

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 11 March 2019 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Malpas, Ashraf, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Choudary, Chunga, Davenport, Duffy, G Eales, T Eales, Eldred, Flavell, Golby, Hadland, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, Joyce, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, B Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Sargeant, Kilby-Shaw, Smith, Stone and Walker

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 25 February 2019 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Cali, Caswell, G Eales, Hadland and M Markham.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the Mayor's invitation Councillor Meredith informed the Council that former Councillor Jane Hollis had passed away. She had served for eight years on Northampton Borough Council (NBC) and Northamptonshire County Council (NCC). She had worked hard for her residents and took her duties as a councillor very seriously. She had done a lot to promote young people of the borough. She spent three years as the Chair of a scrutiny committee at NCC. She was fifty four years old with two sons. She had overcome numerous problems with illnesses in her life. He had sent condolences to her family expressing great sympathy on behalf of the Council.

On behalf of the Conservative Group, Councillor Lane passed on their condolences. She had been Chair of the Planning committee. He noted that she was always smiling and would be missed.

On behalf of the Labour Group, Councillor Marriot passed on their condolences. He had served on the Council for four years with Jane. She had built good relationships on the Council and was a very pleasant individual.

The Mayor began with an apology. He noted that various people had been offended

by various remarks he had made. He had not meant them to be offensive. He asked officers and members of the Council to accept his apology. He accepted that both members and officers were doing what they could. He had tried to conduct the meetings to the best of his ability and he did appreciate the work of officers and members.

The Mayor provided an update of all the events he had attended since the last meeting along with promoting his upcoming events.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mr Mick Ford of Northampton Town Supporters Trust (NTST) addressed the Council and thanked the administration and the opposition for supporting their application that the ACV for Sixfields stadium be extended to cover the old athletics track land. It was important and was safeguarding land that was designated as community benefit land when the stadium was built in 1994.

The old athletics track was moved to Moulton to accommodate the redevelopment of Sixfields in 2013. The leasehold now rested with County Development Northampton Ltd and they were concerned any future development of that land may not be of community benefit.

NTST would support the installation of 4G pitches, the development of a training facility, a 50 metre swimming pool or a velodrome. They would welcome a discussion around a sports strategy to aid regeneration of the town. NTST urged the Council not to lose sight of what was a fundamental requirement in making the town a more attractive place for those who live, work and visit.

Mr Martin Sawyer addressed the Council explained that the Supporters Trust was aware of the unitary vision and the risks it represented. Two motions before the Council at this meeting sought to highlight the important role of residents associations going forward. The Sports Strategy for West Northamptonshire was ten years old and needed to be renewed to include specific facilities for women, children and the disabled. The town needed its open spaces and these should be added to a strategy. The bigger picture needed to be considered.

At this point a request was made to allow an additional speaker to address Council. After seeking advice from the Monitoring Officer, the Mayor allowed the address.

Mr Colin Lee addressed the Council saying he represented Thorplands Club 81. It was first formed in 1991 and now had six adult teams and ten children's teams. The club looked to help children stay off the streets. It had many volunteers and the club had plans to develop. There was no specific community centre in that area and they asked for support to develop a club/community centre. A club/community centre would be promoted for community use for such groups as cubs, scouts along with fitness sessions and other uses.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that nine questions had been received from Councillors and members of the public. Question three had been withdrawn, therefore there was now eight. The answers had been tabled and circulated at the meeting in accordance with the Constitution.

Questions and answers were given as tabled unless where stated, supplementary questions were asked as detailed below.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question one, Councillor Nunn explained that meetings were held at the various partners organisations. The meetings were held in private at this time and a consultation process may be added in the future.

In response to supplementary questions relating to question two, Councillor Hibbert clarified that the amount was £8m and it was being used to provide temporary accommodation and further updates would follow in due course.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question four, Councillor Hill confirmed that the Local Plan was being considered at Cabinet on 3rd April 2019. A consultation period would then follow before it was submitted to Council for adoption.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question five, Councillor Eldred confirmed that the budget consultation had reached more people via social media as indicated in the response.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question six, Councillor Hill confirmed that consultation would be carried out and neighbourhood plans would be linked to the local plan.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question seven, Councillor Hibbert explained that there was a legal process to be followed.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question eight, Councillor Hibbert explained that the Homeless at Home team were working with single people to help they stay at home while housing solutions were found.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn submitted his report as Leader of the Council and provided an update on the unitary status. The costs were being considered. There was a need to find the right balance between getting additional staff in for the project, which would drive costs up and asking existing employees to do additional work which could put a strain on day to day operations.

In response to questions the Leader responded that they were trying to find the right site to locate an alternative park and ride scheme whilst promoting the existing scheme. In terms of funding the position of project officer, he confirmed that all costs were being funded equally from all eight local authorities.

Councillor Larratt submitted his Cabinet Member report and thanked Mr Lee for attending, Thorplands 81 did a great job. The importance of the club was recognised and a report would be submitted to Cabinet in due course to propose a lease for Thorplands 81 which would enable them to access other funding sources.

In response to questions the Deputy Leader clarified that the Councillor Development Group had met and asked officers to complete a proposal for Antisemitism and Islamophobia training. It was agreed to be added and delivered by Northamptonshire Police. If that session was not appropriate then others could be considered.

The Deputy Leader explained that the market traders remained keen to know more about the Future High Streets fund and the Council would keep them engaged in the process. The town needed the market and other good retail facilities. There was no proposal to change the heritage lights on the Racecourse but they kept getting broken therefore the fixtures may change to make them unbreakable.

The Deputy Leader indicated that he would continue to raise the rail issues at every opportunity.

Councillor Hibbert submitted his Cabinet Member report explaining it was the second successful year of the emergency night shelter with volunteers donating more than 14,300 hours. The hospital discharge scheme was working well. July marked the 100th anniversary of council housing. A series of events would be planned to mark this milestone and more details would follow. Lakeview House had now been completed. It was a wonderful, light and airy building.

In response to questions Councillor Hibbert explained that people attending the shelters did have personalised plans and knew what help they could receive. He believed that residents should be involved in the council housing anniversary celebrations. Regarding the hospital discharge scheme he confirmed that officers met on a weekly basis.

Following a query the Monitoring Officer explained that restricting the number of members asking questions had been agreed at the pre-meet. The time limit on the item was forty five minutes with three minutes for each portfolio holder. Usually there was not enough time to hear from them all. The constitution allowed the Mayor to manage the meeting in this way.

Councillor Hill submitted his Cabinet Member report indicating that work on the Queen Eleanor Cross would begin on 1st April 2019. In response to questions Councillor Hill clarified that planning processes would be followed with regards to the new pathway from the University to Hardingstone.

Councillor King submitted her Cabinet Member report explained the boards for the guided walks had been erected with a new tour taking place each month relating to a person or place in the town.

In response to questions Councillor King said that she would consider putting boards

displaying LGBT events into the main hall at the Guildhall in the future. The Youth Forum was very well attended with all schools bar one being represented including the cadets. She would want to see this continue following the move to unitary status.

Councillor Hallam submitted his Cabinet Member report saying the Kangaroo run was very successful and he would speak to the ward councillors separately.

In response to questions Councillor Hallam said they would try to influence the owners to maintain the grass verges at Sixfields. The air quality outside of schools was monitored with none indicating levels of air pollution to be concerned over.

Councillor Eldred submitted his Cabinet Member report explaining all collection rates were on target. Events were being booked in the Great Hall. In response to questions Councillor Eldred confirmed that if needed additional staff could be brought in to manage the close down of the accounts.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Smith made a statement on housing. She stated there was a need to consider how housing was viewed. Homes were the foundation of everyday life. They had the ability to affect a person or families wellbeing. There was a need to have homes where people could thrive. The right to buy scheme had devastated the Council's housing stock. She understood the need to own your own home however the housing stock could not be replaced at the same rate.

She felt that private rentals were heavily biased in favour of private landlords. The help to buy scheme helped those who were on higher wages. It was felt that the change to unitary authorities was a good opportunity to focus on housing.

In response Councillor Hibbert indicated that Lakeview House had improved housing standards. The private sector team worked to help people with private landlords. The Council had guidance documents for private renting on its website. The housing teams were working on a single housing policy.

Councillor Smith asked that the Council work with residents to develop the housing strategy.

9. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

Councillor Patel presented for approval the Meetings Cycle for 2019/2020, proposing that an additional council meeting on 29th April 2019 be added. This was seconded by Councillor Oldham.

RESOLVED: That the Meetings Cycle for 2019/2020 be approved including the additional meeting on 29th April 2019.

10. UPDATE ON CARRIED MOTIONS

Councillor Larratt proposed the report which provided an update on carried motions indicating that a further update would be presented in September 2019. The updates presented were colour coded to the specific service area. Further work would be undertaken to enable this document to be available online.

Councillor Patel seconded the report.

Members discussed the report expressing disappointment that it did not contain the details of the responsible officers. It was suggested that the next update should be brought sooner than September 2019. An update on the four community libraries was sought. The definition of 'complete' was sought to explain what the indicators were and what had been done. It was felt that the process should be amended to take account of best practice used elsewhere.

In response to some of the points raised Councillor King explained that nothing further had been done regarding St James and Far Cotton libraries.

In response Councillor Larratt explained it was a first draft of the report and all comments had been noted. The reporting form and style would be amended for the next version.

At this point the Mayor called for the report's recommendations to be voted upon. 5 members abstained from the vote with the remaining members voting in favour.

The recommendations in the report were agreed.

RESOLVED: That Council noted the update on Carried Motions and that a further update would be brought to full Council at its meeting on 16 September 2019.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

- i. Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor B Markham seconded:

"This Council believes that to maintain a connection between communities in Northampton and a remoter Unitary Council that the new body needs to embrace Neighbourhood working supported by delegated budgets.

The Council calls on NBC representatives on the Shadow Authority to promote the concept of Neighbourhood working to enable residents and local stakeholders to influence improvements in their local area."

An alteration to the amendment was submitted by Councillor Stone to delete the word 'influence' in the second paragraph replace with 'work with service providers and drive'. Councillor Beardsworth accepted that amendment. The Mayor asked Council if they accepted the alteration to the motion. Council accepted.

Members debated the altered motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

- ii. Councillor Beardsworth proposed and Councillor B Markham seconded:

“This Council recognises the danger of Northampton losing its strong voice in a newly formed West Northamptonshire Unitary Council.

The Council also recognises that it should strive for equity for all communities in any new arrangements that flow from the Community Governance review considering parishing arrangements within the existing borough boundary.

The Council will aim to ensure that the new arrangements provide a strong voice for Northampton and ensure that no community is excluded from some form of first level of Local Government representation.”

Members debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was lost.

iii. Councillor Birch proposed and Councillor Joyce seconded:

“In preparation for the transition to Unitary we call upon NBC to produce a Sports Strategy for the people of Northampton that draws on the Sports Strategy for West Northamptonshire of 2009.

The purpose of this strategy, as well as reviewing current facilities, would be to identify gaps, reflect current user preferences and requirements.

Only by doing this can we protect the assets in Northampton for the people of the town.”

Members debated the motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

iv. Councillor B Markham proposed and Councillor Larratt seconded:

“In September 2018 this Council expressed its concern about the number of housing developments that were failing to deliver open spaces and other amenities to adoption standards and transfer them to the relevant local authority but instead were establishing management companies to manage and maintain them with no democratic oversight or accountability.

In order to protect residents from uncontrolled charges and poor levels of service this Council would like to see all open spaces and other amenities provided by developers built to the standard required by local authorities for adoption, and calls upon Planning Officers to do all that they can to achieve this in their negotiations with developers.

This Council wishes to make it clear that it will aim for open space land on new residential developments to be transferred into the Council’s ownership.

Furthermore, this Council also calls on other local authorities, i.e. Northamptonshire County Council, when offering their land for sale for potential residential development to make it a condition of sale that the relevant local authority retains ownership of the open space within the proposed development.

Additionally, this Council will fully research the problems and issues that residents, Residents Associations, and Parish Councils have with management companies in Northampton and resolves to write to the Secretary of State expressing them as well as the views of the Council. Furthermore, this Council will work with the Local Government Association to lobby the Government for legislation to address the issue of Management Companies with a view to protecting residents from unreasonable maintenance charges, giving them the right to challenge such charges, as well as providing communities, including Town and Parish Councils, the opportunity to take on the role and responsibilities of the management companies.”

An alteration to the amendment was submitted by Councillor B Markham to change the word ‘local authorities in the fourth paragraph along with removed the words ‘i.e. Northamptonshire County Council’ to ‘public bodies’. The Mayor asked Council if they accepted the alteration to the motion. Council accepted.

Members debated the altered motion.

Upon a vote the motion was carried.

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

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 9:20 pm