

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 18 September 2017 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Ansell, Ashraf, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Caswell, Choudary, Culbard, Davenport, Duffy, T Eales, Eldred, Flavell, Golby, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, B Markham, Malpas, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Sargeant, Kilby-Shaw, Smith, Stone and Walker

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the proceedings of the Meetings of the Council held on 10th July 2017 and the Extraordinary Council meeting on the 17th August 2017 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Chunga, M Markham, Cali and Hadland.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor welcomed representatives from the Kings Heath Boxing Club and noted that it had become one of the most successful boxing clubs, which had started out as a small club and developed. He introduced Mr Ethan James who was currently dominating the sport and was the most decorated youth boxer ever. The Mayor congratulated him on the silver and gold medals that he had recently won.

The Mayor announced that Northampton had won Gold in East Midlands Bloom awards and noted that the Council had participated in the event for a number of years and helped to promote community cohesion and thanked those involved for their hard work. The Mayor thanked the Cabinet Member for Environment who proceeded to thank those involved in Bloom including Councillor Ansell, Paul Townsend, Peter Hackett, Sue Ousley and Annie McGarth and other partners in the community achievement.

The Mayor extended the best wishes of the Council to Councillors Chunga and Councillor M Markham who were unable to attend the meeting.

The Mayor further announced the success of Alfie Bears picnic held on the 22nd July 2017. He thanked the Revenue and Benefits team for holding a fundraising event on the 27th July, where £700 had been raised for the Mayor's Charity. He further thanked Councillors who had attended the Marberg Twinning Gala dinner and noted that he was currently in the process of arranging his return visit.

The Mayor noted that beer mats had been circulated and noted that from the 20th October, Phipps brewery would be launching the Mayors Mash Brew, which would be on sale in 40 pubs within Northampton. He reported that the poster for 'Mayorfest' had been issued and that tickets were currently on sale and urged Members to support the event.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mrs Dagma King addressed Council and thanked the Lib Dems for their support in her quest to improve the amenities at Victoria Street Coach Station. She noted her displeasure with the responsible Cabinet Member and reported that more substantial seating should be provided.

Mr John Bright addressed Council and commented that as a resident of Far Cotton, he had seen a large increase in the number of HIMO's and noted that many of them were not licensed. He asked that adequate resources be provided to ensure that the number of these were accurately measured and subsequently dealt with.

Ms Beverly Mennell addressed Council and stated that more needed to be done to address vulnerable residents' in Council owned properties who had tree maintenance issues.

Mr Paul Joyce addressed Council and commented that given the state of local government finances, Councillors should not receive any increase in their remuneration allowance; there was a lack of understanding amongst Councillors of the cost of living and the hardships faced by many residents of Northampton and that consideration should be given to the many and not the few.

Mr Nikesh Jani addressed Council and referred to his employment as a teacher in the public sector and commented that he had faced on going budget cuts and argued that the allowance for Members should not be increased and commented that the current financial problems experienced by many should be recognised before any discussion on an increase in allowances occurred.

Mr Tony Mallard commented that he was unhappy that public liability insurance for Residents Associations was inclusive of road signage and speed cameras and reported that it was a cost that should be covered by the Council.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 15 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 were given as tabled (included in an updated agenda on the Council's website) unless where stated, supplementary questions were asked as detailed below.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 2, Councillor Hallam reiterated his written answer and stated that the Council were working with the County Council to address issues with regards to commercial bins being placed next to residential bins.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 3, Councillor King commented that she would supply updated information on PSPOs when received.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 4, Councillor Hibbert commented that as far as he was aware, walkabouts were still taking place by NPH and he would confirm this at a later date.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 9, Councillor Nunn commented that staff at the Council were employed on their skills set, irrespective of their sex or ethnicity.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 13, Councillor Nunn commented that he would confer with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning on the provisions of facilities at the Victoria Street Coach Station.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn submitted his report as Leader of the Council and welcomed the interim Chief Executive who was now in post full-time. He updated Members on the work being carried out with regards to Unitary Status and noted that that Governance work was ongoing and noted the successes that were contained within the Governance Action Plan. The Leader noted that there had recently been an increase in the number of traveller encampments across the Town and noted the work that had been done with partner agencies in protecting public open spaces. He further commented that he had attended at event at the Nightshelter to thank the many volunteers who had offered support to run the Shelter or presented donations.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Nunn reported that since Brexit Unitary Status had become less of a priority nationally. He also noted that the local MPs supported the proposed improvements to infrastructure. It was also explained that there were ongoing discussion between the Borough and County Council with regards to the Castel Mound, who were the owners of the land and examine future proposals of the site. He confirmed that the corporate induction included input from the Union representatives. Responding to further questions, he reported that there was continued work on the congestion problems with the Kingsthorpe corridor and noted that the Council had a very active dialogue with Whitehills and Spring Park Residents Association -WASPRA on infrastructure issues in and around the Town.

Councillor Larratt submitted his Cabinet Member report as Deputy Leader of the

Council and reported that work was progressing with the re-configuration and re-covering of the market stalls. He noted that there had been training for Councillors on Standards and procedures and noted that a personal safety course for Councillors had been arranged for March 2018 as well as women's self-defence course. He further reported that progress had been made following the agreement at Cabinet for the Borough Council to take responsibility for some of the streetlights.

In response to the questions asked, Councillor Larratt reported that attendance at the Market Advisory Group (MAG) of traders fluctuated and noted that a steering group had been established to examine the potential improvements to the reconfiguration of the market. He noted that there had been no responses received in relation to feedback requested asking traders for proposed improvements. He commented that there had been a proposal to move 8 stalls and create a second aisle and this was being done in order to make the market more attractive and welcoming to members of the public. Responding to further questions, Councillor Larratt commented that once available, he would circulate a map of NBC owned street lights to Members and commented that Southbridge lights would be replaced and that those on Nunn-Mills Road, whilst un-adopted would be the area would be looked at in order to improve lighting.

Councillor Hallam elaborated on his Cabinet Member report and commented that despite the illegal encampments that had been witnessed in the Town Centre recently, which was a drive to attract legitimate use of the public open spaces. He noted that new bollards had been installed at a number of key areas to reduce the number of instances of unauthorised vehicles driving on them.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Hallam confirmed that he would be happy to meet with the Delapre Dragons as requested by the Ward Councillor and commented that there had been issues with access to alleyways, but that there had been a change in policy which should have addressed concerns to some extent. He responded to further questions by noting that tree maintenance was an area of work that was strictly managed and that there were certain times when the work could not be carried out, but confirmed that tree maintenance in the Eastern District had been scheduled for before the end of the financial year. He noted that there were ongoing sightings of rodents in certain parts of the town where refuse management had not been properly accomplished.

Councillor Hibbert, as the Cabinet Member for Housing submitted his Cabinet Member report and noted that as mentioned by the Leader and event had been held at the Nightshelter in support and recognition of those who had worked hard in its success. He noted that the shelter had been used by in excess of 100 men who were either at risk of, or had been sleeping rough and thanked the volunteers and officers who had worked on it. He highlighted the successful prosecution of a landlord who had failed to comply with an Improvement Notice and subsequently fined £10,000.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Hibbert explained that sheltered housing was excluded from the Right to Buy scheme. It was noted that the volunteers for the Nightshelter were being managed by a permanent member of staff and concurred with the sentiments of other Councillors in thanking the staff and volunteers for their

work. He further commented that he recognised that there were fewer facilities for homeless women, but explained that they were fewer in numbers and slightly easier to rehouse.

Councillor King elaborated on her Cabinet Member report and updated members on St Crispins Community Centre and thanked the legal department for their work on the completion of agreements for the centre.

In response to questions asked, Councillor King explained that there was continued work with partnerships organisations and agencies in reducing the number of domestic abuse incidents. She commented that the Government was examining the impact of betting shops and gambling problems within the UK and that the Youth Forum and would contribute to any consultation in delivering their findings of their Gamble aware project.

At this juncture of the meeting, the Mayor informed Council that the allocated time had been met and no further Cabinet Member reports would be heard.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Duffy stated that the Eastern District of the Northampton had originally been apart of the new town plan to deal with the London overspill. Having been built in the 1970s, the area no included Goldings, Lings and Thorplands and urged the administration to invest and renew in the area as she considered it to have been neglected of late. She commented that the design of some estates had resulted in high crime areas and anti-social behaviour and that the lack of CCTV in residential areas had led to arson, vandalism and fly-tipping. She further noted that a large number of residents in the Eastern District felt neglected by the Council and whilst they had continued to pay their Council Tax, they had seen a decrease in the services provided.

Councillor Hallam responded by commenting that there were a lot of community groups who the administration had been in communication with over a substantial amount of time and stated that the Council did not neglect the people in Northampton East. He noted that Northampton East were first on the list of areas who would be receiving tree maintenance and reported that play equipment had been installed in Southfields Park and a recent 'Community Week of Action' held for residents. He further reported on the work that had been undertaken by the Deputy Leader of the Council with Thorplands 81 football training for young people and older youths. He commented that the Eastern District was not the only area of Northampton that would like to have more capital investment and suggested that the use of Councillor Community Funds to target specific areas of interest. He noted that he recognised that more work was needed in the area and that it would be done in due course.

In response, Councillor Duffy reiterated that residents of the Eastern District felt neglected and suggested that the Council weren't listening to their requests. She commented that there had been an increase in the amount of shopping trolleys that were being abandoned and very little done by either the Council or the supermarkets in addressing the blight that this had on the area.

9. REVENUE AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE

Councillor Nunn proposed a report which sought Councils approval to delegate the delivery of the Authorities statutory billing, collection, enforcement and benefits service to the newly formed Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee and the appointment of the Cabinet Member for Finance to the Committee.

Councillor Patel seconded the proposal

RESOLVED:

That Council approves:

1. That the delegation of the Councils statutory billing, collection, enforcement and benefits service to the newly formed Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee be approved and that the change be amended in the NBC constitution.
2. That Councillor Brandon Eldred, Cabinet Member for Finance be appointed to represent the Council on the Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee.

10. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Councillor Nunn proposed a report which sought Councils approval to amend the Council's current Scheme of Members' Allowances to take into account the recommendations received from the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). He noted that the Chair of the IRP would elaborate on the report.

Councillor Larratt seconded the report.

Mr John Cade (Chair of the IRP) explained that the panel had met on a number of occasions with various Councillors and noted a questionnaire had been sent out to all Councillors for comments and feedback. He commented that Northampton Borough Council was not a typical Borough Council and that this should be recognised.

Councillor Stone questioned why Group Whips received no remuneration which Mr Cade explained was a valid but political role and therefore not awarded an allowance. She further commented that it would be insensitive for Councillors to receive an increased allowance as tax payers were hard hit by austerity measures and front line services had also been impacted on as well as some Council workers.

The Leader commented that he was aware of some Councillors who were suffering from financial hardship and that some of the roles that were being undertaken by Councillors could be considered full time and noted that the allowances they received were less than some officers on an hourly rate basis. He stated that the reason the Labour Group were not in favour was due to their manifesto pledge.

Councillors Beardsworth and B Markham concurred that the last time an Independent Remuneration Panel had made considerations was back in 2008 and that whilst they recognised the hardship faced by some residents, the commitment and hours

dedicated by Councillors should be recognised.

Councillor Marriott commented that the Labour Group would oppose the changes as they did not recognise the need to increase allowances. He stated that it had been a manifesto pledge and that the group would be standing by their promises. Councillor Smith echoed the sentiments of Councillor Marriott and commented that the group were remaining by their principles.

Councillor Meredith commented that the Labour Group were using the report politically and reported that it was an independent review and commented that it should not be referred to as a pay rise, but an increase in allowances. He commented that he, like others Members, were on-call to residents up to 20 hours a day and urged Council to agree to the recommendations.

Councillor Oldham commented that there was never a right time to increase allowances and noted that all of the concerns that he initially had and raised with the panel had been answered and were addressed in the report. He noted that he would take the increased allowance but would donate his increase to the Mayor's Charity.

Councillor Nunn thanked the members of the IRP for their hard work and specifically thanked the Chair of the IRP for his attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the following recommendations received from the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel, as detailed in the Report at **Appendix 1** and the supplementary Report of the Panel at **Appendix 2 (of the report) be considered**, that:

- a) the Basic Allowance, of £6,692.26 per annum, remains unaltered;
- b) the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Leader of the Council is set at £17,227.74 per annum;
- c) the annual SRAs for positions receiving an SRA be maintained at the same percentage level of the Leader's SRA:
 - Deputy Leader (60%)
 - Cabinet Member (55%)
 - Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (35%)
 - Leader of the Main Opposition Party (35%)
 - Chair of the Planning Committee (30%)
 - Chair of the Licensing Committee (30%)
 - Leader of the Third Group (20%)
 - Councillors appointed to the West Northants Strategic Planning Committee (10%);
- d) the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair of Standards Committee be set at 15% of the Leader's SRA;
- e) the Co-Optee allowance for the Independent Chair of Audit

Committee is set at £4306.94 per annum;

- f) any Independent Members or Parish Councillor Members co-opted onto the Standards Committee receive a co-optees allowance of £500 each per annum;
- g) all the allowances as recommended are indexed at a rate of 1% for 2017/2018;
- h) the recommended Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility Allowances and Co-optees' Allowances be index linked to any salary increases for Northampton Borough Council Officers at grade 5 of the organisation's Pay Scales and that such indexation continues until the next review of the IRP, or for a period of four years, whichever is the sooner;
- i) the Constitution is amended to reflect the policy that, where Councillors hold more than one position of special responsibility, only one SRA (the higher amount) may be claimed;
- j) the Councillors' Travelling Allowance, Guidance for Members, draft version 4, February 2017 (as at **Annex B of Appendix 1**) be approved;
- k) no change is made to the Dependants' Carers Allowance Scheme; and
- l) these recommendations take effect from **May 2017**.

2.2 That the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme be amended to reflect the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel as detailed in its reports at **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2 of the report**.

2.3 That authority be delegated to the Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer to:

- a) make the necessary changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme in the Council's Constitution to reflect Council's decision, to include the full schedule of rates and allowances and terms and conditions; and
- b) make arrangements for the publicity that the Council is required to undertake in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

11. INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Councillor Nunn proposed a report which sought Council's approval for an Independent Chair to be appointed to the Audit Committee. This would take into account the recommendations received from the Council's Audit Committee.

Councillor Larratt seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the composition of the Audit Committee be altered to provide that the Chair of Audit Committee would be an independent, non-voting, co-opted member and would be in addition to seven elected Members, and that the necessary amendments be made to the Council's Constitution.
2. That authority be delegated to the Borough Secretary & Monitoring Officer the powers needed to determine a recruitment process in consultation with Members, necessary to enable it to co-opt an independent person onto the Audit Committee so as to enhance its performance of its functions.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

- i) Councillor Smith accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Birch.

Council agreed to the altered motion which was debated below:

“This council will mark the centenary of women gaining the right to vote by honouring Margaret Bondfield as the first ever Woman MP for Northampton. Afterwards she became the first female cabinet minister, and the first woman to be a privy counsellor in the UK, when she was appointed Minister of Labour.

The women's forum will be asked to consider a commemoration event in the Guildhall.

The Council further commits to honouring Margaret Bondfield by commissioning a statue of her to be placed in the Courtyard of the Guildhall during the next financial year.

This Council notes that 2018 is the centenary of the year in which women won the same voting rights as men. This gave propertied women aged 30 and over the right to vote for the very first time. Universal suffrage for both men and women followed 10 years later.”

Members debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

- ii) Councillor Stone accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Ashraf.

Council agreed to the altered motion which was debated below:

“This Council notes the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government made a recent speech to the Local Government Association where he recognised

'there is a serious shortage of decent affordable housing' and went to talk about the stark inequalities in housing and said he was willing to listen to proposals from ambitious councils to try to address these issues.

In Northampton we have recognised for some time there is a desperate need for more social housing and have stated our aim to address this. We are an ambitious council and agree that members and officers will continue to work together to develop a proposal to finance and build new social housing locally. The proposal will be submitted to government for their support and approval."

Members debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

Mr Huffadine-Smith addressed Council on motion iii) and commented that held concerns about the number of HIMOs and the associated problems such as on-street parking, feral cats and refuse issues and commented that there were some landlords who were motivated by greed and the consequence was a loss of family homes. He hoped that the Council would extend the area that Article 4 Directive was proposed to cover.

- iii) Councillor Davenport accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Culbard.

Council agreed to the altered motion which was debated below:

This Council notes that some parts of the town have increasing numbers of HIMOs.

This Council further notes that in recent times it has introduced tougher restrictions with Article 4 directives in certain areas of town restricting the concentration of HIMOs to 15 per cent in a 50 metre radius.

This Council believes it now needs to review the current policy, using evidence to assess the extent and impact of HIMOs in relation to their impact on existing localities and communities, including reviewing the concentration of Class C4 (Houses In Multiple occupation), and mixed C3/C4 use or sui generis Houses in Multiple Occupation use (more than six people sharing) uses within the 50m radius.

Members debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

- iv) Councillor Beardsworth accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor B Markham.

Council agreed to the altered motion which was debated below

“This Council recognises the burden of special expenses and how they impact on parished areas of Northampton and the residents thereof.

In order to relieve the burden special expenses have on parish taxpayers, this Council is working closely with parishes to encourage them and afford them the opportunity to take on the freehold of premises and open spaces within their areas. This will lead to special expenses not being charged for transferred premises and land.

We are also reviewing the designation of our parks and open spaces in order to ensure that in parish areas special expenses apply appropriately”

Members debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

v) Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor Meredith seconded:

“The use of Bed and Breakfast to provide temporary emergency accommodation for homeless people, in particular families, should always be a last resort. B & B is particularly unsuitable and disruptive for families and at a time of growing homelessness and represents poor value for money within a stretched budget. We believe that it is time for the authority to follow Reading Council and others and use prefabricated units to create a stock of temporary emergency housing to provide homes for families while they are waiting authority-owned or other social housing”.

Members debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

vi) Councillor B Markham accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Beardsworth.

Council agreed to the altered motion which was debated below

“This council believes that motions passed by a majority vote are important and that the public would expect them to be acted on.

There should we believe be a report-back process on action taken and where appropriate results.

To ensure that the proper process exists, it needs to be enshrined in the Constitution of this authority and Council resolves to address this as a part of a Constitution review in the very near future”.

Members debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

Mr Huffadine-Smith addressed Council on motion vii) and commented that the Council needed to provide for travellers as the amount of places they could dwell had diminished and urged Councillors to read the DCLG 'Guidance on Gypsy and Traveller sites' and commented that this could reduce the cost of preventing travellers from accessing public spaces.

vii) Cllr Hallam proposed and Councillor King seconded:

This Council recognises the value of its parks and open spaces that are well used by residents and visitors. Therefore, it shares the community's concern about illegal encampments occupying our parks and open spaces as well as private areas across the Borough.

Councillors and Officers have been in continual contact with local residents during the periods of many illegal encampments throughout this year, and have been extremely concerned by the reports of anti-social and threatening behaviour, as well as fly-tipping and damage to parkland around the encampments.

Northampton Borough Council (NBC) subscribes to the Countywide Traveller Unit (CTU), a joint initiative between councils, and led by Northamptonshire County Council. NBC also delegates its powers under sections 77 and 78 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to the CTU. For several years this has proven to be the most effective way of dealing with illegal encampments. We recognise that the legal process is lengthy and can cause a good deal of inconvenience and anxiety to the local residents.

NBC seeks to achieve a balance between actively discouraging illegal encampments and maintaining access for residents, recognising that it is not possible to completely secure parks from those who are determined to set up illegal encampments without affecting residents' rights of access to their local parks and open spaces. Bollards and posts can be an effective means of preventing unauthorised access to our parks and open spaces. The bollards are designed to prevent any motorised vehicles gaining access as they all have the potential to damage green spaces, and more importantly, put the people who use our parks at risk. Therefore, NBC has last month again started the installation of bollards and posts around our town's green spaces.

While most people respect the signage we have in place, installing bollards is one of the ways we can make sure that our parks can be maintained to a high standard for everyone to enjoy.

This Council resolves to:

- 1) Call on the police to make use of all powers at their disposal to remove as soon as possible any illegal encampments from our parks and open spaces, bearing in mind the legal duties placed on the council to assess the welfare needs of relevant groups

2) Investigate further legal opportunities to prevent / deter illegal encampments;

3) Continue to work closely with the CTU and the police to increase efficiency and identify ways of speeding up the eviction process whilst continuing to abide by all the legal requirements.

Members debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

viii) Councillor King proposed and Councillor Larratt seconded:

“The Keep Safe Scheme aims to support people with learning disabilities to keep safe and get help in an emergency when out and about in Northamptonshire. Keep Safe, together with Safe Places, works under the Safe Places Organisation, which unites all the Safe Place (and Keep Safe) schemes by having all the information in one place so everyone can see it.

Northampton Borough Council recognises the importance of the Keep Safe Scheme and will be training all new staff at the one stop shop during their induction.

Northampton Borough Council aims to be a Keep Safe place, accessible to all”.

Members debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

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

There were no matters of urgency to be considered.

The meeting concluded at 9:49pm