

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 10 September 2018 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Ashraf, Aziz, Bottwood, Cali, Caswell, Choudary, Chunga, Davenport, Duffy, Golby, Graystone, Hadland, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, Joyce, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, B Markham, M Markham, Marriott, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Sargeant, Smith and Stone

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ashraf declared a personal non-pecuniary interest as a Northampton Partnership Homes board member.

Councillor Hibbert declared a personal non-pecuniary interest as a member of Northampton Rail Users Group.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 9th July 2018 were agreed.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillors Birch, Beardsworth, G Eales, T Eales, Eldred, Flavell, McCutcheon, Kilby-Shaw and Walker.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that he had recently held a cheese and wine event at the Guildhall where there had been a tour of the building included. He announced that a civic reception had been held for the participants in the 'Ride for Hope' event on the 9th September 2018 in the Mayor's Parlour.

The Mayor further announced that he had visited the Hope Centre and had seen art work that had been submitted by service users and noted that a calendar of various paintings would be selected and produced for the Mayor's Calendar which he anticipated would be ready in October 2018. He announced that a 'curry night' had been arranged for Friday 14th September 2018 at Bipinbrooke and thanked Councillor Patel for assisting in the organisation. Lastly, the Mayor congratulated Councillor Cali on her recent wedding.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Ken Warren addressed Council and explained that as a resident of sheltered housing complex in Northampton promoting independent living and noted that he had concerns about the proximity of trees in Blackmore Park to his property. He asked

that there be better management of the tress and appealed for Councillors to visit the site to witness the tree branches encroaching onto his property. He further commented that he considered the branches to be a significant fire risk due to the proximity to the building.

Mr David Huffadine-Smith referred to the report 'Update from the Cross Party Working Group – Community Governance Review' and commented that he was pleased with the report and recommendations and noted that it was a positive start. He commented that there was a need for the review to be extended to parished areas and explained that the boundaries were not set in stone and consideration could be given to moving them. He further questioned whether the term 'Parish Council' was out of date and there was little affiliation with the Church and suggested that they be referred to as Neighbourhood Councils and noted positive steps towards increasing and improving community cohesion.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that 11 questions had been received from Councillors and members of the public and that the answers had been tabled in accordance with the Constitution.

Question and answers were given as tabled (included in an updated agenda on the Council's website) unless where stated, supplementary question were asked as detailed below.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 2, Councillor Nunn in the absence of Councillor Eldred, advised that he would meet with Councillor Stone to discuss assisting care leavers with Council Tax.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 5, Councillor Hallam explained that it was currently not possible for him to resolve the blocked drains issue as it was not within his jurisdiction and was the responsibility of Northamptonshire County Council.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 6, Councillor Hallam stated that he would continue to work with the Police, despite their reluctance to use their powers and commented that the Council would continue to look at ways to reduce access to areas.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question 7, Councillor King informed Councillor Stone that each individual Member could access crime statistics in their specific areas through the police website.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn, as the Leader of the Council, elaborated on his report and explained that there was a need to progress with the future Unitary Councils expediently and noted the establishment of the Improvement Board. The Leader explained that there was a need to maintain a commitment to the provision of services. He noted that he had yet to receive any updates from the Labour Group with proposed traveller transit

sites.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Nunn explained that there were costs associated with the Improvement Board but that it was a necessity for there to be joined up and cohesive working. He further responded to questions posed, informing Members that he had spent time with the flood inspectors and that he would continue to inform Councillors of any relevant updates.

Councillor Larratt, elaborated on his Cabinet Member report and updated Members by informing them that additional training had been arranged for members of the Licensing Committee to attend on the 27th September 2018, which related to updates contained at item 10 of the Council agenda.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Larratt thanked the Council for the positive feedback received from the training sessions that had been attended. Referring to questions asked relating to Rail Issues, Councillor Larratt explained that Northampton had a very poor rail network and that efforts were being made to improve this, through ongoing talks with rail operators and networks, but noted that there was a need to assess the impact of HS2. He confirmed that he would speak to officers with regards to the possibility of erecting a shelter at the train station.

Councillor Hallam elaborated on his Cabinet Member report and explained that the Council were currently 90 days into the new environmental services contract with Veolia. He stated that he was aware that further improvements and work was needed and thanked staff and officers for their hard work in ensuring a smooth transition, specifically giving credit to the grass-cutting scheme. It was noted that Northampton would be receiving an update to the status of the application to Britain in Bloom in October 2018.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Hallam explained that refusal of individuals issued with a fixed penalty notice for littering/fly tipping to make payment, would result in the Council taking court action. He further noted that weed-spraying had been carried out in some areas and despite some of the challenges faced, additional weed-spraying would be carried out as part of the winter maintenance schedule. Responding to further questions, Councillor Hallam explained that the newly issued blue bins had an increased capacity and those who were not eligible would be allowed to co-mingle in the retained boxes. He noted that residents needed to feel proud of the place that they lived and that a clean and tidy environment would enhance this; the increased number of fixed penalty notices would go some way in reducing instances of littering and fly tipping. Responding to a query with regards to air quality, Councillor Hallam explained that the need to tackle air pollution and suggested that this was achievable through improving infrastructure.

It was explained that sheltered housing was no longer being serviced as part of the new environmental services contract. He explained that there had been a record number of fly tipping waste picked up by the contractors and commented that he would clarify the training carried out with regards to sharps and syringes.

Councillor King submitted her Cabinet Member report and noted that a new

construction company had been appointed for the Museum expansion and renovation project and the contractor would take possession of the site in mid-September 2018. It was confirmed that the Council had received over £800,000 from the Home Office to fund youth projects and reduce gang culture and knife crime in Northampton.

In response to questions asked, Councillor King explained that 'Weeks of Action' would be monitored. She further confirmed that the names of contractors and event organiser would be shared to enable Councillors to contribute financially to specific events through their Councillor Empowerment Funds.

At this juncture of the meeting, the Mayor advised that the time limited for Cabinet Member reports had been reached and no further Cabinet Members would elaborate on their reports.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor B Markham announced that due to ill health, Councillor Beardsworth was unable to attend and asked for Council to agree that Opposition Group Business be withdrawn

RESOLVED:

Council agreed to the withdrawal of Opposition Group Business.

9. UPDATE FROM THE CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP - COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Councillor Larratt proposed a report which sought Councils agreement to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) in respect of the whole Borough area, approve the Terms of Reference and delegate authority to the Working Group to determine the timetable for the CGR. Councillor Larratt explained that he would be attending a meeting of the Parish Clerks and Chairmen at a meeting on the 12th September 2018 and noted the need to proceed quickly due to the very limited time frame.

Questions were raised with regards to any additional costs that would be incurred by Council Tax payers and whether some residents would see an increase in precepts in addition to a possible rise in Council Tax.

Councillor Nunn seconded the report and noted that the harmonisation of costs across all of the Borough could be considered positively.

Councillor Larratt explained that there was a need to ensure that residents would be fully involved and represented throughout the process and therefore there would be an extensive consultation needed.

RESOLVED:

2.1.1 That a CGR under Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 be undertaken in respect of the whole Borough area, rather

than in respect of the unparished areas only

2.1.2 That the draft Terms of Reference at Appendix 1 of this report be approved.

2.1.3 That authority be delegated to the Working Group to determine the timetable for the Community Governance Review to be included in the Terms of Reference, (including determining the date of commencement of the CGR).

10. LICENSING COMMITTEE STRUCTURE REPORT

Councillor Nunn proposed a report which sought the approval for the appointment of a further Licensing Committee and the delegation of certain powers to the Committee to ensure lawful discharge of the Council's licensing functions.

Councillor Sargeant seconded the report and welcomed any additional Committee work that may be required.

RESOLVED:

1. That it be agreed that a further Licensing Committee be appointed, comprised of the same members as the existing Licensing Committee, to discharge functions which are not automatically delegated to the existing Committee and to allow further delegation of those functions to sub-committees and officers as necessary.
2. That the functions set out in Appendix A of the report be delegated to the Licensing Committees specified in that Appendix.

11. APPOINTMENT OF THE S151 OFFICER

Councillor Nunn proposed a report which sought the confirmation of the appointment of the Chief Finance Officer following the endorsement from the Appointment and Appeals Committee on 23rd August 2018 on a fixed term contract basis for a period of 18 months from 1st June 2018.

Councillor Larratt seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

That Council confirmed the appointment of Stuart McGregor as Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer)

12. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Councillor Larratt proposed a report that sought Council's approval to proposed amendments to the Constitution that related to the Markets Advisory Group.

Councillor Haque commented that he attended a number of the Group meetings and was not happy with the proposed structure.

Councillor Larratt explained that the current composition of the Group was not effective and therefore the Chairmanship was being bought back in house.

Councillor Nunn seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Responsibility for Functions section in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution be amended, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, to alter the composition of the Market Advisory Group so that the Chair be the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Market Liaison (instead of an independent Chair nominated by the Leader of the Council); and
2. That the Scheme of Delegations to Officers be amended in the Constitution to delegate the powers currently delegated to the Town Centre Manager in respect of market matters (Part 8, Part B, paragraph 5.1), to the Markets Manager, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report.

13. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - HUNSBURY MEADOWS PARISH

Larratt proposed a report which presented Council with the final recommendations following the consultation required under the relevant guidance.

Councillor Oldham seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Pineham Housing Development be merged with Hunsbury Meadows Parish
2. That the boundary between Upton Parish and Hunsbury Meadows Parish follow the River Nene to include the polling district SNUP2 (at appendix 1 of the report)

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

The Mayor confirmed that he had agreed to an additional item being placed on the agenda under Matters of Urgency, which was tabled at the meeting and explained that Council were being asked to agree to a change in Planning Committee places on the grounds of ill-health.

Councillor B Markham proposed a report which sought Council to agree to hi, being replaced by Councillor Meredith on the Planning Committee.

Councillor Meredith seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Meredith replace Councillor B Markham on the Planning Committee.

14. NOTICES OF MOTION

i) Councillor Hallam propose and Councillor Marriott seconded:

This Council notes that graffiti is an unwelcome sight in most towns and cities across the country. A town is often judged by how it responds to graffiti, particularly that of a racist or offensive nature. Council notes that there has previously been a robust informal policy and stance adopted regarding this, but now resolves to:

- a) Adopt a formal policy for the removal of graffiti in a quality manor, free of charge on private property where the appropriate permission has been provided in writing by the property owner;
- b) Prioritize and immediately tackle instances of racist or offensive graffiti;
- c) Continue the commitment to do all it can to remove graffiti in the town, including working closely with the police across the borough, Northampton Town Centre BID, Network Rail, and owners of other affected properties, to try and catch offenders;
- d) Relaunch the “name the tag” campaign and actively promote it within the Youth Forum and youth groups across the town;
- e) Urge people to report offenders and the location of graffiti on both public and private property when they see it, so it can be removed.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

ii) Councillor Stone proposed and Councillor Russell seconded:

“This Council recognises that children’s services in the county are under pressure:-

There are more and more children coming into Local Authority care. There is growing child poverty. Children on free school meals are going hungry during the school holidays. Respite for parents caring for children with disabilities is under threat. Mental Health Services for children have long waiting lists. Universal services for the 0 -5 year olds are under threat as libraries close and money is withdrawn from the voluntary sector. Early help and prevention for families has declined over the last 4 years. We have a growing number of children living in temporary accommodation.

Northampton Borough Council resolves to oppose calls to outsource children’s services. Work with and resource partners to deliver multi-agency neighbourhood working. Develop a strategy to combat child poverty”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

iii) Councillor Ashraf proposed and Councillor Duffy seconded:

“We have been a fair trade Borough in the past. Can we reintroduce this and make sure we continue the fair trade policy in the future?”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

Mr Huffadine Smith addressed Council on motion iv) and explained his support for a more fair and democratic voting process. He stated that he believed strongly in democracy and as such considered proportional representation fairer than the current first past the post system and urged all Councillors to vote freely and fairly on the motion.

The Mayor explained that as Councillor Beardsworth was unwell and not in attendance, motion iv) would be seconded by Councillor Meredith.

iv) Councillor B Markham proposed and Councillor Meredith seconded:

“We call upon this Council to write to the Secretary of State for communities and local government, requesting that the election for the new unitary Council be trialled under proportional representation using the single transferable vote. Council believes this will produce a result which more closely reflects the views of a diverse Northampton community”.

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

Mr Dale Wallis addressed Council on motion v) and explained that he had purchased a property on an estate where management companies were responsible for the upkeep of open spaces and noted that some residents were paying a management fee of over £400 per annum on top; since purchasing their properties, some residents had experienced an increase over 350%.

Ms Maitland commented that the motion was a progressive step, but did not consider that it was going far enough to deal with the injustice that residents were subjected to. She reported that the management companies were not accountable to residents and requested that developers be strongly encouraged to share their financial calculation for time and costings and asked for this to be monitored.

Mr Huffadine Smith commented that he was aware of residents purchasing a property

without the realisation that they would be subjected to additional costs of the management fees in addition to the Council tax. He reported that planning departments were able to stipulate conditions and explained that there had been instances where houses in the areas had been converted into HMOs and passing on cost of management fees with its occupants which was unfair.

v) Councillor Sargeant proposed and Councillor Larratt seconded:

“This Council recognises the concerns of residents and Parish Councils in areas where management companies are responsible for open space and other amenities. Council resolves to support residents and Parish Councils in resolving their concerns.

This Council also resolves to make it clear that, it too, has significant concerns regarding the establishment of management companies to manage open space and other facilities on new housing developments in the borough of Northampton, rather than them being formally adopted.

While resisting management companies, this Council will encourage developers to consider all the alternatives available for managing the facilities on new developments in the borough and Northampton growth area, including seeking for developments to be adopted with sufficient resources to ensure that the maintenance of these pieces of land is fully funded”.

Council debated the motion

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

vi) Councillor Graystone proposed and Councillor Nunn seconded:

“This Council notes the Government’s aims in encouraging a modal shift of freight from road to rail, which is a key aspect of its transport policy, and recognise that with effective implementation this modal shift can result in a reduction of carbon emissions, shorter and more efficient journeys, and fewer road casualties.

This Council further notes that the delivery of a national network of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs) forms a key part of recognising this aim, and the criteria for these are set out in the National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN) and the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange Policy Guidance documents.

This Council also notes that the NPSNN is clear that there is a need for an expanded network of large SRFIs across the regions to accommodate the long-term growth in rail freight, and that new rail freight interchanges, especially in areas poorly served by such facilities at present, are likely to attract substantial business, generally new to rail. However, the NPSNN also states that existing operational SRFIs and other intermodal RFI are situated predominantly in the Midlands and the North, and that SRFI capacity needs to be provided at a wide range of locations, to provide the flexibility needed to match the changing demands of the market.

This Council believes that, as there is already around 39m sq. ft of SRFI-related

warehousing either under construction or being proposed in the East Midlands alone, not including the existing SRFI warehousing capacity already present nor other SRFIs in the wider Midlands region, it is unclear whether the proposed local developments, Rail Central and Northampton Gateway, are compliant with the NPSNN.

This Council, therefore, resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Transport to ask for an urgent review of the NPSNN, and all other associated policy guidance, to ensure that SRFI capacity is deployed as a national network across the country, rather than being built in areas where developers have pre-existing land options”.

Council debated the motion

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

The meeting concluded at 10.00pm