

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH
COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 4 June 2018
AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Malpas, Ashraf, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Caswell, Choudary, Chunga, Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, G Eales, T Eales, Eldred, Flavell, Golby, Graystone, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, Joyce, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, B Markham, M Markham, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Sargeant, Kilby-Shaw, Stone and Walker

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Kilbride, Bottwood, Markham and Ashraf declared personal interests as NPH Board members.

Councillor Davenport declared a personal interest as a Ward Councillor, affected by the recent floods.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the Meetings of the Council held on 23rd April, 14th May and 17th May 2018 were agreed.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Cali, Marriott, Hadland and Smith.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that he had attended a tree planting event which had been undertaken to celebrate the Royal Wedding between Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. He announced that Oak Apple Day had been successful with Earl Spencer having been in attendance. He further announced that he and Councillor Meredith had attended the Queens Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on the 31st May 2018 which had been a privilege. The Mayor announced that his Summer Ball would be held at the Guildhall on 24th August and the Speedy Cup would be held at the Swan and Helmet on the 23rd June 2018 and urged people to contact the Civic and Mayoralty Officer for further information.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Brian Hoare spoke in favour of a Unitary Authority and noted the importance of gathering the views of the general public specifically relating to geographical representation. He stated that the Secretary of State wanted a locally led proposal and the proposals should not be considered as a fait accompli.

Mr Arthur Newbury commented that he would like the Council to offer assurances that section 106 (S106) monies be brought into the Town Centre and are included in all future plans. He questioned the viability of having no parking for students at the new Waterside campus (for the University) and commented that additional park and ride schemes would only lead to increased traffic and suggested that a car park be built on the eastern side of the Town.

Mr David Huffadine-Smith questioned the feasibility of undertaking a Community Governance Review and suggested that it would result in having a single Town Council for the whole of Northampton Town but with such limited powers it would be comparable to that of a Parish Council which could give communities a real and effective structure.

Mr Daniel Soan stated that commented that he would be in support of the establishment of a Town Council and thus ensuring that there provisions be in place to protect the Civic role of the current Borough Council. J

Mr Tony Mallard commented that he had empathy with the position the Council were currently in, having received an instruction from Government, He stated that best efforts needed to be made to protect the Town and noted that pride of the history and heritage of the Town and the need to protect greens spaces and Northampton Partnership Homes to ensure established tenants are offered some security.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 28 questions had been received from Councillors and members of the public and that the answers had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution.

Questions and answers were given as tabled (included in an updated agenda on the Council's website) unless where stated, supplementary questions were asked as detailed below.

In response to a supplementary questions relating to question 1, Councillor Hallam stated that recycle boxes collected from residents would not end up in landfill.

In response to a supplementary questions relating to question 2, Councillor Nunn stated that the total revenue deficit was not known but as soon as it was, he would happily share the information.

In response to a supplementary questions relating to question 5, Councillor Hill noted that although there had been increased parking charges, there had also been an increase in footfall.

In response to a supplementary questions relating to question 7, Councillor Larratt commented that there was ongoing work with Sports Clubs in the Borough and licenses being drawn up.

In response to a supplementary questions relating to question 11, Councillor Hallam

stated the environmental services contact between January and April 2018 had received positive feedback.

In response to a supplementary questions relating to question 23, Councillor Nunn commented that he did not share the disappointment of the costs of opening up Abington Street to traffic.

In response to a supplementary questions relating to question 26, Councillor Hallam stated that Air Quality was being measured and that statistics had shown an improvement.

In response to a supplementary questions relating to question 28, Councillor Hallam that technical work required ahead of formal declaration of an AQMA was being progress and was on target and welcomed future input from Mr Sawyer.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn, as the Leader of the Council elaborated on his Cabinet Member report and explained that with regards to Unitary Status, vast amounts of work had been undertaken and noted that fast paced environment and time frame that had been imposed. He explained that there was a commitment to continue with voluntary sectors and noted the opportunities for local representations to be heard through various means including from Parish Councils. The Leader noted the appointment of the Independent Chair of the Audit Committee and welcomed his future contributions.

In response to questions asked, the Leader explained that the Administration had a commitment to consultation with on Unitary Status and this would be demonstrated in the future weeks.

Councillor Larratt elaborated on his Cabinet Member and updated Councillors on the training that was being offered and noted that the street lighting meeting with Officer and Member working group had taken place and that the finances would soon be signed off prior to a survey being carried out.

In response questions relating asked, Councillor Larratt explained that a public survey had been developed with regards to Northampton Market which was anticipated would demonstrate what young people and traders would like to see happen to the market and noted that requests had been made for involvement from the Youth forum and the Universities.

Councillor Hallam elaborated on his Cabinet Member report and thanked all of the Officers who had played a part in the transitional process and launch of the transfer of the Environmental Services providers and noted the success of the first day of the new contract.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Hallam commented that work was due to be undertaken on grass cutting near to dual carriageways and other highways. He explained that robust plans had been put in place to ensure that bins in parks would be emptied in a timely manner and that improvements were being made. Councillor Hallam further reminded Council that it was day one of the new contract and that

there were robust plans in place but that there was a need for patience before real results would be seen and asked that people reassess and judge the contract in 6 to 9 months, not on the first day of the contract. He further reported that street cleansing would be carried out more frequently and that there would be 2 extra street cleaning officers. Councillor Hallam explained that efforts were currently being made to clean-up the town centre and to apprehend people who were caught littering by way of issuing them with Fixed Penalty Notice, 4,500 of which had been issued.

Councillor King elaborated on her Cabinet Member report and noted the success of the LGBTQ pride event and flag raising which took place at the Guildhall in May 2018. She further referred to the IDAHOBIT celebrations which took place on the 17th May 2018. Councillor King offered her condolences to the family of a young person who had been fatally stabbed in Northampton and noted the Council's commitment to assisting the police in reducing knife crime and noted she was due to attend a conference on knife crime.

In response to questions asked, Councillor King explained that refugees would be involved in 'Refugee Week' through the Colours of the Words competition. She further responded to questions relating to crime figures and noted that they were supplied to her by the Police and that it was up to each individual Councillor to explore the figures further. She noted that tenders for work on the museum would soon be received and that future reports would include a business case.

At this juncture of the meeting, the Mayor advised that the time limit had been reached and no further Cabinet Member would elaborate on their reports.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Ashraf thanked Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) for their hard work and noted their progress over the years. However, she stated that there was still a need for affordable homes to be provided and noted the amount of boarded-up and empty homes in the Borough. She reported that there was a growing number of homeless people and that some landlords were increasing rents to generate quick cash. She commented that few people made a choice to be homeless and noted that increased number of people living in overcrowded premises. She congratulated the work of the Landlords Forum but stated that there was a need for more to be done to ensure that the rogue landlords did not thrive in the current economic climate and called for a 'Northampton Standard' to be introduced. She reported that there were over 3,000 people on the housing register in Northampton and that there were 387 children who were currently in temporary accommodation and urged the Council to encourage developers to adhere to the allocation percentage with regards to the building of affordable homes.

In response, Councillor Hibbert stated that he was not in disagreement with the opinions of Councillor Ashraf through the provision and delivery of more affordable housing. He stated that the Council had a very good enforcement team who were tackling rogue landlords. He further reported that homelessness was being tackled through various measures which included the Night shelter. He explained that the authority had reduced the number of people who were being housed in temporary accommodation outside of the Borough and noted the administrations commitment to

providing housing for everyone.

Councillor Ashraf responded stating that she was proud to be on the NPH Board and hoped that her and her fellow board members were making a positive contribution in addressing housing issues.

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Councillor Nunn proposed a report which updated Members on the current situation with regards to the potential Local Government reorganisation within Northampton. It sought Council's approval to work with the other county, district and borough Councils on a draft unitary proposal for consultation and for an agreed budget to finance the work.

Councillor Stone commented that Councils were being put under pressure by the Government and being starved of resources; she questioned how a new unitary authority would manage when starting out with a budget deficit.

Councillor Beardsworth stated that she was not in support of the recommendations and was displeased with the Government's decision to pursue the limited options and noted that the creation of a unitary authority would be with a number of difficulties including a lack of commonality. She emphasised the need for a consultation to involve, collaborate with and empower members of the public

Councillor B Markham commented that he considered the recommendations would pre-empt the proposed consultation with businesses and residents.

Councillor Duffy reported that her ward bordered that of Daventry District Council and noted her concerns that there had been a lack of cohesion with them over matters affecting both areas. Councillor Meredith stated that the proposal was motivated by the 7 Conservative MPs for the area and to agree to the report would be an extension of the MPs approach.

Members raised concerns about asset stripping and called the Council to establish a register in order to preserve the Towns assets. Further concerns were raised about the litter, the cuts to public services and issues with the recovery of loan money to NTFC, which was currently decaying the Council and the Town.

Councillor Golby offered his support for the recommendations and stated that the move to a Unitary Authority was encourage by the Government as they could see the overall benefits that it would bring.

Councillor Oldham reported that he had initially been in support of a Unitary Northampton but as this concept had been dismissed by the Government it was considered a necessity to work with their proposals.

The Deputy Leader commented that he had serious reservations about joining South Northants and Daventry but noted that they had been to the Government with the proposal for a Unitary Northampton on a number of occasions and this had not been fruitful; therefore it was necessary to reconsider the options offered. He explained that

the assets of the Borough were of great importance and every effort would be made to protect them.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote, there voted for the recommendations:

Councillors Aziz, Bottwood, Choudary, Eldred, Flavell, Golby, Graystone, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Malpas, M Markham, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Kilby-Shaw and Walker.

There voted against the recommendations:

Councillors Ashraf, Beardsworth, Birch, Chunga, Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, G Eales, T Eales, Joyce, B Markham, McCutcheon, Meredith, Russel and Stone

There abstained the Mayor:

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That Northampton Borough Council (NBC) acknowledge the recent invitation from the Secretary of State to submit a proposal for a single tier of Local Government in Northamptonshire
- 2.2 That the Council continue to work with the other county, districts and borough councils on a draft unitary proposal for consultation, suitable for submission to the Secretary of State, set against the criteria as detailed in the formal invitation letter and attached schedule, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government in Northamptonshire
- 2.3 That it be agreed to a working budget of up to £100,000 (in addition to any internal resources consumed within existing budgets) with delegated authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, that would fund any necessary work required in relation to local government reorganisation.
- 2.4 That a further report be received on the 29th August 2018 which will detail the final proposal to be submitted to the Secretary of State and the outcomes from the consultation, prior to the final submission deadline of 31st August 2018
- 2.5 That Council's resolution on the motion on Unitary Government dated 23rd January 2017 has been superseded following the later resolution of Council dated 14th May 2018 be noted and affirmed

10. INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Councillor Nunn proposed a report which called upon Council to note that Mr Ian Orrell, having been selected as the successful candidate, be appointed as the Independent Chair of the Audit Committee.

Councillor Larratt seconded the report.

Councillor Stone commented that it was good to have a more robust challenge to the accounts and expressed concern that the Statement of Accounts was still to be signed off.

RESOLVED:

That Council notes the appointment of Mr Ian Orrell as the Independent Chair of the Audit Committee

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

Mr Huffadine-Smith addressed motion i) and commented that some residents of Northamptonshire did not want a co-mingling of Towns but stated that it was essential to recognise that an instruction had been given by the Government and therefore there was a need to proceed. He suggested that the Council examine and learn from the roles of Parish Councils.

i) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Stone seconded:

“The letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government regarding submission for unitary authorities stated that they wanted “locally led proposals for establishing unitary authorities across the county which will be right for communities and people they serve”.

This Council acknowledges these requirements and will try and fulfil them on behalf of the residents in the Borough of Northampton.

To achieve this end the Council commits to undertake consultation with local residents to explain the changes that are being proposed and to seek resident’s views on the geography of the new Unitary Council to serve Northampton residents and their views on combining with other local districts.

This is the most important decision regarding local government reorganisation since 1974 and all Councillor should make their best effort to help with the consultation so that the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Governments call for proposals is delivered”.

Councillor Nunn proposed and Councillor Larratt seconded an amendment.

Amended motion to read:

“The letter from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government regarding submission for unitary authorities stated that they wanted “locally led proposals for establishing unitary authorities across the county which will be right for communities

and people they serve”.

This Council acknowledges these requirements and will try and fulfil them on behalf of the residents in the Borough of Northampton. It is essential that Residents participate in the formal, county-wide consultation, because this will ensure that their views are taken into account, and this council will encourage them to do that.

To achieve this end the Council commits to undertake consultation with local residents to explain the changes that are being proposed and to seek resident’s views on the key issues and requirements of a new unitary council to serve Northampton residents

This is the most important decision regarding local government reorganisation since 1974 and all Councillor should make their best effort to help with the consultation so that the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Governments call for proposals is delivered”.

Council debated the amendment.

Upon a vote, the amendment was agreed and became the substantive motion.

The motion was debated.

Upon a vote, the substantive motion was carried.

- ii) Councillor Culbard accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Stone.

“Obesity in Childhood is a growing problem. There are many causes of obesity. One is an issue that can be addressed by planning conditions.

Tower Hamlets and other Local Authorities are leading the way by not allowing fast food outlets within a 400 metre radius of schools. Some authorities are additionally providing healthy food awards for local retailers to encourage healthier food choices.

This council therefore commits to proposing, through the local plan process, a policy that there will be no new fast food outlets that fall within a 400 metre radius of schools.

We will additionally consider creating a healthy food award for local retailers to encourage healthier food choices”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

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

The Mayor reported to Council that a matter of urgency had arisen and needed to be considered at the meeting. The Mayor explained that a motion had been circulated to them and a tabled in front of them. The Mayor explained that he had consented to the motion being placed on the agenda as a matter of urgency.

A motion was proposed and seconded "That Council Procedural Rules be suspended so as to allow the debate on the motion to continue beyond the 10.00pm guillotine."

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

Ms Jade Jones addressed Council on the urgent motion and commented that as a resident of Briar Hill she had lost everything in the floods. She empathised with her neighbours who had young children and stated that they had received limited support.

Mr Peter Marsh commented that the response of the Council had been very disappointing and urged the Council to reconsider future responses to similar incidents.

Ms Jenny Renshaw questioned why there had been no warning sirens and commented that there had been nowhere safe for disabled residents or young children. She further commented that she had received no help and had been left destitute as the floods had ruined her home and belongings. She reported that the Council needed to respond more quickly in the future and offer assistance to those who were affected by such events.

Councillor Davenport proposed and Councillor Beardsworth seconded:

"We call upon this Council to do a full investigation into the response of the recent flooding in Northampton. We need to consult with residents to find out if their expectations were met by this authority and look to how this authority can make sure that things are in place if such an event ever happens again".

Councillor Davenport commented that the flooding could have been a more serious incident and stated that she felt let down by the response of the administration.

Councillor Beardsworth questioned what lessons had been learnt and noted that after the severe floods in 1998, the response from the Council had been commendable, but suggested that the latest response to the floods had been inadequate.

Councillor G Eales noted that 50 % of the homes that had been affected by the recent flooding had not had insurance which was due to the fact that some residents weren't able to get insurance due to the increased risks and asked that the Government intervene and provide some assurances to residents who were not able to purchase insurance.

Councillor Meredith offered his sympathy to all of those who had been affected by the

recent flooding and reported that the Councils response to the requests of an 80 year old man who had suffered from flooding, had been disgraceful. He stated that more needed to be done to assist residents and lessons needed to be learned and future response improved.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

The meeting concluded at 10.33pm