

Question for Full Council Monday 23rd April 2018

Question 1

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Beardsworth

In November 2017 you advised me that

“Officers are refreshing previous feasibility and valuation work at Albion House so to inform an options appraisal on the property and site. The options to be considered are likely to include an extension to St John's MSCP and also disposal for residential and/or commercial uses. “

Do you have any update to report?

Response

The initial review has identified possible infrastructure constraints on the use of the site for car-parking. We are therefore taking external advice on the options available to us for development of the site.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

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Question 2

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr B Markham

Does the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing agree that the decision, supported by tenants and councillors, to set up Northampton Partnership Homes as an Arm's Length Management Company has proved successful and still offers the best option for the management of the council's existing housing stock and for provision of affordable rented homes in the future?

Response

Yes, I agree with you that setting up Northampton Partnership Homes was a good decision and I am delighted with the improvements that NPH has made to the Council's homes and the services that tenants and leaseholders receive. Although it is essential that the Council works with a wide range of partners to deliver the amount of affordable rented housing that is needed in Northampton, I am confident that NPH will continue to play a key role in the delivery of new housing in the future.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing

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Question 3

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr B Markham

The Northampton Alive section on the council website includes the following statement "Northampton Borough Council is currently assessing expressions of interest for the development of Northampton's Greyfriars site.

A shortlist of bidders is expected to be announced in late December or early January, and these will work closely with the council's project team to develop their proposals, which can then go out for public consultation ahead of final Cabinet approval.

Final submissions are expected by the end of February 2016 and a developer will be appointed by May. This process will take account of the many suggestions put forward by members of the public during a consultation held in August 2014."

In your letter to council tax payers, last month, you stated that " - - taking a fresh look at plans for the Greyfriars site".

Is it not time that you updated the council website?

Response

The website was not up to date and has been updated. During the past week an internal candidate has been appointed to the Head of Marketing and Comms role, and a review of all such current online material will be taking place. Any such issues spotted can be raised at any time though, and quickly corrected, without the need to wait for a full council meeting.

Regarding Greyfrairs specifically, we are currently assessing proposals for a thorough traffic study, which we feel is essential, and this study will take account of traffic throughout the town centre.

Councillor Nunn
Leader of the Council

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Question 4

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr B Markham

The council website states:

“A boutique hotel is being created by private developers at 13 and 15 Guildhall Road.

There will be up to 13 stylish rooms, a cafe serving guests and the public, and a high-quality restaurant, making an attractive offer in the heart of the Cultural Quarter.”

I understand that these former council properties have been sold, does he have any news as to when this hotel or indeed the neighbouring coffee shop promoted on awnings in Guildhall Road might be going ahead.

Response

Pleased to report that the project to develop the hotel and café is going well, and we have been told that construction work and fit out will be completed around August, with the opening a little later. This is good news for the town centre.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

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Question 5

Question to Cllr Eldred from Cllr Beardsworth

Government financial support for local councils continues to fall and in the future we will be expected to rely more on Council Tax, charges and Business Rates to fund local services. With large retail units such as Toys R Us closing and others relocating to Rushden Lakes does he share concerns about future income from Business Rates?

Response

The administration does have concerns about the future of Business rate income, whilst in the media Districts and Boroughs are often quoted as receiving 40% of the Business Rates collected, it is in fact from this share only that Government extracts the tariffs and levy element.

The risk and impact on Business Rates from VOA revaluations and the constant flow of appeals and challenges means the level is volatile and collecting authorities carry a material risk.

However Cabinet continues to support and promote the Enterprise Zone and Northampton Borough as a great economic location with infrastructure and connectivity. Therefore we remain positive that we will continue to see a growth in Business Rates in our area and will seek to retain a fairer proportion.

Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet Member for Finance

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Question 6

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Birch

As all organisations employing over 250 people with a budget of £3m plus have to report on the gender pay gap, can you tell us, how does NBC rate?

Response

Northampton Borough Council is focused on creating a culture that embodies the Vision and Values of the organisation, and where all employees feel valued for the contribution that they make towards the delivery of a Corporate Plan that enables the best services possible.

The Council is committed to treating all employees fairly and supports diversity and equality in everything that it does.

Gender Pay Report

Below is Northampton Borough Council's first Gender Pay Report and is accurate information based on a "snapshot" of the pay of all employees as at 31 March 2017.

The Equalities Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) came into force on 6 April 2017 and requires public sector organisations employing more than 250 people to publish their results against six prescribed indicators of gender pay equality.

Mean gap The difference between the mean* hourly rate of pay of men and women

*average pay for all men and average for all women employees **13.21%**

Difference in hourly rate of men (£14.30) and women (£12.41)

Median gap The difference between the median* hourly rate of pay of men and women

*middle value of pay for all men and middle value for all women employees
14.96%

Difference in hourly rate of men (£13.57) and women (£11.54)

Mean bonus gap The difference between the mean* bonus paid to men and women

*average bonus for all men and average bonus for all women employees **0.00%**

Median bonus gap Bonus payments are not made
The difference between the median* bonus pay paid to men and women

*middle value of bonuses paid to all men compared to all women employees
0.00%

Bonus proportions Bonus payments are not made
The proportions of men who were paid a bonus and women paid a bonus **0.00%**

Bonus payments are not made
Quartile pay bands The proportions of men and women in the lower; lower middle; upper middle; and upper quartile pay bands
Quartile 1 Male **26.67%**
Female **73.33%**

Quartile 2 Male **18.43%** Female **81.58%**

Quartile 3 Male **38.67%** Female **61.33%**

Quartile 4 Male **41.33%** Female **58.67%**

Overall result

The organisation-wide result shows that Northampton Borough Council has a mean gender pay gap of **13.21%**

Councillor Nunn
Leader of the Council

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Question 7

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Stone

Do we pay the Apprenticeship Levy? If so how much? How many apprentices do we have and what is our total annual spend on apprenticeships? What is the spend per head?

Response

The council pays approximately £2,500 per month into the levy, this changes slightly each month as it's based on the numbers employed each month and the salary bill for that month, as it is calculated as a % of the month's pay bill.

We currently have 7 apprentices that were taken on last month and 1 apprentice that is half way through her course.

NBC has not completed a year under the levy, so we cannot confirm the annual spend, but the intention is to allocate all of it, and use the additional top ups and funding arrangements to ensure that this budget is put to good use and none is lost. However we can confirm that the levy pot is £29,627 to date, which includes the government's 10% top up.

There has been no spend to date on the 7 new apprentices as we are in set up phase, however they have been allocated to different schemes ranging for £2,500 per head to £9,000 per head. These Apprenticeships range from 12 to 48 months dependant on the level of the course they have signed up to.

We have a further 5 people waiting to sign up this month.

Councillor Nunn
Leader of the Council

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Question 8

Question to Cllr Hallam from Cllr Haque

The new environment contract with Veolia includes idverde as the contractor for grounds maintenance. Is this a sub contract through Veolia or is the contract with NBC who will monitor it?

Response

IDverde is a subcontractor of Veolia.

Councillor Mike Hallam
Cabinet Member for Environment

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Question 9

Question to Cllr King from Cllr Birch

Can we have a clear breakdown of the criteria for the awards to community groups from the £70,000 the Cabinet have taken out of the CEFAP pot?

Response

The allocated amount of 70k to be delegated at the Cabinets discretion to meet the objectives of the corporate plan to increase and compliment Heritage and culture opportunities in Northampton.

Councillor Anna King

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Community Safety

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Question 10

Question to Cllr King from Cllr Choudary

When are we going to work with partners in the town and have a plan to ensure that **all** our youth have access to youth facilities, sports facilities and leisure facilities?

Response

We are working with lots of community and voluntary organisations/partners who are providing sport/youth provision for young people. Our direct support includes grants to:

- NLT through the partnership grant process to deliver the street multi-sports programme (they work in the areas where we experience the highest amounts of crime and ASB) - £8,500 (2017-18)
- Free to Talk, who are working with Blackthorn Good Neighbours, CSN and some other community centres to deliver youth clubs/provision, again in our highest priority areas, where the need has been identified - £15,000 (2017-18)

We are also holding our second International youth day in August working with partners from all areas.

Additionally, we are about to undertake an exercise to map what is available in the Borough for young people to establish a list of options, which will enable us to sign post/refer young people to relevant service when appropriate.

Councillor Anna King

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Community Safety

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Question 11

Question to Cllr Eldred from Cllr Chunga

The 2016/17 budget has not been signed off by the External Auditors at the time of posting this question. Why? And what lessons have been learned from that?

Response

The budget has not been signed off by the external auditors as Full Council approved the Budget on 29th February 2016.

If the question actually relates to the final Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 then I can advise that progress is being made, there have been some technical issues that arose from property valuations and the production of the accounts themselves, exasperated by an external audit regime that appears to be more indepth than usual, the additional work being done will contribute to the more timely completion of the 2017-18 Accounts.

Lessons are being learned and an update on those lessons will be provided in the normal manner to the Audit Committee.

Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet Member for Finance

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Question 12

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr McCutcheon

What public campaign is this Council going to lead to ensure we get a Unitary Northampton when the County is reorganised?

Response

I have received a number of emails from people who share the ambition that this council expressed in its motion of January 2017, that Northampton should have a unitary council delivering all related services, and that its boundary should be expanded to include those communities that are part of our town but not within the current borough boundary.

However, we have been given a very short period of time to prepare proposals for unitary local government, and extremely clear guidelines for proposals, and the neither the concept of a unitary Northampton or altering boundaries fit within these guidelines. Given the importance of many other aspects of future unitary arrangements, there is a risk that we will lose influence over these other aspects as a result of our proposal being discounted because it is outside the criteria.

The Leaders of the three political parties have written to the Minister to express our view over a unitary Northampton, and are pushing for a response that will help us assess this risk. Time for a campaign, and the likelihood that it will succeed, seem very limited.

Councillor Nunn
Leader of the Council