

MINUTES

OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH
COUNCIL HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON, ON Monday, 16
September 2019 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING

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

COUNCILLORS: Malpas, Ansell, Ashraf, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Cali, Choudary, Chunga, Davenport, Duffy, G Eales, T Eales, Flavell, Golby, Graystone, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, Joyce, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, B Markham, M Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Meredith, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell, Sargeant and Stone

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

2. MINUTES.

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd July 2019 were agreed and signed by the Mayor.

3. APOLOGIES.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Caswell, Eldred, Hadland, Kilby-Shaw, Smith and Walker.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Mayor announced that there was an upcoming Civic event on Sunday 22nd September and asked Members to attend. He stated that he would be taking part in a sky-dive on 24th September to raise money for his Mayoral Charity and asked Members to sponsor him. He reported that he had attended 115 engagements so far in his Mayoral year. The Mayor reminded Council that the Gala Dinner would be taking place on 2nd November.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Mia and Ava Joyce addressed Council on behalf of Eco March Northampton and expressed the "urgent need" to ban single-use plastic bags in the town. They noted that Parliament, followed by NBC and other local authorities, declared a climate emergency, however little action had taken place following the announcement. They reported that marine life is being killed due to wasteful human practices and stated that paper and tote bags were a sustainable alternative to plastics and would significantly reduce Northampton's carbon footprint.

Alice Whitehead addressed Council and commented that 10 street trees would be planted along Penrhyn Road for the first time in approximately 50 years. The project had been spearheaded by the Save Our Trees campaign in collaboration with The

Woodland Trust, NBC and NCC. A study by Northampton University, commissioned by the Save Our Trees campaign which showed that street trees in Far Cotton had declined by 51% since the 1960s. The report further highlighted the benefits of street trees, including contributing towards a reduction in urban warming, improving air quality and reducing stress, as well as some economic benefits. Ms Whitehead stated that whilst the report was welcome, it was not unreasonable to extrapolate the pattern across trees all over the town. Ms Whitehead asked Council to support the Save Our Trees Campaign aims, which are:

- To appoint a dedicated tree officer who would feed into the now unitary authority;
- To change the Council's tree policy to allow for the replacement, in situ, of valuable urban trees;
- Regular maintenance of the town's street trees;
- Ongoing investment and reinstatement of street trees as part of the move to unitary;
- To plant more appropriate, compact trees to avoid problems seen with larger trees, and;
- For planning controls to be properly applied by developers to reduce the number of trees felled.

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor advised that sixteen questions had been received from Councillors and members of the public and that the answers had been tabled 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 six, Councillor Hallam advised that the "door [was] open" for compostable food caddy bags to be rolled out to the public in the future.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question nine, Councillor Hallam stated that he would supply Councillor Ashraf with a breakdown of the duties of Neighbourhood Wardens and Park Rangers.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question eleven, Councillor Hallam advised that it was never too late for requests for urgent tree maintenance.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question thirteen, Councillor Hallam stated that Northampton had the highest number of charging points in the county and that work was underway to have more installed across the town.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question fourteen, Councillor Hibbert indicated that there would be increased pressures for non-homeless persons on the Council's housing waiting list, homelessness was a priority.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question fifteen, Councillor

Hibbert indicated that buying ex-council homes was a possibility.

In response to a supplementary question relating to question sixteen, the Leader advised that Councillor Eldred would issue a further answer outside of the meeting.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

Councillor Nunn submitted his report as Leader of the Council. He advised of a Member briefing session to be held on 18th September; this would be relating to Local Government Reorganisation and it was important for members to attend.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Nunn explained that unitary work was taking up a lot of resources but the Structural Changes Order would be imminent, stating that he and the Leader of Northamptonshire County Council were continually lobbying central government. The Leader advised that unitary alone would not transform services, input was needed from district and borough chief executives who each fronted part of the unitary project. The Leader confirmed that he would invite the new Programme Director, Paul Helsby, to Northampton Borough Council for a briefing with Members. The Leader explained that the Programme Director post was not an additional one, nor did it incur an extra cost. However the overall cost remained a concern for all members.

Responding to a question regarding dredging of the Billing Brook lakes, the Leader confirmed that it was within the Council's remit; this was a long-standing problem for the town which had now been resolved.

In response to a question relating to a motion calling for a "People's Plan", the Leader advised that a board meeting would be held on 24th September with Northampton University to review the written consultation responses. This would then lead to confirming a final template for a People's Plan. The Leader highlighted the importance of different demographics of people feeding into the consultation.

In response to a question relating to EV charging points, the Leader explained that some issues had been brought to light at the LGA conference, including charging points on terraced streets, but he saw this as an opportunity for more charging points in the town.

With regard to the St James Link Road, the Leader explained that a detailed land survey revealed higher levels of ground contamination which brought estimated costs to £4m, however the Council would continue to pursue opportunities to deliver it.

Councillor Larratt presented his report as Deputy Leader and responding to questions, advised that the Community Governance Review Working Group would always consult residents on what they had been asked to. With regard to street decommissioned street lights in the town, the Deputy Leader stated that he would be happy to check the council's asset records to find out whether any lights were due to be switched back on.

Responding to questions regarding rail issues, the Deputy Leader reported that Northampton was losing out on direct services to Crewe, however he would continue

to fight for the East West Rail to run through Northampton.

The Deputy Leader explained that a Planning Protocol had been drafted which he anticipated would give Members more involvement in planning applications and the pre-application stage, and more influence in shaping Section 106 Legal Agreements.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that he would take a suggestion to swap plastic bags for more environmentally friendly options to the next Market Advisory Group. He would also look into issues surrounding the "Report It" app.

Councillor Hallam submitted his report as the Cabinet member for Environment and explained that a paper on single-use plastics would be brought to the next Climate Change Panel in October and invited Mia and Ava Joyce to the meeting.

In response to questions, Councillor Hallam explained that the council had been spending increasing amounts of money on the town's parks and the council were always fighting for more.

Councillor Hallam explained that the money saved on reducing the cost of bulky waste collections has been spent partly on increasing the number of booking slots available by 50%. This had been well received by residents but Councillor Hallam would be happy to look into any issues that had arisen around waiting times.

Responding to a question regarding street waste bins, Councillor Hallam stated that there were several in the town that were not the responsibility of Veolia; he would look into the issue further once provided with details by Councillor Cali.

Responding to a question relating to climate change working groups, Councillor Hallam advised that delays had been caused by diary clashes; meetings were due to start in October.

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

Councillor Ashraf made a statement on "Cleaner, Greener and safer Northampton". She noted that the Council had carried a motion declaring a climate emergency but questioned what changes had been implemented to improve air quality, tackle single-use plastic, pollution and littering. She had started speaking with residents, community groups and schools to raise awareness of the issues faced and the steps to be taken to improve their lives and the lives of their communities. She stated that people in the town no longer took pride in where they lived. Landlords frequently fly-tipped previous occupants' belongings onto the street, a long-standing issue that needed a specific policy to deal with it. She reported that most households recycled 44% of all recyclable plastic bottles and noted that of the 13,000 water refill stations across the country, there was not one in Northampton, yet Rushden Lakes had 7. Northampton Borough Council should be offering alternative solutions before asking people to change their behaviour. She advised that constituents in her ward were dissatisfied with the lack of enforcement action taken on repeat fly-tippers and noted that Colleagues have the same problem. She questioned whether the Environmental Services contractors were meeting their targets, how they were making and spending money. She stated that the Council should be planting trees in the town and flowers

on unused green sites and put solar panels on the town's community buildings.

In response Councillor Hallam explained that for 7 years under the previous Environmental contract there were 3 KPIs in "red"; he was happy to report that 2 of these were now "green" and the remaining red KPI related to fly tipping which was not the fault of the contractor but a small minority of members of the public. He noted that the Neighbourhood Wardens had recently come 3rd nationally in terms of FPNs and enforcement action taken and reported that recycling across the borough was increasing at an average of 6% per month. He further noted that residents were emailing the Council to thank Veolia on carrying out the contract to such a high level, something that scarcely happened under the previous contract.

Councillor Ashraf stated that the Council should not be picking up after people who refused to take responsibility for their own actions to the detriment of the rest of the town, that Council should be using its powers to challenge and prosecute environmental offenders.

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE TO THE WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT COMMITTEE

Councillor Nunn proposed the report which sought to amend the Terms of Reference for the West Northamptonshire Joint Committee.

Councillor Larratt seconded the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That Council agrees the revised and augmented Terms of Reference set out in Appendix 2 of the report and delegates the necessary powers and authority to the West Northamptonshire Joint Committee.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, to amend the "West Northamptonshire Joint Committee Agreement" to incorporate the changes agreed by Council.

10. UPDATE ON CARRIED MOTIONS

Councillor Larratt proposed the report which sought to update Council on Carried Motions from April 2018 to date.

Councillor Patel seconded the report.

Councillor Larratt advised that he would refer questions relating to specific motions to the relevant Cabinet Member.

Responding to a question regarding motion 3 from Full Council held on 10/12/18, Councillor King explained that the Council were working with NDAS and a "domestic violence strategy" had been created.

Responding to a question regarding motion 6 from Full Council held on 5/11/18,

Councillor Hallam asked if he could be emailed with details of under-performing supermarkets so that he may further investigate.

Responding to a question regarding motion 4 from Full Council held on 5/11/18, Councillor King advised that 2 fairs held over the summer had been relocated and that the situation was still under review.

Responding to a question regarding motion 6 from Full Council held on 5/11/18, Councillor Hallam stated that the aim of the motion was to persuade supermarkets to change their behaviour; this change could be evidenced in the increased responses from supermarkets.

Responding to a question regarding motion 2 from Full Council held on 04/06/19, Councillor King stated that primary school conferences included workshops such as “being a good citizen” as well as giving dietary advice.

RESOLVED:

1. That Council notes the update on Carried Motions
2. That a further update is brought to Full Council at its meeting on 9th March 2020

11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2018/2019

Councillor Lane, as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report and thanked every member involved in the work of Scrutiny, specifically the Panel Chairs and members of the public for their suggestions. He thanked the Scrutiny Officer for her continued hard work and noted his appreciation for her dedication to the role.

Councillor Ansell seconded the report.

Members discussed the various panel work that had been undertaken and thanked the Scrutiny Officer and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their dedication and concurred that the topics that they had scrutinised had been extremely valuable and insightful. Members agreed that Northampton Borough Council were a great example of when Scrutiny is done well but had concerns about what it may look like under the new unitary authority.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19 be noted.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

- i) Councillor Joyce accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Stone.

Council agreed to the altered motion below:

“We are concerned that the borough council, local organisations and residents are, generally speaking, using non-renewable energy suppliers, incurring high bills, and using up precious resources.

We agree that a Big Switch to a green energy company would be much better for the environment and help reduce bills.

Noting that the value of a new contract to provide energy to this Council will be in excess of £0.5M per annum, Council notes that this will require a full procurement exercise to be undertaken, and that such an exercise will take up to 18 months, by which time the Council will no longer exist. Northampton Borough Council therefore resolves to propose to the future Unitary Council that it makes the big switch to a green energy company, lead from the front and show its commitment to renewable future.

While this Council can only operate within its own scope of control and influence, it resolves that as a key place leader, it commits to searching for best ways to encourage and work with local organisations, residents and businesses across the borough to see how they can make a difference to the environment through all relevant technologies, including options to switch to green energy companies. Therefore, this Council resolves to ask the Air Quality and Management Change Working Group to pursue this.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

ii) Councillor Roberts proposed and Councillor Russell seconded:

“This council is aware of the Government proposal to create a Children’s Trust for the provision of Children’s Services in the Northamptonshire area, serving two Unitary Authorities.

For Children’s Services to improve there needs to be a return to multi agency locality working.

There needs to be a focus on early help and prevention.

We therefore commit to modelling how this could work in two areas of Northampton, Briar Hill and St David’s.

The modelling will involve a needs analysis of the families and young people in the area.

This will be a desk top exercise looking at income, health, housing, education, employment, life expectancy, crime rates and other influencing factors.

The modelling will look at community and voluntary sector resources that can be

utilised to provide the network of support needed in conjunction with statutory services, particularly housing, adult social care, and health.

The modelling will identify gaps in provision.

The results will go to the West Northants joint committee and the West Northants Shadow Board.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

iii) Councillor Hallam accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Kilby-Shaw.

Council agreed to the altered motion below.

“Council notes the excellent work of the "Save our Street Trees" Group in Far Cotton and the work they have done in bringing both NBC and NCC together with the Woodland Trust to look at a trial project for re-instating street trees in Northampton.

Council notes the work of the former Mayor of London Boris Johnson in re-instating 20,000 of street trees to our Capital during his time as the Mayor and the benefit that can give to the wider environment and efforts to combat climate change. He also delivered his pledge to create 100 rejuvenated spaces as part of his pocket parks programme in 26 London boroughs, with more than 25 hectares of community land across the capital having been converted into new enhanced green areas.

Northampton Borough Council calls for a transformation of underused urban spaces across our town. Trees deliver huge benefits such as cleaning the air and storing carbon. To ensure future generations receive these benefits and Northampton grows sustainably, we all need to protect existing trees and plant new trees.

This council agrees to:

1. Develop a tree planting strategy that will replace the number of trees that are being felled or have died.
2. To increase the number of trees in the town to create a cleaner greener Northampton”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a requisition for a recorded vote:

There voted for the motion: Councillors Ansell, Ashraf, Aziz, Beardsworth, Birch, Bottwood, Cali, Chunga, Davenport, Duffy, G Eales, T Eales, Flavell, Golby, Joyce, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, Hill, Graystone, Kilbride, King, Lane, Larratt, Malpas, B Markham, M Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Nunn, Oldham, Parekh, Patel, Russell,

Sargeant, Kilby-Shaw, Smith, Stone, Walker.

There voted against the motion: Councillor Meredith.

There abstained: Councillor Choudary.

The motion was carried.

iv) Councillor B Markham accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor Meredith.

Council agreed to the altered motion below:

“This Council discussed “Declare a Climate Emergency” at its meeting on the 3rd June 2019.

Over the August Bank Holiday weekend DEFRA declared at their Northampton Monitoring Station the Highest Pollution figures across the country had been recorded.

This Council has yet to publish “the adjusted Air Quality Readings for 2018” which the administration has said are the only figures that it is prepared to use to initiate correct action to protect the health of Northampton residents.

Councillors are concerned that adhering to this approach will result in a similar delay in 2020 waiting for the 2019 adjusted Air Quality Figures to be verified by the DEFRA.

In support of the declared Climate Emergency this Council calls upon the administration to publish “provisional adjusted Air Quality Readings” as soon as adjustments have been applied by NBC Environmental Health Department and to take action to address any areas of concern.

The Council believes that this approach will demonstrate that it is taking action at the earliest possible time to protect the Health of Northampton residents.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

v) Councillor Meredith proposed and Councillor Beardsworth seconded:

“This Council has expressed its concern in debates in this chamber at the growing signs of poverty across Northampton but it has also recognised that local action requires a multiagency approach.

Councillors believe that the Borough Council is in a unique leadership position to bring about multi-agency working to improve the distribution of collection points across the town to help the voluntary organisations maintain the flow of stock that is vital to help struggling families.

The Council requests that the Portfolio Holder for Community Development approaches the Business Improvement District and the local Voluntary sector organisations, to encourage a joint initiative to develop an enhanced network of collection points for food donation across the town centre.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was lost.

- vi) Councillor Beardsworth accepted an alteration to the original motion as published on the agenda. The altered motion was seconded by Councillor B Markham.

Council agreed to the altered motion below:

“The County Council is responsible for on street parking charges in the Town Centre and the Borough Council is responsible for the parking charges in the car parks that it operates.

This Council believes that Car Parking charges are a factor in the vitality and prosperity of the Town Centre.

The County Council has initiated consultation with the Public and Stakeholders regarding the increases that it is proposing but it unfortunately ends on the 5th September.

This council believes that it should formally respond to the County Council consultation and request that they accept a late submission from the Borough Council.

The council agrees that it wishes to express concern and opposition to the proposed increases as it believes that it will have a detrimental effect on the Town Centre economy at a time when this council is trying to address the downturn in footfall and look for ways of investing in the Town Centre in support of its long term prosperity.”

Council debated the motion.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried.

13. 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 9:48 pm