

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON THURSDAY THE TWENTY SEVENTH DAY OF SEPTEMBER 2007 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Beardsworth, Capstick, S.Chaudhury, I. Choudary, Church, Clarke, Collins, Conroy, Crake, Davies, Duncan, Edwards, Flavell, Garlick, Glynane, Hadland, Hawkins, Hoare, Hollis, Lane, Larratt, C. Lill, J. Lill, I. Markham, Matthews, Meredith, Mildren, Palethorpe, Perkins, Reeve, Scott, Simpson, Tavener, Taylor, P/Varnserry, PD. Varnserry, Wilson and Woods

1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of Northampton Borough Council held on 23 July 2007 were signed by the Deputy-Mayor.

2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from the Mayor, Councillors Caswell, R Conroy, De Cruz, Hill and M Hoare.

3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Deputy-Mayor advised that copies of the Constitution had been tabled and that the Council's Constitution was now also on the Borough Council's website as well as the Intranet.

The Deputy-Mayor then advised that he would be taking an emergency motion regarding the Northampton Sea Cadets as a Matter of Urgency.

4. SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE - PRESENTATION BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES COMMISSIONER NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

In response to a point of order raised by Councillor Clarke in terms of how the following presentation fitted into the Constitution the Solicitor to the Council gave advice and guidance on this.

Kate Yates, Children and Young Peoples Commissioner at Northamptonshire County Council then gave a PowerPoint presentation on services for children and young people in Northamptonshire. She stated that the purpose of the presentation was to draw attention to this initiative which was nationally driven and aimed at a partnership approach to drive forward the five outcomes that every child matters and for every child to be healthy, enjoy and achieve, achieve economic wellbeing, make a positive contribution and stay safe. The aim was to enable more effective work with children and young people and to facilitate links with other local initiatives.

Following her presentation a number of questions were taken it being noted that Councillor Taylor was the Children's Champion for Northampton Borough Council. Copies of the presentation were left for members to take away and any further questions or issues could be referred to Kate Yates and she would respond to these accordingly.

5. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES.

There were none. However at this juncture the Deputy-Mayor received two petitions; the first was from a Mr Lawrence and a Mrs Murray on behalf of residents of Links View who were asking the Council to employ a specialist groundwater surveyor to establish what was causing the problem of water seepage and which was now affecting many houses in the area. The Deputy-Mayor accepted the petition on behalf of the Council which would be forwarded to the relevant Portfolio Holder.

Mr Keith Bonham then presented a petition on behalf of residents of Little Billing village stating that they were totally opposed to the sale of green space between Valley Road and Valley Crescent for residential development and therefore called upon the Leader of Northampton Borough Council to allow this land legal protection by officially registering it as a village green with The Commons Registration Authority. This would ensure that this natural asset could continue to be enjoyed by residents and visitors for generations to come. The Deputy-Mayor accepted the petition on behalf of the Council which would be forwarded to the relevant Portfolio Holder.

6. QUESTION TIME

The Deputy-Mayor advised that six questions had been received from members and that the questions and answers had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution. The Deputy-Mayor advised that he would take the questions in the order in which they had been received.

Councillor Capstick then asked a question of Councillor Crake as the relevant Portfolio Holder. The question was whether the administration would give a guarantee for finding the funds for opening all public toilets that were due to be closed after the last Tory administration's budget.

She noted the response as tabled. Following a supplementary question Councillor Crake advised that the current administration were managing the situation as best they could under the current circumstances and financial situation.

Councillor Malpas then asked a question of Councillor Beardsworth as the relevant Portfolio Holder as to whether Council owned properties in his ward would have their doors modernised as had been the case elsewhere in the Borough. He accepted the response as tabled.

In response to a supplementary question it was noted that the budget included funding for replacement of sheltered housing doors in Billing Ward.

Councillor J Lill then asked a question of Councillor Glynane as the relevant Portfolio Holder in terms of what the Administration was doing to address the environmental impact, increased levels of traffic may have on the town following the recent changes to car parking charges which would hopefully attract more visitors to Northampton. Councillor J Lill accepted the answer to the question as tabled but asked a supplementary about the 24 hour lighting in the car parks and the environmental impact this would have. Councillor Glynane commented that people would feel safer in the car parks with 24 hour lighting.

Councillor Reeve asked a question of Councillor Woods in terms of when he planned to honour his party's pledge and remove the bunding that he promised the people of Delapre and Far Cotton before the elections in May. He also asked whether he could be told how much it was going to cost and where the finances were coming from to facilitate such a programme of works. Councillor Reeve noted the answer to his question as tabled.

Councillor Lane asked a question of Councillor Glynane as the relevant Portfolio Holder whether he was happy with the attendance figures for this year's Balloon Festival and did he expect them to increase in 2008. Councillor Lane accepted the response as tabled and asked a supplementary question as to whether the fee was likely to increase next year. Councillor Glynane commented that if the event was to be improved upon further then there would possibly be an increase in fees.

The final question was a question from Councillor Caswell to Councillor Woods but as Councillor Caswell was unable to be present the response was duly noted and would be passed onto Councillor Caswell accordingly.

7. 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.

In presenting his Portfolio update Councillor Woods raised two points. Firstly to welcome the Chief Executive designate David Kennedy to his first Council meeting. Secondly he drew attention to paragraph 3 of his report regarding the formation of a joint Planning Committee with South Northamptonshire Council and Daventry District Council and advised that a set of proposals had been drawn up and would be taken to a Cabinet meeting in the near future. He then advised that the progress assessment had been appended to his report for information.

Members then asked questions regarding this Portfolio presentation. Further reference was made to the impact of giving responsibility of planning powers to bodies outside this Borough. It was noted that this was regrettable but that the joint Planning Committee referred to was a Planning Policy Committee and not a Planning Development Committee.

In terms of the Audit Commission Progress Report in response a question Councillor Woods acknowledged the work and efforts that had been put in by the

previous administration.

Councillor Glynane portfolio holder for Community Engagement and Safety then presented his portfolio update which touched upon car parks, town centre partnership, shopmobility, the balloon festival, leisure centres, community safety, the safer stronger Northampton Partnership, health and safety, customer services and partnership working. Members then asked questions regarding the update. In response to a query regarding the percentages under community safety regarding anti social behaviour, Councillor Glynane advised that these figures were an approximation. Note was also made of the number of reported incidents it being noted that these figures were up due to more active measures being taken to address the problem and therefore they had received a higher profile. Councillor Palethorpe posed a question regarding the chairing of the multi agency task groups and advised that he would put in a written question and Councillor Glynane would supply a written response. Councillor J Lill asked a question regarding the balloon festival and whether as in previous years a working party would be set up to carry out a de brief for this year's festival. Councillor Glynane confirmed that there had already been a meeting with the disabled peoples forum and the public would also be invited to talk about the festival at the local democracy week. He stated that he would also welcome comments from councillors about this years festival. Further questions were then asked about the balloon festival for example what entrance fee would be charged for next year's event. It was noted that this had not yet been determined and also that the final figures for this year's festival had not yet been finalised.

Councillor Beardsworth as portfolio holder for housing then presented her portfolio update which covered Council Tax, Performance and Homelessness. She added that she had been liaising with Kettering Borough Council's Housing Director and that both Councils were working together to deal with particular instances of anti-social behaviour to obtain ASBO's against a number of individuals. Other questions were then asked under the headings of services and homelessness.

Councillor Church portfolio holder for Regeneration then presented his portfolio update which covered Local Development Framework, Planning Service, Economic Strategy, the Grosvenor Centre and St John's Cultural Quarter. A question was asked with regard to the planning service and assurance sought that the quality of decisions was not being affected by the speed with which they were now having to be delivered. It was noted that the appeals process would be used as a measure of quality in terms of how many appeals were overturned. In response to a question regarding Grosvenor/Greyfriars it was noted that this was proceeding well, negotiations were continuing and officers were working very hard to achieve the deadline. A report was due to be submitted to Cabinet at its meeting on Monday 1 October.

At this juncture the thirty minute time limit for this item expired and the guillotine came into operation. As such the remaining three portfolio presentations were duly received and the Deputy Mayor advised that any further questions on these should be submitted to the portfolio holder in writing and a written response would be received to those questions.

8. EXTERNAL AUDITORS REPORT (FOLLOWING THE AUDIT OF THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS)

It was agreed that items 8 and 9 would be taken together.

Councillor Perkins presented the external audit report from KPMG on the 2006/07 financial statements and use of resources and the statement of internal control and the statement of accounts for 2006/07. He stated that KPMG had issued an unqualified opinion on the accounts with no adjustment. There had been some presentational changes but these did not impact upon the financial position previously disclosed. Councillor Woods duly seconded the report which had been considered and agreed by Audit Committee and Cabinet earlier that week.

RESOLVED: (1) That the KPMG unqualified opinion of the 2006/07 accounts be noted.
 (2) That Council approve the 2006/07 Statement of Internal Control.
 (3) That Council approve the 2006/07 Statement of Accounts.
 (4) That the Director of Finance be authorised to make non material adjustments post council approval, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Finance.

9. RE-PRESENTATION OF ACCOUNTS POST AUDIT.

10. APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES TO RICHARD RAYNSFORD ALMSHOUSES DALLINGTON

Councillor Woods presented a report seeking approval to the appointment of two trustees to Richard Raynsford Almshouses Charity Dallington.

RESOLVED: That under the terms of the charity commissioners scheme for The Raynsford Almshouses Charities the Council appoint Mrs Jane Humphrey and Mrs Marjorie Cook to be trustees to the charities.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

N.B. Councillor Church declared a personal and non prejudicial interest in the following motion as a member of the Northamptonshire Police Authority.

Councillor Hadland moved and Councillor Palethorpe seconded the Notice of Motion as printed under item 11 on the agenda :-

“This Council deplores Central Government’s chronic under funding of Northamptonshire Police which has forced Chief Constable Peter Maddison to consider reducing officer numbers by up to a quarter.

This Council notes that according to the latest figures for the Northampton West area violent offences in Northampton, Daventry and Towcester increased by 9.6%, robbery by 2.3% and drugs offences by 28.5%. With crime increasing and detection rates falling this Council is gravely concerned that continued under funding of the police has left residents of Northamptonshire vulnerable.

Therefore this Council demands that Central Government increases funding to bring Northamptonshire Police into line with similar sized forces thereby allowing for an increase in officer numbers to relieve the present resource crisis and instructs the Chief Executive to inform the relevant Government Department accordingly.”

Councillor Church then moved and Councillor Simpson seconded an amendment to the motion as follows:-

To delete from the second paragraph,

“With crime increasing and detection rates falling this Council is gravely concerned that continued underfunding of the police has left residents of Northampton vulnerable.

”and to insert “This Council welcomes the introduction of the Police Safer Community Teams, the improved visibility of policing with Police Community Support Officers working in partnership with the Borough Council’s neighbourhood wardens and welcomes the significant achievements in the reduction of overall crime in Northampton, particularly burglary, vehicle crime and criminal damage. This Council recognises that these reductions in crime can only be sustained by increased long term funding to Northamptonshire Police.”

The amendment was then duly debated voted upon and carried to become the substantive motion.

The substantive motion was then duly debated voted upon and carried.

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

At this juncture the Deputy Mayor advised that there was an emergency motion which he had indicated earlier that he would take as a matter of urgency and called upon Councillor Larratt as the mover of the motion:-

Councillor Larratt then moved and Councillor Tavener seconded :-

“Northampton Borough Council recognises the success of the Northampton Sea Cadet Unit as one of the leading Sea Cadet Units in the United Kingdom. This Council also recognises the benefit the Unit affords young people throughout the area.

This Council confirms its commitment to supporting organisations that provide opportunities for young people throughout our Borough and beyond. In particular this Council confirms its commitment to supporting the continued success and development of the Northampton Sea Cadet Unit.

In order to secure the continued success of the Northampton Sea Cadet unit, this Council requests Cabinet to resolve the issue as soon as practicable to enable the sea cadets to seek funding and continue their activities in Northampton.”

The motion was duly debated, voted upon and carried unanimously and stood

referred to Cabinet.

The meeting concluded at 9.25pm