

## MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON THURSDAY THE TWENTY NINTH DAY OF JULY 2004 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

**PRESENT:** HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR Councillor W B Massey (in the Chair).

**COUNCILLORS:** Allen, Barron, Beardsworth, Boss, Caswell, Church, Concannon, Crake, Duncan, Edwards, Eldred, Evans, Glynane, Hadland, Hill, B Hoare, M Hoare, Hope, Lane, Larratt, J Lill, McCutcheon, Malpas, Miah, B Markham, I Markham, Marriott, Mason, Matthews, Palethorpe, Perkins, Pritchard, Roy, Simpson, Stewart, Tavener, Taylor, Wire, Woods and Yates.

### 1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Council held on 7<sup>th</sup> June and the special meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2004 were signed by the Mayor.

### 2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Acock, Flavell, Hollis, C Lill, Patterson and Robinson.

### 3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

There were none.

### 4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES/QUESTIONS.

There were none.

### 5. EXECUTIVE

#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HELD ON 24<sup>TH</sup> MAY AND 5 JULY 2004

These were presented and it was moved that the recommendations under item 17 Fernie Fields Sports and Social Club of the May minutes and items 18 – Authorisation of delegated Powers, 23 – Land at Lings Way and 25 – Land at Fullingdale Road of the July minutes be adopted. The recommendations under item 19 far Cotton recreation Ground were not adopted it being noted that they were going to be the subject of further discussion following a call in. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

### 6. GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Held on 28<sup>th</sup> June. The minutes were presented and it was moved that the recommendation under item 7 – Community Enabling Fund Advisory panel – Change of Membership – be adopted. A motion that minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

### 7. LICENSING COMMITTEE

Held on 11<sup>th</sup> May and 8<sup>th</sup> June 2004. A motion that the minutes as presented be

adopted was carried.

## **8. PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Held on 26<sup>th</sup> May and 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2004. A motion that minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

## **9. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The meetings of the following Overview and Scrutiny Committees: Health and Environment and Public Protection held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2004; Housing held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2004; Planning, Transportation and regeneration held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2004; Leader of the Council and General Purposes, held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2004; Community Leadership held on 17<sup>th</sup> June and Financial Strategy and Performance, held on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2004 were moved en-bloc and duly adopted.

## **10. STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2004. A motion that minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

## **11. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

A report presenting the recommendations of the Council's appointment panel (Special Standing Committee) was circulated seeking approval to the appointment of a Chief Executive for the Authority.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the recommendation of the Council's appointments pane, to appoint Mairi McLean to the post of Chief Executive of Northampton Borough Council be approved subject to satisfactory medical clearance and satisfactory completion of other routine employment vetting processes in line with the Council's recruitment and selection policy and procedure to be agreed.
- (2) That the appointments takes effect, subject to meeting the conditions outlined above, at a date to be agreed with the Leader of the Council.
- (3) That the current interim arrangements with respect to the Acting Chief Executive remain in place until Mairi McLean takes up employment with the Council.

## **12. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2003/04**

The authority's statement of accounts for the financial year 2003/04 was presented to the Council and duly approved and certified by the Mayor accordingly.

## **13. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURAL RULE 5.2.**

(A) Councillor Woods asked a question of the Leader of the Council as to the progress being made with the development of a Green travel Plan for Northampton Borough Council. Councillor Larratt advised that the Council had not been able to progress its own Green travel Plan owing to budget reductions and the sustainable Development Officer post, previously responsible for developing the plan, being deleted. Additional resources would need to be identified elsewhere. Councillor Woods then urged the Executive at the earliest opportunity to bring back the Green Travel Plan and a number of other issues of sustainable development that had been lost including the loss of one part time Officer post. Councillor Larratt took on board

the comments made and advised that the issues could be addressed in the current service prioritisation exercise in preparation for the forthcoming budget preparation for 2005/06.

(B) Councillor Pritchard then asked a question of Councillor Hill as the relevant portfolio holder. She stated that the Government saw sustainable development as an essential part of modern Britain. EU directives such as the Strategic Environmental Assessment had become a legal function of the Council and therefore needed resources to implement. This area would see major developments in the future and ensuring sustainability issues were fully incorporated was vitally important. She asked if the portfolio holder could explain why the budget was cut by £60,000 in the last year's budget review whilst many other Councils were investing in sustainable resources. In implementing these reductions in this year it had meant the loss of one part time Local Agenda 21 Officer post. This had now apparently resulted in:

- Sustainable development training ceasing
- Involving in bike to work day being stopped
- After this year, the Borough would not have the resources to be involved in the Green festival
- Work on the Green Travel Plan had ended
- There was no Support Officer for the FAIRTRADE Town designation.

As community leaders should we not take the lead in promoting sustainability throughout this Council and the Borough of Northampton. Councillor Hill commented that part of this issue had been covered in the previous question. He explained that as part of the need to cover the 1.4 million shortfall in the Council's budget, officers had been asked to save £60,000 from the sustainable development budget. This had led to the deletion of one part time post, the holder of which had been deployed to another post. These duties were being subsumed into the work of other members of the office.

(C) Councillor Roy, in Councillor Patterson's absence, asked a question of Councillor Palethorpe as the relevant Portfolio holder. Had the Housing Department/Council data that identified roads/pavements that were not adopted by the Highways Authority? Councillor Palethorpe advised that there was data available but the position was currently under review as the result of a Court case that had indicated that the extent of Highways on housing estates maintainable by the Highways Authority was greater than originally believed. He added that ultimately the responsibility would lay with the County Council and hopefully the situation with regard to parking could be resolved by 1<sup>st</sup> October, which was the anticipated effective transfer date. Councillor Roy asked whether members could have maps covering their wards. Councillor Palethorpe advised that this would be possible.

(D) Councillor Wire then asked a question of Councillor Hill as the relevant portfolio holder as to whether Northampton Now had replaced the Community Newspaper Northampton Today and who had set the policy for the content of Northampton Now. Councillor Hill advised that the previous magazine did not meet the needs.

The Editorial content was managed by the Public relations Unit who were guided by the code of recommended practice in producing all items of publicity. Content should not be political. All staff were invited to send ideas in and the various portfolio holders and other Councillors were welcome to suggest items. The Public Relations Team used their knowledge of forthcoming issues/events to put content together. Councillor Wire then asked a supplementary question regarding Councillors' profiles, which he considered to be political. Councillor Hill explained which of the members had been selected for profiles so far and the reason why. He added that for the next edition they were seeking to have a profile of a member of one of the other political parties and invited those interested to contact Public Relations.

(E) Councillor Concannon asked a question of Councillor Palethorpe as the relevant portfolio holder what kind of monitoring arrangements were in place to ensure Officer and Consultant time spent on each of the options available in the housing option appraisal were equitable. Councillor Palethorpe advised that Stage 1 of the appraisal process related to the identification of a preferred option. A financial appraisal of each option was made by the Financial Consultant and not by the Council. The work was currently underway. This information would then be communicated to all stakeholders simultaneously. All factual information was subsequently examined by the independent tenant advisors' own financial consultant. Tenants were then informed of any significant issues by that body.

(F) Councillor McCutcheon then asked a question of Councillor Palethorpe which linked into the above. He asked which outside agencies were being engaged at this stage of the housing option appraisal consultation. Specifically could he detail which residents' groups, which members of the town's community legal services partnership, which black and minority ethnic groups in the town and which groups representing the interest of homeless people. Councillor Palethorpe advised that the Community Housing Taskforce required the completion of a Communication Strategy. Included were details of all stakeholders identified. This document would shortly be available for scrutiny by all members (it would appear on the intranet). Any suggested additions would be incorporated.

(G) Councillor Woods then asked a question of Councillor Palethorpe for an update of progress on repairs and maintenance in Drayton Walk since April when he had asked a similar question. Also, could an update be given on the future programme of work on this estate and give information in writing to the Ward Councillors and the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Chair? Councillor Palethorpe advised that he had visited Drayton Walk that morning and elaborated upon the works that had been carried out. This included the removal of all doors and frames to open up the areas as requested by the tenants, the painting of doors and windows, external grills for bin store windows, all bin store cupboards being cleared of refuse, the removal of graffiti, the painting of stairwells and banisters, upgrading of lighting etc. It was noted that feedback from the residents to date had been positive. Councillor Palethorpe agreed to write to all Councillors and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee as requested. In response to a supplementary question on the length of time the works were taking he promised that the pressure would be kept up to get the works completed.

## **14. RECOVERY PLAN**

The Acting Chief Executive gave an update on the progress with regard to the Recovery Plan. He advised that since the last report there had been a period of significant steps and referred to the appointment of a new Chief Executive. Since the last meeting of the Monitoring Board, a letter had been received from the Minister, copies of which had been circulated. The letter welcomed the work done so far and agreed that the three main improvement priorities and three main service priorities were the right ones. It was recognised that they set a clear agenda for the incoming Chief Executive and new Management Team. However, it recognised that there was still much to do to achieve a full recovery and that it was very important to continue to maintain a cross-party consent about the way forward. The following was expected of the Council; namely to set out clearly how it was intended to manage performance, to be strongly focused on the key improvement and service priorities and to be realistic about the pace of improvement as recovery had to be sustainable and real. Comment was made that it would be helpful as the Council developed its plan to reflect more fully on how it intended to build meaningful partnerships which could deliver practical outcomes for the local community and in doing so involve other key partners in the private and voluntary sectors as well as the County Council and other neighbours. Also, it was considered that further work was needed on the performance management arrangements set out in the annex to the plan to make them more robust and to properly reflect the nature of the recovery process. Clear and demanding targets for the period between now and October were expected. This would provide the platform both for establishing momentum and for rigorous monitoring through the Government Monitoring Board.

It was noted that a resolution for adopting the recovery plan would be raised as a matter of urgency under item 10 on the agenda. The Acting Chief Executive then referred to a couple of weekends, the first of which had been facilitated by the IDEA and which had concentrated on the future role of the Borough and the second which had been facilitated by Price Waterhouse Coopers which had looked at budget prioritisation in the context of our corporate plan. It was noted that in terms of capacity building assistance was now being given by Joe Hubbard, a Director at Wellingborough Borough Council who would be helping the Borough for a couple of days a week to help give steerage on the Housing agenda.

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

### **RESOLVED**

The mayor agreed that the following issues be considered as matters of urgency due to the undue delay if consideration of them was deferred.

### **(A) EMERGENCY MOTION**

It was agreed that Procedure Rule 3.1 be suspended to enable the following motion to be discussed: Councillor Barron then moved and Councillor Marriott seconded: "That a motion of regret be placed against this authority in that introductory tenancies have yet to be introduced for new tenants. This Council agrees that after more than one year since the issue was unanimously agreed, it is unacceptable that the political will of this Council can be ignored and undermined for so long.

In the light of that, this Council instructs the Acting Chief Executive to pursue this issue and bring it to a speedy conclusion.

To ensure that no further decision of this full Council can be delayed in such a way in the future the Acting Chief Executive is further instructed to have a progress/reporting mechanism and timetable for future policies adopted by this full Council to be reported back to the following and subsequent full Councils.”

The motion was duly debated, voted upon and carried unanimously.

### **(B) RECOVERY PLAN MOTION**

Again, Procedural Rule was waived to enable the following emergency motion on the recovery plan to be debated. Councillor Larratt then moved and Councillor Church seconded: “That the recovery plan be received by the Council and adopted into its policy framework as the basis for the Council’s improvement. This is in accordance with the Government’s arrangements set out in paragraph 4.1 of the plan subject to:

(i) An amendment to paragraph 2.4 to incorporate the following requirements laid out in a letter from the Right Hon Nick Raysford MP:

“It would be helpful if as you develop the plan, you could reflect more fully how you intend to build meaningful partnerships which deliver practical outcomes for your local community and in doing so involve other key partners in the private and voluntary sectors as well as the County Council and your near neighbours.”

(ii) The need to develop and amend as necessary the detailed programmes set out in the annex to the plan (such amendments to be reported to the Council as appropriate from time to time).

In seconding the motion, Councillor Church moved a minor amendment to include the words “and agreed” so that the words in brackets in the second point read: “(such amendments to be reported to and agreed by the Council as appropriate from time to time)”.

The amendment was duly debated, voted upon and carried to become the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was then duly voted upon and carried.

### **(C) EMERGENCY MOTION**

Again, Procedural Rules were waived to enable the following motion to be debated. Councillor McCutcheon then moved and Councillor Boss seconded:

“This Council believes that operational decisions such as closures of the Housing section for 16 weeks impede the duty of elected members to ensure effective governance of Council in ensuring that high and fair standards of services are delivered to local constituents.

The Council resolves in situations where there is this severe an impact on governance on matters that affect core services of the authority that the issue should be brought to Executive for discussion.”

The motion was duly discussed, voted upon and carried.

The meeting concluded at 2045 hours.