

Meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

Date Thursday, 20th December 2012 (10.00 am –3.17pm)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

Carol Pepper (Chairman)
L B Cooper (Vice Chairman)

	Reg Adair		Keith Longdon
	John Allin		Rachel Madden
A	Fiona Asbury		Geoff Merry
	Chris Barnfather		Mick Murphy
	Victor Bobo		Philip Owen
	Joyce Bosnjak		John Peck
	Richard Butler	A	Sheila Place
	Steve Carr		Darrell Pulk
	Steve Carroll		Mike Quigley MBE
	Allen Clarke		Mrs Wendy Quigley
	Ged Clarke		Alan Rhodes
	John Clarke		Ken Rigby
	John Cottee		Kevin Rostance
	Michael J Cox		Mrs Sue Saddington
	Jim Creamer		Mel Shepherd MBE
A	Bob Cross		S Smedley MBE JP
	Mrs Kay Cutts		Mark Spencer MP
	V H Dobson	A	June Stendall
	Dr John Doddy		Andy Stewart
	Sybil Fielding		Martin Suthers OBE
	Stephen Garner		Lynn Sykes
A	Michelle Gent		David Taylor
	Glynn Gilfoyle		Parry Tsimbirdis
	Keith Girling		Gail Turner
	Kevin Greaves		Keith Walker
	John M Hemsall		Stuart Wallace
A	Stan Heptinstall MBE		Gordon Wheeler
A	Rev. Tom Irvine		Chris Winterton
	Richard Jackson		Brian Wombwell
	Rod Kempster		Martin Wright
	Eric Kerry		Liz Yates
	John Knight		Jason Zadrozny
	Bruce Laughton		

HONORARY ALDERMEN

Mr Martin Brandon-Bravo OBE
Mr Terry Butler
Mr John Carter

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mick Burrows	(Chief Executive)
Jayne Francis-Ward	(Policy, Planning & Corporate Services)
Anthony May	(Children, Families and Cultural Services)
David Pearson	(Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection)
Paul Simpson	(Environment and Resources)
Carl Bilbey	(Policy, Planning and Corporate Services)
Gail Holliday	(Policy, Planning and Corporate Services)
Martin Done	(Policy, Planning and Corporate Services)
Chris Holmes	(Policy, Planning and Corporate Services)
Sara Allmond	(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)

OPENING PRAYER

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

1. MINUTES

A report setting out proposed changes to the minutes of the last meeting was circulated.

RESOLVED: 2013/01

That the Minutes of the last meeting of the County Council held on 1st November 2012 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the changes outlined in the report, and the inclusion of Councillor John Peck in the list of those who were present at the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The following apologies for absence were received:-

Medical/Illness
Councillor Bob Cross
Councillor Fiona Asbury

Councillor Michelle Gent
Councillor Sheila Place
Councillor Rev. Tom Irvine

Other
Councillor June Stendall
Councillor Stan Heptinstall MBE

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

4. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

(a) Emergency Planning Team response to recent flooding

The Chairman acknowledged the excellent work done by the Emergency Planning Team, and other colleagues in response to the recent floods, which had first impacted the village of Zouch, and then on communities along the River Trent, most notably in Newark.

(b) Presentation of Awards

Divisional Commander's Commendation – Car Cruising

The Chairman presented the award to Tony Shardlow and Chris Walker which acknowledged the success of their work in Netherfield and Colwick to stop vehicle nuisance in and around the local retail park.

Green Apple Environment Award 2012

Councillor Richard Butler presented the Chairman with the Green Apple Environment Award 2012 which acknowledged the work of the Council in relation to energy saving.

Local Authority Caterers' Association Business of the Year Award

Councillor Andy Stewart presented the Chairman with the Local Authority Caterers' Association Business of the Year Award which acknowledged the work of the managers and staff of the Council's Schools Catering Team.

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 - Environmental Weight Limits

Councillor Keith Longdon	-	ASBO Reduction in Eastwood
Councillor Sybil Fielding	-	Roads in Worksop North
Councillor Kevin Greaves	-	Resident's Parking Scheme, Stubbing Lane, Worksop

6. PETITIONS

(a). PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

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

- (1) Councillor Keith Longdon – Petition regarding creating a crossing at the end of Newthorpe Common
- (2) Councillor Steve Carr – Petition requesting a crossing patrol on Park Street
- (3) Councillor Mike Quigley – Petition requesting a residents parking scheme on Lime Grove
- (4) Councillor John Peck – Petition requesting Traffic Lights on the junction of Mickledale Lane
- (5) Councillor Kevin Greaves – Petition requesting a Parking Scheme on Stubbing Lane, Worksop
- (6) Councillor Rachel Madden – Petition calling for a review of the traffic management system on Chapel Street, Kirkby

RESOLVED: 2013/02

That the petitions be referred to the appropriate Committees for consideration in accordance with the Procedure Rules.

(b) PETITION RESPONSES

RESOLVED: 2013/03

That the contents and actions be noted in respect of petition responses agreed by the Children's and Young People's Committee on 3rd December 2012, and the Transport and Highways Committee at its meeting on 22nd November 2012.

7. QUESTIONS

(b) QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Three questions had been received as follows:-

- (1) from Councillor Chris Winterton about whether elderly people in Nottinghamshire are being over charged for services that they have not received (Councillor Kevin Rostance replied)
- (2) from Councillor Joyce Bosnjak regarding £900,000 from Nottinghamshire County Council being given to Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club (Councillor John Cottee replied on behalf of Councillor Reg Adair)
- (3) from Councillor Chris Winterton about the reduction of information printed in various languages provided in our Libraries (Councillor John Cottee replied)

The full responses to these questions are set out in Appendix B to these Minutes.

8. CLARIFICATION OF MINUTES

The report provided Members with the opportunity to raise any matters of clarification on the minutes of Committee meetings published since the last meeting.

9. WINTER READINESS

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts introduced the report and moved a motion in terms of the resolution 2013/04 below.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Richard Jackson

RESOLVED: 2013/04

- (1) That elected members note the plans for:-
 - Snow Clearance and gritting
 - Schools
 - Vulnerable people
 - Communications
- (2) That the Winter Weather Plan 2012 be approved.

10. UPDATE ON THE INITIAL FINDINGS FROM THE 2012 NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ANNUAL RESIDENT'S SATISFACTION SURVEY

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts introduced the report and moved a motion in terms of the resolution 2013/05 below.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Martin Suthers OBE .

RESOLVED: 2013/05

- (1) That the increased levels of satisfaction evidenced by the 2012 Nottinghamshire annual residents' satisfaction survey be noted.
- (2) That the Council uses this survey data as the baseline and looks to set meaningful targets for future years based on this.
- (3) That further detailed analysis, including mapping of activity that may have contributed to high/low levels of satisfaction across the Council, looking at links to cost and quality of service and other available data, be undertaken.
- (4) The Council continues with annual satisfaction surveys in future years.

11. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAM WASTE CORE STRATEGY – SUBMISSION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Councillor Richard Butler introduced the report and moved a motion in terms of the resolution 2013/06 below.

The motion was seconded by Councillor John Hemsall.

RESOLVED: 2013/06

- (1) That the County Council approves submission of the Nottinghamshire and Nottingham Waste Core Strategy to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for Examination.
- (2) That the Corporate Director, Policy, Planning and Corporate Services be authorised , in consultation with the Chairman of Environment and Sustainability Committee, to agree in principle any necessary amendments to the Submission Core Strategy during the Examination process, subject to adoption of the final plan by Full Council.

12. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL BROADBAND PLAN UPDATE

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts introduced the report and moved a motion in terms of the resolution 2013/07 below.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Keith Girling.

RESOLVED: 2013/07

- (1) The public support for the campaign be recognised.
- (2) That Council continue to do all in its power to bring about the delivery of broadband as quickly as possible and recognises the importance of broadband to all sections of the community, and in particular to business regeneration.

13. FIRST REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM AFTER SIX MONTHS

Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts introduced the report and moved a motion in terms of the resolution 2013/08 below.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Martin Suthers OBE.

RESOLVED: 2013/08

- (1) That Council notes the outcome of the review process.
- (2) That Council agrees to the establishment of a Public Health Sub Committee chaired by the Deputy Leader, and to the Terms of Reference as set out in the report.
- (3) That Council agrees the constitutional amendments as set out in Appendix C to the report.
- (4) That Council agrees the constitutional amendment as set out in paragraph 10(c) of the report; to change 'Councillor' to 'committee member' as necessary throughout the procedure rules for committee and sub- committee meetings.
- (5) That Council agrees that reports to service committees be in the name of the relevant Corporate Director or Service Director and reports to Policy Committee and Council be in the name of the relevant Committee Chairman, with the exceptions as set out in the report.
- (6) That questions to the Chairman of the Police Authority be removed from the Council procedure rules and that any questions to the

Police and Crime Commissioner be directed through the Police and Crime Panel or the Community Safety Committee.

Following consideration of this item, Council adjourned from 12.30 pm until 1.45 pm for lunch.

15. NOTICE OF MOTION

It was moved by Councillor Jason Zadrozny and seconded by Councillor Rachel Madden:-

“That Nottinghamshire County Council

- (i) Supports the bottom up process in the Sustainable Communities Act that enables councils to drive action and assistance that central government gives councils to promote thriving local economies and sustainable communities;
- (ii) Notes that the Act gives councils the power to
 - make proposals to government for action and assistance from government to promote sustainable communities, and that
 - those proposals can be for, but are not restricted to, new powers or a transfer of powers or public money from central control to local control;
- (iii) Notes that the Act defines sustainable communities broadly, that definition having the four aspects of
 - the improvement of the local economy,
 - protection of the environment,
 - promotion of social inclusion and wellbeing, and
 - participation in civic, political and democratic activity;
- (iv) Resolves to use the Act by responding to the government’s open invite for proposals and submit proposals for action and assistance from central government each year for the next three years and to then review the outcome of this activity and consider whether to continue to use the Act;
- (v) Resolves that a draft policy be developed on how the Council will take advantage of the opportunities set out in the Act for approval by Policy Committee; and
- (vi) Further resolves
 - to inform the local media of this decision;
 - to write to local MPs, informing them of this decision; and

- to write to Local Works c/o Unlock Democracy, informing them of this resolution to use this Act.”

The following amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts and seconded by Councillor Martin Suthers OBE

- In sub-paragraph (i), after the words “drive action”, insert a comma and after the word “and” insert the words “welcomes the”
- Remove the text after sub paragraph (i)
- Add a new paragraph as follows:
 - “(ii) Agrees that the Policy Committee should examine the opportunities provided by the Sustainable Communities Act and decide whether and how these might be taken forward.”

The amended motion would read:-

“That Nottinghamshire County Council

- (i) Supports the bottom up process in the Sustainable Communities Act that enables councils to drive action, and welcomes the assistance that central government gives councils to promote thriving local economies and sustainable communities.
- (ii) Agrees that the Policy Committee should examine the opportunities provided by the Sustainable Communities Act and decide whether and how these might be taken forward.

The meeting was adjourned from 3.07 pm to 3.12 pm.

The mover of the original motion Councillor Jason Zadrozny indicated that he accepted the amendment.

The motion as amended was put to the meeting and declared to be carried and it was:-

RESOLVED:- 2013/09

That Nottinghamshire County Council

- (i) Supports the bottom up process in the Sustainable Communities Act that enables councils to drive action, and welcomes the assistance that central government gives councils to promote thriving local economies and sustainable communities;

- (ii) Agrees that the Policy Committee should examine the opportunities provided by the Sustainable Communities Act and decide whether and how these might be taken forward.

The meeting closed at 3.17 pm

CHAIRMAN
M20DEC12

APPENDIX A

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20th DECEMBER 2012

3-MINUTE SPEECHES

Councillor Bruce Laughton

“My three minute speech will be short otherwise I’ll run out of voice. It is a congratulation really on behalf of my constituents and myself for all the hard work that has gone on putting in Environmental Weight Limits. For those people who don’t know what they are it is seven and a half tons weight limits into villages that I represent; Cromwell, Carlton-on-Trent, Norwell, Caunton and Bathley.

Not only are we doing that but we are hopefully going to be downgrading the A612 to a B road and putting an environmental weight limit in the triangle between the A612 and A617 and all this is work that is ongoing by Richard’s department and will make a massive impact in the quality of life for people that I represent in North Nottinghamshire.

Not only are we doing that; I’m now being used as a battering ram or consultant for other areas that are wishing to protect their environment from lorries trundling through their communities. It is absolutely essential and was part of our manifesto commitment three years ago that we intended to do something about this problem and the Conservatives in this chamber are delivering. We are delivering an improvement in the quality of life to those individuals who are not being woken up in the morning; their houses are not being shaken to bits and they are able to live in a sustainable and normal fashion.

You can imagine my dismay when I saw a Liberal Democrat Focus that went round my communities that said ‘HGV Promise failure’. This was put out to all the villages and Southwell in my division. I would just like to point out that it is these sorts of lies that we should condemn as a Council because it drags us all down. It is the mire that the Liberal Democrats have placed themselves with in the Caunton and Southwell division.”

Councillor Keith Longdon

“I rise this morning not to criticise opposition but to thank them. As far as I’m concerned in Eastwood we have a new youth centre in which I work along with the youth centre team and Philip Owen and we have reduced anti-social behaviour by 47.8%.

I would like to thank Philip’s team because now we have a little bit of an under spend within the youth centre and he’s agreed that it will go to a new skate park in Eastwood which the kids at the local comprehensive school, whom I’m very proud of, are raising money for that project. That £35,000 (I won’t go into detail

of all the others) but we have now raised £115,000 and we are still going. So I would like to thank you Philip. Thank you very much.”

Councillor Sybil Fielding

“Securing the adoption of roads on two large housing developments in Worksop North proved to be a challenge. The work was long and complicated, requiring my engagement with developers, outside agencies and skilled development officers of the County Council.

The cornerstone to this success was my work with the Bassetlaw development control officer. Members may recall I paid tribute to the work of Mr. Bob Castle just prior to his retirement. At the same time I did warn this Council of the consequences of not replacing such officers and this would prove to be a false economy. Now Bassetlaw does not have a development control officer and it is of great concern that the development control officer has refused to meet with me because he physically does not have the time and I am still awaiting a reply from an email from the beginning of November.

Most recently I have been approached by one company in Worksop that is considering moving its company to Cheshire with a loss of over a hundred jobs due to the poor state of the access road; an unadopted road and this is a company looking to move from two sites to one where the Managing Director has made it clear that limited access on a poor road will be an issue.

Having made numerous requests to Highways to be kept informed of the situation, through the grapevine I understand the cost of pulling the developer's bond will not entirely cover the cost of the work of bringing the roadwork up to adoptable standard. The Service Director and the Chief Executive are well aware of my concerns. I hear there are concerns about setting a precedent although this is just hearsay because, as a local member I'm not being kept informed.

There is a stark contrast here; this Administration defended its actions in supporting Nottinghamshire's Cricket Club to the tune of close to £1 million as to protect jobs yet seems unwilling to spend a few thousand pounds to protect over 100 full-time skilled jobs and the potential of new jobs.

It may well be the work has been agreed but as a local member I'm certainly not being kept informed.”

Councillor Kevin Greaves

“Along with my colleague I have residents within my division who work in this industrial estate and have complained to me about the state of the road that has not been adopted. They feel bemused at how this Council can okay close to a million pounds to the Cricket Club which I’m sure you will all put on your leaflets when you are up for election.

They are quite bemused at how you can give money to a private company and yet not even adopt a road which is totally unsafe for travelling down on a bicycle or whatever. But I’m sure that you will be looking into it because you have a hundred jobs here at stake, whereas at Trent Bridge one of your colleagues was stating 14 jobs at a local fish and chip shop was gained by putting a million pounds into the Cricket Club.

The other thing that I would like to bring to your attention is on Stubbing Lane in Worksop which wants a resident’s parking scheme. This road has now become absolutely intolerable for emergency services and buses alike. I’m going to be handing in a petition also about this road but it’s become so narrow with parking from non-residents that it’s becoming very dangerous. Traffic is not able to pass properly, emergency services getting stuck and also that the bus company Stagecoach are supporting this petition for the residents because they’re having to stop their bus short of the housing estate which is about 800 yards up the road to drop the residents off there because they can’t pass any further. So if you would look into that for us.”

APPENDIX B

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20TH DECEMBER 2012 QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Question to the Chairman of the Adult Social Care & Health Committee from Councillor Chris Winterton

“Please could the Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Health Committee inform the Council on whether elderly People in Nottinghamshire are being over charged for services that they have not received?

Also, could the Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Health Committee explain why the Council is sending out thousands of reminder letters and a number of final court notices if elderly people are satisfied with the way they are being invoiced?

Would the Chairman agree that it is unfair and highly inappropriate for elderly people to be invoiced incorrectly and would he agree to a full investigation into the way in which elderly and vulnerable people are being invoiced for vital services?”

Response by Councillor Kevin Rostance, Chairman of the Adult Social Care & Health Committee

“Thank your Councillor Winterton for your question, which I will take in three parts.

Part one: please could I inform the Council whether elderly people in Nottinghamshire are being over charged for services that they have not received?

Chairman, the Fairer Contributions Policy was introduced in October 2010 to allow charging for service users transferring from traditional services to a Personal Budget. Service users are offered a financial assessment to determine the maximum amount they can afford to contribute towards their Personal Budget. If a service user has over £23,250 in savings, they are required to pay the full amount.

The Council produces Personal Budget statements on a quarterly basis to compare the amount the service user has been charged to the actual cost of the service provided. If the service user has not accessed a service, for example due to a hospital admission, they can contact the Council to query their contribution and, if the query is justified, the Council will make an immediate adjustment to their contribution for the relevant period. I should point out that not all councils provide this retrospective analysis, but in Nottinghamshire we believe that if a person has paid for a service they did not subsequently use, through no fault of their own, then it is right to return the appropriate amount.

Part two of the question asks me why the Council is sending out thousands of reminder letters and a number of final court notices if elderly people are satisfied with the way they are being invoiced.

A total of 10,459 people currently receive social care services and out of this, a total of 7,773 are required to pay a contribution towards the cost of their care or to pay the full cost based on their financial circumstances. 2,686 service users receiving services currently do not pay a contribution towards the cost of their care at all.

Reminder letters and court notices are sent out by our Income and Credit Control Team. These letters are automatically generated when an invoice is not paid in full. If charges have not been paid then a reminder letter is sent out 21 days after the initial invoice. If the invoice then still remains unpaid, a Final Notice or Court Notice is issued 42 days after the initial invoice. Where the balance outstanding is under £175 a 'Final Notice' is issued and where the balance is £175 or more a 'Court Notice' is issued. Service users or their carers are advised to contact Income and Credit Control at any point in the process if they have any queries about the invoice.

We have checked with officers within the Income and Credit Control Team and they confirm that in most instances the level of the charge is not being disputed. From over 101,000 invoices processed by Adult Care Financial Services in the last year up to September, only 41 complaints were made, of which only six related to overcharging.

I'll repeat that: 101,000 invoices, 41 complaints, only six relating to overcharging. The evidence would therefore suggest the vast majority of people are satisfied with their invoice.

The problem is that people sometimes do not pay their contribution in a timely way. Reminder letters are sent out to service users in order to prevent them incurring a large debt. We recognise the difficulty of the current financial climate and support service users accordingly, but the Council cannot neglect its responsibility to ensure all charges are collected in a timely manner in accordance with its financial procedures.

Part three of Councillor Winterton's question asks me if it is unfair and inappropriate for elderly people to be invoiced incorrectly and would I agree to a full investigation into the way in which elderly and vulnerable people are being invoiced.

"Chairman, I would not agree, because Councillor Winterton's premise is wrong.

Service users are invoiced correctly for their contribution, which is based on a full financial assessment of their ability to pay. Invoices are based on the information Adult Care Financial Services have about the care the person has received.

Personal Budget statements are then produced which compare the amount a service user has been charged to the actual cost of the service provided and paid for by the Council. Should the planned care have altered, invoices are adjusted immediately if notification is made of these changes. Our procedures are fairer than those of some other councils.

I shall repeat the invitation I always make to Councillor Winterton, which is to approach me or the relevant council officers if he has cause for concern about an individual service user's invoice or any other adult social care issue. Unfortunately, he seems to prefer tabling questions in Council which create a generalised and misleading impression of the service we provide. I do not think it helps our hard working staff, I do not think it helps our service users and I am not even sure his questions have the enthusiastic support of his own Group. I have tried to answer them nevertheless."

Question to Chairman of Finance & Property from Councillor Joyce Bosnjak

"Would the Chairman agree that £810,000 from Rushcliffe Borough Council plus £900,000 from Nottinghamshire County Council (which equates to over £1.7 million) is a very large gift to Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club from the taxpayer of Nottinghamshire, when they are being burdened with austerity measures?"

Response by Councillor John Cottee, Chairman of the Culture Committee answered on behalf of Councillor Reg Adair

"The award made by Rushcliffe Borough Council is a matter for that local authority and you would need to ask them for a response. My answer will focus on Nottinghamshire County Council's decision.

As Chairman of the Culture Committee I want to make it clear that the award agreed by this County Council at the Policy Committee to Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club was not a gift. It represents a carefully considered and reasonable investment in the sporting profile and economic and social development of this County.

First of all, as part of the funding agreement, the Nottinghamshire Cricket Club will deliver a new, three year youth social inclusion programme in the Hawtonville area of Newark, based upon the very successful original programme in Cotgrave, which has driven down youth crime, anti-social behaviour and resolved other issues within the local community. In fact, BBC Radio Nottingham ran a feature only yesterday to show how successful this has been. This programme for

Hawtonville is worth £270,000, and is a superb example of the kind of community focused innovation that effective partnership work can generate;

Second, the award of the grant will help secure for our County the most attractive package of international cricket outside London for the next four years - and potentially beyond. This is great news for the local economy at a vital time. It is estimated that continuing international cricket at Trent Bridge will generate over £30 million of economic benefit to our County from 2013-16, and will ensure that Nottinghamshire's good name is positively promoted across the world, helping to attract further international trade and visitors;

Third, the Council will enter into a long term agreement with the Cricket Club enabling us to innovatively promote the full range of our Council's services to local people across a range of platforms. This will be worth more than £500,000 over a 15 year period (approximately £34,000 per annum) and will help us to ensure that local people who need vital Council services can access them more easily and effectively. We will also be able to market Nottinghamshire as a destination for national and international tourism.

Chairman, it won't have escaped your notice that there is an election approaching and opposition councillors such as Councillor Bosnjak have a vested interest in generating and exploiting public misunderstanding of certain decisions we make. In this case it is particularly hypocritical because the previous Labour administration itself assisted the Cricket Club and Labour councillors might well have opted to do so again if they were in our position, despite suggestions to the contrary.

Without the upgrade to facilities at Trent Bridge, there was a very real threat that this historic ground would lose Test Match status. If this happened, I have no doubt that there would have been a similar, in fact bigger, public outcry, from cricket fans, local businesses and even those who do not have a direct interest. Opposition Members would then most likely be tabling opportunist questions asking "How could this happen?" and "Why did Nottinghamshire County Council not anticipate this and do more?"

I'm sure that when the opportunity for short-term political mischief-making has passed, and when future Test Matches take place, there will be a much wider public appreciation that this was the correct decision.

And I must say finally, Chairman, that I won't take lessons from Councillor Bosnjak or any other Labour Members about "burdening" the taxpayer. It was a Labour Government whose economic mismanagement created the situation we face today, and she was a member of previous Labour administrations which burdened the taxpayer with council tax increases of up to 9% and 12%, doubling council tax in the space of a decade.

It is because of savings we have made in the back office that this authority has the financial flexibility to pursue economic development opportunities such as this

without any increase to council tax in the past three years. I repeat, without any increase in Council tax for the past three years. This grant award isn't a gift, but rather, an investment that will achieve ongoing economic and social returns."

Question to the Chairman of the Culture Committee from Councillor Chris Winterton

"Nottinghamshire County Council provides information that is printed in various languages, particularly at our libraries.

Please could the Chairman confirm that reductions have been made to this service and as a result Mansfield Library has had to significantly cut the information it translates and prints into different languages?"

Response by Councillor John Cottee Chairman of the Culture Committee

"The Library service aims to provide a comprehensive range of resources including published foreign language material relevant to the needs of the local community. This includes foreign language printed books and journals. In addition, the ongoing provision of free use of the internet provides access to many foreign language publications and web sites.

The service undertook a review of newspapers and journal titles and, specifically for Mansfield Central Library when it reopened; no demand for Asian language titles was made. Nevertheless, if there are specific requests, the service will always look at these seriously and either purchase or borrow for customers. So, there is not a reduction in service, just a greater awareness of supply and demand and a commitment to achieve better value for the public money we spend.

The service has just launched a new electronic magazines service which is due to include a number of foreign language titles. More information is available on the County Council web site.

Library staff and the 'Ask Libraries' information service are geared to answer specific enquiries and will source published information, including in foreign languages, for customers. This does not include, and never has included, commissioning the actual translation of sources.

It is a fact Chairman, that local authorities have less money to spend and must make better use of it. This is an alien concept to Councillor Winterton, who was part of a Labour administration which wasted public resources and never challenged itself to deliver services in a more efficient or targeted way. It is why the Labour Group can only equate less money to a reduction in service and it illustrates exactly why they could not be fit to run this Council.

In contrast, with regard to translation services, we are working progressively with colleagues in the City to provide an improved, responsive and comprehensive service which values all of our customers.”