

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Pensioners' Forum

Thursday, 27 January 2011

People at the meeting: Roger Rumsey
Councillor Jane Hollis
Councillor Brian Markham
M Brown
Mary Dyer-Atkins
Mr Mike Hill
Brian Nichols
Christiana Owusu-Akuffo
Archbishop Samuel Owusu-Akuffo
Margaret Prikhard
Joyce Smith
Audery G Tayler
David Ward
John Wright

Officers at the meeting Lindsey Ambrose
Thomas Hall

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Northamptonshire LINK

David Ward, Manager of Northamptonshire LINK introduced the work of these groups. They are groups of individuals and community groups who work together to improve health and social care services (such as hospitals, doctors and care homes). For example, when Health Services go through changes, this information would be discussed in groups such as Northampton Pensioners Forum. LINK would then gather people's opinions and take any issues back to the National Health Service (NHS) and social care departments to get changes made.

The Forum discussed the NHS White Paper. The Forum talked about funding from the NHS and Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) for Northampton Older People's Health Forum. David said the NHS would continue to fund that forum, with support continuing from Northampton Northampton Borough Council (NBC), Northampton Pensioners Forum and Northampton Pensioners' Voice. There was no information yet from Northants County Council (NCC) about their future involvement.

David said that a member of Northamptonshire Link will attend Northampton Pensioners Forum meetings regularly. He said if anyone would like any further information please contact the Link.

E-mail: info@northamptonshire-link.org.uk

Address: 15 St Giles Street, Northampton NN1 1JA

Web: www.northamptonshire-link.org.uk

Tel: 01604 808684

3. NBC Budget Consultation "Difficult Choices"

Councillor Brian Markham updated the Forum about the Council's consultation on its budget and priorities for 2011-12.

The Government's Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 indicated that local government finances would be reduced by 28% over the next four years.

NBC's consultation "Difficult Choices - Budget and Priorities" asked people to help this Council decide where to spend more or less money. The consultation contained five main statements. The final decisions about the budget and priorities would be made at a meeting of the Full Council on 28 February 2011.

Statement 1: Proposal to change the way NBC deliver some services e.g. creation of a Leisure Trust and using the private sector to deliver waste and street care services;

Statement 2: To continue to support the voluntary sector to deliver services when this is the most efficient and appropriate approach;

Statement 3: To not increase car parking charges despite the forthcoming increase in VAT;

Statement 4: To increase the amount spent on homelessness prevention; and

Statement 5: To prioritise how to spend The Capital Budget.

The Council would not be looking to raise council tax in 2011-12. This is because it recognised that for many people, including pensioners, this is their largest outgoing. It could be deemed as unfair to increase council tax as it does not recognise people's ability to pay.

NBC had decided to save money by selling Cliftonville House. Moving staff and updating facilities at the Guildhall, would provide a saving of £450,000 each year.

The Leisure Trust would be Council funded. It would continue to recognise the needs of community groups and people who need concessionary rates to use the leisure facilities. NBC hoped the Trust might attract more investment than NBC and that this would hopefully be used to improve facilities. The changes would mean too that each £1 of income would be worth more: the Trust would not have to pay VAT in the way the council services did.

The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) would be increased. This should help more people to stay in their homes for longer and to live as independently as possible.

The Council would make some savings by reducing and reorganising staff in several departments.

4. Community Centres: Update

Thomas Hall, Head of Policy and Community Engagement updated the Forum about community centres.

The Council currently runs 21 community centres in Northampton:

- 11 have a management committee; and
- the others are managed by NBC officers.

In future, council officers would only be able to do a little to manage their 10 community centres. This is because of budget constraints and the need to make efficiency savings.

It was important for the council to make sure that all the community centres were being managed locally. People and organisations would have the freedom and flexibility to apply for a long lease for local people to run the community centres. This would save money and prevent the loss of community centres. It would also make sure that local people, best placed to understand local community needs, were making the decisions about how their community centre could best be used.

Members of the Forum raised some concerns about the state of repair of some community centres; about the possibility that the people most suitable to run the centres may not have the funds for the lease or to improve conditions. Thomas Hall confirmed that the council was willing to talk to any willing applicants to see what the council can do to help with improvements or help fund the transition to their new management in the short term. He said it is important to the Council that it does not lose willing management; the skills and resources in the local community would be valuable to create a successful community centre for the local area.

If NBC does not manage to find applicants to lease the community centres they will continue to run them in the short term and try to generate more interest from the local community.

5. Our Telephone Number Is Changing - 1 March 2011

The Northampton Borough Council telephone number is changing to make things easier – and cheaper - for NBC customers.

From 1 March 2011, the new number would be:

0300 330 7000

This is the number to use for general queries and Northampton Borough Council switchboard.

6. Holocaust Memorial Day In Northampton: 27 January 2011

The Holocaust Memorial Day activities in Northampton would in 2011 include:.

27 January - February:

Jtrails Jewish History and Heritage of Northampton exhibition in the People's Gallery

at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, Guildhall Road. Free.

10 February 7pm:

Dr Zoe Waxman speaking on Anne Frank -lecture at Northampton Synagogue. The lecture is organised by Northampton Historical Association (www.history-northampton.org.uk)

In partnership with Northampton Hebrew Congregation (www.northantshc.org).

Until 5 April 2011 people could nominate unsung heroes for an Anne Frank Award (www.northampton.gov.uk/annefrank)

7. Any Other Business

Roger Rumsey told the Forum about how he and some other people had the chance to be involved in helping develop a new advice guide about shop fronts in Northampton. He said he was pleased the council wanted to talk to members of the Forum in this way. He hoped that there would be more similar opportunities and that people would want to be involved.

Lindsey Ambrose updated about the new equalities law. The Forum discussed about being involved in

- giving views about how easy council documents are to read and understand
- helping more officers develop changes and updates to how things are done
- helping to shape the new equality strategy for the Council.

The Forum agreed to being involved in these ways.

8. Items For Future Meetings And Activities Of The Forum

The topics the Forum suggested might be explored at future meetings were: further discussion about the new equalities law and how forum members can help the council get things right for older people; and an update on council budget and priorities for older people including changes to the bus subsidies.

9. Would You Like To Join The Forum?

Membership enables you to receive information by email or post about meetings, consultations, events etc so you can be actively involved with Northampton Borough Council and dialogue about services.

There are various ways to join:

- register on our website to receive Agendas, Minutes and updates for the Forum (and other meetings managed by the Council). Go to:

www.northampton.gov.uk/getupdates

- contact Lindsey Ambrose, the Forum's co-ordinator:

Tel/Text: 0779 53 33 687

Tel: 01604 837566

E-mail: lambrose@northampton.gov.uk

- write to us at:

**Northampton Pensioners' Forum, NBC, The Guildhall, St Giles Square,
Northampton NN1 1DE**

10. Northampton Pensioners' Forum On Facebook

More older people are using the Internet now, including Facebook. We now have a Facebook page. Anyone can post news on it at any time. You might like to share invitations to events, funding opportunities, local and national consultations.

The easy web address for the Facebook page is:

www.northampton.gov.uk/pensionersforumonfacebook

This is in addition to the Forums information on the NBC web pages at:

www.northampton.gov.uk/forums