

## MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON WEDNESDAY THE TWENTY FIRST DAY OF FEBRUARY 2007 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

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

### 1. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eldred, Hope, McCutcheon, Patterson, Stewart, Taylor and Yates.

### 2. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor advised that this was the re-convened Budget meeting of the Council, which had stood adjourned the previous week. He stated that an agenda showing the Order of Business had been tabled.

### 3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES/QUESTIONS.

The Mayor advised that as this was again a special meeting of the Council Procedural Rules (Procedural Rule 22) would again be suspended so as to allow members of the public to address the Council on the Budget item. It was noted that requests to speak had been received from following: John Morrissey, Mary Clark, Mr Adams, Tina Harvey, Ursula Wright, D Green, C Grethe and Jenny Rendall.

### 4. BUDGET 2007/08 - 2009/10 (REPORT FROM ADJOURNED MEETING)

Councillor Hadland moved and Councillor Palethorpe seconded the Budget report 2007/08 for approval. Councillor Hadland stated that the proposed Budget was based on feedback and the consultation process. He drew particular attention to Appendix 3, which set out the savings that had been recommended by Cabinet on 5 February 2007. In seconding the report Councillor Palethorpe referred to community grants and advised that some grant applicants had received notification that their grant would not be considered. He stated that this was not the case and was pleased that there would be a further amendment on grants being put forward this evening.

John Morrissey then addressed the Council stating that he was a storyteller by

profession and that Northampton needed to be a place of change, putting people and community first. He commented that it was largely due to the arts that created Northampton's image and therefore the importance of the arts in the Town should be recognised.

Mary Clarke, from the Doddridge Centre, addressed the Council referring to the proposed cuts in funding to community centres. She referred to a letter that she had sent to Councillors regarding this, which she read out. She stated that the Borough should encourage community facilities and concluded that she suspected that the options that were being put forward had been done so with limited knowledge of the sectors involved and not fully realising the effect the cuts would have.

Mr Adams addressed the Council. He initially made comment upon the Audit Commission report and the need for Northampton Borough Council to have strong leadership in order for it to turn itself around. He commented on rumours of articles being sold off by the Borough Council, which were part of its heritage, and expressed concerns over this commenting that the elections in May would determine the success of this Budget.

Tina Harvey addressed the Council referring to the pressures on the staff in the One Stop Shop and expressed her concern in terms of the effect the merger of the Housing and Money Advice Centre into the One Stop Shop would have on the already stretched capacity of the staff there. She then referred to the forthcoming local elections commenting that she would like to see more independent Councillors standing and her hopes that next time would see a better Audit report.

Ursula Wright then addressed the Council stating that she was speaking as a member of Northampton Arts Collective. She stated that there were five points in protest at the cuts to the Arts Development Service upon which she elaborated. She stressed the importance of the arts for young people stating that they needed more than just shops and clubs. The Arts Development and Events Team played a crucial role in supporting these needs and their links with voluntary groups.

D Green addressed the Council stating that he was a campaigner petitioning against the cuts and that whatever was passed at tonight's Budget meeting there would still be cuts that were hidden and delayed. He added that the problems of the cuts had not been solved and that the Council would be facing a similar situation in the not too distant future. He stated that services should not be privatised or sold off.

C Grethe declined the opportunity to speak.

Jenny Rendall addressed the Council on behalf of the Need 2 Know shop in Kings Heath and also as a local resident. She briefly outlined the current support for the Need 2 Know shop stating that this year they had to apply to a different fund but there had been no consultation on this. She stated that her organisation met many of the LAA targets and asked that there be continued support for the Need 2 Know shop.

The Council then discussed the Budget.

Councillor Woods then proposed and Councillor Glynane seconded an amendment to the Budget as follows:

“(A) Restore £50,000 to Community Grants to be targeted on services to areas of deprivation within the town to be paid for by working with the voluntary sector to restructure advice services within the town saving £50,000 in 2007/08.

(B) Restore £50,000 for diversionary activities for youth within the Arts Development Budget to be paid for by:

- (i) Additional grants and external funding within the Arts Development function
- (ii) Sponsorship of Events

Totalling £50,000 in 2007/08 in addition to any target already built into the base budget rising to £200,000 in future years. If these savings cannot be achieved in 2007/08 the balance of savings will be achieved by identifying additional vacancies within the Citizen Engagement service areas.”

Councillor Hadland accepted the above amendment for incorporation into the Budget proposals.

Councillor Barron, in making an amendment to the Budget, reaffirmed the existing Root & Branch statement on redundancies as made previously by the three Group Leaders and confirmed that severance arrangements would apply for the next six months, whence they would be reviewed.

Councillor Barron then proposed and Councillor Marriott seconded the following amendment to the Budget:

“(A) Restore £50,000 to the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit

(B) Restore £50,000 to Community Centres

(C) Paid for by:

- (i) target saving of £35,000 to be achieved by a combination of debt scheduling and more effective cash management
- (ii) Savings of £15,000 in mobile telephone usage
- (iii) £50,000 of revenue efficiency savings to be realised from review of security at Westbridge Depot.

Again Councillor Hadland accepted the amendment for incorporation into the Budget proposals.

Councillor Roy then proposed a further amendment and in doing so declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as a member of UNISON and as an employee of the Race Equality Council. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Conroy and was as follows:

- (D) "In addition in the context of the detailed Budget to vire £13,820 from Community Grants to Community Centres for the purpose of securing the rental costs of the Need 2 Know shop and the Thorplands and Thorplands Brook Community Co-operatives as independently managed community spaces."

NB Councillor Boss declared an interest as a Director of Thorplands Community Co-operative.

Councillor Hadland accepted this further amendment for incorporation into the Budget.

At this juncture the Mayor spoke in respect of the value to the Council of the Tourist Information Centre and the Access Group.

The Budget as proposed, together with the above amendments was then put to the vote and carried. It was noted that the proposals were carried with the Conservatives voting for the proposals and the Liberal Democrats and Labour Groups abstaining from voting.

The Mayor then commented that under the Council's constitution, because the Council had amended the Cabinet's proposals, the decision reached could only be "in principle". This would become effective after five working days unless the Leader of the Council raised an objection. If the Leader of the Council did raise an objection, a further meeting of the Council would become necessary.

**RESOLVED:** That the Budget report be received and the recommendations as detailed below be agreed together with the incorporation of the three amendments as outlined above:

That Council:

1. Note the comments of the acting 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 Exercise (copies of which have been circulated separately).
3. Approves the Revenue Budget for 2007/08 as recommended by Cabinet and as set out in the Appendices and to include the three amendments as outlined above.

**5. 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 8:00 pm.

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