MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 24 October 2011 AT SIX THIRTY O’CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Aziz, Ansell, Beardsworth, Begum, Bottwood, Capstick, Caswell, Choudary, Choudary, Conroy, Davies, Duncan, Eales, Eldred, Ford, Glynane, Golby, Gowen, Hadland, Hallam, Hibbert, Hill, King, Larratt, Lynch, Mackintosh, Malpas, Markham, Marriott, Mason, Mennell, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Palethorpe, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Stone, Subbarayan, Wire DL and Yates

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hadland declared a Personal interest in item 14- Appointment of Trustee to Sir Thomas White’s Northampton Charity and the Henry and Elizabeth Lineham Fund as Chair of the Trustees.

Councillors Capstick and Hadland declared Personal interests in item 14- Minutes of the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee as members of that Joint Committee.

Councillors Aziz, N. Choudary, Davies, Golby, Hallam, Hibbert, Lynch, Markham, Mason, Meredith and Oldham declared Personal interests in item 16 (i)- Notices of Motion as members of the Planning Committee.

Councillors Eales and Golby declared Personal interests in item 16 (i)- Notice of Motion as members of the WDNC Northampton Planning Committee.

Councillor Gowen declared a Personal interest in item 16 (i)- Notice of Motion as a season ticket holder of the Saints RFC.

Councillors Aziz, Begum and Stone declared Personal and Prejudicial interests in item 16 (iii)- Notices of Motion as having close involvement with Supplementary Schools and did not speak or vote thereon.

Councillor Conroy declared a Personal interest in item 16 (iii)- Notice of Motion in so far as the school that he was a governor of was a host to supplementary school classes.

Councillor Patel declared a Personal interest in item 16 (iii)- Notice of Motion in so far as his granddaughter attended a supplementary school.
Councillor Mackintosh declared a Personal interest in item 16 (iii)- Notice of Motion as Cabinet Member for the subject area with Northamptonshire County Council.

2. MINUTES.
Subject to the addition of Councillor Conroy's apologies and to the deletion of the words “County Council” and “team” in the second paragraph of page 2, the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 12 September 2011 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.
Apologies were received from Councillors Flavell and Strachan.

4. MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS.
The Mayor referred to the 150th Anniversary of the laying of the Guildhall Foundation Stone and to the exhibition in the Court Room the previous week, congratulating Ian Widdicks; noted that a permanent home was to be found for it and referred to the successful dinner the previous Saturday.

The Mayor reminded Council of his Gala Dinner to be held on 25 November 2011.

The Mayor reported that he would be entering the London Marathon in April 2012 to raise money for his charities.

The Mayor commented that the Council had won the East Midlands in Bloom Gold Award in the City Category and presented the Certificate and trophy to representatives of Enterprise.

The Mayor reported that the Council, Frank Haslam Milan and Orbit Housing had won the Best Sustainable Smaller Housing Project of the Year in the 2011 Sustainable Housing Awards for its development of new houses at Brookside Meadows in Kings Heath. He referred to the award that had been displayed, congratulated Gary Parsons, Strategy and Performance Manager who had lead the Council's work on the project and presented the award to the Director of Housing.

The Mayor referred to the tragic events that had taken place at the Lava and Ignite nightclub the previous week and commented that as it was the subject of an ongoing Police investigation Councillors should refrain from making any comments about it.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS
Mr Hoare referred to the Leader of the Council’s Portfolio Holder report and to the lack of reference to performance issues. This was a surprising lack of reporting to Councillors, the public and the media. He noted that an exceptions report had been submitted to the September meeting of Cabinet but nothing to the October meeting and observed that the November meeting had been cancelled. He commented that that there was no mention of performance reports in the Forward Plan and nor had there been at the Audit Committee. He queried how the Council’s performance could be judged; there did not appear to be adequate opportunity for challenge.
Mr Baker commented that it was of concern that a large company could not introduce a food waste collection service until after Christmas. He believed that it smacked of incompetence. He queried what the costs of the delay were.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 11 questions had been received from members of the public and Councillors and that they and the answers had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution.

In the absence of Mr Adams, Mr McNabb and Mrs Varnsverry it was noted that the responses to the questions they had submitted would be sent to them.

Councillor Aziz asked Councillor Hadland as the relevant Portfolio Holder whether a multi faith room could be included as a requirement in the design of the new Grosvenor Centre and noted the response as tabled. Councillor Aziz as a supplementary question asked if the public would be included in any discussions in the provision of such a facility. Councillor Hadland stated “yes”.

Councillor Wire DL asked Councillor Hadland as the relevant Portfolio Holder why a pledge in the Conservative Manifesto to establish an independently chaired body to review the governance and direction of the Market Square had not yet been actioned and noted the response as tabled.

Councillor Mason asked Councillor Hadland as the relevant Portfolio Holder to give a firm commitment to opposing moving Northampton Central Library from its current location and noted the response as tabled.

Councillor Mennell asked Councillor Malpas as the relevant Portfolio Holder if the Housing Department would consider using social media, particularly twitter, as a way of keeping in touch and informing its customers and noted the response as tabled.

Councillor Wire DL asked Councillor Malpas as the relevant Portfolio Holder how the Council addressed the issue of fuel poverty with its most vulnerable tenants and noted the response as tabled.

Councillor Mason asked Councillor Malpas as the relevant Portfolio Holder how opposition Councillors would be included in the various reviews and discussions affecting the Housing service and noted the response as tabled. As a supplementary question Councillor Mason asked whether the Councillor Training Programme would be used as a way of informing Councillors of changes. Councillor Malpas commented that the Director of Housing had this in hand.

Councillor N Choudary asked Councillor Palethorpe as the relevant Portfolio Holder if the Administration had ruled out applying for city status until at least May 2015 even if an opportunity to do so arose in the meantime and noted the response as tabled. As a supplementary question Councillor N Choudary asked the Leader was in favour of city status. Councillor Palethorpe commented that he was in favour of anything that
promoted Northampton’s position.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

At this point each of the Portfolio Holders made a presentation of their respective portfolios that had been circulated with the agenda.

Councillor Palethorpe submitted his Portfolio Holder report. Councillor Mason commented that the Leader had indicated at the last meeting of Council that Portfolio Holder reports would include more detail and asked when it would be happening. Councillor Palethorpe commented that the Portfolio Holder reports were intended to give headlines and that he generally favoured brevity. Councillor Beardsworth referred to the statement made by Mr Hoare earlier in the meeting and queried where performance information could be found. Councillor Palethorpe commented that performance information could be found on the internet and that he would ask the Council’s IT team to help her access it.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Portfolio Holder report and noted the opening of the Delapre Abbey water garden on 20 October 2011. Councillor Stone asked what improvements did his Portfolio Holder report allude to in the Drapery and also what were the improvements to car parks. Councillor Hadland reminded Council that the Portfolio Holder reports were meant to set out headlines. He commented that the improvements to the Grosvenor Car Park were clearly visible and that a free first hour had been introduced at the Mayorhold Car Park. In the Drapery new street furniture had been put in place and other improvements would follow.

Councillor Hill submitted his Portfolio Holder report and noted the two heritage events described that he would report on further at the next Council meeting. He also noted that Cabinet had agreed to the further transfer of three Community Centres out of Council control. Councillor Meredith in welcoming the Community Clean Ups expressed concern at the quantity of equipment that was being made available to volunteers and possible confusion about how rubbish could be picked up. Councillor Hill commented that he would check on the arrangements and write to Councillor Meredith a response. Councillor I Choudary asked how the Council would monitor the management of the Community Centres transferred out of Council control. Councillor Hill commented that the Council would receive regular reports. In answer to a question from Councillor Eales, Councillor Hill commented that he would write to all Councillors setting out what was needed to organise a Community Clean Up. Councillor Marriott in noting the new Councillor Connect e-newsletter queried what savings were expected to accrue by its introduction. Councillor Hill commented that he would write to Councillor Marriott with a response. Councillor Subbarayan asked what was going to be done with the Community Centres that had not transferred out of Council control. Councillor Hill commented that discussions were still taking place about them running themselves and that the Council was offering help through an advisor who could assist with the preparation of business cases. Councillor Beardsworth noted that CEFAB had recently met and commented that many in the voluntary sector and Councillors would like to know what was happening. Councillor Hill commented that the Liberal Democrats were represented on CEFAB and that the Volunteer Bureau had been briefed. Once a clearer idea of a budget was known then applications for bids would be invited in the usual way and CEFAB would meet to...
decide allocation of the budget. Councillor Beardsworth commented that she would have expected greater support of the Stamp Out Hate campaign. Councillor Hill commented that this was now part of the Leader’s Portfolio. Councillor Eales commented that he had met Deafconnect and had been impressed with their plans for the Dallington Spencer Centre and asked when the works would be completed to allow the transfer to take place. Councillor Hill commented that he would write to Councillor Eales with a response. In answer to a question from Councillor Glynane, Councillor Hill commented that he would write to him setting out the details of the Town and County Art Exhibition.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Portfolio Holder report and noted that a great deal of work was going into budget preparation and also the successful Heritage Weekend. Councillor Beardsworth asked which Performance Indicators was giving the Portfolio Holder the most concern and what was he doing about them. Councillor Bottwood commented that at present none of the Performance Indicators were giving concern. He reminded Council that the information was available on the website. Councillor Meredith commented that the Portfolio Holder had previously referred to a review of the overall financial position that would be available on the website and queried when this would be available. Councillor Bottwood stated that he would write to Councillor Meredith with a response. Councillor Golby welcome the Portfolio Holder’s statement on the Leisure Trust and encourage Council to see what facilities were being provided.

Councillor Malpas submitted his Portfolio Holder report. Councillor Marriott commented that some tenants were concerned about the possible costs of “depooling”. Councillor Malpas commented that as soon as a report was ready it would be made available to Overview and Scrutiny. Councillor Glynane commented that at the last meeting Councillor Malpas had stated that meetings of the Decent Homes Tenants Group had already commenced; when was it? Councillor Malpas commented that he would write to Councillor Glynane. Councillor Glynane queried performance indicators on voids and welcomed the reinstatement of Housing Strategy meetings. Councillor Malpas commented that he would write to Councillor Beardsworth in respect of the voids performance indicators. Councillor Oldham commented that he was dealing with a case where a tenant was having difficulty in downsizing. Councillor Malpas stated that the tenancy regulations were being reviewed and that downsizing would be considered as part of this. Councillor Meredith queried what had happened in respect of the review of garages. Councillor Malpas commented that the review of garages had been an Overview and Scrutiny project and as a result garages at Eastfield had been re-roofed and new doors fitted. If they were popular with tenants then other garages would be repaired and brought back into use. Councillor Mennell asked how Tenant Auditors were chosen. Councillor Malpas commented that he would e-mail all Councillors with this information and place it on the website. In answer to a question from Councillor Beardsworth, Councillor Malpas commented that he would write to her in respect of the areas covered by the CESP.

Councillor Yates submitted his Portfolio Holder report. In answer to a question from Councillor Glynane he commented that the Council’s response to the consultation on
the NPPF had been made on 17 October 2011 and that if the Borough Solicitor advised that it could be circulated to Councillors it would be. Councillor Glynane asked how many bus stops would be included in the new bus interchange and if ticketing facilities would be included. Councillor Yates commented that these questions could not yet be answered as architects had only just been asked to submit schemes for consideration. In answer to a further question from Councillor Glynane, Councillor Yates commented that subject to any legal parameters public consultation on any designs would be six weeks. Councillor Beardsworth referred to Mr Baker’s comments earlier in the meeting concerning the delay in the introduction of a food asked what costs had been incurred by it. Councillor Yates commented that he shared the disappointment over the delay but that he was unaware of any costs it had resulted in. The Administration had inherited the timetable set up by the previous Administration but had decided that it was not feasible to ensure a smooth introduction. Councillor Davies asked whether Enterprise would learn from the mistakes of the introduction of the new waste collection service. Councillor Yates commented that he believed that the new waste collection service had, in general, gone well. The Council was not the only one introducing a food waste collection service as the product was very saleable however there was a shortage of suitable collection vehicles nationally, hence the delay. The costs of delaying its introduction were unknown as the market place for food waste was only just being established and figures were not yet available. Councillor Davies asked what the Council’s role in carbon emissions reduction had been. Councillor Yates stated that from 2006 to 2009 the Council had reduced its carbon emissions by 30%. This had been achieved mainly by vacating Cliftonville House. Councillor Gowen asked if the Council had the capacity to take back planning powers from the WNDC in April 2012. Councillor Yates commented that he was looking forward to the return of planning powers the following April. Councillor Eales asked if the Portfolio Holder was considering an increase in enforcement resources for the inspection of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles and what resources were available to carry out the consultation on a proposed age condition on vehicles. Councillor Yates commented that it was for the Licensing Committee to consider and that he had no plans to increase licensing enforcement resources. Councillor Yates noted that with reference made by Councillors at previous meetings in respect of pest control and rats in particular, of 30,000 enquiries to the Customer Contact Centre only 11 had been about problems with rats.

8. POSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Wire DL commented that he acknowledged that the Leader of the Council had inherited a difficult situation from the previous Liberal Democrat Administration that had lived beyond its means however it was important that the Council devoted as much of its resources as possible to front line services. He noted statements in the Conservative Party manifesto prior to the elections which noted the increase in senior staffing costs of 8% since 2008. He believed that this should be reviewed to free up resources. The majority of staff had experience a pay freeze for two years and some had lost money through Pay and Grading. Staff pensions were also under attack by the Government. In the last financial year 24 senior managers had seen their pay increase by a total of £130,000 plus pension contributions. In the current climate this was not acceptable. Resources needed to be redirected pest control, neighbourhood wardens etc. Councillor Wire asked the Leader to urgently review and redress the
Councillor Palethorpe stated that this had been an issue for many years and that a review would be carried out. Group Leaders had already received a document that showed a reduction in management costs of 20%. However, he cautioned that not all the savings could be transferred to frontline services. The Chief Executive was carrying out a review of what senior management was needed and capacity to carry out front line services. He was grateful for the support of the Opposition to deliver the Northampton everyone wished to see.

Councillor Wire DL, commented that he looked forward to seeing the results of the review and welcomed the protection of front line services.

9. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 31 JANUARY AND 25 JULY 2011

Councillor Palethorpe submitted the minutes of the meetings of the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee held on 31 January and 25 July 2011 for noting. Councillor Hadland seconded the noting of the minutes.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee held on 31 January and 25 July 2011 were noted.

10. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2010/11

Councillor Bottwood submitted a report that set out performance in relation to the Council’s borrowing and investment strategy for 2010/11. Councillor Palethorpe seconded the motion.

RESOLVED: That the treasury management performance for 2010/11, as reported to Cabinet on 27 July 2011, be noted.

11. TREASURY STRATEGY AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2011/12 UPDATE

Councillor Bottwood submitted a report that set out amendments to the prudential indicators in respect of external debt and amendments to the Treasury Strategy and Treasury Management Practices consequent upon the deletion of some vacant posts. Councillor Palethorpe seconded the motion.

RESOLVED: 1. That the revised prudential indicators for external debt required under the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (Fully revised second edition 2009) as set out at Appendix A of the report, be approved.

2. That (a) The revised TMP Schedules for 2011-12 set out in Appendix B of the report and
   b) The revised Treasury Management Strategy for 2011-12 set out in Appendix C of the report, incorporating the Affordable Borrowing
Limit for 2011-12 as required by the Local Government Act 2003, be approved.

12. CHANGES TO AUDIT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP
Councillor Hallam submitted a report that sought ratification to changes to the membership of the Audit Committee. Councillor Patel seconded the motion.

RESOLVED: 1. That Councillor Patel replace Councillor Duncan as the Chair of the Audit Committee and that Councillor Nunn become the Deputy Chair of the Audit Committee.

2. That Councillor Hibbert replace Councillor Duncan on the Audit Committee.

13. SEMLEP NORTHAMPTON WATERSIDE ENTERPRISE ZONE
Councillor Caswell submitted a report that sought the appointment of the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Enterprise, ex officio, to the Enterprise Zone Board. Councillor Nunn seconded the report.

RESOLVED: That the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Enterprise be appointed, ex officio, to the Enterprise Zone Board.

14. APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEE TO SIR THOMAS WHITE’S NORTHAMPTON CHARITY AND THE HENRY AND ELIZABETH LINEHAM FUND
Councillor Hill submitted a report seeking approval of the appointment of Janet March to the Sir Thomas White’s Northampton Charity and the Henry and Elizabeth Lineham Fund. Councillor Marriott seconded the report.

RESOLVED: That Janet March be appointed to the Sir Thomas White’s Northampton Charity and the Henry and Elizabeth Lineham Fund until the annual Council meeting in 2015.

15. APPOINTMENT TO ST THOMAS HOUSE
Councillor Hallam submitted a report seeking the approval to the appointment of Councillor Wire DL to the St Thomas House Charity. Councillor Marriott seconded the report.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Wire DL be appointed to St Thomas House.

16. NOTICES OF MOTION
(i) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Cllr Glynane seconded:

“The council recognises the great disappointment of many Saints season ticket holders who will be faced with additional travelling costs to Milton Keynes at a time when many families are experiencing financial pressures on household budgets.
This Council is concerned at the potential loss of £1 million business revenue to Northampton’s economy as a result of the Northampton Saints Rugby Football Club decision to voluntarily move their home Heineken Cup fixture against Munster to Milton Keynes.

The council also recognises the great disappointment of many Saints season ticket holders who will be faced with additional travelling costs to Milton Keynes at a time when many families are experiencing financial pressures on household budgets.

Major fixtures, either in the Heineken Cup or against our East Midlands rivals Leicester Tigers will always create the potential for ticket sales higher than the current 11,500 capacity at Franklin Gardens but this can be solved by progressing the planned redevelopment of the Sturtridge Stand.

The Rugby Club announced their plans to expand capacity at Franklin Gardens to 17,500 in November 2009. The current Conservative Administration when in opposition claimed that they would solve the planning application problems if they were voted into office.

This council calls on the Board of Directors of the Saints and the Conservative Administration to deliver on their previous promises of expanding Franklin Gardens for the benefit of the Northampton economy and their loyal fans.

Council believes that unless a planning application for the redevelopment of the Sturtridge Pavilion is made before the end of this year then there is a real danger that the development will not take place during the 2012 closed season resulting in more Saints home fixtures moving to Milton Keynes during the 2012 /13 season.”

Councillor Wire DL proposed and Councillor Eales seconded an amendment as follows:

“That an additional paragraph be added to the end of the motion to read:

“This Council recognises that the Saints Rugby Club would have been much further along with their stadium development plans had it not been for the mishandling and incompetence of the previous Liberal Democrat administration. The current Liberal Democrat councillors who were all in the last administration should apologise to the Saints and the people of Northampton.”

Councillor Wire DL proposed that the amendment be modified by the deletion of the last two paragraphs of the motion. The amended motion to read:

“The council recognises the great disappointment of many Saints season ticket holders who will be faced with additional travelling costs to Milton Keynes at a time when many families are experiencing financial pressures on household budgets.

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Milton Keynes.

The council also recognises the great disappointment of many Saints season ticket holders who will be faced with additional travelling costs to Milton Keynes at a time when many families are experiencing financial pressures on household budgets.

Major fixtures, either in the Heineken Cup or against our East Midlands rivals Leicester Tigers will always create the potential for ticket sales higher than the current 11,500 capacity at Franklin Gardens but this can be solved by progressing the planned redevelopment of the Sturtridge Stand.

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This Council recognises that the Saints Rugby Club would have been much further along with their stadium development plans had it not been for the mishandling and incompetence of the previous Liberal Democrat administration. The current Liberal Democrat councillors who were all in the last administration should apologise to the Saints and the people of Northampton.”

Upon the proposal being put by the Mayor, Council agreed to the modification of the amendment.

Council debated the amendment.

Upon a vote the amendment was carried.

Council debated the amended motion.

Upon a vote the amended motion was carried.

(ii) Councillor Palethorpe proposed and Councillor Marriott seconded:

“Council will be aware that all members are required by Law to adopt a Model Code of Conduct based on regulations under the Local Government Act 2000.

In summary the code as it currently applies to members of Northampton Borough Council is to apply certain standards to Member involvement and behaviours. The obligations are designed to ensure that Councillors serve the public interest rather than their own.

The current situation is that the Council complies fully with the statutory obligations through a statutory Standards Committee which hears and determines complaints of any breach of the Code of Conduct. The Standards Committee has statutory powers to sanction members which include suspension for up to six months.
The committee also has the power to refer certain matters to the Standards Board for England. This national body has more extensive powers which can result in members being disqualified for up to five years.

The Localism Bill proposes the abolition of the Standards Regime, including

- Abolition of the National Standards Board for England
- Abolition of the requirement for Councils to have a Standards Committee
- Abolition of formal sanctions available to the Standards Committee.

In order to retain public confidence in the role and duties of elected Councillors, Council resolves, subject to the detailed requirements of the Localism Act to:

- Fully commit to maintaining high standards of conduct by members
- Formally adopt a Model Code of Conduct based on the current code or one based on one specified by the Localism Act
- To continue with a Standards Committee, with independent representation, as currently
- All members, including Co-optees will be expected to sign and comply with the Model Code of Conduct.
- The Councils' Monitoring Officer will have an obligation to establish and maintain a register of interests, specified by the Localism Act
- That the Leaders of the Political Groups are charged with supporting a strong ethical culture with the responsibility for ensuring that the Model Code of Conduct is implemented and applied."

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

(iii) Councillors Aziz, Begum and Stone left the meeting in accordance with their declarations of interest set out above.

Councillor Mason proposed and Councillor Gowen seconded:

“That this Council recognises the value of supplementary schools in Northampton. The schools add value to the life in our Town by ensuring the children who attend are good citizens, focussed on achievement, know how to share and collaborate with all communities, and as they grow up can offer a range of languages in the workforce. They represent good value for money through the voluntary efforts of their respective communities. They play an important role in community cohesion.

By passing this motion Council acknowledges the value they add to the wellbeing of our communities. Applauds the Association of Northamponshire Supplementary Schools in its efforts to develop a strong strategy for sustainability for the schools.”

Councillor Mackintosh noted that in his role as a Cabinet Member of
Northamptonshire County Council he had already met with the Association of Supplementary Schools and would continue to do so to find solutions to the withdrawal of funding from April 2012.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

17. 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 20.20 hours.