

Question for Full Council Monday 28th April 2014

Question 1

Question to Councillor Markham from Mr Norman Adams

In the Autumn Statement last year, the government announced it would raise local authority Housing Revenue Account borrowing limits, by £150 million in 2015-16 and £150 million in 2016-17. On 7th April 2014 the government published the detail of how local authorities can bid for additional borrowing. Will NBC come forward with proposals and take advantage of this opportunity?

Response

The Borough Council has previously expressed interest in raising the debt cap on the HRA and welcomes the Government's announcement. The Borough Council has also announced that it will be building 100 new Council homes for rent.

The Government seeks competitive bids for up to £300m across the country in total, to support the building of 10,000 new homes for rent, within rules and guidance set out on the 7th April.

Work has been commissioned to frame the best possible bid for these funds within the rules of the competition and I fully expect the Council to submit a bid by the deadline set.

Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing

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Question 2

Question to Councillor Hallam from Councillor Stone

What is going to be done about the littering and fly tipping that occurs on private land and blights the environment for other residents?

Response

As Cabinet member for Environment, it is one of my major priorities to improve the cleanliness of the town. Although the Council's duties, responsibilities and powers make a clear distinction between public and private land, the cleanliness of private land is of no less importance to me, although the approach and solutions to dealing with matters such as littering and fly tipping on private land, of course, need to be different.

To assist me in keeping the town clean and tidy I have ensured continued investment in Neighbourhood Wardens and Environmental Enforcement Officers, who work closely with councillors, residents associations, community groups and Enterprise, our environmental services contractor. These officers also liaise with landlords and land owners to try to ensure they take responsibility for their property and have a wide range of enforcement powers which they use when necessary and appropriate.

**Councillor Hallam
Cabinet Member for Environment**

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Question 3

Question to Councillor Mackintosh from Councillor Mason

Cllr Mason to Cllr Mackintosh

In April 2004 the following resolution was passed by full Council:

“Councillor Pritchard moved and Councillor Crane seconded:

This Council recognises that fair trade is tackling poverty by enabling disadvantaged producers from poor countries to receive a better deal, through encouraging support for the FAIRTRADE mark.

We therefore resolve to support fair trade by:

- serving FAIRTRADE tea and coffee at our meetings and offices
- encouraging the use of FAIRTRADE products in our town and local work places and community organisations
- attracting support for FAIRTRADE in eh media and in our own publications
- supporting the formation of a local steering group to ensure continued commitment to obtaining FAIRTRADE town status.”

I understand the Guildhall is no longer using Fair Trade products, why?

Response

I am grateful for this being brought to my attention.

This has been looked into by the Guildhall Office and I understand Fair Trade products will be introduced soon.

**Councillor Mackintosh
Leader of the Council**

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Question 4

Question to Councillor Markham from Mr Norman Adams

How many tenants with two or more children are living in one bedroom (council) property?

Response

The data that is held on the Open Housing database is only accurate at the point of sign up, unless the tenant subsequently notifies us of an addition to their household.

According to the data that is held on the Open Housing database, there are currently 4 one bedroom council owned properties with two or more children in the household.

**Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 5

Question to Councillor Bottwood from Mr Neil Clarke

What was the cost of Councillors for year 2012/13 (including Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility, Travel & Subsistence and Mayoral Allowances)

Response

The total cost of Councillors for the year 2012/13 including Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility, Travel and Subsistence, and Mayoral Allowances was £430,322.99. In previous years the levels were:

2011/12 £429,060.67

2010/11 £450,795.78

2009/10 £460,304.17

**Councillor Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Finance**

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Question 6

Question to Councillor Markham from Mr Neil Clarke

In June 2013 a Freedom of Information response (NBC1022-595/13) STATED that the Council Housing Stock had 23,357 rooms currently classified as bedrooms. It also stated:-'The Council does not hold any data on bedroom sizes, as this information is not held it is not covered by the Freedom of Information legislation'

Is it still the position that the Council holds no data on bedroom sizes?

Response

The Freedom of Information Request referred to in this question asked how many bedrooms in the Council's housing stock are above 5 square metres in size and how many are below 5 square metres in size.

The Council does not hold data on bedroom size and as such it is not covered by the Freedom of Information Act.

It is of course possible that some information on room size may exist in individual property files but no data on bedroom size across the Council exists and it would be significantly in excess of the costs limit in the Freedom of Information Act to seek to compile such data.

**Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 7

Question to Councillor Markham from Mr Teddy McNabb

Due to the on-going decent homes scandal, what if any health risk assessment of our residents and in particular our vulnerable residents were taken by Northampton Borough Council?

Response

The Council takes its obligations to potentially vulnerable residents extremely seriously.

We have training programmes in safeguarding awareness for housing officers, support staff, operatives and caretakers and always aim to identify potentially vulnerable tenants and other members of their household.

Tenant profile information continues to be recorded, including specific vulnerabilities, which we can use to provide further targeted support where appropriate.

Every contractor used by the Council is obliged to ensure that their employees and sub-contractors are aware of any specific vulnerability of households when working in their home. Every contractor should ensure that all their operatives and sub-contractors have the appropriate documentation from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Works in properties with vulnerable people are supervised and health workers and other agencies notified prior to commencement of any such works.

Project officers and Resident Liaison Officers deal with individual cases and assess specific needs of tenants and based on that evaluation programme works accordingly.

We work closely with our contractors to protect such tenants and continue to refine and re-evaluate our processes.

**Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 8

Question to Councillor Mackintosh from Mr Phil Leach

Cllr Mackintosh, I hope you have listened to what the public had to say in public comments & petitions regarding Abington Street. Why do you think it is such a great idea to de-pedestrianise the area when we the public have proven that the majority of the public don't want it to happen?

Response

The plans by the Administration to reopen of the middle stretch of Abington Street is part of our strategy to bring economic growth and improve the vitality of Northampton. We are creating an area where people can be picked up, dropped off and park in the heart of the town centre, and this will bring the area back to life as we make it easier for shoppers and support local businesses.

**Councillor Mackintosh
Leader of the Council**