

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 9 June 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair); Councillor Brian Sargeant (Deputy Chair); Councillors Tony Ansell, Joy Capstick, Mick Ford, Brendan Glynane, Elizabeth Gowen, Phil Larratt, Lee Mason, Suresh Patel and Winston Strachan.

Councillor Tim Hadland – Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Councillor Mike Hallam – Cabinet Member for Environment

Councillor Mary Markham – Cabinet Member for Housing

Steve Boyes – Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Julie Seddon – Director of Customers and Communities

Richard Birchett – Interim Head of Landlord Services

Phil Bayliss – Senior Licensing Officer

Louise Faulkner – Senior Licensing Officer

Tracy Tiff – Scrutiny Officer

Peter Storey – Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Parekh and Subbarayan.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2014 were agreed as a true record, with the addition of Councillor Ford's name in those present.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

Councillor Capstick declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in item 7 as a former member of the WNDC and a current member of the WNDC Audit and Risk Committee.

Councillor Hadland declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in item 7 as a former member of the WNDC and a current member of the WNDC Audit and Risk Committee.

Councillor Lane declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in item 7 in discussion on the railway station as he had been a member of the Planning Committee which had granted planning permission for the construction of the new station and had voted in favour of permission being granted.

**5. MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACCEPTED RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE FOLLOWING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT:
RETAIL EXPERIENCE**

The Committee were happy with the Cabinet's response on 17 July 2013, which had accepted their recommendations. Members considered that the situation was improving and that the direction of travel was correct.

Agreed: That the report be noted and that the monitoring of this item is now complete.

6. NBC OWNED STREET LIGHTING

Councillor Mary Markham addressed the Committee regarding NBC owned street lighting. She stated that the work to confirm which lights were controlled through the Housing Revenue Account was on target to be completed by the end of June 2014. Every Housing Revenue Account controlled light would be identified by a Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) and mapped on the council's GIS system. Further work would then take place to identify where the electricity supply for the lights came from and who paid for it. This would then be discussed with NCC. She stated that she would keep the Committee updated and present a report to the Committee.

Councillor Jamie Lane welcomed the report which would be made to the Committee's next meeting in September 2014.

In answer to a comment about some people staying in their homes at night as they could not see their pathway, Councillor Mary Markham stated that it would be a Northampton standard that vulnerable, elderly and people in sheltered accommodation would have a light outside their doors.

Agreed: That the report be noted and that a further report be brought to the meeting of the Committee on 8 September 2014.

7. WEST NORTHANTS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (WNDC)

Councillor Tim Hadland addressed the Committee on the handover from WNDC to NBC. He stated that all WNDC projects were on track, including the University (which was on target) and the new railway station (which was scheduled to open in September). Once the Station was completed, the old Station would be demolished and construction of a 1300 space multi-storey car park will start in Spring 2015. This will, in turn, enable the land taken by the existing car parks to be brought forward for mixed use development. Marketing of the St. Peter's Waterside site for commercial development has started.

In response to concerns that the footbridge across the platforms was too high for disabled and other users and that the facility to take passengers across the tracks was minimal Councillor Tim Hadland undertook to raise these matters with Network Rail. He stated that the intention was to have a passage way between the car park and the station which would improve access for people with disabilities. He would do all he could to ensure that parking for disabled people was appropriate.

In response to members' comments, Steve Boyes, Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning, stated that he was confident that all the funding for the project would be forthcoming. Network Rail had agreed a significant financial contribution. He also stated that there would be a net gain in parking spaces, from the present 950-980 places to 1,300 places. Councillor Tim Hadland stated that Phase 3 would be to bring commercial opportunities forward. He would also speak to the highway authority regarding the number of taxis which would be allowed at the station.

Councillor Phil Larratt stated the view of the Disabled People's Forum that there should be two passenger lifts rather than one. Councillor Tim Hadland stated that NBC and NCC had tried to have two passenger lifts but had been unsuccessful. Escalators had not been installed as they took up more space than lifts.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

8. GUIDELINES OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

Councillor Tim Hadland addressed the Committee on guidelines for Section 106 (s106) agreements and the spending of s106 moneys.

Steve Boyes, Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning, stated that the majority of developments have s106 agreements and the size and nature of the contribution depended on the number of houses and the type of development. Where planning applications were refused and went to appeal officers and developers negotiated contributions, in advance, should the appeal be allowed. He confirmed that the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy was a separate issue to s106 agreements. There was an opportunity for commuted sum to promote social housing elsewhere in the Borough, if it was not provided on site.

Councillor Phil Larratt expressed concern that the s106 contribution in respect of the former Cliftonville Middle School had not been used for the provision of sports pitches as stated in the agreement. Councillor Tim Hadland stated that the contribution had been made to the WNDC, which had decided how it should be used. The £25,000 remaining in the contribution would be used for the provision of sports pitches and it might be possible to do a deal if further funding was required. Steve Boyes undertook to look into whether the Nene Meadows Supplementary Planning Document needed to be revised to include the provision of sports pitches in the area.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

9. NORTHAMPTON BUS TERMINAL

Councillor Tim Hadland addressed the Committee regarding the North Gate Bus Station. He stated that a detailed report regarding the bus station, particularly covering the issues on the first day of operation, was available on the Council's website. There were some lessons for partnership working which could be learned from the report.

Members expressed concerns regarding a number of issues related to the bus station, bus stops in the Drapery, bus operations and the use of Victoria Street for National Express journeys.

Councillor Tim Hadland responded to these concerns, as summarised below:

- The bus station site, plus the stops in the Drapery, was the preferred site of the available locations. Any site around Greyfriars would have been temporary and might have been further from the shopping centre than the new bus station.
- The traffic model had been unable to take account of illegal traffic movements and some volumes of traffic had been unexpected. These issues had been addressed when they were known.
- The charge to use the bus station toilets was necessary to prevent the costs of maintaining them falling on Council Tax payers and to keep the toilets in good order.
- The number of seats in the bus station and the seating arrangements were under regular review.
- The bus shelters in the Drapery were being looked at. It was not yet known what the temperatures would be inside the bus station in summer and winter but work was being undertaken looking at air movements in the bus station.
- Victoria Street was not an ideal location for National Express services. In the longer term, a new site was being searched for closer to the bus station. He wanted improvements to the current shelters and some form of toilet provision in Victoria Street.
- The availability of National Express tickets at Bounds taxis would be publicised.

Steve Boyes, Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning, stated that there were continuing discussions with the bus operators about issues and he would raise with them the issue of buses “travelling all around the houses” to get into the bus station.

Members considered that there needed to be more effective enforcement action against drivers illegally using the Drapery and the streets around the bus station and that this issue needed to be raised with the Police.

Agreed:

- 1. That the report be noted.**
- 2. That a further report be presented to the Committee at its next meeting in September 2014.**
- 3. That the Police be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee to consider enforcement issues relating to the bus station.**

10. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (CSP PERFORMANCE)

Julie Seddon, Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, presented the Partnership’s bi-annual report. She stated that there was a very positive picture, with all crime reduced by 17.1% on the year end performance. The Police were very supportive and the partnership was the most successful one in Northamptonshire. Targets were set based on national trends, local resources and priorities.

In response to a question Julie Seddon stated that some issues were dealt with directly by the Police, whilst others were dealt with by the Partnership. This depended on the nature of the issues.

Councillor Phil Larratt drew attention to a special constable who had been a great community asset before being moved from his area. Julie Seddon stated that Police decided their own operational issues. She would raise any concerns regarding increases in anti-social behaviour through the Partnership.

Councillor Lee Mason expressed concern that hate crime was not a specific crime type in the Partnership’s categories.

Councillors Ansell and Sergeant referred to issues with cyclists on pavements and the lack of enforcement. Councillor Jamie Lane suggested that the Police, and the Police and Crime Commissioner if available, be invited to the Committee’s next meeting to discuss this issue.

Agreed:

- 1. That the report be noted.**
- 2. That the Police/Police and Crime Commissioner, along with the Chair of the CSP, be invited to attend the meeting on 10 November 2014 to discuss issues raised in the discussion above.**

11. LICENSING FUNCTION PERFORMANCE

Councillor Mike Hallam addressed the Committee regarding the performance of the Council’s Licensing function. He drew attention to the Park Rangers’ and Neighbourhood Wardens’ vehicles which were being used at night by the Licensing team. He also referred to the Law Commission’s report on the taxi and private hire trade which had made

recommendations for the Government to consider. He also stated that a report on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals, which were appearing in increasing numbers, would be considered by the Licensing Committee on 17 June 2014. He congratulated the Licensing team for their excellent work.

Phil Bayliss, Senior Licensing Officer, responded to a question, stating that the majority of complaints they received with regard to taxis and private hire related to the driving, or attitude, of the driver. Many of the complaints were minor but all had to be investigated. Officers required vehicle plate numbers and details of incidents to allow them to investigate complaints.

In response to comments from members about anti-social behaviour in the town's parks at nights, including the suggestion that Park Rangers should have enforcement powers, Councillor Mike Hallam stated that he would discuss issues with the Police and would write to schools where pupils took part in such behaviour.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

12. SCRUTINY PANELS

12.A SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - IMPACT OF THE WELFARE REFORM ACT

Councillor Lee Mason presented the report to the Committee. It was envisaged that the review would be concluded in July 2014 and presented to the Committee at its meeting on 8 September 2014.

Councillor Jamie Lane stated that he would present the report to Cabinet in November 2014.

Agreed: That the report be noted.

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

Councillor Joy Capstick presented the final report of Scrutiny Panel 2 on the management and regulation of private sector housing, including houses in multiple occupation. She drew particular attention to the two separate visits, which could be some time apart, to assess and licence properties.

Councillor Jamie Lane stated that he would be presenting the report to Cabinet in September 2014.

Agreed: That the report be approved.

12.C SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

Councillor Jamie Lane presented the report and scope for Scrutiny Panel 1 which would be looking into causes of interpersonal violence in the Borough and suggesting responses. He stated that he had recently taken over the Chair of the Panel from Councillor Sivaramen Subbarayan.

Agreed: That the scope of the review be approved.

12.D SCRUTINY PANEL 2 - POVERTY IN THE TOWN

Councillor Elizabeth Gowen presented the report and scope for Scrutiny Panel 2 which would be looking into whether poverty was a serious issue in Northampton.

Agreed: That the scope of the review be approved.

12.E SCRUTINY PANEL 3 - KEEP NORTHAMPTON TIDY

Councillor Tony Ansell presented the report and scope for Scrutiny Panel 3 which would be looking into implementing a "Keep Northampton Tidy" campaign.

Agreed: That the scope of the review be approved.

13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2013/2014

The draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report was presented to the Committee.

Councillor Jamie Lane stated that he would present the approved Annual Report to the Council meeting to be held on 14 July 2014.

Councillor Joy Capstick stated that she considered that for transparency the Committee should be Chaired by an Opposition member rather than a member of the Administration.

Agreed: That the report be approved.

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

Councillor Jamie Lane stated that this item had been deferred as NCC had moved the date of its Committee meeting back to 24 June 2014.

Some members stated that they had been unaware of the change of date until advised by the Scrutiny Officer.

15. POTENTIAL FUTURE PRE DECISION SCRUTINY

There were none.

16. URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 8:25 pm.