

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Pensioners' Forum

Friday, 20 January 2012

People at the meeting: Councillor Brian Oldham

Officers at the meeting Lindsey Ambrose
Thomas Hall

1. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FROM PEOPLE WHO CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE MEETING

An apology for absence from the meeting was received from Joyce Smith.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2011 were agreed.

Matters Arising

The Chair urged everyone to make his or her representations on the Taxi Age Policy Consultation.

Members of the forum expressed their concern over quality of taxi vehicles and driving and stated that they would welcome more spot checks by the Council.

Training of Volunteers for Inspection of Care Homes- members were reminded to contact Link, if they wished to take part in training for volunteers.

Councillor Oldham reported back on street lighting. He reported that damaged streetlights were being replaced by new "BFI" lights, which were more efficient. They will not be replacing those that are switched off. If replacements are made then there may be a reassessment of the street to see which lights should remain off. He commented that he personally had made over 30 appeals to have lights reinstated some of which had been done and urged people to keep making comments to the County Council.

Questions were asked as to where the liability rests if people suffer an injury as a result of the lights being switched off. There was also concern that the reduction in street lighting will lead to increased levels of crime and vandalism.

The Forum were advised that Councillor Geraldine Davies had lodged a queries with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission as to whether the switching off of the lights was in some way a breach. It was reported that the Commission were considering its response.

4. COMMUNITY NEWS EXCHANGE

Friday 27 January 1100 - Flower laying ceremony at the Holocaust Memorial Stone in the Courtyard at the Guildhall.

If you would like to say a few words as part of this please contact Lindsey Ambrose 0779 53 33 687 or lambrose@northampton.gov.uk .

Monday 30 January (6.30pm for) 7pm The Great Hall - Holocaust Memorial Day event

Annual event to mark National Holocaust Memorial Day. In 2012, there will be particular recognition of the events in Uganda in 1972 which led to the expulsion of British citizens including people who have come to live in Northamptonshire.

Stamp out Hate Crime Exhibition

The Northampton Youth Forum's first Stamp out Hate Crime campaign exhibition about Northampton is now in the People's Gallery at Northampton Museum, Guildhall Road 17 January to 4 March 2012 (Tues to Sat 10am - 5pm and Sun 2pm - 5pm).

5. NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION

Thomas Hall, Head of Community Engagement gave the Forum members a presentation on the Budget Consultation process 2012/13.

The main points of the discussion were as follows; -

The budget will be considered by Cabinet on 22nd February and then at Council on 29th February. There have been several ways that people could submit the comments on the budget proposals. Consultation questionnaires have been sent out to forums. They are available for completion on line and there is a public question time meeting on 26th January.

The net budget is reducing. There will be no increase in Council Tax but there will be a decrease in the grant from Central Government. This means that there will need to be savings .The Government is changing the way in which Local Government is financed so it is not certain of the exact amounts however indications are that the formula grant for 2011/12 will be £14.2 million, dropping to £13.3 million in 2012/13, £12.5 million in 2013/14 and £11.7 million in 2014/15.

The key aim of the budget is to deliver savings through efficiencies rather than cut services.

There are a number of key pieces of legislation, which may affect budgets that it is not possible to quantify. For example the impact on the Government Welfare reforms for example potential numbers of those made homeless because of housing benefit changes.

Comments from Forum members included: -

Rat Service- hardship fund – This should be a completely free public service and people should not have to be subject to a means tested assessment.

Stop Funding PCSO's – the Police should be responsible for providing an effective service independent of requiring grants from the Borough Council. Money currently used to support PCSO's should be spent on more Community and park wardens.

Bus Interchange- funding should be available from private companies who have an interest in the development.

CCTV- is only as effective as the support package. There are many types of property i.e. flats, commercial premises that are not covered. The usefulness of CCTV was called into question if there is inadequate street lighting. It was accepted that this Council budget could not be seen in isolation. The proposals made by this Council may impact on County Council budget decisions and vice versa.

Social Lettings agency- there would be concern if private landlords and agencies were able to set rent levels. There was a reassurance that it was meant to deliver a common access framework only.

Homeless people in council housing not B&B- whilst considering that it was preferable for people to be housed in Council homes rather than B&B's there was concern as to how the housing would be identified and allocated. There was some concern that more than 10 years ago money had been spent converting accommodation for use by the homeless at Spencer barracks and Cliftonville was this still being used?

Review policy on allotments – Members believed that there had already been 2 reviews in 5 years and were suspicious that another one may be attempting to identify land for sale to developers.

Investment in Enterprise Zone- there were questions as to how the value of the Enterprise Zone could be measured. How would it be known if it had resulted in an increased numbers of jobs?

Overall – some members felt that there wasn't enough detail in the consultation. They wanted to know detailed figures for the budgets. These are contained in the Cabinet report of 22nd December. It was also commented that there were now a number of key services which have been contracted out and that there needed to be reassurances that these were good value.

6. ENTER AND VIEW OF CARE HOMES

Moya Mc Vicar , Vice Chairman of Northampton Link, gave the Group an overview of the work that they had done at Northampton General Hospital.

There were three groups, all open meetings involving members of the public.

The Health Care Bill had implemented changes which had placed more emphasis on what individuals want from their healthcare and how they want it delivering.

Some of the 24 care homes have been visited, these were the ones that had been given top status by the quality commission. Visits normally take place in small groups of 3 or 4. Visits are pre notified and there are restrictions on where they can go. Training is provided on the restrictions.

Visits involve looking at communal areas, general level of facilities, quality of food. Residents are asked questions which are based on a national questionnaire although in reality the information can be found out by having a chat with the resident.

Of the 24 homes visited so far there have been no serious concerns.

There was concern that standards in homes drop during night time hours when the numbers of staff in place reduce.

There is also a scheme to reintroduce visits to hospital wards. This may also look at making night time visits.

Moya will send details on how to volunteer to Roger. Anyone who is interested should contact him.

Members thanked Moya for her presentation.

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OR FORUM ACTIVITIES

A representative from Northampton General Hospital be invited to attend a meeting in the near future.

Potential impact of benefit changes on tenants, particularly in regard to under occupancy of properties. This could be linked with the progress on the sheltered housing review.

8. DATE AND VENUES OF FUTURE FORUM MEETINGS

The meeting scheduled for 9th February 2012 has been cancelled.

The date of the next meeting would be Tuesday 20th March 2012 in the Holding Room.

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified