

## **APPENDIX A**

### **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2018 QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN**

#### **Question to the Chairman of the Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee from Councillor Jason Zadrozny**

At a Full Council Meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> July, I asked you about whether there was a multi-agency, County-wide approach to deal with the problems caused by synthetic cannabinoid substances like Spice and Black Mamba.

I called for a 'Spice Summit' involving the County Council, the seven Districts, Nottingham City Council, the Police and NHS. You said at the meeting that you were happy to arrange this. I reminded you at the last Full Council Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September and have subsequently emailed you.

The use of these cannabinoid substances remains a huge problem – especially affecting our Town Centres.

Has any progress had been made to get this organised?

#### **Response from Councillor Stuart Wallace, Chairman of the Adult Social Care & Public Health Committee**

I certainly can recall you mentioning a "Spice Summit" even though it is not in the minutes of the meeting, though I do not specifically recall agreeing to arrange one. I think I did agree with your broader point - along the same lines - that all agencies must continue to work together to tackle this issue, and indeed we have, which includes me having discussions with the Police and Crime Commissioner to see whether or not a summit, for want of a better word, could be arranged.

Since July, work has been co-ordinated through the Safer Nottinghamshire Board to encourage and engage districts councils, Nottinghamshire Police, Public Health and the NHS.

A countywide event was hosted by Mansfield District Council on 4 October to showcase work being undertaken across districts in supporting these vulnerable adults, many of whom are homeless, have poor mental health and are using New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) as a consequence.

The Police and Crime Commissioner continues to fund the assertive outreach workers in Ashfield, Mansfield and Bassetlaw through the allocation to the Community Safety Partnerships, who are engaging with these vulnerable adults within town centres. Efforts continue to be focused on those districts where NPS use is most visible, where several stakeholders have commended the arrangements to support these vulnerable adults to access the full range of services they require.

Building on the success of this assertive outreach work, efforts are underway with key stakeholders across Nottinghamshire to submit a bid to the Ministry of Housing,

Communities and Local Government Rough Sleeping Initiative Fund, to provide a multi-agency response for people who are rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness, including people who are intoxicated with NPS in public places. This initiative is part of the Government's manifesto ambition to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. The bid will be designed to be flexible and responsive to individual district needs. It has the support from the Chief Executives of the District Councils and County Council, and the direct involvement of officers from the public health and community safety teams.

When we debated your motion on this subject in September I stated then, and I will reiterate, that the threat posed by New Psychoactive Substances has to be seen in context, given the relatively small number of incidents compared with the prevalence of alcohol abuse or illnesses caused by tobacco, which really do outstrip and cause problems throughout all of our districts. However, Members should be left in no doubt that efforts to tackle the problems caused by synthetic cannabinoid substances are ongoing, and are proportional to the scale of the problem.

The motion agreed in September stated that the Leaders of all Groups on the County Council would write a joint letter to Nottinghamshire MPs asking them to lobby the Home Secretary to consider all of the evidence for reclassifying drugs like Black Mamba and Spice to Class A. We duly did that, and the responses received to those letters so far have been circulated to Group Leaders, including yourself.

Indeed, one of the respondents, Councillor Ben Bradley, County Councillor for Hucknall North and Member of Parliament for Mansfield, personally met the Home Secretary to discuss policing issues, and repeated his own call for reclassification of these NPS drugs. I understand that on 6 November, the Minister recommended that the Advisory Council on the misuse of drugs should assess if Spice should be involved in a different class. We are still awaiting the results of that.

It was agreed in September that the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee would receive regular reports on the numbers of referrals where NPS are identified, which would allow the reporting of further examples of the problems being caused by the misuse of these drugs across our County for users, residents and traders, and to discuss any further actions they require.

**Question to the Chairman of Children and Young People's Committee from Councillor Liz Plant**

Ofsted have identified an 'ambitious corporate parenting board' as a key building block for good outcomes for children in care. Does the Chairman agree with me that it was a mistake to remove the corporate parenting sub-committee and that it is time to reinstate it so we can focus effectively on the needs of our looked after children and ensure their voice is clearly heard?

**Response from the Chairman of Children and Young People's Committee, Councillor Philip Owen**

The concept and practice of 'Corporate Parenting' is vital. The term 'Corporate Parent' describes the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees,

and partner agencies to provide the best possible care and safeguarding for children who are looked after by a local authority. Every member and employee of the council has the statutory responsibility to act for that child in the same way that a good parent would act for their own child.

As Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee previously between 2009-13, and again now, I have regarded my own duty as a Corporate Parent with the utmost seriousness, and I expect the same of every other Member, Officer and partner agency. I have never for a second questioned Nottinghamshire County Council's responsibility and duty to be an excellent Corporate Parent to the children we look after, whose wellbeing depends on our diligence and support.

I did question, however, whether a Corporate Parenting Board or Panel as a sub-committee of the full Children and Young People's Committee represented the best way to carry out this duty. Yes, the words 'Corporate Parenting' are included in the title, but this doesn't guarantee that the action is being carried out as well as it could be. As a sub-committee it was by definition subservient to the full committee and therefore risked being seen as of less importance than those matters discussed at Children and Young People's Committee.

In my experience taking part in Corporate Parenting Panel meetings in the past, they were poorly attended and Members were often deluged with background paperwork that actually left you feeling a million miles away from the young people whose experiences and needs you were there to discuss.

Between 2013 and 2017 Councillor Peck was in the role of Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee, and yet I do not recall him, although he may correct me, I do not recall him attending any meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel in that time. In my opinion, this does not reflect a dereliction of his duty as a Corporate Parent, but rather, an implicit recognition in practice that the Panel, despite its title, was not actually critical or central to performing the duty to which it aspired.

So, under my leadership and direction, the duty of being a Corporate Parent and keeping in close touch with our children in care has been incorporated into the main Children & Young People's Committee, where not just I, but all Members of the committee 'own' this duty and responsibility. Councillor Plant will recall that when we endorsed the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2018, not only did it come to the Full Committee, but I invited the Children in Care Council Chairman, Darren, not only into the Chamber to present the strategy but also to join me in signing the foreword. You'll further recall that we, as a full committee, were able to thank him personally and extend our best wishes as he left Nottinghamshire to take up his degree in Lincoln.

We have our Children in Care Council, attended as its name suggests by children in care, but also by my Vice Chairman, Councillor Tracey Taylor; with the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services; the Service Director for Education, Learning and Skills; and the Service Director for Youth Families and Social Work. It is

also supported by Terry Galloway, who based on his own experiences as a care leaver is a campaigner and advocate for children in care. He led such initiatives as the campaign for council tax exemption for care leavers, which Nottinghamshire County Council adopted and promoted as policy and which has been agreed by our local district councils. We are the first top tier local authority in England to achieve this in such a way.

With this high level involvement, the Children in Care Council encourages our young people to be directly engaged in shaping and feeding back on the services they receive. The Young People Looked After team helps children who want to take part by supporting them with these meetings and encouraging their direct involvement or input into different projects including:-

- inspecting residential homes;
- helping to organise and deliver events for fostered young people;
- training foster carers; and
- interviewing social workers and managers.

The Children in Care Council has a number of groups: 'Juniors' for ages 8 to 12; 'Seniors' for ages 13 to 18; and 'Care Leavers' for ages 16 to 21, or 25 if they have a disability or are in full time education or training. These all feed into the main Children in Care Council, the outcomes of which can in turn be fed back to the Children & Young People's Committee as appropriate.

We have a Care Leaver's Board, which works on shaping the packages for care leavers, again with involvement from Terry Galloway and the Service Directors I mentioned previously.

We are also building apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers, indeed we expect to have some of our care leaver apprentices at next January's Children & Young People's Committee meeting. Today we welcome Year 7 Looked After Children (LAC) to County Hall as part of their work experience, in a way that any good parent would wish to introduce their children to the world of work. In the New Year, I and other elected members and officers will take part in The Children's Commissioner for England's LAC "Takeover Day", when our children will shadow members and senior officers for the day.

Reports on the County Council's duties and performance with regard to foster carers are also now included on the main Children and Young People's Committee agenda, with Foster Carer Liaison Action Group meetings carefully scheduled to ensure that their representative on the main committee can feed back any issues foster carers wish to raise.

In my view, these practical initiatives, involving more direct contact between the young people receiving our services and the Members and Officers responsible for delivering them, allow the Council to carry out its duties as a Corporate Parent in a more meaningful way. Certainly more meaningful than a group of Officers and Members

attending - or in some cases not attending - meetings where their knowledge of the experiences of the children for whom they are Corporate Parents comes from a large bundle of papers akin to a small encyclopaedia, and often much less intelligible.

We have turned Corporate Parenting from being an abstract, theoretical exercise into a hands-on practical exercise. The voices and needs of Looked After Children are clearly heard, and acted upon. Our children in care are now far less remote from contact with Children and Young People's leadership including the most senior officers and elected Members.

However we are coming up to Christmas and so I am in "listening mode" and it is apparent that Councillor Plant and perhaps some other members of the Children and Young People's Committees' do not understand this new and improved way of working, so I have therefore asked the Corporate Director for Children's Services to bring a paper and presentation to the January meeting of our committee, outlining the roles and responsibilities of Corporate Parenting and how we exercise these in Nottinghamshire. I would expect that our children and young people will not only shape that report and presentation but be part of the full committee.

## **THE FOLLOWING TWO QUESTIONS WERE TAKEN TOGETHER**

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

Following the media coverage of the devastating impact the decision to change the way the council calculates individual contributions to the costs of care has had on Nottinghamshire's most vulnerable residents, will the Chair reverse this decision?

### **Question to the Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee from Councillor David Martin**

According to a recent statement issued by this Council about the new charges they will be implementing for users of adult social care:

"Nottinghamshire County Council has always been clear that anyone who needed support to understand and adapt to these changes would be able to talk to a Financial Assessment Officer from the Council's Adult Care Financial Services Team, who would help them to ensure that they are maximising the benefits for which they are eligible."

Could you tell me how many of the 862 disabled people or their families who are set to be affected by changes in how they pay for their care have sought advice from a Financial Assessment Officer employed at this Council?

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

Chairman, you might not expect me to welcome two questions together, but actually I do, because it enables me to correct the misrepresentation of some of my comments in recent weeks.

On 17 October, Nottinghamshire County Council's Policy Committee agreed changes to the way the authority calculates individual contributions towards the cost of care and support. This decision followed a consultation which started in late summer with service users; relatives, carers, friends of service users and the wider public. Service users were individually contacted by mail.

The revised contribution policy brings Nottinghamshire into line with many other local authorities, and also with the Department of Health and Social Care's guidance to councils on the benefits they can take into account when determining the amount people are asked to contribute to their care costs. The authorities which already follow this guidance are Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Sheffield City Council, Wolverhampton, Manchester City, Kent, Warwickshire, Cornwall, Oxfordshire and Leicester City to name but a few. A number of others are thinking of following the same route.

As a personal point, I have never described the policy, anywhere, as a mistake. It was a necessary decision to ensure the fair distribution of funding support across all Nottinghamshire residents all of whom rely on our services. That position I do not move from.

Nottinghamshire County Council, like other councils with social care responsibilities, faces significant challenges in meeting increased demand for its care services, whilst absorbing significant reductions in the amount of funding we receive. Examples of those pressures that we will come under this coming year include:-

- Younger adults with disabilities are living longer with our support, which of course is good news and I congratulate everybody in that sort of care for managing to achieve it, but does increase the amount of money that we as a County need to invest in their care;
- Each year we see an increase of 4.5% in the number older people over the age of 85 living with long-term conditions and disabilities;
- We are supporting more people overall than ever before, whether they are in their own homes, in supported living or in care homes. Research published today stated that millions of elderly people risk going without care because of the demand councils are facing, as they struggle to meet that demand; and
- Next year there will be a further rise in costs, including £7.5 million for the National Living Wage, £3 million to support an increase in the number disabled adults under 65 and just over £1 million for older people.

All of these factors contribute to the Council's forecast budget shortfall of £64 million, as reported to Policy Committee last month, so irrespective of how we feel in our hearts, difficult decisions have to be made. And in this case, our decision is only to fall into line with what other councils are already doing, and with guidelines issued by the Government.

However Chairman, concerns have been expressed about the speed of implementation of the policy, which I feel are justified, and for that I have apologised. The wording of the letters sent out to service users in early November gave insufficient warning of when the revised contribution calculations would commence.

I think this was a mistake, and I apologise to any service users or carer who were unduly distressed by the suddenness of this notification.

In response to this problem, and with additional short-term flexibility provided by the Government's recent announcement of £9.5 million of additional one-off funding for the Council, we agreed at Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee on Monday a revised timescale for the implementation of the contributions policy, to give service users, their carers, their supporters more time to fully discuss their circumstances with the Council and to adjust to the changes.

Consequently, no-one will be expected to contribute more as a result of these changes until April 2019 at the earliest, after which the changes in contribution will be phased in gradually, so that full implementation will not be until November 2019. Our modelling shows that 42% of people will still not need to contribute to their care costs after these changes.

Nottinghamshire County Council has always been clear that anyone who needed support to understand or adapt to these changes will be able to talk to a Financial Assessment Officer from the Council's Adult Care Financial Services Team, who will help them to ensure that they are maximising the benefits for which they are eligible.

It is interesting to note that the Government last week released the facts that over £30 billion per year of benefits remain unclaimed.

Councillor Martin's question states that 862 people are affected, but this is the number who will begin to contribute because of the changes. There are a further 1,953 people who will make an additional contribution.

Up to the end of last week, Adult Care Financial Services had received 1,598 contacts from service users or their carers. Many of these simply involved clarification and information, with no additional advice required beyond the call. The circumstances of 445 people have been followed up with a review of their income and expenditure.

So, the professional support from the Council is there, and more time is now available to access that support. We will continue to work sensitively with people affected and their carers to review their needs and make adjustments to their contributions where necessary. We will provide support to ensure that they are receiving the correct benefits and that their income and expenditure means that they can afford their care costs.