

## MINUTES

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

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

**COUNCILLORS:** Allen, Barron, Boss, Caswell, Church, Conroy, Duncan, Edwards, Eldred, Evans, Flavell, Glynane, Hadland, Hill, B.Hoare, M. Hoare, Hollis, Hope, Lane, Larratt, C.Lill, J. Lill, Mc.Cutcheon Malpas, B.Markham, I. Markham, Marriott, Mason, Massey, Matthews, Palethorpe, Patterson, Perkins, Robinson, Roy, Simpson, Tavener, Taylor, Wire, Woods and Yates

### 1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held on 23 January 2006 amended to include Councillor Hollis in the list of those present were signed by the Mayor.

### 2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Acock, Crake, Miah, Pritchard and Stewart.

### 3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that she had agreed to take, as a matter of urgency, an urgent motion with regard to Delapre Abbey and that this would be considered after the other business on the Agenda i.e. the Budget/Council Tax, the HRA Budget and the Political Structures had been dealt with and that, in view of the large number of people present for the Delapre Abbey issue, that part of the meeting would take place in the Great Hall.

The Mayor then welcomed Caroline Johnson, Senior Sports Development Officer, and Natalie Lawrence Sports Development Officer to the meeting and presented them with their QUEST Accreditation Award in recognition of achievements and continued improvement.. Caroline then informed members about the award.

The Mayor announced that Northampton Borough Council had come first in this year's Good Citizen Dog Scheme annual awards run by the Kennel Club which rewards organisations that worked towards promoting good dog ownership. She welcomed the winning team from Environmental Health who were present at the meeting namely Caroline Stranding, Andy Cullinane and Claire Smith and presented them with their award.

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

That Mr Adams be permitted to address the Council in respect of Item 6, Housing Revenue Account Budget 2006/2007.

#### 5. BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX FOR 2006/2007

Councillor Hadland as Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder delivered his Budget Statement which he commended to the Council. He stated that the general feedback on the Budget was that the consultation exercise had been a success and that next year even wider and earlier consultation was planned. All three political parties had met on 12 and 13 January to reach an agreement on the Budget and a consensus was duly reached to enable the £790,000 funding gap to be closed. Councillor Perkins, on behalf of the Opposition, and Councillor Barron on behalf of the Labour Group then made their comments upon the Budget Statement accordingly.

Councillor Hadland then moved and Councillor Perkins seconded the Budget and Council Tax Report 2006/2007 for approval. In so doing Councillor Hadland drew attention to the fact that Recommendation 4 had been amended to add the wording, "With the exception of paragraphs 2(F) to 2(I), 3 and 4". He explained that because the County Council had been unable to agree their budget, it had not been possible to agree their Council Tax precept which had a knock on effect with the rest of the County setting their Council Tax. As such it was not possible to set the whole of the Council Tax this evening and this would need to be set at a later date hence the amendment to Recommendation 4. It was noted that the County Council had applied to the Court to have the injunction against them lifted and in the meantime meetings were taking place across the County between the Chief Executives of the various Borough and District Councils to keep updated on the situation and establish a consensus on the way forward.

It was noted that it would be necessary to hold a special meeting of the Council at the appropriate time to set the Council Tax. This would not require full attendance as long as the meeting was quorate.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be received and the recommendations as detailed below be agreed:-

That Council

1. Note the advice of the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) set out in the report particularly in relation to the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
2. Note the results of the budget consultation as set out in the report and detailed at Appendix C.
3. Considers and approves the Revenue Budget as laid down in Appendix A for 2006/2007.

4. Consequently agree the formal budget and agree the calculation of the Council Tax base and Council Tax determinations set out in the Resolution in Appendix B of the report with the exception of paragraphs 2(f) to 2(i), 3 and 4.
5. Authorise the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Financial Strategy and Democratic Services, to make any adjustments to cash limits necessary in line with the reasons set out in paragraph 2.3 to implement the Budget decision of the Council before the 1 April 2006 subject to the overall cash limit remaining unchanged.
6. Instruct Corporate Directors and Corporate Managers to contain expenditure for 2006/2007 within the service area cash limits set out in Appendix A.

## **6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2006/2007**

Mr Adams addressed the Council referring to page 3 of the report which mentioned the HRA Investment Fund and the fact that there was an amount of £3m within the budget available for investment in 2005/2006 and he hoped that this would be dealt with in consultation with the tenants. He commented that he was glad to see that the HRA had been forecast up to 2009 and hoped that the fourth option would be in place after that time. He expressed the view that both Councillors Palethorpe and Miah were supporting the fourth option and thanked them for this and also thanked the Liberal Democrats for supporting the fourth option all the way through. He hoped that the Labour Group would support this option also.

Councillor Palethorpe then presented the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2006/2007 report. He clarified Mr Adams point regarding the fourth option in terms of both his and Councillor Miah's position regarding this. He then drew attention to the supporting people allowable increase commenting that a 2.5% increase had been budgeted for but it was now known that this was a 2% increase.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be received and the recommendations contained therein be agreed and that the position regarding the supporting people allowable increase be noted.

## **7. POLITICAL STRUCTURES - REPORT OF SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL**

Councillor Barron presented the Political Structures and Miscellaneous Matters Report asking Council to note the progress on the Constitutional Review Working Party's consideration of the matters referred to it from the last Council meeting. It was noted that a further report would be submitted to Council at its meeting on 27

March.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be received and noted.

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

As referred to at the start of the meeting it was noted that the Mayor had agreed as a matter of urgency an urgent motion on Delapre Abbey and that this would take place in the Great Hall following a ten minute adjournment.

The meeting of the Council was then adjourned.

The meeting resumed in the Great Hall.

NB Councillor Larratt declared an interest in the issue as an employee of the HSE

URGENT MOTION – DELAPRE PARK

Councillor Glynane moved and Councillor M Hoare seconded the following motion:-

“This Council notes the concern of many residents about the bunding works currently in progress in Delapre Park and round the Delapre Golf Centre.

It notes that:

1. Planning permission has been granted for these works and this cannot be withdrawn.
2. An archaeologist has been consulted on the works, has observed work in progress and has reported satisfaction with the work to the County Archaeological Service.
3. NBC’s Building Control staff have inspected and continue to monitor works in progress including the location and content of the bunds and have liaised with and will continue to liaise with the Health & Safety Executive on safety issues.
4. NBC have provided a detailed response to questions raised by residents’ groups on the processes and consultation leading up to the construction of the bund.
5. Cllr Glynane (Ward Councillor) has attended public meetings, met with NBC officers and representatives of the golf club and contractors and has sought meetings with the Delapre Park Action Group.

It further notes the concerns of residents regarding:

1. Health and Safety issues relating to the workings.
2. The potential damage to archaeological remains – particularly related to the Battlefield site.
3. The destruction of sight-lines across the park from London Road.
4. Damage to the beauty and amenity of the park as a facility for local people and as a setting for Delapre Abbey.
5. The perceived failure of NBC to consult sufficiently with residents before work commenced.

This Council resolves to:

1. Set up a consultation group comprising Delapre Ward Councillors, the Portfolio Holder, NBC Officers and up to three community representatives.
2. Request the Portfolio Holder to investigate urgently reducing the size of the bund along the London Road boundary (i.e. that part of the works directly within NBC's control) to maintain sight lines to Delapre Abbey and across the park from London Road without significantly compromising the defensive characteristics of the bund.
3. Confirm with the County Archaeological service and/or the History Department of the University of Northampton that historic features and artefacts are adequately protected and to publish a report on findings to date.
4. Continue to ensure, consistency with the legal requirements that no inappropriate materials have been used in the construction of the bund.
5. Ask English Heritage to add Delapre Abbey, its gardens and part of the park (excluding the golf course) to its Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, and further, the Borough Council considers designating Delapre Abbey, its gardens and part of the park as a Conservation Area.”

Three representatives from the Delapre Park Action Group then addressed the Council, Mr Graham Mills, Mr Allen Scott and Mr Murphy. On behalf of the Action Group they expressed their deep concerns over the bunding works that were being carried out and the damage that was being done to Delapre Park land as a result. Particular concerns included the height of the bunding, the damage that was being caused to Delapre parkland, the way in which the contractors were carrying out the works and the origins of the material being deposited on site for the bunding.

Comment was made that a substantial number of trees had been removed from the rookery despite the fact that it had originally been said that no trees would be removed. They asked that the parkland be returned to its former state and that consideration be given to designating Delapre Abbey, its gardens and the park as a conservation area. Further comments were made regarding the conditions imposed on the planning consent for the works and the view expressed that some of these conditions had been breached. Generally the Action Group were opposing the motion, one of the main reasons being on the wording on one of the resolutions and in particular the use of the word investigate. The Group were requesting that the size of the bunding be reduced.

The motion was then duly debated.

Councillor Marriott then moved and it was seconded that pursuant to Procedural Rule 6.3.4 the motion be referred back to Cabinet.

The amendment was discussed and voted upon and lost.

At this juncture, given the complexity and strength of feeling on the matter, the Mayor allowed a further seven members of the public to speak on the matter before the debate on the motion continued. Mr G Walker, Mr Kalyan, Mr Pickering, Mr Rawlings, a representative from the archaeology unit, a representative from Friends of Delapre Abbey and Mrs Connell then all addressed the Council reaffirming the views expressed by the three speakers earlier as well as mentioning that some important archaeological finds had been exposed during the earth works and the point being made that this site could be an important Roman site.

Councillor Simpson then proposed and Councillor Hadland seconded a further amendment to the motion that Resolution 2 of the motion be amended to request the Portfolio Holder to investigate reducing the size or removing the bunding.

At this juncture the meeting was adjourned to consider this amendment.

The meeting resumed.

Councillor Simpson advised that with deep regret he had to withdraw the amendment upon legal advice.

The motion as originally proposed by Councillor Glynane was put to the vote and the motion was carried.

The Leader assured that he would do all that he could to move this issue forward and asked that representatives of the organisations stay behind so that the consultation group could be set up at the earliest opportunity and he gave further assurance that the whole of the Cabinet would be working on this matter in order to achieve a satisfactory result.

The meeting concluded at 9.48 pm.

