

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 3 - NORTHAMPTON POST UNITARY

Thursday, 20 September 2018

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Brian Sargeant (Chair), Councillors Aziz, Sam Kilby-Shaw and Jamie Lane

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Lee Mason

Witnesses Councillor Tony Ansell, Mayor of Northampton
Councillor Jonathan Nunn, Leader of the Council
Councillor Phil Larratt, Deputy Leader of the Council
Councillor Arthur McCutcheon, previous Mayor of Northampton
George Candler, Chief Executive

Councillor Dennis Meredith - observing

Officer Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Press James Averill, Democracy Reporter

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Joyce (Deputy Chair), Councillor Danielle Stone and Morcea Walker (Co Optee.)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

3. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2018 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

Councillor Tony Ansell, Mayor, Councillor Jonathan Nunn, Leader of the Council, Councillor Phil Larratt, Deputy Leader and George Candler, Chief Executive, presented the written response to the core questions. The salient points were highlighted. Councillor Arthur McCutcheon, in the capacity as previous Mayor, addressed the Scrutiny Panel with his responses to the core questions also.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- The Mayor is invited to other services and events, in addition to those provided in the written responses, such as the Laughery Ceremony and Diwali
- The significance of Oak Apple Day was emphasised and should be a key event, led by the Mayor of Northampton. Over the years a number of civic events have disappeared, it would be the opportune time to reintroduce some of these for example May Day celebrations
- In answer to a query regarding the expectations of the Mayor, Councillor Ansell advised that it is an honour and young people are often excited to meet the Mayor. He provided an example of when he met with young people recently.
- Civic tradition is very important within the town
- Lee Mason, co optee, and also previous Mayor of Northampton, commented that during her Mayoralty year she met with Groups that she did not know existed. She asked that information regarding the cost of the Mayoralty and the amount of income generated by the Mayoralty is costed and provided to a future meeting of this Scrutiny Panel. This information would be important in informing the evidence base.
- The Deputy Leader conveyed the view that the Mayoralty should continue into any new Unitary Council
- The need to retain regalia, such as that that is housed in the Mayor's Parlour was highlighted. The value of the Mace was highlighted.
- The Honorary Recorder has been recently appointed.
- The Scrutiny Panel queried how the role of Honorary Alderman would continue, post Unitary, as currently they are appointed due to their service to the Borough of Northampton. The Scrutiny Panel would like to see Honorary Alderman continuing in the new Unitary Council.
- Councillor McCutcheon advised that in his opinion the people of Northampton appear to want the Mayoralty. He gave an example of when he was Mayor and the excitement when the Mayoral car parked up at an event. He felt the Mayoralty could expand to include Mayor's events at different venues, the museum or Forum cinema, for example.
- 100th birthday acknowledgements are expanding and this now comes under the remit of civic Mayors. During his Mayoral year, Councillor McCutcheon had four 100th birthdays. The Mayor's visit to hospitals on Christmas Day really cheers patients and staff up, especially on the Children's ward. During his Mayoralty year, Councillor McCutcheon had promoted and made use of the town's Museums.
- The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the marketing of the Mayoralty via the website but felt this could be done more proactively such as leaflets at places such as the train station and libraries. The Mayoralty needs to be published more. Social media could be used more too.
- A Community Governance Review is now being undertaken by the Borough Council with a view to creating a new town council for Northampton. This review is looking at different Mayoralty models and would look to continue the tradition of the mayor and wider civic events and be the custodian of the civic regalia.

Councillor Tony Ansell, Mayor, Councillor Jonathan Nunn, Leader of the Council, Councillor Phil Larratt, Deputy Leader and George Candler, Chief Executive, and Councillor Arthur McCutcheon were thanked for their informative address.

6. SITE VISITS

The Chair presented the briefing note detailing the findings of the recent site visits. He advised that Morcea Walker, Co-Optee, had expressed the following view *“following the site visits to Raunds and Higham Ferrers, I am very keen for Northampton to find a way to secure its heritage and position in the new Unitary. We have over 800 years of very important history which needs to take pride of place as we move on. Centre of attention (in a positive way) is certainly what I would like to see as we progress”*

The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the findings from the site visits.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

7. DESKTOP RESEARCH

The Scrutiny Panel received a report that detailed the findings from desktop research. The salient points were noted.

AGREED: That the information provided informs the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.