

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 11 September 2019

PRESENT: Councillor Nunn (Chair); Councillor Larratt (Deputy Chair); Councillors Hadland, Hallam, J Hill, Hibbert and King

APOLOGIES: Councillor Eldred

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Eldred.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 August 2019 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

3. INTENTION TO HOLD PART OF THE MEETING IN PRIVATE IF NECESSARY

The Leader explained that Item 14 (Investment Acquisition Opportunity) had been exempted under schedule 12A, Part 3, (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor King declared an interest in Item 11 – Update on the Grant of Property Leases and Management Agreements to Northampton Leisure Trust (Unity Leisure) as a member of the board.

6. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

7. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPERS

Councillor Lane as chair of Overview and Scrutiny presented the report and expressed thanks to Councillor Russell as chair of the Scrutiny Panel, Councillor King, and Tracy Tiff for her excellent report. He particularly highlighted the recommendations for increasing bed space for homeless women (2.1.2), providing solutions for those not eligible for benefits (2.1.3), sharing the report with others in the unitary area (2.1.8) and increasing social media presence to counter the perception that the council does nothing about homelessness (2.1.6).

Councillor Russell recommended the Housing First model (2.1.1) and highlighted the importance of developing and strengthening relationships (2.1.5). In relation to 2.1.7 a scheme had been set up in Cambridge to encourage giving to a fund by contactless card rather than giving directly to people on the streets. Updating the recruitment policy to interview those with experience of rough sleeping (2.1.9) would also be a positive step.

Councillor Birch as a member of the Scrutiny Panel was concerned that interim action was needed with the onset of colder weather, since most of the recommendations addressed longer term issues. The Leader asked how participation could be encouraged by those who choose not to engage with services provided. Councillor Birch considered that recruiting ex-homeless people to explain how they got off the streets could be helpful.

Councillor Stone welcomed the recommendations. She considered that the tie-in with mental health services needed to be improved, more and better quality temporary accommodation was required, serious case reviews needed to be implemented for each early death so that lessons were learned, and sexual assault needed to be taken more seriously.

Councillor Hibbert thanked the task panel for their presentation and work. He noted that a single homelessness forum was being developed, the rough sleeper strategy was being reviewed, a winter shelter was being considered and housing stock was being built up. He also pointed out that serious case reviews were led by NCC.

The Head of Housing and Wellbeing stated that there had previously been tensions between organisations, but partnerships were now stronger. Government funding had resulted in additional posts to boost the work on rough sleeping. Housing First provided a pathway to help those not able to access services by the normal route and funding had contributed to that. He also pointed out that not everyone sleeping in a tent was homeless; the situation was complex.

Councillor King reported that Navigators were available at the One Stop Shop. 16 Days of Activism in November would focus on domestic abuse. She stated that she would report back on recommendation 2.1.7 (alternative giving scheme).

Councillor Russell queried whether part of the new funding would support people with tenancies, since this would reduce vulnerability by enabling them to develop life skills and resources. The Head of Housing and Wellbeing stated that a mental health outreach worker was in post for a year and two people had been funded via NPH and NASH to provide tenancy support. This enabled support to be provided to those who would not otherwise receive it.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet noted the report and recommendations.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - IMPACT OF THE MOVE OF THE UNIVERSITY

Councillor Lane as chair of Overview and Scrutiny outlined the report and thanked Councillor Walker (chair of the Scrutiny Panel), members of the panel and Tracy Tiff for their help. The panel had been set up as a result of anti-social behaviour following the University move. The recommendations were straightforward and required NBC to write to the University.

Councillor Hadland agreed that there needed to be engagement with the University. He was unsure whether the roads mentioned in recommendation 2.1.3 were adopted highway, which could impact implementation.

Councillor King noted that the University had used a unit in Market Walk to showcase their activities.

RESOLVED

Cabinet noted the report and recommendations.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - EVALUATION OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTS

Councillor Lane as chair of Overview and Scrutiny outlined the report and noted that NBC had carried out the overview and scrutiny function well. Most recommendations had become policy, and one of the reports had been shortlisted for a good scrutiny award by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. Call ins were very rare and had been dealt with well. More detail would be provided in the annual report to Council next week. Particular thanks were expressed to Tracy Tiff for her input.

Councillor Larratt stated that the value of scrutiny was well-recognised. It worked well and delivered for the people of Northampton. It was important that there was a focus on scrutiny for the new authority. Councillor Lane asked that the report and its recommendations be shared with colleagues in other authorities.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet noted the report and recommendations.

10. FINANCE MONITORING - PERIOD 4

In the absence of Councillor Eldred, the Chief Finance Officer outlined the report and noted that the forecast overspend for the general fund revenue budget was £0.743m, which was a slight improvement from the previous figure of £0.768m. Pressure had resulted from the Government's change to DWP guidance, a reduction in the value of recycling, and higher cost of temporary accommodation. He stated that front line services would not be compromised and any underfunding would be met from reserves.

Councillor B Markham considered that the report would have been more helpful in tabular rather than narrative form. Councillor Stone agreed and also expressed concern at underspending on staff costs. The Chief Finance Officer pointed out that this was not intended to be a cost saving measure and there was active recruitment to vacant posts. Councillor Stone queried how benefits overpayments occurred. The Chief Finance Officer explained that although benefits payments were regularly reviewed, overpayments could occur, for example, if there was a delay in advising of changed circumstances. In response to a query about the HRA, the Chief Finance Officer pointed out that the funds were available so that houses could be purchased if the opportunity arose.

The Chief Finance Officer stated that there could be costs associated with changing the format of the report. The Leader advised that the options would be considered and reported back.

RESOLVED:

- 2.1 Cabinet noted the contents of the report and noted that future reports will set out the actions being taken by Corporate Management Board (CMB) to address issues arising.
- 2.2 Cabinet noted the amendments to the capital programme as set out at paragraph 3.5.1.
- 2.3 Cabinet approved the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out at **appendix 1**, and adopted the strategic principles therein.

11. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE. ALL MEASURES AND OUTTURN REPORT QUARTER 1 - 1 APRIL 2019 - 30 JUNE 2019

Councillor Larratt as the relevant Cabinet Member referred to the revised report circulated at the meeting. This showed a good outcome for the quarter in question; for example, BV012V staff

sickness had significantly improved. The red issues were continuing to be addressed.

Councillor Beardsworth noted that the report was useful. She queried whether EC09 (fly tipping) was a result of opening times at NCC's household waste recycling centres.

Councillor Beardsworth considered that more needed to be done regarding temporary accommodation (HML01). The Head of Housing and Wellbeing stated that the numbers in temporary accommodation were a concern to all. There were currently 9 households in B&B (with shared facilities) but only one with a pregnancy/child. Councillor Birch queried how many children were in temporary accommodation and whether there was any relationship between NPH evictions and those in temporary accommodation. The Head of Housing and Wellbeing confirmed that the majority of households in temporary accommodation had children and agreed to provide Councillor Birch with the numbers. Councillor Hibbert stated that there were not many formal evictions by NPH, who tried to maintain tenancies wherever possible.

Councillor Birch queried whether HMO08 (HMO licensing) was affected by resources. Councillor Larratt was not aware of this, but agreed to investigate. In respect of Councillor Birch's concerns regarding MPE01 and MPE02 (NWEZ businesses/jobs) Councillor Larratt stated that the narrative went some way towards explaining the current situation and that he would be happy to clarify any further details.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet reviewed the contents of the performance report (Appendix 1) and recommended actions to be taken to address any issues arising.

2.2 Cabinet agreed that the Annual Performance Report will be presented in June of each year to the Audit Committee.

12. UPDATE ON THE GRANT OF PROPERTY LEASES AND MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS TO NORTHAMPTON LEISURE TRUST (UNITY LEISURE)

Having declared an interest in this item, Councillor King left the room and took no part in the discussion.

Councillor Hadland as the relevant Cabinet Member stated that the current complex Management Agreement with Northampton Leisure Trust was no longer required. A report in March 2018 had suggested amendments, but termination of the agreement altogether would free Northampton Leisure Trust to carry out their work more effectively, and release NBC from monitoring responsibility.

Councillor Beardsworth was delighted that Northampton Leisure Trust had been so successful and supported the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

2.1 Cabinet approved:

a) The termination of the existing Management Agreement between the Council and Northampton Leisure (Unity Leisure) dated 31st March 2011 and attached as appendix 1 to facilitate the completion of the proposed lease arrangements with the Trust.

b) Delegated authority to the Economic Growth and Regeneration Manager, the Borough Secretary and Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Enterprise to complete the necessary leases.

c) Authorised officers to negotiate and agree terms and conditions in the said lease

arrangements to ensure as far as possible the continuing provision of the requisite leisure services to the public in the three leisure centres now being managed and controlled by the Trust, but which do not fall foul of the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

d) Noted that by moving to lease arrangements, that will involve the Council losing substantial control over the delivery of leisure facilities in Northampton.

e) Further reports to future meetings of the Cabinet on any issue arising which the officers concerned consider need further discussion and decision by Cabinet before completion of the new lease arrangements.

f) To seek any further external legal advice deemed necessary to conclude the transaction.

13. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Chair moved that the public and Press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that there was likely to be disclosure to them of such categories of exempt information as defined by Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 as listed against such items of business by reference to the appropriate paragraph of Schedule 12A to such Act.

The Motion was Carried.

14. INVESTMENT ACQUISITION OPPORTUNITY

This item was heard in private.

The meeting concluded at 7.10 pm