

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 31 MARCH 2022**  
**QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN**

**WRITTEN RESPONSES PROVIDED AFTER THE MEETING AS THE TIME LIMIT OF 60 MINUTES FOR QUESTIONS WAS REACHED**

**Question to the Chairman of the Communities Committee from Councillor John ‘Maggie’ McGrath**

In the latest round of Local Communities Fund allocations earlier this month, several charity and third-sector service providers across the county received funding for accessibility transport schemes.

However, in my division of Stapleford and Broxtowe Central, the organisation who normally provide this service, The Helpful Bureau, did not receive funding for this despite delivering the service successfully for many years.

I understand that Council officers are keen to meet with both myself and a representative of the Helpful Bureau to determine if there is another way to resolve the matter and identify whether additional funding for this essential service in Stapleford and Broxtowe Central can be found.

Given the urgency of the situation and the importance of this service to its users, will the Chairman give support to the Helpful Bureau and request that officers report back on the outcome of these discussions, confirming what additional support the service can receive, prior to the next Full Council meeting?

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

First of all, I am proud that this County Council’s new, discretionary Local Communities Fund (LCF) is supporting groups, charity and voluntary organisations around the county, especially as Nottinghamshire continues its recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Demand for this support has been unprecedented and £1.2 million has been allocated so far, funded of course by taxpayers.

The Helpful Bureau in Stapleford applied for funding towards five of its projects. It was successful with three applications, meaning over the next four years they will receive a total of £120,540 in Local Communities Fund money. This is one of the largest totals of funding we have allocated to the 70 groups awarded this type of grant.

To ensure that we are fair in our distribution of funds, all applications are very carefully assessed against the same set of criteria. This includes asking applicants to be clear on what plans and match-funding are already in place to maintain their projects. In the case of two of the Helpful Bureau’s applications, not all of the criteria were met, and those applications were unfortunately unsuccessful.

As with any unsuccessful application, officers have spoken with the Helpful Bureau to explain why we were not able to make an award in those two cases, and we have

offered information about further help and support, including a reminder that we are still welcoming applications for one-off, smaller revenue bids of up to £5,000.

I will indeed ask officers to hold further discussions with the Helpful Bureau, involving the local county councillors, and report back to Communities Committee on the outcomes, including any additional support the Council might be able to provide. However, I am satisfied that the Local Communities Fund criteria have been applied fairly, as they should be when we are distributing public money.

**Question to the Chairman of the Children and Young People’s Committee from Councillor Andy Meakin**

Does Chairman support the growing campaign to stop schools insisting that pupils wear branded school uniforms?

**Response from Councillor Tracey Taylor, Chairman of the Children and Young People’s Committee**

I support measures that help parents to minimise the cost of school clothing, especially when other costs of living are rising. No child should suffer or miss out on their education because their school’s uniform requirements are too costly.

The Government published national guidance regarding branded school uniforms in November 2021. This guidance stated that all schools must ensure that “*school uniform costs are reasonable and parents get the best value for money.*”

Nottinghamshire County Council has reminded all schools through our schools bulletin, and in governors’ newsletters, about the statutory guidance on the cost of uniforms published on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

All schools should ensure that their uniform policy is published on their website and is clear and easy for parents to understand.

This administration is encouraging all schools, regardless of their governance, to consider these matters carefully when setting their uniform policy for the next academic year.

**Question to the Chairman of the Transport and Environment from Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022, you stated that plans were “on pause” for the promised new recycling centre near Cotgrave in Rushcliffe until the outcome of the strategic review of the recycling centre network across Nottinghamshire which you stated will last 3 months. It has now been 12 weeks and our promised recycling Centre is still on pause. Could you update Council on the outcome of the review and when we are likely to hear about our recycling centre – something promised since 2016?

**Response from Councillor Neil Clarke MBE, Chairman of the Transport and Environment Committee**

I refer Councillor Purdue-Horan to the Transport & Environment Committee 'Recycling Centre Strategic Review' committee paper and the associated media statement of the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022, which were published on the Nottinghamshire County Council website at that time and remain available to view.

**Question to the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee from Councillor Tom Hollis**

Could the Chairman please specify the exact responsibilities that being a corporate parent mean to Nottinghamshire County Council?

**Response from Councillor Tracey Taylor, Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee**

Chairman, I welcome this question because it allows me to emphasise the importance of the role of the County Council and each individual County Councillor as Corporate Parents.

Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs Nottinghamshire County Council undertakes. I would say it is the most important, and not just because of my position as Chairman of the Children & Young People's Committee.

When a child, for whatever reason, cannot safely stay at home, it is up to us as the local authority to step in and give them the care, support and stability they deserve. This isn't just the responsibility of myself as the Committee Chair or Colin Pettigrew as the Corporate Director for Children, Families & Cultural Services. We need everyone looking out for our most vulnerable children and young people, and every councillor has an important role to play.

Being a Corporate Parent means doing everything we can for every child in the council's care – and every care leaver – to give them the opportunities that other children get. This covers everything from keeping an eye on their progress at school, to looking after their health and wellbeing, to preparing them for life as independent adults – and supporting them when they get there.

We need to be ambitious for the children in our care, encouraging them to dream big and take chances even if they don't feel like that's been an option in the past.

It's also about the smaller things that make life more fulfilling. It's about making sure children receive birthday cards; ensuring they are rewarded when they do well and supported when they don't; and helping them to take part in the activities they enjoy and providing new experiences. It's about making sure someone is on the end of a phone when a care leaver is having a hard day at work or university, or is there to help them navigate an application form.

Put simply and succinctly, it's about doing the things you would do for your own children.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 defined for the first time in law the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure - as far as possible - secure, nurturing and positive experiences for looked-after children and young people, and care leavers. Many of the children who come into our care will face more challenges before they reach adulthood than any child should have to endure. It is our duty, and our privilege, to fight their corner and give them every opportunity to reach their potential.

### **Question to the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee from Councillor Michelle Welsh**

Will the Chairman show support for the seven recommendations outlined within the County Council Network's commissioned report, The Future of Children's Social Care, by outlining what specific actions this Council will undertake to influence the required national changes to strategy, investment, regulatory frameworks, best practice guidance and funding, as outlined in the report?

### **Response from Councillor Tracey Taylor, Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee**

Nottinghamshire County Council is an active member of the County Councils Network. Indeed, our Director for Children's Services, Colin Pettigrew, founded the network for Directors for Children and he was part of the small steering group that offered insight, challenge and direction to this CCN report. The report is driven by 5 underpinning pillars or principles:

- Placing children and young people at its heart: hearing their voices, views and ambitions;
- Keeping families together: (when it is safe do so);
- Aligning partnership working: to avoid any cracks or cliff-edges within or between organisations;
- Ensuring the right care for those who require care; and
- Providing a great place to call home: that is loving, stable and maintains connections with family, friends and communities.

Chairman, these principles, and the model that the report suggests, will optimise the support to children in and on the edges of care. This chimes very strongly with our own 'Whole Family Safeguarding Programme', the delivery of which was discussed at our Children & Young People's Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021. The aim of this, our programme, is to develop a whole system operating model which takes a strengths-based approach to supporting families so that children in need of help, protection and care achieve their best possible outcomes.

Specifically, the programme will seek to achieve the following:

- Children will experience stability and consistent relationships, to enable them to feel safe and to thrive;

- Families will be provided help and support from a range of professionals in integrated teams that meet parental needs as well as children's, so that more children and young people can live safely at home and in their communities;
- Friends and family and foster carers will experience better training and support so that more children who are in the care of the Local Authority will experience living in homes that are family-based and local;
- Teenagers and their families will receive more tailored support that recognises the risks young people may experience from outside of the family home, so that more young people are able to stay living in their community;
- Those young people that do need residential care will live locally and receive care and support that effectively meets their diverse needs as individuals;
- Having practitioners with different skills and expertise in teams working in a strengths-based way will enable a refocussing of the role of social workers and improve the quality of holistic support provided to families.

Chairman, through this programme, the following benefits will be realised:

- A de-escalation of needs – more families receiving consent-based help and support, with fewer requiring child protection plans or care proceedings;
- Children spending less time in Local Authority care, meaning young people safely returning home more quickly or achieving permanence through well-supported adoption, special guardianship orders or child arrangement orders;
- Fewer older young people needing to come into care;
- More children experiencing consistency of relationship with their social worker;
- Less reliance on procuring high cost external residential care at a distance for children whose needs can be better met in family-based or local residential homes; and
- Less reliance on the agency social work workforce.

The Children and Young People's Committee recognised that in order to deliver on this programme at pace, more capacity and investment was required. It therefore committed an additional £1.5 million between 2022 and 2024 to fund the transformation resource and capacity. That work is led by a new Service Director who Cllr Welsh helped to appoint.

So, to summarise, the answer to the question is 'yes', and we are ahead of the report in both our thinking and actions. Colin Pettigrew as the Chairman of the County Councils Network of Directors of Children's Services will continue to ensure that Nottinghamshire County Council's and as importantly our children and young people's voices are heard.

**Question to the Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee from Councillor Mike Pringle**

Could the Chairman confirm whether every carer in Nottinghamshire has received a bonus payment of £500 for their hard work during the Covid pandemic, via the Government's £300m fund announced in December 2021?

## **Response from Councillor Boyd Elliott, Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee**

Last October the Government announced a £162.5 million Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund for adult social care, to support local authorities to address (adult social care) workforce capacity pressures in their geographical area over the winter through recruitment and retention activity. The purpose was to:

- support providers to maintain the provision of safe care;
- bolster the capacity within providers to deliver more hours of care;
- support timely and safe discharge from hospital to where ongoing care and support is needed;
- support providers to prevent admissions to hospital;
- enable timely new care provision in the community; and
- support and boost retention of staff within social care.

In December 2021, a £300 million extension of this fund was announced, to which I believe Councillor Pringle is referring, although it was not a 'bonus' scheme in the way he infers. Nottinghamshire County Council passed this funding on to the Adult Social Carer Market to use for a variety of workforce schemes including retention, recruitment and funding one-off pay initiatives, as this funding was temporary. This approach was reported through Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee.

## **Question to the Chairman of the Nottinghamshire Pension Fund Committee from Councillor Lee Waters**

Nottinghamshire's Pension Fund analyst had predicted for months that a war in Ukraine was imminent, why did the fund not act sooner to disinvest in Russian-based assets?

## **Response from Councillor Eric Kerry, Chairman of the Nottinghamshire Pension Fund Committee**

May I thank Councillor Waters for his question. Hindsight is a wonderful thing!

Let's start with the date of Russia's heinous crime of invading another sovereign state, Ukraine. This has been widely reported as the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022; although some believe some troops may have moved into the Donbas and Luhansk regions slightly before then.

The statement that Councillor Waters refers to is the report to my Committee by our Independent Financial Advisor on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022. In which he wrote:

"The Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24<sup>th</sup> February was well anticipated, and apart from higher commodity prices has not at the time of writing affected investors' confidence much. However, second-order events clearly have the potential to upset markets considerably. In particular, wars tend to be inflationary as they increase demand and reduce supply capacity. The military (and governments) are less price sensitive than the private sector."

In view of the horrible events unfolding in Ukraine it is easy to believe it was predictable. Early analysis indicated that in December, the forecasting community said that there was a 40% chance. And on February 13<sup>th</sup>, there was a 60% chance. At the time, the US intelligence services were already saying what was going to happen. Many people didn't believe it. In fact, the Ukrainian Government were asking people to stop talking about it as they were stating publicly that it wasn't going to happen.

And as if to prove a point: a founder of the forecasting roundup site Global Guessing, thought that this crisis has not been the forecasting community's finest hour. "The probability would go up 10 points one day, down 15 the next then two days later go up another 10," ... "That's not what you'd expect from a well-grounded forecast."

I think what our Financial Advisor was stating was that an invasion was predictable, but the issue was not one about whether it was predictable but about our ability to predict when it would occur. If we followed Councillor Waters' hindsight logic, then today we should know Saturday's lottery numbers. It is just simply illogical.

And what other predictions have there been, for what the Russian Government calls a 'special operation'.

The day after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a Russian lawmaker who also happens to be the grandson of one of the most famous diplomats of the 20th century gave a speech in parliament. In his speech, Vyacheslav Nikonov quoted his grandfather, Vyacheslav Molotov, who negotiated the Molotov-Ribbentrop deal that carved up Poland and much of Eastern Europe -- and made a prediction.

"The enemy will be defeated, and victory will be ours. And I have no doubts about this," he said.

Twenty-seven (23/3/2022) days into Russia's war, Nikonov's prediction, echoed by other Russian politicians, has not come to pass. That is the trouble with predictions.

But Councillor Waters question forgets the real implications for the people of Ukraine. Whilst he ponders the timing and predictions of Russia's invasions, he forgets the unfolding humanitarian crisis. The tragic loss of life and human suffering, as well as causing massive damage to Ukraine's physical infrastructure. With an estimated 10 million Ukrainians displaced.

Our hearts go out to all Ukrainians at this dreadful time, and we can only hope that the sanctions imposed on Russia do have some effect to swiftly put an end to this war.

### **Question to the Chairman of the Economic Development and Asset Management Committee from Councillor Helen-Ann Smith**

Could the Chairman please outline all spending that the County Council have made on improvements to County Hall since February 2020 over £1000. Please itemise your answer by date and what the money was spent on?

## **Response from Councillor Keith Girling, Chairman of the Economic Development and Asset Management Committee**

The following improvement works have been undertaken at County Hall since February 2020 with their commencement dates and cost:

- In October 2020, works necessary to alter the basement PABX room were commenced to enable vacation of the data centre and support migration to the cloud. The works cost £235,985.
- In November 2020, works commenced to the flue and chimney to ensure continued safe and compliant operation of the gas heating system. The works cost £212,813.
- In December 2020, we spent £20,000 on improvements to the water system to reduce water quality risks.
- In April 2021, we spent £3,750 on pre-works to rooms to make them suitable for smarter meetings.
- This was followed in June 2021 with provision of additional card reader devices at a cost of £4,200 and finally expenditure of £1,152 on providing power and water supplies to vending machine locations.

Excluded from this answer are building maintenance activities as opposed to specific improvement works and the cost of new meeting room technology which does not form part of the building and is portable for use elsewhere.