

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Pensioners' Forum

Tuesday, 1 May 2012

1. WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS

The co-chair Roger Rumsey welcomed everyone to the meeting . Present were Councillor Brian Oldham – the co-chair of the Forum, Mike Hill, John Rawlings, Ann Timson, Liz Percival, Norman Sharp, Mary Dyer Atkinson, Harry Tuttle, Hazel Tuttle, Brian Nichols, Dave Hewitt.

Officers- Lindsey Ambrose.

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

Apologies were received from Maurice Brown and Mr and Mrs Owusu-Akuffo.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Subject to minute 7 being amended to show the next meeting of the forum should be 7th June the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2012 were approved.

Matters arising

Members of the forum felt that the meeting on 20th March had been “high jacked” by people who had come along for the item on the Northampton Bus Interchange. They felt that they had not had a proper opportunity to express their views and also that some other items had not received proper consideration.

Housing Matters

Therefore it was agreed that Councillor Markham, Cabinet member with responsibility for Housing be asked to attend the next meeting of the Forum to discuss Housing matters.

Bus Interchange

The Council co chair of the Forum, Councillor Brian Oldham declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as a member of the Council’s Planning Committee.

The main points of concern on the Bus Interchange were as follows; -

- It is not large enough, bus bays will still be outside. This is unacceptable, as people should not have to wait outside exposed to the elements.
- The numbers of buses using the interchange will be too high, leading to congestion within the building and the entrances/exits to it. Including shops within the area will also increase the number of people movements and lead to congestion.

- The bus interchange is an important element of the Town Centre regeneration and getting it wrong will damage prospects of encouraging people and new businesses into the Town.
- Not enough information was available on what alternative arrangements would need to be in place during the construction of the interchange.
- There was a feeling that adequate responses had not been made to questions raised and that this had led to people feeling angry and frustrated.

The Forum **AGREED** that they should send a letter to the Planning Committee expressing the Forum concerns about the long term viability of the bus interchange as to its suitability for the needs of the elderly and vulnerable.

4. NORTHAMPTON CARNIVAL ARCHIVE PROJECT

Lindsey Ambrose explained that the Northampton Carnival were looking to collecting photographs, memories etc to make a digital record of Northampton Carnival.

The project is being funded by the National Heritage lottery and is a pilot for a national record.

If anyone has anything that they would like to submit they should contact

Ajaib Hussain 01582 437114 ajaib@carnivalarts.org.uk

Items would be returned, once they had been copied into the archive and contributions will be acknowledged.

5. 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 27th April and that a percentage of votes would be needed in order for the petition to be considered.

The Forum was advised as to the status of all current positions. As of the 1st May there were 3 areas that had been validated as going forward for further consultation:

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1. Parklands Ward
2. West Hunsbury Ward
3. St James Ward

There were also 3 other areas where the required number of signatures was almost achieved: -

1. Sunnyside and Obelisk Wards
2. Westone Ward
3. Hunsbury Meadow

The main points of the discussion were as follows: -

- Who is driving the collection of signatures? Several members of the Forum said that they were not aware of the petitions. Largely this has been led by local Conservative Councillors, as the Community Governance Review was part of the Conservative Party manifesto. However, in some areas active resident associations had taken part.
- Petitions are online and have also been collected in physical form on doorsteps or in local shops, community centres etc.
- There were concerns that this did not give those people who were against it a chance to register their disapproval at this stage.
- Any areas that pass the threshold will be further consulted upon and all residents in the area will be included in a referendum.
- The need for a third layer of government was also questioned. There was a feeling that adding an additional layer would be wasting money.
- There was concern as to how potential parish areas had been defined .In most cases these were on ward boundaries and yet there was a feeling that since boundary changes these were not necessarily obvious communities.
- Councillor Oldham stressed that it was very important that people were made aware of the issue and that they were given information so that they could make an informed decision on whether they felt that there was a benefit in being a parished area.
- Parished areas can raise a precept - monies which can be spent in the area under a specific list of powers. This will mean that there will be an additional charge in those areas that adopt a parish system, however exact amounts vary depending on size of parish etc.
- There was also concern that the Community Governance Review Steering Group may be able to overturn any decisions made as a result of the referendum. Members were advised that this was not the intention although a view from the Steering Group may be required if there was a marginal result.
- There is a Community Governance Review Information and Guidance leaflet available, and information is available on the website. Government guidance suggests that it is good practice to carry out a Community Governance Review every 10-15 years.

6. COMMUNITY NEWS EXCHANGE

John Rawlings stated how pleased he was to see that the Northampton Baby Café had secured funding for another year.

Mile Hill commented that as the Chronicle and Echo was moving its printed publication to a weekly paper then the Council should be considering alternative methods of communication.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Northampton University

Concern was expressed that the University had publicly said that it was considering moving sites so soon after permission had been granted to build student accommodation on the St Johns site. It was felt that the University must have been aware of that when making the application.

Northampton General Hospital (NGH)

At the end of the last year the Forum had requested that someone from the General Hospital attend one of their meetings to discuss growing concern about the capacity of the hospital, particularly in the Accident and Emergency services. This had not happened.

Roger Rumsey stated that he had had a meeting with the Leader of the Council, the NGH and Lindsey Ambrose in which they were told that due to funding cuts there was no liaison officer available.

The Forum **AGREED** that they should send a letter to NGH asking that a representative come to a future forum meeting.

Libraries

Members of the Forum were advised that there may be a proposal to move Kingsthorpe Library. They considered that libraries are a vital community connection, particularly for older people and felt that any potential threat to them should be resisted.

8. SUGGESTIONS FOR ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OR FORUM ACTIVITIES

The next Forum meeting will have a Housing theme, inviting Councillor Mary Markham- Cabinet member for Housing and Ian Swift, to discuss Housing Allocations, roles of private landlords and issues over HIMO'S.

9. DATE AND VENUES OF FUTURE FORUM MEETINGS

7th June 2012

13th September 2012

The meeting concluded at 4:10 pm