

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Thursday, 18 October 2007

PRESENT: Councillor Woods (Chair); Councillor Glynane (Deputy Chair);
Councillors Beardsworth, Church, Crake, Hoare and Mildren.

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meetings held on 25th September and 1st October were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

RESOLVED: That Councillor Davies and Councillor Hadland be granted leave to address the Cabinet in respect of Item 5, Establishment of a West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5. ESTABLISHMENT OF A WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Councillor Davies addressed the Cabinet and expressed his concern at the apparent under-representation of the Borough Council on the proposed Joint Committee, which could lead to the Council being out-voted on issues by South Northants and Daventry District Councils. He also considered that, in view of the Council's current poor performance rating, all political groups, as stakeholders, should be represented on the Committee. He felt this was particularly important in the case of the Labour Party, as this was the party of central Government. With regard to the proportionality of a Labour member sitting on the committee, Councillor Davies commented that his group had allowed committee representation of the Conservative Party even when there was only one elected member on the Council.

Councillor Hadland then addressed the Cabinet and echoed Councillor Davies' sentiments, stating that, in the interests of democracy, all political parties should be represented on the Committee.

Councillor Hadland drew the cabinet's attention to the appendix to the report, in which the paragraph numbering was not consistent with the Contents page.

Councillor Church, as relevant portfolio holder, presented the report, explaining that there had been intensive training, discussion and negotiation involving the three district councils concerned. As a result of the joint working, the Borough Council would have a say in the future growth and development on and over its borders. He commented that negotiations were still taking place with regard to the make up of the Committee but warned that if an agreement was not reached between the three councils and also the County Council, it was likely that central Government would impose a solution that might include the appointment of Government selected Committee members. He further pointed out that planning policy work was a Cabinet function, although this might be shared with colleagues when it had been

decided who would serve on the Committee. It was noted that the WNDC was to have an observer position on the Committee. It was proposed that the work of the Committee would be scrutinised by each council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements and an annual report would be required. There would be no change in the existing arrangements for the determination of planning applications.

Councillor Woods made it clear that the creation of a Joint Strategic Planning Committee was a strong desire of central Government to ensure that the Local Development Framework progress was agreed quickly and efficiently. This would result in a diminution of democratic oversight, which was to be regretted. A major role of the Committee would be to agree the Northampton Implementation Area, the area for growth of Northampton outside the Borough boundary. In doing this it was important that the competing dangers of town cramming and urban sprawl were avoided. Whilst almost inevitable that one or two neighbouring villages would be incorporated into Northampton's urban area, the protection of villages was important in maintaining the relationship of Northampton to its rural hinterland.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Cabinet recommends to Council that they agree the establishment of a joint strategic planning committee responsible for joint planning policy formulation and adoption for purposes of Part 2 (Local Development) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, to be known as the "West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee", and request the Secretary of State to make an Order under section 29 of the Act to effect this.
- (2) That the draft Memorandum of Intent at Appendix A be agreed as the recommended basis for the operational arrangements of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee (including membership/voting) and that should there be any further revisions to the draft Memorandum of Intent these be agreed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder with the recommendation to Council being amended accordingly.
- (3) That the Council's employees within the Joint Planning Unit will serve the Joint Strategic Planning Committee when it is established.

The meeting concluded at 18:00