

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Monday, 3 December 2007

PRESENT: Councillor Woods (Chair); Councillor Glynane (Deputy Chair); Councillors Beardsworth, Church, Crake, Hoare and Mildren

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held on 5 November 2007 were signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

RESOLVED: (1) That Councillors Hadland and Perkins be granted leave to address the Cabinet in respect of item 6 "Developing the Balloon Festival".

(2) That Mr Swinn be granted leave to address the Cabinet in respect of items 8(A), (B) and (C) Revenue Budget Monitoring 2007/8 Period 7, Capital Budget Monitoring 2007/08 Period 7 and Performance Monitoring.

(3) That Councillor Palethorpe be granted leave to address the Cabinet in respect of item 8(B) Capital Budget Monitoring 2007/08 Period 7.

(4) That Councillor Malpas be granted leave to address the Cabinet in respect of item 10 "Ecton Lane Travellers Site" on the private part of the agenda.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were none.

6. DEVELOPING THE BALLOON FESTIVAL

Councillor Hadland addressed the Cabinet referring to the issues that had been raised in terms of the budget and costings of this year's Balloon Festival. He commented that there was now a substantial shortfall due in part from lack of income from traders and was surprised at this as normally traders had paid up front. He also referred to the fact that for many years there had been a cross party working group with regard to the Balloon Festival and noted that this was now again proposed. He questioned whether the same proposal would have been on the table if the event had been a success this year and queried how this year's event had accrued the amount of debt..

Councillor Perkins then addressed the Cabinet stating that he believed Northampton should have a showcase festival. 2008 would have a Balloon Festival but he considered that after this a decision should be made as to what sort of festival there should be for future years. He expressed the view that the event had not been been a success for the last four years and if the Council was going to fund a loss making festival then this would obviously have an effect on other services. He referred to capacity issues in terms of organising the festival and referred to paragraph 3.4.2 of the report. He expressed the view that if the Council was

to have a festival then it should be outsourced to someone who managed such events on a professional basis.

Councillor Glynane as the Portfolio Holder then submitted the report, the purpose of which was to consider the way forward for the 2008 Balloon Festival and subsequent years' events and to identify budgetary consequences for Full Council. He drew attention to an amendment under paragraph 3.2.2 of the report advising that it should read £134,000 rather than £120,000. He stated that it was being recommended that a crossparty working group be established to advise Cabinet on the Balloon Festival and that this should include other external individuals such as possibly balloonists and traders.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet is recommended to:-

- (1) Authorise a Northampton Balloon Festival for August 2008.
- (2) Recommend to Council a budget of £75,000 for the 2008 Festival.
- (3) Agree to review the admission charge.
- (4) Agree to establish a cross party working group to advise Cabinet on the Balloon Festival and that this include other external individuals as appropriate.
- (5) Agree that the Balloon Festival Working Group be asked to develop proposals which will enable the festival to be as financially self-sustaining as possible over a five year period in consultation with potential partners.
- (6) Agree that management arrangements for the Balloon Festival should have the following features:-
 - Strong budget management
 - Strong consistent project management
 - A robust and clear process
 - Clear and consistent objectives

7. PLANNING ENFORCEMENT POLICY GUIDE

Councillor Church as the Portfolio Holder submitted the report advising that this was another stage in the improvement programme of the Borough's planning service which sought to agree priority areas for planning enforcement within the overarching policy agreed by Cabinet on 6 March 2006.

RESOLVED: That the following priorities for planning enforcement be agreed:-

- (1) A serious threat to health and/or safety e.g. traffic hazard, storage of hazardous substances, development creating pollution problems. Permanent damage to the environment (e.g. loss of protected tree, unauthorised work affecting the character of a listed building and some works within a Conservation Area).
- (2) Building work that is unlikely to be given planning permission without substantial modification (e.g. excessively large house extensions). Unauthorised uses causing severe nuisance through noise, smells, congestion etc.
- (3) A breach causing problems which may be resolved by limited modification (e.g. insertion of opaque glazing in an unauthorised window to overcome privacy problems; restrictions on hours of use etc. Property whose condition adversely affects the amenity of the surrounding neighbourhood.
- (4) Breaches of a minimal nature raising minimal planning concerns.

8. PERFORMANCE

8.1 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2007/08 PERIOD 7

Mr Swinn addressed the Cabinet referring to a couple of items of expenditure under Housing Services regarding £295,000 for temporary staff and £250,000 for consultants. He stated that there had been problems with Revenues and Benefits for some four years now and asked when permanent staff would be employed and when we would cease to pay consultants.

Councillor Mildren as the Portfolio Holder presented the Revenue Budget Monitoring Report stating that there was a forecast of a net overspend of £412,000 which was a reduction on previous projections. In response to Mr. Swinn's questions it was noted that the issues were under review and that the Contract with Kendrick Ash was a three year Contract which would be phased out.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report be noted and the actions being taken to manage the forecast overspend be noted.
- (2) That a virement of the saving on the pay award from salaries budgets to Community Safety, Leisure and Town Centre Management be approved.
- (3) That a virement of £250,000 from reserves to Housing General Fund for the Kendrick Ash Contract be approved.
- (4) That a virement of £250,000 from reserves to Community Safety, Leisure and Town Centre Management for car parking be approved.

8.2 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2007 - 08 PERIOD 7

Mr Swinn again addressed the Cabinet expressing concern that NACT and tenants had not been consulted on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme. He referred to paragraph 3.2.3 and commented that there was a Decent Homes Rewiring Group and he was sure that they were not aware of the contents of the report. He also questioned why the ramp at the Spring Boroughs Café came under the Chief Executive's budget as he thought this was Neighbourhood Renewal. He stated that really the essence of his address was that the tenants had not been consulted but that he had a number of other detailed questions to ask.

Councillor Palethorpe then addressed the Cabinet supporting Mr Swinn's comments and expressed his concerns that there had been little consultation regarding the Housing Revenue Account. He then referred to the voids situation commenting that there was still 200 voids and that amounted to around £650,000 a year. He stated that it was important to discuss with tenants issues of importance to them.

Councillor Mildren then presented the report seeking approval for capital schemes in or to be added to the Council's capital programme for 2007/08, to advise of the slippage of unfinished schemes from 2006/07 into the 2007/08 capital programme, to advise of the latest proposed capital programme for 2007/08, to advise how the 2007/08 capital programme would be funded and to advise on the latest capital programme monitoring position and future reporting arrangements for the capital programme. It was noted that the capital programme monitoring report would be brought to Cabinet on a monthly basis in future. He added that if Mr Swinn submitted his questions in detail he would respond to them as there were too many to deal with at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the inclusion of the following schemes into the capital programme for 2007/08 be approved:-
 - (a) Schemes already identified in the draft capital programme for 2007/08 Decent Homes Rewiring.
 - (b) Schemes to be added to the capital programme for 2007/08 – Recycling Improvements to Access Normally Hard to Reach Areas (Waste Performance and Efficiency Grant WPEG).
- (2) That Cabinet note:-

- (a) The slippage of finished schemes from 2006/07 into the 2007/08 capital programme as set out at Annex B.
- (b) The latest proposed capital programme for 2007/08 as set out at Annex C.
- (c) The funding arrangements for the 2007/08 capital programme as set out at Annex D.
- (d) The capital programme monitoring position as at end of October 2007 as set out at Annex E.
- (e) The future reporting arrangements for the capital programme throughout the year.

8.3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Mr Swinn again addressed Cabinet referring to BVP212 regarding reletting time and noted that it had increased and that the reason was due to sickness and absence. He commented that he could not see any reason why voids could not be dropped down to one per cent. Also the reletting times average was 21 days although some authorities managed this within 7-14 days. He then referred to management structures commenting that property maintenance should be brought out of the street scene and come under a Housing Director.

Councillor Hoare as the Portfolio Holder then presented the monthly performance monitoring report advising of the Council's performance for October 2007 against monthly performance indicators.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

9. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Chair moved that the public and Press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that there was likely to be disclosure to them of such categories of exempt information as defined by Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 as listed against such items of business by reference to the appropriate paragraph of Schedule 12A to such Act.

The Motion was Carried.

10. LEASING OF ECTON LANE TRAVELLERS SITE (3)

An addendum to the report was tabled at the meeting.

Councillor Malpas addressed the Cabinet referring to the section of the report regarding consultation and stated that neither he nor the other Ward Councillor of Billing or Billing Parish Council had been consulted. Also the wrong MP for Wellingborough was mentioned. It was not Paul Stinchcombe it should have been Peter Bone and on this basis he considered that the whole report was flawed and he expressed his disappointment over this.

Councillor Crake as the Portfolio Holder then presented the report and referred to the addendum that had been circulated drawing attention to the changes that had been made. In terms of the consultation process letters had been sent out on 2 August to the consultees listed under paragraph 10 of the report. A number of people on the list had responded.

The Chair expressed the view that given the concerns expressed over the consultation and other issues that required further clarification that the report be deferred until the special meeting of Cabinet on 17 December.

RESOLVED: That consideration of this matter be deferred and that an updated version of the report be submitted to the special meeting of Cabinet on 17 December.

The meeting concluded at 7.10pm