

## MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON MONDAY THE TWENTY FOURTH DAY OF JANUARY 2005 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

**PRESENT:** THE DEPUTY MAYOR Councillor Beardsworth (in the Chair).

**COUNCILLORS:** Acock, Barron, Beardsworth, Boss, Caswell, Church, Concannon, M T Crake, Edwards, Eldred, Evans, Flavell, Glynane, Hadland, Hill, B Hoare, M Hoare, Hollis, Hope, C Lill, J Lill, Malpas, B Markham, I Markham, Marriott, Mason, Matthews, McCutcheon, Palethorpe, Patterson, Perkins, Robinson, Roy, Simpson, Stewart, Tavener, Taylor, Wire, Woods and Yates

### 1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Council held on 13 December 2004 were signed by the Deputy Mayor.

### 2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from the Mayor, Councillors Allen, Duncan, Lane, Larratt and Pritchard.

### 3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

There were none.

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

**RESOLVED:** That Mr Swinn, Mr Adams, Mrs Chambers, Mr Genus, Mr Woodhouse, Mr Winder, Mr Westhead and Mr Pounds be permitted to address the Council in respect of the Notice of Motion 7(b) on the agenda regarding the Housing Stock Options Appraisal and that Mr Markey, Mr Littlewood and Mr Green be permitted to address the Council in respect of the Notice of Motion 7(a) on the agenda regarding the Leisure Centres.

At this juncture the Mayor agreed to vary the order of the business to consider the Notices of Motion as the next 2 items and that the Notice of Motion 7(b) regarding the Housing Stock Option Appraisal be taken first.

### 7. NOTICES OF MOTION

7.(b) At this juncture Councillor Barron on behalf of the Labour group advised that

in the light of new information and the latest position with regard to the Housing Stock option appraisal they wished to withdraw the motion at 7(b) standing in the names of Councillors Mason and Roy.

Councillor Church drew attention to Procedural Rule 6.8 in that Motions could only be withdrawn with the consent of the Council and therefore formally requested Council to consider the withdrawal of the Motion. This was seconded by Councillor Marriott.

This proposal was voted upon and carried and the motion under item 7(b) on the agenda regarding the Housing Stock Option Appraisal was duly withdrawn.

In view of the complexity of the situation regarding the Housing Stock Appraisal and in the light of further information received Councillor Palethorpe, as the Portfolio Holder for Housing, made a statement and gave an update on the situation. He briefly outlined the background to the Housing Stock Option survey, which had taken place before Christmas. He explained that this was a statutory requirement under Government legislation and there had been a 6.9% response to the survey. However GOEM had advised that whilst this response was valued in terms of those who had responded the Council needed to go back and carry out a further survey to get a more representative response ie from working tenants with families, as originally the responses had been predominately from the Sheltered Housing sector. Councillor Palethorpe advised that in view of this request from GOEM the Council now had to carry out a further survey to get a valued result and this would be reported back to Council on the 18 April when the issue would be fully debated.

Mr Swinn, Mr Adams, Mrs Chambers, Mr Genus, Mr Woodhouse, Mr Winder, Mr Westhead and Mr Pounds then addressed the Council commenting on the involvement and work of the customer panel, concerns over the survey and results so far and the expenditure arising from this consultation and asking that tenants views be considered more than had been to date and that the Northampton Borough Council align with other Council's to retain Social housing.

The above were thanked for their addresses and their comments duly noted.

7. (a) Mr Markey then addressed the Council speaking against the sale of the Boroughs 3 Leisure Centres and presented a petition containing some 3,280 signatures opposing any such sell off. Mr Littlewood, Branch Secretary of Unison then addressed the Council in support of the motion and Mr Green a Leisure Centre user then made his address again in support of the motion.

The suspension of Procedure Rule 3.4 was moved and seconded to enable a vote to be taken on the following motion:-

The motion was carried.

Councillor Barron then moved and Councillor Marriott seconded the motion:-

“This Council rejects the Conservative Administration’s plans to privatise the town’s three Leisure Centres, believes that the plan is ill thought out, not market tested and could lead to closures and cannot be implemented in time to effect the 2005 budget.

We believe that employees within our Leisure Centres have the right to be consulted on any future changes to the service and also have the right to expect job security and protected conditions of service. We regret that they should be left to read about their fate through the pages of the local media.

We believe our Leisure Centres provide valuable and affordable leisure services to the public of Northampton and pricing policy should also play a role in any future re-organised provision. It is particularly important that these services continue to be provided given the indices of deprivation reflecting the poor health in significant parts of the town.

We therefore call on Council to:-

- (a) Drop the current plans for privatisation of the town’s three Leisure Centres
- (b) Research, other options to privatisation including the formation of an arms length Leisure Trust
- (c) Consult with the staff and users and other stakeholders including local health and sports development agencies and of the threatened Leisure Centres on their views as to the future management of the services therein”.

Councillor B Markham then moved and Councillor Perkins seconded an amendment to the motion as follows:-

“We believe that employees within our Leisure Centres have the right to be consulted on any future changes to the service and also have the right to expect job security and protected conditions of service, we regret that they should be left to read about their fate through the pages of the local media.

We believe that our Leisure Centres provide valuable and affordable Leisure services to the public of Northampton and pricing policy should also play a role in any future re-organised provision. It is particularly important that these services continue to be provided given the indices of deprivation reflecting the poor health in significant parts of the town.

We therefore call on Council to: -

- (a) Research other options to privatisation including the formation of an arms length “Leisure Trust”
- (b) Consult with staff and users and other stakeholders including local health and sports development agencies of the leisure centres on their views as to the future management of the services therein

This Council is committed to ensure that all three leisure centres remain open, are able to improve and are operated in a way that provides the best possible value to users within the budget to be determined by the Council

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

The substantive motion was then voted upon and carried

## **5. COMMITTEE MINUTES.**

**(A) OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES.** The meetings of the following Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Health and Environment and Public Protection held on 24 November 2004, Housing held on 25 November 2004, Community Leadership held on 16 December 2004 and Leader of the Council and General Purposes held on 20 December 2004 were moved en bloc and duly adopted. In response to a query raised by Councillor Crake under item 8 of the Health and Environment Overview and Scrutiny minutes concerning the review of the recycling scheme Councillor J Lill undertook to send a written response to her on the progress regarding this matter.

**(B) GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on 29 November and 9 December 2004. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

**(C) EXECUTIVE** held on 6 December 2004. In presenting the minutes Councillor Hadland referred to page 633 item 14 - Calculation of Council Tax Base, a recommended item, which had been taken as a matter of urgency to 13 December Council meeting and duly approved. He further drew attention to page 635 item 19 - Formation of Waste Partnership for Northamptonshire which had been referred to Executive as an item of special urgency and as such under the Constitution required that such items needed to be reported to Council accordingly. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

NB: Councillors Beardsworth, Boss, Flavell, Hadland, Marriott and Patterson declared an interest in respect of item 21 of the minutes The Royal and Derngate Theatres.

**(D) LICENSING COMMITTEE** held on 14 December 2004. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

**(E) STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held on 7 December 2004. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

**(F) PLANNING COMMITTEE** held on 8 December 2004. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

NB: Councillor Hill declared an interest in respect of item 7(b) of the minutes and Councillor Boss declared an interest on any Northamptonshire County Council application.

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

Councillor B Hoare referred to the fact that the CPA assessment was based on services provided by this Council to the Citizens of Northampton and questioned how we would be rated given that on Sunday 23 January when Abington Park was full of citizens the only public toilet that was open to the public was the Ladies toilet in the Lower Park. Both Gents toilets were closed and neither Disabled toilet had any information about how to gain access. Also all the toilets in the Upper Park were either boarded up or closed. Councillor J Lill advised that the toilets in the Lower Park were normally open on a daily basis but closures were as a result of a fire in the Gents toilets on the 15 January resulting in them needing to be refurbished. The toilets in the Upper Park were closed awaiting repairs to the roof. An order had been placed with the Contractor. Access to all disabled toilets required the use of a Radar key which whilst being freely available to the disabled was not available for general public use. Councillor B Hoare asked a supplementary question seeking assurance that all the toilets in Abington Park would be open and of a reasonable standard by the Summer. Councillor J Lill stated she would be pursuing this.

Councillor B Markham asked a question of Councillor Hadland referring to the fact that in July 2004 Executive had agreed to the disposal of surplus garages and land off Fullingdale Road for the development of elderly persons bungalows. It had also been requested that until the development could start the site be cleaned up and made secure. Although some rubbish removal did take place the site still remained unsecured. He asked the portfolio holder whether plans for the bungalows were still going ahead and when the site would be secured. Councillor Hadland advised that gates would be erected and should secure the site until the development was completed. In response to supplementary question concerning the length of time for response to an e-mail regarding this issue Councillor Hadland advised that he would get officers to look into this accordingly.

Councillor B Markham then asked a question of Councillor C Lill whether he was aware that a proposal by First Bus to cease the 5a Service from the 20 February and replace it with Route 7 would mean people living in the Boothville and Lakeview areas of the town would lose the only remaining service which connected their communities with the Weston Favell Centre. This was their source of shopping as well as Doctors, Library and Leisure Facilities. He sought the Portfolio holders support to call for First Bus to reconsider this proposal. Councillor C Lill advised that he was aware of these service changes and the affect this would have and that the Council had expressed its concerns to First on this matter. First had responded by saying that it understood these concerns but the changes throughout Northampton had been made on commercial grounds. Councillor Lill stated that he would therefore fully support the residents in their call to First Bus to reconsider its decision and that he would be pursuing this matter accordingly.

Councillor Wire then asked a question regarding an update on illegal traveller encampments and referred to a motion on this subject to full Council last year. He

stated that under the current administration illegal encampments were running at record levels with 125 being recorded in the last 12 months. He therefore asked whether steps had been taken to identify sites. If the sites had been identified where were they, what had been the cost of the clear ups on illegal sites in this financial year and how did this relate to the budget allocated for the purpose. He stressed the importance of working with other agencies and that criticism of both the County Traveller Unit and the Police were counter productive. He stated that it was recognised that in order to control illegal encampments permanent sites needed to be found and these needed to be located in specific areas with no disruption to the settled community and after full consultation. On recognised sites the travellers would be required to pay a ground rent for the services provided. In the absence of the Leader Councillor Hadland responded to these questions. He referred to the setting up and work of the Northampton Traveller Consultative Group and to the fact that as part of its terms of reference it would be exploring land use within the County with regard to suitability for permanent sites and transit/emergency stopping places. Also it had been agreed to appoint consultants to undertake an evaluation exercise in relation to this. He then reported upon the expenditure on site clean ups and advised that the cost of providing permanent sites was currently unknown.

Councillor Marriott then asked Councillor C Lill a question:-

With the study of Nene Regional Park the development of Southbridge and the completion of the flood defences he asked what value he placed on the river valley master plan, was it still a live document and did the administration intend continuing with its progress. Councillor C Lill advised that the river master plan was still a live document and was now being developed in a form of the development framework for the water side in Northampton. The study was being carried out by Halcrow funding by EMDA and the final report had just been completed. The development framework document was particularly important as it incorporated issues raised by the Sustainable Communities Plan, Countryside Agency, Green Infrastructure Initiative, Cultural Mile, River Nene Regional Park and Environment Agency Flood Plain Guidelines. The next stage was to make a presentation to Members and EMDA and ODPM representatives with a view to taking the framework forward to project design stage.

Councillor Hollis then asked a question of Councillor J Lill whether she could confirm the date of the last delivery of black refuse sacks in St Davids ward. Councillor J Lill advised that black sacks were last delivered in St Davids ward between December 2003 to February 2004. A card accompanying the sacks would have informed residents that these were for use between August 2004 and July 2005. Households due to receive wheelie bins by the end of March 2005 would not receive black bags for the forthcoming year which would commence on the 1 August 2005. All remaining households would receive the usual quota to the new bag year. Delivery had already started across the town and would be completed by the 31 July 2005. In response to a supplementary question Councillor Lill confirmed that she would try to establish firm dates and let Councillor Hollis know accordingly.

## **8. RECENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

The Council received a report together with an appendix, copies of which were

circulated at the meeting, detailing progress on recent notices of motion. As requested at the last meeting Councillor Palethorpe, as the portfolio holder for Housing, gave an update on the progress on Introductory tenancies. He advised that the scheme would be up and running by the 1 April 2005 and it was hoped that the two Tenancy Officers would be in place by then. He stressed the need to get all legal requirements and procedures in place initially.

Reference was then made to a motion passed at Council some considerable time ago regarding the Housing Needs Section and it was agreed that this would be looked into and put on the next recent Notices of Motion report for an update accordingly.

## **9. RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE**

Councillor Hadland gave an update on the latest position advising that there had been good progress on the key performances indicators. In terms of Management Restructure 3 Directors had now been appointed and Interviews for the 9 Corporate Managers had taken place the previous week. He stressed the importance of this exercise being completed sensitively and quickly and advised that the results would be reported to the Executive at its meeting on the 31 January. The Root and Branch review had been commissioned and there had been a tremendous response of 34 applications in the first few hours. Progress continued in terms of Revenues and Benefits and the ERM was in place this week. It was proposed to set up a transition period to run alongside the new management structure during the transition process.

Councillor Tavener then referred to a report which had been circulated at the meeting as part of the Councillor development programme entitled Building Political Leadership and capacity. She advised that the East Midlands Local Government Association Consortium had been engaged as the consultants to provide a Councillor Development Programme. She advised that there was a meeting of the Council Development Group on the 9 February and commended this report to Council. The report was duly received and noted.

## **10. NOMINATIONS FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Consideration was given to a report, copies of which had been circulated with the agenda seeking 4 nominations to be submitted to the ODPM for the 2 seats allocated to Northampton Borough Council on the West Northamptonshire UDC Board. It was noted that these nominations should allow for the appointment of 2 board members from different political parties. Councillor Hadland in presenting the report advised that it had not been possible to reach a general consensus between the political groups and as such the general consensus on the way forward was that each party nominate 2 members so that a total of 6 nominations would go forward to the ODPM. As such it was proposed that Councillors Larratt and Caswell be nominated from the Conservative Group, Councillors Yates and Woods be nominated from the Liberal Democrat Group and Councillors Barron and Marriott be nominated from the Labour Group. This was duly voted upon and agreed. It was

noted that assistance would be available the following day for any of those nominated needing assistance with their CV.

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

The Mayor announced that there was a matter of urgency that needed to be considered under the rules for urgent items and that the public and press be excluded from this item on the grounds 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 item of business by reference by paragraph 1 of Schedule 12(a) to such Act.

**CORPORATE MANAGER GRADES.**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive, copies of which were circulated at the meeting, regarding the proposed grading for the posts of Corporate Manager.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the recommendations as set out in the report be approved and that the grades for the Corporate Managers posts be approved.
  - (2) That the financial implications be noted.

It was noted that Tony du Sautoy Interim Change Director would be leaving the Borough at the end of this month and the thanks of the Council for all his hard work and efforts in the recovery process were placed on record.

The meeting concluded at 9.30 pm.