

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TO CABINET - 24 JULY 2019

Report Title	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – NORTHAMPTON POST UNITARY
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Agenda Status: PUBLIC

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the comments and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Scrutiny Review – Northampton Post Unitary.
- 1.2 All Overview and Scrutiny review reports are published on the Overview and Scrutiny page on the Council's Webpage and a copy of this report can be located: www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny - Previous Scrutiny Reviews.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that:
 - 2.1.1 The Mayor of Northampton is retained and if necessary a Charitable Trust is set up for the Mayoralty. The Mayoralty is also retained at the Guildhall to protect Civic traditions and to promote our heritage.
 - 2.1.2 A Civic Quarter is created that includes our Civic assets.
 - 2.1.3 Should a Town Council be established, the Town Council should be located in the Guildhall, along with Mayoralty and its regalia to ensure the secure protection of the historic assets of the Borough Council.
 - 2.1.4 To protect civic pride in a wider Northampton area and consider that the proposed Unitary Council for the West of Northamptonshire should be called the Greater Northampton Council.
 - 2.1.5 It is ensured that the Maces, known as North, South, East and West, are retained in Northampton's Museum, in the borough and that all silver assets are made secure.
 - 2.1.6 Oak Apple day is a Borough Council tradition and it should be recaptured by the Borough. This would be the opportune time to reintroduce some of the civic events that have over

time disappeared, for example May Day celebrations and celebrate other cultural celebrations.

2.1.7 Other key roles of the Mayoralty must be protected, including:

- The Mayor is the Chair of the Housebound Fund
- The Mayor is the President of Town Twinning
- The Mayor is the President for St John's Home
- Honorary Freeman take place just once every civic term
- Hereditary Freeman take the oath from the Mayor

2.1.8 The re-establishment of the roles of Major's Serjeant and Town Serjeant, as Honorary roles, for example the office of Alderman or former Councillor are investigated and introduced.

2.1.9 Publicity and marketing of the Mayoralty is good; but it should be widened further to include proactive use of leaflets at locations such as the train station and libraries and more use of social media.

2.1.10 Cabinet is informed that it is the aspiration of the Scrutiny Panel that Northampton is a City of Culture by 2025.

3. Background and Issues

3.1 Following approval of its work programme for 2018/2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting in March 2018 commissioned Scrutiny Panel 3 to undertake the review – Northampton Post Unitary. An in-depth review commenced in June 2018 and concluded in May 2019.

3.2 A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Brian Sargeant (Chair); Councillor Paul Joyce (Deputy Chair); Councillors Mohammed Aziz, Sam Kilby-Shaw, Jamie Lane, Danielle Stone and Graham Walker. Lee Mason and Morcea Walker were co-opted to the review.

3.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority – Improving our Governance.

Evidence Collection

3.4 Evidence was collected from a variety of sources:

Background data, including:

- Presentation to set the scene: a summary of the civic pride, events and ceremonies that currently take place within the Borough of Northampton and information; links with communities, role of the Mayor
- Relevant Legislation, for example the Localism Act 2011
- Statistics: including:

Number of Mayoralty events, civic ceremonies etc.
Supporting Charities (previous Mayor)

- Best practice external to Northampton/Case Study examples
- Internal expert advisors:
 - The current Mayor of Northampton
 - Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council
 - Chief Executive
- External expert advisors:
 - Representative of the Northampton Rotary Club
 - Freeman of the Borough
 - Expert Historian
 - The Chairman, Committee, Mayor's Fund for the Housebound
 - Lord Lieutenant's Office
 - High Sheriff's Office
 - Previous Mayors of Northampton
 - Representatives of All Saints Church, Thomas White, Blue and Orange School
 - Chair, NIFF
 - Town Clerk from a Town Council, such as Sutton Coldfield, Chester
- Site visits - various Town Councils

4 Key Findings and Conclusions

4.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

4.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel emphasised that both the Mayoralty and Civic tradition is very important within the town. The Mayoralty should be retained at the Guildhall. The Scrutiny Panel felt that a Charitable Trust could be set up for the Mayoralty.

4.1.2 The Scrutiny Panel realised that Oak Apple Day is a Borough Council tradition and was traditionally held at dawn on 29 May each year. It fell on a Sunday one year and was moved to 12 noon. There is a need for this event to be recaptured by the Borough. It is an important Borough event. Over the years a number of civic events have disappeared, it would be the opportune time to reintroduce some of these for example May Day celebrations.

4.1.3 100th birthday acknowledgements are expanding and this now comes under the remit of Civic Mayors.

4.1.4 The Mayor's visit to hospitals on Christmas Day really cheers patients and staff up, specially on the Children's ward.

4.1.5 Evidence highlighted that the Mayor of Northampton has key roles during his Mayoralty year including:

- The Mayor is the Chair of the Housebound Fund
- The Mayor is the President of Town Twinning
- The Mayor is the President for St John's Home
- Honorary Freeman take place just once every civic term – The Panel queried what would happen in terms of Unitary.

- 4.1.6 The Scrutiny Panel emphasised that there is a need to ensure that the Mace is retained in Northampton's Museum, in the borough and that all silver assets are made secure.
- 4.1.7 It was noted that the punch bowl that is kept in the Mayor's Parlour, was presented to a former Mayor when he had a child whilst in Office.
- 4.1.8 Evidence received highlighted that expert advisors providing information to the Scrutiny Panel all felt strongly about the retaining of the Mayoralty and Civic events.
- 4.1.9 The Scrutiny Panel queried who would lead on Hereditary Freeman Services in any potential Unitary Authority.
- 4.1.10 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted that not many towns have Mayors going back 800 years.
- 4.1.11 The Scrutiny Panel conveyed the view that it hoped that there would be a Town Council, with a Mayor. It was commented that assets would be protected by Town Council.
- 4.1.12 The Scrutiny Panel commended the book "*The Borough of Northampton and Its Guildhall and Civic Traditions - RJB Morris*". The book contained a lot of very important information.
- 4.1.13 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the marketing of the Mayoralty via the website but felt this could be done more proactively such as leaflets at places such as the train station and libraries. The Mayoralty needs to be promoted more. Social media could be used more too.
- 4.1.14 Evidence gathering demonstrated that the High Sheriff is appointed by the Crown. The primary role is to look after the High Court Judges. The High Court does not have a formal administrative Office. There is no funding for the role of High Sheriff. It is an unpaid role.
- 4.1.15 It was noted that when the previous Mayor's Serjeant had retired, the role had not been replaced. The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be useful for there to be an Honorary Mayor's Serjeant, possibly an Alderman, or former Councillor. There would be no cost to such an Honorary post.

5. Options

- 5.1 Cabinet will need to consider the report as part of its response to the recommendations.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Policy

- 6.1.1 The work of Overview and Scrutiny plays a major part in the development of the Council's policy framework through its work programme.
- 6.1.1 The report and its recommendations have policy implications in relation to the Council's response to the recommendations regarding Northampton Post Unitary. Cabinet's response will need to consider these issues in detail.

6.2 Resources and Risk

- 6.2.1 Cabinet will need to consider the resourcing issues for the recommendations made.

6.3 Legal

- 6.3.1 Legal issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

6.4 Equality

- 6.4.1 Equality issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

6.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

- 6.5.1 The Committee received evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in paragraph 3.4 of this report.

Background Papers

Overview and Scrutiny Committee report – Northampton Post Unitary (June 2019)
Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 June 2019

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