

APPENDIX B

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2022 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Question to the Cabinet Member for Finance from Councillor Jim Creamer

The Cabinet Member reported 'significant funding reductions' in the Council's 2021/22 Budget and 'on-going funding reductions from Government' in the Council's 2018/19 and 2019/2020 Budgets, as did the previous Chairman of the Finance and Property Committee in the 2017/18 Budget report.

Does the Cabinet Member still agree that significant funding reductions from Government have been a key driver of pressure on Council budgets in recent years?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Richard Jackson

As Councillor Creamer will be aware, there has been a gradual, planned reduction in the old mechanism for local government funding, namely the Revenue Support Grant, over the past decade. This represented in a shift in policy from central funding to local revenue raising, largely requested and supported by local government, albeit with controls on taxation to prevent the excessive increases of bygone years, such as 9% and even 12% here in Nottinghamshire under Labour administrations.

Ultimately, this made councils like ours more accountable to our own local taxpayers, and more directly responsible for spending their money well. There's an old phrase: '*Necessity is the mother of invention*', and over the past decade, this Council has saved more than £300 million of taxpayers' money through modernisation and transformation driven by these improved management principles.

The real answer to Councillor Creamer's question, however, is that an ageing population and increasing need for support in our communities are the 'key drivers' of pressure on council budgets, currently exacerbated by high inflation caused by global events.

As I've said before, every Government of all political persuasions since at least the 1990s has been guilty of not preparing well enough for the pressures that we knew would increase on the health and care sector, and when you see the flack that was directed at former Prime Minister Boris Johnson for being bold enough to finally try to grasp that nettle, you can perhaps understand why the likes of Blair, Brown and Cameron played for time rather than acting when they could and should have done. It is of course a welcome fact that people are living longer, but this brings increasing health and social care needs, and we also have a vital duty to look after vulnerable children who need our support. The Government has not been blind to this, providing significant targeted investment through the Better Care Fund, the Improved Better Care Fund, Social Care Grant and Services Grant. The extra funding we are due to receive from Government through the recent Autumn Statement will also be helpful as we finalise our Medium-Term Financial Strategy and budgets for future years. Thank you, Chairman.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management from Councillor Sam Smith

Earlier today, I submitted a petition signed by over 75 residents calling on this Council to withdraw from their planning agreement with a housing developer for land surrounding the Highfields School in Balderton.

This issue has been subject to the planning process for more than seven years and each planning application has, so far, been rejected by Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC) as the local planning authority. There is currently a further planning application awaiting decision.

If this application is rejected by NSDC, will the Cabinet Member agree to work with me to consider protecting the land off London Road as an open green space?

Response from the Deputy Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management, Councillor Reg Adair on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management, Councillor Keith Girling

The Council, acting with two other adjacent landowners, is under contract with Avant Homes to sell their combined lands subject to Avant Homes achieving planning consent to a residential development.

Avant Homes has submitted a planning application which is due to be determined shortly.

As the question confirms, the combined lands have been subject to various planning applications without success over a number of years. If the current application is rejected, then the Council and other landowners will be able to reconsider the future of their land.

In the light of any further planning problems the Council will need to review its strategy for the land and alternative uses. This would be something on which I would wish to consult with the Local Member.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families from Councillor Penny Gowland

School transport is essential in enabling students to get to and from school safely.

How are the resources such as buses, equipment, trained staff and educated support workers matched to the school transport needs of this County's extremely vulnerable children, including the SEN children for which this Council is responsible, to ensure services are appropriately delivered?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Councillor Tracey Taylor

The County Council's Transport Team uses a range of information when arranging school transport for vulnerable pupils. To determine the type of transport required, we take into account:

- Information given by a pupil's family and school;
- Information drawn from Education, Health & Care Plans where appropriate;
- Advice from officers in our specialist education services; and
- any additional support and specific equipment that may be needed.

Where necessary, additional information is requested from parents or medical professionals. Transport is then arranged through either existing transport provision, or by procuring specialist transport through our procurement frameworks.

Where specific training for support staff is required, this is provided and checked, and all relevant documentation is checked by the transport team before the transport provision commences.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health from Councillor Mike Pringle

The current HMRC approved Home Care Worker Mileage Allowance Relief is 45 pence per mile.

Is the Member aware of any Nottinghamshire County Council preferred care providers who do not currently contribute this full amount to their Care Work staff when travelling between clients?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, Councillor Matt Barney

The contracts that the Council holds with providers do not specify the amount of mileage allowance that providers should pay.

The rates the Council provides to our care providers enables them to pay at or above an hourly rate which enables providers to pay their staff at least at or above the National Living Wage including travel time, and which enables them to compete with other employers locally.

The legal position is that the terms and conditions of employment for care staff are a matter between those staff and their employer and the Council does not prescribe pay or mileage rates.

There is no law that states employers have to offer mileage allowance and the employee can get tax relief called Mileage Allowance Relief (MAR) on the unused balance of the approved amount.

Employers are not obliged to pay out the advisory HMRC mileage rate of 45p per mile for cars. They can choose the rate they want to reimburse employees at. Normally, this rate is lower than the one set by HMRC, as a higher rate will end up being taxed on the excess.

Further engagement with providers will take place through the Market Shaping programme of work, intended to support market sustainability.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment from Councillor Penny Gowland

What plans do the Council have to help alleviate the current problems of match day parking in West Bridgford?

Question to the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, Councillor Neil Clarke MBE

In answer to a friendly question, you'll be glad to know that I will not be giving a party-political election broadcast containing abusive insults that can't be replied [to] or corrected.

I'm sure we all wish Nottingham Forest well in the Premier League, but I also understand and appreciate the issues and challenges that increased popularity and success bring.

There is, on the plus side Chairman, a large boost to the local economy bringing many more customers and visitors to both the local area and also the wider area, so that is to be applauded, but I do recognise that there is a balance to be struck, and that's not to minimise the local problems which I do understand.

Complaints relating to parking generated by visitors to the City Ground have been received by the County Council for many years. These are typically generated from the Lady Bay area or from the opposite side of Radcliffe Road and Edward Road. Neither of these two large residential areas are subject to residents' parking zones unlike the more central areas of West Bridgford and those roads immediately adjacent to the football ground.

Many residents do not have off-street parking available, and consequently compete with the supporters on home match days for space. The Enforcement team are fully aware of the issues and deploy up to four officers at each home game specifically to patrol the nearby streets. This typically results in a number of penalty charge notices being issued, although there is evidence that some visitors are opting simply to park as near as possible on a restriction and simply pay the penalty. The results of the on-street parking surveys show that whilst there were potentially some locations that may benefit from a resident parking scheme, such schemes could not be introduced on these roads in isolation as that just transfers the problem somewhere else. A larger scheme that protected all of the potentially affected roads was therefore considered but has not been taken forward as it doesn't currently meet all the requirements of the provision of the rules of a residents' permit scheme. There are many criteria set out for residents' permit schemes Mr Chairman, and I won't go through them all now, but there are many factors that have to be taken into consideration.

So, moving onwards, the approved planning application to extend the Peter Taylor Stand at the ground, and the adjacent flats, has led to a planning obligation offer to

mitigate against the extra traffic this development will generate. Specifically, this includes:

- £50,000 for matchday traffic regulations orders;
- £40,000 for further traffic regulation orders specific to Radcliffe Road and to Fox Road; and
- £190,000 towards matchday permits.

The latter is for a period of free permits assuming that some new resident parking schemes are introduced. These obligations are based upon likely measures that can be developed further, but at this stage they are little more than a commitment to the financial contribution.

The latest situation is that the details of the Section 106 Agreement are still being finalised by Rushcliffe Borough Council. Within this process the trigger for payment will also be determined and, as many of the contributions are to deal with issues caused by additional residents and supporters, this is likely to be somewhere between the initial development start and the first occupancy. However, since the Section 106 Agreement is secure, the County Council can consider a consultation process. It is important to stress that although there should be financial backing for these new restrictions, the process for introducing them remains the same, and if there is opposition locally then new schemes may not develop.

In the meantime Chairman, I'm pleased to observe, note, and remind colleagues, that the County Council does contribute also to alleviating the the parking problems by offering the estate here around County Hall, which comprises would you believe, around 600 parking spaces, and of course they are available on the matchdays when of course the car park is not being used for other events. I'm not sure this actually contributes quite enough to satisfy Councillor Jackson's budget, but we'll do our best! Apart from that, Chairman, it is an ongoing problem, we will keep monitoring it, and we will keep looking at as many ways as possible to try and alleviate the problems.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Finance from Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan

Last month, when it was revealed that soaring inflation and rising costs will mean Nottinghamshire County Council needs to find at least an extra £24m in savings to balance its books you told the Local Democracy Reporting Service - local government "generally needs more money from central government". Can you outline what you have been doing to lobby the Government for more money, for a multi-year settlement and to implement the Fair Funding Review?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Richard Jackson

I'll endeavour to answer this straight-forward question in a straight-forward way without grandstanding, Mr Chairman, and I thank Councillor Purdue-Horan for his question.

My Budget Update to Cabinet last week set out the anticipated budget position for next year, indicating that our anticipated pressures and inflation costs would increase by a further £26.2 million to stand at £41 million next year.

At that meeting, and in the report, I spelt out the significant work that Cabinet Members have undertaken to both control in-year spending and to explore opportunities to alleviate or mitigate the pressures and inflation we are facing. The report set out an anticipated reduction in our pressures next year of £12.5 million resulting from that good work.

I also mentioned at the Cabinet meeting that we have continued to lobby Government directly, and through the County Councils Network and the Local Government Association, about the financial challenges facing this Council and local government in general.

Our Council Leader has played a significant part in presenting this case, as referenced in his own report to today's meeting. Councillor Bradley's direct access to Government departments and to senior ministers is, I believe, benefiting not just the County Council here, but the local government sector in general.

You only need to consider our spectacularly rapid success in securing the East Midlands Devolution Deal, compared with the difficulties we faced previously, to realise how effective this authority can be due to the influence of our Leader.

I thank Ben for the fantastic work he has undertaken on behalf of this Council, and I thank other Cabinet colleagues, and Chief Officers, who never stop lobbying the Government departments and ministers relevant to their own portfolios. I also thank Nigel, our Section 151 Officer and his team, for the excellent support they provide to us in our lobbying efforts. This has resulted in some good outcomes for local government from the recent Autumn Statement.

To give one example, Mr Chairman, last July, our Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, Councillor Barney brought a paper to Cabinet setting out the significant risks associated with delivering no fewer than eight pieces of social care reform through 2022 and 2023.

As one of the key recommendations in his report, Councillor Barney committed this Council to lobbying the Department of Health & Social Care with our concerns about the timetable and funding available for implementation.

It is therefore very significant that in his Autumn Statement, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt specifically said he had "heard the very real concerns from local authorities", in particular around social care charging reforms due to be implemented in October 2023. The Chancellor duly proposed to delay the implementation of this 'important' reform for two years, releasing funding to allow councils to provide more care packages.

The Chancellor said he wanted the social care system "to help free up some of the 13,500 hospital beds that are occupied by those who should be at home" and had therefore decided to allocate, for adult social care and hospital discharge, additional grant funding of £1 billion next year and £1.7 billion in the following the year. He explained that £600 million in the next financial year and £1 billion in the following year would be allocated through the Better Care Fund, with the remaining £400 million in

2023-24 and £680 million the following year being allocated to local authorities through a ringfenced grant to support hospital discharges.

Overall Chairman, the Autumn Statement, with its increase in funding for local authorities, reflects the extent of the lobbying efforts we have undertaken collectively, securing additional funding for social care of £2.8 billion next year, rising to £4.7 billion the year after.

Another example of our success lobbying for and securing resources from national level is our Nottsbus On-Demand pilot, funded in partnership with the Government, which Councillor Neil Clarke described in detail at the previous Council meeting.

I can inform members today that Councillor Clarke has already written to the new Secretary of State for Transport seeking further resources to expand this scheme, so we await developments in that regard.

Councillor Purdue-Horan's question asks what lobbying we have done regarding multi-year settlements and the Fair Funding Review. The answer, which he already knows I suspect, is that we have been lobbying for fairer funding and greater long-term certainty for several years. Perhaps he thinks I'll be evasive on this subject because those particular efforts have not yet brought the outcomes we want?

On the contrary, I have no hesitation in stating my disappointment and frustration that the Fair Funding Review has been delayed again. The Review was first promised in 2016 and is especially important to a large, semi-rural County like Nottinghamshire that has not been well-treated by local government funding formulas over the years, apart from last year's good one-year settlement awarded in the context of Covid.

I appreciate that the Government has faced some truly exceptional challenges in the past couple of years, but in my opinion the Fair Funding Review should be expedited as a key part of the solution to some of those challenges, rather than being delayed because of them.

Likewise, we absolutely do need longer-term local government settlements so we can plan more comprehensively. Our budget planning horizon is four years and our strategic planning looks even further ahead. We have big ambitions for this County and this County Council. To reach them, we need greater certainty of funding over future years.

I'm not shy at all about highlighting the areas where our lobbying efforts have yet to succeed. In fact, speaking publicly about such matters is part of that ongoing lobbying process, and I happen to know the Leader has been lobbying as we're sat here today through this meeting, Chairman.

However, we should also recognise where we have been successful in attracting extra resources, or greater freedom over the way we use resources, and the amount of work that goes into securing those outcomes. The very nature of lobbying is that sometimes success comes quickly, and other times it takes years of persistence. What I will say with confidence is that with our Leader, Nottinghamshire is better placed than any other council in this country to achieve that success.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Children and Families from Councillor Michelle Welsh

Following the Government's Autumn Budget Statement, funding for the full cost of Early Years education and childcare services will continue to have a substantial shortfall of over £4bn by 2025 according to Department for Education estimates.

What impact will this have on the Council's Early Years services, Early Years settings and the children of Nottinghamshire?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Children and Families, Councillor Tracey Taylor

I haven't seen the Department for Education estimates to which Councillor Welsh refers, but I have seen an article published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies which states that:

'While inflation is currently squeezing the budget for free childcare hours, real-terms spending on free childcare hours has more than doubled since 2009–10, from around £1.7 billion to more than £4 billion last year'. I will just stress that those figures are corrected over time so they count as today's figures.

The article also however states that: 'Higher-than-expected inflation means even that increase will not compensate for rising costs.'

It is a fact that the abnormally high inflation rate in the UK and across Europe, driven by recent and current global events, presents a major challenge to all service providers, both state and independent sector.

Nottinghamshire County Council does not itself provide early years education or child care, and the analysis by the IFS does not relate to the support to families that is provided through our public health nursing which includes the "health visiting" offer, or our children's centre services. It does relate to the money that the Council receives to pass on to private, independent and voluntary sector early years settings for the funded offer for two, three and four-year-olds. In this current financial year, the Council has passported 98.7% of its early years funding, which comes from the Designated Schools Grant, to local early years providers. We've retained less than 3% for central costs even though we are permitted to retain up to 5%.

Nottinghamshire County Council values its childcare sector and provides an hourly rate that is higher than the average hourly rate provided by statistically similar local authorities. Early Years settings have also received a temporary five pence per hour uplift in 2022/23 using underspends which we are consulting on continuing for future years. This places us well to support early years providers through this period of higher inflation.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, from Councillor Paul Henshaw

In line with the Cabinet's decision to adopt a £1 pay lift for Care Workers from September, can the Cabinet Member confirm whether all eligible Care Work staff are now being paid a rate which is £1 per hour more than they were being paid in July?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, Councillor Matt Barney

For anyone who isn't aware of the Cabinet decision to which Councillor Henshaw refers, it was agreed on 14th July 2022 to pay an additional £1 per hour to contracted homecare and supported living providers, intended to be passed on to Care Workers. This rate increase commenced from 12th September 2022.

Our contracts with these providers do not allow us to stipulate that the £1 should automatically be passed to the workforce, but our communications with providers asked that this be considered as a priority.

Since then, we have sought to monitor the delivery of this £1 increase through our Quality Market Management Team. Our initial findings from Homecare, Extra Care and Supported Living Providers indicate that a number of care and support providers have passported the full amount or even more than the £1 per hour to their workforce. Some providers have increased pay but not the whole £1, with part of the increase instead used to pay increased mileage, fuel costs and the costs associated with company cars that staff are using. Providers are also needing to invest to cover the costs associated with recruitment and retention and staff bonuses.

Our Quality Market Management Team are continuing to audit providers on how the £1 fee uplift is being implemented and the impact in terms of market sustainability. The full evaluation will be completed in January 2023.