

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON MONDAY 7 DECEMBER 2009 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Beardsworth, Capstick, Caswell, S. Chaudhury, I. Choudary, Church, Clarke, Collins, J. Conroy, R. Conroy, Crake, Davies, Edwards, Garlick, Glynane, Golby, Hawkins, B. Hoare, M. Hoare, Hollis, C. Lill, J. Lill, Malpas, B. Markham, I. Markham, Mason, Matthews, Meredith, Mildren, Palethorpe, Perkins, Reeve, Scott, Simpson, Taylor, P. D. Varnsvery, P. M. Varnsvery, Wilson, Woods and Yates

The Mayor announced the recent death of Ron Linsdell, a former Mayor. The Council stood for a minute's silence. Councillors paid tribute to Ron's service as a Councillor and Mayor.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (1) Councillors Church and Woods declared personal and prejudicial interests in respect of item 12(iii) "Notice of Motion" in respect of WNDC as Board members of that organisation.
- (2) Councillor Garlick declared a personal but non prejudicial interest in item 13 "Matters of Urgency" in respect of Weston Favell School as a Governor of that body.
- (3) Councillors Edwards and Hawkins declared personal but non prejudicial interests in respect of item 12(iii) "Notices of Motion" in respect of WNDC as members of that organisation's Planning Committee.
- (4) Councillors Church and Woods declared personal but non prejudicial interests in respect of item 7 "Portfolio Holder Presentations" insofar as the discussion referred to the WNDC's agreement to fund the Market Square Lighting Scheme as Board members of that organisation.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 26 October 2009 were signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors De Cruz, Duncan, Hadland and Larratt.

The Mayor welcomed Councillor M Hoare to the Council meeting following a

prolonged period of illness.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor reported that the Council had received a Customer Service Excellence Award for all its Customer Services and IT. The main strengths that had been highlighted were staff showing real passion for what they do and pride in delivering customer focussed services. Full compliance was achieved in every area of the standard. Whilst the award was granted to Customer Services and ICT it reflected the hard work and customer focus of the whole of the Council.

The Mayor noted that the Gala Dinner had raised £1500 towards the Mayor's Charity.

The Mayor stated that the Mayoress had secured a £10,000 award from the Barclaycard Community Fund towards his Guide Dogs for the Disabled charity. This would allow for one dog to be fully trained.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Sheron Watson commented that residents were opposed to the social housing being planned on the former garage site. She referred to car parking problems in the area that would be exacerbated by the loss of the garage space as well as the rights of access that it gave. She requested that restoration of the area as a garaging site be considered. Sheron Watson handed the Mayor a petition. The Mayor indicated the petition would be handed to the appropriate Director and Portfolio Holder for response.

Norman Adams asked what NBC stood for. Was it Northampton Borough Council or Northampton Bingo Club? He commented that tenants representatives had been invited to agree to an arrangement by letter or not be further involved with the Council. There would not be an elected tenants representative body. He understood that names would be put in a hat and picked out randomly. He referred to an item later on the agenda in respect of committee allocations and the fact that the Chief Executive appeared to be becoming a bingo caller.

Mr Swinn noted the number of people now registered on the Housing waiting list as 7,048. He commented that this was an increase of 3,100 in 12 months or 70%. He noted the two schemes for building social housing and the Government guidance How Councils Can Build the Houses We Need. He noted that both bids were in the region of £450,000 each.

Mr Baker commented that the Council should be congratulated for the joint work undertaken to improve Council housing which would not have happened in years gone by. He also congratulated the Council upon its floral displays.

Mr Grethe stated that he believed that a review of the Council's Constitution was taking place. He felt that the current arrangements were too restrictive and that more time for public contributions should be allowed at Cabinet and Council. He hoped that the Working Party would take on board his views.

Mr Mallard in representing the Eastfield Residents Association expressed concern that their local Councillor had not been allowed to address Cabinet on 25 November 2009 in respect of the items referring to Overview and Scrutiny. He commented that the Residents Association had sent letters to the Borough Solicitor, Leader of the Council, Councillor P D Varnsberry and the Chronicle and Echo. In referring to other issues he commented that it appeared that the Independent Councillors were being kept from important issues and Committees.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 108 questions had been received from members of the public and Councillors. The questions and responses had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution.

Councillor Clarke commented that the questions from the Independent Group members had been submitted some seven days previously which he believed gave adequate time for responses to be made available to the Council. It appeared that Cabinet had been advised by the Chief Executive and Directors that to answer all the questions would distract from the work of the Council. However the advice given to his group by the Chief Executive had been that it was for the Portfolio Holders and Chairs to respond to questions. It was not reasonable to say that officers would be involved in composing responses.

Councillor B Hoare apologised for copies not being available to all Councillors at the commencement of the meeting. He noted that Portfolio Holders were perfectly entitled to decline to answer questions. He reported that an offer had been made to the Independent Group Councillors to nominate three questions each but they had declined to do so. Questions that asked for detailed analysis couldn't be answered by Portfolio Holders without the assistance of officers.

Mr Adams asked, Councillor Beardsworth as the relevant Portfolio Holder, "the recent report (November 5 2009) by the National Institute for the Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) highlights work/stress. Could the Portfolio Holder for Housing confirm that stress is being monitored across the areas covered by her? Could she give the hours lost (to stress) according to Sheltered Housing Wardens (Co-ordinators) in each of the following months this year – January to October 2009. Councillor Beardsworth stated that she could confirm that processes were in place to ensure that the Council monitored all absences related to stress as with all absences. The total hours lost to stress related staff absence within Sheltered Housing equated to 1,495.24 hours (202.5 days) during the period January 2009 to October 2009.

Norman Adams asked Councillor Beardsworth as the relevant Portfolio Holder, "In the period from March 2008 to August 2009 one block of flats in Camborne Close (Delapre) has had repairs to its door(s) on 20 occasions. Was this an exception or was it common across the Borough? Would the Portfolio Holder please give the full cost of repairs to communal doors and locks for the period in question Borough-wide?" Councillor Beardsworth commented that in the period between 1 March

2008 and 1 August 2009 Property Maintenance spent in the region of £145,337 on approximately 2,100 communal door and lock related repairs. Total spend was produced using the national Housing Federation Official Schedules and includes repairs to bin stores, meter cupboard doors, gates, entrance doors and access controlled equipment. Norman Adams asked a supplementary question and commented that he was aware that at Camborne Close on the 20 occasions referred to, repairs had not been dealt with at once. This allowed access to the building by anyone including youths. He noted that most of the ground floor was given over to sheltered housing. He queried whether the Portfolio Holder was aware of a fire in a block of flats one street away and had the lock been working at the time? Councillor Beardsworth replied that it was not possible for her to be aware of these particular circumstances but that a report on the fire might shed some light on this.

Mr McNab asked Councillor Beardsworth as the relevant Portfolio Holder “as NBC now use its selected Tenant Auditors (as shown by the letter to tenants dated 6 November) to visit Council homes could she confirm that CRB checks had been undertaken?” Councillor Beardsworth commented that CRB checks had not been undertaken as Tenant Auditors were not left unaccompanied in any circumstances that required a CRB check. Mr McNab enquired as to what schemes had been visited by Tenant Auditors. Councillor Beardsworth undertook to write to Mr McNab with this information.

Mr Swinn asked Councillor Beardsworth as the relevant Portfolio Holder “How many private dwellings were empty for more than six months on 30 November 2009?” Councillor Beardsworth commented that this was an annual Best Value Performance Indicator which required complex research and was reported annually on 31 March at the end of each financial year. Accordingly, she was unable to advise Mr Swinn at this time. Mr Swinn commented that he was surprised that private dwellings were not monitored monthly and he enquired how many empty dwellings management orders had been issued for 2008/09. Councillor Beardsworth commented that the Council was working with the private sector and had found homes for 240 people this way. She indicated that she would write to Mr Swinn with the information that he sought.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor Perkins as the relevant Portfolio Holder “What was the annual subscription fee paid to the LGA by NBC?” Councillor Perkins indicated that the LGA subscription next year would be £12,850 a reduction of approximately £635.72.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor Hoare as the relevant Portfolio Holder “whether he considered that the previous Leader of the Council was a suitable person to chair the Audit Committee given that the decisions he was auditing were those that he was responsible for as Leader of the Council?” Councillor B Hoare commented that Councillor Clarke was mistaken as to the respective roles of Overview and Scrutiny and the Council’s Audit Committee and referred Councillor Clarke to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Guidance on the Role of Local Government Audit Committees. As clarification to a further query from Councillor Clarke, Councillor B Hoare indicated that the Audit Committee did not oversee

financial decisions but that the proper financial processes were in place. The checks and balances were provided by Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillor Clarke asked a question of Councillor Crake as the relevant Portfolio Holder whether there was a role for “traditional” small one person enterprises using horsepower or handcart to take part in the Borough’s various recycling schemes. Councillor Crake commented that she had not given consideration to the situation Councillor Clarke described. She was open to looking at any proposals that would deliver a better public service to the hardworking taxpayers of Northampton within the Council’s resources. Councillor Clarke as a supplementary question commented that rag and bone men still toured around Castle and St Crispin wards and often passed Westbridge Depot. He commented that they could collect recycling material and drop it off at the depot thereby helping to keep streets clean. Councillor Crake undertook to further investigate this and respond to Councillor Clarke.

Councillor Hawkins asked a question of Councillor P D Varnsberry as the appropriate Portfolio Holder in respect of the continuation of the Neighbourhood Management Strategy and whether there was a clear understanding of the basis for partnership funding from the NCC. She noted the response as tabled.

Councillor Hawkins asked Councillor Church as the relevant Portfolio Holder what measures the Council had taken to protect historic shoe making buildings from further risk of demolition so that aspect of the town’s important history would not disappear from the urban landscape. Councillor Hawkins noted the response as tabled and asked Councillor Church about progress towards creating a boot and shoe conservation area. Councillor Church noted that work on this had commenced due to the risk to the buildings concerned in 2008. He noted that officers were aware of the need to conserve buildings where possible and consideration was being given to the creation of a boot and shoe conservation area over the next year.

Councillor Hawkins asked Councillor Crake as the relevant Portfolio Holder whether the Council had any plans to follow Labour controlled Leicester City Council in fitting GPS positioning systems to its fleet of lawnmowers. Councillor Crake indicated that the Council did not have any such plans but would be prepared to look at any proposal that would deliver a better service to the taxpayers of Northampton within the Council’s resources.

Councillor Mildren asked Councillor Perkins as the relevant Portfolio Holder a question in respect of the bi-annual performance indicator NI179 which forecasted that the Council’s Value for Money for 2009/10 would be £1.04m compared with a reported outturn for 2008/09 of £5.35m. Would the Portfolio Holder indicate how this figure had been calculated and reasons for the decrease of £4m. Councillor Mildren noted the response as tabled. Councillor Perkins commented that some years included two sets of figures and other years a single set depending on how the reporting periods fell. He agreed that this was confusing.

Councillor Mildren asked Councillor B Hoare as the relevant Portfolio Holder a question in respect of listing all the disclosures relating to the last 12 months worth

of freedom of information requests by Northampton Borough Council giving the type of information requested, what had been disclosed and if information had been refused the reasons why. Councillor Mildren noted the response as tabled.

Councillor Mildren asked Councillor Beardsworth as the appropriate Portfolio Holder to confirm reports that on Thursday 26 November there were only three Sheltered Housing Wardens on duty owing to a briefing of all Housing staff. Could she confirm details of the arrangements that were made to ensure that of those 2100 residents in Sheltered Housing who were scheduled to be visited on that day were accommodated. Councillor Mildren noted the response as tabled.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor B Hoare as the relevant Portfolio Holder “would the Leader agree to the contract between Legal and General and this Council being submitted for scrutiny (as private business if necessary) to ensure the Council’s decision is robust? If not why not?”

Councillor B Hoare declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor B Hoare as the relevant Portfolio Holder “If agreement is given to close Bridge Street on a temporary basis on Friday and Saturday nights will a similar order be raised to open up the top end of the Drapery to traffic be sought for the same time? If not how will vehicles entering the Drapery from Gold Street leave the Town Centre.”

Councillor B Hoare declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor P D Varnsvery as the relevant Portfolio Holder “Can the Portfolio Holder explain what assistance this Council has given to groups wishing to set up credit unions in the last year?”

Councillor P D Varnsvery declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor B Markham as the relevant Portfolio Holder “How many members of the Council’s staff have been affected by verbal or physical violence in the last 5 years? In what locations did these events occur and what level of support has been given to those employees?”

Councillor B Markham declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor Perkins as the relevant Portfolio Holder “What professional fees, eg SOLACE etc, does NBC pay on behalf of its staff and what has been the annual cost of such over the last three years?”

Councillor Perkins declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor B Markham as the relevant Portfolio Holder “What is the total cost of maintaining the Council’s web site?”

Councillor B Markham declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor B Markham as the relevant Portfolio Holder “Why does the Council not have joint member/trade union liaison committee?”

Councillor B Markham declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor B Markham as the relevant Portfolio Holder “Re overview and scrutiny work of the Council: Is the leader satisfied that officers are acting on Member requests, so that reports intended for Cabinet should appear at meeting of Scrutiny committees for pre scrutiny before the items are dealt with by the Cabinet?”

Councillor B Hoare declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor Perkins as the relevant Portfolio Holder “Would the Portfolio Holder list in table format the following information of each of the past four financial years for each Council directorate:

- i. the estimated pension costs of staff employed;
- ii. the percentage this represents of the directorate’s running costs?

Would the Portfolio Holder list in table format the following information of each of the past four financial years;

- i. the number of employees for whom the Council has to make pension provision;
- ii. the number of pensioners;
- iii. the estimated pension liability of those currently employed;
- iv. the annual cost of pension provision to those retired;
- v. the percentage of total council expenditure spent on pension provision;
- vi. the average annual pension for an employee who retired during the last financial year?”

Councillor Perkins declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor Perkins as the relevant Portfolio Holder “Given the naming in 2008 of at least a hundred companies in the Office of Fair Trading’s “bid-rigging” inquiry, does the Portfolio Holder know of any company who the Council has a link with that was named – firstly those in the group of companies who have admitted breaking the rules and secondly of the others named but have so far not admitted any responsibility? Given this, will the Portfolio Holder quickly investigate and then look to take legal action against such companies that have caused Northampton Borough Council to pay more than was fair or expected for contracts? Will the Portfolio Holder act to change the rules on how the Council procures contracts given the recent findings, perhaps including clauses to cover exposure of this type of wrong-doing and suitable compensation payments to Northampton Borough Council from such colluding contractors?”

Councillor Perkins declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor Perkins as the relevant Portfolio Holder "How many public clocks are there in the Borough, how many are working and not working? and what is the total cost to the Council?"

Councillor Perkins declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor P D Varnsvery as the relevant Portfolio Holder "Will the Portfolio Holder set out in table format the running costs of the "one stop shop" in each year since 2007?"

Councillor P D Varnsvery declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor B Hoare as the relevant Portfolio Holder "Will the Leader of the Council comment on how the Guildhall may be made more welcoming to visitors who use the main staircase entrance into the building? In view of the total dearth of signage and welcoming reception desk, what could be provided at minimal cost to indicate that this is an open and democratic Council?"

Councillor B Hoare declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor B Hoare as the relevant Portfolio Holder "What steps will be taken to ensure that all voters are made aware of the recommendations being made by the Council working party to the Electoral Boundary Commissioners?"

Councillor B Hoare declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor B Hoare as the relevant Portfolio Holder "Would the Leader agree that the proposed reduction of OVSC committees will lead to a weakening of the Authority's ability to fulfil its statutory duty in view of the amount of Council business required to promote this Council in its journey towards 4* status."

Councillor B Hoare declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor B Hoare as the relevant Portfolio Holder "What tangible benefits accrue to NBC for their membership of the LGA and can the Leader give examples of where VFM and best practice has been achieved as a direct result of such membership taking into account the opportunity cost of attendance at conferences."

Councillor B Hoare declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor Crake as the relevant Portfolio Holder "Can the Portfolio Holder confirm the number and location of all the public waste bins in Northampton, the collection rotas for each, and the plans for the future of such waste bins?"

Councillor Crake declined to answer.

Councillor Clarke asked Councillor Crake as the relevant Portfolio Holder “Are flood mitigation plans adequate to protect the Borough’s IT services in the event of this service being moved to Westbridge?”

Councillor Crake declined to answer.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

At this point each of the Cabinet members made a presentation on their respective Portfolios which had been circulated with the agenda.

Councillor B Hoare presented his Portfolio Holder report. Councillor Clarke noted that he and his colleagues had declined to answer a number of questions and he compared this with the statement in his report to be open and honest with Elected Members and for Councillors to hold the Cabinet and himself to account in a robust and forthright way. Councillor Clarke commented that the words on paper were contradicted by the actions in Council. Councillor B Hoare commented that he and his Cabinet colleagues were perfectly entitled to decline to answer questions and he was more concerned about putting resources into improving the Council and developing the good work already done by Councillors and officers. He noted that in any case, more questions had been asked on this occasion than at any other question time. Councillor Malpas commented that he was aware that a consultant had been engaged to give the Council advice on accommodation needs in order to accommodate those staff moving out of Cliftonville House. He queried whether this expertise already lay within the Council. Councillor B Hoare commented that he could neither confirm or deny this but the Chief Executive may have engaged specialist help to make the best possible use of the space that was available. Councillor Mildren asked Councillor B Hoare what the word “Northamptonian” meant to him. Councillor B Hoare indicated that a “Northamptonian” could either be someone who had been born and bred in Northampton or someone who had the best interests of the town at heart.

Councillor Beardsworth as the Portfolio Holder for Housing submitted her report.

Councillor P D Varnserry as the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement submitted his report. Councillor Golby commented that this year’s Christmas lights combined with the German market looked good. However, he commented that the “Merry Christmas” lights at the bottom of Bridge Street were not working properly. Councillor P D Varnserry commented that the fault had been discovered the previous Tuesday, examined on Friday and new parts were due to be fitted, probably on 11 December 2009. Councillor Meredith congratulated the officers for how well the town centre and market square was looking. Councillor Clarke enquired that whilst Bridge Street was closed would the prohibition to traffic at the top of the Drapery be lifted so as to allow traffic from Mercers Row and George Row to be able to exit the town centre? Councillor P D Varnserry noted that the traffic arrangements had been well advertised but that traffic could exit via the top of the Drapery. Councillor Mildren queried whether the welcome signs should say “welcome to everybody” rather than “Welcome Northampton”. Councillor P D Varnserry noted that all were welcome in Northampton.

Councillor Church as Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration submitted his report and commented that WNDC had agreed, the previous week, to fund the market square lighting scheme. He noted that a public consultation exercise on the scheme would be held in the Guildhall from the following week. He reported that the Council had received a £52,000 Government grant to bring back into use currently empty shop units. Councillor Clarke asked whether the Portfolio Holder would be prepared to allow Overview & Scrutiny to scrutinise the agreement with Legal and General in respect of the Grosvenor redevelopment albeit in private. Councillor Church indicated that it was up to Overview and Scrutiny to decide what it wanted to examine. Councillor Golby welcomed the Joint Core Strategy and Central Area Action Plan and in the case of the latter queried whether members would be able to see the plan following the consultation exercise. Councillor Church indicated that the Central Area Action Plan would be submitted to Cabinet and that further work on transport implications needed to be undertaken. He noted that there would be a further round of public consultation when the plan was submitted to the Secretary of State. Councillor Mildren commented that it was a stated policy of the Council to support existing businesses in the town centre and as the Grosvenor redevelopment was a long term project and he queried how this policy would be reviewed if the situation with Legal and General were to change. Councillor Church commented that there had been much misinformation floated that the Grosvenor development would take 20-30 years to complete. It would not take that long and changing trends in retail would be taken into account. It was important to consider the effect of out of town shopping on the town centre now. This was a widespread policy that was adopted nationally. Councillor Palethorpe noted the good news of the funding to bring into use currently empty shops and suggested that the University be canvassed for ideas from its schools of Fashion and Art and Design. Councillor Glynane commented that at least three shops that were being currently renovated in the town centre and Councillor Church noted that although these were welcome other empty units needed new retailers as soon as practicable. Councillor Edwards queried to whether he was aware that the residents of St James would like a supermarket in their area. Councillor Church commented that no planning application had been submitted at present and as a member of the Planning Committee he was not in a position to comment if one had been.

Councillor B Markham, as the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Support submitted his Portfolio Holder report. Councillor Hawkins in noting the funding for improvements to the One Stop Shop commented that signage within the Victorian Guildhall was not clear and whether this could be included. Councillor B Markham noted that one of the plans put forward was to re-introduce the use of the main entrance in the Courtyard and that signage was included in the project.

Councillor Crake as the Portfolio Holder for Environment submitted her Portfolio Holder report. Councillor Malpas referred to an e-mail he had received about Community Cleanups and the need in the future for an estimate of the tonnage of refuse to be collected to be made and an indication of the ownership of the land in question as those organising the Community Cleanup would need to contact each department separately to arrange for rubbish to be removed. He commented that this was unlikely to help public involvement in community cleanups. Councillor

Crake commented that this was not anything to do with Community Cleanups but related to the Community PayBack Scheme where the Probation Service had not previously consulted on where they were removing rubbish from. Councillor Clarke noted that residents in Castle Ward had been told by Westbridge Depot that the Council would not accept rubbish collected by the Probation Service. Councillor Davies also referred to the same issue in respect of Ecton Brook Ward and added that rubbish couldn't be left on the streets. Councillor Crake asked for details of particular incidents. Councillor Mason referred to a similar situation in Lumbertubs Ward. Councillor Meredith commented that in respect of Fox Covert Wood a Council van had removed 1½ tonnes of rubbish that had been collected through Community PayBack. Councillor Yates referred to the free car parking provision set out in Portfolio Holder's report and congratulated her upon it.

Councillor Perkins as the Portfolio Holder for Finance submitted his Portfolio Holder report. Councillor Mildren thanked the Portfolio Holder for the imminent move and opening of Shopmobility to the Mayorhold car park. The Mayor noted that he was due to open the new facility on 16 December 2009. Councillor Clarke commented in respect of the proposals to examine the Council's assets and noted that currently it was not a seller's market. Councillor Perkins concurred and commented that at present the intention was just to make investigation of the assets that the Council held. Councillor Palethorpe asked the Portfolio Holder if he could indicate the amount of income that had been received from new businesses opening in Northampton over the last year. Councillor Perkins undertook to write to Councillor Palethorpe with the details.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Palethorpe indicated that he was speaking on behalf of the Environmental Services functions of the Council. He noted that over the last three years the Council's budget had been cut by £20m and much of this had come from Environmental Services. He believed that Environmental Services had been cut to the bone and it was important to maintain what was left. He was aware that this year there was again a need for the Council to make savings as far as possible to maintain services. He believed it was important that funding was not further reduced to Environmental Services so they could continue to deliver services. He noted that the health of the organisation was dependent upon the health of staff, in this case many of whom worked outside. He urged the Administration to protect Environmental Services; they were a visual representation of what the Council provided for people.

Councillor B Hoare commented that a balanced budget needed to be brought to Cabinet on 16 December and consideration would have to be given to competing priorities. The Cabinet would have to make choices. He could not tell Council today that Environmental Services would not be asked to make savings once again. He was pleased with improvements that they had already made and the Council had made significant commitments in respect of carbon management. Cabinet's proposals made on 16 December would then be consulted upon publicly and a final decision would be made in February 2010.

Councillor Palethorpe thanked the Leader for his comments and appreciated the difficulties that Cabinet found itself in. He noted that if collections of waste to the public were cut this would just lead to increased journeys to waste collection centres as people took rubbish to them. This in itself would not be good for the environment. He reiterated that as far as possible Environmental Services should be protected at its current level.

9. PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR MONITORING REPORT

Councillor Perkins submitted a report. Councillor B Hoare seconded its adoption.

RESOLVED: That the revisions to the Council's prudential indicators for 2009-10, as set below be approved:

(a) Estimate of capital expenditure

	2009-10
Estimates of Capital Expenditure 2009-10	Estimate as at 30 September 2009
	£000
General Fund (Non HRA)	11,494
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	14,736
Total	26,230

(b) Estimate of capital financing requirement (CFR)

Capital Financing Requirement (Closing CFR)		
		2009-10
		31 March 2010 Estimate £000
General Fund (Non HRA)		26,205
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)		(6,675)
Total		19,530

10.ALLOCATION OF COMMITTEE PLACES

Councillor B Hoare submitted a report. Councillor P D Varnsberry seconded

adoption of the resolution. Councillor Clarke reiterated the concerns he had expressed at the last meeting of Council and commented that his Group had asked for places on each of the three Overview & Scrutiny Committees. He was unhappy that it was proposed that individual places would be determined by a draw from a hat. He stated that if this was followed through his members would not attend the Committees that they had been allocated to.

RESOLVED: That if within three weeks of 7 December 2009 the Independent Group have not named their members to the Committee places agreed by Council at the meeting of 26 October 2009, the Chief Executive be delegated to conduct the drawing by lot of the names of members of the Independent group against those Committee places already agreed, and to allocate those places to the drawn named members.

11.CONSTITUTION WORKING PARTY- COMPOSITION

Councillor B Hoare submitted a report. Councillor Perkins seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED: That the Constitution Working Party comprise two members each from the Liberal Democrat and Conservative Groups and one each from the Labour and Independent Groups.

12.NOTICES OF MOTION

(i) Councillor Simpson moved and Councillor Collins seconded:

“That this Council applauds the launch of the 10:10 campaign which encourages organisations across the public, private and third sectors to cut their carbon emissions by 10% in 2010.

This Council considers it vital that Local Government demonstrates robust political leadership in responding to the climate crisis and that the United Kingdom does more to reduce its carbon emissions and develop the green technologies needed to generate economic growth in years ahead.

This Council further considers important for the Borough of Northampton to lead by example in reducing its carbon emissions and to strive to be a regional leader on environmental issues.

This Council notes with great regret that last month’s floods across the north west of England and recognises the link between extraordinary weather patterns and man made climate change.

This Council resolves to sign the 10:10 campaign, in accordance with other Liberal Democrat run authorities, setting its base line for emissions at 31 December 2009.”

Mr Swinn asked what trust and confidence people could have in Councillors, given two motions that had been approved in 2005 in respect of the suspension of customer panel and establishment of a new tenant participation mechanism.

Nothing had taken place since. In respect of this motion there needed to be a national education programme for people generally.

The Council debated the motion.

The motion was carried.

(ii) Councillor B Hoare moved and Councillor P D Varnsvery seconded

“That this Council notes the United Kingdom’s unprecedented peace time fiscal position. Specifically:

- (1) That the Government borrow £89,4000,000,000 this year to meet its Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR2007) Targets.
- (2) That this year’s extra borrowing will stretch the national debt beyond £200,000,000,000,000 a figure greater than any forecast by HM Treasury.
- (3) That respected national and international bodies, including the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have warned against maintaining public spending at the historic rates seen since 2001.

This Council further notes:

- (1) That CSR 2007 expires on 31 March 2011.
- (2) That the Labour Government has not published spending plans beyond this date.

This Council recognises the crossroads at which Local Government finds itself and accepts that future Governments will seek real terms reductions in spending across many services currently run by local authorities. This Council resolves to:

- (1) Continue its programme of reform to protect as many front line services as possible.
- (2) Seek more substantive partnership arrangements with neighbouring public sector bodies to minimise back room costs.
- (3) Engage Northamptonians in an open and honest dialogue about the extent of change required to maintain existing front line services.
- (4) Lobby Northampton sitting Members of Parliament, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to push for reform of the discredited Council Tax to ensure that Northamptonians enjoy the fully funded, local delivered services they deserve.

Mr Adams on behalf of Northampton Save Our Services stated the motion was indicated that cuts were needed and were needed now. He commented that cutting public services in a recession would lead to greater problems. People were being told that the public sector needed to pay for the consequences of the actions of bankers. He noted that over the last three months the debate seemed to have moved from how to reduce public deficit to an acceptance of cuts in public services. It was important for Local Government to fight for jobs and public ownership.

Mr Swinn commented that the country did not want or need to go back to the situation after the Second World War. He believed that much would depend on

what the next Government after the General Election did. He believed that front line services would be reduced because of the way Local Government was financed. He noted that in a recession local authorities lost income and that Councils would be better off if a local income tax were in place. He also referred to what he believed was an absurd situation in respect of concessionary fares where Councils were unable to reclaim the full costs of implementing this Government scheme.

Mr Green on behalf of Northampton Save Our Services commented that they were opposed to cuts in public services and health. He believed that the motion before Council supported massive cuts into the future. These cuts were there to protect bankers in the private sector. He believed that the current economic model supported by the three main political parties had failed and referred to a local example of the PFI schools. He noted that the public were increasingly aware that whilst bankers had been bailed out bonuses were still proposed to be paid to them. He believed that there was a lack of political resolution to resist this situation.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote:

There voted for the motion: Councillors Beardsworth, S Chaudhury, Church, Collins, R Conroy, Crake, Garlick, Glynane, B Hoare, Hollis, B Markham, I Markham, Matthews, Meredith, Perkins, Simpson, Taylor, P M Varnserry, P D Varnserry, Woods and Yates.

There voted against the motion: Councillors Caswell, I Choudary, Clarke, Davies, Edwards, Golby, Hawkins, C Lill, J Lill, Malpas, Mason, Mildren, Palethorpe, Reeve and Scott.

There abstained: The Mayor.

The motion was carried.

(iii) Councillor Palethorpe moved and Councillor J Lill seconded:

“That this Council believes that planning decisions affecting the town should be subject to proper democratic scrutiny, and should therefore be made by Elected Members of this authority. This Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State requesting that WNDC be disbanded and that planning powers be returned to the relevant Councils as soon as is practicable.”

Chris Swinn commented that he supported the motion and believed that in the hands of a Conservative government the WNDC would be disbanded however there was a question of what they might replace it with.

Council debated the motion.

The motion was carried.

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

The Mayor was of the opinion that the following item be discussed as a Matter of Urgency due to the undue delay if consideration of it were deferred:-

WESTON FAVELL SCHOOL.

Councillor Palethorpe moved and Councillor Simpson seconded

“Northampton Borough Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Leader of Northamptonshire County Council expressing this Council’s opposition to the proposal of designating Weston Favell School to Academy status. Northampton Borough Council supports the views of the students, parents, governing body and staff of Weston Favell school in realising the ambition to become an excellent education and community school”.

Council debated the motion.

The motion was carried.

The meeting concluded at 22.30 hours