

MINUTES

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

PRESENT: THE DEPUTY MAYOR Councillor C.Lill (in the Chair).

COUNCILLORS: Acock, Allen, Barron, Boss, Caswell, Church, Concannon, Crake, Duncan, Edwards, Eldred, Flavell, Glynane, Hadland, Hoare, Hope, Lane, Larratt, Lill, Lill, Malpas, Markham, Markham, Marriott, Matthews, McCutcheon, Palethorpe, Patterson, Perkins, Pritchard, Roy, Stewart, Tavener, Wire, Woods and Yates

1. MINUTES.

The meeting of the proceedings of the Special Meeting of the Council held on 9 May, the ordinary meeting of the Council held on the 16 May and the Annual Meeting of the Council held on the 19 May 2005 were signed by the Deputy Mayor.

2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from the Mayor, Councillors Evans, Hill, B Hoare, Mason, Massey, Miah, Robertson and Simpson.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that he had pleasure in advising of two awards that had been made to Northampton Borough Council. The first was to Silvina Simmonds from the Council's Housing and Money Advice Centre for becoming Debt Counsellor of the year and he presented Silvina with her award. The second was an award to the Call Care staff on the achievement of Accreditation to the Association of Social Alarms Providers Code of Practice.

The Mayor then asked that the Council receive a joint statement signed by the three party Leaders. The Chief Executive read out the joint statements which was with regard to employment arrangements for the Root and Branch which confirmed the Council's commitment to current employees. The three party leaders and the Chief Executive then signed the document.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES/QUESTIONS.

RESOLVED: That A Timson, Mr Westhead, Mr Swinn, Mr Green, Mr Winder and Mr Adams be permitted to address the Council in respect of item 8 Housing Option Appraisal and that Mr Taylor be permitted to address the Council in respect of the Notice of Motion under item 7(c) on the agenda "Make Poverty History".

At this juncture the Deputy Mayor agreed to vary the order of business to consider item 8 "Housing Options Appraisal" as the next item.

8. HOUSING OPTIONS APPRAISAL

A Timson, Mr Westhead, Mr Swinn, Mr Green, Mr Winder and Mr Adams then addressed the Council reiterating their points made at the last meeting and asking that the Council give favourable consideration to stock retention.

Councillor Palethorpe as the portfolio holder for Housing then presented the report on the Housing Option Appraisal which recommended that the Council fully debated the options available in order to determine its preferred option for the future of the housing stock and the associated landlord service that best delivered its commitment to the Corporate Plan priority, "Ensure the Availability of Decent and Affordable Homes for all". In presenting the report Councillor Palethorpe paid tribute to the work of the housing staff and to those tenants who had worked very hard on the customer panel. Councillor Palethorpe then moved and Councillor Hadland seconded that procedure rule 3.4 be suspended to enable the following motion to be discussed and vote taken.

The motion was carried.

The following motion was then moved by Councillor Palethorpe and seconded by Councillor Hadland:-

Northampton Borough Council reaffirms its commitment to the democratic process and a policy in which the final decision on the future of the Landlord service of the Council's Housing Stock will reside with Council tenants and that the Council will continue to develop a housing asset management structure to deliver high quality improvements to the current Council Housing Stock.

In pursuing the policy of seeking to meet the future needs of the people of Northampton and in reaching a decision on the future of the Housing Landlord Service, Northampton Borough Council has taken the following into account,

- (i) All aspects of the Northampton Borough Council Housing Option Appraisal as required by Government Policy.
- (ii) Northampton Borough Council stock condition survey 2003
- (iii) Northampton Borough Council current position as a "Recovering Council"
- (iv) Northampton Borough Council projected financial position 2006/2010
- (v) ODPM determination that there is no "fourth option" for Council housing

That the Chief Executive inform the Government Office for the East Midlands (GOEM) that having taken all of the factors into consideration the decision of the

Council is for stock retention whilst further work is conducted into how improvements above that of the Basic Decent Homes Standard can be achieved in the future.

Councillor Woods then proposed and Councillor Perkins seconded an amendment to the motion with the inclusion of a new third paragraph to be numbered (1) and to take out the words has taken the following into account The new paragraph to read (1) endorses the findings of the House of Commons Council Housing Groups Inquiry into the future funding of Council Housing 2004/2005 as set out in their report "Support for the Fourth Option" for Council Housing.

The words has taken into account be numbered (2) and followed by the points (i) – (v) as listed in the original motion then to amend the final paragraph to add the words after work is conducted with full involvement of tenant representatives and to add at the end of that paragraph and into options that encourage and provide greater tenant involvement in the management of the Councils Housing Stock.

Councillor Barron then moved and Councillor Marriott seconded a further amendment that the additional paragraph (1) be deleted and that an extra point (vi) be added to read a meeting with the Town's MPs and Minister on 9 June 2005. This amended motion was then debated the motion reading as follows:-

Northampton Borough Council re-affirms its commitment to the democratic process and a policy in which the final decision on the future of the landlord service of the Council's Housing Stock will reside with the council tenants and that the Council will continue to develop a housing asset management structure to deliver high quality improvements to the current council housing stock.

In pursuing the policy of seeking to meet the future needs of the people of Northampton and in reaching a decision on the future of the Housing Landlord service, Northampton Borough Council has taken the following into account.

- (i) All aspects of the Northampton Borough Council Housing Options Appraisal as required by Government policy
- (ii) Northampton Borough Council Stock Condition Survey 2003
- (iii) Northampton Borough Council's current position as a "recovering council"
- (iv) Northampton Borough Council's projected financial position 2006-2010
- (v) ODPM determination that there is no "fourth option" for Council Housing
- (vi) A meeting with the Town's MP's and Minister on 9 June 2005

That the Chief Executive inform the Government Office of the East Midlands (GOEM) that having taken all of the factors into consideration the decision of the Council is for Stock Retention whilst further work is conducted, with full involvement

of tenant representatives, into how improvements above that of the basic Decent Homes Standard can be achieved in future and into options that encourage and provide greater tenant involvement in the management of the Council's housing stock.

The amendment was then voted upon and carried to become the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was then voted upon and carried.

5. COMMITTEE MINUTES.

(A) EXECUTIVE held on 23 May and 6 June 2005. In presenting the May minutes Councillor Larratt drew attention to item 18 Development of Northampton Festival and placed on record thanks to those staff involved for making the event a success.

With regard to item 9 of the May minutes Community Centre Charges Councillor Marriott moved that the charges be referred back to Executive for further discussion. Councillor Larratt agreed to take this back.

A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

(B) PLANNING COMMITTEE held on 27 April 2005. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

(C) OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES. The meetings of the following Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Leader of the Council and General Purposes held on 29 March, Financial Strategy and Performance held on 31 March, Community Safety and E Government held on 5 April, Housing held on 3 June, Health and Environment and Public Protection held on 9 March and Financial Strategy and Performance held on 17 February 2005 were moved en-bloc and duly adopted.

At this juncture Councillor Barron asked that Procedural Rules be waived to permit an emergency motion to be taken. This was duly seconded by Councillor Wire.

This was carried.

Councillor Barron then moved and Councillor Wire seconded the following motion:-

This Council recognises the statement from the Round Table in that they no longer feel able to organise the annual Firework display in Becketts Park. This Council places on record its appreciation for all that has been done by the Round Table in raising funds for charity.

In addition this Council also recognises the thousand of families who enjoy the annual event and regret that no organisation is committed to continuing with the firework display. Of particular concern is the prospect of unofficial firework displays

taking place across the town which not stewarded or controlled by the correct authorities.

Taking that into account this Council agrees to approach other agencies and authorities with a view of managing the firework display in Becketts Park to ensure a large family event continues. In addition the Roundtable will be able to continue with bucket collections for raising money for worthy causes.

The motion was carried.

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

Councillor Malpas asked a question of Councillor Lane as the Portfolio Holder. He advised that the residents and visitors of Billing Ward very much appreciated their dedicated Community Beat Officer as well as their newly appointed Police Community Support Officer Mr Paul Watts. PC Jewel the dedicated Community Beat Officer was often seen in all weathers cycling around the ward and his presence in this way was reassuring for all the citizens in the Ward. However the new Police Community Support Officer could not accompany PC Jewel as the Northampton Police force would not allow their Support Officers to use bicycles. Considering the fact that Billing Parish Council had agreed to sponsor Mr Watts and provide him with a bicycle fit for this purpose and Mr Watts was very keen to start using pedal power. Councillor Malpas asked the Portfolio holder if he will do all in his power to lobby the Chief Constable for a change in the rules. Councillor Lane advised that this was a police matter but Northampton Borough Council Officers had contacted Inspector Sean Bell who had advised that it was not the case that Police Community Support Officers were not allowed to use bicycles. In fact he encouraged and supported such an initiative for the Officers and this mode of transport could be used if they wished as long as the bicycle was roadworthy and suitable. He also welcomed the positive comments regarding PC Jewel and Mr Paul Watts.

Councillor B Markham then asked a question of Councillor J Lill as the Portfolio Holder. He asked that when reviewing the introduction of wheelie bins in part of the town last year Health and Environment scrutiny recommended that a scheme for the collection of garden waste free of charge from properties not yet supplied with wheeled bins was developed and introduced. He asked what were the current arrangements for collection of garden waste from those properties that still had black sacks and how was the service promoted. Councillor J Lill advised that in accordance with the Health and Environment Scrutiny recommendation a free of charge service for the collection of garden waste had been introduced to properties where a wheeled bin had not been supplied. The current take up was approximately 20 bookings per week. She further advised that because these properties were still on black bag collection their service was still weekly as opposed to wheeled bin properties where the service was on an alternative week collection basis. Therefore the current interim situation was incurring additional resource to provide these collections. The extension of the scheme planned for the current year would target those areas who did not currently have the full waste minimisation

service provided from where the collection of both recyclable and compostable materials was difficult. The extension of the scheme would predominately focus on flats and high rise dwellings giving them an alternate week collection of residual waste and recyclable material. Capital funding was available to purchase containers and it was anticipated that the collections could be made within current revenue budgets. Those areas remaining on weekly bag collections for residual waste would be assessed to find the most appropriate way to provide alternate weekly green waste collections. However it should be noted that there would be increased resource implications which could not be met from current revenue budgets.

7. NOTICES OF MOTION

At this juncture it was agreed to consider item 7 (c) the Make Poverty history motion first.

Mr Taylor then addressed the Council with regard to this motion expressing his support and seeking the Council's unanimous support to the motion in "Making Poverty History".

Councillor Hollis the moved and Councillor Pritchard seconded that procedure rele 3.4 be suspended to enable the following motion to be debated

The motin was carried

Councillor Hollis then moved and Councillor Pritchard seconded the motion:

"This Council welcomes the UK Government's commitment to the Millennium Development goals.

This Council recognises that Local Authorities with their duty to promote economic and social well being can play a role in highlighting and promoting issues to address world poverty. Northampton has already made a start locally by recently prompting Fair Trade.

This Council resolves to support and publicise all Make Poverty History events taking place either locally and nationally and specifically by:-

adding the white band symbol of the campaign to the Council's website with supporting information to raise awareness of this important campaign.

giving Borough wide support to Make Poverty History day on July 1st by encouraging staff to support the campaign.

providing information about the campaign in the One Stop Shop and other relevant locations.

In addition this Council proposes to:-

Urge all NBC suppliers and contractors dealing with international companies to

comply with the principles of Fair Trade.

Work with other authorities and strategic partnerships to promote the campaign to increase aid to Africa and drop Debt.

ask support from our twin towns of Marberg and Poitiers in support of the Make Poverty History campaign.

Seek support from Northampton's MPs to this campaign.

Finally this Council calls on the United Kingdom Government to lead the way for change and use its influence when it holds the presidency of the G8 and Chairs the EU to Make Poverty History in 2005".

The motion was voted upon and carried unanimously.

(A) Councillor Patterson moved and Councillor Boss seconded that Procedure Rule 3.4 be suspended to enable the following motion to be discussed and a vote taken.

The motion was carried.

Councillor Patterson then moved and Councillor Boss seconded the motion as follows:- The Labour group are dismayed and disappointed that extra Community Wardens have failed to materialised so far this year. The Labour Group calls on the new cabinet member responsible for Community Safety to deliver more swiftly than his predecessor".

The motion was duly debated voted upon and carried by a vote of 8 members it being noted that 28 members did not vote.

(B) Councillor Patterson moved and Councillor Boss seconded that Procedural Rule 3.4 be suspended to enable the following motion to be discussed and a vote taken.

The motion was carried.

Councillor Patterson then moved and Councillor Boss seconded "The Labour Group calls on the Executive to take a proactive approach to resolve the ongoing saga of refuse collection in the Northampton East Area.

Councillor Woods then moved and Councillor Larratt seconded an amendment "This Council calls on the Executive to take a proactive approach to resolve the problems of fly tipping and refuse collection in Northampton.

Councillor Patterson as mover of the original motion accepted the amendment. This was duly voted upon and carried.

(D) Councillor Woods moved and Councillor B Markham seconded that Procedural Rule 3.4 be suspended to enable the following motion to be discussed and a vote taken.

The motion was carried.

Councillor Woods then moved and Councillor B Markham seconded the motion as follows

Northampton Town Centre

This Council welcomes recent news suggesting that the redevelopment of the Grosvenor Centre will go ahead. However it recognises a wider concern over the future of Northampton Town Centre.

This Council resolves to set up a Town Centre Enquiry to bring together all interested authorities and individuals to tackle these concerns. In particular this enquiry will:-

draw up an action plan of improvements and regeneration measures for Abington Street and the Town Centre as a whole.

Review Transport access to the Town Centre including car parking and bus services.

Appoint a Town Centre Tsar/Champion to drive forward the Action Plan.

Resolve the future plans for the Market Square and Cultural Mile in terms of the impact on the Town Centre.

Examine best practices from other towns.

The Enquiry will include Councillors from the Leader of the Council and the Planning, Transportation and Regeneration Committees.

The motion was duly debated, voted upon and lost.

9. RECENT NOTICES OF MOTION

The Council received a report copies of which had been circulated with the agenda detailing the progress on recent Notices of Motion. With regard to the Post Office copies of the letter sent by the Chief Executive were circulated for information.

10. RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE

Councillor Larratt advised that the interviews for the Corporate Manager appointments had taken place between the 7 to 10 June and 5 candidates had been offered and accepted the posts. Second interviews for the two outstanding posts had subsequently taken place and candidates offered the post.

The Root and Branch Review had been presented to the Recovery Board by the Challenge Team and a joint letter from the Political parties would be sent out to staff. Roadshows regarding this issue would also be held.

With regard to Performance Management a new regime had now begun and would be audited externally by KPMG. Service planning was now taking place across the Council.

The Councillor Development Programme had now begun and workshops had taken place although attendance was poor. Members were being encouraged to attend as much as possible. A meeting with the Minister of State, the Three party Leaders and the Chief Executive was due to take place this coming Wednesday to discuss the latest CPA review.

Councillor Barron then raised a number of concerns over a number of issues in relation to the ODPM and particularly on the issue of member commitment and advised that he intended to raise these concerns at the earliest opportunity. He asked the Chief Executive to look into this matter further. The Chief Executive undertook to liaise with Councillor Barron after the meeting to clarify those points to be taken up with the Lead Officer from the ODPM.

11. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2004/05

Councillor Hadland presented the Authority's Statement of Accounts for the Financial Year 2004/05 copies of which had been circulated, which he commended to the Council for approval. It was noted that these had been considered and approved earlier in the evening at a special meeting of the Executive.

RESOLVED: That the authority's Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2004/05 be approved and in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit regulations 2003 the Deputy Mayor signed a statement certifying that the Statement of Accounts had been approved.

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

The Mayor announced that there were 2 matters of urgency

(a) Interim Political Committee and other membership and related matters
Consideration was given to a report, copies of which had been circulated, seeking approval as far as was possible to further maintain the status quo with regard to the existing political appointments committee and other memberships the next available meeting when the whole issue could be reconsidered in the light of the political structures review and interim amendments to the constitution.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and the arrangements as set out be agreed with the Committee memberships remaining as they are at present with the following being noted;- that Councillor Matthews had some ago replaced Councillor Beardsworth on the Community Enabling Fund Advisory Panel, that Councillor Stewart was no longer Chair of the Licensing Committee and therefore this presented a

vacancy and that in the interim the Deputy Chair would assume the Chair. It was further noted that Councillor Roy rather than Councillor Evans was on Licensing Committee and that Councillor Evans and not Councillor Marriott was on Planning Committee. It was also noted that Councillor Lane should not appear on Overview and Scrutiny II now that he was a Portfolio Holder. It was noted that other changes that were required in the interim should be conveyed to the Chief Solicitor.

(b) Best Value Performance Plan

Consideration was given to the Best Value Performance Plan copies of which were circulated at the meeting. It was noted that under the Local Government Act 1999 and Statutory Instrument 2002/305 the Council had to publish its best value performance plan by the 30 June each year. Under the constitution this document was part of the Authority's Policy framework and only the Council could approve or adopt it. Attention was drawn to the fact that whilst there was no specific sanction for failing to meet the deadline in the Councils present position such a failure could very well lead to direct intervention by the Secretary of State. In order to meet the deadline members were therefore requested to pass the resolution adopting the plan subject to final collation and adjustment with a view to publication on the 30 June 2005 and that in the interim any comments by members on the document be sent to the Chief Executive by 12.00 o'clock on Wednesday the 29 June 2005.

Concerns were expressed from members over the fact that this had been presented at such short notice and guidance was sought on the implications should the plan be postponed to enable further consideration. In view of the concerns expressed Councillor Larratt recommended that the Best Value Performance Plan be withdrawn and therefore not published on the 30 June and brought back to a special meeting of the Council in July for further discussion to allow in the meantime for the proper consultation process to take place. This cause of action was duly agreed.

The meeting at 10.40 pm.