the development.

Council also welcomes the work that has been going on to enable it to deliver large scale housing development through Northampton Partnership Homes and the Council's own specialist delivery vehicle, about which a report will be presented to Cabinet in January 2018. In light of this, Council also recognises and welcomes the work that is now underway to deliver a mix of housing, including family and social housing, at an early stage on the Greyfriars site, along with a mix of other uses, such as retail, hotel, leisure, and coach facilities.

This Council recognises that to develop the site, there is a need to work with the County Council to reconfigure the Highway infrastructure within the area to bring the site into the town centre and improve north south permeability through the site.

This Council resolves to progress the delivery of a mix of housing alongside retail, hotel, leisure, and coach facilities on the Greyfriars site, working with the County Council to improve highway infrastructure around and through the site."

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

12. 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 7.38pm