

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 1**

#### **Question to Councillor Markham from Mr N Adams**

Tenants are exempt from the bedroom tax if they meet BOTH the following conditions:

1. They have continuously received Housing Benefit (full HB or 1p per week) on or before 1 January 1996, AND
2. They have lived in the same property since 1 January 1996

Can you give assurance that the above conditions were taken into account and that the bedroom tax has NOT been imposed on ANY Tenant(s) meeting the above conditions?

#### ***Response***

The reality is that housing benefit claimants satisfying relevant conditions to qualify under the provisions you are referring to, and who are also affected by the spare room subsidy, are very few in number. LGSS, our housing benefit service provider, is of course fully aware of these provisions and has systems in place to identify such cases to ensure they are correctly determined.

***Cllr Markham  
Cabinet Member for Housing***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 2**

#### **Question to Councillor Markham from Mr N Adams**

On the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2013 in response to a written question, you gave the number of voids at the end of September 2013 as 115

I would bring to your attention that for week 26 (23 September to 29 September) the rental loss on void properties was £18,538.88

On your stated 115 properties it would suggest an average council rent of £174.80

Would you please confirm the number of 115 voids given on 28<sup>th</sup> October?

#### ***Response***

The total number of lettable voids in September 2013 was 115 but there were also a further 114 void properties that were awaiting Major Works and were therefore not lettable. The combined total for void properties for September was 229.

***Cllr Markham  
Cabinet Member for Housing***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 3**

#### **Question to Councillor Markham from Mr N Clarke**

A recent article in the local press 'Licence error forces lorries off Northampton's roads' stated the overall cost to the public purse won't be known until the hired vehicles are returned.

Question:

What part of the public purse will cover the cost?

- a) The General Fund
- b) The Housing Revenue Account

#### ***Response***

The Housing Revenue Account

***Cllr Markham  
Cabinet Member for Housing***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 4**

#### **Question to Councillor Hadland from Councillor Palethorpe**

Would the Cabinet member tell us if during his and the Leaders regular fortnightly meetings with Legal and General whether they have given any indication that the decision on Grosvenor Centre redevelopment is conditional on the Secretary of State rejecting the Rushden Lakes Development?

#### ***Response***

I would refer you to the evidence submitted by Legal and General to the Inspector at the Public Inquiry.

The evidence submitted by Legal and General supports this Council's position that Rushden Lakes would, if approved, have a significant, adverse impact on Northampton town centre. Legal and General confirmed at the Inquiry that if the Secretary of State approved the Rushden Lakes application, then Legal and General would not proceed with the proposals for the development of the Grosvenor Centre extension on the scale that have previously been published.

There have been discussions with Legal and General about Rushden Lakes, but we have plans for the regeneration of site whatever the decision from the Secretary of State

***Cllr Hadland***  
***Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 5**

#### **Question to Councillor Mackintosh from Councillor Palethorpe**

In order to clarify the position of the Northampton Borough Council will the Leader of the Council inform the Council if the Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership LEP and South East Midlands LEP support his opposition to the proposed Rushden Lakes Development?

#### ***Response***

I can confirm that neither NEP nor SEMLEP submitted any evidence or made any representations to the Rushden Lakes Public Inquiry.

We all recognise that Rushden Lakes would have a negative impact on Northampton, which is why I have campaigned so hard against it.

It is a shame that on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2012 when the decision was taken, Cllr Palethorpe tweeted:

'Good luck to East Northants Planning Committee tonight.'

What a disgrace.

***Cllr Mackintosh  
Leader of the Council***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 6**

#### **Question to Councillor Bottwood from Mr L Costello**

What is the collection rate for households who are now having to pay at least 20% Council Tax under the new Council Tax Reduction scheme, and how many of those households in default are being prosecuted to recover the debt?

#### ***Response***

The current rate is 8.5%, which is due to increase to 15%. The Borough Council will support individuals in financial hardship, and where possible avoid court action. It should be noted that the Council follows national legislation that prescribes the use of court action in recovering Council Tax.

***Cllr Bottwood***  
***Cabinet Member for Finance***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 7**

#### **Question to Councillor Bottwood from Mr L Costello**

What are the amounts of Council Tax Base Reduction grants being given to each parish council in the borough in 2014/15?

#### ***Response***

The Council currently has no plans within its draft budget for 2014/15 to pay any Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grants to parish councils.

***Cllr Bottwood  
Cabinet Member for Finance***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 8**

#### **Question to Councillor Hallam from Councillor Stone**

What measures have been put in place to safeguard our citizens, including the most vulnerable (such as homeless) in light of the recent severe weather and floods?

#### ***Response***

The Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) will be open in Oasis House, which will activate when temperatures are forecast to be below freezing for three consecutive nights. The Provision opens on the first night in these conditions. The weather in Northampton has been very mild for the time of year, and therefore the SWEP has not been activated this year so far. There have been no areas in Northampton that have been affected by flood waters, therefore no intervention has been required.

***Cllr Hallam  
Cabinet Member for Environment***



## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 9**

#### **Question to Councillor Mackintosh from Councillor Stone**

What are the issues with the local authority working with the public health authority and what can be done to improve our working practice?

#### ***Response***

The public health authority is Northamptonshire County Council. This authority has an excellent working relationship with the County Council.

***Cllr Mackintosh  
Leader of the Council***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 10**

#### **Question to Councillor Markham from Councillor Mason**

Can we have updated figures on the number of households in arrears as a consequence of the bedroom tax?

#### ***Response***

303 tenants subject to the under-occupancy charge did not have arrears on the 1st April but had arrears at the end of December. The bottom line here is that we cannot be certain why anyone falls into arrears, so the question can't be answered with total clarity.

***Cllr Markham  
Cabinet Member for Housing***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 11**

#### **Question to Councillor Markham from Councillor Mason**

What are the current homeless figures and when will the next count be conducted?

#### ***Response***

The last count was done in November 2013, and we returned a figure of 9. The next count will be due in November this year.

***Cllr Markham  
Cabinet Member for Housing***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 12**

#### **Question to Councillor Hadland from Councillor Capstick**

How many new homes have been built or are in the process of being built in this town since May 2011? Furthermore, how many of these are affordable homes? How many are for social rent?

#### ***Response***

Net number of dwellings built 1st Apr 11 – 31st December 2013 = 1349 (423, 11/12 +516, 12/13 +410, 13/14)

Number of New Affordable Dwellings Built = 397 (82, 11/12 + 179, 12/13 +136, 13/14)

Number of Social Rented Built = 186 (70, 11/12, 76, 12/13, 40, 13/14)

Number of Affordable Rent (80% of market rent) Built = 119 (3 11/12, 62 12/13, 54 13/14)

***Cllr Hadland***

***Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 13**

#### **Question to Councillor Mackintosh from Councillor N Choudary**

How many apprenticeships do we have as a local authority and how many do our contractors/commissioned services have?

#### ***Response***

I can confirm that the Borough Council has 6 apprentices.

I am unable to confirm how many of the authority's contractors/commissioned services have apprentices, or how many they employ.

***Cllr Mackintosh  
Leader of the Council***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 14**

#### **Question to Councillor Markham from Councillor Gowan**

How many children spent Christmas in temporary and emergency accommodation?

#### ***Response***

There were 27 households in B&B type accommodation, with a total of 18 dependents between them. There were 47 households in Council Stock accommodation, with a total of 55 dependents between them.

***Cllr Markham  
Cabinet Member for Housing***

## Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014

### Question 15

#### Question to Councillor Bottwood from Councillor Beardsworth

At the Council meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013 the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mackintosh presented a report recommending that £88,325 of Special Expenses be refunded to the residents of Hardingstone and West Hunsbury Parish Councils and that this sum, plus the cost of issuing recalculated Council tax demands to the two parishes, be taken from the general reserves.

The Council also resolved that: -

2.4 That Council approve a full review of special expenses to be undertaken during 2013 prior to setting the Council Tax for 2014/15

Can the Cabinet Member advise the Council on the details of this review?

*(In particular, please include conclusions, consultations, scrutiny and subsequent actions, particularly in communicating with Parish Councils regarding the consequences for their budgets, steps taken to factor the review into the upcoming budget and moves to replenish the depleted general reserves used to resolve the administration's error when approving the last budget)*

#### **Response**

The Council has been working closely with Parish Council's as part of their budget setting process. The conclusion of the review has led to the Special Expenses for the residents of Hardingstone and West Hunsbury Parish Councils being permanently reduced and these expenses being spread across the residents of the whole Borough. As part of the Council's budget setting process a review of reserves will be undertaken to ensure they are set at a reasonable level to reflect the risks faced by the Council.

**Cllr Bottwood**  
**Cabinet Member for Finance**

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 16**

#### **Question to Councillor Eldred from Councillor Glynane**

Would the Cabinet Member please advise the Council on the current status of the Administration's plans to sell off the Sekhemka statue?

#### ***Response***

Plans to sell Sekhemka are progressing well. Due to commercial confidentiality associated with the sale, I am not currently in a position to go into greater detail, as to do so would be detrimental to the Council's position in this matter. I will of course provide more information when I am able to do so.

***Cllr Eldred***  
***Cabinet Member for Community Engagement***



## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 17**

#### **Question to Councillor Eldred from Councillor Beardsworth**

Could the Cabinet Member please detail the consultation that has taken place with the families attached to the Francis Crick statue regarding plans to move it?

#### ***Response***

Discussions have taken place with the families attached to the Francis Crick statue and no final decisions have yet been taken about where to relocate it.

***Cllr Eldred***  
***Cabinet Member for Community Engagement***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 18**

#### **Question to Councillor Hadland from Councillor Conroy**

Could the Cabinet Member tell the Council how many retail units in Northampton town centre are owned by Northampton Borough Council?

#### ***Response***

The Council owns 22 retail units within the Town Centre.

***Cllr Hadland***

***Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 19**

#### **Question to Councillor Hadland from Councillor Conroy**

Could the Cabinet Member tell the Council how many of the retail units in Northampton town centre which are owned by Northampton Borough Council are vacant?

#### ***Response***

There are two units that are currently unlet. However, some units are let, but temporarily are not trading, whilst physical works are completed to premises by the tenant.

***Cllr Hadland***

***Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 20**

#### **Question to Councillor Hallam from Councillor Meredith**

Could the Cabinet Member please detail to the Council how NBC is preparing for Northamptonshire County Council plans to start charging for Household Waste Recycling?

*(Please include details of mitigating the anticipated rise in flytipping, and how this has been built into the upcoming budget)*

#### ***Response***

The Borough Council has discussed this draft budget proposal with the County Council at political and officer level and are looking at options.

***Cllr Hallam  
Cabinet Member for Environment***

## **Question for Full Council Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

### **Question 21**

#### **Question to Councillor Markham from Mr N Clarke**

In 2013 the Council paid £230,866 to eight establishments for B&B accommodation.

My understanding is that limited use of council stock was also used to help reduce reliance on expensive B&B accommodation.

Question

- a) What was the extent of the use of council housing stock?
- b) What savings were achieved from the use of HRA stock?

#### ***Response***

a) We currently have 50 Council Stock properties which are used to reduce the need for B&B accommodation – 47 were in use last month – three were out of use due to essential maintenance works needing to be carried out.

b) It is not possible for me to precisely state the level of savings derived from the use of housing stock as an alternative to B&B due to variable factors such as charging rates, length of stay and the contribution the customer can be required to make to the charge.

***Cllr Markham***  
***Cabinet Member for Housing***

