

NORTHAMPTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

Monday 29th March 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Ashraf (Chair); Councillor Meredith (Deputy Chair); Councillors Ansell, Birch, Hallam, Haque, Hibbert, J Hill, Joyce, Lane, B Markham, Marriott, McCutcheon, Russell, Smith and Stone.
In attendance: Mr R Walden (Acting Town Clerk), Mrs J Thorneycroft (Administration Officer, Ms E Hawkins (Mayoral and Civic Officer; Mr L Gould, (Northampton Borough Council); Mr D Moody and Dr L Sambrook-Smith (NorthantsCALC)

The Chair started the meeting by congratulating Councillors Penny Flavell, Jamie Lane, Brian Markham, Les Marriott and Dennis Meredith on their recent appointment by the Borough Council as Honorary Aldermen.

She also welcomed to the meeting Julie Thorneycroft, who started work with the Council the following Thursday as the new Administration Officer and also Lizzie Hawkins the Civic and Mayoral Officer who was also transferred to the Council's staff on Thursday.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Duffy

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1st March 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. TRANSFER OF ASSETS AND SERVICES

(a) Guildhall

The Acting Town Clerk reported that, following discussions arranged by the Borough Council's Cross Party Working Group with West Northants Council (WNC) concerning this Council's desire to be granted a long lease of the historic part of the Guildhall, WNC had concluded there was insufficient time to conclude a lease of the nature desired. In order to facilitate the inception of the Town Council and ensure proper access for parties, officers of WNC had presented formal proposals for a licence to occupy part of the premises as follows:

- Exclusive use of the Mayoral Suite and ground floor offices as previously discussed and a parking space for the Mayoral Car
- Shared access to the ground floor kitchen on an informal basis
- Shared access to meeting rooms and other civic areas via a booking system managed by WNC
- Pre-booking of the Council Chamber guaranteed for Council Meetings

Councillor Adam Brown the WNC portfolio holder for property and assets had further advised that work on a suitable lease to meet the Town Council's mid-term and long-term

needs would start as soon as workloads of WNC officers allowed. WNC hoped to enter into these negotiations in a friendly and cooperative spirit with the aim of ensuring that the Guildhall remains a valuable part of civic life for all residents of Northampton.

The Town Clerk presented the draft Heads of Terms for a Licence to Occupy part of the Guildhall as outlined in a plan submitted to the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Birch, seconded by Councillor Marriott and

RESOLVED: (i) that the Council accepts the proposed license to occupy of parts of the Guildhall as indicated, as a temporary measure to enable negotiations to be concluded with West Northants Council on medium and long term solutions.

(ii) That the Town Clerk be authorised to enter into the License to Occupy on behalf of the Council

(b) Transfer of Mayoralty and Civic Regalia

The Town Clerk reported that the Borough Council at its meeting on 22nd March 2021 had agreed the following:

- The formal transfer of the Borough Mayoralty and all its associated duties and offices to the Northampton Town Council on 1st April 2021.
- That all items in the enclosed list presented to the Council be transferred from the Borough Council to the Northampton Town Council with effect from 1st April, 2021
- That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive to enter into an appropriate agreement between Northampton Borough Council and the Northampton Town Council to ensure the future safekeeping of all monuments/artefacts listed in the report.
- The Chief Executive be given delegated authority in consultation with the Cross Party Working Group to determine the continuing role of the Offices of Civic Dignity and the Roll of Honorary Freedoms and any other matters relating to such offices and their functions with the intention that all such offices, civic relationships etc will be transferred to the Northampton Town Council on 1st April 2021
- To continue to explore and assuming it can be legally enacted, agree the transfer on 1st April, 2021, or a reasonable date thereafter, of the Honorary Recorder role from Northampton Borough Council to the Northampton Town Council subject to all formal legal matters by statute being concluded, and any necessary discussions with the West Northamptonshire Council as to any involvement they may wish to have in the honorary role.

The Town Clerk presented the draft of the proposed Agreement referred to above which included the following provisions:

1. conserving the Assets for the benefit of the local communities of the Unitary Councils to support the mayoralty and heritage of Northampton;
2. keeping the Assets in good condition and repair. This shall include

but not be limited to:

- and
- 2.1 implementing a planned programme of repairs and maintenance;
 - 2.2 commissioning regular (no less than five-yearly) professional condition surveys to inform repair and maintenance of the Assets;
 3. maintaining adequate insurance in respect of the Assets;
 4. the Town Council is not permitted to assign (which shall include, without limitation, transferring, conveying, selling or otherwise disposing of) the whole or any part of the Assets without the prior consent of West Northamptonshire Council in writing.

It was proposed by Councillor Birch, seconded by Councillor Marriott and

RESOLVED: That the Chair and Vice Chair be authorised to sign the Agreement referred to above on behalf of the Town Council to ensure the preservation and conservation of the civic regalia.

(c) Transfer of Festivities, Events and Northampton in Bloom

The Town Clerk reported that arising from on-going discussions between officers and councillors from this Council, West Northants and the Borough Councils, the West Northants Executive Committee (WNEC) had agreed that the budget for the following activities and services be transferred to this Council on a tapered basis over three years:

- Fireworks
- Christmas Lights and Activities
- Diwali
- Bands in the Park
- Music Festival
- Northampton in Bloom
- Other minor events

The budgets referred to were based upon the Borough Council's expenditure for these activities in 2019/20. He recalled that when this Council had set its own budget for 2021/22 it had included a contingency sum for enhancing or extending services which may be transferred from the principal councils.

In a separate matter, he recalled that the Town Council had no initial funds and the first instalment of its 2021/22 precept would not be received until the end of April. Some set up funding would therefore be needed early in April to enable the Council to be able to pay a number of invoices and staff salaries which will be paid on the 20th day of each month. Having discussed this matter with the Director of Finance at the Borough Council, I was pleased to advised that the Cabinet had agreed to make a grant to the Town Council in the sum of £80,789. This was calculated under a formula relating to precept and council tax base which allowed proportionate grants to made to Kingsthorpe Parish and Far Cotton Community Councils. The sum was more than sufficient for the above purposes and would also be utilised to promote Covid-19 awareness and additional costs incurred in connection with Council's response to the pandemic.

It was proposed by Councillor Birch, seconded by Councillor Marriott and

RESOLVED: (i) That the Council accepts the transfers proposed by West Northants and authorises the Acting Town Clerk to conclude any necessary agreement relating thereto

(ii) That the Executive Committee be authorised to approve any enhancements to the transferred events and activities considered desirable in 2021/ 22 from the contingency budget for that year

(iii) That the receipt of a set up grant from the Borough Council be welcomed

5. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE

Councillor Birch proposed and Councillor Marriott seconded that the report of the Executive Committee held on 15th March 2021 be received and endorsed and that the recommendations contained therein be adopted.

Upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED: The report of the Executive Committee held on 18th February 2021 be received and endorsed and that the recommendation contained therein be adopted

6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That, in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting

7. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK – REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Committee at its last meeting had noted that Marion Goodman had advised that she was unable to take up the offer of her appointment as Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for personal family reasons.

The Acting Town Clerk then recalled that the Borough Council had entered into a contract with the Northants County Association of Local Councils (NCALC) for supporting the creation of the new Town Council and the provision of an Acting Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. That contract would expire on 31 March 2021 and it had always been intended to report to this meeting on a proposed short term continuation of that contract as necessary to support the new Town Clerk up to and including the Annual Council Meeting on 17 May 2021.

The Committee then reviewed a range of options and concluded that, in order to enable councillors elected on 6th May to review the terms and conditions of the Town Clerk post and to have ownership of the section process, it was preferable to appoint an Interim Town Clerk for a period of 12 months.

The Chief Executive of NCALC, Danny Moody, anticipating that the Council might approve the Committee's recommendations., reported on the interest the NCALC team had identified in an interim position.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Council is saddened to note that, for personal and family reasons, Marion Goodman is unable to take up the offer of appointment as Town Clerk and all councillors extend to Marion their very best wishes for the future.**
- (2) That the contract between Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (NCALC) and Northampton Borough Council for supporting the creation of the new Town Council and the provision of an Interim Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) be continued for a further 12 months as follows:**
 - (a) For total of 20 days (out of 30 working days) from 1 April 2021 to 17 May 2021 including the continued provision of Richard Walden as Acting Town Clerk;**
 - (b) From 18 May 2021 until 31 March 2022 or such later time as a permanent Town Clerk takes up their employment.**
- (3) That the existing Town Clerk Appointments Panel (Councillors Birch, Hibbert, B Markham, Marriott and Russell) be authorised to decide the final details of the interim arrangements at (2b) above under that contract including the appointment of an Interim Town Clerk.**

The meeting concluded at 19:04