

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 1

Question to Cllr Bottwood from Cllr Beardsworth:

In 2014 the then Chairman of Northampton Town Football Club requested an additional £1.5 million loan on top of the previously agreed sum of £12 million. The stated reason being that the sum previously agreed by the Cabinet was insufficient to complete the programmes of works set out in the original application. Was Councillor Bottwood, as Cabinet Member for Finance at the time, aware that the former Leader of the Council David Mackintosh had agreed to this extra money?

Response

It is my understanding that all cabinet members were made aware that the additional sum would be required.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 2

Question to Cllr Bottwood from Cllr Meredith:

Can the Cabinet Member advise me why Southfields Residents Association have not yet received confirmation that Southfield Park has been designated as parkland.

Response

Whilst it was indeed agreed that the land and at Southfields could in future be known as Southfields Park, this concession did not entail plans on my part to formally notify stakeholders such as Southfields Resident Association of this name change.

As the local councillor, I would suggest that you yourself are well placed to share this information with interested parties such as the RA.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 3

Question to Councillor Bottwood from Councillor Beardsworth:

Fly-tipping and litter in central areas of our town are out of control. In particular there is a problem with commercial waste from shops, take-aways and HIMO's. What action is being taken against those minority of businesses that continue to cause problems for their neighbours and make the town unattractive to visitors.

Response

I note your comments about commercial waste in the town centre. Our environmental health officers and neighbourhood wardens regularly patrol and carry out checks to remind businesses of their legal obligations in relation to the effective management of their waste. A number of Fixed Penalty Notices have recently been issued where businesses have failed to respond to words of advice and duty of care notices.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 4

Questions to Councillor Bottwood from Councillor Meredith:

Three months ago, the Cabinet Member for the Environment told Council that Amey Enterprise were going through a restructuring exercise and that he expected their performance, in relation to the street scene and ground maintenance to pick up once his had been completed. Can he say whether and in what way he thinks services have improved since that time?

Response

The environmental services contract continues to be a major challenge and, I dare say, that will be the case until our agreement with EMS/Amey comes to an end in just under two years' time.

New management has indeed now been put in place and I think there are indications that there has been some improvement in some areas. I regard customer complaints to be a good general indicator of how things are going and I am pleased to say that the number of complaints received are significantly down in August and September, as compared to the previous two months. Please be assured however that we are not resting on our laurels and we will continue to push and challenge to get the best service we can for the town, until we are able to put new arrangement in place in June 2018.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 5

Questions to Councillor Hadland from Councillor Beardsworth:

When looking at the redevelopment of the Greyfriars Area did the Portfolio Holder consider including a new bus station for the town on the site of the old one and using Northgate as the international coach terminus for Northampton?

If not why not?

Response

The option was considered as part of the strategic appraisal of the Greyfriars site however was dismissed as not viable. Ultimately the cost would have been carried by the tax payers of Northampton.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 6

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Terrie Eales:

We have a housing shortage and it has been agreed that there will be 100 homes built in Dallington Grange. This project has been delayed and hasn't even gone out for consultation yet. If it gets approved by planning from previous plans I've seen, the social houses are set to be placed close to the Kings Heath side of the development which will be the last part to be built. So realistically this will take years. What plans are in place for building further houses in the meantime?

Response

The Council is continuing to discuss the delivery of houses on Dallington Grange with the site developers. Large sites do take a number of years to be built out however, so the council is also aware of other opportunities to accelerate the delivery of all housing, including council housing. The Housing Delivery Plan, recently agreed at cabinet, will review all potential opportunities.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 7

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Ashraf:

I have been dealing with a number of families in desperate need of larger properties. Family homes with more than 2 bedrooms are just not coming back into circulation. What plans are there in place to rectify this problem or offer further help and support to families in this situation?

Response

I share your concerns about the reducing number of larger, affordable rented homes that are becoming available for letting, and the impact this is having on families.

Over the last few years, the total number of affordable rented homes that have become available for letting has continued to reduce and, during this period, larger family homes (with 3 or more bedrooms) have accounted for a steadily reducing proportion of new lettings.

We are in the process of drafting a new Housing Allocations Policy that will award additional priority to the transfer applications of existing tenants who are under-occupying larger family homes and are willing to move into accommodation that has fewer bedrooms. This will hopefully increase the number of larger family homes that become available for letting.

Northampton Partnership Homes has recently secured planning permission to build two new 4-bedroom homes, and I will ensure that larger family homes form an integral part of its future development programme. I am also planning to meet with Officers from the Council and NPH to establish whether or not there is anything more that can be done to help and support families who are living in overcrowded housing.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 8

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Terrie Eales:

The current housing banding isn't fit for purpose. The emergency band doesn't seem to differentiate between levels of need. I am aware that there were talks of this being changed. Is there any further progress on this or an idea of time scales?

Response

We are in the process of drafting a new Housing Allocations Policy that will include key changes to the Banding System and the way in which applications are prioritised.

Although we are hoping to be in a position to commence consultation on the new Housing Allocations Policy early next year, I am happy to meet with you and Councillor Ashraf to brief you on the changes that we are proposing to make to the Banding System and how we think the new Housing Allocations Policy will help meet residents' needs better in the future.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 9

Question to Cllr Bottwood from Cllr Terrie Eales:

There has been signage going up in hot spot fly tipping areas stating that the area is being monitored. Has this resulted in any increased fines being issued? And has there been any decrease in fly tipping in these areas?

Response

We can say with certainty that there has been a definite decrease in the number of fly-tipping. Furthermore, there has not been an increase in fines, which clearly shows that the "Under Surveillance" signs have been successfully preventing fly-tipping. Regrettably, we have had to deal with some of the signs being pulled down and these are challenges we are actively addressing.

We are pleased with the positive results so far and as you can appreciate, this is work in progress and we remain fully committed to continue reducing fly-tipping in Northampton.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 10

Question to Cllr Bottwood from Cllr Birch:

What is the cost of collecting Flytipping to the Borough Council?

Response

The removal of fly tipping is an element of the street cleansing service provided by Enterprise through the environmental services contract. The council does not make a specific payment for the removal of fly tipping as it is included in the overall contract price.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 11

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Culbard:

Could you advise me how the 'evidence collecting' process towards an Article 4 Direction is progressing? In Far cotton and Delapre due to the University development in the area.

Response

Officers from Planning and Housing are using a variety of sources of information to gather an accurate picture of the current situation relating to Houses in Multiple Occupation in the Far Cotton area. Once this has been established, decisions will need to be made about whether to introduce an Article 4 area and/or additional licensing, and the form that these might take. The decision whether to introduce an Article 4 area and its form will be considered by Cabinet in March 2017 and would then be confirmed in January or July 2018 depending on its form.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 12

Question to Cllr Bottwood from Cllr Culbard:

Why are we not helping people who are elderly and/or with disabilities who visit cemeteries. In some cemeteries such as Towcester Road cemetery there are no toilet facilities whatsoever. What are we going to do about this?

Response

There isn't a budget for these facilities. If facilities were installed, then there would then be ongoing costs for cleaning, repairs, rates and utility costs.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 13

Question to Cllr Bottwood from Cllr Ashraf:

After being advised that a suction machine has been acquired for the Town Centre can you please advise me when other machines are due to be rolled out in other areas?

Response

The machine in the town centre was acquired to improve the cleanliness of the town centre and supplement the town centre cleansing carried out by Enterprise. While there are no current plans on increasing the number of suction sweepers, we will be happy to keep in under review.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 14

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr McCutcheon:

Isn't the absolute controversy of Unadopted roads a prime example of why we need a unitary authority? It is outrageous that home buyers are left in the precarious position of paying their Council taxes but having no services for those taxes. Will you as the new leader try to build a better working relationship with the NCC so that issues like this can be resolved by both Planning and Highways working together?

Response

I will work with NCC on these issues to try ensure that their processes and ours do not delay the adoption of a road. I am also aware that delays are generally as a result of issues between NCC Highways and developers.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn

Acting Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 15

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Davenport:

Cllr Mary Markham had said at the Steering Group Committee meeting for the Environmental contract that she was going to arrange more CCTV cameras for Flytipping. Can you assure us that you will continue in this endeavour to catch flyer tippers? This will not only will raise funds it will cut the costs of collecting the rubbish.

Response

I can confirm that we are serious about tackling fly tipping and using all the available means to do so. We install cameras at fly tipping hotspots and use the evidence obtained together with statements from residents who have witnessed fly tipping to take enforcement action against those responsible.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Acting Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 16

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Davenport:

People are buying houses in good faith, like the residents of Tower Hill Close, believing their roads will be adopted. Surely, because a s38 agreement is decided upon during the planning procedure, we cannot wash our hands of it and we must take some responsibility when they are not adopted. Now that you are Leader what will this authority be willing to do?

Response

This is a difficult issue for residents, and is not a problem of their making.

I am not aware of the Tower Hill specifics but whether the road is adopted or not is a matter between the developer and the highway authority, in our case the County Council; it doesn't form part of the planning application approval, so the Borough Council has no role to play. We can encourage the County to adopt where possible, but ultimately it is up to a prospective purchaser to check if a road is adopted or not, and many of us have dealt with these such issues on behalf of our local residents, urging developers to complete the necessary work to enable adoption to take place.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn

Acting Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 17

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Davenport:

Considering the recent agreement at Cabinet to be prepared to spend up to £200,000 in legal fees to uphold a covenant on the Barn Owl pub surely the NBC can now reverse what Cllr Mike Hallam has said about not spending taxpayers money on using the law to stop one landowner from using the Bridleway between Hunsbarrow Rd and Hunsbury Hill Avenue as this would save thousands of people from the nuisance of motorbikes whizzing around Briar Hill area.

Response

For some time the administration has been very clear on its view regarding the Bridleway issue, and we have offered a number of measures from the Community Safety Team, and also to work with the Police to help to tackle the issue. However, we will not be changing our position on challenging the rights of way of land ownership. I understand that this has been discussed with you on a number of occasions, but offer to help with this remains open.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Acting Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 18

Question to Cllr Hallam from Cllr Russell:

Will the Cabinet Member agree with me that Domestic Violence in the town is a serious issue and that the re-habitation of perpetrators needs to be resourced?

Response

No matter how high or low the levels of domestic abuse are, they should always be seen as a serious issue. Increases in levels of violent crime have been seen nationally, and is not just specific to Northampton.

There is a countywide approach in dealing with perpetrators of domestic abuse, which includes a perpetrator rehabilitation programme. This forms part of a range of services in place to support victims and perpetrators of Domestic Abuse.

Councillor Mike Hallam
Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 19

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Ashraf:

We all want to see the joining up of St. James Mill Road. Can the Cabinet Member provide us with an update?

Response

The Council continues to push forwards with this project and the design work via the County Council Highways Authority is nearly complete. The Council is also in discussion with Network Rail as to the acquisition of the necessary land to enable the project.

A positive outcome will be achieved and the Council is currently forecasting that a planning application will be submitted this calendar year with works commencing in the spring.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 20

Question to Cllr Eldred from Cllr Stone:

Please can you confirm that we are charging disadvantaged people who fall into arrears with their Council Tax £75 for each reminder letter?

Response

NBC does not charge for the issue of a reminder notice in respect of Council Tax. A reminder notice gives the opportunity for a customer to bring their account up to date within seven days, or to contact to make a suitable arrangement to bring the account up to date. If this reminder still remains unpaid, the Council may issue a summons to the Magistrates Court that will incur an additional £82.40 additional costs.

Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet Member for Finance

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 21

Question to Cllr Bottwood from Cllr McCutcheon:

There is great concern about air pollution across the town. One contributor to this is taxi drivers leaving their car engines idling when they are waiting for passengers. What can we do to encourage taxi drivers to turn off their engines instead of leaving them idling?

Response

This will be brought to the attention of the Hackney Association and Private Hire Operators in the regular meetings that take place with the Council's Licensing Officers. They will be reminded both of the environmental impact of leaving engines running and also the cost of the fuel involved.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 22

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Stone:

The leader of the Council has noted his membership as a Freemason on his register of interests. Please can we know how many other Councillors and how many officers are Freemasons and if this has any impact on the development of Council Policy, on our business transactions and on service delivery?

Response

The Declaration asks about charitable organisations, therefore, as I have been a Member I felt it should be listed. It has no impact on the development of Council policy, business transactions or service delivery.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Acting Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 23

Question to Cllr King from Cllr Z Smith:

Community Pharmacies form an important part of the health care in the town. What can we do as a Council to ensure that Community Pharmacies are not forced to close because of government cuts?

Response

Community Pharmacies will be offered a new package focusing on quality of services provided to the public.

Councillor Anna King
Cabinet Member for Community Engagement

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 24

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Birch:

Decisions made by the County Council have an impact on the well-being of the citizens of our town. The impact of the proposed NCC funding cut of £1.1million from the section 75 joint commissioning pool with the NHS for Youth Counselling Provision will be severe. It may also compromise the funding received by the counselling services from the Future In Mind programme. This could mean an additional funding cut over 4 years of £1m. How can we work with the County to ensure the funding is retained? How can we mitigate the effects on our children and young people if we are unsuccessful?

Response

Through the Partnership Grant Allocation Process, we allocate £550,000 to the community and voluntary sector, who are delivering outcomes that have an impact on the well-being of citizens in Northampton. We fund both Manna House and Relate, both counselling services, supporting children, young people and their families. We also fund the Lowdown, who provide services specifically for young people, including counselling provision.

We continue to promote the partnership grant fund as an opportunity for organisations to access funding, as well as our small grants pot of £50,000 and the Cllr Community Fund, all which have supported projects for young people.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Acting Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 25

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr McCutcheon:

Does this Leader agree that we need unitary status for Northampton with a limited expansion of the borough boundary?

Response

As the possibility of Unitary has recently become more likely, I have considered the savings, efficiencies and service improvements that should result and which I would welcome. In the event of a Unitary, I do agree that this must be on a larger boundary than the current borough.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Acting Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 7th November, 2016

Question 26

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Russell:

As the new Leader please can you give your support (as previous Leaders of the Council have done) to the campaign to award Walter Tull posthumously the Military Cross?

Response

I am aware of this issue, and wish the campaigners success in their campaign to enable the Military Cross to be awarded to Walter Tull posthumously.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn

Acting Leader of the Council