

## MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON MONDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF MAY 2008 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

**COUNCILLORS:** Beardsworth, Capstick, Caswell, I.Choudary, Church, Clarke, Collins, R. Conroy, J. Conroy, Crake, Davies, Duncan, Edwards, Garlick, Glynane, Hadland, Hawkins, Hill, Hoare, Hoare, Hollis, Lane, Larratt, C. Lill, J.Lill, Malpas, B.Markham, I. Markham, Mason, Matthews, Meredith, Mildren, Palethorpe, Perkins, Reeve, Scott, Simpson, Tavener, Taylor, PD Varnsberry, PVarnsberry, Wilson, Woods and Yates

### 1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of Northampton Borough Council held on 17 March 2008 were signed by the Mayor.

### 2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Chaudhury, De Cruz and Flavell.

### 3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor advised that she had attended the ceremony in Becketts Park to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1998 floods.

She then referred to a recent tombola event which had proved to be an excellent fundraiser for the Mayoral charities. Another such event had been the Chinese meal at The Oriental Garden in Sheep Street which had raised over £1,400 for the Mayor's charity.

She then advised that the Mayoress had planted a tree in Lings Primary School for the Mayoress' Annual Tree Planting Ceremony.

She then referred to a visit to Northampton by a group of Headteachers from Thailand who had come to Northampton. The Mayor had been presented with a shawl to mark their visit.

The Mayor then announced that this would be her last Council meeting as Mayor and that it had been a truly wonderful and memorable year.

She was then pleased to announce two presentations to the Sports Development Team. Firstly she presented Nina Bridges from Sports Development with a finalist certificate in the Sustainable Communities Award 2008. This award was in the Healthy Communities Award Category for the Kings Heath Physical Activity Project.

The second award was presented to Lawrence Kay, Senior Sports Development Officer who received a Quest Certificate on behalf of the Sports Development Team. Quest is an external body that assesses sport and leisure services and it was noted that this time the Council had been awarded the status of Quest Highly Commended as we had improved on our previous Quest mark. The Mayor on behalf of the Council congratulated Sports Development on these achievements.

At this juncture the Mayor asked whether there were any Deputations/Public Addresses from members of the public given that on this occasion there was the opportunity for the public to address under item 7 on the agenda regarding the Report of the Constitution Review Working Party. It was noted that Mr Shah wished to address on the Notice of Motion, Mr Adams wished to address on the Report of the Constitution Review Working Party and that Mr Swinn also wished to address on the Report of the Constitution Review Working Party and the Notice of Motion.

Reference was then made to the Notice of Motion and the fact that Councillor Flavell the mover of the motion was not present at the meeting due to illness and it was therefore agreed to waive procedural rules to allow Councillor Larratt to move the motion instead in this instance.

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

The Mayor advised that eleven questions had been received, two from members of the public, Mr Adams and Mr Green and the remainder from Councillors.

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

Mr Adams noted the response to his question to Councillor Woods as tabled and asked a supplementary question. He asked whether Councillor Woods would take on board the fact that sixty authorities at the moment were taking up the issue of negative subsidy and could Councillor Woods at the earliest date make that sixty one authorities. Councillor Woods advised that officers had been discussing this with the group who were responding on a national basis and he would come back as soon as possible in terms of whether the proposal was appropriate.

Councillor Reeve asked a question of Councillor Glynane regarding the Delapre bund. Councillor Reeve noted the response as tabled.

Councillor Palethorpe asked a question of Councillor Woods as to whether or not he had been consulted with regard to the contents of a letter that had been distributed to properties around Robinson House. Councillor Palethorpe noted the answer as tabled.

Councillor Reeve asked a question of Councillor Glynane regarding figures for burglaries in privately owned and Council owned dwellings. Councillor Reeve noted the response as tabled.

Councillor Palethorpe asked a question of Councillor Beardsworth seeking details of the total sum outstanding and the percentage of the amount payable on all Council owned garages that were least attendance. He noted the answer as tabled.

Councillor Malpas asked a question of Councillor Woods as to whether the Borough Council had any plans to establish a town centre tram system or to forge transport links with the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive. He noted the answer as tabled and then asked a supplementary question as to why Greater Manchester was sending out information about their systems with Northampton's bus passes. Councillor Woods stated that the issue of passes and accompanying documentation had been sub contracted to the government's preferred supplier Fujitsu who were dispatching passes for Northampton and many other places.

Councillor Reeve asked a question of Councillor Glynane regarding the Balloon Festival in terms of last year's accounts and this year's allocated budget. He noted the response as tabled and asked a supplementary question as to whether alternative entertainment and attractions were in place should it be bad weather over the festival weekend. Councillor Glynane advised that there a whole range of activities over the Racecourse had been planned but that unfortunately the weather was not within the Council's control.

Councillor Palethorpe asked a question of Councillor Glynane regarding the Northampton Athletics Track at Sixfields. Councillor Palethorpe noted the response as tabled and asked that the detailed negotiations with a number of parties be pursued. Councillor Glynane took this point on board.

NB. Councillor Clarke declared a personal interest in Sixfields as a Director of Northampton Town Football Club.

Councillor Reeve asked a question of Councillor Glynane about the provision of PCSOs for the Borough. Councillor Reeve noted the response as tabled.

Councillor Palethorpe asked a question of Councillor Glynane whether he would not agree that all violent criminality regardless of the circumstances should be condemned. Councillor Glynane concurred with this view and Councillor Palethorpe noted the response as tabled.

Mr Dave Green then asked a question of Councillor Church regarding progress by NBC on securing Managed Community Access Agreements with Northamptonshire County Council and WNDC for community use of facilities and playing fields at the new PFI schools. Mr Green noted the response as tabled and asked a supplementary question in that would the Borough Council refuse any further planning applications for surplus school sites until such time that Community Access Agreements had been put in place. Councillor Church advised that any such planning applications would be determined by the WNDC and the Borough Council would be a consultee. He could not predict the response of the Planning Committee.

NB. In answering the above question Councillor Church declared an interest as a representative on the WNDC Board.

## **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.

Councillor Woods then presented his portfolio update which covered issues of improvement, inspections, management restructure and the WNDC. A number of comments were made regarding the section dealing with the results of our Direction of Travel Inspection.

Councillor Glynane then presented his portfolio regarding community engagement and safety which covered crime, anti-social behaviour, Safer Stronger Northampton Partnership, Venezia, the Balloon Festival, culture and leisure, customer service performance, complaints management, housing progress assessment and call care –Telecare Standards Accreditation (TSA) Audit. Under the paragraph culture and leisure Councillor Clarke made the comment that in his opinion culture and leisure was failing in terms of a playing field strategy.

Councillor Beardsworth then presented her portfolio update in terms of housing. This covered issues such as partnership working, local housing allowance, property maintenance, housing register review, service awareness forum and the big picture. Councillor Hill under property maintenance enquired when the Bouverie estate door entry system would be carried out. Councillor Beardsworth undertook to write to him regarding this.

NB. Councillor Malpas declared a personal interest in Bouverie estate as a resident of that estate.

Councillor Lane then asked a question as to when the boilers at Pennycress Place were last serviced. Councillor Beardsworth advised that the boilers were normally serviced once a year but that she would write to him.

Councillor Clarke then asked a question regarding Cooper Street flats as to why works had not met the target. She advised that there had been some legal implications but the works would be completed and that she would write to him regarding this.

Councillor Church then presented his portfolio update in terms of regeneration. He advised that he had recently attended a workshop dealing with developing a master plan for Becketts Park and that there would be a public exhibition in Becketts Park in June and that he hoped as many Councillors as possible would attend and contribute to this. His portfolio covered issues such as Grosvenor/Greyfriars, economic regeneration strategy, the Market Square and RSL Management Partnership Agreement. In response to a question regarding works to the Market Square Councillor Church advised that this process could not be rushed but that progress was being made. In response to a question regarding a closed footbridge

in Becketts Park he stated its replacement would be dealt with as soon as finance could be found.

Councillor Crake then presented her portfolio update in terms of the environment. Under the paragraph on waste management she amended the figure of 10,000 homes to 13,866 homes. The report covered issues such as street scene, waste management, carbon management programme, stray dog service and property maintenance. In response to a query from Councillor J Lill regarding recycling not being collected she advised that she would look into this and let her know. In response to a question from Councillor Larratt as to when a list detailing bands in parks would be published she stated that this would happen within the next two weeks. Regarding any question concerning the replacement train in Abington Park she advised that this would be installed once health and safety issues had been thoroughly investigated and completed. In terms of the question regarding Victoria Park improvements she stated that every effort would be made to ensure it maintained its standard.

Councillor Hoare then presented his portfolio update in terms of performance. This covered issues such as induction test for hackney drivers, Land Charges, Election Services, overall performance, absence management, best value performance plan, preparation of a new set of national indicators, new performance management system, performance management framework, single status and equal pay and skills for life. In presenting his report he placed on record thanks to Bruce Sturgess who had recently retired as Licensing Enforcement Officer for all his support and work that he had done for this Council. Thanks to Ross Thompson the Council's Electoral Services Manager was also placed on record it being noted that his experience had been recognised at a regional level and that he had been asked to chair the East Midlands branch of the Association of Electoral Administrators.

Councillor Mildren then presented his portfolio update regarding finance which covered general issues, improvement, value for money, risk management and asset management.

## **6. NORTHAMPTON ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY**

Councillor Church presented a report seeking adoption of the Northampton Economic Regeneration Strategy as set out under Appendix 1 and which had been recommended to Council for adoption by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 April 2008. The report was duly seconded by Councillor Woods.

**RESOLVED:** That Council adopt the Northampton Economic Regeneration Strategy.

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

(A) At this juncture the Mayor invited the suspension of Council procedural rule 22 to allow the public to address on the Report of the Constitutional Review Working Party. This was duly agreed.

Councillor Clarke then moved the suspension of procedural rules generally for debate on this item. This was seconded by Councillor Larratt. This was voted upon

and lost.

**(B) REPORT OF CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW WORKING PARTY.**

Mr Adams then addressed Council referring to public speaking at future Council meetings stating that it should never have been restricted in the first place and that he would have liked to have spoken on other items at this meeting.

Mr Swinn then addressed the Council supporting Mr Adams in his comments. He stated that this had taken two years to achieve in terms of public speaking.

Councillor Perkins as the Chair of the Constitutional Review Working Party then presented the report which was duly seconded by Councillor Palethorpe. It was noted that following consideration by Council on 17 March 2008 of the report of the Constitutional Review Working Party this report had been prepared setting out the detailed drafting changes to the Constitution for adoption. In presenting the report Councillor Perkins drew particular attention to a couple of points firstly in terms of public speaking in that at Council meetings the public could now speak on any item rather than just Notices of Motion and that the guillotine would fall half an hour later at 10.00pm which gave an extra half an hour to allow public to put any questions. He added that this was a cross party report and not just a report of the administration. He then highlighted the various changes to the Constitution. The report was then duly debated in detail with Councillor Clarke expressing a number of concerns particularly in terms of public speaking stating that the public speaking was restricted to three minutes in total and that members were also being restricted to three minutes rather than five minutes during the course of debate. He stated that he would be voting against the recommendations to adopt the changes to the Constitution. Councillor Perkins stated that the Constitution was a document that was constantly evolving and that there would be further meetings of the Constitutional Review Working Party.

**RESOLVED:** (1) That Council adopts the changes to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 3 of the report.  
 (2) That the Tree Panel be reconfigured with five Councillors who were not members of the Planning Committee.  
 (3) That Council delegates powers to the Solicitor to the Council to make any minor grammatical changes to the Constitution prior to publishing the document.

**8. MEETINGS CYCLE 2008/09**

Councillor Woods presented for approval the Meetings Cycle for 2008/09 which was seconded by Councillor Meredith.

**RESOLVED:** That the Meetings Cycle for 2008/09 be approved as amended by Cabinet on 6 May 2008 and as detailed in the Appendix to the report.

**9. STAFF RESTRUCTURE - DELEGATIONS**

Councillor Woods submitted a report which was seconded by Councillor Hollis the purpose of which was to report Cabinet's decisions in relation to its delegations to the Chief Executive and to report Cabinet's specific recommendations that Full Council delegate to the Chief Executive certain powers to enable him to implement the new senior management structure.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That Full Council note Cabinet's decision to delegate to the Chief Executive it's (Cabinet's) relevant powers in relation to implementing the staff structure (recommendations 2.3 and 2.5 of Appendix 1 as attached).
  - (2) That Council note Cabinet's decision to recommend to Full Council that it delegates all it's (Full Council's) relevant powers to the Chief Executive in relation to implementing the staff structure (recommendations 2.4 and 2.5).
  - (3) That Full Council delegate to the Chief Executive all Full Council's powers (non-Executive powers) necessary to enable him to progress all relevant processes necessary to implement the structure.
  - (4) That Full Council requires the above delegations are undertaken in consultation with the Leader of the Council relevant to portfolio holders as appropriate, the Chair of General Purposes Committee and the Leaders of the two minority groups of the Council.

## **10. NOTICE OF MOTION**

Mr Shah and Mr Swinn addressed the Council with regard to the Notice of Motion concerning Concessionary Bus Passes both expressing the view that it would be better if concessions were available twenty four hours a day. Comment was also made that perhaps this was an issue that should be considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In the absence of Councillor Flavell and as agreed earlier in the meeting Councillor Larratt moved the motion which was duly seconded by Councillor Lane as set out below "This Council notes that concessionary bus passes are now currently only valid in the Borough between the hours of 9.30am and 11.00pm which is the national statutory minimum. While the 9.30am start time has already been established due to heavy bus use in the morning peak, the 11.00pm finish time appears to have been imposed from 1 April 2008 with implementation of the new national concessionary scheme. This cut off time cannot be justified on grounds of capacity and constitutes a reduction in service provision.

This Council also notes that some bus pass holders have been in contact with Councillors and local MPs to complain that the evening cut off time is too early and request that it be extended. In the light of public demand, Council requests Cabinet to consider extending the period of free travel beyond the statutory minimum to allow pass holders to travel after 11.00pm, until a time relevant to the termination of the last evening services. Council further requests that Cabinet consider that this be paid for in the current financial year with LABGI money and added to the Council's core budget for future years".

The motion was duly debated, voted upon and carried and stood referred to Cabinet.

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

There were none.

At this juncture Councillor Woods on behalf of the Council thanked the Mayor for the courteous and official way in which she had carried out her duties in the Chamber during her Mayoral year.

The meeting concluded at 9.15pm