



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY PANEL 3

NORTHAMPTON POST UNITARY

20 SEPTEMBER 2018

BRIEFING NOTE: SITE VISITS

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its inaugural scoping meeting, Scrutiny Panel 3 (Northampton Post Unitary) agreed that it would undertake various site visits to inform its evidence base.
- 1.2 In setting its scope (terms of reference), the Scrutiny Panel suggested site visits to the following:
 - Raunds Town Council
 - Higham Ferrers Town Council
- 1.3 Desktop research regarding other Town Councils has been undertaken and the findings are provided in a separate briefing note which is another agenda item.
- 1.4 Detailed below are the findings from the two site visits.

2 SITE VISITS

2.1 Raunds Town Council

2.1.1 Councillor Brian Sargeant, Chair, Councillor Danielle Stone and Morcea Walker, Co Optee, together with Marianne McCarthy, Solicitor, and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, visited Raunds Town Council on Thursday 9 August 2018. The site visit met with Councillor Richard Levell, Mayor of Raunds Town Council, and Kate Houlihan, Clerk.

2.1.2 Raunds Town Council has a population of 8,641 (2011 census). It has a budget of £450,000 from the precept.

Councillors and Staff

2.1.3 Raunds Town Council comprises 12 Councillors covering 2 wards.

- 2.1.4 In 2005 Raunds Town Council decided to elect a Mayor rather than having a chairman of the council. The Mayor is elected each year at Annual Council. A Deputy Mayor is also elected and they are expected to take over from the Mayor in the following year. However, it is possible for the Mayor to be in Office for longer than one year. The Mayor does not have robes or a mace but does have chains of office.
- 2.1.5 The Mayor Chairs the Council which meets monthly, with the exception of August. The Town Council also has consultative Committees.
- 2.1.6 The Clerk is the senior Officer of the Town who is supported by two Assistant Clerks and an Officer Administrator. There are also a number of caretaking staff.
- 2.1.7 The Clerk is responsible for the day to day management of the services delivered by the Town Council.

Civic Events

- 2.1.8 Three key events are held annually:

- Civic Service
- Burns Night Dinner
- Wine Tasting

Other events are held that the Mayor partakes in including:

County Fayre
Christmas Lights
Remembrance Day
Halloween Party
Bonfire Night

- 2.1.9 The Mayor's Charity for 2018/2019 is the Stoke Association.

Assets and Functions

- 2.1.10 Raunds Town Council is currently working with NCC as part of its Independent Library process with a view to purchasing the building and supporting a local community group to run the library.
- 2.1.11 It has responsibility for the management of lots of green space, which includes a dog park.

2.2 HIGHHAM FERRERS TOWN COUNCIL

2.2.1 Councillor Brian Sargeant, Chair, Councillor Danielle Stone and Morcea Walker, Co Optee, together with Marianne McCarthy, Solicitor, and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, visited Higham Ferrers Town Council on Thursday, 9 August 2018. The site visit met with Councillor Jason Smithers, Mayor, and Sandra Mitcham, Clerk.

2.2.1 Higham Ferrers has a population of 8,000 (2011 census.) It has a budget of £365,000 from the precept.

Councillors and Staff

2.2.2 There are 16 elected Councillors who serve a four year term. All Councillors are voluntary and no allowance is received. The Mayor has a budget for civic functions and an annual allowance of £1,500.

2.2.3 The Mayor is elected each year at Annual Council. A Deputy Mayor is also elected and they are expected to take over from the Mayor in the following year. The Mayor wears full robes, there is a mace and chains of office. The Clerk is also expected to robe up for Council and other events. Robes are worn at four meetings a year.

2.2.4 Higham Ferrers also has a Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council; the rationale being that it helps business continuity. Other Committees:

Planning

Policy and Resources

Environment and Recreation

Personnel Committee meets on an ad-hoc basis.

2.2.5 The Clerk is the most senior role of the Council. The Council also employs an Assistant Town Clerk, Admin Officers x 2, Admin/Finance Officer, Parks and Open Spaces Warden x 2, Mayor's Sergeant and Town Hall Cleaner.

2.2.6 There is also the role of Town Manager funded by Section 106 monies. 25% of the Town Manager's time is dedicated to Higham Ferrers.

Civic Events

2.2.7 Annual events include:

Mayor making

Civic Service
Carol Service – the Mayor leads the procession
Mayoralty Charity events
Remembrance day
Christmas event – Opened by the Mayor
Christmas Service

The Mayor's Charity for 2018/2019 is the Air Ambulance.

Assets and Functions

2.2.8 Assets and functions of Higham Ferrers Town Council include:

Town Hall
Farmers' market
Cemetery
Open spaces and play areas – including a skate park and football pitch, tennis courts and MUGA
Public toilets
Churchyard
Grass cuttings
CCTV

2.2.9 Higham Ferrers Town Council is working with a Community Group regarding taking over the local library. It is envisaged it will be housed in a porta cabin located on a car park, run by a Community Group.

2.2.10 Higham Ferrers is twinned with Hackenberg in Germany. Twinning visits take place annually. One year the Mayor of Higham Ferrers visits Hackenberg and the following year the Mayor of Hackenberg visits Higham Ferrers.

3 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 That the information provided in this briefing note informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Brian Sargeant Chair, Scrutiny Panel 3 – Northampton Post Unitary

10 August 2018