

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 18 April 2016 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

PRESENT: HER WORSHIP THE MAYOR Councillor Flavell (in the Chair).

COUNCILLORS: Malpas, Ansell, Ashraf, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Cali, Caswell, Chunga, Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, Eales, Eales, Eldred, Golby, Gowen, Hadland, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, Hill, Hill, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Sargeant, Shaw, Smith, Stone and Walker

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hadland declared a personal non pecuniary interest in Item 7, as a Trustee of the Delapre Abbey Trust.

Councillor Bottwood declared a personal non pecuniary interest in motion iii) as a Board Member of Northampton Partnership Homes

Councillor Caswell declared a personal non pecuniary interest in motion iii) as a Board Member of Northampton Partnership Homes

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meetings held on the 29th February and the 7th March 2016 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Aziz, Lynch, Russell and Choudary.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that on the 1st April she had been in attendance at an event declaring the High Sheriff of Northamptonshire - Caroline Brocklehurst at Sessions House.

It was noted that on the 8th April 2016, the Mayor's consort Michael had planted a lovely Silver Birch tree at Abington Park as part of the annual tree planting tradition. The Mayor explained that on the 24th April she would be laying a wreath in honour of the brave at the Anzac Memorial Service at the Towcester Road Cemetery.

The Mayor commented that the Council meeting would be her final Council meeting

before Annual Council. She thanked Members for their support over the past year and wished Councillor Malpas every success in his Mayoral year.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Keith Bennett addressed Council and stated that whilst he respected the views of the fire safety officers, the zero tolerance policy of personalising communal areas would be near impossible to implement and questioned how it would be policed. He commented that banning door mats and flower pots was a step too far and common sense should prevail, allowing tenants to report real hazards and the blanket ban was a policy too far.

Mr Paul Denton addressed Council and spoke of the 9 years of misery he had endured as a resident close to Highway 39 and Sixfields due to the incessant use of motorbikes using pathways that were frequently used by pedestrians and dog walkers and stated that it was only a matter of time before someone was seriously hurt by them. He reported that there had been incidents of motorcyclists using the area as a getaway exit from local robberies, from smash and grabs to armed hold ups and asked that more be done to prevent and stop this and make the area safer for residents.

Mr Norman Adams commented that he applauded the concentrated effort that had been made in tackling, preventing and reducing rough sleepers and stated that he was pleased the Council's plan to use the former British Rail Social Club as a temporary emergency shelter. He commented that the increased accommodation charges had seen an impact on the homelessness situation and reported that there was a need for the monthly monitoring.

Mr Andrew Stratton addressed Council and commented that the lack of street lights in Tower Hill had caused numerous issues for local residents and whilst Councillor Hadland had put an order in for them to be switched back on residents were still living in fear. He commented that the number of undesirable people who had been seen loitering had increased since the street lights had been turned off had increased and reported that more money should be spent on ensuring resident safety.

Ms Jaya Patel submitted a petition asking the Council to reconsider the possibility of taking back the shop premises due to the redevelopment of Little Cross Street. She noted that it had been signed by over 700 people and explained that she thought she had been guaranteed.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 21 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 given were as tabled (included in an updated agenda on the website) unless where stated, supplementary questions were asked, as detailed below.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 2, Councillor Hadland confirmed that the demolition of Albion House would be happening, but was unable to confirm the date.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 7, Councillor King confirmed that she would be happy to meet with Councillor Davenport and the Police to discuss the issues of off road motorcycles in Briar Hill and Far Cotton and Delapre.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 15, Councillor Hibbert stated that some rents on garages differed due to popularity in certain areas but that he would look into the costs in the future in partnership with Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH).

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 16, Councillor Hibbert stated that it was a requirement for residents producing medical certificates for parking mobility scooters in close proximity for less able residents.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 18, Councillor King reported that they were continuing to work with agencies and the Community Safety Partnership, but with no legislation banning the sale, it was becoming increasingly hard to tackle the problems associated with legal highs.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 19, Councillor Hibbert commented that there was the intention to clear Toms Close to allow development of new homes.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 20, Councillor Hibbert stated that the intention to build 100 new homes was a step in the right direction for the Council to match the sale and rebuild of Council Houses under the Right to Buy legislation.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 21, Councillor Bottwood confirmed that they were constantly looking and reviewing options to decrease emissions and constantly kept them under review.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Markham submitted her Leaders report and elaborated thereon. It was noted that the 7 Borough and District Councils in the County had been working collaboratively together to explore options relating to proposed unitary local government status. She praised the achievements of Northampton Town Football Club who were on the edge of promotion and noted the intention to hold a civic ceremony for the Cobblers, provisionally on the 5th May 2016. The Elections team was congratulated for their hard work with a significant increase of residents being on the Register. She updated Members by explaining that there had been issues with the St Edmunds site, but that the Council had agreed to secure the site for clearance.

In response to questions asked, the Leader noted that she would have pass on comparison figures to Councillor Birch regarding the electoral registration for last year.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report and stated that 100,000 Council Tax bills and benefit notifications had been sent out and thanked the work of officers.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Hallam commented that with regards to Business Rates, should people be struggling, they should contact the Council and they would be happy to communicate with anyone experiencing problems. Councillor Hallam further stated that money had been invested in the Southfields and Goldings area and this had been done through Section 106 agreements.

Councillor Bottwood submitted his Cabinet Member report and explained that recently, equipment had been seized from an unlicensed tattooist who had been operating from a house and had posed a risk to public health. It was further noted that during the 'Clean for the Queen' litter picking campaign had resulted in over 6 tonnes of rubbish having been removed by over 40 volunteers. He corrected two parts of his report, section 3, "Environmental Services" which should have read 'East Midland in Bloom' and section 8, should have read Farmfield Road.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Bottwood confirmed that the system for reporting abandoned shopping trolleys had not changed but that patience was needed as some were in very precarious places to reach. He further reported that the G4S officers working on fixed penalty enforcement wore body-cams and could therefore issue on the spot fines for those seen littering. In response to further questions asked, Councillor Bottwood declared that a lot of work was being undertaken to tackle fly-tipping but that perpetrators were becoming more adept at hiding their identities and therefore were more difficult to catch.

Councillor King submitted her Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. She reported that there had been Weeks of Action for a number of areas which saw multi-agency work and activities being carried out which had been very well received.

In response to questions asked, Councillor King stated that the Hate Crime Unit had been disbanded but figures relating to such crimes could be gathered and collated for the next Council meeting. She confirmed that the Youth and LGBTQ Forum had undertaken work relating to Hate Crime and that a more comprehensive update could be given after the PCC election.

Councillor Eldred submitted his Cabinet Member report and noted that since May 2015, £71,554 of the Councillor Community Fund had been spent and any unspent funding would be carried over into the next year. He commented that there were numerous events to be held in Northampton including a Food Festival, Beer Festival, Race for Life and Carnival Parade.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Eldred confirmed that he was unaware of any charges being applied on voluntary organisations being charged to use parks in area. He confirmed that the allocation for the Councillor Community Fund would not be affected for the next 3 years as it had been a Manifesto pledge to remain the same throughout the Administrations term. In response to a request from another Member,

Councillor Eldred confirmed that he would meet them and the members of the Residents Association to discuss the Southfields Community Centre.

Councillor Hibbert submitted his Cabinet Member report and elaborated thereon. It was noted that work continued on the Rough Sleeper strategy and that efforts were being made to resolve the shortage of emergency accommodation and as such had planned to use the former British Rail Social Club.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Hibbert confirmed that data had been gathered relating to the demographics of homeless people and some had been helped to return to their country of origin. Responding to further questions, Councillor Hibbert explained that the outreach workers had counted rough sleepers on the basis that if they had bedded down or were on top of their beds, they were considered to be sleeping rough and noted that the Rough Sleepers Strategy would go some way to alleviate the problem.

Councillor Hadland submitted his Cabinet Member report and noted that he would resolved to work with Mr Stretton to deal with the lighting issue in his area. He that the Cabinet Advisory Group had worked closely to develop the Local Plan and asked Councillors and members of the public to feed into the consultation process. He noted that Phase 1 of the Guildhall Road had been completed early and noted that the lift refurbishments in the Grosvenor centre had been completed.

In response to a question asked, Councillor Hadland commented that the cleaning of chewing gum from the streets was undertaken as part of the Amey contract.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Davenport made a statement as set out on the agenda. She questioned whether resources were spread evenly over the whole of the borough and equally among Wards to tackle fly tipping, anti-social behaviour, dog fouling and littering.

Councillor Bottwood responded by reporting that every Ward and local Councillor encountered problems and that the Council strived to look at what could be done to resolve the issues with the resources they had. He commented that anti-social behaviour was experienced in all Wards and that there was a need for them all to work with the Police and other agencies to resolve issues. He further stated that they could not simply rely on officers but that Councillors had a responsibility too and that the administration was addressing problem areas by working with supermarkets to reduce the number of abandoned trollies and the highways agency to clean up the gateways into the Town Centre.

In response Councillor Davenport questioned the disproportionate amount of money that had been spent on certain projects and developments when there were other areas that appeared to have been deprived of similar funding.

9. SPRING BOROUGH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillor Markham proposed a report which sought Council's approval to make Spring Boroughs Neighbourhood Plan, following the referendum, held on the 10th March 2016.

Councillor Hadland seconded the proposal.

Councillor Stone commented that she had been an advocate of the making of the Neighbourhood Plan and praised the number of residents who had turned out to vote on the referendum and was thrilled at the decision.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 That Council 'makes' the Spring Boroughs Neighbourhood Plan, in accordance with section 38(A)(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 2.2 That the Spring Boroughs Neighbourhood Plan and the Decision Statement (Appendix 1 of the report) be published on the Council's website and paper copies be provided in locations where people who live, work and carry on business in the area can view them.
- 2.3 That the Decision Statement and details on how to view the Spring Boroughs Neighbourhood Plan be sent to the qualifying body (Spring Boroughs Voice – the Neighbourhood Forum) and any person who asked to be notified of the Council's decision.
- 2.4 That Spring Boroughs Voice be congratulated on the successful outcome of the referendum and the making of the Spring Boroughs Neighbourhood Plan.

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

- i) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Meredith seconded:

“NCC debated a motion calling for an independent study on the benefits of unitary council models in Northamptonshire. This Council notes the lengths to which the Conservative group went to ensure that motion did not include a requirement to bring on district and borough councils as joint commissioners, only as consultees.

Council notes that different unitary models could look more or less favourable depending on the scope and type of question asked, and that the best interest of the County as a whole is not necessarily the best interest in Northampton.

Council notes that its role is to bring about what is best for this town, not to prop up a failing County Council.

Council therefore resolves to commission its own independent report into the benefits of unitary models to the town of Northampton”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

Mr Norman Adams addressed motion ii) and commented that whilst he could understand tenants not wanting to reside in a sterile environment, he did not agree with the way they had gone about it and did not want to see any tenants or firefighters marred as a result of contraventions to fire safety recommendations.

Mr Phil Leach stated that tenants should be able to take pride in where they lived and their environment and voiced his opinion that tenants not being able to personalise their communal areas was taking Health and Safety a step too far.

ii) Councillor G Eales proposed and Councillor Davenport seconded:

“Many of our council tenants take pride in their environment and wish to personalise their communal areas. This council resolves to work with NPH on strategies that allow for this personalisation in such a way that doesn’t contravene Health and Safety regulations”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

Mr Norman Adams addressed Council on motion iii) and noted that more money had been allocated to DHP but recognised that it would not necessarily cover all costs of those seeking help, struggling to make ends meet. He questioned the appeals process that was in place for those turned down from Discretionary Housing Payments and questioned whether those turned down could be reviewed.

iii) Councillor Davenport proposed and Councillor Ashraf seconded:

This Council notes that the Discretionary Housing Payment is an important source of help for those struggling to make ends meet.

This Council believes not enough people are aware of DHP in Northampton.

This Council resolves to :-

- a) Work with and encourage NPH officers so they promote DHP. DHP should be promoted before someone faces eviction.
- b) To do much more to advertise DHP through housing letters, leaflets and so on.
- c) Make access to DHP as easy as possible.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

The Mayor announced that with the agreement of Council, motion iv) had been

withdrawn.

11. 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 8.52pm