

Northampton Borough Council - Northampton Pensioners' Forum

Thursday, 15 January 2015

Present: Cllr Brian Oldham (Councillor Co-chair, NBC), Roger Rumsey (Community Co-chair), Mike Hill (Pensioners Voice), Brian Nichols, D. J. Hewitt, John Rawlings (Quakers), Tony Mallard (NFRA & ERA), Hazel Tuttle, Cllr. Mennell (NBC), Gill Shadbolt (Care and Repair), Veronica Male (Tollers), Karen Marsh (Tollers), Cllr Mike Hallam (Cabinet Member for the Environment, NBC), Cllr Alan Bottwood (Cabinet Member for Finance, NBC), Cllr. Brian Sargeant (NBC), Alice Morgan(NBC)*

*Took minutes

1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Ann Timson, Harry Tuttle, Jacqueline Forrest-Smith, Christiana Owusu-Akuffo, and Vicki Rockall.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed, subject to the below changes:

- Cllr. Mennell was not marked as present at the last meeting.
- TM made a correction under item 3 paragraph 3 of the minutes – there are five tenants sitting on the board of NPH, not just four.
- DH - item 3 paragraph 5 of the minutes – correction of the spelling of 'Tupe', and 'affected'. DH also commented that there are possibly 2 redundancies following the transfer of staff to NPH.

Matters arising:

- AM fed back responses to the forum regarding enquiries about fines for cycling on footpaths, and street drinkers.
 - The power to issue fixed penalties for cycling on the pavement lies with the Police. Although Accredited NBC Neighbourhood Wardens can take enforcement action, the fixed penalty notices are issued by the Police – NBC do not have statistics on the number issued etc.
 - The whole of the borough is covered by a Designated Public Spaces Order for anti-social drinking – see fact sheet on this enclosed at the end of the minutes.
- DH commented on the Matters Arising at the last meeting regarding trees – 2 separate teams deal with the crowns and the trunks of trees. DH raised concerns about this issue; Cllr Hallam said DH's comments have been taken on board.
- TM commented that no planning application has yet been submitted for St Edmunds hospital site. Cllr Oldham said although progress is slow, there is movement forward with the site.

3. NOMINATIONS FOR COMMUNITY CO-CHAIR

Roger Rumsey. (Nominated by Hazel Tuttle, and seconded by Mike Hill)
John Rawlings (Nominated by David Hewitt, and seconded by Tony Mallard).

Elections to be held in March.

4. CLLR. HALLAM - ENTERPRISE CONTRACT

Cllr Hallam fed back to the forum regarding two issues that were raised to him at a previous meeting. Firstly, the land on Leicester Street is not part of the Enterprise Contract. Secondly, the B and M hedge has now been sorted.

Cllr Hallam recapped about the Enterprise Contract, and the achievements that have been seen, such as Bloom, Green Flag etc., and improvements in grass cutting.

Cllr Hallam explained that the Council are tied into the contract with Enterprise for 7 years (2011-2018). Mid-2016 will be the time to look at changes we want to make to the contract. There are benefits to the contract, but in hindsight, it would have been useful to have small mini-break clauses to review the contract and its terms.

JR asked whether there is any possibility of looking at changing the recycling containers used. Cllr Hallam advised that the lead time for the supply of recycling boxes is a national issue. To change the containers, the Council would need to put up the capital, as Enterprise would not do this - NBC would not be in a position to provide this amount of capital commitment. Any boxes that are damaged by the crew themselves, Enterprise is liable for the cost of this. A discussion about recycling followed.

The forum discussed the charge of £25 for bulky waste collection. Cllr Hallam commented that he would like to look at possibility for discounts for certain people, such as Pensioners, in the future. GS advised that Care and Repair also offer bulky waste collection; this is charged at their hourly rate of £15. Cllr Hallam commented that the hands of the council are tied with the contract currently, but come 2016, other options will of course be explored with other organisations.

Questions were raised by forum members about an ingestion plan for Westbridge. Cllr Hallam advised that Cabinet has approved a proportion of land at Westbridge, but plans could not be discussed further yet, as the proposals are in their very early days. More information will be shared once it is available.

Cllr Hallam advised that there are two people in the contract team, the Partnership Unit: Mick Tyrell and Olive Grey. Peter Hackett, who has previously worked for NBC and was transferred across to Enterprise, has now been brought back to NBC also. There are meetings between Daventry District, Northampton Borough and Amey to oversee the contract.

DH asked about the frequencies of street sweeping and refuse collection. Cllr Hallam advised that the contract is not frequency based; the only frequency based element is refuse collection. The rest of the contract is output based, measured by a

number of different criteria. DH commented that he believes a number of streets do not comply with the Environmental Protection Act. DH advised one issue is around frequency of street sweeping. Cllr Hallam advised he will look into this and will return with a response in the future. Cllr Hallam told the forum that two new street cleansing machines have been purchased, one by NBC and one by the BID. There is also now one warden allocated just for the Town Centre.

DH also raised concerns about weeds, when the herbicide is applied, and also about rubbish left after football matches at the Racecourse.

RR commented that the pensioners forum have a lot of experience and expertise from their time in employment, and could look through contracts to support the Council. Cllr Bottwood advised that third parties are often not able to be involved with this process. Cllr Bottwood also commented that with environmental issues, we all need to take responsibility for reporting.

Cllr Hallam commented that if he is still in his position mid-2016, he would be looking to come to the forum to discuss what should be in the contract, and what services the Council should pay extra for etc.

5. CLLR BOTTWOOD - NBC BUDGET CONSULTATION

BN raised concerns about documentation not being circulated before the meeting. This is available on the internet. AM offered to bring some down to the meeting, but this was not required.

Cllr Bottwood gave an overview of the budget forecast and proposals for 2-15/16. In 2018/19 it is estimated that there will be a £6.6million gap. In 2016/17 it is forecasted that there will be a £2.6 million gap. Council tax represents just 1%.

Budget proposals for 2015/16 can be found here:

<http://www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200024/consultations/2038/budget-1516-consultation>

A 0% increase in Council Tax has been proposed.

Budget for 2015/16 of £28 million is balanced, and £1.8 million will be reserved to help find the gap in 2016/17.

DH raised a question about Abington Street - Cllr Botwood advised that the forum would need to speak to the County Council and Cllr Hadland, NBC Cabinet Member of Regeneration, about this.

The forum had a discussion about the restructuring of local government. JR asked what services are being cut, and how deeply. Cllr Bottwood advised that frontline services are not being cut, and moving to shared services has helped to ensure this. DH raised concerns about local authority finances.

The forum discussed the issues around shared services and the possibility of moving to a unitary authority etc.

Cllr Bottwood asked that if the forum has any questions or topics for discussion around finance, please invite him to a future meeting; he would be very happy to attend and advise

The Budget consultation is live until 31st January – the online consultation can be found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nbcbudget2015>. For help please contact budget@northampton.gov.uk or call 01604 837573.

6. CLLR SARGEANT - NBC SCRUTINY PANEL, 'POVERTY IN THE TOWN'

Cllr Sargeant gave an overview of the Poverty in the Town Scrutiny Review, and commented that the issue of Poverty affects Pensioners also.

DH raised that issues such as food banks, private rented sector and rent caps, caps on pay day lenders, loan sharks, etc., are not included within the core questions. DH said that one problem that needs addressing is where do people go to get advice.

JR commented that the Northampton Quakers do a monthly collection for the food bank and support the night shelter.

The forum discussed issues around poverty in the town, including sanctions, and examples and stories of poverty.

BN asked how poverty is defined. ***ACTION: TT will send the definition used by the Scrutiny Panel across to AM who will circulate to the forum asap.***

Cllr Sargeant invited the forum members to attend the next Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 12th February at 6pm, in the Jeffrey Room. All forum members are welcome. TM offered to circulate the papers to the NFRA also.

7. ACTION PLAN UPDATE

AM has met with Museum services, and has discussed the possibility of the forum intergenerational project linking in with the WW1 projects the museum are working on. A plan has been formulated, that the WW1 project officer will train the Youth Forum members in Oral History interviewing and recording, and the youth forum members will then interview the Pensioners Forum who would like to take part to record their family stories of the world wars. This will then be archived by both the Youth Forum and Pensioners Forum together.

It is likely that this activity will take place during the Easter school holidays. Dates to be confirmed.

If you would like to take part in this activity, please let AM know via email alicemorgan@northampton.gov.uk or via telephone (01604) 837795.

8. COMMUNITY NEWS EXCHANGE

Tuesday 27th January, Holocaust Memorial Day
Civic Ceremony 12 noon
Evening Ceremony from 6:30pm in the Great Hall

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

DH asked when Abington Street is going to be fully opened. DH was advised that the railings are still to be delivered and installed.

MH asked for the health service to be discussed at a future meeting, looking at parking facilities and the possibility of moving to shared services with KGH.

10. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT FORUM MEETING

Thursday 19th March, 2-4pm, the Jeffrey Room, The Guildhall

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified

Designated Public Spaces Order and Street Drinking

In response to your questions - the whole of the borough is covered by a Designated Public Spaces Order (DPPO) for anti-social street drinking.

The DPPO is not a ban on drinking alcohol outdoors. Drinking alcohol outdoors only becomes an offence if you are behaving in an anti-social manner and are asked by an accredited enforcement officer to stop doing so and you refuse. The DPPO is not applied to people who drink sensibly in a public place.

How is it enforced?

- If you are acting in an anti-social manner whilst consuming alcohol, or look as though you are likely to, you may be asked to stop drinking by a PSCO, police or other accredited officer.
- If you refuse to stop drinking the officer has the right to confiscate and dispose of the alcohol.
- If you surrender the alcohol and behave, no further action will be taken.
- If you refuse to give up the alcohol you may be arrested and have a fine of up to £500 or be issued with a fixed penalty notice of £50.
- If you surrender the alcohol yet continue to behave in an anti-social manner you may be arrested and convicted of a Public Order Offence.

(NB. With effect from 20/10/2014 the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 commenced. From that date the existing DPPO transferred to a Public Spaces Protection Order, still keeping the same powers as listed above.)

The designated 'Wet' area for street drinkers in Alley Yard was removed 8 years ago. It is important to note that the main reason for the 'Wet' area was to provide a single area where street drinkers could go and also provide an opportunity for them to engage with relevant support services.

Therefore, when the decision was made to remove it, there were a number of reasons:

- The poor behaviour of the people using the shelter (fighting, urinating in the street, verbally abusing passers-by)
- It had also become a gathering place for drinkers from outside of the town
- Lack of engagement of the street drinkers with support agencies
- Negative impact it was having on the neighbouring businesses
- The same street drinkers were also meeting in other areas of the town centre

Hope this information helps. If you require any further detail please let me know.