

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 11 November 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair); Councillor Brian Sargeant (Deputy Chair); Councillors Tony Ansell, Capstick, Ford, Glynane, Larratt, Lynch and Mason

Councillor David Mackintosh – Leader of the Council
Councillor Brandon Eldred, Cabinet Member - Community Engagement
Councillor Tim Hadland, Cabinet Member – Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
Councillor Mary Markham, Cabinet Member – Housing
Councillor Alan Bottwood – Cabinet member - Finance
Steve Boyes – Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
Julie Seddon - Chair of the CSP
Tracy Tiff – Scrutiny Officer
Nicola Brindley – Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES: Councillor Gowen, Councillor Patel, Councillor Subbarayan and Councillor Strachan

1. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 9th September were signed by the Chair as a true record.

2. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

Councillor Capstick declared an interest in Item 7 as a Board member of the WNDC.

Councillor Hadland declared an interest in Item 7 as a Board member of the WNDC.

4. CABINET'S PRIORITIES 2013/2014

Leader of the Council and Environment

Councillor David Mackintosh addressed the committee and confirmed that he had regular meetings with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the GP consortia where the priorities would be brought forward. The Hospital and health services agenda was good for the town and relationships had evolved with the Chief Executive of the Hospital. He suggested that Health and Wellbeing is an area that could warrant future Scrutiny input, particularly of the action plan when finalised.

In response to a question, Councillor David Mackintosh confirmed that the definition criteria had changed on jobs in the Enterprise Zone and different sections were reviewed to attract more businesses into Northampton. Churches Shoes had just created 150 more jobs and Cosgrove had consulted with Northampton College to take on more trainees. He

considered that progress had been made.

Councillor Joy Capstick paid tribute to Councillor Mike Hallam with regard to a maintenance problem in her ward which he resolved and provided prompt feedback. She highlighted the problems of other homeowners in her ward which were due to the Council not maintaining areas properly.

Councillor David Mackintosh confirmed that Councillor Mike Hallam was aware of the issues and would follow them up.

Housing

Councillor Mary Markham addressed the committee with regard to the stock option review and examined the most appropriate way it could be delivered in council homes. Five people had been selected to go on the panel and the Employee Focus group reviewed stock conditions and the tenants survey. The Government draft consultation paper developed the option criteria and had visited other local authorities to adopted best practise and experience they had. The Employee Focus group and tenants had operated in a fair and transparent way and had made recommendations on factual information. Both groups had recommended the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) for consideration by Cabinet and Full Council.

In response to a question from Councillor Phil Larratt she confirmed that street lighting could be reviewed before the suggested timescale of April 2014 although a lot of changes were still happening and they would have to ensure the appropriate time and effort would be invested in it.

There was further discussion on the structure of the team who were reviewing the HIMOs and their roles.

Councillor Mary Markham confirmed that resources had been put into the housing area and a helpline had been set up for residents which was guaranteed to give a response on the same day. A survey in Semilong and Sunnyside had been completed which had detected more HIMOs than previously thought and 6000 more homes had to be visited. They were setting their own policies and standards given to all Landlords. She expected the HIMO policy to be completed by December 2013.

Finance

Councillor Alan Bottwood addressed the committee with regard to the monitoring of shared services. He considered the transition had gone smoothly and had received positive feedback at NBC and NCC. The staff which remained were positive about the future and out of the 18 staff in Finance, 6 of them were in better positions in LGSS. He also confirmed that morale had not suffered.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel had regular briefings and considered that the process was positive. The Scrutiny Panel looking at the Welfare Reform Act would start work in January 2014.

Councillor Alan Bottwood confirmed that the number of claimants had not decreased compared to other years although the number of bogus claims had. The council had been proactive about the changes which took place. The Welfare Reform would stay on the agenda.

Community Engagement

Councillor Brandon Eldred addressed the committee and confirmed that the management of the museums had had a restructure and moved the back office staff into the Guildhall. Abington Park museum would open at the weekends from next winter.

He confirmed that there were many events scheduled in 2014 which would bring people into the town centre and get the local schoolchildren and businesses involved.

In response to a question Councillor Brandon Eldred confirmed that they were advertising for buskers for the town centre and would be launched on 21st November 2013.

Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Councillor Tim Hadland addressed the committee and confirmed that the HML Bid was successful and the money was awarded in October. The Delapre project was proceeding and the roof would be replaced in January. It was an 18 month project and the main work would commence in the autumn. The future governance would be reviewed with other stakeholders and a dedicated officer was now in place to work on the Delapre project. They would bring forward the activity plan and recruit accordingly.

He referred to the transition of the WNDC to the Council and confirmed that work on the joint core strategy was on going. Further work would be done and it was in its final stages subject to inspection in the spring.

RESOLVED: That details of Cabinet's priorities be noted.

5. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities submitted a report and confirmed that the serious acquisitive crime figures could be linked to the recession. She confirmed that that the CCTV cameras had been decommissioned strategically and there had been no evidence of impact of the ones removed.

Councillor Phil Larratt suggested that the lights had been switched off unnecessarily and an inventory of lights were needed as the residents were suffering. People did not feel safe and poorer areas were suffering.

In response to a question, Julie Seddon confirmed that domestic abuse had decreased although there were complex issues in under reporting. Historically there was an increase over the Christmas period. Good treatment was provided to people with drug issues and work would be carried out with street drinkers and beggars particularly in the town centre area. There were professionals in place to help people with complex issues although the licensing department had been working with the police to tackle the problem.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that there would be a further update in June. They could review the figures and if necessary request the Police and Crime Commissioner to the committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a further update be provided to the committee in June 2014.

6. WEST NORTHANTS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (WNDC)

Councillor Tim Hadland submitted a report and confirmed that the WNDC would be replaced by local control and would provide more accountability. An agreement would be reached

shortly and the council would not suffer financially. There were 24 people left at WNDC who worked hard to keep the project going and had satisfactory resources.

In response to a question, Councillor Tim Hadland confirmed that the Bus station redevelopment was a medium to long term risk and would create an asset. How it was financed was a matter for discussion which was on going.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that an update would be brought to the Committee in January.

RESOLVED: That an update on progress regarding the transition from WNDC to NBC be brought to the committee in January.

7. SCRUTINY PANELS

7.A SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - IMPROVING THE TOWN'S PARKS

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that the Scrutiny Panel will receive the Chair's draft report at its meeting on 25th November and would present the final report to this committee in January for approval. It would then be presented to Cabinet in March 2014.

7.B SCRUTINY PANEL 2- MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING (INCLUDING HIMOS)

Councillor Joy Capstick confirmed that at the next meeting on 18th November there would be representations from senior officers regarding HIMOs and licensing.

Councillor Jamie Lane thanked Councillor Joy Capstick for her work on it.

8. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTING AND MONITORING WORKING GROUP

Councillor Lane advised that the inaugural meeting of the Working Group had set the Terms of Reference for 2013/2014, a copy of which was presented to the Committee for approval.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that the next meeting was on 6th January 2014 and the suggestions from the Working Group on budget items for Scrutiny input would come to committee on 27th January 2014 where the public could speak on it.

9. REPORT BACK FROM NBC'S REPRESENTATIVE TO NCC'S HEALTH, ADULT CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that the written report from Councillor Matt Lynch would be circulated to the Committee for information.

10. POTENTIAL FUTURE PRE DECISION SCRUTINY

There were none.

11. URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 19:30 hrs