

## **Northampton Borough Council**

### **Northampton Pensioners' Forum**

**Tuesday, 20 March 2012**

#### **1. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The co-chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and stressed that the Pensioners Forum was non –political and was for open discussion. He mentioned that he was happy to see so many people in attendance. He introduced Councillor Oldham – the co-chair of the Forum.

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

Apologies were received from Mr and Mrs Owusu-Akuffo.

#### **3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012 were agreed once an amendment to them correcting BFI to PFI be made.

##### Matters Arising

There were none.

#### **4. NORTHAMPTON ALIVE**

Northampton Alive and the Northampton Bus Interchange were taken under the next agenda item as a joint item.

#### **5. NORTHAMPTON BUS INTERCHANGE**

The Leader gave a presentation, which set out the administrations vision for the future. He commented that the Enterprise Zone would create new jobs as more businesses would move into the area and subsequently generate growth in and around the Northampton area. He reported that there was a need for the redevelopment of the Grosvenor Centre in order to attract more people and more businesses into the Town Centre, and a number of businesses had commented that they considered it to be commercially unviable due to the limited space available and lack of potential development.

With regards to the Bus Interchange, it was reported that it was a jointly funded project, which involved West Northants Development Corporation, Northamptonshire County Council and the Borough Council. It was reported that the location of the Fish Market had been chosen due to its proximity to the Drapery and the Market Square and unlike the current bus station, the proposed station would not house buses overnight. He reported that currently there were office spaces that could not be filled and a redundant car park that was not usable due to the problem of an acidic solution dropping on to cars and structural engineers had deemed the car park as unsafe for use and therefore, money was being lost hence part of the

reason for the proposed development.

The Leader informed the Forum that the St Johns Development would see student accommodation to ensure the growth and development of the University, which would be in the heart of the Town Centre. The current car parking facility had always been designated development land and therefore with car parking not at capacity in the Town Centre, the development of student accommodation would be welcomed without loss of parking spaces. Further projects were mentioned such as the Marina in Becketts Park and the restoration of parts of Delapre Abbey, partly funded by the Lottery, working towards preserving the heritage of Northampton. Discussions were still underway with regards to the refurbishment of the Train Station to encourage and attract people and businesses to the area.

A questions and answer session followed the presentation:

Q) When will the Conservative administration start listening to people and are Legal and General dictating what happens to the town?

A) On going discussions have been had with Legal and General and there have been frustrations with the amount of time that this had taken. People are being listened to and he welcomed people to examine the plans when the application would be made for the Grosvenor Centre development later this year and a consultation would be undertaken whereby peoples opinions and concerns would be listened to.

Q) Two main concerns were expressed by the Bus User Group – i) Public Consultation had been very limited and people had felt excluded from the discussion and ii) There needs to be collaborative working with other Councils and agencies for the development to be a success.

A) Collective partnership working was of paramount importance and extensive communications with the other Councils was already underway.

Q) Why was it not possible to 'revamp' the current building and is the proposed amount of money to be spent on developing the Bus Interchange justifiable.

A) The costs of repairing the revamping the bus station would be £30 million – which would be significantly more than developing a new Bus Interchange. Structural engineers had examined the Bus Station and deemed it to be not fit for purpose.

Q) Could a plan be shown of what a revamped Bus Station could look like without the demolition of the old one, so that people could see different options and how long will the new one last?

A) The last thing that people would want to see would be the desertion of people and business from the town. People would be able to see the plans of the Bus Interchange from 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012. The Bus Interchange was a long-term vision.

Q) Would it be possible for a new frontage to be added to the current bus station?

A) The underlying structural problems would not allow for just a frontage to be added as it involved more than just changing the aesthetics.

Q) Can people be assured that the proposed Bus Interchange be built to last?

A) Investments have been looked at and extra money from the Borough Council would be used in the development and the extra facilities that would be provided as an investment for the people.

Q) What would happen to the bus routes during the time of development?

A) The whole of the Town Centres traffic could be redesigned in order to accommodate any changes

Q) Have you examined other car parks such as Wolverhampton to consider any problems that they have experienced?

A) Consideration has been given to a number of other Bus Stations and those ongoing considerations and developments were still underway. The Leader agreed to look at Wolverhampton.

The Co Chairs thanked the Leader for his presentation. The Leader invited all members of the forum to contact him about any concerns or issues by letter or email if they did not consider had been addressed at the Forum. A number of people expressed their concern that the Agenda Item had been so limited in time and it was pointed out that other meetings have also been arranged to discuss the Bus Station.

## **6. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

It was explained that the Community Governance Review was an opportunity for local people to have their say about how their local communities are run with regards to whether or not they would be parished or not. It was noted that people needed to sign a petition in the area that affected them before submission closes on the 27<sup>th</sup> April and that a percentage of votes would be needed in order for the petition to be considered.

Due to time restrictions forum members suggested that further consideration be given to the matter at a future meeting.

## **7. COMMUNITY NEWS EXCHANGE**

Cllr Markham – Cabinet Member for Housing explained the forum members that some people had requested information about the position of Sheltered Housing. She commented that people living longer and therefore the demand for Sheltered Housing would increase. She commented that a report would go before Cabinet in June 2012.

Cllr Markham, in response to a question explained that there had been an increase in the number of people who were homeless and as a last resort; some of those

people had been housed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. She stated that the number of people temporarily housed in Bed and Breakfasts was 29. She further elaborated that consideration had been given to the Housing Stock Transfer and that she was committed to providing the people of Northampton with housing that met the Decent Homes Standards, housing stock transfer being one of the ways in which this could be achieved and assured the forum that she would continue to work with the finances allocated to her. She further explained that a secured tenancy was for Council tenants and assured tenancy being for housing association tenants.

#### **8. SUGGESTIONS FOR ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OR FORUM ACTIVITIES**

- Community Governance Review
- Platform 51

#### **9. DATES OF FUTURE FORUM MEETINGS**

1<sup>st</sup> May 2012

7<sup>th</sup> July 2012

The meeting concluded at 4pm