

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON THURSDAY 26 JUNE 2008 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Beardsworth, Capstick, Caswell, Choudary, Church, Clarke, Collins, J. Conroy, R. Conroy, Crake, Davies, Edwards, Garlick, Glynane, Hadland, Hill, B.Hoare, M. Hoare, Hollis, Larratt, Lill, Malpas, I. Markham, Mason, Matthews, Meredith, Mildren, Palethorpe, Perkins, Reeve, Scott, Taylor, P.D. Varnserry, P.M. Varnserry, Wilson, Woods and Yates

The Mayor noted that several Councillors were not sitting in the seats allocated to them.

Two Councillors commented that they were unaware of which seats had been allocated to them. The Mayor stated that seats in the Council Chamber had been allocated, as usual, following discussions within and between the Groups and that all Councillors had been made aware of this.

Councillor Hadland withdrew the Conservative Group from the meeting in protest over this situation. The Conservative Group left the Chamber.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 18:43 hours.

The meeting resumed at 19:10 hours.

Councillor Woods commented that this would be the last meeting that Clive Thomas, Director of People Planning & Regeneration, would be attending before leaving and on behalf of the Council thanked him for his work for the Council and wished him well for the future.

The Mayor announced that as no immediate agreement could be reached in respect of the seating plan he was adjourning the meeting until Monday 30 June at 18:30 hours.

The meeting adjourned at 19.20 hours

RECONVENED COUNCIL MEETING 30 June 2008 at 6.30pm.

PRESENT: His Worship the Mayor, Councillor B Markham (In the Chair)

Councillors I Choudary, Church, Clarke, Collins, J Conroy, R Conroy, Crake, Davies, De Cruz, Edwards, Garlick, Glynane, M Hoare, Hollis, Larratt, C Lill, Malpas, I Markham, Matthews, Meredith, Mildren, Palethorpe, Perkins, Reeve, Scott, Simpson, Taylor, P M Varnserry, P D Varnserry, Woods and Yates.

1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meetings of Council held on 12 May 2008 and 22 May 2008 were signed by the Mayor.

2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Beardsworth, Capstick, Caswell, S Chaudhury, Duncan, Flavell, Hadland, Hawkins, Hill, B Hoare, Lane, J Lill and Tavener.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor commented that Councillor Tavener had recently been in hospital and on behalf of the Council expressed his best wishes to her and her family.

The Mayor commented that he had met a group of young African men undertaking a sponsored walk to raise awareness of the problems in Africa and who were trying to encourage young Africans to get involved in finding solutions to those issues.

The Mayor commented on the clear up of Abington Park undertaken on 28 June with the help of volunteers from the Church of the Latter Day Saints and the supervision and equipment provided by the Council.

Councillor Davies stated that at the meeting adjourned on 26 June Councillor Mason had been unable to take her allocated seat in the Council Chamber and the remainder of the Labour Group had supported her. Councillor Davies stated that there was no intention to give slight to the Mayor and apologised if his Group's actions had been interpreted as such.

Councillor Clarke stated that he was happy to sit in the seat allocated to him and was pleased that the seating plan would in future be a matter of agreement. He hoped that this would extend to all other issues that were open to all Councillors to be involved in.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr C Swinn with reference to item 7 "Statement of Accounts 2007/08" commented that he was pleased that HRA Balances had been increased and that more money had been made available for the Decent Homes Standard. He commented that the previous week had been the third anniversary of the tenant's vote for the housing stock to be retained by the Council. He also commented that he was pleased that improvements had been made in Revenues and Benefits and Homelessness but commented improvements were still needed in Housing Maintenance. Mr Swinn expressed the hope that the Council would join the Joint Municipal Housing Association.

6. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Councillor Woods submitted a report and commented that this was a new document introduced this year as part of the Annual Governance Arrangements. It would be presented to the auditors as part of the Council accounts. The document was based on six core principles that had been identified by the independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services and set out in the report.

Councillor Perkins indicated that the Audit Committee had reserved their position to await the Auditors comments on the Statement.

Councillor Clarke noted that the cycle of Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings was out of sync with those of Cabinet and therefore provided a limited opportunity for Councillors to examine decisions made by Cabinet. In response Councillor Woods noted that Overview & Scrutiny could hold extra meetings if they so chose.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Governance Statement be adopted.

7. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2007/08

Councillor Mildren submitted a report commenting that it summarised the day to day expenditure and balances of the Council during the last financial year. The report had to be approved in draft form by 30 June and adopted by 30 September. He noted that neither Audit Committee or Cabinet had raised any issues.

Councillor Woods thanked the Director of Finance and her colleague for their work to compile the statement and noted that Cabinet had asked the Chief Executive to look at some housing schemes project management.

Councillor Palethorpe stated that he was pleased with the increased funding made available for meeting the Decent Homes Standard and expressed the hope that N-TACT would be involved in any decisions on what works were carried out.

Councillor Clarke highlighted a number of potential risks identified in the statement and Councillor Church observed that there were also a number of potential windfall gains that were also identified.

Councillor Perkins stated that the Audit Committee had considered the accounts in detail and had alerted Cabinet of some issues and were to investigate others itself.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the revised General Fund Balance be noted.
- (2) That the Statement of Accounts for 2007/08 be adopted.
- (3) That the Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance be authorised to make any non-material adjustments to the accounts prior to external audit.

8. LONG SERVICE AWARD - COUNCILLOR RICHARD CHURCH

The Mayor observed that at Annual Council a report on employees Long Service (25 and 35 years) was made however no such opportunity existed for Councillors. He commented that Councillor Church had served the Council and residents of Kingsthorpe continuously for 25 years and congratulated him upon that landmark

and presented a gift to him.

Councillor Church expressed his thanks to the Mayor and the Council and expressed the hope that this would be extended to other Councillors upon similar achievement. He stated that he found it rewarding to do something for the local community and that more young people should be encouraged to get involved in local government.

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 19.35