

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON MONDAY THE TWENTY THIRD DAY OF JANUARY 2006 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

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

1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held on 28 November 2006 were signed by the Mayor.

2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Larratt, Massey and Taylor.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

ACTION

The Mayor announced that she had attended a 104th birthday that day at Nicholls House and commented on how all the residents liked it there and to the fact that it would be very sad if such a good facility was lost to the Town.

The Mayor then referred to the annual Mince Pie Run, which had taken place before Christmas, with the Mayor visiting hospitals, residential care homes, etc, throughout the Town for mince pies.

She then congratulated those members of staff involved with the Street Scene who had gained an NVQ 1 qualification commenting that it was commendable that staff were making these efforts in improving services.

She then referred to the improvements in benefits and placed on record congratulations to those staff concerned.

On another positive note, the Mayor advised that she had opened the Northampton Sustainable Expo Exhibition at Sixfields the previous

week and called on Councillor Caswell who wished to say a few words in connection with this event. Councillor Caswell on behalf of the Council placed on record thanks to those staff who had organised the event which had been so well received that delegates were asking if there could be a repeat event in two year's time.

The Mayor advised that the Leader of the Council had confirmed in writing his resignation as Leader of the Council and as such appointments of Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council needed to be determined as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Malpas then proposed and Councillor Hill seconded Councillor Hadland as Leader of the Council. It was agreed that appointment of the Deputy Leader would be taken at the same time and Councillor Hadland proposed and Councillor Tavener seconded that Councillor Palethorpe be appointed as Deputy Leader of the Council.

Following some debate, the motion was carried and Councillor Hadland was duly appointed as Leader of the Council with Councillor Palethorpe as Deputy Leader of the Council.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES/QUESTIONS.

ACTION

RESOLVED: That Mr Adams, Mr Green, Mr Davison and Mr Boys be permitted to address the Council in respect of Item 6, Notice of Motion, regarding Northamptonshire County Council budget in terms of youth services.

At this juncture, the addresses from those who had so indicated were heard.

Messrs Adams, Green, Davison and Boys all spoke in support of the motion as printed on the Agenda, it being noted that Mr Green was speaking on behalf of Northampton Trade Union Council. All expressed their deep concerns over the proposed cuts in the draft Northamptonshire County Council's budget and their impact on youth services and the impact this would have on the County, particularly as it targeted the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in society. The view was expressed that the County Council needed to consider other alternatives to find a solution. Particular concern was expressed over the proposed closure of Grendon Hall which had provided a wide ranging spectrum of facilities for the community for many decades. The addressees therefore implored the Council to get the County

Council to reconsider these proposed cuts.

At this juncture it was agreed to consider the notice of motion under Item 6 regarding the youth services as the next item.

NB Councillors Church, Lane, Edwards, Eldred, Malpas, Tavener, Hill, Wire, Patterson, Glynane, Hollis, Yates, B Hoare, Roy and The Mayor declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in the item.

Councillor Marriott moved and Councillor Roy seconded that Procedural Rule 3.4 be suspended to allow the following motion to be debated.

The motion was carried.

Councillor Marriott then moved and Councillor Roy seconded the following motion:

“This Council deplores the proposed cuts in investment and the proposed tendering out of youth services in the draft Northamptonshire County Council budget.

This Council believes that any cuts in provision or action that may produce instability in the operation of the service will result in:

Potential increase in crime and disorder with reduced diversion facilities.

Larger impacts on those young people from families least able to afford alternatives.

Longer term implications on the well being of young people in the Borough area.

The Council agrees to submit to the consultation on the County Council’s budget its significant concerns on the issue.”

Councillor Church then moved and Councillor Yates seconded an amendment to the motion as follows:

That the existing text be retained and that the following be added to the end of the above motion:

“In particular this Council recognises the valuable opportunities that Grendon Hall provides to young people in Northamptonshire.

This Council believes that alternative funding arrangements for the retention of Grendon Hall have not been fully explored and that Grendon Hall could provide an even better facility, for even more young people, with a modest capital investment.

This Council does not support the proposed closure of Grendon Hall and requests the County Council to explore alternative options for its retention and improvement.”

Councillor Marriott, accepted the amendment.

The motion as amended was then duly debated, voted upon and carried to become the substantive motion.

A vote was then taken upon the substantive motion and carried as set out below:

“This Council deplors the proposed cuts in investment and the proposed tendering out of youth services in the draft Northamptonshire County Council budget.

This Council believes that any cuts in provision or action that may produce instability in the operation of the service will result in:

Potential increases in crime and disorder with reduced diversion facilities.

Larger impacts on those young people from families least able to afford alternatives.

Longer term implications on the well being of young people in the Borough area.

The Council agrees to submit to the consultation on the County Council’s budget its significant concerns on the issue.

In particular, this Council recognises the valuable opportunities that Grendon Hall provides to young people in Northamptonshire.

This Council believes that alternative funding arrangements for the retention of Grendon Hall have not been fully explored and that Grendon Hall could provide an even better facility for even more young people with a modest capital investment.

This Council does not support the proposed closure of Grendon Hall and requests the County Council to explore alternative options for its retention and improvement.”

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

ACTION

Councillor B Hoare asked a question regarding the fact that in the last

two years the presentation of the Council's Best Value Assessment had been presented to this Council at the very last minute. This had ensured compliance with Government timetables but he considered that it had not facilitated proper scrutiny of the Best Value Process. He asked whether the Portfolio Holder could advise if a timetable for producing and scrutinising this year's Best Value Report had been set and when Councillors would be provided with a copy of that timetable. Councillor Palethorpe responded to the question stating that the first draft was due to go to Improvement Board on 24 May, an updated draft would then be circulated to all Councillors for consideration/comment by 29 May followed by consideration by Overview & Scrutiny on 14 June, Improvement Board again on 15 June and full Council on 26 June. This would then ensure that the Best Value Performance Plan was submitted by the statutory deadline of 30 June. In discussing the timetable it was suggested that perhaps this was an issue that could be discussed by the Constitutional Review Working Group.

Councillor Marriott then asked a question regarding the position over the closure of the cyber-café at Briar Hill, a building owned by the Borough Council. He asked whether the Council had withdrawn funds from the project and if so, why, as the centre offered a valuable service to the community. He asked if there had been consultation over this with all users and partners. Councillor Hadland briefly outlined the current position, it being noted that Northampton Borough Council were not responsible or accountable specifically for the project only as part of the Community Safety Partnership and as owners of the building. However, it became clear as the project continued that the Youth Service were not achieving the required results and, in order to utilise the Centre, a number of other groups began to utilise the facilities. Ultimately the Community Safety Partnership had no further funding to keep the Centre going and there was no alternative but to close it for the time being. However it was acknowledged that the area was in desperate need of a community facility/ community development. In response to a further question from Councillor Marriott for further information and background details, Councillor Hadland undertook to do this.

Cllr
Hadland

At this juncture Councillor Hadland took the opportunity to place on record thanks to Councillor Larratt for all his work and efforts during his time as Leader of the Council.

Councillor Wire then asked a question about the closure of Nicholls House Residential Care Home which had eighteen sheltered housing units within the complex owned by the Borough Council. He asked whether Councillor Mere could advise of the future of the unit and was he aware of the distress being caused to tenants of these units who were both elderly and vulnerable. He further asked what consultation there had been with the Primary Care Trust or the Health

Authority and when Councillor Miah had last visited the premises. Councillor Miah advised that he had in fact visited the premises that day and was in discussions and would be working with Officers and the County Council to look at options for the future. He stated that he would keep Councillor Wire updated it being noted that he had a further meeting with relevant parties the following day.

Cllr Miah

6. NOTICE OF MOTION

7. PROGRESS ON RECOVERY PLAN

ACTION

Councillor Hadland advised of the Ministerial visit on 20 December with the three group leaders. The Minister was satisfied with progress so far. Root & Branch had been carried out on target and appeals dealt with by the end of January. Phase 1 of the benefits had been completed on time over the Christmas period and work was now proceeding on clearing the backlog. The final phase of the Government's Audit Committee had been established and had met twice. In terms of the budget there had been a two-day session over 12 and 13 January to receive the figures and arrive at a consensus budget. A consensus budget had in fact emerged at the end of the two days and now the next stage was the consultation period following which there would be a special Cabinet on 16 February for onward submission to full Council on 27 February.

Date of meetings to be noted by all.

8. POLITICAL STRUCTURES - REPORT OF SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL

ACTION

Councillor Hadland presented for consideration a report "Political Structures and Miscellaneous Matters" which sought approval to implement some further changes following on from the major review of the Council's Political Structures and Governance Arrangements at its meeting on 29 September 2005. In discussing the report, Councillor Perkins suggested that Recommendations 4 and 5 be agreed but that the remaining recommendations 1 to 3 be referred back to the Constitutional Review Working Group for consideration. Councillor Barron suggested that in addition following consideration by the Constitutional Review Working Group the matters be referred on to the Improvement Board and Full Council accordingly.

Constitutional Review Working Group/Imp Board

Councillor Barron also raised an issue regarding addressing Planning Committee and the need to accommodate representations from the MPs (possibly in a way similar to that afforded to the Ward Councillors). Councillor Lane commented that he chaired the Planning Task and Finish Group and that this was an issue that the group were intending to discuss.

Cllr Lane

RESOLVED: (1) That nominations to the Constitutional Review Working Group be made through the Party

Whips and the timetable for the commencement of the Constitutional Review be noted. That it be noted that the Liberal Democrats nominations to this Group be Councillors Perkins and Church.

Party Whips

- (2) That recommendations 4 and 5 be approved.
- (3) That recommendations 1 to 3 as detailed below be referred to the Constitutional Review Working Group for consideration and then to the Improvement Board and Full Council in February:
 - 1 Changes to allow delegated decision making by Portfolio Holders to take place in non-formally constituted meetings unless members of the public or Councillors indicate in writing that they would wish a public meeting to consider an item identified on a published list.
 - 2 Delegate to the Improvement Board powers to determine the format and structure of future Council meetings.
 - 3 Delegate powers to the Solicitor to the Council to make amendments to the Constitution to enable the implementation of recommendations 1 and 2 above.
- (4) That with regard to the issues outlined under (3) above the delegated decision making be referred back to Council in March and the remaining two issues be referred back to Council within three months.

Constitutional
Review
Working
Group/Imp
Board

9. RECENT NOTICES OF MOTION

ACTION

The Council received a report, copies of which had been circulated, detailing the progress on recent notices of motion. Councillor Markham referred to his request at the last meeting for an update on Northampton citizens, which was still outstanding. Comment was made about the lack of progress on the market square to which Councillor Hadland responded. He noted that there had been some slippage.

Leader

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

ACTION

The Mayor advised that the following should be considered as a matter of urgency – Local Area Agreements.

Councillor Hope declared an interest in this issue in a private capacity and not as a Councillor and therefore did not take part in any discussion.

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

Councillor Hadland then presented the report for consideration, copies of which had been circulated, and which had been considered by the Improvement Board the previous week. The purpose of the report was to update and inform Council on the latest developments on the Local Area Agreement for Northamptonshire, to propose modifications to the proposals relating to governance of the agreement and to propose a process for signing off the final agreement. In discussing the report, Councillor Glynane referred to Recommendation 2 which recommended that this Council's representation on the Strategic Board for the LAA be increased from one to two Councillors. However he suggested that this should be an increase from one to three Councillors to reflect the political makeup of this Authority.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and the recommendations contained therein be as follows with Recommendation 3 being amended to increase representation to three Councillors:

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That it be requested that this Council's representation on the Strategic Board for the LAA be increased from one to three Councillors.
- (3) That it be requested that Council be represented on each of the Block Boards
- (4) That a representative for the Shadow Strategic Board be nominated.
- (5) That Improvement Board at its meeting on 16 February consider the delegated authority to agree the final proposals and then this be brought back to full Council following that discussion.

Imp Board

The meeting concluded at 9:10 pm.

