

Question for Full Council Monday 10th July, 2017

Question 1

Question to Cllr Larratt from Cllr Haque:

We keep hearing that the market is to get a facelift. How much consultation has taken place, when will we know what is being planned, where is the money coming from?

Response

Consultation has taken place with Market Traders over the last couple of years. There is a Market Advisory Group which meets on a regular basis. The Group is made up of officers, traders and businesses who all have an interest in the market square. This group continue to be consulted and involved. An action plan has been developed and the majority of the improvements have been implemented including regular deep cleansing, summer and winter activities and stall improvements.

During this financial year, all the market stall canvas covers are being replaced. This is being paid for from the Council's Capital Programme.

In addition, we are consulting regarding a reconfiguration of the market, including the possibility of creating a second main aisle. At a recent meeting of the Market Advisory Group a Steering Group, comprising mainly of Traders, was established to take this forward. Traders have been given plans of the existing Market layout and have been asked to produce their own suggestions for reconfiguration. A truly bottom up process. The suggestions of the Traders will be considered by the Steering Group with a view to obtaining consensus and agreement of a revised layout that will be implemented later in the year when the stall covers are replaced. At this stage, costs are expected to be minimal as the only costs will be re-routing some cabling although further ideas may be suggested as the work of the Steering Group proceeds and the funding of any such ideas will have to be considered.

Councillor Phil Larratt
Deputy Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 10th July, 2017

Question 2

Question to Cllr Hallam from Cllr Haque:

Deep cleansing takes place, sometimes, in the town centre. When will we have deep cleansing in other shopping areas and in our wards?

Response

Deep cleans are not restricted to the town centre and are carried out anywhere in the town. In fact, there have been many deep cleans carried out outside of the town centre.

A deep clean is where a team is targeted to a specific area, in order to thoroughly clean that area of litter and detritus and bring it up to a Grade A standard. This is not the same as the enhanced cleansing that is carried out in the town centre on a daily basis. The Town Centre and Market Square being heavily commercial have very high footfall and as a result need more regular deep cleaning than other areas.

Councillor Mike Hallam
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 10th July, 2017

Question 3

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Birch:

Please can we have an assurance that the deputy leader of the County Council fully supports this Council's Cross Party call for unitary status for Northampton?

Response

I am aware that the Deputy Leader of the Northamptonshire County Council wants the best local government arrangement for our residents.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 10th July, 2017

Question 4

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Birch:

Please may we have an update on how we are progressing the Councils motion on unitary status for Northampton? When can we expect to see the consultation document that has been commissioned by the joint authorities?

Response

There is an update in the Leader's report on Unitary for this and every Full Council meeting.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 10th July, 2017

Question 5

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Duffy:

We have accident hot spots in our town, especially around junctions in residential areas and around school gates. What steps are being taken by this Council, working in partnership with the County and with the Police, to improve road safety around the town?

How can we improve monitoring, reporting and the clearing up after non-fatal accidents?

Response

Whilst roads and road safety are the responsibility of the County Council, my Group tell me that they regularly get involved in road safety campaigns in their wards, including with local schools, and they also work with their local Neighbourhood Policing teams and parish councils, where they exist. They have also used their empowerment funding to support local speed initiatives and highways safety measures, contributing to VAS speed signs, etc.

Conservative Members also report that they have requested junctions to be considered for waiting restrictions where there are visibility issues through the County Council's Annual Review of Parking Restrictions.

Personally, I have for example worked with local County Councillors to borrow the 'Kill Your Speed' signs, and secured them to lampposts in my ward as part of such campaigns.

I'm surprised that this question has come forward, as I would have expected Labour Councillors to have been doing the same.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council

Question for Full Council Monday 10th July, 2017

Question 6

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Mr Adams:

When the government expanded right-to-buy in 2011, ministers said they were committed to “one for one replacement”. However, councils have consistently warned that they are unable to keep up with the loss of housing under right-to-buy.

Northampton having ONLY started to build or acquire 25.82% of them:

Would you like to say sorry to people on the housing waiting list?

Response

The rate at which homes are being sold under the Right to Buy scheme does, indeed, make it difficult for councils to keep up with the replacement of homes that are lost through sales.

Without an increase in the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap, we need to use our resources wisely and to strike a careful balance between investing in the construction of new homes and investing in the improvement of our existing homes. That is why the Council has commissioned expert independent advice on how best to fund and deliver a large-scale development programme of new council homes over the next 10 years.

I do, of course, apologise to the people on the housing register who are in need of a move to better housing and have to wait longer because of the difficulties that the Council has had in replacing the homes that have been lost under the Right to Buy. I would like to assure them, however, that I am doing everything I can to speed things up and remain committed to prioritising those in the most urgent need.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing

Question for Full Council Monday 10th July, 2017

Question 7

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr J Hill:

Millions of pounds have been spent in the Delapre ward on the renovation of the historic Delapre Abbey. Whilst this is an excellent investment in the town's heritage, and something that the town's residents and especially Delapre residents have wanted for many years, can the Leader of the council explain why one of the local ward members seems especially determined to frustrate the completion of this important project, and has now called in the Cabinet decision to fund the completion of the restoration?

Also, given the delay that this same Labour member for the Delapre ward has caused the restoration project and therefore the opening of the Abbey by calling in the Cabinet decision, can the Leader please advise what the cost of the delay is, as a result of the expected August opening date not being met and the opening now being delayed until the autumn, following the call in?

Response

Many of us would welcome this level of investment being undertaken in our own wards, so I am disappointed that one Labour member seems so unhappy about this happening in her ward, especially as many members of the Friends of Delapre Abbey, who have kept the dream of restoring the Abbey alive for so long, are resident within her ward.

With regard to the cost, August would have been a key month for income for the Abbey, and so it is estimated that this call in may have cost the Abbey in the region of £60,000 - £80,000. As the council has stated that it does not intend to make further funding available to the Abbey, this represents a sad, unnecessary and major blow to the viability and sustainability of the Abbey, particularly when the same local ward member stated at the Cabinet meeting that she too would have voted in favour of the funding to complete the Abbey restoration work.

Opposition members opposing just for opposition's sake is their right, and like all Councillors I fully respect the scrutiny process. But on this occasion it has to be acknowledged that this has had very significant implications for this impressive restoration project and for the Trust that will be running it.

**Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council**

