

APPENDIX B

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 23RD NOVEMBER 2017 QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Mike Pringle

Having watched Councillor Bradley's interview as Mansfield's MP on the East Midlands Politics Show, has the Leader of the Council been advised by Councillor Bradley that council's should be spending their reserves on supporting development locally? If so, can she advise this Council on what proportion of our reserves she is prepared to spend and on which projects?

Response from Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE, the Leader of the Council

I did not see Councillor Bradley's interview on the East Midlands Politics Show, but I am happy to explain the position regarding Nottinghamshire County Council reserves.

The Council's reserves are held for specific and statutory reasons, such as PFI (Private Finance Initiative) reserves, schools reserves, insurance fund reserves, Section 256 monies held in agreement with NHS partners or grant monies received in advance for specific revenue or capital schemes. In addition, there is the County Fund Balance set aside as part of our strategy of managing risk in the overall Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

We must remember that reserves are one-off resources and we should try and limit their use in funding on-going costs. However it is inevitable that we will use some of them to support front-line services specifically to allow time for us to transform our services and close the overall funding shortfall over the medium term.

When the Council set the Budget last February it approved a strategy to release over £36 million of reserves to support ongoing service requirements and to allow time for the authority to transform its services. £27 million of this is planned to be utilised in this financial year.

Decisions on the use of reserves both revenue and capital, will be taken when the Council determines its budget in February 2018.

It is worth remembering that the use of reserves was agreed as part of the Labour budget in February.

The following two questions were taken together:-

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

Would the Chairman of the Communities and Place Committee give me his assurance that the Districts of Ashfield, Broxtowe, Gedling, and Mansfield will receive a fairer redistributed proportion of the Highways Capital Maintenance Programme Budget for

2018-19 based more on high volume usage rather than geographical areas? Would he also take this opportunity to reassure members that of the currently unallocated remaining forty percent of funding, greater attention will be given to the divisional County Councillors preferred projects for their own areas as previously promised?

Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Tom Hollis

At the last meeting of the Communities and Place Committee it was announced that Ashfield District got the least money allocated to it under the provisional Highways Capital and Revenue programme 2018/19. Of the token allocation of £895,000 for Ashfield District - £335,000 is to be spent in Hucknall, £300,000 in Kirkby North leaving only £260,000 for the rest of the Ashfield District. Of the 60 schemes that Ashfield Independent Councillors put forward – not one is in the provisional plan. What assurances will the Chairman give that Ashfield gets its fair share of urgently needed funding for the remaining 40% of the budget?

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

Funding is allocated to the Highways Capital Maintenance Programme Budget based on a combination of the Highway Network Length in each District, and, for carriageway related maintenance, the road condition. This modelling is used for all districts in the county and follows an asset management approach as advocated by national guidance.

The scheme requests submitted by County Councillors are currently being considered. The output from this work will be available once the final budget allocations are known from Government and local contributions from the Council in February 2018. This will be reported to Communities and Place Committee where members will have another opportunity to discuss this important issue.

We did discuss this at Communities and Place Committee and the position is the same – we have not finalised the budgets and the applications are being worked through.

Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Joyce Bosnjak

Does the Chairman share our concerns about the significant impact that the changing criteria to the grant aid scheme and funding of voluntary organisations will have on vulnerable citizens as a result of the decision taken at Policy Committee last week?

Response from Councillor Gordon Wheeler, Vice-Chairman of Communities and Place Committee, on behalf of Councillor John Cottee, Chairman of Communities and Place Committee

The comprehensive report and strategy which was agreed at Policy Committee last week provides the Council with a funding strategy for three years which will significantly and positively invest in and support voluntary organisations and local communities across Nottinghamshire.

Bringing together three different pots of discretionary funding to establish the new Local Improvement Scheme will ensure that targeted support for voluntary and community groups is provided in a single coherent strategy.

This will support communities to be more resilient through, for example, encouraging active community support, volunteering, and giving groups the backing and confidence to seek wider funding opportunities. In 2015/16 funded groups attracted an extra £2million from other funders.

Groups will be able to apply for capital and revenue funding, and in line with the Council's strategic priorities, the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) will contribute to making Nottinghamshire a great place to live, work, visit and relax. The funding will focus on supporting communities to be strong, vibrant and resilient.

We are encouraging innovative applications for projects and activities which support the council's priorities. Examples include:

- Community based improvement schemes;
- Projects and activities which help people to live independently for longer and help our most vulnerable people to make healthier life choices, minimising risk and improving community safety;
- Projects that increase, develop and support volunteering, helping people to have stronger links their communities.

Councillor Bosnjak, if you look at the website this morning you will find all the information you could possibly want on the LIS Scheme. I urge every Councillor to get involved with the launch of the scheme.

Detailed information and guidance on the criteria and how to apply is now available online and officers will support groups through the process. In addition, three events are being held in early December to provide information and the opportunity for questions and answers on the process.

Have no doubt whatsoever that we are doing absolutely everything we can to engage communities across Nottinghamshire.

Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Rachel Madden

Is the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee happy with the progress of the roll out of broadband across the county, with special reference to Ashfield?

Response from Councillor Gordon Wheeler, Vice-Chairman of Communities and Place Committee, on behalf of Councillor John Cottee, Chairman of Communities and Place Committee

I am extremely pleased with the progress of the broadband rollout, far exceeding the coverage that was expected at the commencement of the Better Broadband for

Nottinghamshire programme. By September 2018, over 98% of properties across Nottinghamshire will have access to superfast Broadband.

I want to give a lot of thanks to officers for the work that has gone into rolling out the broadband. Almost 99% of homes and businesses within Ashfield district are now able to receive superfast broadband speeds, with further properties due to be provided with access during the coming months.

Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Rachel Madden

Firstly, following receipt of further information last week may I express my thanks to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee for the latest actions being taken over the J27 problem. It looks like this may finally solve this matter to the relief of both my residents and drivers using the A608. My question is about another aspect of highway safety - is he confident that the Authority is doing all it can regarding hot spots for dangerous speeding?

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

Casualty reduction has always been taken very seriously in Nottinghamshire and in 2018/19 the County Council will spend over £1million to help reduce casualties resulting from road traffic collisions. One of the key ways of achieving this is through our speed management initiatives. Our in-depth investigations of police accident reports identify sites where groups of similar accidents lead to road users being injured. Improvement schemes are tailored to address specific issues identified by the investigations, ensuring that the most effective treatments can be deployed. By this means, the maximum reduction in the number and severity of casualties can be achieved with the available funding.

Our long standing relationship with Nottinghamshire Police has enabled us to work with them in a data-led approach to delivering speed management initiatives and awareness raising around the dangers of travelling at inappropriate speeds. Safety cameras, speed limit reductions, speed indicator devices, traffic calming, signing and road markings all assist road users to travel at a speed appropriate to the situation.

In 2018/19 the County Council has also increased the integrated transport block allocation for schemes to address community concerns about speeding at locations where there is no reported history of injury accidents. £250,000 has been allocated for such measures which include interactive speed signs and changes to local speed limits; and this funding is prioritised at those locations where significant numbers of vehicles are travelling above the speed limit.

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

Would the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee take note of the calamitous debacle of Ashfield District Councils horrendous miss-management of County Council's £1.4 million funds issued over the provision of Garden waste bins after a

successful two years increasing recycling, Ashfield is now expected to reduce the recycled rate of garden waste by forty percent over the next year, which will only lead to an increase in domestic waste and fly tipping?

Response from Councillor Kevin Rostance, Vice-Chairman of Communities and Place Committee, on behalf of Councillor John Cottee, Chairman of Communities and Place Committee

The County Council's financial contribution to the Ashfield District Council Green Waste Incentive Scheme was agreed by Finance and Property Committee in November 2015. £1.4million was granted by the previous administration to reduce the size of the bins in Ashfield which was not popular at the time. This was based on the assumption that the District Council intended to reintroduce charges for green waste collections after two years of free provision.

The business case presented identified a potential reduction in subscribers of up to 50% at that point in the project, with an assumed reduction in recycling performance at District and County level. Currently looking at 40% of garden waste rather than the target of 50%.

Whilst the District Council is proposing to reintroduce the charges for green waste next year, the County Council continues to provide 12 recycling centres, all of which accept green waste free of charge for those residents not willing or able to subscribe to the scheme.

Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Tom Hollis

Is the Chairman aware that travellers have moved onto Highways land on Chesterfield Road, Huthwaite? They appear to have a flagrant disregard for rules. For example, disposing of rubbish on the street, outdoor disposal of human waste and loud late night parties. The travellers are now over the 28 day notice period issued and continue to expand the site. As the Chairman can imagine this being in a family area, local residents are extremely concerned and frightened by this in what is happening. Could the Chairman advise me on what action has been taken to remove this group from this location?

This question was withdrawn at the meeting by Councillor Hollis.

Question to the Chairman of the Nottinghamshire Pension Fund Committee from Councillor Jason Zadrozny

I have been asked by many residents to express their concerns about the investments of our Council Pension Fund in fossil fuel companies and to ask you to support the divestment of the fund.

A new report (<http://gofossilfree.org/uk/fuellingthefire>) shows that across the UK council-managed pension funds are investing more £16 billion in oil, coal and gas companies. These investments undermine local and national efforts to address climate change, and represent an unacceptable financial risk to pension-holders.

Two years ago, world governments signed the Paris Agreement – pledging to curb emissions and limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees. But the actions of fossil fuel companies like Shell and BP are pushing us far beyond this vital climate threshold.

Since 2015, the world has experienced the warmest year ever recorded and 2017 has brought devastating extreme weather events. Further extraction and burning of fossil fuels is not compatible with tackling climate change, and investing in fossil fuels is deeply irresponsible.

These investments also represent a serious financial risk to council pension funds. The value of fossil fuel companies is based on their reserves, and ability to burn them. But if global climate targets are going to be met, these reserves are ‘unburnable’ (<https://goo.gl/EU3F95>).

Leading financial experts, including the Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, have highlighted the risks of fossil fuels becoming ‘stranded assets’ and the danger which this poses to funds which continue to invest in them.

Council pension funds should be invested in the long-term interests of their members but they are not well served by risky investments which are driving climate change. Instead, councils could be investing in ways that benefit the local community – like renewable energy infrastructure and green social housing.

Fossil fuel divestment is a practical, legal and responsible way for pension funds to respond to climate change and address financial risk. Over 800 institutions around the world have made divestment commitments, including council pension funds in the UK like Southwark and Waltham Forest.

Local councillors have significant power over the investment decisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme:

1. Do you agree that the council should divest its pension fund from fossil fuels and reinvest in ways that benefits the community?
2. What steps are the council taking to end fossil fuel investments and invest responsibly?

This question was withdrawn at the meeting by Councillor Zadrozny.

Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Rachel Madden

Can the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee assure us that all submissions for footpaths and bridleways to be added to the definitive map will be processed successfully by the deadline drawn up by Tony Blair's government?

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

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) introduced a cut-off date of 2026 for registering public rights of way on the Definitive Map and Statement. This cut-off applies to claims for paths and carriageways based on old documentary evidence. Claims based on use, for example, where use has been over 20 years are not affected by the deadline.

This cut-off date is subject to commencement by a statutory instrument. Following a review by Natural England in 2007 a stakeholder group representing users, landowners and local authorities was set up. Their remit was to look at reforms to speed up the claims process. The group's recommendations formed the basis of the rights of way elements in the Deregulation Act 2015. The cut-off date will now take effect once the regulations and guidance of the 2015 Act have been completed. A date has yet to be set.

The cut-off date could change. However, public right of way claims based on documentary evidence will be protected from the cut-off date if valid applications are received and registered prior to 1st January 2026.

Question to the Chairman of Policy Committee from Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Is the Chairperson aware of the impact of withdrawing the Nottinghamshire Economic Development Fund? Seven businesses across our County including two in Ashfield have gone through a costly application process only for the money to be withdrawn. Would the Chairman like to express her regret to the businesses affected? Does the Chairman think that this sends out the unfortunate message that this Council no longer backs jobs and growth?

Response from Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE, Chairman of Policy Committee

Nottinghamshire County Council faces significant funding challenges over the next four years and as such our political administration has to carefully review our spending commitments. In recognising that businesses need certainty and as a result of the applications, successful or otherwise, on 31st October, the seven businesses were informed that the Economic Development Fund would be reviewed.

On 15th November the Council considered the future of the Nottinghamshire Economic Development Capital Fund (NEDCF) to ensure alignment with the current priorities of Nottinghamshire County Council. The decision was made by the County Council's Policy Committee to close, with immediate effect, the Fund. I recognise that this news will be disappointing and I would like to apologise that we have not been in a position to inform the seven businesses sooner of the outcome of their application. The decision was not taken lightly and was heavily debated by Councillors of all parties, you included Councillor Zadrozny.

I would like to take the opportunity to emphasise that we do value the impact these businesses have in our economy and although we will not be awarding the grant they sought, we would like to assist them in identifying other suitable sources of funding to

help grow their businesses. There are other loan providers around as well as funds coming forward under the Midlands Engine Investment Fund. We are all about jobs and growth in this area which is why I so object to the Metro Strategy. If there is any way we can help this company we will do so.

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

Is the Chairman aware that the store net service keeps shops in Sutton-in-Ashfield in contact with the Police? The antenna does not reach the new police station based at Kirkby council offices and there is not enough coverage leaving shops without a valuable service. Will the Chairman agree to raise this with the Police and Crime Commissioner?

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

I understand that a new booster antenna will be up and running by this Friday. We believe this will ensure that the shops in Sutton-in-Ashfield are able to once again use the store net service.

Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Does the Council Leader share my disappointment that The Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling MP, the Secretary of State for Transport has not replied to your letter calling for an urgent meeting with the Leaders of the Ashfield Independents, the Conservatives and the Labour Party on Nottinghamshire County Council to discuss the electrification of the Midland's Mainline? Chris Grayling visited Nottingham on Monday this week – did you have prior knowledge of the Ministerial Visit and did any member of the County Council take this opportunity to question him about the cancellation of the electrification of the Midland's Mainline?

Response from Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE, the Leader of the Council

As Council Leader I have sent a letter to the Secretary of State setting out the motion passed by Members, and asking him to respond as he considers appropriate. The letter has been circulated to Members by Democratic Services. I trust everyone has received a copy. I trust that it is being considered and that a reply will be forthcoming in due course.

I did not have prior knowledge of Chris Grayling's visit to Nottingham on Monday. While he was heading north, both myself and the Deputy Leader were heading south to Marlow in Buckinghamshire for the County Councils Network Conference, an important event on the local government calendar which has been in our diaries for some time. No councillors have informed me that they had an opportunity to question the Secretary of State during his visit, and we would not normally get notifications, which is something we have taken up with Civil Servants in the past. I have spoken to local MPs about this. We are doing all we can to get better connectivity.