



Nottinghamshire County Council

Meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

Date Thursday, 26th September 2013 (10.30 am – 3.17 pm)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

COUNCILLORS

John Allin (Chairman)

Pauline Allan (Vice-Chairman)

Reg Adair
Roy Allan
Chris Barnfather
Alan Bell
Joyce Bosnjak
Nicki Brooks
Andrew Brown
Richard Butler
Steve Calvert
Ian Campbell
Steve Carr
Steve Carroll
John Clarke
John Cottey
Jim Creamer
Mrs Kay Cutts
Maureen Dobson
Dr John Doddy
Boyd Elliott
Sybil Fielding
Kate Foale
Stephen Garner
Glynn Gilfoyle
Kevin Greaves
Alice Grice
A John Handley
Colleen Harwood
Stan Heptinstall MBE
Tom Hollis
Richard Jackson
Roger Jackson
David Kirkham
John Knight

Darren Langton
Bruce Laughton
Keith Longdon
Rachel Madden
Diana Meale
John Ogle
Philip Owen
Michael Payne
John Peck JP
Sheila Place
Liz Plant
Darrell Pulk
Alan Rhodes
Ken Rigby
Tony Roberts MBE
Mrs Sue Saddington
Andy Sissons
Pam Skelding
Stella Smedley MBE JP
Martin Suthers OBE
Parry Tsimbirdis
Gail Turner
Keith Walker
Stuart Wallace
Muriel Weisz
Gordon Wheeler
John Wilkinson
Jacky Williams
John Willmott
Yvonne Woodhead
A Liz Yates
Jason Zadrozny

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

David Pearson	(Deputy Chief Executive)
Jayne Francis-Ward	(Policy, Planning & Corporate Services)
Tim Gregory	(Environment and & Resources)
Anthony May	(Adult Social Care, Health & Public Protection)
Derek Highton	(Children, Families & Cultural Services)
Carl Bilbey	(Policy, Planning & Corporate Services)
Martin Done	(Policy, Planning and Corporate Services)
Chris Holmes	(Policy, Planning and Corporate Services)
Karen Townrow	(Policy, Planning and Corporate Services)
Anna Vincent	(Policy, Planning and Corporate Services)
Michelle Welsh	(Policy, Planning and Corporate Services)

HONORARY ALDERMAN

Martin Brandon-Bravo OBE

OPENING PRAYER

Upon the Council convening, prayers were led by the Chairman's Chaplain.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED: 2013/039

That the Minutes of the last meeting of the County Council held on 11th July 2013 be agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Handley (Personal) and Councillor Liz Yates (Personal).

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

(a) European Prize

The Chairman reported that Nottinghamshire had been awarded the prestigious 2013 Plaque of Honour by the Council of Europe. This award which has been only given to a handful of places throughout the whole continent recognises the work of local people over many years in promoting unity and friendships with different people and places in Europe.

Sir Alan Meale MP will be presenting the award to the Council as part of a day of festivities and entertainment at the MyPlace Centre, Westfield Folkhouse, Mansfield on 24th October.

(b) Change of Conservative Group Spokesman Community Safety

The Chairman reported that Councillor Bruce Laughton has been appointed the Conservative Group Spokesman on Community Safety with effect from Monday 16th September 2013.

(c) Presentations and Awards

Outstanding Paper Award

Councillor Muriel Weisz introduced the Outstanding Paper Award which had been awarded to the co-authors of "Almost Invisible Providing Subtle Support in Community Settings" which was published in the Tizard Learning Disability Review. The Chairman received the award from Councillor Weisz, and presented it to the staff that were present.

The Dignity in Care Award

Councillor Muriel Weisz introduced the Dignity in Care Award which had been awarded to Veronica Bell who after winning the regional Great East Midlands Care Award for Dignity in November 2012, then went on to win the National Dignity in Care Award in June this year.

The Chairman received the award from Councillor Weisz and presented it to Veronica Bell.

5. CONSTITUENCY ISSUES

Set out in Appendix A to these minutes is a full note of the issues discussed by Councillors as follows:-

Councillor Bruce Laughton – Flooding in his Division

Councillor Roger Jackson – Flooding issues in his area

Councillor Sue Saddington – Closure of Kelham Bridge

6. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The following petitions were presented to the Chairman as indicated below:-

- (1) Councillor Tom Hollis regarding winter gritting
- (2) Councillor John Ogle regarding saving the crossing patrol on Newark Road, outside of Tuxford Academy
- (2) Councillor Maureen Dobson requesting Stagecoach re-instate the bus service to the Bus Station on the Coddington route
- (3) Councillor David Kirkham in relation to the indoor market and park and ride, Sutton Central
- (4) Councillor Steve Carr regarding the installation of traffic lights at the junction of Marlborough Road and Abbey Road, Beeston
- (5) Councillor Steve Carr from employees at Broxtowe Borough Council regarding the proposed residents parking scheme
- (6) Councillor Liz Plant regarding West Bridgford Central residents objections to the privatisation of the Probation Service
- (7) Councillor John Peck jointly with Councillor Bruce Laughton and Councillor Roger Jackson regarding objection to the proposed incinerator or 'gasification' waste disposal plant in Bilsthorpe

RESOLVED: 2013/040

That the petitions be referred to the appropriate Committees for consideration in accordance with the Procedure Rules, with a report being brought back to Council in due course

7. QUESTIONS

(a) QUESTIONS TO NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AUTHORITY

No questions were received

(b) QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Seven questions had been received as follows

- (1) from Councillor Steve Carr regarding 20 mph signs being erected outside schools being prioritised on the basis of deprivation statistics (Councillor Kevin Greaves replied)
- (2) from Councillor Steve Carr regarding Eskdale Drive Junior School, Alderman Pounder Infants School and Sunnyside Primary School being given priority for installation of 20 mph signs (Councillor Kevin Greaves replied)
- (3) from Councillor Richard Jackson regarding the proposed introduction of advisory 20 mph speed limits outside an initial 50 selected schools in Nottinghamshire (Councillor Kevin Greaves replied)
- (4) from Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts regarding the unusually high number of cancelled or postponed committee meetings during September, especially in the first week after the summer recess (the question was not asked, as Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts was not in the Chamber)
- (5) from Councillor Richard Jackson regarding the delayed work on Worksop Bus Station (Councillor Kevin Greaves replied)
- (6) from Councillor Philip Owen regarding the decision to withdraw the Discretionary Travel Scheme for children travelling to preferred schools (Councillor John Peck replied)
- (7) from Councillor Sue Saddington regarding the anger of local residents and road users over poor traffic management during the recent closure of Kelham Bridge. (This question was not asked as the sixty minutes allowed for questions had elapsed).

The full responses to these questions are set out in Appendix B to these Minutes
Questions 1, 2 and 3 were answered together

8. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2012/2013

Councillor David Kirkham introduced the report and moved a motion in terms of Resolution 2013/041 below.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Darren Langton

RESOLVED: 2013/041

- (1) That the contents of the Annual Governance Report be noted.
- (2) That the letter of representation be approved.
- (3) That the Statement of Accounts 2012/2013 be approved .

Council was adjourned from 12.30 pm to 1.45 pm

9. TENDER FOR HOME BASED CARE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Councillor Muriel Weisz introduced the report and moved a motion in terms of resolution 2013/042 below.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Joyce Bosnjak

RESOLVED: 2013/042

- (1) That the work undertaken to review existing home based care and support services and to plan for the re-tender of these services be noted
- (2) That the commencement of the tender for home based care and support services and for new contracts to be awarded for commencement in April 2014 be approved as set out in the report.

10. REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM

Councillor Alan Rhodes introduced the report and moved a motion in terms of resolution 2013/043 below

The motion was seconded by Councillor Joyce Bosnjak

Councillor Ken Rigby moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Reg Adair:-

“That the motion be amended with the following addition:-

- 7) That in view of the propose changes to the frequency and responsibilities of committees, and the need to make savings across the Council, the Independent

Remuneration Panel be recalled to consider the implications and potential reductions to Members' Special Responsibility Allowances."

The amendment was put to the meeting and after a show of hands the Chairman declared that it was lost.

The requisite number of Members requested a recorded vote and it was ascertained that the following 29 Members voted '**FOR**' the amendment;-

'FOR'

Reg Adair	Rachel Madden
Chris Barnfather	John Ogle
Andrew Brown	Philip Owen
Richard Butler	Ken Rigby
Steve Carr	Tony Roberts MBE
John Cottee	Mrs Sue Saddington
Mrs Kay Cutts	Andy Sissons
Dr John Doddy	Martin Suthers OBE
Boyd Elliott	Gail Turner
Stephen Garner	Keith Walker
Tom Hollis	Stuart Wallace
Richard Jackson	Gordon Wheeler
Roger Jackson	Jacky Williams
Bruce Laughton	Jason Zadrozny
Keith Longdon	

The following 35 Members voted '**AGAINST**' the motion

'AGAINST'

Pauline Allan	David Kirkham
Roy Allan	John Knight
John Allin	Darren Langton
Alan Bell	Diana Meale
Joyce Bosnjak	Michael Payne
Nicki Brooks	John Peck JP
Steve Calvert	Sheila Place
Ian Campbell	Liz Plant
Steve Carroll	Darrell Pulk
John Clarke	Alan Rhodes
Jim Creamer	Pamela Skelding
Maureen Dobson	Stella Smedley MBE JP
Sybil Fielding	Parry Tsimbiridis
Kate Foale	Muriel Weisz
Glynn Gilfoyle	John Wilkinson

Kevin Greaves
Alice Grice
Colleen Harwood

John Wilmott
Yvonne Woodhead

The Chairman declared the amendment to the motion was lost.

The original motion was then put to the meeting and it was;-

RESOLVED: 2013/043

- (1) That the Public Health Sub-Committee be re-classified at the Public Health Committee
- (2) That responsibility for statutory crime and disorder and flood risk management scrutiny be allocated to the Community Safety Committee
- (3) That the terms of reference for each committee that currently has responsibility for consultation responses be amended to state, 'Approval of consultation responses except for responses to day-to-day technical consultations which will be agreed with the Chairman and reported to the next available Committee following their submission.
- (4) That the procedure rules for Full Council and committees regarding the use of recording devices and cameras be amended to include the words 'subject to sufficient notice'
- (5) That the proposed pilot changes to the frequency of specified Committees be noted.
- (6) That the County Council, as host authority to the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Panel, agrees to include the Independent Members of the Police and Crime Panel as equivalent to the statutory co-optees within the current scheme of allowances and pay such allowances accordingly.

11. ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

None

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 3.17 pm

CHAIRMAN

APPENDIX A

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 26th SEPTEMBER 2013

3 MINUTE SPEECH

Cllr Bruce Laughton

“As members are aware on the 23rd July this year there was a storm which hit the Trent Valley and had a massive impact on the people that I represent in the Southwell and Cauntton division, particularly in Southwell we had 225 houses that were flooded and over 15 businesses were seriously affected.

I'm rising on my 3 minute speech really to thank the emergency services, in particular Rob Fisher and his team for all the hard work that was done in my division during that calamitous event. The community pulled together in an amazing show of strength supporting many of the residents that were impacted by this event and some of the stories were actually extremely harrowing and some residents who were flooded left their home and never returned.

The Flood and Water Act 2010 puts the responsibility fairly and squarely in the hands of this Council as the lead local authority and I was one of the first Chairman of the Nottingham Flood Risk Management Board when it was set up. Nottinghamshire County Council has the responsibility as this lead local flood authority in holding the riparian owners who own the dykes and ditches where this water came down to account for maintaining those very dykes.

I believe that as a Council we have been woeful in our responsibility implementing the 2010 Act. I ask those members present who are responsible in the flooding arena who have taken over that responsibility that they start to use their powers to ensure that these dykes and ditches within my patch and many other areas across Nottinghamshire are held to account and do the proper maintenance of those watercourses.

Finally can I say that it is extremely important that also those members that represent Nottinghamshire in the flood arena actually push for the implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) because that will then give local members the powers to control development in their area where it may well affect both floodwater and foul water flooding.”

Cllr Roger Jackson

“I do rise on the same issue regarding the flooding on the 23rd July. In my division I had over a 100 houses flooded on that night and we all know it was a very abnormal weather condition but it did highlight the event of the inadequacy of the drainage system that we have in this county.

I have now over 10 properties that have flooded over 10 times in the last 6 years in my division. We're saying that the weather is definitely changing, whether it's climate change that is causing it or not, we certainly have a lot more rainfall now than what we have been having over the last 20 years. I know there's very little capital funding available for flood defences but at least as an authority we now need to be more proactive not just reactive to guarding flooding and protecting properties in our county. In fact there is a good drainage system out there, but the years of neglect and low maintenance have rendered it useless because of the dry periods we've been having.

Now as the lead authority we need to work together with other agencies such as the Environment Agency, IDB, Severn Trent and even Network Rail to resurrect all the old dykes and culverts that have been neglected over the years. We need to get, as Bruce has said, the riparian owners back on board who need to maintain their watercourses. Many have been neglected, lost and even filled in over the years. When these dykes and geysers were done over a hundred years ago they were dug by hand, they were done for a reason because that's the way the water flowed and we've lost that now. We need to get back to full maintenance.

It is now time to try and encourage some of our vulnerable parishes to prepare, to get the lengthsman's scheme back going again so we've got people on the ground actually monitoring culverts and cleaning gutters and gullies out. We all know the roadsweeper goes down the road, it pushes as many leaves in the gullies as it does suck up itself, that's when you get past the cars parked there as well. So we do need some manual maintenance now to look at the systems we have. Planning authorities should think twice about where they give planning permission, especially low lying areas on floodplain.

Also on authorities, people think "I live on top of the hill" but where does your water go to? It always runs down through the valleys and we have to deal with it. So I think authorities at the top of the hill need to think where the runoff comes and where they give planning permission as well. It is very important and it all has to be dealt with.

I hope, Chairman that all agencies now can get together with the County as the lead authority to get some robust and organised regular maintenance put together and a scheme which will help protect properties in our county and my region in the future."

Cllr Sue Saddington

"Chairman you will recall at the last Council meeting I spoke about the planned temporary closure of Kelham Bridge and invited the Chairman of the Transport & Highways Committee to join me on the first day of the closure, 24th July to witness the impact on the traffic.

Councillor Greaves did not respond to my invitation which was probably wise, because he would've been embarrassed by the shambles. My mailbox was full of complaints from irate vehicle users and residents asking questions such as;

“Where were the signs on the A612 approaching Lowdham from the Nottingham direction warning of the Kelham Bridge closure?

Where were the signs directing traffic through the A6097 and A46 to Newark and warning drivers of journey delays including Councillor Rhodes delayed by half an hour en route to a meeting with Councillor Roger Blaney.

Where were signs at Lockwood Hill to advise traffic on the A617 from Rainworth to divert the other appropriate roads?

Why was traffic allowed to travel in blissful ignorance along the A612 or the A617 to Kelham only then to discover that Kelham Bridge was closed causing queues of stationary traffic?

Why did the Council operate temporary signals at the Dovedale Hill A616 junction on a 3-phase rather than 2-phase basis keeping 2 flows stationary for the sake of the very occasional cars travelling from Ollerton and wishing to turn right into Kelham?

Why did the Council fail to police the one way operation on Trent Lane and not install heavier barriers at one end to enforce the closure which enabled some reckless motorists to remove the light plastic barriers and ignore No Entry and Road Closed signs causing danger to oncoming traffic and forcing this diversionary route to close on safety grounds?

Regarding the Bridge itself;

Why did the Council take so long to order the correct stone and seek approval from Newark and Sherwood District Council conservation offices?

And a question of my own, Chairman;

Why did a Senior Officer tell me in an email that local reports of stone from the bridge being dropped into the River Trent were just stories?

I subsequently visited the bridge and took pictures of at least 2 large pieces of stone and several distinctive red bricks on the riverbed which could have come from nowhere else but from that bridge. It is a good job I didn't rely upon the officers' assurances in compiling my responses to residents.

The mail I received was scathing about the Council and one email stated and I quote; “This has seriously been mismanaged by the Council's Highway department”

Another said;

“I am left with the impression that the Highways department gave no real thought to the serious effect the closure would have and just took the lazy way out”

Frankly, this was a fiasco and the Council's attempts to downplay it have angered people even more. Having already raised then dashed the hopes for Kelham bypass, Councillor Greaves should take responsibility for this chaos."

APPENDIX B

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 26th SEPTEMBER 2013

QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Question to the Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee from Councillor Steve Carr

In light of the recent decision with regards to 20mph signs being erected outside schools being prioritised on the basis of deprivation statistics, can the Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee advise me where these statistics were obtained from and how old they are? What provisions were made for statistical anomalies where county schools also take pupils from city schools?

Question to the Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee from Councillor Steve Carr

Can the Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee tell me why Eskdale Drive Junior School, Alderman Pounder Infants School and Sunnyside Primary School have been prioritised for installation of 20 mph signs when all three are on roads with traffic calming measures already in place?

Question to the Chairman of the Transport and Highways Committee from Councillor Richard Jackson

On 17th September the Chairman of the Transport & Highways Committee moved a report proposing the introduction of advisory 20 mph speed limits outside an initial 50 selected schools in Nottinghamshire (subject to public consultation and feasibility).

Appendix 3 to the report stated 'Speed surveys have already been undertaken at the schools below' and listed 49 of the 50, with Members advised that Carr Hill Primary had been omitted in error.

Can the Chairman tell Council how many of the 50 surveyed schools had mean speeds below 20 mph and how many had mean speeds above 20 mph (between 8am and 9am)?

Response from Councillor Kevin Greaves Chairman of Transport and Highways Committee

First of all Mr Chairman I would like to restate that it is the intention of this Council to introduce a 20 mph speed limit outside every school in the County.

It is the intention of this Council to deliver a 20 mph speed limit outside every school in the County as quickly as possible.

I fully recognise that the road outside each school will need an approach to introducing a 20 mph speed limit best suited to that location – this will not be a “one-size fits all” approach.

Some schools – where traffic speeds are already generally below 24 mph – will benefit from a very quick to deliver solution of an advisory 20 mph limit.

Other schools – where speeds are perhaps higher – are likely to need additional measures – interactive speed signs, traffic calming and/or a mandatory limit. These measures take longer to deliver with detailed designs, consultations and legal processes. But the delivery of these schemes will not be held up by doing the easier ones first.

I will not hold up the benefits of delivering the straight forward schemes quickly, which will encourage drivers to slow down outside schools, while we work up the more detailed schemes.

Nor will I allow a detailed scheme to be delayed.

The 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation, utilising the Open Data Communities’ deprivation map, was used to prioritise the first 50 schools. Priority has been given to schools located in (or close to) the areas of highest deprivation.

For example, Beeston Fields school was not prioritised in the first 50 schools as neither its level of deprivation (31-40% most deprived in the country) nor the neighbouring city wards (21-30% and 71-80%) were as high as the prioritised schools. The schools prioritised within Broxtowe are within (or close to) wards that are in the top 11-20% most deprived in the country.

As stated previously, the first 50 schools are located in (or close to) the areas of highest deprivation. Eskdale Drive Junior School, Alderman Pounder Infants School and Sunnyside Primary School have been prioritised for installation of 20 mph signs as they are located in wards which are in the top 11-20% most deprived wards in the county.

It is the intention of this Council to deliver a 20 mph speed limit outside every school and undertaking speed surveys is part of the design and delivery process, helping to determine if additional speed reduction measures will be required in the future.

Speed surveys have not been undertaken outside seven of the proposed schools located on cul-de-sacs as it was not considered necessary due to the short length of the road and there being no through traffic. One survey is still outstanding outside Car Hill Primary. Of the remaining 42 proposed locations 21 have a mean vehicle speed above 20mph during 08:00 and 09:00 hours.

As already stated it is the Council's intention to introduce a 20 mph speed limit outside every school in the County as quickly as possible. I do not propose to hold up the benefits of delivering the straight forward schemes quickly, which will still encourage drivers to slow down outside schools, whilst we work up more detailed schemes nor will I allow the detailed schemes to be delayed in anyway at all.

Question to the Chairman of Transport and Highways Committee from Councillor Richard Jackson

Under the previous Conservative administration between July 2012 and March 2013, Nottinghamshire County Council purchased the property required upon which to build a new bus station for Worksop.

In February 2013, residents were given the chance to view the plans for the bus station and, when the Conservatives left office, construction was scheduled to commence in Autumn 2013 with the station due to open to passengers in Summer 2014.

Can the Chairman of the Transport & Highways Committee therefore, explain recent media reports that 'wrangling in the planning process' now mean work on the bus station will not start until Summer 2014, with the opening delayed until Spring 2015?

Response from Councillor Kevin Greaves Chairman of Transport and Highways Committee

Last November (2012) members of the County Council's Transport and Highways Committee were told that work on the bus station could begin in autumn this year, with construction taking around nine months. This was subject to acquiring all the private land needed for the scheme.

I am pleased to confirm that all the land needed to construct the scheme is now in local authority ownership.

With any major development such as this there is a huge amount of work which goes on behind the scenes. Our designers, for example, have been busy carrying out additional surveys, discussing the scheme with affected neighbours and updating the plans following the consultation exercise earlier this year. We have also been working closely with Bassetlaw District Council and the bus operators.

As part of this process there has of course been a considerable amount of pre-application discussion of the scheme with the County Planning Authority ready for when they receive the planning application for this proposal over the next few weeks.

The new bus station remains on track for work to begin next summer for opening in spring 2015. Site clearance works will actually start sooner than that and I am determined that the people of Worksop get the bus station they deserve -- a station fit for the 21st century and one they can be proud of.

At a time of severe financial constraints Nottinghamshire County Council is funding the new bus station to the tune of over £3m and we are as keen as anyone else to see the work begin.

The new station will help stimulate the economy of Worksop and is being modelled closely on the one at Retford which celebrated its sixth birthday this year and which is continuing to be a massive hit with passengers.

The increase in usage is absolutely staggering and is due in no small part to the fact that the people of Retford now have a comfortable waiting environment with friendly and helpful staff on hand to provide assistance and information.

That's exactly what the people of Worksop can look forward to and I personally can't wait to see work begin.

Question to the Chairman of Children and Young Peoples Committee from Councillor Philip Owen

Following Labour's decision to withdraw the Discretionary Travel Scheme for children travelling to preferred schools, which was introduced by the Conservatives in September 2011, would the Chairman of the Children & Young People's Committee admit:-

- a) That the removal of this scheme discriminates against parents who cannot afford the cost of transport to send their children to a preferred school;
- b) That the timing of the consultation during the school summer holidays made it more difficult for parents and school governor bodies to respond and that the Labour Group has ignored the 91% of online respondents who wanted to keep the scheme;
- c) That reducing parental choice can only undermine healthy competition between schools, providing less incentive for underachieving schools to improve; and
- d) That this was an ideological decision and not a legitimate cost-cutting measure?

Response from Councillor John Peck Chairman of Children and Young Peoples Committee

Well first of all Chairman, I'd like to thank Councillor Owen for his question and for giving me the opportunity to explain to Full Council the very same points that I made to the Policy Committee last week in presenting the report to remove the Discretionary Travel Scheme (DTS).

I notice that Councillor Owen is asking me to admit to his four statements. The answers to those four statements in no particular order are;

No to a)

No to b)

No to c)

And No to d)

Unfortunately the question fails to recognise that the expression of preference by a parent or a carer is exactly that, it's a preference – nothing more, no less. While it is the duty of the local authority to make appropriate home to school travel arrangements which comply with the law, it's neither a requirement nor affordable to make free provision for all.

The DTS did not target those who could not afford transport; it benefitted the few and not the many. On average 425 children in each year group across the whole county – that's 5% of that year group. It was not an entitlement for all children to travel to preferred schools. It will continue to be available to those qualifying children and young people who currently access it until they reach the end of Year 11.

Let me repeat that – no child currently on the scheme will lose out and I made that absolutely clear when we decided to get rid of this scheme that those that were already on the scheme, we understood their position and we would honour that commitment.

The scheme could only be accessed where existing buses were in operation in any case, and was therefore not only inequitable but was also vulnerable to any network changes which might happen and these things do happen.

The Home to School transport policy however, does include measures which help low income families and it provides subsidised travel for many others that are above that threshold. In relation to secondary age children travelling to their nearest suitable faith school on the grounds of religion, between 2 and 25 miles from home, the existing transport policy and you need to remember that the removal of this Discretionary Travel Scheme sits outside the existing Home to Travel policy. We haven't touched that, so all those measures remain in place. So the existing Transport Policy ensures that those on free school meals or maximum working tax credit travel free of charge. Those above that threshold are eligible for subsidised travel, and they pay a flat rate of £300 per year.

So in many cases such as the journey from Newark to Mansfield for example, this marks a very significant discount off the true cost of that journey. That rate has actually remained the same since 2007 so as the bus fares have risen, that has become an even greater subsidy. The Policy also states that where a family has three or more children attending schools on denominational grounds, only the two youngest will be charged – if you've got 3, 4, 5 children, etc then you're only charged for the first two.

All these measures in our existing Transport Policy, which is more generous than most, amount to a very generous package of support which is completely unaffected by stopping this scheme.

Some of these matters were wrongly reported by the BBC I have to say, and I'm delighted to say that the BBC recognised that, and on their Radio Nottingham the following day it did actually correct some of their misleading reporting. But as you can see, the low-paid families are very well catered for under our existing scheme.

Quite frankly, I find it hypocritical that Councillor Owen would try to have us believe that he is the champion of the low paid when he is a member of the party which has supported the bedroom tax and only last week he sat in Policy Committee voting against the Living Wage.

Now onto part B of Councillor Owen's question, the reason for the timing of this consultation was clear. For there to be an opportunity to make savings in relation to the scheme in 2014 i.e. next September, it was crucial for consideration to be given, and a decision taken before the closing date for applications for secondary school places and that's next month, October 31st.

Councillor Owen and you just heard him say it again, said the consultation went out during the summer holidays. Honestly, I've not known Councillor Owen for long but I know that his contributions tend to be a load of hot air and ill research. It did not go out in the summer holiday, it went out before the summer holiday – during July. But you've heard him say it again, and he keeps saying it. In his world he will believe whatever he says because he only listens to his own voice and he's not listening to anybody else.

So all schools received the information about the proposal in July prior to the summer holiday. One school organised a petition and another school used its website to communicate with parents throughout the consultation period. Also, Councillor Owen, it was not necessary as you stated for school governing bodies to be formally consulted but nevertheless I've no doubt that Head Teachers would've made it clear to their Governors or Chairs of Governors that such a consultation was taking place. All responses to the consultation were taken into account.

But not surprisingly, guess where the majority of the responses came from? The majority of course were from the parents of children already on the scheme, all who hoped to do so in the future. Exactly as you would expect the other 740,000 people across the county didn't respond of course they wouldn't. But the consultation did go out to all the schools and libraries and everywhere else but, and this is another thing I should remind Councillor Owen of, a consultation is exactly that, it's not a referendum.

Is Councillor Owen trying to suggest that every time his administration put a policy out to consultation, they always changed their policy? Of course not.

When the school budgets are proposed every year, is it the case that Councillor Owen when the budget consultation goes out and there are about six responses and five of them are against it, is it the case that Councillor Owen upended his policy and threw it out the window? Of course not. It's not a referendum, it's a consultation. He doesn't

seem to understand that. It's incredible that he quotes 92% of the 300 odd of the recipients of this policy, is he expecting me to overturn a policy on the basis of that? How absurd.

Parents and carers have the right to express their preference in relation to school places for their children. It's a key commitment of this administration to ensure that all Nottinghamshire schools and I'm sure it was a key commitment of the previous administration as well, are good or outstanding wherever they may be, whatever their governance arrangements. This travel scheme has no bearing whatsoever on the quality of education provision across our schools and it has had no significant effect as far as I can tell and I know because I've asked our officers this, no significant impact on parental preference which has broadly stayed the same now as it did prior to the 1st September 2011.

Think about it for a moment Councillor Owen, is he seriously suggesting that 425 children or 5% of the school population within that year group across all of the county each year and many of those families, remember this, many of those families out of those 425 would've made this choice anyway irrespective of whether this scheme existed or not. Is he seriously expecting that whether or not, that those children transported criss-crossing up and down the county made any serious difference to standards? I think not – it's a ludicrous suggestion.

Is he suggesting therefore that in the 150 local authorities across England, including every single Tory controlled authority who do not operate this scheme, that parental choice is severely limited? Or that standards are suffering/ I don't think so.

There is just simply no logic to his argument.

And now for D, this is just rubbish. I've explained to Councillor Owen quite clearly in simple one words and I've found Councillor Owen's snide comment towards Councillor Greaves absolutely despicable and says more about Councillor Owen than it says about anybody else. Yes, he can sit there and smirk but he should've seen the expressions of embarrassment on the backbenchers behind him when he made that remark. It's just rubbish; I've explained to Councillor Owen quite clearly that this is not the case. I'm not afraid to make political decisions but I can assure members that this decision was not driven by some ideology, not at all and I've said to him before. If anything the misguided ideology was that of Councillor Owen in introducing this policy in the first place despite not knowing whether it was properly costed and whether it was sustainable or not, and quite clearly it wasn't.

If there's any ideology at all, then my ideology is in with all those other Conservative councillors that also didn't decide to implement this scheme across the country. He stands alone on this. This decision is driven by the urgent need to target precious resources. We've got to find £154 million pounds in budget savings and we've made a start and this is a start because it will save up to £1.7 million pounds by 2017/18. He doesn't seem to understand that but we've made a start on that, we've moved quickly. It's that which drives this, not a political consideration at all. We've got to save the money and we're doing that by being fair and equitable and as I've said, we're still looking after the low-paid and don't lecture me about the low-paid.