

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 2 November 2020 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Malpas, Ansell, Ashraf, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Cali, Choudary, Davenport, Duffy, G Eales, T Eales, Eldred, Flavell, Golby, Graystone, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, Joyce, Kilbride, Lane, Larratt, B Markham, M Markham, Marriott, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Sargeant, Kilby-Shaw, Smith, Stone, Walker and Roberts

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th September 2020 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Meredith, Hadland, McCutcheon, Chunga and King.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The mayor thanked Members for their contributions to his chosen charity from their covid empowerment funds which amounted to almost £6,000. He announced that he had visited Brampton Primary School and attended a virtual fundraiser for Go Gold for Alfie which raised £,1000. The Mayor attended a conference held by Northampton Town of Sanctuary and congratulated the organisation for their efforts in helping vulnerable people during such a difficult time. The Mayor also judged posters made by school children supporting work by the Community Engagement team to raise awareness about hate crime in schools.

Upcoming events included:

- Diwali, 7th November starting at 5:30pm, details of the event could be found through the Mayor's Office and Communications team.
- Remembrance Sunday, 8th November: the event would be virtual, and details could be found through the Mayor's Office.

The Mayor urged Members to note any emails regarding new or updated covid regulations, and asked Council to contact the Civic and Mayoral Officer to make

contributions to upcoming online events.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

The Mayor announced that six members of the public had registered to speak.

Robin Burgess, Anne Wankiiri and Rachel McGrath requested to speak before Motion i was debated, and Alice Whitehead, Joe Cole and Russel Horsey requested to speak before Motion ii was debated.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that ten questions had been received by Councillors and that the answers had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution. Questions and answers were given as tabled unless where stated, supplementary questions were asked as detailed below.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 1, Councillor Hallam explained that the Kingdom Enforcement contract was not currently operational due to Covid-19 restrictions, greatly reducing the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 9, Councillor Larratt advised that the independent highways inspector was being funded by the Local Highway Authority.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 10, Councillor Hibbert advised that Covid-19 and unitary elections had caused delays, however updates would be brought to future meetings.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn presented his report as Leader of the Council and highlighted the salient points. He noted the upcoming Remembrance Sunday and stressed the importance of the public staying at home and watching the virtual event instead. In response to questions, Councillor Nunn stated that the burden on the Environmental Services team was significant, but staff were coping under the circumstances and capacity levels were under constant review. Regarding the E-Scooter scheme, Councillor Nunn advised that progress had been made, they now had registration numbers so that the public could report them if they were found in unsuitable locations. Councillor Nunn stated that a more positive dialogue had been opened with NCC; the Council had made numerous responses, both formal and informal to consultations, including a “delivery robot” initiative.

Councillor Larratt presented his report at Deputy Leader and highlighted the salient points. In response to questions, Councillor Larrat advised that he would raise capacity issues regarding Democratic Services with the Monitoring Officer at their next meeting. The Community Governance Review Cross-Party Working Group would be considering asset transfers in due course. He advised that members of the public were entitled to postal votes and any applications for a postal vote would be duly processed; an all-postal vote election would require a change in legislation and there was no desire in central government for this to be done presently. Councillor Larratt assured Members that a member briefing on rail issues was being worked on.

He also confirmed that Countywide Traveller Unit would continue on a county-wide basis following post-unitary.

Councillor Hallam presented his report as Cabinet Member for Environment and highlighted the salient points. He noted that his report had been written before the latest lockdown announcement and thanked officers in Environmental Health, Neighbourhood Wardens and Park Rangers for their continued hard work. In response to questions, Councillor Hallam advised that parks were maintained and updated on a rolling basis. Stats on missed bin collections and fly tipping were reported to Cabinet in regular monitoring reports. He confirmed that whilst there had been a number of isolated incidents, business compliance regarding Covid guidelines was generally very high. He advised that the Neighbourhood Wardens were effectively doing 2 jobs currently, however their hard work several months prior contributed to keeping Northampton from entering a local lockdown. Regarding fly tipping, Councillor Hallam stated that the evidence suggested a direct link between criminal gangs and organised fly tipping which was a difficult issue to resolve. He echoed comments made by Councillor Russell congratulating the local Park Ranger and community at Bradlaugh Fields on its Green Flag award.

Councillor Hibbert presented his report as Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing and highlighted the salient points.

At this juncture of the meeting, the Mayor announced that the time limited for Cabinet Member reports had been reached and no further Cabinet Members would elaborate on their reports.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Beardsworth made a statement on “Rose of the Shires” and stated that people going above and beyond during the pandemic represented the rose; she highlighted the efforts of a neighbour in providing meals for school children who had given her the nickname “Mrs Hope”. She lamented the fact that MPs had subsidised meals yet voted not to provide free school meals during school holidays. Councillor Beardsworth hoped that Members would contact the MPs for Northampton North and South and ask why they voted against the motion to provide free school meals.

Councillor Nunn stated that nobody wanted to see children to go hungry and advised that by Thursday 29th October, 11,500 families had received vouchers and that by the end of the half-term, almost every eligible family had access, and noted that they could continue to claim for vouchers after the half term ended. This was an issue that had been exacerbated by Covid-19, but there was a determination to make things better for everyone.

Councillor Beardsworth stated that the Government had not listened to the people; 2,000 paediatric consultants had written to the Prime Minister stressing the importance of free school meals throughout the holidays and the advice had not been heeded.

9. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE AND NEXT STEPS

Councillor Larratt presented a report on Community Governance and Next Steps and

noted the recommendations of the Cross-Party Working Group, contained in Item 2 of the report.

Councillor Nunn seconded the report.

Councillor Stone moved that the item be deferred and the report be sent back to the Cross-Party Working Group for further development; she stated that there had been no further work had been undertaken since the report was taken to the Cross-Party Working Group on 16th September and expressed her disappointment that the report had not been seen by a scrutiny group or Members informed by way of a briefing.

Councillor Roberts echoed comments made by Councillor Stone and commented that there were no references to funding or budgets within the report

Councillor Birch seconded the motion made by Councillor Stone and commented that work should not progress until further details such as costings were detailed in the report.

Councillor B Markham commented that further details regarding assets, budgets, costing, etc., should be considered by the new town and parish councils which would involve a broader spectrum of elected members and allow members of the public to observe any decisions made.

Councillor Beardsworth expressed her disappointment that no work had been made on the report since it was considered by the Cross-Party Working Group on 16th September. She questioned funding figures in the report and stated that further work was needed.

Councillor Malpas voiced concern around the lack of costings within the report and suggested that some of the town's assets would need to be sold in order for the Guildhall to be properly maintained.

Councillor Larratt commented that any delays could cause the Council to risk losing control of implementing the new town and parish councils; the new shadow town and parish councils were the best option to inform the Cross-Party Working Group which would then bring forward satisfactory recommendations.

A vote was taken on the amendment by Councillor Stone to refer the report back to the Cross-Party Work Group for further work.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

The recommendations within the report were agreed.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Chief Executive convenes a first shadow meeting of the Northampton Town Council to consider the matters as set out in the draft agenda on page 17 of the Cross-Party Working Group report of the 16th September 2020 (and

marked Appendix A in that report).

2. That the Northampton Town Council be recommended at its first shadow meeting to agree the terms and conditions along with arrangements for the recruitment of a Town Clerk for the Town Council who when appointed will commence duties as soon as is practicable after the 1st April 2021.
3. That the Cross-Party Working Group be delegated power to carry out the interview and appointment of a Town Clerk and have further delegated authority to agree all terms and conditions for such an appointment.
4. That the services proposed to be transferred to the Town Council as set out in the enclosed report from Richard Walden to the Cross-Party Working Group on page 11, section 3.6 (i) be approved in principle subject to further consideration by the Cross-Party Working Group and final recommendations to be brought back to a future meeting of Full Council.

NB. Please note that the Highway verge issue will remain the responsibility of the new unitary authority unless transferred at some future date.

5. That the Cross-Party Working Group be given delegated authority to act as a Parish Council Renumeration Panel with any recommendations submitted for approval to Full Council and then for consideration by the Shadow Town Council.
6. That Full Council approves the transfer of the existing Borough Coat of Arms to the Northampton Town Council with any necessary approvals from the College of Arms.
7. That the governance arrangements for the Northampton Town Council as set out in section 3.12 on page 14 of the Cross-Party Working Group report be approved and recommended to the Shadow Town Council.
8. That agenda item 4 (pages 31 to 68) of the Cross-Party Working Group report dealing with the transfer to the Northampton Town Council of the Borough Council's muniments etc. be noted with any final decision to be made by Full Council once a full list of such items has been agreed by the Cross-Party Working Group.
9. That the transfer of the following properties as referred to in the Cross-Party Working Group report (agenda item 5 on pages 69 to 72).
 - a) The Guild Hall, Northampton to the Northampton Town Council.
 - b) The Far Cotton Recreation Centre to the Far Cotton and Delapre Community Council.
 - c) The appropriate community centre or centres to be identified in the Kingsthorpe area for transfer to Kingsthorpe Parish Council.

Be approved in principle subject to further consideration by the Cross-Party Working Group as the best way forward both in the short and long term for

each of the above proposals with any final decision being made by Full Council before the 31st March 2021.

10. That the report in Agenda item 6 (pages 73 to 76) of the Cross-Party Working Group dealing with the issue of Town /Parish Council precepts be noted with further reports to Full Council after further consideration by the Cross-Party Working Group.
11. That similarly the report in Agenda item 6 (page 77) of the Cross-Party Working Group dealing with the cost to date of the Community Governance Review be noted.
12. That the decision of the Cross-Party Working Group at its meeting on the 16th January 2020 to give further consideration at a future meeting to the proposal to grant the Freedom of the Borough to the National Health Service etc be noted.

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

Robin Burgess addressed Council in respect of motion i) and commented that on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council he was coordinating the administration of the government award towards addressing holiday hunger. He advised that there were a high number of people seeking assistance who had previously not been in receipt of benefits or required the service of food banks, as a consequence of the pandemic.

Anne Wankiiri, of United African Association addressed Council in respect of motion i) and advised that some BAME children were not eligible for food vouchers due to the immigration status of their parents; her organisation provided many of these families with food parcels but stated that they needed assistance from the Council and other organisations.

Rachel McGrath, representing Northamptonshire Food Poverty Network, addressed Council in respect of motion i) and stated that the Food Poverty Scrutiny Panel found there was an expectation that voluntary organisations would “fill the gap” where councils could not meet the needs of hungry families, however voluntary organisations were facing an unsure future. She stated that the motion would provide assurance to families locked in a struggle to make ends meet, noting that the situation would get worse as unemployment rose. Ms McGrath further noted that the End Child Poverty Coalition found 11,721 kids living in poverty in Northampton.

- I) Councillor accepted an amendment to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Birch.

“1 in 10 children in Northamptonshire receive free school meals. For many of these children this is the only hot and substantial meal they receive.

Free School meals are not customarily available during school holidays. Working parents incur additional childcare costs around the holidays. Families already struggling with low budgets find it difficult to feed their children. Children most at risk

of hunger during the holidays may also suffer from social isolation, loneliness, and inactivity. These factors combined can lead to significant weight loss or gain, and negative impacts on physical and mental well-being.

This is a problem highlighted further with the current pandemic and one that is likely to increase and definitely not go away. Covid-19 is a natural phenomenon, poverty is not, and the containment of the virus will not end this plight.

During recent months, this council has supported a number of charities and groups to deliver food support to the most vulnerable, many of them supporting families with young children in particular, through grants of around £85,000, and is involved with the management of the £330,000 DEFRA grant which is directly supporting food provision and food banks, which is administered by the Hope Centre.

This council therefore resolved to:

- Work with Northampton MPs and the county council to support the extension of the voucher scheme to all school holiday periods and to look to embed the scheme all year round.
- Urge National Government to act to ensure this gap is filled.
- To support calls to protect pupils forced to self-isolate, who will not receive their free school meal and may go hungry.

This council will also:

- Work with Partners to establish Holiday Clubs where children can access social activities as well as food, providing financial relief for parents on very low incomes, so that no child goes hungry over any school holiday.
- To scope and investigate the possibility of harnessing additional funding targeted to identified groups who already do or wish to offer these services.
- Continue to direct a portion of the community fund budget into community organisations, who already do, or wish to, offer these services.
- In continuing to work with the County Council, commit to taking the points in this motion forward into the West Northants authority.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the altered motion was carried.

Alice Whitehead, founder of Save Our Street Trees, addressed Council in respect of motion ii) advised that 10 trees were planted in Far Cotton in 2019 and expressed a wish that this would become a blueprint across the county, but noted that a proactive tree policy was needed that properly maintained, protected and replaced urban trees. She highlighted the benefits of urban trees and stated that trees should be at the heart of the Council's target to reach carbon neutrality by 2030.

Joe Cole, representing Woodland Trust, addressed Council in respect of motion ii)

and echoed comments made by Alice Whitehead and explained that people generally went on to lead more sustainable lives after being involved in environmental causes and reiterated the importance of policies that created social equality regarding trees.

Russell Horsey addressed Council in respect of motion ii) and commented that the importance of urban trees had been highlighted during the pandemic since most people were spending more time locally and at home and stated that this was a good time for the Council to review its tree policy with a view of influencing the new unitary authority to plant more trees across the county. He stated that tree planting was essential in order for the country to meet climate targets and noted that bids awarded by the government were to those councils with strong tree policies and positive community engagement.

II) Councillor Roberts proposed and Councillor Joyce seconded:

"Northampton Borough Council's Tree Policy was written in 2016, with no serious amendments or considerations since that time. The policy is out of date and falls short of those used by other councils.

There are no pictures to show what a good tree in Northampton looks like, and it fails to join up planning policy.

There is a negative bias that over-emphasises the challenges and conflicts without enough content about the benefits or solutions that would lead to improvement of Northampton's urban forest and community engagement around them.

There are many more positive benefits that trees bring to urban environments. For example, they can increase house prices, improve health and wellbeing. They can also encourage more sustainable lifestyle choices. There is very little on the biodiversity benefit.

We call on this Council to:

1. Note the significant role trees play in enhancing accessible green spaces, improving air quality, restoring and protecting soil health, creating wildlife habitat, mitigating flood risk and benefiting public health;
2. Recognise the contribution trees make to the environment in our towns including shading and cooling, pollution and noise mitigation, as well speeding up floodwater drainage and improving the quality of our street scene.
3. Call for a review of current policies on, and attitude towards, the planting of trees appropriate to our urban areas with a view to introducing a more proactive policy, which looks to increase the number and regularity of trees planted in our town and residential streets and parks and other open spaces;
4. Call for a new strategy to include providing opportunities to educate children in understanding the benefits of trees and to get involved in tree planting;
5. Recommends closer partnership working with the, and landowners seeking sites for new tree planting
6. Recommends a Tree Summit bringing together the Local Councils, Park

Rangers, Landowners and partners responsible for land maintenance, the Woodland Trust and members of the public to work out how to plant more trees in our town, residential streets and in our parks and other open spaces.

7. Culminate this action into a working Tree Policy that includes but is not exhaustive of the following;

- To allow for 'replacement in situ' of valuable urban trees.
- For a regular maintenance plan to be outlined.
- There should be a mapping exercise. This is not just for existing trees, but for planting opportunities.
- Stronger tree policies that informs infrastructure design and prevents conflicts.
- Arboricultural Officer (s) at the heart of plans
- Parameters agreed on what residents can and can't do to trees.
- A clear inclusion of the responsibilities for Trees on Council owned/NPH run land, taking account of the tree size and maintenance requirements
- More information on tree benefits.
- Detail references that reflect the growing research and evidence into the benefits of trees.
- Recognises an opportunity for the council to adopt CAVAT – a way of valuing its stock when the trees need removing for development, so they can get money back for replanting:
<https://www.ltoa.org.uk/resources/cavat>.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

III) Councillor B Markham accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Beardsworth.

“During the 2019 General Election Campaign the Prime Minister identified the need for a fundamental reform of Adult Social Care and that a Green Paper on the future of care would be produced.

No green paper has been forthcoming and so far, there have not been the All Party Talks designed to produce a financially sustainable long-term answer to the Social Care Crisis, in England and Wales.

This council believes the need for government to reform social care remains a priority. The future well-being of our residents poses a serious challenge and potential financial risks to the new West Northamptonshire Unitary and the local health economy.

1. This council therefore supports 'The lives we want to lead' – the LGA green paper for adult social care and asks our local MPs and the Government to engage with the Adult Social Care, All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) to achieve a non-party sustainable long term answer to the future provision of

Adult Social Care."

This council also notes the progress of Northamptonshire County Council's Adult Social Care service to focus on improving outcomes for residents while transforming its services. This has resulted in the service being nationally recognised as a high performing service according to the national ASCOF measures."

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

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

None.

The meeting concluded at 9:21 pm