

APPENDIX A

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2023 QUESTION TO LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON THE EXECUTIVE REPORT

Question from Councillor Tom Hollis

In your report, items 25 and 26 discuss a meeting you held with the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt MP. Did you discuss with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the real term cuts in funding to fix our broken roads and pavements, the failure of Government to give local Councils a multi-year settlement, and the government's failure to implement a fair funding review that has adversely impacted Nottinghamshire County Council and its residents?

Question from Councillor Jim Creamer

When discussing 'cost of living challenges' and 'business costs' in your meeting with the Chancellor,

Did these topics feature as part of a wider discussion on the lasting economic impact Nottinghamshire residents have experienced following the previous Chancellor's disastrous mini-budget this time last year?

Response to questions from Councillor Hollis and Councillor Creamer by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ben Bradley MP

I'm grateful for the questions Mr Chairman, and for the interest in my conversations with the Chancellor. I can confirm that both I and Parliamentary colleagues from around both Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire who were in the meeting raised the issues of funding for our highways – a point that was reflected, as I say, by a number of colleagues and which, you'll be pleased to hear, was the thing when we came to the end of the meeting that the Chancellor chose to reflect on in terms of his takeaways from the conversation that we've had, which I think is a positive thing and we also spoke at length about Local Government finance and about the pressure on our services aided by the fact that the Minister for Local Government Lee Rowley was also in the room in his capacity as a Derbyshire MP.

On the two points specifically, I'm pleased to be able to say again that it really is positive, and unique, that Nottinghamshire County Council has a voice in that room and is the one and only Council in the whole of the country who can have that direct and regular conversation with the Chancellor. It's something I've talked about and something that I think we have benefited from. That can only be a good thing, so I'm sure you will be pleased to hear Councillor Hollis that those things were raised in that meeting.

Councillor Creamer, on your point, there's been a lot of figures bandied about around Liz Truss' time in office and – if you enjoy a bit of economics – lots of figures that have often rejected since actually. People often refer to the 'economic impact' when what the actually mean is the 'cost' or impact on the Treasury's internal 'bottom line'. The 'economic impact' you refer to is actually really difficult to measure and I can say

confidently that in the months following the budget that you referred to, in October the economy actually grew by 0.55% and in November the economy grew further by 0.15%, so there's your economic impact. It's safe to say that yes, the cost of living and cost to business of things like energy bills, food inflation and others were very much part of the conversation with the Chancellor and again were reflected by a number of colleagues around the room so you can be rest assured that those things were raised.

Question from Councillor Sybil Fielding

I welcome the news that the first phase of the Gateford School is finally due to be completed by September next year.

As the local Member who has campaigned for this school to be built, does the Leader share my disappointment that the school is set to be delivered one year later than initially indicated and to only two thirds of the eventual capacity?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ben Bradley MP

As far as I understand the Section 106 agreement was index linked, in terms of the amount of money available and so if the cost goes up the Section 106 agreement to pay for it will also go up, it shouldn't be at additional cost to the Council. But the important factor, it has been raised already by Councillor Payne in an earlier debate today, and the debate is happening in my own constituency and in Mansfield, around future developments as well and around the county, is that when you plan for things over the long term you make assumptions, you make projections around need and population that isn't always still the case 10 years later, and we have to use the funding that is available to us to deliver on the need.

Speaking about my own constituency, of the Lindhurst development, I think the Section 106 agreement was signed there a decade ago from memory, a long, long time ago, and the kids who needed primary school places a decade ago are 10 years older and they need secondary places now, and that is likely to be the case around the County. We have a declining birth rate around the county in terms of pupil numbers entering in to primary schools every year. The last few years that number has fallen, so it would be mad to just build, as you seem to be suggesting, full two and a half form entry knowing that there isn't actually the pupil numbers, or a place planning need for us to build that. As what we're increasingly seeing on the other end of the scale is small primary schools, with reducing numbers that then become financially unsustainable because there aren't enough kids to actually fill those schools.

Where we do have a challenge is in secondary places increasingly around the county, so actually what we need to do is to ensure we make the best use of the Section 106 money to fulfil the challenge that is actually there and that the data tells us is actually there, where we don't have a place planning problem around primary schools, we do increasingly have one around secondary because that bulge that existed and created that need for places in primary is now older and is now moving into the secondary population. We have to make sure we manage that and it's easy to stand here and say you promised 10 years ago that you would do "X", I didn't as I wasn't here, but at the same time we also have to expect that these are projections of numbers, these are projections of need and it would be remiss of us as a Council to not make up to date

assumptions and figures and move forward as we do when we have the actual figures, to deliver what the residents actually need in those communities and I am sure members opposite would expect nothing different.

