

## **APPENDIX A**

### **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2019 QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN**

#### **Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Alan Rhodes**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020 we commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

The day coincides with the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Genocide of Bosnia.

How will Nottinghamshire County Council mark this significant day?

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

It is very important that we remember those who suffered as a result of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides around the world.

We have a lot planned to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day on this significant anniversary; building on the events in previous years.

Nottinghamshire County Council will be running an all-day event in the Assembly Hall on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020. This event has been developed with the support of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and of course officers of this Council .

I am personally going to attend and open this event with the Chairman. The event will consist of a program of activities including, displays, videos and a candle lighting memorial ceremony. The names of children who were victims of the Holocaust will be read at the event. A number of guest speakers have also been invited to speak about both Auschwitz and Srebrenica. Colleagues are being asked to bake a Jewish bread recipe "Challah" that they can make at home and bring in to share, and this in particular for officers around the Council where they cannot be in County Hall because of where they are located.

At the County Councils Network event this year I spoke to a representative from the Trust and told her what we had planned. She particularly liked the idea of reading out children's names as they should not be forgotten and whilst we remember them, they are not forgotten, and she was going to suggest to other Authorities planning their events, that they carry this out also.

Further information on the event will be published nearer the time. Staff and elected members will be invited. I would encourage everyone who is able to take part in this important event to please come along.

#### **Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Muriel Weisz**

Your recent statement at Policy Committee indicated that the purpose of your policy to reduce the minimum guaranteed income available to County residents with the most

complex needs, who receive a service from the county council is to encourage them into employment and prevent them expecting 'treats every day'.

The current intention of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee is that the Corporate Director will work on a wider front to improve the employment offer for people with a wide range of disabilities, which is low in the County and in the East Midlands. I appreciate that your motion, aimed at your own administration appears to support that intention.

Can the Council, therefore, be reassured that your motion is not aimed to further reduce the limited income available since November for adults of working age, many of whom need 24 hour one-to-one support and have no speech?

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

The Council can indeed be reassured that my motion later today is not aimed to reduce the minimum guaranteed income available to County residents with complex needs.

Councillor Harper and Councillor Wallace in previous committee meetings explained the reasons for the Minimum Income Guarantee policy decisions made over the past 18 months, which were:

- to ensure this Council's policy is in line with that of other local authorities; and
- to ensure we distribute and spend public money as fairly possible across the services we deliver to a wide range of vulnerable people.

There are no further changes planned to that policy. This Council is not in a position to reduce the income of people with a disability. Indeed we have robust processes in place to ensure we take a range of factors into account when assessing the financial contribution that an individual makes to their care.

That is the simple answer to your question, Councillor Weisz. However, the tone of your opening paragraph leads me to make a further comment.

You have chosen to quote me out of context from a previous meeting, seemingly to imply a lack of care on my part for Nottinghamshire residents with complex needs. I hope this is nothing more than an attempt at political mischief, and that you have the decency to recognise that as a County Councillor with 30 years' experience, my motivation is - and always has been - to improve life opportunities for our residents, including the most vulnerable young and older people we serve.

We may have different political philosophies about the best way to achieve this, but I would like to believe that every member of this Chamber has good and sincere intentions at heart, and that we should respect each other enough not to infer otherwise.

My point in today's motion, and in my comments at previous meetings, is that we should seek to create a culture where people with disabilities and health conditions feel included in mainstream society, be that in the world of work, leisure or education. The alternative is an unacceptable situation where people with complex needs are

made to feel different, whether that means being patronised and treated in a condescending manner, or at the opposite extreme, being ignored or excluded.

For example, I have spoken to wheelchair users who say that three of the most infuriating reactions they have to endure is when people treat them as though they are invisible; or in a manner which implies they are incapable of doing anything for themselves; or in a way which assumes they require special indulgence or protection – which was the actual context of my phrase: “treats every day”.

In reality, most of us just want as normal a life as possible. Yes of course people with disabilities and health conditions face certain barriers – physical and cultural – that other people may not face, but all they ask from society – including councils such as ours - is a for ‘level’ playing field, not a ‘special’ playing field. It is patronising, if not cruel, to treat a person with complex needs as somehow ‘separate’ from the rest of society, or to make stereotypical, negative assumptions about their capabilities.

In advance of the motion, I can give Members some good news ‘hot off the press’ that we have been successful in our expression of Interest to partner the Local Government Association on their work programme ‘Place Based Commissioning for Employment and Skills’. I’ll explain a little more later, but this is a great opportunity for us to shape our thinking and inform the LGA policy position.

This is the point I sought to make previously, and it is the basis of my motion later today, which I hope will enjoy the unanimous support of this Chamber.

**Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Samantha Deakin**

The recent flooding in Ashfield was entirely avoidable. Could the Chairman please inform me what lessons the Council has learnt?

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

I would like to echo what others have said, that my thoughts go out to all of the communities that have been affected throughout Nottinghamshire, with the overwhelming amount of rainfall that we had to endure and, as we saw, resulted in extensive property flooding, businesses flooding and highways flooding. We had a months’ worth of rainfall within 24 hours. The Watnall rain gauge actually recorded 26mm of rain on the 14<sup>th</sup> alone, it really was horrendous.

Councillor Cottee and I have been at the forefront. We have been out to a number of sites and honestly, some of the scenes were absolutely devastating. Many home and business owners are still unable to get into their properties and it is going to take them months or maybe even years to recover from this. We are supporting them as best we can. That being said, I would like to take the opportunity again to echo what you said Chairman and thank all the teams that went above and beyond [the call of duty]. Our flood risk management teams, our emergency response teams, Via East Midlands, who all worked around the clock and out of hours, evenings and weekends, holding

drop-in sessions to make sure we could offer support and guidance to the most vulnerable who were affected, who will continue to be our main priority.

We did have an excellent debate on this at the last Communities & Place Committee meeting, which unfortunately Councillor Hollis couldn't attend as he was unwell and we do hope he makes a swift recovery. We had representatives from the Environment Agency, we had Sue Jaques [Flood Risk Manager, Nottinghamshire County Council] and Gary Wood [Group Manager, Nottinghamshire County Council], and the discussion went on for well over an hour. I hope that everyone felt it was useful and that we are all going to be working together. At the end of that meeting we did speak about the Section 19 reports. Producing a Section 19 report is one of our duties as the Lead Local Flood Authority and this will outline exactly what happened all over the County, including your areas in Ashfield. We will be able to collate all this information together to have a look at the main areas that we need to focus on. These will hopefully be ready to present to us at the Communities & Place Committee next time but I am happy to relay all the details, if I get them any sooner, directly to you. Your local knowledge is key as well, so if anything comes back from these areas that you feel are not in this report then I am happy to meet up afterwards to go through where you think we can improve.

We do have a few bits of information that have come back about Jacksdale. The flooding at Jacksdale we believe was caused by a third party culverting a water course without permission. The third party has been visited by the Flood Risk Management Team and the culvert is being removed this weekend. Adjacent to Laverick Road a culvert was found to be blocked with tree roots, so Via has been out and removed all of the roots and have cleared the entire culvert as well.

The flooding in Selston, we believe was caused by another third party placing a grill over one of the inlets to a culvert. This third party has also been contacted by the Flood Risk Management Team and the grill is being removed imminently.

We are still working with Ashfield District Council on the production of the Section 19 report. We will take all of the findings away and as always, we will continue to look for opportunities where we can work better, where we can improve our efficiency. We will keep bidding in to try and draw the additional contributions to help enhance our offer.

We have got some great projects that have gone on in Ashfield already: Thoresby Dale and Titchfield Park, that we are going to be working with Ashfield on, are really exciting. Watnall Road, another project in Ashfield and hopefully, if anything comes out of this section 19 report we will be able to bid for extra funding to help with future projects and will do so.

We will also strive to increase levels of awareness within local organisations and communities, so they can become more resilient to flooding and understand their responsibilities, which will in turn help identify the risks, likelihood and consequences of flooding events. We do have a great team here at Nottinghamshire County Council and we do our very best to make sure that all those people who have been affected do feel safe again.

### **Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Kate Foale**

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust urgently needs to raise £1m to buy Attenborough Nature reserve and make it forever safe. This is a real asset to Nottinghamshire – I quote from our ‘Visitor Economy strategy’:

“The heart of our strategy is about making our natural assets..... work harder for the visitor economy”

Each year more than 500,000 visitors flock to the reserve. To quote Sir David Attenborough:

“Attenborough Nature Reserve is undoubtedly an unforgettable place to experience the natural world and the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust play a very important part in protecting it and I would encourage anyone who cares about wildlife to support them.”

Please could the Leader identify what financial and other support this Council is prepared to offer Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust in securing the long term future of this wonderful County asset?

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

Sites such as the Attenborough Nature Reserve in Councillor Jackson and Councillor Kerry’s division are an important part of our Visitor Economy, which we anticipate will increase the gross value of the tourism sector in Nottinghamshire by £80million per year by 2029.

We are very much aware of the valuable work of the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, with whom this Council enjoys a very positive relationship. I meet regularly with Paul Wilkinson, the Trust’s Chief Executive, and as recently as October we discussed the future of the Reserve and their ambitions for the site going forward.

The Trust has cared for Attenborough Nature Reserve for many years, and I can certainly appreciate their desire to acquire the site from Cemex UK. Their campaign has already secured more than £900,000 of their £1million target, showing the overwhelming support of the residents of Nottinghamshire and beyond, and I am sure they will reach their funding goal soon.

Though it would not be appropriate for the Council to divert great sums of taxpayers’ money to support this appeal – which is, ultimately, a commercial land acquisition – we have given our full support to the Trust in our role as Minerals Planning Authority. In particular, we have been working with Cemex to ensure that they carry out all the required work under their Section 106 agreement, ready for the transfer to the Wildlife Trust without any problems – which is the proper role of this Council as a Minerals Planning Authority.

**Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Kevin Greaves**

Last month, a Freedom of Information Request revealed that Nottinghamshire has the highest number of potholes in the entire UK, a staggering 253,920, two and a half times more than the second highest in the UK. Would Councillor Cottee like to explain why this is?

**Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Jason Zadrozny**

Nottinghamshire has been named 'the worst place for potholes in the UK.' A Freedom of Information request revealed Nottinghamshire County Council received 253,920 reports of potholes between January 2017 and June 2019. When will the new technology that the Council have invested in be rolled out County-wide?

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

Yes Councillor Greaves, I welcome the opportunity to explain why Nottinghamshire's roads have a high number of potholes, but I am slightly surprised that you would want to ask the question, certainly given the fact that you were the Chairman of the Transport & Highways Committee as recently as May 2017 and the answer is not really going to do you any favours.

May 2017 was, of course, the time when the Conservative & Mansfield Independents took control of this Council's highways from Councillor Greaves and Labour, which we were delighted to do, but we were much less delighted to inherit a £143 million backlog of road repairs. Labour had been in control of this Council for 32 of the previous 36 years and this backlog is the reason why the condition of some of our 2,774 miles of highway today is not what we would like to have.

When the Conservative & Mansfield Independent administration took over, we were in no doubt that spending more on repairing our roads had to be one of the major priorities for this County. This is presumably the point of Councillor Greaves' question, and if that's the case, perhaps he should have a word with some of his colleagues who were wrongly accusing us of "putting potholes before people".

Within our first few months in office, Conservative & Mansfield Independent councillors identified an extra £24 million to be spent specifically on road maintenance over the term of this administration.

By no means is this the solution to a £143 million backlog, because you cannot put right 32 years of underinvestment in just four or even eight years, but it was certainly a statement of our intent to begin reversing the decline of our roads, with a longer term ambition to bring them back to the ideal standard our residents would like.

We know that having a safe, good quality road network is a priority for residents and local businesses, which is reflected in this council's spending. In fact, research by

Money Supermarket highlights that Nottinghamshire is one of the highest spending authorities in respect of tackling this problem.

Councillor Zadrozny is quite right to highlight the fact that we have invested £1.75 million specifically in new technology to improve and speed up the way potholes and road repairs are completed.

We are introducing a spray injection chip patching vehicle that treats surface defects by sealing the target area, filling cracks in the road and removing small potholes whilst smoothing out the surface. This will significantly improve productivity, so our highways teams can cover more than double their daily repairs target. And by the way, even before introducing this equipment, our highways operatives already repaired twice the number of potholes in 2018 as they did in 2017 – some 115,000 potholes – such is the scale of investment.

In recent weeks, some of our employees have received training using this spray injection patching system in the vicinity of the Bilsthorpe depot, and this service will begin to be rolled out across the County from March / April 2020.

We also have two new “hot box” vehicles that allow the council to quickly patch larger areas on the road, where the road surface has suffered significant deterioration. Filling material can be transported using the hot box storage, laid in optimum conditions and compacted, and these controlled conditions mean that the serviceable life of repairs can be extended. Overall, this technology will improve the quality of the ride for road users as well as the way the road looks.

Of course we took a public relations risk in announcing the £24 million of extra funding for highway maintenance at the start of our administration, because it invites an expectation that all of our roads will be returned to top condition forthwith. This was never going to be the case, as I stated at the time. In fact, this simply marked the beginning of what will be a very long and very resource-intensive project. However, the alternative is to do what Labour did for much of their time in office and that’s not invest enough in the ongoing maintenance our road infrastructure.

To be fair to Councillor Greaves, that neglect began under previous Labour highways cabinet members and chairmen long before he took office, but if his intention in tabling this question was to deflect the blame for the state of Nottinghamshire’s roads onto this administration, then I have no hesitation in giving him a history lesson to set the record straight.

**Question to the Chairman of Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee from Councillor Muriel Weisz**

Recent trends in the County show that there is a growing increase in the number of older people being admitted to residential care, after a few years of improvement of more people being given their choices of housing with care. The current administration has set quite modest targets for the number of people being offered housing with care, in order to progress towards the higher provision of neighbouring counties and reduce expenditure on residential care.

Can the Chairman explain the Council's failure to meet these targets and show what plans are in place to improve peoples' choices?

**Response from Councillor Tony Harper, Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee**

A priority for this Council is to develop a greater range of housing options for older people, to maximise their independence and enable them to remain in their own home wherever possible, which in turn prevents or delays their need for residential and nursing care. This was set out in the report on our future vision for Ageing Well services, presented to, and approved by Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee in October this year.

Until relatively recently, work has focused on Nottinghamshire County Council's Extra Care and subsequent Housing with Care strategy in isolation. We are now developing a wider partnership vision and plan. Housing with Care is just one component of a range of care alternatives that need to be in place, and we are therefore working with other agencies and the NHS to develop a more strategic vision. An independent review which was commissioned by the Better Care Fund Partnership has been undertaken by a leading consultant ARK, resulting in recommendations that all partners are currently considering, prior to everyone agreeing a joint strategy and a plan of action.

Our key aim is to enable vulnerable people to live in the type of housing that best suits their individual needs. This requires a range of accommodation to cater for ageing populations, such as accessible general needs housing, retirement villages, and Housing with Care.

It also includes providing minor and major adaptations to buildings, other equipment and technology, and access to Disabled Facilities Grants and care at home.

In order to measure our success in identifying people's needs and making the right housing options available to them at the right time, we need good quality, easily accessible information and data. That's why the work now underway has a far broader remit and inevitably takes longer to plan and develop. The benefit will be to deliver a much improved set of options and services for local people when we reach the implementation stage. This will allow us to offer a much better scale, pace and consistency of provision across the county than we have ever had before.

Nottinghamshire County Council is involved in 13 Extra Care or Housing with Care schemes operating across the County, but because these have evolved over several years, they operate in different ways. We are examining the performance of all of them in order to assess their strengths and weaknesses and determine which operating model works best.

Once we have drawn these conclusions, this information will be shared with our partners in Spring 2020, alongside a description of how Housing with Care and other supported accommodation options will be procured by the Council. This will allow the market to better understand what this council wants, and how they as partners can support our aspiration to provide 'the right support, in the right home, at the right time'.

At the two most recent Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee meetings, we have tasked officers with organising a regular cross-party Working Group for Members to scrutinise these issues, which will include your valuable input. We want to work together on this.