

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 3 April 2019

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

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2019 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

3. INTENTION TO HOLD PART OF THE MEETING IN PRIVATE IF NECESSARY

The Leader explained that Item 13 (Sixfields – Update of the Judgement and Enforcement Issues) had been exempted under schedule 12A, Part 1, (3) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr Lakin addressed Cabinet on Item 9 *Local Plan* and expressed concern that a 2 acre site of green space, originally owned by Nene College and now part of Northampton University was coloured brown on the plan and designated residential land. If sold to a developer, there would be very little protection for the land. The site had ponds, trees, hedgerows, 32 species of bird and was a green oasis. Mr Lakin would like this area to be protected and designated green space.

Mr Adams addressed Cabinet on Item 11 *Reducing the Use and Cost of Temporary Accommodation* and expressed concern that NBC were paying private landlords for accommodation, whilst a number of properties used for temporary accommodation remained empty. He had no problem with extending the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing provided that the money was spent on social housing in the town and not returned to the Government.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

6. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no issues arising from Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

7. UPTON COUNTRY PARK - APPOINTMENT OF MAIN CONTRACTOR

Councillor Hadland as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report seeking approval to appoint the main construction contractor for the Upton Country Park project. He reported

that the site covered 400 acres, which would be an asset to the town for generations to come. Three credible tenders had been received and would be analysed. The appropriate delegations would ensure that the work could go ahead as soon as possible within the window of opportunity over the summer months.

Councillor Hallam reiterated that this was an excellent project. The maintenance allowance had been allocated and the funding had been received from S106 payments.

Councillor Stone welcomed the project but considered that better forecasting could have obviated the need for delegated powers. The Chief Executive pointed out that democratic processes were being followed, but delivery was being speeded up by delegation. Councillor Larratt noted the potential future works under 3.1.10 including a car park, which had been requested by the parish council.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet delegated authority to the Head of Economy, Assets and Culture, in consultation with the Borough Secretary, the Head of Customers and Communities and the Cabinet Members for Regeneration and Environment to finalise the contract terms and to appoint the main construction contractor for the Upton Country Park project.

2.2 Cabinet delegated authority to the Head of Economy, Assets and Culture, in consultation with the Borough Secretary, the Head of Customers and Communities, and the Cabinet Members for Regeneration and Environment to undertake any further land acquisitions, transfers of land, easements etc.

8. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Councillor Hill as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report outlining the programme and resources for the local plan. This needed to be approved before consideration of the Local Plan and would come into effect immediately.

Councillor Brian Markham expressed concern that Section 4.6 referred to electric car charging points only in the town centre. He considered that these were also required elsewhere, such as industrial and warehouse sites. Councillor Hallam stated that funding was available to provide rapid charging points, but was proving challenging due to no control over the highway. A list of proposed sites would be sent to Councillor Markham by email. Councillor Larratt noted that charging facilities for those living on terraced streets needed to be considered.

Councillor Markham also wondered why there was no mention of a transport plan, since although this was currently the responsibility of NCC, it would be required for the proposed unitary council. The Leader pointed out that this was currently being discussed with NCC.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet approved the new Northampton Borough Local Development Scheme and brought it into immediate effect.

9. LOCAL PLAN

Councillor Hill as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report presenting the proposed Local Plan, setting out the planning policy framework for the Borough until 2029. He pointed out that there would be a consultation on the Local Plan from 1 May 2019 until 14 June

2019.

Housing numbers had been a key driver and sites had been found to deliver and meet the objectives, as explained in Appendix C (pages 940-943). There had been some changes as follows:

Site 1007 – reduction from 44 to 22

Site 1009 – change in timeframe (6-10 years not 0-5 years) resulting in a reduction from 271 to 100

Site 1137 – reduction from 92 to 74.

This had resulted in a reduction of 211 dwellings, but the outcome of the plan would not be affected. These changes would be made to the Local Plan before consultation.

Councillor Hill expressed thanks to the team for producing the Local Plan.

Councillor Brian Markham noted that housing numbers had not been delivered in the previous Local Plan. There had been a fall back on SUEs, with large developers having no incentive to develop the land. Affordable housing had also been affected. Councillor Hill acknowledged that SUEs had under-delivered, and the Housing Technical Paper had been written to address this issue.

The Head of Planning stated that there were regular discussions with developers and landowners – but these were circumstances beyond NBC's control.

Councillor Beardsworth noted the shortage of housing stock and wondered whether there were options for self-build. The Head of Planning stated that a register of plots was available. In response to Councillor Beardsworth's question, he also advised that a tracked changes version of the Local Plan would be available electronically at the next stage in the adoption process.

Councillor Birch referred to the wildlife area behind St George's Avenue and asked that this area be protected.

Councillor Stone referred to air quality on page 56 and noted that there was no strategy to stop cars idling. She considered that cars should be restricted around school entrances. Councillor Hallam stated that air quality had been monitored close to three schools where problems might be expected, but raw data showed no issues. Schools were only occupied part-time – whereas living in an area of air pollution could cause greater problems. Councillor Stone believed that air quality should be monitored inside school buildings rather than outside.

Councillor Stone reported concerns on behalf of Councillor Roberts regarding development around Ransome Road. Parking had been a problem and more and better play areas were needed. Adoption of roads in new developments was also an issue.

Councillor Stone also pointed out that climate change was an issue for many young people and the effects needed to be mitigated by protection of public spaces.

Councillor Russell expressed concern about Bradlaugh Fields in her ward, which was seeking a green flag award but needed support. She wanted to know the terms and conditions of the covenant on the land and whether a SSSI could be applied for. Councillor King agreed to provide the information required.

Councillor Hill reiterated that written submissions would be welcomed as part of the

consultation.

RESOLVED:

- 2.2 Cabinet approved the Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan Part 2, Policies Map and Sustainability Appraisal for publication under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended.
- 2.2 The Head of Planning was given delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning to make minor non-material spelling, formatting, mapping and other amendments to the consultation documents where they do not alter the intent of the plan.

10. CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Councillor Hill as the relevant Cabinet Member presented a report seeking the review and redrafting of the Barrack Road Conservation Area Article 4 Direction.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 Cabinet approved the adoption of the Barrack Road Conservation Area Re-appraisal and Management Plan (Appendix B),
- 2.2 Cabinet approved the re-drafting of the existing Barrack Road Conservation Area Article 4 Direction to include all properties within the Conservation Area.

11. REDUCING THE USE AND COST OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Councillor Hibbert as the relevant Cabinet Member submitted a report seeking approval of a Temporary Accommodation Action Plan and extension of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing to acquire affordable housing. Realistic short term targets had been set for immediate impact, with more council housing also planned in the longer term.

It was acknowledged that voids had been a problem, but work was ongoing with NPH to resolve this. A further report would be made to Cabinet in October 2019 detailing progress in implementing the Action Plan.

The Head of Housing and Wellbeing answered the questions raised earlier by Mr Adams as follows:

- NBC were making best use of the temporary accommodation – using it either the same day or the day after it had become available;
- Right to buy receipts needed to be used within the timescale set by the Government. There had been two quarters in the past in which this had not happened due to problems with the new building or buying of properties. Since NBC were now ahead of the programme, this was unlikely to occur again.

The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that if agreed by Cabinet, a paper would be submitted to Full Council to extend HRA borrowing by up to £25m. The funds would not actually be borrowed unless required, and permission would be sought for this.

Councillor Beardsworth expressed concern regarding the increase in numbers of homeless people. She suggested stopping the right to buy to give breathing space. Councillor Hibbert pointed out that the accommodation was still being used, even if it was sold. The Head of Housing and Wellbeing advised that council homes were only used for temporary

accommodation where needed.

Councillor Smith stated that the report was positive and it promoted safe, appropriate temporary accommodation within Northampton rather than elsewhere. She considered that problems would continue until developers were forced to use their full capacity of affordable housing. She asked whether there was any recourse to reclaim costs from Housing Benefit. Councillor Smith pointed out under Action 3 under 3.3.6 that there were circumstances where it was not safe for applicants to return to their families and safeguarding issues needed to be recognised.

Councillor Hibbert agreed that NBC needed to be strong on ensuring 35% of development was affordable housing and confirmed that Housing Benefit was reclaimed. He also confirmed that it was not the intention to return people to their families if this was not safe.

RESOLVED:

2.1

(a) Cabinet approved the Temporary Accommodation Action Plan (attached to this report as Appendix 1);

(b) Cabinet approved the submission to Full Council of a request for supplementary funding in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to extend HRA borrowing by up to £25m in order to enable the acquisition of affordable housing under s106 / development agreements via developers;

(c) Cabinet agreed to receive a further report in October 2019, providing details of the progress that the Council and Northampton Partnership Homes have made in implementing the Action Plan and what impact this has had on the use and cost of temporary accommodation; and

(d) Cabinet noted that, although the implementation of the Action Plan should result in costs being controlled, reduced and avoided, an unforeseen increase in demand may create a further cost pressure.

12. 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.

13. SIXFIELDS - UPDATE OF THE JUDGEMENT AND ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

The decision was made in private session.

The meeting concluded at 19.48