

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON MONDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2008 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Caswell, S. Chaudhury, I. Choudary, Church, Clarke, Collins, J. Conroy, R. Conroy, Crake, Davies, Duncan, Edwards, Flavell, Garlick, Glynane, Hadland, Hawkins, Hill, B. Hoare, M. Hoare, Hollis, Lane, Larratt, C. Lill, Malpas, I. Markham, Mason, Matthews, Mildren, Palethorpe, Perkins, Reeve, Scott, Simpson, Tavener, Taylor, P.D. Varnsberry, P.M. Varnsberry, Wilson, Woods and Yates

1. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of Northampton Borough Council held on 21 July 2008 were signed by the Mayor subject to the correction of the spelling of Holly Avil on page 2.

2. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Beardsworth, Capstick, de Cruz, J Lill and Meredith.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Church and Woods declared personal interests in item 8 "Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/2008" insofar as the report referred to the WNDC of which they were Board members.

Councillors J Conroy and Duncan declared personal and prejudicial interests in item 10 "Northampton Municipal Church Charity" as they were trustees of it.

Councillor Hadland declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of item 10 "Northampton Municipal Church Charity" as an adviser to it.

Councillor Taverner declared a personal interest in item 7 "Cabinet Member Presentations" insofar as the report referred to disabilities.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor referred to the Heritage Open Days which was taking place over the weekend of 13 & 14 September. He commented that the Mayor's Parlour and Guildhall would be open on 14 September and that members of the Youth Forum would be escorting visitors around the building. He noted that the Deputy Mayor would be present at Hazelrigg House.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

(i) PETITION FROM UPTON GRANGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION TO EXTEND UPTON PARISH BOUNDARY.

Mr M Clarke on behalf of Upton Grange Residents Association presented the Mayor with a petition to extend the Upton Parish boundary and commented that the required 250 signatures had been gathered. The request was to extend Upton Parish boundary to Upton Way to include Upton Grange and that some parts of Upon One which were currently outside of the Parish boundary should be included within it.

(ii) OTHER.

Mr D Green with reference to the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/2008 referred to the loss of school playing fields caused by the County Council's PFI scheme. He commented that some 20 playing fields would be lost at a total cost of £1 billion. The County Council had said that there should be community access to the new facilities and the Borough Council had a policy that access agreements should be drawn up. But these access agreements did not exist. PPS 17 stated that any new open space to be provided should be equal to or better than that which had been lost. It did not appear that the WNDC were pursuing this issue and the Borough Council seemed to be absolving itself of any responsibility. Mr Green understood that the Borough had written to the WNDC in the Spring but that a response was still awaited and he suggested that the Council should be more robust on this matter.

(Councillors Edwards, Lane, Hill, Malpas and Taverner declared a personal interest in this matter as County Councillors).

Mrs Walder in reference to the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/2008 referred to the loss of open space and commented upon her own experience of working with 4-11 year olds in some of the most deprived areas of the town. She commented that playing fields were an important resource for free recreation and she cautioned that the WNDC, County Council and Borough Councils needed to be careful in the decisions that they made or else no open space would be left.

Mr C Swinn in respect of the Cabinet member presentations referred to the Community Engagement Strategy and the toolkit from Portsmouth which had yet to be implemented. In respect of Housing he commented that the Choiced Based Lettings process appeared to be working well. He expressed concern at the operation of N-TACT which he considered at present to be dysfunctional and not fit for purpose. He commented that N-TACT had no grievance or conflict resolution process in order to deal with any issue that might arise.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that two 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 I Chaudhury thanked Councillor Church for the answer to his question that had been tabled and asked him whether he agreed with the Police and the

Town Centre Partnership that a skateboard park should be provided at Becketts Park. Councillor Church commented that he understood the point of view that had been expressed and that a town centre location for a skateboard park did seem sensible but all possibilities should be examined.

Councillor Scott thanked Councillor Woods for his answer to her question that had been tabled and further queried that as permitted development in parks referred to minor matters whether he was happy that the matter had been resolved ethically. Councillor Woods confirmed that he was content with the outcome of this matter.

7. 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 the issues of management restructure, improvement, the Joint Strategic Planning Committee and WNDC. In answer to a question he confirmed that portfolio holders were responsible for their own reports. Councillor Clarke expressed concern at the expense of the Joint Strategic Planning project and Councillor Woods commented that consultants had looked at the capacity of the Joint Planning Unit and had recommended that capacity be improved as well as the qualifications of those involved in it. He conceded that it would have significant implications for the budget but it was important that the joint local document framework was brought forward quickly and to a good standard. He undertook to write to Councillor Clarke with the financial details and stated that consultants would continue to be used when and where necessary by the Council.

Councillor Clarke proposed and Councillor Larratt seconded "That the Council's Procedural Rules be suspended so as to allow unlimited questioning of portfolio holders."

Upon a vote the motion was lost.

Councillor Woods on behalf of Councillor Beardsworth presented her portfolio report which covered performance, partnership working and other key issues.

In respect of N-TACT Councillor Woods commented that tenant participation was an area that the Council wanted to work successfully and it needed to involve people from across the town and should help the Council's improvement. However, at present it was not doing this. In answer to questions from Councillor Palethorpe he commented that an improved process had been put in place for Disabled Facilities Grants and that a backlog of applications was being processed. This in turn had put pressure on the Occupational Therapists. He noted that in terms of Team Leaders as many as were needed would be appointed. In response to questions from Councillor Malpas, Councillor Woods commented that customer service within the Housing area needed further work and that he would write with details of the Manager responsible for the Ecton Lane Traveller Site. He noted that the web based version was only one means of accessing the Choiced Based Lettings

system and that texting or talking to Housing Officers were available as alternatives. Feedback on the system had so far been positive. In response to a query from Councillor Clarke, Councillor Woods undertook to write to him in respect of the Cooper Street flats and in response to Councillor Flavell commented that a Housing Officer or himself or Councillor Beardsworth would attend a meeting of Neighbourhood Partnership 9.

Councillor Glynane presented his report regarding Community Safety, Culture and Leisure and Customer Services Operations. He noted that an evaluation of both the Venezia and Balloon Festivals would be undertaken. The Venezia costs were being met by sponsorship. The Balloon Festival had been a success this year and Councillor involvement in the Balloon Festival Working Party was welcomed. In respect of the Safer Stronger Northampton Board meeting Councillor Glynane confirmed that meetings would take place where there was adequate disabled access. He also noted that the key to the public disabled toilet at the Guildhall could be obtained via the Guildhall Office.

Councillor Glynane undertook to write to Councillor Clarke in respect of the Balloon Festival budget figures and undertook to write to Councillor Larratt with details concerning the Events Policy and consultation upon it. In response to a query from Councillor Reeve, Councillor Glynane commented that individuals guilty of persistent criminal behaviour should be jailed but this should not be confused with early intervention when problems first arose so as to move an individual away from a criminal behaviour path.

Councillor Church presented his portfolio report which covered the Market Square, Public Realm, Chrysalis Centre, St Johns Master Plan, Central Area Action Plan, Director of Planning and Regeneration and Head of Planning, Planning Committee meetings and Becketts Park and the Racecourse. In response to questions raised by Councillor Larratt, Councillor Church commented that he supported the pedestrianisation of Gold Street and noted that the County Council and WNDP would have a large input into public realm projects. It would be for the County Council to consider whether part of Abington Street should be opened up to traffic; the Council could only comment on proposals once they had been brought forward. In response to a query from Councillor Flavell, Councillor Church noted that the Becketts Park plans had been displayed at the Guildhall as well as the Balloon Festival and that all views were welcome. In response to Councillor Clarke he commented that it was premature at the moment to consider how market stalls would be allocated under the new arrangements but the process would be discussed with the market traders and the Markets Manager. In response to Councillor Hadland Councillor Church commented that the Council had lobbied the County Council to ensure that the public realm works in Gold Street were stopped at least a month before Christmas so as to allow traders to take advantage of the trading season.

Councillor Crake submitted a report which covered Street Scene, Consultations, Waste Services, Carbon Management and Private Sector Housing. She undertook to write to Councillor Lane in respect of the Council's involvement in the ELVIS Partnership scheme. Councillor Crake acknowledged the comments made by

Councillor Palethorpe in respect of Northampton Town Football Club's work with the Athletics Club in respect of the athletics facilities at Sixfields. In answer to a question from Councillor Larratt Councillor Crake commented that the Council would shortly be advertising the collection of all plastics for recycling and she noted that some material would be sent to China for reuse. In answer to a query raised by Councillor Taverner, Councillor Crake noted that the maze in the rose garden at Abington Park would be low and that children would be clearly visible to adults supervising them.

Councillor Clarke declared a personal interest in this report as an employee of Northampton Town Football Club insofar as the discussion referred to his employer.

Councillor B Hoare presented his report which covered improving the Council's performance, higher standards of service, better information for the public and supporting Councillors and employees.

Councillor Mildren submitted his report which covered the Statement of Accounts 2007/2008, the comprehensive performance of assessment and budget for 2009/2010 to 2011/2012. In answer to a question from Councillor Hadland Councillor Mildren noted that any ongoing liability accruing from the transfer of the sculptures on the Racecourse to the Council's ownership would be included in the draft budget. In response to a query from Councillor Clarke he undertook to write to him once all the figures were available in respect of costs and income for the Balloon Festival. The expectation was that the outcome would be better than for the previous year.

Councillors Church and Simpson declared a personal interest in this report insofar as the discussion concerned the sculptures on the Racecourse as members of the Friends of the Racecourse.

8. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2007/2008

Councillor Simpson submitted a report which had been circulated with the agenda and thanked Alan Lenton in the Print Services Unit for the design of the report. He elaborated upon the report and that of Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1 and referred to the need to increase resources and support available to Overview & Scrutiny. Councillor R Conroy seconded the adoption of the report. Councillor Malpas and Lane commented upon the work of Overview & Scrutiny Committees 2 and 3 respectively. Councillor Woods commented that the Cabinet welcomed the report and the work of Overview and Scrutiny and had tightened up its own responses to Overview & Scrutiny recommendations. He acknowledged that further resources to support Overview & Scrutiny could be considered in the budget round.

RESOLVED: That the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/2008 be noted.

9. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Councillor Woods submitted a report that had been circulated with the agenda.

Councillor Clarke expressed concern that the effects of the joint planning process on

the Council's budget and the philosophy behind the joint working with the County Council and Daventry and South Northamptonshire District Councils.

RESOLVED: That Councillors Church, Hollis, Woods and P D Varnsberry be confirmed as the Council's representatives on the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee with Councillors Beardsworth, Collins, J Conroy and Meredith to act as substitutes.

NB Councillor Clarke voted against the above resolution.

10.APPOINTMENTS TO NORTHAMPTON MUNICIPAL CHURCH CHARITIES

Councillor Collins submitted a report that had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED: That Mr J Church, Mr T Sanderson and Mrs J Lineker be appointed as Trustees to the Northampton Municipal Church Charity.

11.INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Councillor B Hoare submitted a report and reported that the third member of the Panel would be Mr Terry Wright.

RESOLVED: (1) That approval be given to the setting of an independent Remuneration Panel.

(2) That the following people be appointed to the Panel:-

Mr Paul Joy

Mr Augustine Madu

Mr Terry Wright

(3) That the period of service for independent Remuneration Panel members be varied between 3-5 years in order to retain experience on the panel and to avoid all members leaving together; the length of service to be negotiated with each of the Panel members and to have regard to the relationship between the length of service and the electoral cycle.

(4) That the recruitment and selection of the Independent Remuneration Panel members in line with the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 be noted.

12.AMENDMENTS TO MEETINGS CYCLE

Councillor Woods submitted a report that had been circulated with the agenda.

Comment was made at the consequential effects on meetings of some of the Neighbourhood Partnerships.

RESOLVED: That the amended Meetings Cycle for 2008/09 be approved to take effect from Wednesday 15 October 2008.

13.OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

The Mayor noted that in accordance with the Constitution no prior notification of any Opposition Group Business had been given.

Councillor Hadland moved and Councillor Clarke seconded that "Council Procedural Rules be suspended so as to allow an item of Opposition Group Business to be

discussed”.

Upon a vote the motion was lost.

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

None.

The meeting concluded at 21.02 Hours