

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 9 September 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Woods (Chair); Councillor B. Hoare (Deputy Chair); Councillors Beardsworth, Church, Perkins and P. D. Varnsberry

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Crane

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 August 2009 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Councillors Church and Woods declared personal, non-prejudicial interests in Item 6, West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee: Minutes of 6 July 2009 as NBC representatives on the Committee.
2. Councillors PD Varnsberry and Beardsworth declared personal, non- prejudicial interests in Item 6, West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee: Minutes of 6 July 2009 as attendees at the WNJSPU meeting on 6 July 2009
3. Councillors Church and Woods declared personal and prejudicial interests in Item 8, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) Quinquennial Review, as members of the WNDC Board and withdrew for the duration of the item.

5. ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were none.

6. WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF 6 JULY 2009

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting on 6 July 2009 be noted.

7. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

As the relevant Portfolio Holder, the Chair, Councillor Woods introduced the report and explained that this was the second year of monitoring information about complaints and compliments. There had been a significant reduction in the number of complaints received and this was a reflection of the improvement in the process of dealing with issues raised. It was accepted that there was still room for improvement and training was being undertaken to achieve this. In the meantime, monitoring would continue.

Councillor P D Varnsberry requested that a system be introduced whereby it might be identified when councillors had intervened to address issues raised by residents before they reached the stage of a formal complaint.

Councillor B Hoare asked for a more detailed breakdown of the figures by directorate so that strengths and weaknesses could be identified and dealt with.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted along with the work in progress to improve complaints handling.

8. WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (WNDC) QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW - RESPONSE TO CLG CONSULTATION IN RESPECT OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS

Councillors Woods and Church left the meeting and the Deputy Leader, Councillor B Hoare, took the Chair.

Councillor B Hoare presented the report explaining the requirement to respond to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny report of July 2009 in relation to the 5-year review of the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation. These were set out in Appendix 1 of the report and were to form the framework for the Council's detailed response to the CLG.

He highlighted the need to amend the current arrangements of the WNDC with the organisation taking the role of concentrating on major projects and infrastructure rather than matters outside their scope that could be dealt with efficiently by the individual district councils. Councillor B Hoare also pointed out the recommendation to change WNDC from a statutory to a non-statutory body with local legitimacy and national backing. It was to be recommended that the changes be implemented within the next 18 months.

Councillor B Hoare then drew attention to the anomaly of the current practice of not allowing Board members to sit on the WNDC planning committees for their own districts, but having the authority to determine planning applications in other districts. He further highlighted the importance of ensuring that nominations of councillors to the Board of WNDC be appointed by their own Council and not by the CLG.

In response to Councillor Perkins, it was made clear that there would be no additional funding to take into account increased staff costs in the event of them taking on additional planning work. It was accepted that the revenue from planning fees would not cover this cost. However, attempts could be made to secure a grant and there would be the benefit of the Council being more able to control planning issues. Members would be advised of budget implications in due course.

Councillor P D Varnsvery, whilst welcoming the report, asked that the wording be tightened up to ensure that all changes were implemented within the 18 month period previously referred to.

RESOLVED

1. That Cabinet agree the proposed formal response to the consultation attached at Appendix 1, delegating any final minor textual amendments to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Leader.
2. That Cabinet authorise the Chief Executive and the Deputy Leader to work with Northamptonshire County Council, South Northants Council, Daventry District Council and West Northamptonshire Development Corporation on points of common agreement and to lend the Council's voice to any common approach to Government that may help achieve change in line with the Council's response to the consultation.

The meeting concluded at 18:35