

Question for Full Council Monday 15th September 2014

Question 1

Question to Councillor Markham from Mr Norman Adams

Right to Buy receipts:

If a council were to fail to spend the receipts within three years, it would be required to return the unspent money to government with interest.

In the period April 2012 to June 2014 NBC have sold 155 properties with receipts of over £7 million

Question:

What amount of receipts have NBC spent?

Response

In 2012/13 and 2013/14 the total RTB receipts spent was £3.19m. The funding for capital programmes is not applied until financial year end therefore the 2014/15 spent figure is not available.

**Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 2

Question to Councillor Markham from Mr Norman Adams

The Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 inserted new sections into the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to introduce a new application and appeal procedure, to review affordable housing obligations on the grounds of viability.

Question:

What effect to date has this made on numbers of deliverable affordable housing

Response

There have not been any formal applications received by the Council to review the amount of affordable housing provided in S.106 obligations through the mechanism introduced through the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013.

**Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 3

Question to Councillor Hadland from Councillor Meredith

What is the total number of members of staff working within the planning department who have left the organisation within the past 3 months?

Response

Four members of staff have left the Planning Department in the last three months.

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

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Question 4

Question to Councillor Hadland from Councillor Meredith

How many consultants are currently being used in the planning department?

Response

There are currently no consultants employed within the Planning Department.

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

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Question 5

Question to Councillor Hadland from Councillor Meredith

Are there plans to use more?

Response

More what?

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

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Question 6

Question to Councillor Markham from Councillor Beardsworth

How many people have been paid compensation for wrongly removing property from vacated social housing?

Response

There have been 9 cases in the last 3 years, out of 2,962 properties that became empty and underwent repairs before being re-let.

**Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 7

Question to Councillor Markham from Councillor Beardsworth

How many of these were after the housing was vacated because of a death?

Response

Of the 9 cases in which compensation was paid, none of these was after the housing was vacated because of a death of the tenant.

**Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 8

Question to Councillor Markham from Councillor Beardsworth

How many interims and consultants are being employed by the Borough Council currently in the Housing department?

Response

The total number of Interims/Consultants in the Housing Department is 11 as of Friday 5th September.

**Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 9

Question to Councillor Eldred from Councillor Glynane

Whose decision was it to place the statue where it is?

Response

This question does not mean anything.

Councillor Eldred
Cabinet Member for Community Engagement

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Question 10

Question to Councillor Mackintosh from Councillor Glynane

How many members of staff have left the organisation in the past year?

Response

Since 2011 this administration has made significant reductions to the number of back office staff at the Borough Council, and senior management has been reduced from 21 to 10, saving local tax payers £850,000 which has been reinvested in front line services.

The number of employees that left NBC in 2013/2014 is as follows:

<i>TUPE</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>216</i>
<i>Non TUPE</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>140</i>

**Councillor Mackintosh
Leader of the Council**

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Question 11

Question to Councillor Mackintosh from Councillor Glynane

How many members of staff left the organisation in 2010

Response

287 members of staff left in 2010 when the authority was under Lib Dem administration.

Since the Administration took control, we have reduced the number of senior managers, shared back office staff costs, significantly reduced bureaucracy and reinvested the savings in front line services - something the failed Lib Dem administration did not do.

**Councillor Mackintosh
Leader of the Council**

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Question 12

Question to Councillor Markham from Mr Neil Clarke

NBC states housing developments of 15 dwellings or more are required to provide affordable housing at a minimum of 35%. BUT can be less if this makes a scheme unviable.

What percentage of developments in excess of 15 dwellings has USED the unviable line and been given planning consent with less than 35% of the dwellings affordable?

Response

Since the Affordable Housing Interim Statement was adopted in February 2013, there have been nine sites that meet the criteria of 15 or more dwellings which have been given planning permission up to 1st September 2014.

Two of these permissions have been approved with less than 35% affordable housing.

**Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 13

Question to Councillor Markham from Councillor Mason

There still appears to be some problems with the implementation of decent homes work in Northampton East, what is being done to remedy this situation?

Response

The Decent Homes Programme this year will bring 3,100 properties up to the Decent Homes Standard by way of significant improvements. In such a large programme there are bound to be some complaints and at present, there are 5 complaints at Stage One or Stage Two of our complaints procedure.

**Councillor Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 14

Question to Councillor Hadland from Councillor Stone

When will plans for the St Edmunds Site be made public?

Response

The Council continues to work closely with the developers regarding the submission of a planning application and Listed Building Consent.

Clearly this is a complex application and it will be submitted shortly and be available on the planning website for public viewing thereafter.

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

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Question 15

Question to Councillor Hadland from Councillor Stone

Are the small businesses negatively affected by the work to open up Abington Street and the work to improve the Victoria Promenade/Bedford road junction going to be compensated for their losses?

Response

Northampton Borough Council officers have been in direct discussions with the Independent Valuation Office. Officers have assisted in supplying information which has led the valuation office to offer a reduction in Business Rates for the duration of the works to Abington Street. The reduction is offered to businesses within a specific geographic area.

Borough Council officers are working with the County Council in terms of businesses located in the immediate vicinity of the Victoria Promenade works.

Councillor Hadland
Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

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Question 16

Question to Councillor Mackintosh from Councillor Marriott

We seem to be experiencing a lot of turbulence in the NBC workforce. If this is the case are we conducting exit interviews to find out why?

Response

Current turnover rates for the Council's workforce are below national averages, and are lower for the first six months of this year than for the last six months of 2013. All employees who leave are offered either to complete an exit interview form or to meet with an HR Advisor. This is detailed in the letter sent on receipt of a resignation. Whilst few employees take up this opportunity, the information provided is shared at the appropriate senior management level in the strictest confidence.

**Councillor Mackintosh
Leader of the Council**

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Question 17

Question to Councillor Hadland from Councillor N Choudary

When is the work on Victoria Street, putting in facilities for bus passengers, going to begin and end? What facilities are going to be provided for passengers in the Drapery?

Response

Works are to be completed by the end of October.

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

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Question 18

Question to Councillor Hallam from Mr Fitzhugh

Far Cotton Recreational Ground was granted Town Green Status in 2010 and we would ask the Council why they have continually disregarded the laws and regulations concerning this awarded status, by allowing car parking and the setting up of 'Fun Fairs' to take place on Far Cotton Recreational Ground at the detriment of the worsening condition of Far Cotton recreational ground.

Response

The Council, as landowner, agreed to the registration of the Green. The essential characteristic of a Town Green is that it is there for the use and benefit of the locality for the purpose of recreation, amongst other things. Holding a Fun Fair on the Green for the benefit and recreation of residents in the locality complies with the law, but we are happy to discuss this further with local residents to seek their views.

**Councillor Hallam
Cabinet Member for Environment**