

Question for Full Council Monday 6th November, 2017

Question 1

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Haque

How much money has been spent on the Market Square in the last five years, including staffing and is the amount considered value for money?

Response

Staffing Costs	£ 826,976
Maintenance Costs	£ 174,584
NNDR	£ 364,427
Vehicle Costs	£ 50,097
Supplies & Services	£ 251,170
Total Spend	£1,667,254
Income	£1,466,319

Net Spend of £ 200,935

The market square is an iconic feature of the town and the town's market is over 800 years old and attracts around 6 million visitors annually.

The council considers the investment to be acceptable when taking into consideration the economic, employment and tourism aspects associated with the market.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 2

Question to Cllr Hallam from Cllr Haque

There is some research that shows in-house services are more responsive to changing need and better value for money. In light of this will the Administration reconsider going out to private tender for environmental services?

Response

No. A very robust options appraisal was undertaken through which the various options available to the council for the delivery of environmental services were evaluated with the assistance of industry experts, Eunomia. The process was subsequently endorsed by PWC, the council's internal auditors.

Outsourcing clearly emerged from the options appraisal as the best option for the council and on that basis Cabinet took the decision to undertake an OJEU procurement process, which is now well underway and making progress in accordance with the agreed programme.

I remain fully confident in the council's decision to outsource environmental services and I was further reassured in my view by the very positive report to Cabinet of Overview and Scrutiny last month.

Councillor Hallam
Cabinet member for Environment

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Question 3

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Ashraf

Please can we have an update on the plans to link up St James Mill Road?

Response

The acquisition of land from Network Rail is scheduled in the next couple of months, following the completion of Network Rail's disposal process. The Council has instructed the final feasibility and design of the road. Construction is programmed for 2018 subject to planning.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 4

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Ashraf

When will the permanent car park at Castle Railway Station be built?

Response

The council continues to work through the feasibility of the carpark. A final decision cannot be taken until the new franchisee West Midlands trains have reached agreement with the Department for Transport. This is scheduled for December 2017.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 5

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr McCutcheon

The Conservative manifesto on page 12 says

“A re-elected Conservative administration will ensure all planning applications for Houses of Multiple Occupancy are automatically brought before the Planning Committee for decision to protect local residents and communities.”

This is an excellent idea. When will this be implemented so councillors do not have to go through the bureaucratic process of doing a call-in?

Response

The process for determining all planning applications is set out in the Councils Constitution. When determining applications, the Council has a duty to do so as promptly as possible, providing a timely decision for the applicant, and its performance in doing so is measured against nationally set targets. At present, only major applications are automatically referred to Committee, and members can request that certain applications are called in to ensure they are considered in public. Requiring all HIMO applications to go to Committee would, in cases where the proposal complies with policy, cause unnecessary delays for applicants, potentially impact on the Councils performance figures and take up Committee time.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 6

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Choudary

In a recent Chronicle and Echo article,

<http://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/special-report-crazy-golf-bowling-alley-and-a-bigger-cinema-at-northampton-s-sol-central-all-on-hold-because-of-greyfriars-1-8187765>

It was suggested that the report recommending a cinema on the Greyfriars site was “not impartial”. How do you respond to that suggestion?

Response

The report commissioned by Northampton Borough Council, the connection between the author and The Light cinema chain is declared within it in a deliberately transparent manner.

Given the niche nature of cinema consultancy, it would be very difficult to find a firm with the required specialist knowledge which did not have links with one or more cinema chains. The report was just contribution to the assessment of options.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 7

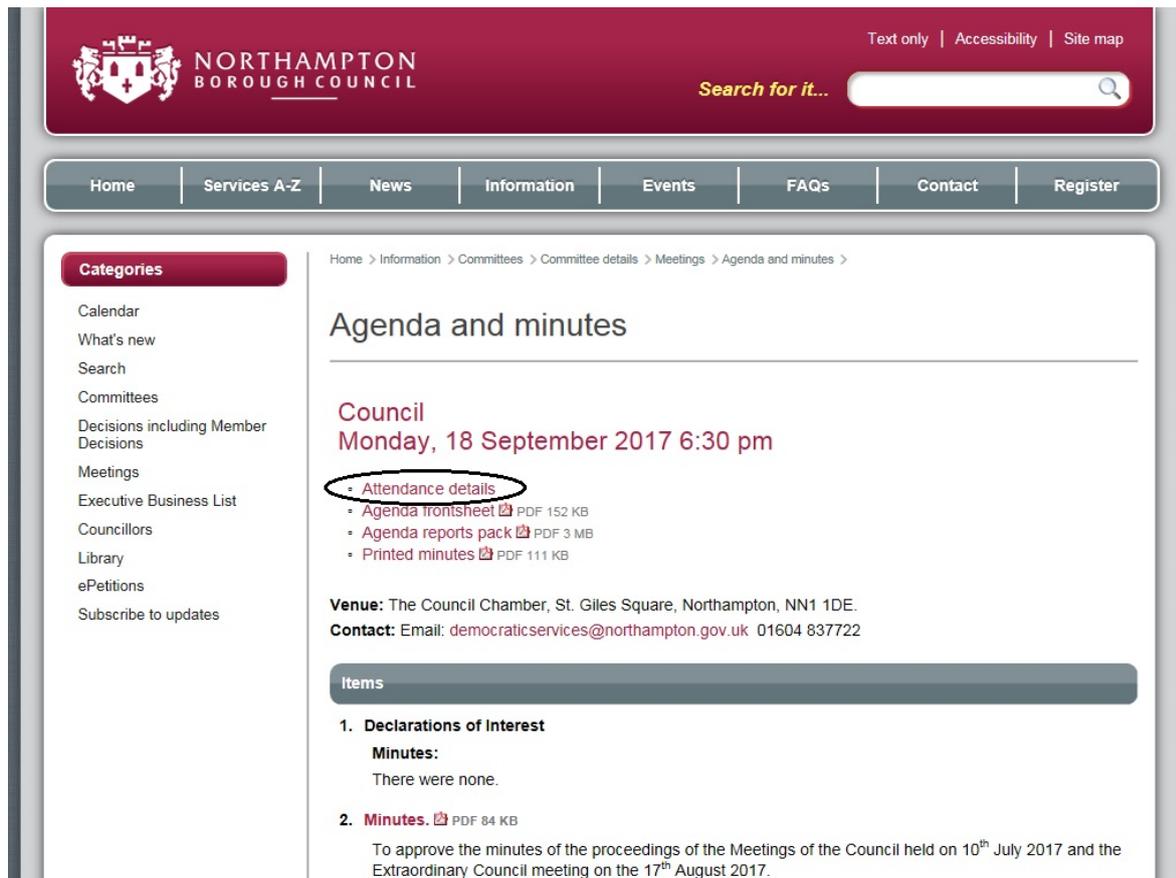
Question to Cllr Larratt from Cllr Stone:

Your Conservative Manifesto on page 9 said “a re-elected Conservative administration will continue to publish the record of attendance for all councillors and monitor attendance of councillors”. When will this be done?

Response

We remain committed to being open and transparent with regard to Member attendance at Council and Committee meetings by having attendance details published on the NBC website. We do not wish to laden our staff with additional work in collating and providing additional reports on attendance. Therefore, a feature has been enabled on Modern.gov that provides public access to all Member attendance records at Council and Committee meetings. Those without internet access can visit the One Stop Shop, where staff can help them access the information.

Example:



The screenshot shows the Northampton Borough Council website. The header includes the council logo, name, and navigation links (Text only, Accessibility, Site map). A search bar is present. The main navigation menu includes Home, Services A-Z, News, Information, Events, FAQs, Contact, and Register. The left sidebar lists various categories like Calendar, What's new, Search, Committees, etc. The main content area is titled 'Agenda and minutes' and features a breadcrumb trail: Home > Information > Committees > Committee details > Meetings > Agenda and minutes >. The main heading is 'Council Monday, 18 September 2017 6:30 pm'. Below this, there is a list of links: 'Attendance details' (circled in red), 'Agenda frontsheet' (PDF 152 KB), 'Agenda reports pack' (PDF 3 MB), and 'Printed minutes' (PDF 111 KB). The venue is listed as 'The Council Chamber, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE.' and the contact email is 'democraticservices@northampton.gov.uk' with the phone number '01604 837722'. A section titled 'Items' contains two numbered items: '1. Declarations of Interest' with a sub-section 'Minutes:' stating 'There were none.', and '2. Minutes.' (PDF 84 KB) with a sub-section stating 'To approve the minutes of the proceedings of the Meetings of the Council held on 10th July 2017 and the Extraordinary Council meeting on the 17th August 2017.'

Councillor Phil Larratt
Deputy Leader of the Council

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Question 8

Question to Cllr Eldred from Cllr Stone

How much money do we make on parking fees?

Response

The income figures for car parking are as follows

2016/17	£3,118,413
2017/18 to September	£1,747,958

Councillor Eldred
Cabinet member for Finance

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Question 9

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr McCutcheon

The Conservative Manifesto page 8 says [A re-elected Conservative] “will remain opposed to plans by neighbouring authorities to impose housing developments around the town”. Had any success with this?

Response

The Borough Council has continued to assess planning applications for development around the Borough boundary, and has raised concerns where it is considered that these would impact on Northampton residents.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 10

Question to Cllr Eldred from Cllr Birch

When is Universal Credit being be rolled out in Northampton and what measures are being put into place to deal with the financial hardship caused by a six week wait for the benefit payments?

Response

The current timetable is for Universal Credit to be rolled out in Northampton during July 2018. The Council will continue to support customers with Discretionary Housing Payments as this scheme has been extended to include Universal Credit, and NPH also have alternative payment arrangements in place with the DWP for hardship cases, where rent element of UC is paid direct after the 8 week period. Whilst this won't speed up the processing times, it will have the opportunity to reduce unnecessary chasing and the additional pressures this would cause.

Councillor Eldred

Cabinet member for Finance

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Question 11

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Davenport

When will the Social Lettings Agency become fully operational?

Response

Having recently completed the recruitment of the Social Lettings Agency Team, we are now actively encouraging landlords and investors to lease and let their properties to the Social Lettings Agency.

Over the next couple of months, we will be taking over the day-to-day management of 36 privately rented homes that are currently being managed, on the Council's behalf, by Northampton Partnership Homes.

Although it is important that our roll-out of services is carefully managed, it is hoped that the Social Lettings Agency will become fully operational (and able to provide tenants and landlords with the full range of services) by February 2018.

Councillor Hibbert

Cabinet member for Housing & Wellbeing

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Question 12

Question to Cllr Eldred from Cllr B Markham

The Cabinet authorised the purchase of Albion House in November 2014 for £500K which was above the market value at the time.

3 years on the building is unoccupied and has an unkempt appearance.

1. Will portfolio holder advise the council of the cumulative costs to the Council since acquiring this strategic asset?
2. Can he also advise what rental income has been received from letting the building to a tenant in the 2017 / 18 financial year?

Response

- | | |
|---------------|----------|
| 1. Total Cost | £178,913 |
| 2. Total | £29,973 |

Councillor Eldred
Cabinet member for Finance

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Question 13

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Beardsworth

The Cabinet report in November 2014 described Albion House as a strategic acquisition which the authority would use to support the objectives of the Waterside Enterprise Zone.

In April 2016 the Cllr Hadland confirmed to the Council that the £500,000 purchase price paid was above the market value and that the authority planned to demolish the property but could not give a timescale at the time

As there does not appear to be any progress to bring this strategic site into productive use can the portfolio holder advise what steps are being taken to prevent this building becoming a White Elephant?

Response

Officers are refreshing previous feasibility and valuation work at Albion house so to inform an options appraisal on the property and site. The options to be considered are likely to include an extension to St John's MSCP and also disposal for residential and/or commercial uses.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 14

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Beardsworth

I have heard that the plans to build 100 new council homes as part of the Dallington Grange development have been delayed yet again.

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing tell the council what is the current situation with this much needed scheme and whether the continuing delays affect the council's bid for Growth Deal funding?

Response

We are still awaiting a response from the DCLG and Treasury to our request for a further variation of the conditions attached to the Local Growth Fund award.

However, as the Government has now indicated that it would welcome proposals from individual local authorities on what assistance and flexibility they require in order to support new housing development in their areas, we are preparing a proposal that, if accepted, will enable the Council to withdraw from the LGF without any adverse effect on the Council, the Housing Revenue Account or the construction of the 100 council homes on the Dallington Grange site.

Councillor Hibbert

Cabinet member for Housing & Wellbeing