

MINUTES

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

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

COUNCILLORS:

Allen, Barron, Boss, Caswell, Church, Concannon, Crane, Duncan, Edwards, Eldred, Evans, Flavell, Glynne, Hadland, Hill, B. Hoare, M. Hoare, Hollis, Hope, Lane, Larratt, J. Lill, McCutcheon, Massey, Miah, B. Markham, I. Markham, Marriott, Mason, Matthews, Palethorpe, Patterson, Perkins, Pritchard, Robinson, Roy, Simpson, Stewart, Tavener, Wire, Woods and Yates

1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council held on 27 June and 21 July 2005 were signed by the Mayor.

2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Acock, Malpas and Mason.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced with regret the death of Pat Ford, former Labour Borough Councillor and more recently Co-Chair of the Women's Forum. The Council held a minute's silence as a mark of respect. Councillors Wire, Allen and Larratt on behalf of the groups then each paid tribute to Pat's work and dedication during her time as a Borough Councillor and for her work and involvement with other groups notably the Women's Forum. A framed tapestry originated by Pat was on display at the meeting as part of her role with the Women's Forum and it would be on display in the Guildhall in Pat's memory.

The Mayor then welcomed the new Corporate Managers to their first Council meeting.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES/QUESTIONS.

RESOLVED: That Mr Swinn, Mr Adams and Mr Winder be permitted to address the Council in respect of item 8 "Northampton's Housing Strategy" and in addition Mr Swinn address on item 12 "Political Structures and Recovery".

At this juncture item 8 was brought forward to be considered as the next item .

8. NORTHAMPTON'S HOUSING STRATEGY

Messrs Swinn, Adams and Winder then addressed the Council referring to Performance and Targets, the former Tenant Participation Panel and questioning its present constitution and current degree of involvement.

Councillor Palethorpe then presented for adoption the report entitled “Enabling and Delivering Housing Choice 2005-2010 – Northampton’s Housing Strategy” for adoption which was duly seconded by Councillor Hadland. On presenting the report he stated that the strategy was a working document and was due to be submitted to GOEM the following day. He drew attention to a couple of points that he wished to highlight regarding the Housing Market Assessment and the Housing Strategy Consultation event that had been held in July at the Saints Rugby ground.

RESOLVED: That the Housing Strategy for the Northampton Borough covering the period 2005-2010 as detailed in the report circulated be approved to allow submission to GOEM by 30 September 2005.

At this juncture it was agreed to consider item 12 as the next item.

12.POLITICAL STRUCTURES AND RECOVERY

At this juncture Mr Swinn addressed the Council with regard to this issue commenting that he still had concerns about the Political Structures, the frequency of meetings, particularly the fact that Executive, Council and Scrutiny meetings had been reduced from ten to six meetings. He also reiterated his concerns that the number of Scrutiny Committees had been reduced from seven separate Committees to one. He welcomed the continuous Quality Improvement Teams at all levels to ensure there was good service delivery of all front line services to citizens.

Councillor Larratt then presented the Political Structures and Governance Arrangements – Constitution Amendments and Other Matters Report, copies of which had been circulated together with an amendment to appendix 6 tabled at the meeting which stated – “References to the Executive in this appendix shall also include references to the Improvement Board and all members of the Improvement Board making Executive decisions”.He sought approval to the recommendations contained in the report in order to bring into effect the Political Structures and Governance Arrangements that had been agreed by Council on 21 July 2005.

In discussing the report several comments were made. With regard to page 3 concerning the paragraph on the Improvement Board, Councillor Woods asked that rather than the representatives being the Leader and Deputy Leader of each group that it be the Leader and one other member, not necessarily the Deputy of each group.

With reference to appendix 1 paragraph 1(i) Councillor Woods suggested that the references to Leader and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group should read Leader and Deputy Leader of the Minority Opposition.

With regard to page 4 the paragraph regarding Delegations to Cabinet Members some concerns were expressed regarding the last paragraph stating “Connected to this are the procedural changes to the Constitution contained in Appendix 4 which

allows individual Cabinet member decisions to be made in private". Whilst it was recognised that some issues needed to be dealt with in private it was considered that arrangements on how this was dealt with needed to be looked at further.

With regard to questions to Council it was considered that 12 days was too long and that 5 days would perhaps be better.

With regard to a quorum for the Improvement Board it was suggested that the three members should be one from each political group.

Some discussion then ensued with regard to Planning Committee in terms of its frequency of meetings and also the possible suggestion that there could be two Sub-Committees set up on a geographical basis.

With regard to the procedure at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings it was suggested that under paragraph 16.2 a further sentence be added stating that officers members of the Board etc attend when requested.

RESOLVED: (1) That the report be agreed and the recommendations contained therein be adopted namely:-

- (a) The changes to the Constitution contained in the Appendices to the report be adopted.
 - (b) That specific powers be delegated to members of the Improvement Board, the Chief Executive and Cabinet members sitting on the Improvement Board.
 - (c) That an Audit Committee be set up.
 - (d) That the Tree Panel be constituted as a Committee of the Council.
 - (e) That officers be authorised to advertise the constitutional changes as required by the relevant regulations.
- (2) That the various unresolved issues raised above be referred to the Improvement Board for consideration and that delegated powers be granted to the Improvement Board to implement those issues raised accordingly and a further report confirming the changes be reported to Council..

5. COMMITTEE MINUTES.

(A) STANDARDS COMMITTEE held on 7 June 2005. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

(B) PLANNING COMMITTEE held on 22 June, 20 July and 17 August 2005. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

© LICENSING COMMITTEE held on 5th July 2005. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

(D) TREE PANEL held on 14 July 2005. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

(E) EXECUTIVE held on 18 July and 27 June 2005. A motion that the minutes, amended to include Councillor Crake's apologies and to note Councillor Roy's Declaration of Interest following her address under item 18 be adopted was carried.

(F) GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on 13th June 2005. A motion that the minutes as presented be adopted was carried.

(G) OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The meetings of the following Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Health and Environment and Public Protection held on 8 June, Planning Transportation and Regeneration held on 16 June, Financial Strategy and Performance held on 20 June and Housing held on 14 July 2005 were moved en bloc and duly adopted.

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

Councillor Boss asked a question of Councillor J Lill as the Portfolio Holder. He asked that given the time it took to apply for highway closures could he be assured that the St Crispin Street Funfair would go ahead.

Councillor J. Lill commented that the original key problem with the Street Fair was the viability of running the operation. Her understanding was that last year the event had been reduced in size to operate along the pedestrianised Abington Street and a small area of the market. Proposals for this year had retained the same overall area and therefore the issue of street closures was not as important but the prime issue was cost. She then elaborated further upon anticipated costs which would significantly outweigh any income achieved from the event. Therefore other options had been explored ie delivery of the event independently through Explore Northamptonshire or, at their request, the Showmen's Guild. or a combination of the two. She advised that discussions were continuing with regard to the issue.

Councillor Boss then asked another question of Councillor J Lill. He asked when the Events Working Party would next meet for a de-brief on the Balloon Festival and he also asked for a financial statement on the viability of the concerts. Councillor J Lill advised that there had been a de-brief on 6 September and that a further Events Working Party was being arranged for the week commencing 17 October and that full details of the financial situation would be available for discussion at that meeting.

Councillor Wire then asked a question of Councillor Larratt as Leader stating that he was sure the Leader shared disappointment at the resignation of the Town Centre Manager. He asked whether the Leader was aware of the Town Centre Manager's intention to leave the position and was the administration committed to the Town Centre Partnership. He asked that the position be filled as soon as possible with a

quality applicant. Councillor Larratt stated that he was as surprised as everyone else when the Town Centre Manager resigned but could confirm that the administration were committed to the work of the Town Centre Partnership and had been in discussion with Board Members as to how to go forward with the replacement. In the interim an appointment had been made within the Council namely Kath Suer so that the ongoing commitments could be progressed. She had taken up her new role following discussion with some of the external Board members.

Councillor Wire then asked a question of the Portfolio Holder for Housing stating that residents in Melbourne, Abbey and Devonshire House had experienced difficulty in parking in the allocated parking bays. The parking spaces were taken up by non-residents. This was also a town-wide problem and Councillor Wire asked the Portfolio Holder whether he would introduce a permit scheme for tenants to be policed by parking attendants, the permits could be the same design as the ones used for residents parking areas. Councillor Palethorpe stated that the problem had arisen because residents only parking had been introduced in the streets around those particular flats which had resulted in motorists using the parking area at the front of Melbourne House whilst they shopped or went to work. Indeed the problem was one that prevailed throughout the town and the Housing Officers had received complaints from some residents and were attempting to pursue them although this was a difficult task. He then briefly outlined the parking available in the area commenting that it was unlikely that a residents permit only could be implemented because he believed the land was housing and not highways but that he would undertake further investigation regarding land ownership and involve local Councillors as well.

Councillor Pritchard then asked a question of Councillor Hadland stating that the issue of the market had been dragging on for over a year now and the take up of stalls was running at an all time low. There was uncertainty in the town and amongst market traders. She asked whether the administration was committed to the future of the market, when a decision would be made on the new layout and whether the final layout would be put before the traders and general public for information and comment. Finally what was the cost of Letts Wheeler as consultants on the project.

Councillor Hadland stated that yes the administration was committed to the market and the new layout would happen in two phases. It had been decided to reduce the number of stalls and an interim layout had been submitted to the Market Liaison Committee which mirrored Letts Wheeler's layout to some extent. It was hoped that this would be implemented some time in October. Letts Wheeler's proposals were subject to consultation hopefully in October and it was anticipated that the public consultation be as far and wide reaching as possible. The costs for preparing the scheme and consultation was £18,000 and to date £17,000 had been spent.

Councillor Simpson then asked a question of Councillor J Lill as to whether she was aware that with the new Licensing Laws some of the Councils had decided to automatically inform Ward Councillors of any new applications or changes to licences in their Ward and why had Northampton Borough Council chosen not to do

this.

Councillor J Lill stated that she would raise this with officers.

Councillor Simpson then asked a question of Councillor Caswell. He asked whether following the recent announcement by First Bus of the withdrawal of the number 7 and number 50B bus services provided to Southfields, Eastfield and Weston Favell areas and reductions in other services could he advise what action had been taken to alleviate the hardship to residents that those changes would cause.

Councillor Caswell advised that route subsidies to bus companies were now the responsibility of the County Council. However the Ward members and himself as Portfolio Holder had been advised of the service cuts and as a result the County Council had been informed of the Council's concern that important services for the community were at risk. Furthermore the withdrawal of service 7 would be raised at the Area Partnership 5 meeting on 4 October 2005.

Councillor Roy asked a question of Councillor Hadland as the relevant Portfolio Holder whether he could give details on the cost of Commission Consultancy for 2004/5 and Commission Consultancy for this financial year to date. She asked whether he could also give details resources on consultancy in the same period of time.

Councillor Hadland advised he had been unable to obtain accurate figures in time for the meeting but that he would let Councillor Roy have details in writing within the next couple of days.

7.CPA - VALUE FOR MONEY REPORT

Councillor Hadland presented for consideration the final draft of the Value for Money Report, copies of which were circulated at the meeting together with a list of changes that had been made from the previously circulated draft which had been e-mailed to members the previous week. He advised that the Report met the criteria for submission and followed the template dictated by the Audit Commission. It was noted that the deadline for the submission was the following day.

RESOLVED: That the Report be approved for submission to the Audit Commission.

9.RECENT NOTICES OF MOTION

The Council received a report, copies of which had been circulated detailing the progress on recent Notices of Motion.

10.RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE

Councillor Larratt advised that subject to the Council addressing and identifying key issues the ODPM had said the Council's proposals were credible. There would be close scrutiny through the Government Monitoring Board. Specific actions had been put in place by the Corporate Mangers to focus on sickness absence. The

improvements in Revenues and Benefits had been noted and thanks were conveyed to all those involved. The whole of the Senior Management Team was now in place with the Chief Executive, three Directors and ten Corporate Managers all of whom now had portfolios. Details of this had been sent out on the Borough Council's Intranet. With regard to the Root and Branch Review, the statutory consultation period had now ended and meetings had taken place with the Unions to discuss remaining issues. The final structure was due to be determined by 30 September. It was noted that the Service Plan process would commence at the beginning of October. Phase 2 of the Councillor Programme had commenced to underpin arrangements for the new political structures. The programme had been modified to take account of the ministers' requirements. Furthermore, the programme was being made as accessible for all as possible. Councillor Larratt then briefly referred to the situation concerning the Northampton Town Football Club and advised that the Improvement Board would be updated at its next meeting in terms of ensuring the Club's survival and continuity in the Town. Councillor Barron requested that in future all three party leaders receive a briefing on any issues such as the Northampton Town Football Club, This point was duly noted. A motion was put that a regular update on Sixfields be brought to the Improvement Board. This was agreed

11.PROPORTIONALITY REPORT

Councillor Larratt presented for consideration the Report on Committee Proportionality and other matters which was duly seconded by Councillor Hadland. He advised that there were some issues that still required clarification in terms of Labour Group membership on the Planning Committee, the Labour Group's nomination for the Tree Panel and nominations for the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Planning and Licensing Committees. It was noted that the membership of the Local Joint Committee needed to be confirmed. It was noted that with regard to Planning Committee, the proportionality allowed for a total of twelve members with the political makeup being five Conservative, four Liberal Democrat, two Labour and one additional seat, possibly independent. Councillor Concannon sought further clarification in terms of his representation on any of the committees commenting that he would be grateful to have some consultation with the other political parties on this. Some discussion on the Report then ensued, it being noted that although there were six portfolios on the Cabinet, there were actually seven members as one of the portfolios was shared by two people. It was noted, however that there would be clear areas of responsibility between the two members within the relevant portfolio. It was noted that with regard to Civic matters that Councillor Woods should replace Councillor Church. In terms of the appointment of Chairs and Deputies to the Planning and Licensing Committees, Councillor Woods proposed that Councillor Taylor be the Chair of Licensing Committee and Councillor Yates be the Deputy Chair on Planning. Councillor Barron proposed that Councillor Boss be Chair of Planning Committee with Councillor Wire as Deputy Chair of Licensing Committee. Councillor Larratt then proposed that Councillor Malpas be appointed as second Deputy Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Other issues that were raised that required further consideration included the commencement times in terms of the Committee Cycle and the frequency of Planning Committees. It was noted that some meetings were initially scheduled to start at 7:00 pm because member

development was due to take place beforehand but this was only a temporary measure.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the Proportionality and Other Matters Report be received and noted and the allocation of seats on the Council's committees be approved as detailed.
 - (2) That the Committee Cycle be approved and that delegated powers be granted to the Improvement Board to settle the issues to the Planning Committee, Tree Panel, the position of the Independent and changes to Procedural Rule 5.2.
 - (3) That the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Licensing and Planning Committees as nominated above be approved.

12A APPOINTMENT OF SECTION 151 OFFICER

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive seeking approval to an interim appointment of a Section 151 Officer.

RESOLVED: That the Report be received and that the Council appoint Allison Betts as the Council's Interim Section 151 Officer pending a permanent appointment to the post.

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

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 9.05pm