

## MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON MONDAY THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF MARCH 2008 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

**PRESENT:** HER WORSHIP THE MAYOR Councillor L.Mason (in the Chair).

**COUNCILLORS:** Capstick, Caswell, Chaudhury, Choudary, Church, J. Conroy, R.Conroy, Davies, Edwards, Flavell, Garlick, Glynane, Hadland, Hill, Hollis, Larratt, C.Lill, J.Lill, Malpas, B.Markham, I.Markham, Mason, Matthews, Meredith, Mildren, Palethorpe, Perkins, Scott, Simpson, Taylor, P.Varnsvery, PDVarnsvery, Wilson, Woods and Yates

### 1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of Northampton Borough Council held on 28 February 2008 were signed by the Mayor.

### 2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beardsworth, Crake, De Cruz, Duncan, B Hoare, M Hoare, Lane, Reeve and Tavener.

### 3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor advised of recent events that she had attended. She stated that many had involved young people including a harp concert at Wellingborough and Derngate Youth Concert.

She then referred to Fairtrade Fortnight when there had been stalls in both the Grosvenor and Weston Favell Centres. She was pleased to report that the bigger supermarkets were now taking Fairtrade products on board.

She commented that the Tibetan flag had recently been raised outside the Guildhall.

She then referred to the good news that Revenues and Benefits were out of government engagement. Two representatives from the team, Denise Sadler and Maggie Tate were present to receive a certificate on behalf of Revenues and Benefits. The Leader of the Council paid tribute to the hard work and efforts of the team themselves and acknowledged the support that colleagues in other departments had provided to achieve disengagement. He commented that this success helped move the Council forward. The Mayor then presented them with the certificate.

The Mayor advised of plans to hold a Chinese meal at The Oriental Garden Restaurant in Sheep Street on 29 April on behalf of the Mayor's Charity. She added that she would e-mail members with details of the event.

#### **4. QUESTION TIME**

The Mayor advised that two questions had been received, one from a member of the public, Mr Norman Adams and the other from Councillor Malpas.

The questions and answers had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution. She advised that she would take the questions in the order in which they had been received.

Mr Adams then asked the question of Councillor Beardsworth. With regard to the current work expected to take place around the new heating system (Cooper Street) due to start in April 2008 he asked whether any leaseholders affected had been issued with a Section 20 Notice. In the absence of Councillor Beardsworth, Councillor Woods responded to the question and referred to the response that had been tabled. Mr Adams then asked a supplementary question in terms of whether there had been a change in policy. He added that he had posed a similar question in 2006 and was told then that Section 20 Notices were used to recover costs from householders. Councillor Woods stated that yes Section 20 Notices would be used where appropriate.

Councillor Malpas asked a question of Councillor Crake regarding essential maintenance for lakes and ponds that were scattered through our local communities and asked the Portfolio Holder when the two lakes in Bellinge and the lakes in Thorplands and Lumbertubs were last dredged and what sum had been spent on this over the last twenty years. Councillor Malpas noted the response as tabled and asked a supplementary question as to whether the possibility of dredging the lakes and restoring them to their full potential could be looked at. Councillor Woods responded in the absence of the Portfolio Holder stating that he appreciated the concern but that as far as he was aware there was no immediate plans for the dredging of these lakes and that the process was that there would need to be consultation with the Environment Agency to take such a project forward.

#### **5. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS**

At this point each of the Cabinet members made a presentation on their respective portfolios which had been circulated with the agenda. It was noted that as three members of the Cabinet were absent Councillor Woods would present both his and Councillor Beardsworth's Portfolios, Councillor Glynane would present both his and Councillor Hoare's Portfolios and Councillor Church would present both his and Councillor Crake's Portfolios.

Councillor Woods then presented his Portfolio update and circulated a supplementary report in terms of Management Structure and Portfolios. He stated that the Chief Executive would issue a consultation document this week to staff regarding the structure of the organisation. In terms of Portfolios he advised that he intended to make a number of amendments to the responsibilities of individual Portfolio Holders to better align the political and managerial leadership of the Council to ensure better and more efficient and effective leadership. The changes

were likely to be incremental over a period of time as new Directors were appointed and as the new Management Structure developed. However one change with effect immediately after Easter was with regard to Housing Repairs which currently fell within the Environment Portfolio. From 25 March this would fall under the Housing Portfolio.

Councillor Woods then presented the Housing Portfolio report which touched on Housing Department Performance, Partnership Working, Choice Based Lettings and Homeswapper, Rough Sleepers and IBS Housing System Integration.

In response to a question from Councillor Clarke on the leaders portfolio regarding the mechanism of reporting back to Council in terms of issues from the WNDC now that the Leader and Councillor Church had been appointed onto the Board Councillor Woods advised that he would ensure that he reported back and that it would be through the Portfolio updates or by some other method.

Councillor Malpas then asked a question regarding Choice Based Lettings from the Housing Portfolio in terms of whether Overview and Scrutiny would be fully involved in future in decisions of this nature. Councillor Woods stated that he was not aware that there had been any agreement that this should go to Overview and Scrutiny and that he would get the Portfolio Holder to write to Councillor Malpas accordingly. Councillor Clarke then asked a question regarding Council policy in terms of Section 20 Notices. Councillor Woods advised that in terms of Cooper Street quotes were being obtained and once they were available would be looked at in terms of how to best proceed.

Councillor Glynane then presented his Portfolio regarding Community Engagement and Safety together with Councillor Hoare's Portfolio for Performance. The Community Engagement and Safety Portfolio covered issues such as Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour, Safer Stronger Northampton Partnership, Cultural Strategy, Leisure and Sports Development, Museums and Events, Single Equality Scheme, Community Engagement Strategy, Restructure Update, One Stop Shop Pilot Project, Complaints Management and Call Care. In response to a question from Councillor Hill regarding the Performance Portfolio Councillor Glynane said that he would ask Councillor Hoare to write to him in terms of examples where the Council was falling short of its targets and to send him the performance figures for February. Councillor Clarke then asked a question regarding Community Access to PFI schools in terms of what action was being taken to ensure that this was being pursued. In response to a further question from Councillor Hill regarding Operation Flag and the ability to name and shame those companies that regularly broke the rules it was noted that any action should be taken through the Licensing Committee.

Councillor Church then presented his Portfolio update in terms of Regeneration together with Councillor Crake's Portfolio for Environment. It was noted that a Farmer's Market was due to be held on 17 April and he hoped that Councillors would support this. He added that there would be a Farmers Market every third Thursday in the month in future. In terms of the Environment Portfolio there were a number of items to demonstrate how the Council was driving on with the Environment Agenda for example the Carbon Management Programme. He also drew attention to a pilot scheme for Kerbside Glass Collection. Councillor Hadland then asked a question regarding Market Square Improvements in terms of the

consultation that had taken place. Councillor Church advised that there had been consultation with market traders and the community and that he was satisfied that the level of consultation was adequate to deliver a meaningful report on the Market Square refurbishment. Councillor Flavell asked a question regarding the Closure of a Footbridge over the River Nene leading to the Nature Reserve at Barnes Meadow. Councillor Church advised that it was not a decision of the Administration to close the footbridge but that it had been closed for safety reasons and that it was hoped that funds would be secured to re-open the bridge but that he could not say when this would be. He advised that it could not be funded from the current Midsummer Meadow project. Councillor Malpas congratulated the Portfolio Holder for Environment on Bradlaugh Fields achieving Green Flag status.

Councillor Mildren the Portfolio Holder for Finance then presented his Portfolio update. Councillor Hadland stated that he was pleased to note that the Northampton Door to Door Service was continuing. Councillor Palethorpe referred to Shopmobility and was concerned about people not being consulted when Shopmobility was relocated. Councillor Mildren assured that Shopmobility would be kept fully in touch with the situation.

## **6. STAFF APPEALS**

Councillor Woods presented a report which was duly seconded by Councillor Glynane which sought authority to make changes to the Constitution to enable certain staff appeals against dismissal to be dealt with by officers, namely the Head of Paid Service or his nominee. It was noted that the report had been considered and approved by Cabinet on 11 February 2008. In response to a comment from Councillor Clarke Councillor Woods clarified the term "Independent Person".

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That Council approves Model 4 (outlined in Appendix 1) which would mean all appeals against dismissal below Head of Paid Service, Chief Officer and Statutory Officer levels would be heard and determined by the Head of Paid Service or his nominee.
  - (2) That Council delegate to the Solicitor to the Council the authority to amend the Constitution to implement the above.

## **7. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY FOR NORTHAMPTON**

Councillor Woods presented a report which was duly seconded by Councillor Glynane seeking adoption of the Sustainable Communities Strategy for Northampton. It was noted that this had been considered and approved by Cabinet on 11 February 2008.

**RESOLVED:** That Council adopts the Sustainable Communities Strategy for Northampton.

## **8. REPORT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW WORKING PARTY**

The Mayor advised that the report before Council this evening was a preliminary report to consider proposed changes to the Constitution as suggested by the Constitutional Review Working Party and that there would be a special meeting of Council on 28 April to consider the constitutional changes accordingly. Councillor Perkins then presented the report which was duly seconded by Councillor Davies. In considering the report various points were raised in terms of dealing with

amendments, a desire to take this as an opportunity to review the Forums, Opposition Group business, the timing of the guillotine as to whether this meeting should commence at 6.00pm with the guillotine at 9.30pm or continue to commence at 6.30pm with the guillotine at 10.00pm. Councillor Clarke expressed concern over the content of the report and expressed the view that he wished to be an observer on the Working Party as the Independent Councillor. It was noted that this report would be considered by the groups prior to the drafting of the report for 28 April 2008.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the comments on the deliberations of the Constitutional Review Working Party contained in Appendices 1 and 2 be noted.
  - (2) That it be agreed to delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with group leaders and the Constitutional Working Party, the drafting of appropriate amendments to the Constitution, such drafting to be brought back to Full Council for approval on 28 April 2008.

**9. 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 7.55pm.