

## **APPENDIX B**

### **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019 QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN**

#### **Question to the Chairman of the Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee from Councillor Steve Vickers**

At the Full Council meeting last December, Councillor Zadrozny said there was an urgent need to hold a 'Spice Summit' to discuss the problems caused by New Psychoactive Substances in Nottinghamshire, and Councillor Payne announced that Gedling Borough Council would be hosting such an event.

Can the Committee Chairman confirm whether Nottinghamshire County Council sent a representative to the Spice Summit, and if so, who else was in attendance?

#### **Response from Councillor Stuart Wallace, Chairman of the Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee**

The 'Spice Summit' to which you refer took place on 5<sup>th</sup> February and was attended by Nottinghamshire County Council's Director of Public Health, along with our Senior Public Health and Commissioning Manager, who is our lead officer on substance misuse policy.

The meeting was chaired by the Leader of Gedling Borough Council, Councillor John Clarke. The Deputy Leader of Gedling Borough, Councillor Michael Payne was not in attendance.

The agenda included presentations from officers of Mansfield District Council and Ashfield District Council, and also included provision for a speech by the Leader of Ashfield District Council, Councillor Jason Zadrozny, but he did not attend the meeting.

CGL, Nottinghamshire County Council's substance misuse treatment provider, attended the summit, as did a number of officers from the borough and district councils and representatives from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

I am satisfied that we sent our most senior and relevant officer representation to this meeting. These are the experts best placed to make a considerable contribution based on their knowledge and understanding of the New Psychoactive Substances issue, compared with the hyperbole sometimes characteristic of politicians.

I presume the Police and Crime Commissioner, Paddy Tipping, had similar reasons for sending his relevant representatives, rather than attending in person.

However, Chairman, in view of the grandstanding that occurred from Councillors Zadrozny and Payne at December's Council meeting, and the fact that the Leader of Ashfield District Council was officially on the agenda to speak, it is notable that neither of them were present at what they were only too keen to tell us was their own event.

Some might suspect that after seeking their headlines and five minutes of media coverage from the 'Spice Summit' soundbite, their political purpose was satisfied. However, I am sure they will both have plausible explanations for missing an appointment that they previously considered to be essential.

For its part, Nottinghamshire County Council continues to work hard with partners to tackle the NPS problem, whilst maintaining a sense of perspective that the incidence of NPS use is relatively very small compared with the abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. But I do not underestimate the damage NPS does to people.

In line with the motion previously agreed by Full Council, a report for the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee has just been published, which provides an update on the number of NPS referrals to the substance misuse treatment and recovery service, and details the ongoing action being taken to address this issue in Nottinghamshire. This will be discussed at the next committee meeting, which is on Monday.

Finally Chairman I am able to comment that today, the officers that did attend that meeting are meeting together to determine the best way that any funding that might potentially come from central government would be spent.

**Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor David Martin**

Could the Chairman please tell us how many injuries have been reported from uneven or sunken pavements / pathways in Nottinghamshire in the last 24 months and how many of those have the council accepted responsibility for?

Further to this, how many reports of damages to vehicles from pot holes or other defects have been reported in that period and how much has the authority paid out as a result of those complaints?

**Response from the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee, Councillor John Cottee**

As at 26 March 2019, Nottinghamshire County Council has received 198 claims for compensation for personal injury due to defects in the footpath within the last 24 months. To date, we have accepted liability on 34 of these claims.

As at 26 March 2019, Nottinghamshire County Council has received 783 claims for compensation for vehicle damage due to potholes and other defects in the carriageway within the last 24 months. To date, we have paid a total of £88,814 against these claims.

**Question to the Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee from Councillor Alan Rhodes**

Does the Chair of Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee regret the way in which he announced the closure of James Hince Court Care Home, located in my division?

The announcement was made in a public meeting with the media present, before the decision was made by his committee, and before the recognised procedures were implemented to ensure that staff, service users and their families had been informed.

Will he take the opportunity to meet with staff, service users and their families to formally apologise for the insensitive and unprofessional manner that he has dealt with the issue?

**Response from Councillor Stuart Wallace, Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee**

Chairman, if anyone has reason to regret the decision to close James Hince Court and the way this was communicated, it is Councillor Rhodes. Let me explain why.

The closure of James Hince Court and five other Nottinghamshire County Council care homes was first decided, at the Full Council Budget meeting in February 2015, under Councillor Rhodes' Labour administration.

In November 2014, he brought a report to Policy Committee titled 'Redefining Your Council – Transformation and Spending Proposals'. It said:-

"The Council still owns and runs six Care and Support Centres formerly known as Residential Care Homes. Whilst the service provided is very good, the buildings are not modern and do not have the benefit of en-suite facilities for long term care residents. If the homes were to be de-commissioned, then the long term care residents could be offered places at local residential care homes."

One of those six care homes referred to was James Hince Court.

A public consultation followed, after which Councillor Rhodes brought a report to the Full Council Budget meeting in February 2015, which said:-

"...it is proposed that the following three centres would be kept open for another three years: James Hince Court in Worksop, Bishop's Court in Boughton and Leivers Court in Arnold."

So, a precise time limit was now imposed on the future of these three Care and Support Centres, meaning they would close in February or March 2018 at the latest.

Labour's budget plan confirmed this, by setting out clearly that the £4.3 million saving they intended to achieve through all six closures would be completed by the end of 2018/19.

Councillor Rhodes' report on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015 also stipulated that:

"The Council would not allow any new long-term residents to be admitted to any of the six care and support centres from this date onwards in order to minimise the number who have been resident for a significant time."

As I explained last month during the budget debate, the Conservative and Mansfield Independent administration inherited this closure plan in May 2017, by which time it was then well behind schedule.

Twelve months ago, the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee agreed a change request which set a new indicative closure date of July 2019 for James Hince Court. Councillor Rhodes knows this, because he was on that committee.

Last month in my budget speech, I reaffirmed the intention that James Hince Court would close, but now in September 2019 rather than the programmed July. The Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee will be asked to approve this changed date next week.

All of this means that, by September, James Hince Court will have been open 18 months longer than the Labour administration originally planned.

If Councillor Rhodes claims that James Hince Court staff and service users were caught by surprise by my comments a month ago, then it begs the question, what was he doing between February 2015 and May 2017 to inform them of his administration's decision that it would close.

I cannot answer for his time in office. However, I can say from the past two years James Hince Court staff and residents have been kept regularly informed that the closure of the Centre was imminent. Essentially this is an operational matter, but I know that managers have held regular update meetings with both service users and staff.

In respect of the number of residents currently in James Hince Court, it is three and my officers will engage with those residents and those residents' relatives to find an alternative.

I would point out that the Labour administration's decision to admit no long-term residents to the Centre since 2015 has made it self-evident that the Centres are being de-commissioned. So, Councillor Rhodes is wrong to imply that my speech in February was the first time that any indicative date has been announced, and he is wrong to imply that staff and service users are not aware of the date.

His recent comment to the media suggest he wants to keep James Hince Court open. This is somewhat misleading, in light of the decision that he made in 2015 to close it. His question today is cynical and is to salvage some kind, I presume, of political point from what was a directionless and disastrous budget meeting for his group.

If Labour genuinely no longer believe in their decision to close James Hince Court, then instead of spending time tweeting during Council meetings and playing on the emotions of service users and staff, they should have put their efforts into an alternative budget showing how they would now have kept James Hince Court open. I also would suggest that he contacts his MP John Mann who according to his comments in the local press state that John Mann is totally opposed James Hince closing at all and yet this has been the policy of the Labour Group since 2015.

As I said at the start of my answer, Chairman, if anyone has cause to regret the way the closure of James Hince Court has been handled, it is not just in the past month on social media but over the past four years, and that is Councillor Rhodes and his Labour Group.

**Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Helen-Ann Smith**

Can I thank the Chairman for this Council's decisive action following the decision by TM Travel to withdraw the 'Spira' Service that served my division. The 417, supported bus service was re-routed, this puts 3 return trips per day to and from Teversal.

Public Transport in Skegby, Stanton Hill and Teversal is at breaking point with residents with no access to a car increasingly isolated.

Can the Chairman assure me that the longer term review of our supported local bus services will prioritise areas where car ownership is lowest?

**Response from the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee, Councillor John Cottee**

I am pleased that the Council's response to the withdrawal of the Spira Service has helped maintain the service to Teversal.

When the Council reviews changes to supported local bus services, the Strategic Passenger Transport Framework, agreed and adopted by Members in 2015, is used to guide investment decisions. This Framework takes into account many factors which include:

- Car Ownership levels;
- Accessibility to key services;
- Patronage levels; and
- Costs per passenger.

I can confirm to Councillor Smith that a progress report on the review of public transport will soon be presented at Communities and Place Committee.