

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 22 January 2018 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Ansell, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Caswell, Choudary, Chunga, Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, T Eales, Flavell, Golby, Graystone, Hadland, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, Joyce, Kilbride, King, Larratt, B Markham, M Markham, Marriott, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Kilby-Shaw, Smith, Stone and Walker

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the Council meeting held on the 11th December 2017 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Eldred, Sargeant, Lane, Malpas, Cali, Ashraf and McCutcheon.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that he and the Mayoress attended several events over the Christmas period including visits to the town's care homes. On Christmas Eve the Mayor visited the Nightshelter and attended midnight mass at All Saints Church. On Christmas Day the Mayor and Mayoress visited Northampton General Hospital's Accident & Emergency and Children's wards, followed by the Hope Centre where 150 hand-wrapped gifts were delivered.

The Mayor reminded Councillors that Holocaust Memorial day would fall on Wednesday 24th January and urged them to attend. He commented that tickets for Mayor-Fest were still for sale for the upcoming weekend. The Mayor reported that during his holiday to the USA next month, he would be visiting Northampton, Massachusetts, following an invitation from the town's Mayor.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Lisa Bradshaw addressed Council and commented on the waste generated from shops and fast-food establishments on the Bouverie estate. She further commented on parking and fly-tipping issues in reference to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HIMOs), stating that a questionnaire had recently been delivered to residents

following a petition that had been submitted to the Council 2 years previously.

Dagmar King addressed Council and thanked officers and Councillors, particularly Councillor Nunn, for their work in improving the facilities at Victoria Street Coach Station. She stated that in her opinion the station was now in need of a new toilet block and refreshment van.

Tony Mallard addressed Council and gave his opinion that cleanliness levels in the town were low, there were large empty spaces in the town centre and that there was nothing to attract visitors.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 6 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 were given as tabled (including in an updated agenda on the Council's website) unless where stated, supplementary questions were asked as detailed below.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 1, Councillor King stated that a business plan was still being worked on and that she would be supplying more information in her Cabinet Member report.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 2, Councillor Nunn advised that the Council were continuing to pursue legal action to recover money prudently and cost-effectively.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn submitted his report as Leader of the Council and reminded Members that the Deloitte Members' briefing would take place on 23rd January and urged them to attend. He reported that the review of internal management boards had been completed and rationalised arrangements would begin in February. The Leader noted that a further update regarding the Cambridge Milton Keynes Oxford Corridor would be brought before Council in due course. In other business, The Leader further stated that he opened and attended an event at the Park Inn hotel aimed at supporting small to medium sized businesses. He and officers had also met with the Northamptonshire's Best Surprise campaign group on 9th January to successfully increase the number of visitors to the county.

In response to questions asked, the Leader explained that he would continue to brief Members with updates regarding the Cambridge Milton Keynes Oxford Corridor. He advised that the Council would ensure that it signposted available help for small and medium sized businesses. In response to a further question, the Leader commented that whilst he was aware of current problems with rail services, he did not personally think that nationalisation was the right answer to solve them. It was explained that the budget for the existing environmental services contract was set and that the aim for the remainder of the contract was to minimize the cost and maximize the impact of

works carried out. Councillor Nunn confirmed that during his meeting with directors from St Andrews Hospital, a key area looked at was corporate social responsibility events which were to be fed into HR processes.

Councillor Larratt submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. In response to questions asked, Councillor Larratt confirmed that webcasting was imminent. He explained that he received all requests for Councillor training and would be happy to look into any outstanding requests.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report and reported that on 17th January Cabinet chose Veolia as the recommended preferred bidder for the new environmental services contract. He advised that there would be a Q&A session on 5th February which would be the proper platform to discuss the new contract. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hallam advised that a brand new fleet of vehicles would be used for the new contract. He further explained that a robust procedure had been followed and that it showed privatisation to be preferable over bringing environmental services in-house, noting that whilst the new contract would incur a higher cost, the quality of the service received would be greater. It was anticipated that the new contractors would carry out a “deep clean” of all parts of the borough during their first few months. In response to questions regarding the new environmental enforcement contract, Councillor Hallam confirmed that over 1000 fixed penalty notices were issued during its trial period.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member report and noted “brilliant performance” regarding progress made towards the St James Mill Link Road. He further stated the importance of highlighting other areas of good progress including Delapre Abbey and the Queen Eleanor Cross. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hadland advised that no date had been set for the opening of Delapre Abbey, however, he anticipated that it would be open at some point during 2018.

Councillor Hibbert submitted his Cabinet Member report and reported that on 18th January Cabinet approved a Business Case to use monies from civil penalties to fund the expansion of the Housing Enforcement Team, noting that 7 posts were being advertised. He reported that since its inception, the Nightshelter had accommodated more than 150 men with 88 moved on to more settled accommodation. Councillor Hibbert thanked the 94 volunteers for donating more than 7,000 hours of their time to support the work of the Nightshelter. It was noted that whilst homelessness was still a challenge within the borough, steps to alleviate the issue were being taken. It was further noted that Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) were making progress in building new homes; those on Lower Bath Street and Althorpe Street were due for completion in February. In response to questions asked, Councillor Hibbert explained that there were no plans to close the Nightshelter, although a further planning application may be required.

Councillor King submitted her Cabinet Member report and noted a total spend of £287,238.13 on community projects since April 2015. She further noted work done by various Forums and events that had taken place around the Christmas period.

At this juncture the Mayor advised that the allocated time for Cabinet Member

presentations had been reached.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Stone stated that there were many outstanding issues that had not been sufficiently dealt with by the administration and urged them to address the cases she believed to be a priority. She reported that there were unrelenting caseloads, increased fly-tipping, a rise in domestic violence along with greater instances of human trafficking in the Town. She reported that the retail industry was currently in decline and that this was evidenced by the number of empty shops in the Town Centre. She commented that the increased number of people, including families, using food banks was upsetting as were recent reports about the number of young people affected by and living in child poverty. Councillor Stone reported that she supported some of the work that had been completed by the administration which included the Errol Flynn second cinema screen, the Night shelter, events held in the Guildhall and the work carried out with St Crispin's Community Centre along with the ongoing work of Northampton Partnership Homes and SEMPLEP. She encouraged the administration to prioritise vacancies, specifically in the regeneration department and requested that the Eastern District be prioritised for regeneration and insisted that there was a need for an anti-poverty strategy to be adopted by the Council.

The Leader responded by noting the many positive outcomes of numerous projects, which included the clean-up of the Town Centre, which he commented would be further improved once the new contract was fully in place. He noted that the old contract had been quite restrictive but noted that even with the restrictions, they Council had won gold in the 'Bloom' competition. The Leader further reported that issues with regeneration were being dealt with more robustly than ever before and explained that there were many areas of the Town that were being regenerated and cleaned up in the background that she may not be aware of.

Councillor Stone responded by noting that there were increased numbers of residents who were becoming more disadvantaged and poorer who had made no choice but were victims of their circumstances and urged the Council to consider the needs of those most disadvantaged. She noted the importance of the Council staff and explained that people and places were important and there should be a collective drive to improve and drive the Town forward.

9. COUNCIL TAX BASE

Councillor Nunn proposed a report which sought Council's approval of the tax base 2018/19 and associated parish tax bases contained within the report.

Councillor Larratt seconded the report.

Councillor Stone stated that the Labour Group would be supporting the recommendations but wanted consideration given to those who needed support due to other financial increases.

RESOLVED:

As per the requirements under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a recorded vote was held.

There voted for the recommendations:

Councillors Ansell, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Caswell, Choudary, , Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, T Eales, Flavell, Golby, Graystone, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, Joyce, Kilbride, Kilby-Shaw, King, Larratt, B Markham, M Markham,, Marriott, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Smith, Stone and Walker.

There abstained the Mayor.

10. INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR UPDATE OF THE CONSTITUTION

Councillor Larratt proposed a report which sought members' approval to update parts of the Constitution as appended to the report. He explained that the changes were not substantial and further reports making more detailed updates would be submitted to Council once approved by the Constitution Working Party.

Councillor Oldham seconded the recommendations.

Members discussed the report.

RESOLVED:

That the updated parts of the Constitution appended to the report be agreed.

That further substantial changes to the Constitution be considered by the Constitution Working party prior to it being approved by full Council;

11. APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

Councillor Nunn proposed a report which sought Council's approval to appoint a Chief Finance Officer until the 1st June 2018 (or later) if otherwise agreed until a permanent appointment is made.

Councillor Larratt seconded the recommendations.

Council thanked the current Chief Finance Officer for his work and wished him well in his new role.

RESOLVED:

1. That Stuart McGregor be appointed as Chief Finance Officer (Section 151) with effect from 18th February (being the last day of employment of the current Chief Finance Officer), until 1st June 2018 or later if otherwise agreed as being needed until a permanent appointment is made.
2. That the role of Chief Finance Officer (Section 151) reverts back to the

Council's employment on a full-time basis post 1st June 2018, or as soon after as reasonably practicable, and that recruitment to that permanent position be undertaken.

12. UPDATE ON MOTIONS CARRIED AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Councillor Nunn elaborated on a report that updated Members of the Council on the status of motions following approval at full Council.

Councillor Larratt seconded the report.

Councillor Beardsworth asked that updates on petitions submitted by members of the public also be reported back to Council to ensure that Councillors and members of the public be made aware of the outcome of those petitions.

Councillor Marriott asked that a quarterly report be submitted to Council and Councillor Stone gave her thanks to the administration.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

13. NOTICES OF MOTION

In accordance with the Constitution, Councillor Ashraf given Councillor Russell authorisation to propose the motion and Councillor Smith to second it.

Councillor Russell as the proposer of the motion accepted an amendment to the motion submitted by the Conservative Group.

Upon a vote, Council accepted the alteration

- i) Councillor Russell proposed and Councillor Smith seconded:

“This council recognises the important role played by our Private Sector Housing Service which provides the following,

- Licences houses in multiple occupation (HiMOs)
- Enforces legislation tackling rogue landlords
- Investigates suspected incidences of abuse whether from Landlords or tenants

This Council notes that our town's private rented sector is sometimes used to support criminal activity, including money laundering, sexual exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery. Additionally, the profits that can be made from HiMOs, have encouraged criminal, rogue and irresponsible landlords to break the law. In order to tackle these issues, our Private Sector Housing Service needs more resources.

This council welcomes the fact that on 17th January 2018, the Administration took to Cabinet, and approved, a report that enables this Council to impose civil penalties of

up to £30,000 per offence on law-breaking landlords. A business case for utilising the penalty income collected to expand the Housing Enforcement team, initially by eight additional officers, and subject to due diligence and an updated business case, a further five officers, thirteen officers in total, was also approved and is welcomed by this Council.

This Council recognises the demand for, and commits to, a robust, coordinated, intelligence-led response to breaches of legislation and complaints regarding it, and therefore calls on the Police and other agencies to do everything in their power to help support NBC”.

Council debated the motion:

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

14. 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 8.07pm