

# Minutes



**Meeting** COUNTY COUNCIL

**Date** Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2003 (10.30 am to 4.55 pm)

## Councillor membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A' (\* denotes on other County Council business)

### COUNCILLOR

Maureen Tewson - Chairman  
Reg Strauther - Vice-Chairman

Kate Allsop		David Kirkham
Dick Anthony		Bruce Laughton
Chris Baron		E D W Llewellyn-Jones
Roy R J Barsley		Ellie Lodziak
John Bell		Joe Lonergan MBE
Sue Bennett		J T A Napier
Joyce Bosnjak JP	A	R Needham
M M Brandon-Bravo OBE	A	K L O'Toole
Colin Bromfield		Mrs Carol Pepper
Kenneth Bullivant		Tom Pettengell
Richard Butler		Mrs Sheila Place
Terry Butler		R A Poynter
Steve Carroll		Peter D Prebble
John Carter		Chris Preston
W J Clarke		D E Pulk
John Cottee		R S Robinson
M J Cox		Rita Sharpe
Mrs K L Cutts		Vicki Smailes
Yvonne Davidson		Mrs Nellie Smedley
Alan Davison		Mrs S M Smedley
V H Dobson		B G Smith
A Andy Freeman		A S Stewart
Glynn Gilfoyle		J R Stocks
John M Hemsall		M Storey
Stan Heptinstall MBE		Martin Suthers OBE
Graham Jackson	A*	The Hon Joan Taylor
Richard Jackson		David Taylor
Rod Kempster		Parry Tsimbiridis

Keith Walker  
Mick Warner  
C P Winterton

Yvonne Woodhead  
A Woodward

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Prior to the formal business of the meeting, the Council participated in prayer led by the Chairman's Chaplain.

### **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Council held on 28 November 2002 had been circulated previously.

### **RESOLVED:-** **2003/001**

That the Minutes of the last meeting of the Council be agreed as a true and correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

**Note** In accordance with the foregoing Resolution, the Minute Book was signed by the Chairman.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor A Freeman  
" R Needham  
" K L O'Toole  
" The Hon J Taylor (on other County Council business)

### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest by Members or Officers.

### **CHAIRMANS' BUSINESS**

- (1) The Chairman received from Councillor T H Butler, Portfolio holder for Environment, the Green Apple Heritage Award in recognition of the excellent work of County Council in the years in protecting and promoting Rufford Abbey Country Park.
- (2) The Chairman and Members welcomed Councillor Collin Bromfield back to the Council following his recent illness.

- (3) The Chairman informed the Council that, having reviewed the questions submitted under Standing Orders 6.1 and 6.2, she had determined that the question to the Chairman of the Police Authority from Councillor Terry Butler should be considered separately from the remaining questions. It was therefore taken as the next item of business.

**Question from Councillor T H Butler to the Chairman of the Police Authority:-**

Will the Chair of the Nottinghamshire Police Authority except this Authorities deepest sympathy at the death, in the line of duty, of Police Constable Walker. We are deeply saddened by the loss of Constable Walker whilst in pursuance of his duty of protecting the public.

Would he further pass on our condolences to the Chief Constable of Manchester following the death of Detective Constable Oak, who also lost his life in the line of duty."

Councillor W J Clark, Chairman of the Nottinghamshire Police Authority replied as follows:-

"Thank you Chairman and may I thank Councillor Butler for his question.

I would like to thank the Council and the Chairman who have said to pass on condolences. I say 'we' because people say I am more like an officer than a Councillor, but if you are going to get into something you have actually got to live the part. The daily things that they face and having been out with this particular team on the Friday before the death of Ged Walker, I do know some of the dangers that they are in and on that Friday, had there been another case and somebody had successfully pushed us a little further, I too, along with another officer may well have been one of the people that you would have been offering condolences for, because we were pursuing a vehicle through Nottinghamshire, through Derbyshire, from Mansfield, who then tried to subsequently push us off the road, at several points, and quite pleasing through the professionalism of the officers we actually caught up with this vehicle and the helicopter and the whole lot were there. So, through their professional efforts there were three people apprehended and then were taken to Worksop and locked up. So, I do know some of the dangers that they are in, but it has actually highlighted that and along with the death of DC Steven Oake, in Manchester, I cannot say I am pleased to pass on condolences, but I will pass those condolences on.

Can I just read a few words now, that I did actually put into the local newspaper, the Nottingham Evening Post and I know we do not always get reported what one says, but in this case it was and they asked me for a comment:

"With Ged's death we have suffered three losses. Obviously, the loss will be greatest to his family and I do not know how people would cope with such a loss.

As a person went out, probably gave their wife/partner/children a kiss goodbye that morning and went off to do their job and then this happened. So that is, obviously, the greatest loss. However, for the Force it is the loss of an excellent officer with an exemplary record and you have got to look at the years that he has actually been in there, which was now something like twenty-three years he had been an officer. It is also a loss, which will be felt far wider by the people of Nottinghamshire because you do not find officers of Ged's calibre just like that. He had, already, been commended for the excellent work that he had done along with his dog teams. His dedication to the job and I mentioned the 24-hour 7, like many officers in the Force were superb and just flipping back to that experience, I had had on the Friday evening. I joined up at 6 o'clock and I got home at 5 o'clock. The officer that I was with and this is from 6 o'clock Friday evening until 5 o'clock the following morning. I arrived home, the officer was still in Worksop Police Station when I left him at that time and he was having to deal with all the paperwork and everything else on top. He should have signed off shift at 2 o'clock and Glynn behind me, another fellow member of the Police Authority, was with another team and he could also see the dedication. So the 24-hour 7 goes a lot beyond the hours that are stipulated.

I would like to finish off with:

He will no longer be out there policing the County. At least not in a physical sense, but maybe in a spiritual one and through his dog 'Kai' who he always took with him and he did train up, his work will live on through the excellent work of the dog teams and the dog will continue. For people's information, the dog now is staying within the Nottinghamshire Police Force and will be re-trained with a new officer."

Thank you Chairman."

Following the response by the Chairman of the Police Authority, Members and Officers present observed a minute's silence and reflection.

## **PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS**

There were no petitions presented.

## **QUESTIONS**

### **(a) Under Standing Order 6.1**

Four questions had been received as follows:-

1. From Councillor Mrs K L Cutts regarding the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of Local Authorities

2. From Councillor Andy Stewart regarding the County Council's Emergency Planning Department and whether or not their equipped to react to a terrorist atrocity within Nottinghamshire.
3. From Councillor Martin Suthers regarding a recent Mori survey which revealed an initiative overload instigated by the Department for Education and Skills.
4. From Councillor Bruce Laughton regarding the Council Tax increases.

**(b) Under Standing Order 6.2**

There were two questions for the Chairman of the Police Authority, one of them has been dealt with earlier in the meeting.

1. From Councillor Kate Allsop regarding the Government's plan to make £20 million available to include police stations across the country and of Nottinghamshire's allocation.

Copies of the Questions, together with the replies given by Cabinet Members and the Chairman of the Police Authority, are attached at Appendices A and B to these Minutes.

**REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS**

Cabinet Members had circulated written reports concerning issues arising from their portfolios.

Each report was presented orally and Members had the opportunity to make comments or ask questions. Details of the discussions which took place in relation to the reports are included at Appendix C to these Minutes.

Having heard from individual Cabinet Members, the Council:-

**RESOLVED:-**  
**2003/002**

That the written reports and information presented orally be noted.

**Note**

During consideration of Cabinet Members' reports the Council was adjourned between 12.25 pm and 1.45 pm for lunch. Upon returning to the meeting the Chairman and Members welcomed Councillor David Taylor into the meeting following his recent operation.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POLICY STRATEGY**

A report from Cabinet had been circulated. It was moved by Councillor D J Kirkham, seconded by Councillor Vicki Smailes and

#### **RESOLVED:-** **2003/003**

That the Domestic Violence Policy Statement be formally adopted.

### **CORPORATE COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY**

A report of the Deputy Leader had been circulated.

It was moved by Councillor D J Kirkham, seconded by Councillor Vicki Smailes and

#### **RESOLVED:-** **2003/004**

That the Corporate Community Safety Strategy be adopted.

### **THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE M1 AND A453 MULTI MODAL STUDIES**

A report of the Cabinet Member from Environment had been circulated.

It was moved by Councillor T H Butler, seconded by Councillor Vicki Smailes and

#### **RESOLVED:-** **2003/005**

- (1) That the report be noted and
- (2) That the other agencies responsible for delivery of schemes such as the Highways Agency and Strategic Rail Authority be requested to proceed with their scheme as soon as possible
- (3) That the County Council actively participate in the scheme development.

Members of the Conservative Group present at the meeting asked for their reservations about approving the development of NET lines 2 and 3 as set out in paragraph 8 of the report be noted in these Minutes.

### **NOTTINGHAM EXPRESS TRANSIT – THE CHAIRMAN OF LINES 2 AND 3**

A report of the Portfolio holder for Environment had been circulated.

A Motion in terms of Resolution 2003/006 below was moved by Councillor T H Butler, seconded by Councillor D J Kirkham. Following debate, the motion was put to the meeting and was carried. In accordance with the provisions of standing orders, ten Members indicated that they required a division. Voting was therefore recorded and it was ascertained;-  
that the following 30 Members voted for the motion:-

### **COUNCILLORS**

J E Anthony	Chris Preston
Chris Baron	D E Pulk
R R J Barsley	R S Robinson
John Bell	Rita Sharpe
Joyce Bosjnak JP	Mrs Vicki Smailes
T H Butler	Mrs Nellie Smedley
Steve Carroll	Mrs S M Smedley
John Carter	Brian Smith
Yvonne Davidson	Reg Strauther
Alan Davison	Maureen Tewson
Ellie Lodziak	Chris Winterton
J T A Napier	Yvonne Woodhead
Mrs Sheila Place	Arthur Woodward

and that the following 21 Members voted against the motion:-

### **COUNCILLORS**

Kate Allsop	Rod Kempster
Sue Bennett	Bruce Laughton
M M Brandon-Bravo OBE	Joe Lonergan MBE
Kenneth Bullivant	Mrs Carol Pepper
Richard Butler	Tom Pettengell
John Cottee	Ray Poynter
M J Cox	Peter D Prebble
Mrs K L Cutts	Andy Stewart
V H Dobson	Martin Suthers OBE
John M Hemsall	Keith Walker
Richard Jackson	

**RESOLVED:-**  
**2003/006**

- (1) That subject to the approval of the Department for Transport and the Office of Government Commerce, the County Council, as co-promoters with the City Council, advertise jointed with the City Council for a private sector partner to work with the promoters on the development and procurement of the NET lines 2 and 3.
- (2) That a detailed report on the outcome of the tender process and subsequent costings be made to the County Council prior to the completion of any development agreement with the chosen partner.

### **ALLOCATIONS FROM THE CONTINGENCY/UNALLOCATED RESERVE**

A report of the Acting County Treasurer had been circulated.

It was moved by Councillor John Carter, seconded by Councillor D J Kirkham and

#### **RESOLVED:-** **2003/007**

That the allocations from the contingency/unallocated reserve and the budget transfer as set out in the report be approved.

### **WORK PROGRAMME**

A report of the Chair of the Overview Select Committee had been circulated.

It was moved by Councillor R R J Barsley, seconded by Councillor M M Brandon-Bravo OBE and

#### **RESOLVED** **2003/008**

That the current work programme presented by the Overview Select Committee be noted.

### **USE OF URGENCY POWERS**

A report of the Chief Executive had been circulated.

It was moved by Councillor R R J Barsley, seconded by Councillor Brian Smith and

#### **RESOLVED:-** **2003/009**

That the report on the use of urgency provisions contained in rule 16 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules and Rule 17.3 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules be noted.

### **DELEGATION TO COMMITTEE OF CABINET – TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENT**

A report of the Monitoring Officer had been circulated.

It was moved by Councillor D J Kirkham, seconded by Councillor Mrs Vicki Smailes and

### **RESOLVED:-** **2003/010**

That the report be noted.

### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

It was moved by Councillor M J Cox and seconded by Councillor M M Brandon-Bravo OBE

“This Council is concerned at the Government’s reluctance to fully address the growing shortfall in savings for retirement, and the implications of this for future pensioners in Nottinghamshire.

This Council believes that the measures contained in the Green Paper on Pensions Reform are insufficient to re-instate a savings culture, or encourage long-term planning for pensions.

This Council calls upon the Government to grasp the magnitude of the problem and consider more radical solutions, rather than repackaging old proposals.

Following debate the motion was put to the meeting was declared to be lost on a show of hands.

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Orders, 10 Members indicated that they required a division. Voting was therefore recording and it was ascertained that the following 20 Members voted for the motion:-

### **COUNCILLORS**

Kate Allsop  
Sue Bennett  
M M Brandon-Bravo OBE  
Kenneth Bullivant  
Richard Butler

John Cottee  
M J Cox  
Mrs K L Cutts  
V H Dobson  
John M Hemsall

S Heptinstall MBE  
Richard Jackson  
Rod Kempster  
Bruce Laughton

Mrs Carol Pepper  
Ray Poynter  
Peter D Prebble  
Andy Stewart  
Martin Suthers OBE  
Keith Walker

and that the following 28 Members voted against the motion:-

### **COUNCILLORS**

J E Anthony  
Chris Baron  
R R J Barsley  
John Bell  
Joyce Bosjnak JP  
T H Butler  
Steve Carroll  
John Carter  
Yvonne Davidson  
Alan Davison  
Glyn Gilfoyle  
Graham Jackson  
Ellie Lodziak  
J T A Napier

Mrs Sheila Place  
Chris Preston  
D E Pulk  
R S Robinson  
Rita Sharpe  
Mrs Nellie Smedley  
Mrs S M Smedley  
Brian Smith  
Reg Strauther  
Maureen Tewson  
Chris Winterton  
Yvonne Woodhead  
Arthur Woodward

### **ADJOURNMENT MOTIONS**

There were no motions to adjourn the Council.

### **CHAIRMAN**

COUNCIL\M\_23Jan03

**COUNTY COUNCIL – 23 JANUARY 2003**

**(a) QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 6.1**

**1. Question from Councillor Mrs K L Cutts to the Leader of the Council:-**

"Would the Leader of the Council join me in welcoming the results of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of Local Authorities where Conservative councils were the outstanding performers, scoring an average of 3.2 out of five, compared with Liberal Democrat authorities on 2.7 and Labour authorities on 2.6?

Would he join me in congratulating our officers on Nottinghamshire County Council's "good" rating which, when compared with Nottingham City Council's "weak" rating, proves that the County has been able to improve its focus since local government reorganisation?

With County Councils emerging as the best performers overall, is he confident that current and future national policy will protect this valuable tier of local government?"

**Response by Councillor Mick Warner, Leader of the Council**

"Thank you for that Madam Chairman.

I would like to thank Councillor Cutts for her question and apologise to colleagues and comrades for my lack of clarity of voice. I cannot help having laryngitis which is probably why I am going to speak very little today.

Thank you Kay for giving me another opportunity to thank **everyone** connected with the achievement of being assessed as a good council. I make the point of thanking everyone because that includes Councillors in this Chamber, our partners outside of the Authority, our customers and, of course, the *excellent* officers employed by this Authority.

But you know that the Labour Group and I won't just accept being good. *Excellence* is our goal.

As much as I am proud of OUR achievement, I do refuse to be drawn into the ya-booo politics as practised by Kay in her question.

I refuse to gloat over the performance of other authorities (especially when the one Kay mentions is an important partner in much of what we do).

I also refuse to accept Kay's facile argument, that the CPA results reflect some sort of political superiority, the one undeniable fact that shouts out from the CPA tables is that affluence breeds success.

And that, of course, is where we differ so profoundly. I want to build success in our County that has too little affluence. Kay only has interest in helping those parts where there is private affluence in abundance.

I believe we are getting it right and that is reflected in this result. But it is clear that there are concerns about the whole CPA process. Its credibility, in certain areas, has been called into question by authorities in every category of performance. The pattern of results suggests size and prosperity are important factors in where a council is placed. For instance:

- ◆ Almost all councils rated 'poor' have relatively small populations
- ◆ The only County rated poor (Bedfordshire) is the third smallest
- ◆ Councils with severe deprivation hardly feature amongst the top performers

In response to Kay's question, I am confident that this County Council is a valuable provider of local services.

But I have no idea whether our performance, or the performance of counties, generally, will have any effect on any future decisions of any Government that take on reorganisation.

Experience shows that when Government's look to reorganise local government structures performance is not the first thing on their minds.

However, this Government is working hard to drive up standards of performance and it would be more than a little perverse if it were to abolish the very types of localism that are working well.

What we must do is continue to improve our performance and our services. With the help of our excellent officers I am sure we will."

## **2. Question from Councillor Andy Stewart to the Deputy Leader**

"In view of heightened public concern following the discovery of Ricin at premises in London, the fatal stabbing of a Police Officer in Manchester and the imminent possibility of conflict with Iraq, could the Deputy Leader give a reassurance that the County's Emergency Planning Department is equipped to react to a terrorist atrocity within Nottinghamshire?"

**Response by Councillor D J Kirkham, Deputy Leader**

“Thank you Chairman.

I would like to thank Councillor Stewart for his question.

Nottinghamshire County Council’s Emergency Planning Team has been working with a wide range of agencies, both locally and nationally, since the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 when the possibility of terrorist activity was heightened globally.

At present, there is no intelligence to suggest a specific threat to Nottinghamshire. However, with the recent events involving Ricin in London, the stabbing of a Police Officer in Manchester and the imminent possibility of conflict in Iraq, there is no occasion to be complacent.

Since the time of the terrorist attacks in the USA a new multi-agency operating protocol has been developed for responding to incidents in Nottinghamshire. This outlines procedures agreed by the emergency services, health and local authorities of Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham, for the immediate co-ordinated emergency response at the scene of an incident involving the suspected deliberate release of chemical or biological agents. In addition, the Emergency Planning team is playing a key role in assisting the Trent Regional Health Emergency Planning Advisor in meeting the local aspects of a national Department of Health project looking at Smallpox Vaccination Centres, should these be required. Other County Council Departments are also involved in this work.

The Emergency Planning Team’s new Strategy document for Integrated Emergency Management in Nottinghamshire has been designed to provide a structured framework for partners to work together in Nottinghamshire to minimise the effects of any emergency, whether from terrorist activity or any other type of emergency, which may affect the people of Nottinghamshire. The document demonstrates how Nottinghamshire County Council is satisfying the Government’s “Standards for Civil Protection.”

Internally, the Emergency Planning Team works with all departments on the ‘Cross Service Working Group on Emergency Planning’ to co-ordinate their emergency preparedness work.

There is an Emergency Planning Duty Officer on-call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to deal with any incident. The Duty Officer maintains regular contact with the Emergency Services to ensure communications can be passed between a wide range of agencies.”

**3. Question from Councillor Martin Suthers OBE to the Cabinet Member for Education**

The recent MORI survey revealed that a significant cause of disenchantment within the teaching profession is 'initiative overload' instigated by the Department for Education & Skills.

Given the success of this Council in surpassing the Government target for the passporting of funding directly to its schools, would the Cabinet Member for Education agree that an appropriate reward would be greater freedom for head teachers, teachers, governors and parents to determine the most effective education provision for their school in partnership with the local authority?

### **Response by Councillor M Storey, Cabinet Member for Education**

“Thank you Chairman.

Can I thank Councillor Suthers for his question because it provides me with a couple of opportunities. I need to say something about the MORI research and then tell Members what happens in Nottinghamshire.

Before doing anything else let me put on record my thanks to Nottinghamshire’s teachers for all their hard work and professionalism, and all that they do to promote children’s and young people’s life chances in the County.

Turning to the survey referred to in the question. I am sure Members are aware that last Autumn MORI conducted quantitative research on behalf of the General Teaching Council for England, together with PR21 and the Guardian and I am sure your Group has not read it, but this research was undertaken to explore teacher's views on the state of the teaching profession. It was conducted by a postal self-completion questionnaire despatched to all 530,000 registered members of the GTC. 70,011 questionnaires were returned - a response rate of 13.2%. The report cautions that it is important to remember that the results were based on a sub-sample of GTC members.

The research is clearly a major piece of work, which will be of help in deciding how to attract and retain teachers, but Councillor Suthers has been rather selective and indeed somewhat imprecise in his question. I think it important to be clear what the research actually says.

The question Councillor Suthers appears to have latched onto asked which three of nine factors, if any, demotivate you most as a teacher. The responses show that 56% believe that workload (including unnecessary paperwork) is the most demotivating factor with 39% citing initiative overload and 35% a target driven culture as those factors that most demotivate teachers. It is Councillor Suthers’ interpretation that initiative overload is instigated by the Department for Education and Skills. I hold no brief for the DfES, but as it is important to be clear let me remind Members that the DfES are not mentioned in that question. Members might, also, be interested to know that pay, resourcing and the conduct or lack of

support from parents were the least likely factors in demotivation with each of those three factors showing that 11% of respondents believe those to be the factors that demotivate teachers.

Chairman, I could go through this report. I did wonder about doing that as it contains much interest including the fact that 64% of teachers will remain in teaching; that less than one third of respondents would not choose teaching as a career if they had the choice again. I suspect though that Members will not want me to go through the findings, Chairman. So let me move on to what happened in Nottinghamshire.

As I said earlier, I want to place on record my thanks and I am sure all Members are united and support Nottinghamshire's teachers for all their hard work and professionalism in all that they do to promote children's and young people's life chances in the County.

This said, it follows that I am deeply interested in and committed to our local teachers' well being, and I am sure the Council will be pleased to know that we take action, locally, to manage the demands made of schools. This is why more newly qualified teachers, who start their career in Nottinghamshire, continue in the County beyond their first year, and why we have a smaller proportion of permanent teachers leaving the profession in Nottinghamshire than is the case nationally. (This is nothing to do with age profile because ours mirrors the national picture.)

Those of you who studied history, and I am sure Councillor Suthers is among this group, will remember the medieval court of the Star Chamber (abolished by the Long Parliament in 1641). Well, we have our own modern day version of the Star Chamber managed by my Department's senior team - the Director. Its purpose is to ensure that the demands made of local schools and teachers are treated seriously and kept within manageable proportions. This system is backed up by a number of common sense and practical approaches to supporting schools in meeting the challenges associated with developing teachers' skills and understanding so that they can continue to raise the standards achieved by our pupils.

I am also pleased, Chairman, that Councillor Suthers' question recognises that this Council has shown its support for education in passporting all that the current Government has earmarked for Nottinghamshire schools, and more. This is because this Labour Group recognises the importance of education in lifting aspirations and promoting regeneration within the County. In an era of globalisation, it is vitally important that Nottinghamshire increases its skill levels, so that we can have a suitably qualified workforce that can stimulate growth in the local economy. At a time when many businesses can be run as successfully from Delhi as they can from any location within the UK, we need local talent and

enterprise to stimulate the economy in Nottinghamshire. Quite simply the future lies in growing our own.

It would be easy for me to blame the Department for Education and Skills for heaping additional workload on teachers, but I am not willing to take this easy route. Many of the DfES' initiatives have supported the raising of standards, especially in our primary schools where a great deal of targeted additional funding has been made available, and the local Conservative Group is as keen to have high standards in our local schools, as are our parents and the local community.

This Council has a goal to be in the top twenty, nationally, because it wants only the best for Nottinghamshire, and the standards achieved in Education are vital to this goal. The real danger in cutting local developments off from national developments is that Nottinghamshire becomes too insular. I am always willing to learn from others (even Councillor Suthers) and the DfES makes this kind of learning readily available.

So, in my judgement, we currently benefit from the national initiatives, moderated by our own local vigilance, as I have already described, coupled with a very strong local partnership with teachers, head teachers, governors and parents. The strength of this local partnership is recognised in the recent Audit Commission School Survey, as outlined in my report to today's Council meeting.

Our local successes already mean we have freedoms in the way we promote local children's achievements (in the way we implement initiatives, especially those associated with the national strategies for literacy, numeracy and Key Stage 3). This is because the DfES and other agencies recognise the quality of what we are doing. We have also negotiated local freedoms through the Public Service Agreement soon to be signed by this Council. Also, we already have local freedom to design the way we approach our own school improvement work – this means successful schools, which in turn means successful head teachers and teachers, have a much lighter touch than those schools causing concern.

So, the local education system in Nottinghamshire benefits from a well-balanced approach. We continue to use the DfES to provide targeted funding to support children's achievements and so continue to learn from the good practice nationally. Equally, we work very hard to ensure that we keep the DfES' initiatives balanced by local good sense and practical action. And to ensure that the views of all stakeholders in the local education service can influence the way we work in partnership for the benefit of children and young people, and ultimately the County's continued growth and regeneration.

Thank you Chairman."

**5. Question from Councillor Bruce Laughton to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Property**

Has the Cabinet Member for Finance noticed that every year since the Labour Government came to power, Ministers have claimed to be providing a level of local government funding sufficient to prevent councils from inflicting "steep" or "excessive" Council Tax increases?

Can he therefore explain why Band D taxpayers in Nottinghamshire paid £907.81 last year compared to £607.19 in 1997/98 - an increase of 50%?

A new local government funding formula is now in place, but a Labour-dominated House of Commons Select Committee has already described it as complex, confusing and unlikely to improve people's understanding of how their local councils are funded. Can the Cabinet Member therefore advise Nottinghamshire taxpayers as to whom they should blame for the next Council Tax increase - their Labour-controlled County Council or the Labour Government?

**Response by Councillor J Carter, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property**

"I would like to thank Councillor Laughton for his question.

I am pleased that the Labour Government has been more ready to trust local authorities than the previous Government. This is being seen in the steady improvement that is taking place in our schools and social services. Increased freedoms and flexibilities are being proposed for councils who perform well and I am pleased that we are being judged to be a good authority. It seems that even the Central Office of the Conservative Party now support the right of local authorities to take their own decisions, and I am pleased to say that, at last, they have seen sense.

Each year we have explained, in detail, why the Council Tax has had to rise. Members who have been here longer than Councillor Laughton will recall that we had to have a higher Council Tax increase after the Local Government Reorganisation (a creation of the last Conservative government) because of the way Revenue Support Grant distribution changed. We had a 12% increase in Council Tax even though our expenditure only rose by about 3%. In the last 3 years, our Council Tax percentage increase has been below the national average. For 2003/4 we will be continuing with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the important service improvements that will arise for children with special educational needs, for users of the home care service and for users of libraries. We will have to wait and see what the average increase for 2003/4 will be, but already many Conservative-controlled councils are predicting double-figure increases. They should be pleased that they have the right to choose this option.

We have waited a long time for the revisions to the Revenue Support grant arrangements. The Minister has been rightly praised by the Select Committee's report for delivering a result that is an improvement on the previous arrangements and limits the damage from distributional changes. But local government finance is never going to be as simple and easy to understand. When making our budget proposals I am pleased that we have listened, not only to those who complain about Council Tax increases, but also to those people in the county who depend on the services that we provide. We take our decisions carefully and are happy for the people of Nottinghamshire to make their judgement to us on the election date.

Thank you."

**1. Question from Councillor Kate Allsop to the Chairman of the Police Authority**

Whilst we welcome the news that the Government is planning to make £20 million available to improve police stations across the country, and whilst we are delighted that Nottinghamshire is to receive the maximum allocation of £500,000, could the Chairman of the Police Authority explain:

- Which services we will have to cut in order to match-fund this £500,000.
- Whether "refurbishment of operation working areas at police stations" includes upgrading telephone systems to ensure that members of the public can get through to report crime?

Would he agree with me that if this government is serious about tackling crime, it should provide *all* the money for the project, thereby leaving our police forces free to decide how to spend their budget?

**Response by Councillor John Clarke, Chair of the Nottinghamshire Police Authority:**

"Thank you Madam Chairman.

I would like to thank Councillor Allsop for her question and the answer is as follows:

This funding is capital rather than revenue and the Police Authority earmarked capital resources within its overall capital programme in 2001-2002, this was in anticipation of a successful bid. No services have, therefore, been cut.

No, it is not being spent on phone systems. However, the revenue plans for the Force included recruitment of 44 additional part-time call-takers, which we will ensure that target times for answering calls are met. Most of these call-takers are now in post and current performance figures show we are meeting the targets, in excess of 93% of calls, this will continue to improve as all the additional staff move into post and gain experience.

This reflects the increasing trend of ring-fenced funding for the Police Service and we welcome all funding for the Force.  
Thank you Madam Chairman."

**COUNTY COUNCIL – 23 JANUARY 2003**

**PORTFOLIO REPORTS**

**(a) Leader of the Council**

Councillor Warner introduced his written report. Discussions arising from the report centred upon Beacon status for the Economic Development Department centring around intermediate labour market, New Deal and Bridge to Work. The results of the Council's bid are expected in April 2003. Reference was also made to the visitors from the Department DuNord who were looking at school exchanges and to the media training for Members, undertaken, with Nottingham Evening Post.

**(b) Culture Portfolio**

In introducing the report Councillor Bromfield thanked those who had supported him and/or extended their best wishes during his recent illness. He highlighted the fact that Nottinghamshire is in the top 25 Library Authorities and undertook to pass the Council's congratulations to all the staff concerned with the receipt of the Green Apple Award presented to the Chairman earlier in the meeting.

**(c) Deputy Leader**

Arising from Councillor Kirkham's report Members noted the Award of the Specialists Help Quality Mark to the Nottinghamshire Welfare Rights Service.

**(d) Economic Development Portfolio**

Councillor Winterton introduced his report and referred particularly to the Council's work on helping those who are "hardest to reach" and which was being assessed for Beacon Council Status.

**(e) Education Portfolio**

Councillor Storey introduced his written report. Discussions arising from the report centred upon the north of England Education Conference, Bassetlaw PFI and a tribute to all services and community leaders for the support given following the fire at the Wheldon School. Tribute was paid to the speed of cross-departmental response to minimise the effect on the childrens education.

**(f) Environment Portfolio**

Following his introduction of his report, Councillor Butler responded to questions as follows:-

- The Council's obligations under the Section 106 Agreement with Gedling Borough Council with regard to Gedling tip would be investigated by the Director and the Head of Legal Services.
- Issues will be raised with both the Strategic Rail Authority and Midland Mainline with the regard to the reduction in rail services for residents of Nottinghamshire
- The Environment Department had secured an excellent Local Transport Plan settlement for Nottinghamshire which will further help reduce accidents and congestion.

**(g) Finance and Property Portfolio**

Councillor Carter introduced his report. Discussions arising from the report centred upon the Regional Flood Defence Committee and Councillor Carter undertook to forward to Members a copy of the Environment Agency's "Capital Programme", so they can make comments if they so wish to be forwarded to the Regional Flood Defence Committee.

**(h) Resources Portfolio**

Councillor Stocks introduced his written report. Discussions arising from the reports centred upon the performances of the DLO/DSO and their expected targets.

**(i) Social Services Portfolio**

Councillor Anthony introduced his written report. He referred particularly to the official opening of Westwood residential home on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2003 and the remaining two homes (Bramwell and Jubilee Court) which are scheduled for completion in early February 2003. Reference was also made to the achievement of Two Star status for Social Services.