

Question for Full Council Monday 13th March, 2017

Question 1

Question to Cllr Eldred from Cllr Beardsworth:

What has been the total cost so far to the council of the loan to Northampton Town Football Club including money spent on legal fees and other enquiries aimed at finding out what happened to the original loan? What interest will be payable on the outstanding sum in 2017/18.

Response

The total amount spent to date on the loan to NTFC and the subsequent investigations and the process of recovery of these monies is below the £950k that was approved to be used for this purpose at the Cabinet meetings of 24 November 2015 and 13 July 2016.

With regard to the interest payable, this was addressed in the Cabinet report of 24 November 2015 at section 4.2.6 which stated: "The interest accrues on the loan at approximately £275k per annum. This will be paid from within existing debt financing budgets until the loans mature. The loans would be used to fund the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The reason the Council can afford the interest costs of these loans from within existing budgets is that the Council recently had two loans mature (paying an interest rate of 5.68% and 7.03% respectively, costing £950k per annum) and could refinance those loans using the loans transferred back from NTFC.

Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet Member for Finance

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Question 2

Question to Cllr Hallam from Cllr Meredith:

Last year Overview and Scrutiny identified a backlog of work needed to trees and shrubs on borough council land and the cabinet approved funding for a three year programme of works. Will ward councillors be receiving details of work identified in their areas?

Response

Following the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, the council agreed to a 5 year program of enhanced tree maintenance and also allocated a budget of £100k per year, for the work.

To facilitate the 5 year program, the borough was divided into 5 zones, with the first zone covering Ecton Brook and Rectory Farm.

An initial survey of the trees is carried out by a specialist tree surveyor, which identifies the trees to be included in the maintenance program.

This year, the manager of the Partnership Unit met the surveyor on site to look at the proposed work program prior to it starting.

I would suggest that when work in Zone 2 commences, the ward councillors could accompany the manager of the Partnership Unit when he is taken around the area to view what work is planned.

Being on site will give the councillors a clearer idea of what improvements will be made when the work is carried out, rather than seeing a list of work on a sheet of paper.

Councillor Mike Hallam
Cabinet Member for Environment

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Question 3

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Ashraf:

When is the car park at the station going ahead?

Response

The Borough Council continue to work with Network Rail and the Department For Transport to deliver a multi storey carpark at the station.

Officers are preparing a business case that will be presented to Cabinet in due course.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

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Question 4

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Ashraf:

We need a taxi shelter and a phone at the taxi rank at the station. What is happening about that?

Response

The station is the responsibility of London Midland. The proposed phase 2 of the station development may include a reorganisation of the carpark and this could include the taxi rank.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

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Question 5

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Ashraf:

Could we have an update on the number of rough sleepers outside of the town centre?

Response

Based on all of the intelligence we have received – and the findings of the Council's Outreach Workers and Park Rangers – we believe that there are currently about 15 people sleeping rough and/or living in tents outside of the town centre.

Approximately three quarters of these people are EU Nationals who are not exercising their treaty rights and are refusing to engage with the Street Outreach Workers and local services to come off the streets. Council Officers are working very closely with the Police and the Immigration Compliance & Enforcement Team to address this.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing

Question for Full Council Monday 13th March, 2017

Question 6

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Birch:

How many people are using the night shelter?

Response

During its first month in operation, the shelter accepted 44 referrals and accommodated 32 men who were either sleeping rough or at imminent risk of sleeping rough.

The shelter was used each night and was occupied by between 5 and 14 homeless people.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing

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Question 7

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Birch:

Please could we an update on the number of apprenticeships we offer, what rates they are paid at and how many are offered permanent jobs as a consequence of going through a successful apprenticeship?

Response

We currently have five apprentices working with us in the contact centre, one stop shop, facilities, and the post room. There is a vacancy for an asset maintenance apprenticeship that we are recruiting for.

In Customer Services there have been three rolling vacancies for the past five years and the apprentices are supported with an extensive training plan to help them secure a permanent role after two years. Typically the apprentice in Customer Services moves into the trainee Customer Information Officer role and then to the Customer Information Office role over time.

There is a vacancy in the post room which may be filled by the current post room apprentice once they have finished their two year programme.

We do not have a vacancy for the facilities apprentice to move into and it is usual for facilities apprentices to move on to other organisations.

The pay scales for apprentices at NBC are as follows:

	Annual salary	Hourly rate
Year 1 (0-6 months)	£8,259	£3.96
Year 1 (7-12 months)	£9,469	£4.54
Year 2 (13-18 months) (under 18 years)	£10,846	£5.20
Year 2 (19-24 months) (under 18 years)	£12,055	£5.78
Year 2 (13-24 months) (age 18-20)	£13,578	£6.51
Year 2 (13-24 months) (age 21+)	£17,207	£8.25

April 2016	National minimum wage	£6.70
	National living wage	£7.20
April 2017	National minimum wage	no change
	National living wage	£7.50

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council

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Question 8

Question to Cllr King from Cllr Russell:

How many beds are available in women's refuges in Northampton? Do the number of beds available match the need? How secure are the women's refuges this coming year?

Response

The women's refuges in Northampton have the capacity to accommodate a total of 17 households. Although the recent closure of the refuges in Wellingborough and East Northants has reduced the number of refuge places in the County from 43 to 28, Government funding has been secured to support the running costs of Northamptonshire's refuges (and expand their services to help more survivors of domestic abuse) in 2017/18.

In order to help the women's refuges meet the demand, the County's borough and district councils are planning to work with the refuge providers to improve move-on and promote the use of home security improvements to enable people to remain in their homes.

Councillor Anna King

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement & Community Safety

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Question 9

Question to Cllr King from Cllr Hague:

There seems to be a new pattern developing of gangs going through waste sacks left on the street looking for rags and opportunities for identity theft. This results in rubbish strewn across the streets. What can be done to stop this happening?

Response

I do not believe that there is a pattern of behaviour developing in Northampton as described in your question. I am aware however of a recent spate of vandalism involving the splitting open of bags. Neighbourhood wardens have been working with the local community to try to tackle this anti-social behaviour. The problem now appears to have ceased but the situation continues to be monitored.

Councillor Anna King

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement & Community Safety

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Question 10

Question to Cllr King from Cllr Culbard:

How will this Council promote Refuge week in June 19 -25th 2017?

Response

The diverse communities forum will be working on an action plan to form some events for International Refugees week commencing 20th June.

Councillor Anna King

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement & Community Safety

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Question 11

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Stone:

How many apprenticeships do we currently offer and of those which ones and how many result in the offer of a full time job?

Response

We currently have 3 apprentices in roles within Customer Services. These are rolling apprenticeships and have been for the last 5 years. If, after the two year programme, there is a permanent vacancy and the apprentices performance has been satisfactory they will be appointed to the role. It is typical for promotion to a trainee Customer Information Officer role.

If there are no vacancies within Customer Services at the time the apprentices may find permanent employment to vacancies within other areas of the Council.

In the past two apprentices were successful in gaining permanent employment and when the service was outsourced to LGSS they retained their roles with the new employer.

There is an apprentice in the post room and a vacancy for a permanent role to which they may be appointed post completion of their two year programme.

We also have an apprentice in Facilities although there is no permanent vacancy to recruit to after the two years.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council

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Question 12

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Mr Adams:

Northampton's emergency night shelter (former British Rail Social Club on St Andrew's Road) opened its doors for the first time on the evening Monday 6 February 2017.

Question:

From the 6 February to the 5 March how many rough sleepers have bedded down for the night?

- Average number using each night
- Maximum using on any night?
- Minimum using on any night

Response

During its first month in operation, the shelter accepted 44 referrals and accommodated 32 men who were either sleeping rough or at imminent risk of sleeping rough.

The shelter can accommodate up to 20 homeless people and was used each night.

- The average number of people staying at the shelter was 10.
- The highest number of people staying at the shelter on any night was 14
- The lowest number of people staying at the shelter on any night was 5

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing

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Question 13

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Mr Adams:

The Councils increased use of temporary accommodation (TA) in January 2016 it was 88 households in TA in January 2017 this had risen to 165 households in TA.

Question:

What was the number of households in temporary accommodation in February 2017?

Response

The number of households in temporary accommodation in February 2017 was 160.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing

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Question 14

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Mr Clarke:

A specially convened Cabinet meeting for the 1st March 2017 was cancelled; the meeting was called to discuss the purchase of 10 homes at Ash Street, Northampton. The purchase we were informed would be partly funded by 141 Right to Buy receipts, AND would prevent the return of those receipts to central Government.

Question:

Is it still the intention of the administration to purchase AND prevent the return of those receipts to central Government?

Response

The Council is fully committed to replacing the homes that are sold under the Right To Buy and making effective use of the Right To Buy receipts in order to help achieve this.

Although discussions are ongoing in relation to the proposed development of new homes in Ash Street, these will not be concluded during the 2016/17 financial year.

Northampton Partnership Homes and the Council are continuing to work very closely with one another to provide new and replacement homes and to avoid the need to return any Right To Buy receipts to the Treasury.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing

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Question 15

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Mr Clarke:

The Universal Credit (Housing Costs Element for claimants aged 18 to 21) (Amendment) Regulations 2017

If the purpose of homeless hostels is critically short-term first stage resettlement with at least one further stage in 'move-on' or second stage provision. This policy denies payment for housing costs in move-on and thus undermines the homeless hostel model.

Question:

Have NBC considered that if hostel providers continue to admit 18, 19, 20 and 21 year olds and these residents can't move on or at best have greater difficulty in moving this will have an influence on length of stay (When you double the average length of stay you halve the capacity of the service)

Response

I am concerned about the impact that these new Regulations may have on homeless young people, local accommodation providers and our multi strategy for ending the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton.

Officers from the Housing & Wellbeing Service are meeting with the Revenues and Benefits Service and the Council's partners to assess the likely impact of these changes and to decide on an appropriate strategy for mitigating their impact.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing

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Question 16

Question to Cllr Larratt from Cllr Davenport:

Have you investigated further the enforcement officers for litter/fly-tipping also working in conjunction with the NCC enforcing parking (as mentioned to Andy Leighton at the last Disability Forum?)

Response

Yes, a number of organisations have been invited to submit expressions of interest in working with the council to carry out environmental enforcement activity, including the company who work with NCC on parking enforcement.

Councillor Phil Larratt
Deputy Leader of the Council

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Question 17

Question to Cllr Larratt from Cllr Davenport:

Are you going to work with Planning to ensure that more child/adult changing facilities are incorporated into new public buildings (also mentioned in the Forum) so that we will become more of a disability friendly town?

Response

Yes, of course and we will work also with DisabledGo to ensure that the town has the facilities necessary to support the needs of disabled community.

Councillor Phil Larratt
Deputy Leader of the Council

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Question 18

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Davenport:

I was told by the Head of Planning that the subject of Delapre, Far Cotton and Briar Hill becoming an Article 4 Direction Area will be on the Agenda of a Cabinet Meeting in March - is this still the case? The residents of the Ward are becoming increasingly concerned.

Response

Cabinet will be considering a report on the Article 4 Direction at its meeting in March and will make a decision on how to use the powers available to the Council to respond to the situation.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning