

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON MONDAY THE 22ND DAY OF JANUARY 2007 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Acock, Allen, Beardsworth, Boss, Caswell, Church, Conroy, Crake, Duncan, Edwards, Eldred, Evans, Flavell, Glynane, Hadland, Hill, B. Hoare, M. Hoare, Hollis, Hope, Larratt, J. Lill, McCutcheon, Malpas, Massey, Miah, B. Markham, Marriott, Mason, Matthews, Palethorpe, Patterson, Perkins, Roy, Simpson, Tavener, Taylor, Wire, Woods and Yates.

1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Council held on 27 November 2006 were signed by the Mayor.

2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barron, Lane, I Markham and Pritchard.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor stated that he had paid the usual mayoral visit on Christmas Day to the children's wards at Northampton General Hospital and distributed advent calendars and chocolate coins which had been donated by Marks and Spencer. He stated that he had also visited the maternity wing of Northampton General Hospital where he had distributed gift vouchers.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES.

RESOLVED: That Mr Varnsvery be permitted to address the Council in respect of the Notice of Motion item 12 regarding "Safer Communities".

The Mayor advised that with regard to Deputations/Public Addresses under the rules of the new Constitution members of the public would have to give prior notification of their intention to address at full Council and would also only be permitted to address on the item Notices of Motion. Furthermore the Constitution required notification of any addressees by twelve noon on the working day before Council.

5. QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that this again was the first time that this item had appeared on

the agenda under the new Constitution and briefly explained how Question Time would operate. He stated that Question Time would allow members of the public to ask questions of Councillors in responsible positions such as Portfolio Holders and Chairs of Non-Regulatory Committees. Again questions would need to be previously submitted both from members of the public and Councillors five clear working days before the Council meeting. In accordance with the Constitution copies of the questions would be circulated prior to the commencement of the meeting. There would be a 30 minute time slot for this item and any questions that had not been answered within the time slot would be responded to in writing. It was noted that the Mayor could use his discretion to vary the order of questions should he so wish but normally they would be considered in the order in which they were received with members questions being considered first followed by the questions from members of the public.

- (A) Councillor B Markham then asked a question of Councillor Flavell. He stated that the Street Care Team and Neighbourhood Wardens had helped achieve a reduction in the time it took to remove fly tipping. However there were still areas of the town where such anti-social behaviour was endemic and teams were out two to three times a week to deal with dumped rubbish and items of furniture. A small minority of couldn't care less individuals were adding to the cost of the service which was paid for by hard working Council Tax payers. He asked if the Portfolio Holder could tell him how many prosecutions had taken place or were pending as a result of Council monitoring on site where fly tipping was a common occurrence. Councillor Flavell stated in the first instance that roadshows and the schools programme to deliver education first was being carried out whilst fixed penalty notices were issued to those caught in the act of littering. However due to the high cost of prosecution there had been difficulties in getting people to court to get the fines paid. There were also other factors in the issuing of the fixed penalty notices such as the threat of physical/verbal abuse to staff working alone and therefore a set of protocols had been put together to see that the tickets got issued but staff did not feel under threat. One of the issues that was highlighted was that the wardens needed to foster relationships with the local residents. Northampton Borough Council's Legal Department was now in contact with some London Boroughs who had an excellent record in prosecuting persistent offenders and litterers. With the introduction of the Clean Neighbourhood Act 2005 all the paperwork surrounding enforcement has had to be changed. This was now completed and it was intended to run an anti-littering campaign whereby a number of staff would be put into a bad area and issue tickets to all of those who were flaunting the law.
- (B) Councillor Markham then asked a question of Councillor Larratt as the Portfolio Holder stating that in the summer and autumn of 2006 a service review of area partnerships and community forums was carried out by a Task and Finish Group of officers and Councillors. The report was published in October and included recommendations to improve the workings of both and to integrate the work of area partnerships with the new neighbourhood managed areas set up under the local agreement. He asked what was the current status of the report and when would the recommendations be discussed by the Portfolio Holder or

the Cabinet. Councillor Larratt advised that the management of the Area Partnerships and Community Forums was transferred from Community Engagement to Regeneration and Growth in October 2006. The service review report was concluded in October 2006 and would be discussed by senior managers following which a recommendation would be made to the Portfolio Holder. In response to a supplementary Councillor Larratt advised that the transfer had led to some delay and also there had been other priorities such as the CPA report, the budget etc but that he would be pursuing this accordingly.

- (C) Councillor Allen asked Councillor Flavell as the Portfolio Holder whether she could provide an update on the progress to deal with pollution levels above national limits at identified traffic hotspots such as those in St James and Victoria Promenade. She also asked what progress had been made toward reducing carbon emissions around these hotspots in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council. Councillor Flavell advised that the St James and Victoria Promenade areas were declared as air quality management areas in April 2005 due to levels of nitrogen dioxide exceeding the national objective standard. Since then the Council had been monitoring these sites using real time analysers supported by a network of diffusion tubes. Public consultation by way of leaflet drops to all properties in those areas had been undertaken together with wider publicity through the local press and radio. The problem was due to traffic and therefore the Council had worked with the County Council to identify steps to reduce pollution from traffic. The County had introduced a traffic management system and improvement to the public transport system which in the short term appeared to have led to a reduction in the nitrogen dioxide levels. The other key influence on the St James area was the recent opening of the Edgar Mobbs relief road. However it was too soon to comment on the effect this road had on air quality. In addition the Council was due to complete an air quality action plan by February 2007 which would look at other possible measures to improve air quality. Once completed there would be further public consultation. Carbon emissions had not been addressed within the remit of local air quality management. However issues relating to energy and climate change would be addressed under the forthcoming sustainable development strategy. The recently signed Nottingham Declaration underlined the Council's commitment to reducing its environmental impact and was a key element of this strategy.
- (D) Councillor Roy asked Councillor Hadland as Leader of the Council whether he could give details of the risk analysis that was performed in taking the decision to allow only a two week consultation period for the budget. Councillor Hadland stated that public consultation on policy issues was regarded as extremely important and for that reason there was wide consultation over a relatively short period. He stated that also great care would be taken to capture the issues before Council policy in its final budget shape at Council on 13 February 2007 was formulated. A decision on this approach and timetable was not taken lightly and he was aware of the level of public concern that would be aroused. After extensive discussion with other political groups and officers during the latter part of 2006 about the challenges facing the Council it was agreed that this approach was appropriate. The consultation process had

been intensive and had gone much further than simply meeting our statutory obligations. He stated that they had positively sought to engage as wide a cross section of the public and various interest groups as possible albeit within a limited time frame. In the final analysis the Council had to prepare a balanced budget within the statutory deadline. Risk analysis and management was an important aspect of all the Council's work. He was conscious of the compressed timetable for consultation and the challenge set but took the view that it was workable. Councillor Roy thanked the Leader for his response and asked a supplementary question in what investment had been done in terms of quality impact assessment in terms of the disadvantage of having a consultation of only two weeks. Councillor Hadland stated that this required a detailed response and that he would write to her shortly.

- (E) The Mayor advised that a question had been received from a member of the public who was not present and as such a written response would be sent to that person accordingly.

6. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Hadland as Leader of the Council stated that under the new Constitution this was the first time that this item Cabinet Member Presentations had appeared on the agenda and would be a standing item on future ordinary Council meeting agendas. He stated that the purpose of this item was to enable Cabinet members to give an update on their respective portfolios and for members of the Council to ask questions on those presentations accordingly. On this occasion he stated that he and Councillor Palethorpe would be making brief presentations on their portfolios. He then gave a brief update on the main issues in relation to his portfolio as Leader of the Council namely the CPA and the budget. Councillor Palethorpe then made his presentation touching upon the pay and grading review and customer focussed services. At the end of each presentation members asked questions relevant to those presentations.

7. PRESENTATION ON PAY AND GRADING REVIEW - (REPORT HEREWITH)

Councillor Palethorpe introduced this item referring to the paper, which had been circulated stating that the Pay and Grading Review was a Government Directive and that it was a very complicated issue. The report covered the background to the Pay & Grading Review and outlined the current situation nationally and at Northampton Borough Council. H Crabtree, Corporate Manager of Human Resources, then made his presentation on the Pay and Grading Review which set out the implications of the review, the national picture, Northampton Borough Council's position and the way forward.

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

8. COUNCIL TAX BASE

Councillor Hadland presented the report for the Council Tax Base for the year 2007/08 which was seconded by Councillor Palethorpe. He commented that

Wootton Parish was now Wootton and East Hunsbury.

- RESOLVED:** (1) That the calculation of Northampton Borough Council's Tax Base for the year 2007/08 and the report for the calculation of Northampton Borough Council's Tax Base for the year 2007/08 be approved.
- (2) The calculation of Northampton Borough Council's Tax Base for the year 2007/08 under the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI2003/4012) be adopted
- (3) That the calculation of tax bases for 2007/08 for the following parishes namely Billing, Collingtree, Duston, Great Houghton, Hardingstone, Upton, Wootton and East Hunsbury, Northampton (unparished) be approved.
- (4) That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 as amended the figure calculated for the tax base for the year 2007/08 shall be 64,844 (2006/07 – 64,193).

9. APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE - (REPORT TO FOLLOW)

Councillor Hadland presented the report which was seconded by Councillor Woods regarding the appointment of a Corporate Director and Section 151 Officer.

RESOLVED: That the appointment of Isabell Proctor as a Corporate Director and as the Council's Section 151 Officer be confirmed.

10. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW - GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER (REPORT TO FOLLOW)

Prior to consideration of this item the Council adjourned for ten minutes to allow consideration of the paper which was tabled.

The meeting resumed.

Councillor Hadland presented the report which sought approval for submission of the ELGIN report jointly commissioned by the local authorities across Northamptonshire to be submitted to Government in response to the proposals in the Government White Paper by 25 January 2007. It was noted that this had been considered by the Northamptonshire County Council's Cabinet that day and a resolution passed setting out the principles as the way to take it forward. Also tabled was an addition to the recommendation that the Leader and Chief Executive are asked to work with the other Districts, Boroughs and County to agree Heads of Terms for a two tier solution against which a fuller document could be prepared and submitted. Councillor Woods proposed a further amendment which was seconded by Councillor Marriott, "That all three parties would be included in further

discussions to produce an agreement by 22 February 2007". Councillor Hadland accepted the amendments and formally proposed the report as amended for adoption, which was seconded by Councillor Hill.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and that Council agree to the joint submission by the local authorities in Northamptonshire of the ELGIN proposals (at Appendix 1) and that the Leader and Chief Executive be asked to work with the other Districts, Boroughs and County to agree Heads of Terms for a two tier solution against which a fuller document can be prepared and submitted and that further all three parties will be included in further discussions to produce an agreement by 22 February 2007.

11. PROGRESS ON RECENT NOTICES OF MOTION

Councillor Hadland presented a report detailing the progress on recent Council Notices of Motion.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

12. NOTICE OF MOTION

NB Councillor Church declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest in the following as a member of the Police Authority.

Councillor Simpson moved and Councillor Church seconded the following motion:-
"This Council recognises that tackling crime and fear of crime is one of the top priorities for citizens of Northampton.

The Council welcomes the development of Safer Community Teams within the town and the appointment of Police Community Support Officers as part of the expanding team that enables more visible community policing in our town.

This Council notes that the Northamptonshire Police Authority is facing a funding shortfall for 2007/08.

This Council therefore resolves to support Northamptonshire Police Authority in lobbying the Government to recognise that Northamptonshire receives less funding per head of population than the national average. In the light of this and the future growth of the town Northampton has a particular need for increased investment in community policing.

Furthermore as a member of the Safer Communities Partnership Northampton Borough Council resolves to work with the Police to support Safer Community Teams through such initiatives as providing space in Council offices/premises from which Safer Community Teams can work."

At this juncture Mr Varnsvery addressed the Council commenting that tackling crime and fear of crime was one of the top priorities for Northampton. He added

that Northampton would change beyond all recognition in the next twenty years and therefore an adequate police force was essential and he therefore asked why the force was currently in an impoverished state with services being cut. He stated that he had attended various events with the Safer Community Teams and this was very popular both with the Police and the public. It would be a retrograde step if the Safer Community Teams were to be cut. He asked that the Council support this motion.

In accordance with the new Constitution an amendment to the motion had been circulated and this was duly moved by Councillor Marriott and seconded by Councillor Roy namely that a further paragraph be inserted as the last paragraph to read "This Council further notes the recent concerns that have been expressed by the public on the current budget proposals that include cutting the anti-social behaviour unit and neighbourhood wardens. This Council believes cutting the services in this year's budget directly relating to tackling anti-social behaviour would further undermine public confidence in Northampton Borough Council. This Council agrees these priorities for retention in the forthcoming budget to go before Cabinet on 29 January 2007."

Councillor Simpson as mover of the original motion accepted the amendment.

The Mayor then advised he had just been notified of a further amendment which did not comply under the rules of the new Constitution in that it had not been circulated prior to the meeting but that he would be prepared on this first occasion to allow it to be considered.

Councillor Woods moved and Councillor Roy seconded that "this further additional amendment be not put". This was duly voted upon and carried and therefore the second amendment was ruled out of order and not taken.

The motion as amended with the insertion of an additional last paragraph as set out above was then voted upon and carried.

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

At this juncture Councillor Larratt with the leave of the Mayor gave an update on the position with regard to storm damage to trees in the Borough following last week's storms. He stated that in terms of the effects on the tree stocks Abington Park had suffered the worst damage. Also there had been damage to a number of cars in the car park at Cliftonville House. It was anticipated that all the outstanding works to repair the damage would be completed this week and he thanked all staff and partners in the private sector for their hard work and dedication in addressing these issues.

The meeting concluded at 9.10pm.

