

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON MONDAY 21st July 2008 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

PRESENT: HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR Councillor B. Markham (in the Chair).

COUNCILLORS: Beardsworth, Capstick, Caswell, S.Chaudhury, I. Choudary, Church, Clarke, J. Conroy, R. Conroy, Crake, Davies, Edwards, Flavell, Garlick, Hadland, Hawkins, Hill, B. Hoare, Lane, Larratt, J. Lill, Malpas, Mason, Matthews, Meredith, Mildren, Palethorpe, Perkins, Scott, Simpson, Taylor, P.D. Varnsberry, P. M. Varnsberry, Woods and Yates.

The Mayor announced the death of David Walmsley on 17 July 2008. David had been a former County Borough of Northampton Councillor as well as a councillor for Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council. He had been Mayor of Northampton in 1978 and had been made an Honorary Freeman of the Borough in 1988. David Walmsley had also been a member of the original Development Corporation that had overseen the expansion of Northampton during the 1960's, 70's and early 80's. He had been Chair of the County Borough Education Committee at the time of reorganisation in 1974. David had also been a founder member of Northampton College, now the University of Northampton.

Councillors paid tribute to David Walmsley.

On behalf of the Council the Mayor expressed his condolences to David Walmsley's widow and family. The Council stood in silence.

1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of Northampton Borough Council held on 26 June and reconvened on 30 June 2008 were signed by the Mayor subject to noting that Councillor J Lill had been in attendance on 26 June, that Councillor P M Varnsberry had presented her apologies for 26 June and that Councillor Mason had been present on 30 June.

2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Collins, De Cruz, Duncan, Glynane, M. Hoare, Hollis, C Lill, I Markham, Reeve, Taverner and Wilson.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor commented upon the recent death on 10 July of Mr Lynn Wilson in a car accident in Scotland. He noted that Mr Wilson had been a Director of Wilson Connelly but had been well known for his involvement in horse racing, with Northamptonshire County Cricket Club and Northampton Saints Rugby Club. He

had set up the Wilson Foundation in 1970 to help children and young people across the county and the Foundation had made regular donations to the Macmillan Nurses, the Starlight Childrens Foundation and Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air Ambulance. The Foundation had also provided funding for the Francis Crick Memorial Sculpture in Abington Street. On behalf of the Council the Mayor expressed his condolences to Mr Wilson's widow and family.

The Mayor noted that he had met with Anthony Peddle who would be competing in his sixth Paralympics in Beijing. Anthony had already won several medals at the Paralympics including gold in Sydney in 2000 and at the same time had created a world record which had only recently been broken. It was also noted that Holly Abel, World Junior Triathlon champion would also be competing in her first senior games at Beijing. The Mayor on behalf of the Council expressed best wishes to both Anthony Peddle and Holly Abel.

The Mayor commented that Alan Lenton, a Graphic Designer in the Print Services Unit had won a regional award from the National Operatic and Drama Association for the design of a poster for a production of Oliver at the Derngate. Alan had won a number of awards from the same Association for poster design for six years consecutively. The Council congratulated Alan upon his achievement.

The Mayor noted that the CCTV Team had won a British Security Association Award for Best Use of Technology.

The Mayor announced that commencing on 1 August 2008 he was launching a Mayor's blog on the Council's website.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr D Green, in reference to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration's report in respect of the disposal of school playing fields at Parklands and Grange Road, commented on the need to protect open spaces. He noted that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had listened to residents concerns particularly in Parklands and Duston in respect of the potential development on former playing fields. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee had discovered that no PFI Access Agreements had been made for the new school sites and he noted the Open Space Guidelines, which stated that new open space provision should be equal to or better than the existing arrangements. The Committee's discussions had centred around Parklands and the former St Mary's Middle School site. He also understood that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had sought to investigate the use of judicial review of the decisions reached in respect of Parklands and St Mary's. He noted that there was a need for a policy to protect public open space.

Mrs B Walder, in reference to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration's report in respect of the disposal of school playing fields at Parklands and Grange Road, commented that she was a parent with two children living in Duston and noted that there was only one open space remaining in Duston that children could go to. She requested that the Council use whatever influence it could to promote open spaces when new developments were considered.

Mr C Swinn, in reference to the Portfolio Holder for Housing's report, commented that he wished to congratulate the Housing Service for their improved voids performance but noted that actual numbers of void properties were increasing. He also wished to congratulate the Revenues and Benefits Section for the improvements that they had made. He noted that the annual report to tenants did not mention N-TACT or the role that it had and felt that this was an omission. In respect of the report on prudential borrowing he suggested that prudential borrowing for the Housing Revenue account should be allowed so as to be used for improvement of the housing stock. In respect of the report on members allowances he stated that members allowances should be higher and more comparable to those paid by the County Council and that consideration should be given to the creation of a performance bonus.

5. QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that ten questions had been received from Councillors and that they, together with responses, had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution. The questions would be taken in the order in which they had been received.

Councillor Malpas thanked Councillor Church for the answer to his question that had been tabled and declared a personal interest insofar as the question and answer related to disabled applicants for concessionary bus passes.

Councillor Palethorpe thanked Councillor Beardsworth for the answer to his question that had been tabled and asked whether a strategy would be put in place to help tenants in respect of arrears in the light of the economic downturn. Councillor Beardsworth commented that advice would be given not only in respect of arrears but also in terms of managing energy costs.

Councillor Larratt thanked Councillor Crake for the answer to his question in respect of the public bench at the junction of St Edmunds Street, Alfred Street and Stockley Street, which had been tabled.

Councillor Palethorpe thanked Councillor Woods for his response on behalf of Councillor Glynane to his question in respect of Northampton Rape and Incest Crisis Centre that had been tabled.

Councillor Flavell thanked Councillor Crake for the response to her question that had been tabled and requested further information in respect of the local businesses that had been contacted and the dates that that contact had taken place; what length of time constituted "persistence" in respect of rats and what money had been budgeted to deal with this issue. Councillor Crake indicated that she would send Councillor Flavell a written response.

Councillor Flavell thanked Councillor Beardsworth for her response to her question which had been tabled and sought further information about the criteria for the installation of security doors and gates. Councillor Beardsworth commented that the installation programme was run by the Housing Officers who would be pleased to

run through the criteria with Councillor Flavell and that an officer would attend the next Neighbourhood Partnership 9 (St Crispin) meeting in order to appraise the Partnership of the situation.

In the absence of both Councillors Reeve and Glynane, Councillor B Hoare reported that he would send a copy of the response to Councillor Reeve's question in respect of crime figures to him.

Councillor Palethorpe thanked Councillor Beardsworth for her response to his question about homelessness and noted that he had originally made this query via the Councillor Contact Centre on 30 May but had not received a response. Councillor Beardsworth undertook to find out what had happened to Councillor Palethorpe's query.

Councillor Scott thanked Councillor Crake for the response to her question that had been tabled and queried whether there were any short or medium term plans to recruit an officer to enforce flytipping regulations. Councillor Crake commented that there were no plans to recruit a specific officer for this role but consideration was being given to the better use of existing enforcement resources to cover this issue.

Councillors Church and Simpson declared a personal and prejudicial interest as members of the Friends of the Racecourse and left the Council Chamber during discussion of the following question and answer. Councillor Scott thanked Councillor Woods for the response to her question that had been tabled and queried which Cabinet member had given permission for the sculptures to be erected and whether they had sought advice from the Planning Officers. Councillor Woods commented that he had been consulted on this issue but he was not clear if the Planning Officers had been consulted and as the tabled answer stated further investigations were taking place as to whether the erection of the sculptures were within permitted development rights.

6. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

At this point each of the Cabinet Members present 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 Management Restructure, Partnerships, Improvement and WND. A number of comments were made in respect of the Northamptonshire Local Area Agreement 2 and the WND Planning Committee. Councillor Woods undertook to write to Councillors Caswell and Larratt in respect of their queries on the Local Area Agreement 2 and provided an update in respect of Borough Council Members of the WND Northampton Planning Committee (Councillors Church and Woods declared a personal interest in this as WND Board Members insofar as the discussion referred to the WND Northampton Planning Committee).

Councillor Woods on behalf of Councillor Glynane presented his portfolio report regarding Customer Services Operations, Support Services, Call Care, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Culture and Leisure. In response to a comment Councillor

Woods reported that the apparent haphazard delivery service to Councillors by the Post Office was being taken up with them.

Councillor Mildren presented his portfolio report which covered the sign off of the draft Statement of Accounts, Recruitment within Finance, Budget Monitoring and a number of property issues. Following a comment made by Councillor Larratt, Councillor Mildren undertook to confirm with the One Stop Shop that the plans for Archway Cottages were available for public inspection and noted that any objections would be considered by Cabinet in due course. The intention was for the cottages to be refurbished internally and externally and as far as he was aware there were no plans for different access arrangements to the cottages.

Councillor Beardsworth presented her portfolio report which covered Performance Partnership Working, Homeless Strategy and other key issues. She thanked the new Chair of N-TACT, Beverley Menell, for its support and noted that Choice Based Lettings would commence at the end of July. Councillor Beardsworth noted in response to a comment by Councillor Palethorpe that a strategy had been put in place to make sure that benefits, furniture and equipment were all aligned with tenants' needs and that this included follow up visits to see how tenants were coping. She also undertook to write to Councillor Clarke in respect of the Cooper Street heating project.

Councillor Church presented his portfolio report which covered the Chrysalis Centre, the Town Centre Retail Strategy, the Market Square and Abington Street frontages, the Market Square, Disposal of School Playing Fields at Parklands and Grange Road, the Developer Contributions Standard Charge, Former Blueberry Diner Site Car Park Strategy, Sixfields, Concessionary Fares and Establishing an Integrated Planning Service. In respect of the comments made by members of the public earlier in the meeting he stated that clarification from the County Council and WNDC was being sought on the exact status of access agreements. He noted that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee report had been accepted by Cabinet including clarification and strengthening of existing policies within the local development document framework. He was not aware of any comments that Overview & Scrutiny had made in respect of judicial review. He noted that in respect of St Lukes, Duston that any application for this former school site would be determined by WNDC and that the Borough Council would be a consultee. The public could raise their concerns both with the Borough Council and with WNDC. Councillor Church also noted in respect of the Market Square that although the consultants' report had taken longer to bring forward than had originally been anticipated he felt that it would present a welcome solution. (Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest in the contents of this report as a member of the County Council's Development Control Committee)

Councillor Crake presented her portfolio report which covered Street Scene, Waste Management, Carbon Management Programme, Crypto Sporidiosis and Disabled Facilities Grants. She acknowledged the comments made by Councillor Larratt in respect of the train in Abington Park and the support given by County Councillor Maureen Hill and Tony Ansell and also thanked Mr Tom O'Shea and the nursery for donating the train. She confirmed that there would be winter planting in the public

areas such as the town's major roundabouts this year. It was hoped that glass recycling would be rolled out across the town by the end of the year.

Councillor B Hoare presented his portfolio report which covered Performance Management, ICT, Elections, Land Charges and Information Management, Legal Services and Standards. Councillor B Hoare commented that he would further investigate Councillors comments about the slow performance of the portal service and also the spam filters on the Council's computer systems.

7. APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEE TO DALLINGTON RAYNSFORD ALMSHOUSES CHARITY

Councillor Woods submitted a report which sought the appointment of a Trustee to the Dallington Raynsford Almshouses Charity and commented that it would be appropriate at a later date for a report to be made to an appropriate committee on the work of this and other Charities that the Council appointed to. Councillor R Conroy seconded the report.

RESOLVED: That Mrs Mary Christine Musson JP be appointed as Trustee of the Dallington Raynsford Almshouses Charity.

(Councillors Beardsworth, Edwards, Hadland and Mason declared personal interests as Trustees of Charities covered by the general discussion on the work of individual Charities.)

8. PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS FOR CAPITAL FINANCE 2008-09 TO 2010-11

Councillor Mildren submitted a report which sought approval to the range of prudential indicators for 2008/09 to 2010/11. Councillor Perkins seconded the report.

RESOLVED: (1) That Council notes the deviation from the Prudential Indicator for 2008/09 for the upper limit for principal sums invested for more than 364 days.

(2) That the following revised Prudential Indicators for the upper limit of principal sums invested for more than 364 days be as follows:

2008/09 £6m
2009/10 £6m
2010/11 £6m

9. MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2007/08

Councillor B Hoare submitted a report that set out allowances that had been paid to Councillors during 2007/08. Councillor Perkins seconded the report.

RESOLVED: That the unaudited report be noted.

10. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Comment was made that items of business under this heading should be open and transparent. Councillor Hadland commented that an element of spontaneity needed to be kept at Council meetings.

Councillor Hadland commented that since the Administration had taken control in May 2007 much business had been started, however a number of matters had slipped. He referred specifically to the Grosvenor Centre Legal Agreement, the Local Development Document framework, £7m of Capital Projects and Improvements to Consultation.

Councillor Woods commented that a great deal of money had been invested in the Decent Homes Standard for the next three years and increases in funding had been made to Disabled Facilities Grants and for lifts in Council properties. In respect of the Grosvenor Centre development he referred to an informal Cabinet briefing to which Councillor Hadland had been invited and also noted plans for Southbridge, the Market Square and the new West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee.

Councillor Hadland noted that despite the investment in Decent Homes Standard the condition of some Council properties was still deteriorating and that not everything was as the Administration portrayed it.

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

None.

The meeting concluded at 20.38 hours