

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON MONDAY 22 OCTOBER 2012 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

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

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2012 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Flavell, King and Meredith.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor thanked volunteers and members of the Youth Forum for their help and assistance with the Heritage Open Day that had taken place on 9th September 2012. He noted that over 200 members of the public had visited the Guildhall and observed that consideration should be given to running a similar event at a different time of the year in addition. He expressed particular thanks to members of the Youth Forum, Morcea Walker, Liz Percival, Sue Pebody, Lindsey Ambrose and Harold Mitton for their help.

The Mayor reminded Council of the 9th/12th Royal Lancers Freedom of the Borough ceremony that would take place on 3 November 2012.

The Mayor announced the following fund raising events in aid of the Mayoral Charities: 6 November at Sophia's Restaurant, 19 November at the Marriott Hotel for a pampering evening, and 30th November the Mayor's Gala Dinner. Tickets were available for all three events.

The Mayor reminded Council of Diwali which would take place on 10 November 2012.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Huffadine-Smith noted that the review of the EMS contract had now been received and had now been made available on the Council website. He queried why some of it had been redacted when the issues seemed to be public in any case. He commented that bearing in mind statements earlier in the year that EMS could be fined for underperformance he felt that the report was a whitewash. Mr Huffadine-Smith referred to the gross under recovery of allotment rents. He noted that some of the people now working for EMS to deliver the services had been previously working for the Council delivering the same services and had been involved in drawing up the contract. He believed that there was no excuse for the wholesale failure of services; nor did the public want a whitewash. It was not fair for staff to take the blame if they had not been trained for the tasks asked of them and the decisions made had not been theirs in the first place.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

Councillor Gowen asked Councillor Eldred as the relevant Cabinet Member about issues concerning sports facilities being out of order and pitches being in poor condition and noted the answer as tabled.

Councillor Begum asked Councillor Mackintosh as the relevant Cabinet Member about what was being done by the Council to help tackle the rise in burglary and noted the answer as tabled.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

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

Councillor Mackintosh presented his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. Councillor Wire DL in respect of the Community Governance Review asked how many questionnaires had been returned from the 12 areas and whether the previously agreed information had been sent to households in those areas. He also asked why there had been no Conservative representation at St James Residents Association meetings. Councillor Mackintosh reported that a total of 759 questionnaires had been returned, 514 of which had supported the creation of parish councils and 245 had been against. He also reported that the letter to be sent to households in the affected areas had been sent to the printers and read out part of its contents noting that it had been consulted on with members of the working party in an e-mail dated 28 September. Councillor Mackintosh commented that he and Councillor Eldred would attend what meetings they could but they could not go to everything. Councillor Mason asked how many evictions from council houses and possessions of council houses had taken place and also the address of the reported arson property. Councillor Mackintosh undertook to write to Councillor Mason with a response. Councillor I Choudary whilst welcoming the Council's support of Diwali asked whether the Council would similarly support the Muslim festival of Ede. Councillor Mackintosh commented that he had already given a commitment to investigate what support might be given to the Muslim community to celebrate Ede; he welcomed diversity and was happy to support the request in principle. Councillor Beardsworth commented

that the letter that had been previously referred to set out the advantages in having parish councils in some parts of the Borough; this compared with the former neighbourhood working arrangements that had covered the whole of the Borough and that had not meant an increase in Council Tax and was not elitist. Councillor Mackintosh commented that the Administration had introduced the Councillor Community Fund so that Councillors could help local community groups and were supporting local communities. Councillor Hill observed that under the former neighbourhood working arrangements not all wards had had neighbourhood wardens.

Councillor Caswell presented his Cabinet Member report elaborated thereon and reported that the EMS review report had been sent to all Councillors and the press. The Administration had accepted all of the report's recommendations and were now working to implementing them. Councillor Beardsworth commented that the report stated that the contract should have been monitored using the KPIs: she had spoken at previous Council meetings about the apparent lack of monitoring and asked if he felt more performance monitoring should have taken place. She also asked if he was unhappy that the Council had only achieved an Silver in the Britain in Bloom awards. Councillor Caswell commented that EMS's performance had been monitored monthly and noted that the achievement of a Silver Gilt award in this year's Britain in Bloom competition had been achieved in the context of difficult weather conditions. Councillor Davies commented that the EMS review report needed to be properly considered and asked if it would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committees or whether there would be another opportunity to debate it. She also asked if he would expand on comments in his report that Community Wardens enhanced community security. Councillor Caswell commented that the Community Wardens worked with the Police and attended residents association and parish council meetings. He also commented that he was happy for the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committees to consider the EMS review report and noted that Daventry District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be considering it. Councillor Glynane in welcoming the introduction of three further neighbourhood wardens and two park rangers asked where they would be working and also asked when the Cabinet Member had raised the issue of KPI performance in respect of the EMS contract. Councillor Caswell commented that he had discussed performance of the EMS contract with officers on a monthly basis: the situation was as it was and would improve. In respect of the new Neighbourhood Wardens and Park Rangers it had not yet been decided where they would be allocated although one Park Ranger was likely to be mobile. Councillor Larratt asked when a Neighbourhood Warden would be attending meetings of Hardingstone, Wootton and East Hunsbury, and Collingtree Parish Councils. Councillor Caswell commented that he would ensure that this happened. Councillor Wire DL observed that Council had unanimously agreed to the creation of a mobile Park Ranger and that it should be part of the budget process. Councillor Caswell stated that the post was part of the budget consideration and in answer to another question from Councillor Beardsworth commented that the mobile Park Ranger would not be working alone.

Councillor Eldred submitted his Cabinet Member report, elaborated thereon and commented that Parish Councils did not have to automatically levy a precept. Councillor Stone asked that in the light of the withdrawal of the resource provided by the Neighbourhood Co-ordinators, what support was being given to local communities

to develop projects. Councillor Eldred commented that Councillors were local leaders and training would help Councillors fulfil the aspirations of local communities. Councillor Beardsworth observed that his report made no mention of the consultation on the sale of the Sekhemka statue that had been agreed at the previous Council meeting. She also observed that it would be surprising if a parish council did not levy a precept and noted a conversation with Councillor Mackintosh who had intimated a likely precept of £26 per year. Councillor Mackintosh clarified that the figure Councillor Beardsworth quoted was in relation to his own area only. He also observed that if Council agreed to the creation of any parish council then there would be further consultation about any precept. Councillor Eldred commented that discussions about the Sekhemka statue were taking place with interested groups including the Friends of the Museum. Councillor Glynane asked how many free tickets to the music festival were to be given to the armed services and whether he and Councillor Mackintosh had yet visited Home Farm. Councillor Eldred reported that a visit to Home Farm had been arranged for 5 November 2012 and that a planning application in respect of the land at Eagle Drive had not yet been submitted; that 30 free tickets each evening would be given to Army personnel and or their families; and that he believed that there would be a good turnout for the Local Advisory Polls.

Councillor Markham submitted her Cabinet Member Report and elaborated thereon. Councillor Palethorpe in welcoming the Armed Forces Covenant asked whether in assessing needs service personnel and their families would be given the keys to a home as opposed to just being boosted up the housing waiting list. Councillor Markham confirmed that service personnel and their families would get keys to homes. Councillor Beardsworth in welcoming the recently announced £49m towards meeting the Decent Homes Standard asked how contracts would be awarded and whether the “village schemes” to allow smaller and local contractors and suppliers to compete to do work would be continued. Councillor Markham stated that contracts were out for tender and that lessons had been learnt in respect of best value; and weekly meetings between tenants and contractors were now taking place. The “village schemes” would continue and she wanted to support local businesses; everyone could tender for Decent Homes contracts.

Upon a motion being put by the Mayor, Council agreed to extend the time limit allocated for Cabinet Member Presentations by a further 10 minutes.

In respect of de-pooling and maintenance, Councillor Mason asked whether there had been any issues. Councillor Markham commented that issues had been dealt with as they had arisen: most had been as a result of this year’s extreme weather.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. Councillor Palethorpe in noting the recent announcement about LGSS asked whether this was being factored into the budget and what proportion of the anticipated £9.45m savings would accrue to the Council and how many staff would transfer to LGSS. Councillor Bottwood commented that a final decision had not yet been made and that there might be other alternatives. He confirmed that the £9.45m saving was across all the partners and that it was too early to say how many staff were likely to transfer to LGSS. Councillor Palethorpe noted that the statement in the press had stated that the Council would save £9.45m and asked what proportion of that figure would be due to

Welfare Reform. Councillor Bottwood commented that it was impossible to say as the changes and effects of Welfare Reform were unknown.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member Report elaborated thereon and reported that the floodlights for the skateboard park would be completed and switched on the following Tuesday or Wednesday. Councillor Stone asked what impact the cheaper stall rents had had on the Market Square, when the road improvements around St John's would start and finish and what the situation was in regard of the new bus interchange. Councillor Hadland commented that Project Angel was subject to the normal planning processes and that the new bus interchange had planning permission and work was due to commence soon.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Gowen stated that over a year previously the Labour Group had identified Community Safety as a major issue. Northamptonshire Police had had to make cuts of £20m that had meant fewer police officers on the ground. Both the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives had remained silent about the cuts. Labour would like to see next year's community safety budget protected from further cuts: for example, this year CCTV cameras had been reduced but they were an important measure to combat anti-social behaviour. She hoped there would be no further cuts to CCTV provision and ideally the cuts would be reversed. A shock cut had been removing the funding for PCSOs on the basis that this was a Police matter. The Labour Group believed that this was the wrong approach; both the County and Borough Councils had made cuts to the numbers of Police on the streets; this affected public security. PCSOs had attended residents association and community meetings and the public had indicated in consultation that they wanted to keep them but the Administration had said no. Combined with this Neighbourhood Co-ordinators had been cut who had also provided a link to the Police. Furthermore, the cuts to street lighting had led to a rise in car crime. Councillor Gowen noted the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner elections and commented that it would be important for whoever was elected to develop good relations with local communities. She felt that if money could be found for a music festival then it could be found for community safety issues.

Councillor Mackintosh stated that the Administration took Community Safety seriously and worked with the Community Safety Partnership and would continue to offer assistance. He met regularly with the Police and had been out with them. He believed that policing was a Police matter. Resources were tight but despite this the numbers of Neighbourhood Wardens, Park Rangers and the Licensing Team had been increased. He noted that all of the Police and Crime Commissioner candidates had been invited to a meeting at the Guildhall but that the Labour candidate had not attended.

Councillor Gowen referred to Councillor Mackintosh's comment about offering assistance and queried what this actually meant.

9. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS- PLANNING AND AUDIT COMMITTEES

Councillor Hallam submitted a report that sought agreement to changes in the memberships of the Planning and Audit Committees. Councillor Oldham seconded adoption of the report.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That Council Palethorpe replace Councillor N. Choudary on the Planning Committee.
 2. That Councillor Strachan replace Councillor N. Choudary on the Audit Committee

10.EXEMPTION FROM CALL-IN; URGENT KEY DECISION IN RESPECT OF PROPOSED MUSIC FESTIVAL

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report that fulfilled the requirement in the Council's Constitution for an executive decision that has been made on the grounds of urgency and exempted from Call-in to be reported to the next available meeting of Council. Councillor Eldred seconded adoption of the report.

In answer to questions Councillor Mackintosh commented that the venue capacity was 9,500 and that the events would have full insurance against inclement weather and that it was intended to encourage people to use the town centre car parks and walk to the venue but that discussions would take place with residents.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

11.NEW STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS- APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON

Councillor Mackintosh submitted a report that sought approval to the appointment of Mr Ian Harley as "Independent Person" in connection with the Council's new standards arrangements adopted by Council on 21st June 2012 in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 (the "Act"). Councillor Yates seconded adoption of the report.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That the appointment of Ian Harley as an Independent Person be approved.
 2. That it be noted that for the transitional period, the Independent Person would be paid an allowance equal to that which was paid to the Independent Chair of the previous statutory Standards Committee.

12.NOTICES OF MOTION

- (i) Mr Huffadine-Smith noted that although he was a Duston Parish Councillor his comments were made as an individual. He believed that it was good that the Council had opened discussions about creating more parish councils across the town. He hoped that the public would take this opportunity up. However, he felt that the motion had a weakness in that residents associations and other community groups were not included as groups that could contribute to community safety. If, in St James, a parish council was adopted the residents association could scrutinise its activities. In other parts of the Borough

residents associations were the only bodies available to gauge public opinion. He hoped that the motion could be modified to include residents associations.

Councillor Mackintosh moved and Councillor Nunn seconded:

“This council believes that local residents can play an important role in shaping community safety priorities in their neighbourhoods.

This Council recognises the positive work of the town’s parish councils and neighbourhood watch groups to enhance community safety for residents in their areas, and congratulates them on their efforts.

This Council hopes that more local people will use parish councils and neighbourhood watch groups to have a greater influence over community safety issues and priorities in their neighbourhoods, and believes the new Police and Crime Commissioner will play an important role in working with these groups on community safety issues.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

(ii) Councillor Ansell moved and Councillor Sargeant seconded:

“The ornamental side of Abington Park was given to the people of Northampton by Lady Wantage in 1892, and 2012 marks the 120th anniversary of her generous gift to our town.

Council notes that earlier this year Abington Park was ranked in the top five parks in the United Kingdom by a leading travel and tourism website.

Abington Park is the jewel in Northampton’s crown, and this council reaffirms its commitment to Abington Park and all of the town’s green spaces for the enjoyment of future generations, and for the benefit of all of Northampton’s residents.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

(iii) Mr Huffadine-Smith commented that it was sad that Councillors appeared to fear people being empowered. He understood that both the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections and the Local Advisory Polls would be decided by simple majorities. National predictions were that turnout for the PCC elections would be below 30%: he queried whose fault that would be. If Councillors could not persuade people to turn out and vote then who could? If turn-out was low who could say that it did or did not reflect the views of a larger number of people: in his view those who chose not to vote lost the right to whinge. He asked that the motion be withdrawn; perhaps the result should be judged on its clarity rather than on the basis of turn-out.

Councillor Beardsworth moved and Councillor Glynane seconded:

“This Council believes that changing the governance arrangements for local communities should only be done with a significant level of consent from those communities.

This Council in making its final decision on the CGR therefore gives appropriate consideration to the level of the electorate turnout at the Advisory Polls.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was lost.

(iv) Councillor Wire DL moved and Councillor Davies seconded:

“This Council welcomes that £981,000 from Growing Places Fund is being used to improve traffic access around Guildhall Road and St. Johns Street.

This Council notes that accessibility into the town centre needs to be dramatically improved due to key ‘Northampton Alive’ projects such as University student accommodation at St. Johns, new NCC offices in Angel Street and improved train station.

This Council notes that after spending £13.5 million on Marefair and Gold Street that Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council got accessibility into the town centre wrong. This has become a real issue for drivers. The work done in Gold Street and Marefair only achieved further congestion on St Peters Way and surrounding streets.

This Council therefore calls on Northamptonshire County Council to do a feasibility study to improve car accessibility. With major development we need urgent infrastructure in place. Alterations to the road network could help such as;

- Relieving the congestion on St. Peters Way including the ‘Gas Street roundabout’.
- Allowing traffic to turn left when waiting at the traffic lights in Marefair instead of being directed back onto St. Peters Way.
- Not narrowing Bridge Street into a single lane and opening it up to all two way traffic.
- Opening the Drapery up to two-way traffic.
- Rethinking traffic flows in Marefair and Gold Street.
- Opening up the 24-hour Bus Lane outside Castle Rail Station to all traffic between 7pm to 7am.
- Considering the effect of more homes to be built at Pineham on the West side of Northampton will put extra pressure on that side of town. Already when Saints & Cobblers play at home St. James is gridlocked.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was lost.

(v) Councillor Davies moved and Councillor Subbarayan seconded:

“This Council notes that to attract more tourists, more skilled workers and medium/large companies Northampton needs to have a clean and tidy environment.

This Council notes that at present most of the gateways into Northampton are not clean and tidy, which are giving a bad impression of the town. The gateways look visibly unclean such as the roads, pavements and verges.

This Council therefore calls on the Administration, Northamptonshire County Council, and Enterprise to immediately start improving the gateways into Northampton. This Council asks the Cabinet member for Environment to report back at the next full Council meeting in December.”

Councillor Mackintosh asked that the motion be modified to include the Highways Authority in the third paragraph. Councillor Davies agreed that the motion be modified to read:

“This Council notes that to attract more tourists, more skilled workers and medium/large companies Northampton needs to have a clean and tidy environment.

This Council notes that at present most of the gateways into Northampton are not clean and tidy, which are giving a bad impression of the town. The gateways look visibly unclean such as the roads, pavements and verges.

This Council therefore calls on the Administration, Northamptonshire County Council, the Highways Authority and Enterprise to immediately start improving the gateways into Northampton. This Council asks the Cabinet member for Environment to report back at the next full Council meeting in December.”

Council debated the modified motion.

Upon a vote the modified motion was carried.

(vi) Motion withdrawn.

(vii) Councillor Beardsworth moved and Councillor Glynane to second:

“At the Council meeting on the 10th September there was all party support for a motion that proposed that the public should be consulted on whether they supported the sale of the Sekhemka statue and if it were sold, how they would wish to see the proceeds of the sale invested for the benefit of future generations of residents of Northampton.

Decisions taken by the administration in the last 4 weeks have not been in line with the council motion and the council calls on the administration to abide by the wording and spirit of the September motion.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was lost.

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

None.

The meeting concluded at 21.03 hours.