

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Pensioners' Forum

Thursday, 12 September 2013

Present: Roger Rumsey (Chair) Councillor Oldham (Co Chair) Norman Sharp, Mary Dyer-Atkins, Ann Timson, David Hewitt, John Rawlings, Brian Dix, Mike Hill, Tony Mallard, Anne Mackay and Doreen Minney

1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Councillor Lynch – Chair of Scrutiny Panel 1 – who would be talking to forum members on Item 3 of the agenda ‘Consultations - Improving The Town's Parks’.

Apologies were received from Mr and Mrs Tuttle and from Mrs Forrest-Smith.

2. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING (6 JUNE 2013)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 6th of June 2013 were agreed as a true record.

3. CONSULTATIONS - IMPROVING THE TOWN'S PARKS: CLLR MATT LYNCH

Councillor Lynch explained the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and explained that Scrutiny Panel 1 was currently examining ways in which to improve the Town Centres parks in order to make recommendations to Cabinet. It was explained that views were being sought from a number of sources and Councillor Lynch commented that he welcomed all views of forum members. The following comments/suggestions were made by a number of forum members:

- Abington Park – derelict building adjacent of the park (next to the museum should be made into an hotel.
- The boating lake in Abington Park should be opened up for model boats
- Easfield Park – the park is boggy and therefore not good for wheelchair users
- Abington Park – toilets close at 3pm – should be extended until 5pm and to include opening/closing times of the toilets
- More organised activities to be introduced to all parks
- Is the retention of parks a statutory duty if the Council?
- Contractors should fulfil their contractual duties
- Difficulties faced for people in wheelchairs AND those walking with a stick/cane/crutches.

- Friends of the Parks should be offered more recognition for their work
- People should use their parks more

Councillor Lynch thanked members of the forum for their input and commented that if people would like to fill in the questionnaire and have further input, to contact him so that he could feed all further comments back to Scrutiny Panel 1.

4. DISCUSSIONS/EVENT PLANNING

Laura Bessesl – Benefits Team Leader explained the forum members some of the implications of the Bedroom Tax. It was noted that an aspect of the bedroom tax was to bring social landlords (of the public sector) in line with private sector landlords. She commented that it was a National Initiative and that the Borough Council could only implement the changes in legislation of the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

It was explained that there were mechanisms provided by the Council for those suffering from severe consequences of the bedroom tax and commented that residents were able to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment. It was further noted that there was a lack of smaller properties for people to downsize into and that the Council were exploring how private sector landlords could assist and support the Council during the transitional process.

5. PLANNING THE WORK OF THE FORUM FOR 2013/14

The forum discussed the future work of the forum for 2013/14. It was agreed that the following items should be discussed at future forum meetings:

- Transport
- Housing Stock Options
- Northampton General Hospital
- NHS
- GP Services
- 'Healthwatch'

It was **agreed** that at the next meeting, to be held on the 31st October 2013 that topics to be discussed would be

- 1) Transport (including the bus station)
- 2) Housing Stock Options would be discussed

It was **agreed** that at the meeting to be held on the 12th December 2013:

- 1) A representative from the Northampton General Hospital be invited to update the forum members
- 2) A representative from 'Healthwatch' also be invited to update the forum.

6. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Members of the forum took the opportunity to update everyone on events and raise concerns about issue affecting them.

The following information was exchanged between forum members:

- A Veterans Club was being held at Headlands Pub costing £3 per year to join
- Northampton Pensioners Voice would meet at Abington Community Centre every second Monday of the month and cost £10 per year for membership.
- There was a 55 plus group which met in Abington Community Centre which cost £1 per session.
- The 'Shamrock Club' met every Friday between 1.30 and 4.30pm at the Vernon Terrace Community Club

Members of the forum also raised concerns about the increase infection rates of Shingles and it was noted that people were now able to get vaccinated. The forum expressed concern about the number of street drinkers in the Town Centre and it was suggested that the problem would get worse with the building of the new Bus Station.

Concern was also expressed at the prospect of Abington Street being opened up for cars and it was suggested that there would be an increase in the number of accidents involving cars and pedestrians. It was noted that there was soon to be an exhibition about the proposal which would be open to members of the public to examine the plans and put forward their opinions.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT MEETING

It was **agreed** that at the next meeting, to be held on the 31st October 2013 that topics to be discussed would be

- 1) Transport (including the bus station)
- 2) Housing Stock Options would be discussed

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as being the 31st October 2013 in the Jeffery Room, 2-4pm.

The meeting concluded at 4.03pm