

APPENDIX A

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 17TH SEPTEMBER 2015 QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Question to the Chairman of the Personnel Committee, from Councillor Liz Yates

Early in September I learned through the media and the Nottinghamshire County Council Intranet that this authority is consulting Trade Unions and others about an update to the Council's "Smokefree Policy", which would affect our employees.

When I asked an officer why I had received no prior notification of this consultation as the Main Opposition Spokesman for Personnel, I received an apology and was told that the proposal had "originated from Public Health".

Would the Chairman of the Personnel Committee agree that this is clearly a cross-cutting matter which should have been brought before her Committee even if it was also being considered elsewhere, and can she confirm whether and where this consultation was discussed and approved by Members?

Would she agree with me that when Full Council agreed last November to sign the 'Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control' and endorse the 'Nottinghamshire County and Nottingham City Declaration on Tobacco Control', this did not commit the authority to the kind of restrictions now being proposed?

Response from Councillor Sheila Place, Chairman of the Personnel Committee

"The County Council did sign the Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control on 20th November last year. The Declaration committed the Council to an action plan, an action of which is to review the current smoke free policy and take all possible steps to protect the health and safety of all employees during work time.

With regard to Councillor Yates' question around discussion and approval by Members on the consultation, we recognise that this wasn't appropriately handled. There have already been discussions between the Leader and the Chief Executive about this, and we have received assurances that it won't happen again.

I would like to reassure Councillor Yates that once the final proposals have taken shape on the back of the consultation, they will be taken to Personnel Committee for Members to consider."

Question to the Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee, from Councillor Tony Roberts MBE

Does the chairman of the Transport & Highways Committee share the concern raised with me by several residents in Newark West, about the increasing incidence of cyclists riding on public highway pavements and footpaths rather than keeping to the road or designated cycle tracks?

To the best of his knowledge, are these unsafe cycling practices being reported more often across the Nottinghamshire area?

Response from Councillor Kevin Greaves, Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee

"In the last twelve months there were eight cycling issues concerning riders on pavements which were reported to the County Council through the Customer Services Centre. Three of these eight issues were in Newark. In the previous twelve months to that there was one issue reported in the whole of Nottinghamshire.

Newark has one of the highest cycling rates in the County, and cycle facilities such as cycle lanes, and advanced stop lines at traffic signals have all been introduced to cater for this demand.

Cycling on the pavement is illegal but is also very difficult to enforce because it needs a Police Officer or PCSO present to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice which is an on the spot fine of £30. We will continue to work with Nottinghamshire Police regarding any reported incidents."

Question to the Leader of the Council, from Councillor John Wilkinson

In the light of the continuing humanitarian crisis facing hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing warfare, tyranny and death, and the woefully inadequate response of central government, does the Leader of the Council see any valuable role for Nottinghamshire County Council in alleviating such widespread misery?

Response from Councillor Alan Rhodes, Leader of the Council

"The full horror of the human tragedy which is unfolding across Europe was realised as the image of the lifeless body of a young boy who drowned attempting to reach the Greek island of Kos was released to the world. The image encapsulated the great risks refugees are taking in order to escape the perils of their own country.

It was perhaps at this moment that not only our own county or even Europe but the Western World actually realised the true tragedies and the great loss of life which was becoming part of everyday life for those people desperately trying to seek safety from the atrocities, fear and often persecution in their own country. No-one can fail to have been touched by the plight of the people fleeing war-torn Syria and my heart goes out to all those people affected.

Nottinghamshire County Council is a compassionate council and has a long and proud history of providing help and support to refugees across a wide range of different services.

These are exceptional circumstances that require a response at both international and national levels, and as a compassionate council I believe we should be providing as much support to as many of these unfortunate people as we possibly can at a local level.

Many communities in Nottinghamshire have been showing compassion as we have seen collections of food, clothing, blankets and sleeping bags for the refugees who find themselves with either very little or no possessions. I would like it to go on record how very proud I am of these communities and the compassion that the people of Nottinghamshire are demonstrating.

As a County Council we have always played our part with the refugees which settle here in Nottinghamshire some of which are very vulnerable children and young people. There is provision in place to ensure they are housed and supported in transition to education and supported with language needs. We also offer support to families in order to understand our education system in this country.

We are already working in collaboration with our District Council Partners and the East Midlands councils as well as other associated agencies such as the NHS to ensure we play our full part in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme. I have requested that the Chief Executive provide a single point of contact within the Council to act as a coordinating focal point for all enquiries from our partner Councils and Agencies and to ensure that appropriate access is given to County Council services. These arrangements are currently being formalised and will become operational by the end of the week. We are awaiting full details from Government about the role local councils can play in meeting the national commitment in the resettlement of those affected. I envisage there will be a role for both District Councils and other social housing providers in terms of accommodation, as well as our services including social care, transport and education.

I believe Nottinghamshire should play its part in welcoming a proportionate share of the displaced families. I also believe we require a national and international response to the crisis and it is a crisis. We are seeing suffering as the lives of men, women and children are tragically ending as they desperately try to flee warfare and tyranny.

You have my assurance we will do all we that we possibly can.”

Question to the Chairman of Finance and Property Committee, from Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE

On 15th July 2013, the Finance and Property Committee received a report on the future redevelopment of the former Cotgrave Colliery site, and approved a land exchange between the County Council and the Homes & Communities Agency.

Would the Chairman of the Finance & Property Committee confirm whether the County Council has received, or will soon receive, all of the Section 106 monies identified in that report as necessary to:-

- a) ensure the sustainable future management of the County Council-owned Cotgrave County Park (£105,000) and Cycle Track (£57,000) ; and
- b) make provision for the continued protection of the ecological habitats and enhance the green areas of the development to reduce any visual impact on the Country Park?

Response from Councillor David Kirkham, Chairman of the Finance and Property Committee

"I am pleased to confirm that the developers of the former Cotgrave Colliery have paid Rushcliffe Borough Council £66,890.41 towards cycle paths. Nottinghamshire County Council officers are in the process of claiming this from the Borough Council. Monies towards ecology and the Country Park are expected in the spring of 2016 when the appropriate triggers in terms of number of houses built are reached. I would like to reassure Councillor Cutts that we have the same aspirations to ensure that any developer contributions due to the Council are received and that the development at Cotgrave Colliery does not adversely impact on Cotgrave Country Park which is enjoyed by local residents."