

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 3 - NORTHAMPTON POST UNITARY

Thursday, 7 February 2019

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Brian Sargeant (Chair), Councillor Paul Joyce (Deputy Chair); Councillors Jamie Lane and Danielle Stone

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Lee Mason

Witnesses Morcea Walker
Francis Fernandes, NBC
Father Oliver Coss, All Saints Church

Officer Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

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 29 November 2018 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Francis Fernandes, Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer, addressed the Scrutiny Panel. He provided the following information:

As detailed in the book "The Borough of Northampton, its Guildhall and Civic Traditions" written by RJ Morris:

"There is no longer a Mayor's Serjeant (a position held until his final retirement in 2006 by Alan Hughes, who was robed on formal occasions.) The Mace is now carried by the person who is also the Mayor's Chauffeur."

The role of Mayor's Serjeant exists in other Local Authorities.

Civic and Mayoralty Officer

The Post is has been recently filled.

Key roles include:

- To manage and coordinate all Civic/Mayoral functions and related activities on behalf of the Borough Council and co-ordinate such events with the County Council
- To help to provide a high quality administrative, secretarial and appropriate support to enable the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and their escorts to perform their civic duties, and to ensure that the Council's other civic and twinning activities are delivered successfully
- To act as Advisor and Personal Assistant to the Mayor

Mayor's Chauffeur

The Post is covered by two individuals. The key role is to be the Mayor's Chauffeur taking him to Civic/Mayoral functions and full Council. To maintain the upkeep of the Mayoral car to include re-fuelling and servicing and ensure all related documentation is up to date.

To act as Macebearer as appropriate, which entails wearing a ceremonial outfit and carrying the Mayor's Mace.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- The Role of Mayor's Serjeant was to protect the Mayor; carried the mace; the mace is the sign of the authority of the Mayor. A number of Councils keep the tradition of Mayor's Serjeant.
- The previous Mayor's Serjeant retired and was not replaced. The Scrutiny Panel suggested that there be an Honorary Mayor's Serjeant, possibly an Alderman or former Councillor. There would be no cost to such an Honorary post. A potential recommendation of the final report was suggest that a Major's Serjeant and Town Serjeant as an Honorary role, possibly Alderman or former Councillor is investigated.

Francis Fernandes was thanked for his address, the contents of which will inform the evidence base of this scrutiny review.

6. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) ALL SAINTS CHURCH

Father Oliver Coss, All Saints Church, addressed the Scrutiny Panel highlighting the salient points of his written address.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- There is a need for a medium with a high level of search capacity for individuals to use when searching for events.
- NBC website has events page where people and organisations can log in about

- Remembrance Sunday had biggest crowd ever seen this year and the event had been promoted by “word of mouth”.
- There is a need to promote Oak Apple Day.
- There is a need for further promotion of civic events.
- In response to a query, the Panel heard that to lay a wreath one has to register with the Mayor’s office.
- A number of stakeholders are involved in planning for Remembrance Sunday; it is lead by the Royal British Legion
- The Scrutiny Panel suggested a potential recommendation of its final report that the flags in Abington Square are reinstalled.
- In discussing Anzac Day, it was noted that attendees wear rosemary instead of poppies
- The Mayor is invited to Edgar Mobbs Day
- The Scrutiny Panel suggested a potential recommendation of its final report that All Saints is recognised as the Borough Church for the Borough of Northampton
- All Saints Church has very close relationship with the Borough and the County which needs to be acknowledged. A further potential recommendation of the final report was suggested that it is investigated whether free or dispensation parking can be offered for those attending church services in the town; especially on a Sunday

Father Coss was thanked for his informative response, the contents of which will inform the evidence base of this scrutiny review.

(B) SIR THOMAS WHITE CHARITY

A response was not received from Sir Thomas White Charity. Contact would be made with Councillor Tim Hadland to attend the next meeting.

(C) CHAIR, NIFF

The Chair of NIFF was unwell and would attend the next meeting.

(D) TOWN CLERK, SUTTON COLDFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

The Chair advised that he had spoken in length to the Town Clerk, Sutton Coldfield Town Council and she had explained how the Town Council operated. Their Mayor has just two events each year – Mayor Making and Remembrance Sunday.

The information provided would inform the evidence base of this scrutiny review.

The meeting concluded at 7:40 pm