

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON THURSDAY THE TWENTY FIRST DAY OF JULY 2005 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

PRESENT: HER WORSHIP THE MAYOR Councillor S.Beardsworth (in the Chair).

COUNCILLORS: Acock, Allen, Barron, Boss, Caswell, Church, Concannon, Crake, Duncan, Edwards, Eldred, Evans, Flavell, Glynane, Hadland, Hill, Hoare, Hoare, Hollis, Hope, Lane, Larratt, Lill, Malpas, Markham, Markham, Marriott, Massey, Matthews, Miah, Palethorpe, Patterson, Perkins, Robinson, Roy, Simpson, Stewart, Tavener, Taylor, Wire, Woods and Yates

1. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Lill, Mason, McCutcheon, Patterson and Pritchard.

2. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES/QUESTIONS.

RESOLVED: That Messrs Adams, Swinn and Winder be permitted to address the Council in respect of item 5 Political Structures and Recovery and that Mr Swinn also be permitted to address the Council in respect of item 3 CPA progress assessment report and item 4 Best Value Performance Plan.

3. CPA PROGRESS ASSESSMENT REPORT

At this juncture Mr Swinn addressed the Council consolidating his address to take into account all 3 items on the agenda. He referred to the Best Value Performance Plan and his understanding of the Plan and the importance of keeping citizens informed of the vision mission and strategic aims and objectives of the Council for the next 5 years. He also stressed the importance of keeping citizens informed as to whether targets were being met and that any shortfalls were explained. With regard to the Political Structures he questioned the reduction in the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and also the reduction in the number of meetings of the full Council. He expressed the view that the proposals to reduce the numbers of some meetings were a dilution of democracy.

At this juncture Mr P Jones, Audit Commission Relationship Manager was introduced to make his presentation with regard to the CPA Progress Assessment Report. He initially referred to page 6 of the report which was the summary and recommendations commenting that he would have expected there to have been significantly more progress a year on than there had been. He referred to the

current restructuring proposals and recognised that staff were working very hard to achieve the changes but that the Council had not moved on very much and services had not improved significantly. He emphasised the importance of focusing on the key issues of improvement and he also emphasised the importance of community engagement. In terms of capacity he expressed the view that Council did not yet have the capacity to deliver the improvements. However, the management restructuring was moving forward and the use of interim managers was a useful way of supplementing capacity. A review of the political structures was underway and some significant changes were being recommended. He stated that the Council needed to demonstrate that it was serious about moving on and more quickly than before and the need for Councillors and Staff to work together to achieve the changes and improvements. He again emphasised the need to focus on the key corporate priorities to the exclusion of all else and the importance of performance management. In conclusion he stated that the Recovery Plan needed to look realistic, look sharp ensure that the political structures happened and happened quickly and was clear about the services it was delivering.

Councillor Larratt and Councillor Woods and a number of other Councillors then responded to Mr Jones statement noting his comments and confirming that as a Council members were committed to improvement and working together to focus on the priorities to bring about these changes and improvements.

4. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN

Councillor Hadland presented the Best Value Performance Plan, copies of which had been circulated drawing particular attention to Appendix A Best Value Performance Indicators 2004/05 and Appendix B the Corporate Plan 2005/06. He commended the Best Value Performance Plan to the Council for approval and publishing.

RESOLVED: That the Best Value Performance Plan 2005/06 be approved and published.

5. POLITICAL STRUCTURES AND RECOVERY

At this juncture Mr Adams and Mr Winder addressed the Council both expressing their concerns at the reduction in the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the impact this might have in terms of Community Involvement and Engagement.

Councillor Larratt then presented the political structures and recovery report, copies of which had been circulated and sought approval to the recommendations contained therein as the basis. With regard to recommendation 11 on page 2 of the report:- "Appoint postholders to Committees/or continuing existing arrangements "It was suggested that this be reworded to:- "Maintain existing arrangements until September." With regard to recommendation 4 on page 1 of the report regarding the contract between Council/Cabinet etc it was agreed that this be reworded to read "Agree the basis for the contract between the Council, Cabinet Overview and Scrutiny and the Improvement Board set out in Appendix 2." In discussing the report comment was made that the reduction in the number of Overview and

Scrutiny Committees from 7 to 1 was an attempt to improve the management of the Overview and Scrutiny process and that task and finish groups would also be established and there was no reason why Co-optees could not contribute to those studies. Councillor Glynane asked that his concerns with regard to Overview and Scrutiny be noted in that he considered that a dedicated Officer Support Team was vital to enable Overview and Scrutiny to succeed.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and approval in principle in relation to the Council's political structures and governance arrangements be agreed as set out in the recommendations of the report, duly amended to take account of the 2 amendments outlined above, and that a further report be submitted to the Council meeting in September 2005.

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

(A) At this juncture the Mayor on behalf of the Council undertook to pass on best wishes to Councillor Colin Lill for a speedy recovery.

(B) The Mayor then referred to the fact that Councillor Taylor had completed a course on Liquor Licensing and been awarded a Certificate which would enable her to be a licensee. She had chosen to do this course to gain a better understanding of the issue. The Mayor presented Councillor Taylor with her Certificate and some flowers congratulating her on this achievement.

The meeting concluded at 8.10 pm.