

APPENDIX A

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2021 QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Bethan Eddy

Would the Leader provide Council with an update on the progress of talks with the Government on setting up a Devolution Deal for Nottinghamshire

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ben Bradley MP

Some Members will recall that previous attempts to achieve a Devolution Deal through a North Midlands Combined Authority or Local Government Reorganisation have stalled before we have ever been able to deliver on those ambitions.

I am pleased to say, currently, the work to bring together councils across Nottinghamshire to make that fresh case for devolution of more funding and powers from central government is making rapid progress. It appears to have a far greater chance of success, touch wood!

The Prime Minister has stated that Devolutions Deals will be available to County areas who make a strong case, and has called for local leaders to work together constructively in a bid for Devolution and deliver the Government's 'Levelling Up' ambition, especially in areas that have been hit hard by the COVID pandemic and have historically missed out on public and private investment in recent years compared with other parts of the country. You only have to have spent ten minutes in any of our debates ever to recognise that we are one of those places.

Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council, working with all our borough and district partners, are preparing the case for the County and City to receive these powers, giving us the opportunity to improve public services and enrich the lives of our residents. We have a shared ambition for more powers and funding that will help boost economic investment, improve the environment, and tackle health and educational inequalities across our area.

The county and city economy generates more than £2.65 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA), with further untapped potential for growth, but Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands, as we've discussed, is certainly one of those areas that has historically received some of the lowest levels of funding.

That's why, with the full support of the City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee, we published in October the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Case for Devolution – a summary of our vision for change. I don't intend to list everything that's in it, because members can go and find it and read it for themselves, but I will highlight the five key priorities that were identified within it. They are:

- Education and Skills - to improve numeracy and literacy and better support people into quality local employment;
- Transport - to deliver improved local infrastructure and connectivity;
- Environment - including enhanced and protected blue and green infrastructure, improved flood alleviation, and accelerating net zero targets;
- Land and Housing – including delivering more affordable housing, better health outcomes, reduced social isolation;
- Economy and Infrastructure - regenerating our city and town centres, accelerating the delivery of broadband and building stronger partnerships with neighbouring areas such as Derby and Derbyshire;

And in fact, Chairman, we're also adding a sixth priority which is not featured in any of the Devolution Deals elsewhere:

- to support vulnerable children and young people in targeted communities, building on the good work that we have been doing as a Council, and we are discussing what that might look like with the Government presently.

There is a major incentive for the Government to support a Devolution Deal for Nottinghamshire, because, this time, we have the collective support of all of our borough and district councils: Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, and Rushcliffe have all made a formal and financial commitments to delivering this piece of work.

This County Council, together with Nottingham City, our borough and district partners and all of the public service agencies across Nottinghamshire, are all pulling in the same direction, all involved in writing these documents and creating this bid, which was not always the case with previous devolution attempts.

This Council has opened its mind to changing its governance model to meet the Government's request for a suitably strong system of leadership, and this Devolution Deal project has re-energised the joint City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee, which was established some time ago, but now offers an ideal governance vehicle for us to take this partnership forward.

With the agreement of these authorities, we have expressed interest to the Government in being a Pathfinder for a Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Devolution Deal. We anticipate the Government's Levelling Up White Paper will be published before Christmas and will name those Pathfinders, so we are working hard to secure Nottinghamshire's place as one of them.

The Economic Prosperity Committee (EPC) has already signed off a plan to release £0.5 million a year from the surplus rates pool of these councils, which is money set aside for the Economic Prosperity Committee to use for economic development, to host a small team of staff to develop the business case proposals, which will come to

Policy Committee next week. That's a fund, as I say, specifically set aside for the EPC to use for economic development purposes.

Even if we were not named as a Pathfinder, we will still be at the front of the queue for a County Deal when the legislation is passed because of the work we're doing as a partnership, through the EPC, to reform local public services to bring local benefits in terms of better, more joined up services. I am not aware of anybody who has made as much progress and put as much into this over the last four or five months as we have, not just the County Council but those partners across local government that I have mentioned.

Earlier this month I joined the Chief Executive Anthony May, City Council Leader David Mellen, and Councillor Zadrozny in presenting our case to Neil O'Brien MP, who is the Minister responsible for these deals. This was a very productive meeting with many positive noises regarding Nottinghamshire's chances of landing a Pathfinder Deal. If this comes to fruition through the White Paper then we will enter into a period of intense negotiations with Government to clarify exactly what resources and powers we will receive, and what we will agree and be expected to deliver with them. Additionally we've met with other Counties who are part of those discussions at the CCN Conference this week, to talk about shared priorities and how we collectively talk to Government about those things that are true of all of the people who are still having conversations with Government. We understand that there are six councils in the country from more than 40 proposals who are having these conversations about Pathfinder deals.

So, Chairman, where other attempts to secure further money and power from central government have fallen short, often because of a lack of political consensus, this time we are able to tell ministers that the whole of Nottinghamshire wants to work together to secure this Devolution Deal. That is a very powerful message.

These are far-reaching plans set to benefit not just the whole of our county but the wider region with Derbyshire and Leicestershire also being three of those six that are having conversations with Government. That gives the East Midlands the potential for a huge boost for our future development.

Question to the Chairman of the Transport and Environment Committee from Councillor Helen-Ann Smith

The Healdswood Estate in Skegby suffers from speeding traffic – with many using the estate's roads as a racetrack. Would the Chairman agree to meet me on the estate at the earliest opportunity to discuss options to improve road safety in the area?

Response by the Vice-Chairman of the Transport and Environment Committee, Councillor John Ogle on behalf of the Chairman of the Transport and Environment Committee, Councillor Neil Clarke MBE

Community safety, road safety are priorities for this Council and Via. You will be aware that fatalities and injuries on Nottinghamshire roads are reducing year by year on trend.

Councillor Clarke and myself are aware from speaking with officers that there have been two recent speeding complaints regarding Healdswood Street, which is one of the feeder roads onto the Healdswood Estate.

As Members may be aware, Councillor Clarke is currently undergoing a hip operation and therefore may not be in a position to conduct a site visit until early next year but is happy to do so once he is able.

Alternatively, as a Vice Chairman of the Transport and Environment Committee I focus in particular on highways and transport issues and I am happy to meet on site with Councillor Smith if she would like this meeting sooner than meeting with Councillor Clarke.

Whichever of us attends, we would of course liaise with the District Highways Manager when making these arrangements.

Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Kate Foale

Now it has been confirmed that HS2 will not be going to Toton, will there be a proper and thorough impact assessment to consider the impact of this watered-down plan will have on the local economy in Toton and across Nottinghamshire?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ben Bradley MP

I welcome the question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the IRP (Integrated Rail Plan) again and I am really pleased with it – the plan for the north and the midlands as it affects our County and to clarify the point you made about Toton.

As Leader of Nottinghamshire County Council, MP for Mansfield and an advocate for the East Midlands, I welcome the news that HS2 is coming to Nottinghamshire, including East Midlands Parkway Station. Derby, Nottingham and Chesterfield will receive HS2 services in the first instance, that's fantastic news. For those who have been involved in the process, they will know that this has not always been guaranteed. That was certainly not the position we were in six months ago. Others may have had higher expectations but those who have been involved know that to be true.

I further welcome the Government's commitment to complete the electrification of the Midland Main Line – hoorah! – because we have talked about that to death, and here we are. It has been committed to, and the Secretary of State has said in the Chamber of the House of Commons that work will commence before Christmas on the electrification of the Midland Main Line.

The eastern leg of HS2 will run from Birmingham to the East Midlands Parkway, around three miles from Toton, and the high-speed line will cut the journey from Birmingham to Nottingham from 74 minutes to 26 minutes, bringing the West Midlands within a commutable distance, bringing that whole economy closer to our region in terms of work and leisure.

HS2 won't stop at East Midlands Parkway, it is not the intended destination – trains will go on to Derby and Nottingham city centres, rather than through a Toton Hub

Station. That is a technical one because of the difficulties of navigating the Trowell curve via Toton to get into Nottingham which would have required additional significant engineering works. The Government have always been keen to join cities together.

However, it doesn't mean that plans for significant development at Toton have stalled. Far from it. The economic case is well known and in truth it's not so much about train lines as it is about being a hub for investment, for job creation and for economic growth. The Government confirms that it will accelerate transport improvements at Toton, providing a station for local and regional services, to be delivered in line with the substantial private sector investment that we expect to come forward on the site, and that indeed we have already discussed on that site through the relevant corporation through a variety of means with a variety of partners. It's likely that the transport package will include a shuttle to operate between Toton and East Midlands Parkway.

The Integrated Rail Plan also promises to exploit links with other investment in Nottinghamshire, bringing forward business cases for all sorts of regional connectivity including committing to road, rail and tram connections for Toton, and both the Maid Marion Line and the Robin Hood Line extensions which will link some of our most disadvantaged communities in the north of the county into those jobs.

Councillor Zadrozny raised this earlier, as did Councillor Pringle about the certainty around those projects. As he knows, Michael Gove confirmed this week that all of that is funded and will be delivered. The reason there is limited information in the IRP itself is because it lays out projects of national significance and these are much more local projects. As I said earlier on, you won't find many local projects listed in the document. The fact that ours in Nottinghamshire are in it, when none of the others are, is very significant.

All this means there should ultimately be more opportunities for more Nottinghamshire residents to board trains at stations throughout the region than was the case under previous HS2 proposals. Those stations on mainline routes will also see investment in contactless ticketing which will improve the service and processes for rail users.

The proposals for Toton form part of an ambitious long-term vision for the future of the regional economy. The IRP seeks to accelerate the East Midlands Development Corporation as a catalyst to unlock sites across Nottinghamshire and the Midlands, and to lever in private sector investment. It will oversee coordinated developments around Toton and Chetwynd Barracks, Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station and East Midlands Airport, covering an area the equivalent size of three Olympic Parks, with the aim of creating 84,000 jobs, adding nearly £5 billion to our regional economy, as well as 4,500 more homes. From an HS2 perspective, the DevCo is our vehicle to deliver at Toton, and the simplified and faster processes it can bring in order to accelerate that delivery are hugely important.

The next step is to go away and talk to Government and to Michael Gove's department about practically what are the next steps in making that happen including both legislation and funding, and those meetings are coming together as we speak.

Early engagement has been secured with the Department for Transport as well as the Department for Levelling Up, so that we can move forward quickly with these plans. I

am meeting the rail minister very soon and, as I say, we welcome the comments from Michael Gove saying that all of these projects will ultimately be delivered.

To answer Councillor Foale's question directly, we will of course be undertaking a proper impact assessment around Toton and find out exactly what these plans mean for the economy, but the broad picture is already fairly clear. In total, the IRP confirms £12.8 billion of investment in our transport in the East Midlands, with the vast majority of that funding coming to Nottinghamshire, which is really welcome, and although HS2 trains don't run to Toton in the first instance there are still a number of options as to how we get from East Midlands Parkway to Sheffield, some of which still include HS2 trains visiting Toton, so that's not yet clear, but what this does do is give us the certainty to get started in terms of kicking on with that private sector investment and getting something built.

I've personally never known a time when we have been able to welcome an investment of £12.8 billion in our regional transport links. I think you would probably have to go back to the building of the M1 to get that amount of money into our regional economy.

For Nottinghamshire and for our economic priorities this is really good news and I welcome the fact that we have some certainty with some of those projects now to get on and deliver for local people.

Question to the Chairman of the Economic Development and Asset Management Committee from Councillor Mike Adams

Is the Chairman of the Economic Development & Asset Management Committee aware of recent allegations in the media that this Council is spending "a ridiculous amount of taxpayers' money" on vacant buildings, and would he please clarify the facts of the matter?

Response from the Chairman of the Economic Development and Asset Management Committee, Councillor Keith Girling

I think if you cast your mind back to this administration's first Council meeting, Councillor Bradley stood up and talked about co-operation, working together, and we know we have to have opposition and we know you have to bring things up and that's great, but actually about the openness and wanting to work with you, so a bit of advice, and an offer, if you like: if you want to do a story about what this Council is doing and you want the facts, there's actually no need to go through Freedom of Information. Come to us, we'll tell you, and you can do your story. Actually, you might find out some facts that change your mind. So that's just an offer to you.

As services move out of buildings it is necessary for the Council to manage vacated buildings safely for the benefit of the local communities they are located in and to safeguard our assets while we either seek to repurpose or dispose of the buildings. Members will be aware that in the past we have experienced serious fires at empty properties at the former Rolleston Drive depot and at the Grove. When this happens not only does this have a significant impact on the assets of the County Council and significant funds need to be spent in making the buildings safe or demolishing them in

their entirety, but they also have a profound impact on communities in terms of health and wellbeing caused by the incident itself.

To ensure that we manage our vacant buildings as safely as possible, effective from 1st August 2020, we commissioned Arc to undertake their management to ensure consistency of approach. This has been welcomed by our insurers. The buildings have been risk assessed and have security alarms and monitoring. This does come at a cost but is necessary to ensure our assets and communities are kept safe.

Furthermore, by employing Arc there are economies of scale and I can ensure this Council that it gets the best possible price for these services. This process is then managed through our commissioning process with Arc with regular written reports and meetings and access to their 24-hour cover arrangements to deal with any incidents.

I understand that a recent article on this matter described 37 buildings incurring security and maintenance costs to a value of £425,599 in the last year. The number of empty properties being managed now sits at 32. You will note that I referred in my response in the article that following my appointment in May 2021 I ordered a review of all the council's properties and how they could be best handled going forward. I am pleased to announce that through working with Officers there are plans in place for nearly all of the 37 properties referenced in the article, which was the number at the time, but by now sits at 32.

Over the next year the plan for each of these properties will be as follows;

- two of the properties are soon to be demolished;
- 15 of the properties are caretaker's properties at schools. Due to the location of these in and around school sites they are not all easy to repurpose and need to be dealt with sensitively. We are working with Gedling Borough Council to lease three of the 15 and exploring options to house families in need of accommodation in others.
- four are under consideration for other County Council Strategic Priorities; and
- seven are in our disposals programme and are either on the market or will be in the New Year.

The remaining four are all subject to ongoing work to bring back into beneficial use or demolish.

The onus is clearly on us to ensure that we minimise the number of vacant buildings we have, and this can be achieved through making quick decisions on whether buildings can be reused or whether they should be demolished or disposed of. This Administration and the previous Administration has had an active demolition programme removing properties beyond their economic life and the recent report to my EDAM (Economic Development and Asset Management) Committee on the Investing in Notts programme highlighted the ongoing review of our wider property estate and its alignment to the disposal programme. We continue to constantly review the status and future of our empty properties and I remain committed to ensuring they are kept safe while empty and are repurposed, demolished or disposed of, and my Committee will continue to oversee this.

Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Kate Foale

As work is progressing to make the full business case for a Freeport in the East Midlands, what is being done to guarantee that there will be real benefit to the people in Nottinghamshire, including more decent, well paid and secure jobs and a thriving and sustainable local business sector based in the County?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ben Bradley MP

I should start by making clear that developing the East Midlands Freeport's Full Business Case is not entirely within our gift as a County Council but is a joint effort of partners across local government and business. It is actually Leicestershire County Council who are the accountable body for it.

With that said, members and officers from this council have been very active throughout the development of the Freeport Business Case at both stages, which demonstrate the scale of the job opportunities that will be created in the region.

This work, alongside the wider projects at Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Toton, and the wider East Midlands Airport Area that we are progressing through the East Midlands Development Corporation, will deliver 84,000 jobs and £4.8 billion in economic uplift.

Of particular importance to the Freeport Business Case is the provision of proper training to ensure that these jobs benefit local people and their communities. This will include the establishment of local skills academies and ensure that residents don't miss out. Developing better skills education in coalfield communities like Ashfield & Mansfield is a passion of mine, and I am keen to ensure that young people – especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds – are able to take advantage of these opportunities.

A key part of the business case has been to ensure that the economic uplift looks beyond the establishment of the Freeport, into things like construction jobs, and that it develops the long-term prospects that will give our region consistent growth over many years. It is expected that the 'end users' of the Freeport will be major, high-value companies in the manufacturing and energy production sectors, with suitably high-value jobs to match, which return good wages and salaries to local people.

Finally, Chairman, the establishment of a Freeport at East Midlands Airport will allow our region to benefit even further from the continued growth of the airport's freight operation – the largest pure freight airport in the UK - which in turn makes the local supply chain more efficient. This will of course benefit all companies in the region but will be especially important to our small and medium-sized businesses who do not have the same scale to soak up this cost that a larger company might have.

Independently of that, in talks with Manchester Airport Group who run East Midlands Airport they have said to me that the growth of that airport and the continuation of that airport is dependent upon this economic growth and the work that we are doing around that part of the region.

All told, this is a fantastic opportunity for our region and I am certain that the employees and owners of local businesses in particular will be much better off for having the UK's only inland freeport on their doorstep. It works in tandem with our wider regional projects that we have been selling to Government for the last few months, including the Development Corporation (which could form part of the Freeport's Governance) and therefore also the plans for Toton, which sit under the DevCo and obviously we have these Integrated rail plan announcements which join the whole lot of it together. It's almost like there is a plan we are all working to, but we are progressing well. The date for the publication of that full Business Case is the end of January and we continue to make progress on this wider package.

Question to the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee from Councillor Steve Carr

Beeston North with Lenton Abbey Children's Centre building and service is 100% funded by Nottinghamshire County Council. It provides a valuable service for many of the most vulnerable families in my Division.

Will Nottinghamshire County Council agree to protect the budget and services for all Children's Centres in Nottinghamshire including Beeston North and Lenton Abbey Children's Centre until at least 2025 so they can remain open in their current locations?

Response from the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee, Councillor Tracey Taylor

I notice that there is an Independent Alliance motion later on in the agenda today asking for similar reassurances about the future of Nottinghamshire's 60 libraries, even though this Conservative Council has already fiercely protected all of its libraries and there are no grounds to suggest that that commitment will change.

This question appears to be hinting at a threat to children's centre services in Nottinghamshire, including Beeston North and Lenton Abbey, despite the fact that, once again, this Council has an excellent record of protecting such services compared with many other local authorities.

I believe your concerns may be based on current proposals recently in the news by Nottingham City Council to close a number of their children's centres, but I can confirm that the Beeston North and Lenton Abbey Children's Centre building and service is 100% funded by this County Council. We are not reliant on any City Council funding. So, if Councillor Carr is asking me whether we are committed to properly funding and protecting the services we provide to children and families across Nottinghamshire, including in his area, then absolutely we are.

That does not mean, however, that we guarantee to continue delivering those services in exactly the same way forever. Frankly that would be a foolish promise for any administration to make, because we always have a duty to examine new and innovative ways to improve the effectiveness of our service delivery and ensure the best outcomes for those families who need our help most. Nothing in the world of adult social care or children's services provision stands still, and nor should it, because the

demands facing us are changing all the time, and there are often new funds and opportunities available which we should always seek to explore.

We are moving towards the development of Family Hubs in Nottinghamshire. There are plans to reshape early help services to enable Nottinghamshire to develop these hubs with partners. This means families will be able to access a range of support to meet their needs through Family Hub Networks, which will provide virtual and face to face support using a mixture of outreach work, home visiting and community-based provision. Family Hubs will continue to provide early help services for expectant parents and families with children under the age of 5 in line with our Best Start strategy.

If Councillor Carr or indeed any other councillor or member of the public wants to learn more about Family Hubs they can visit the National Centre for Family Hubs website - www.nationalcentreforfamilyhubs.org.uk - and see for themselves why many local authorities are looking to modernise their service in this way. This is a national direction of travel. So far, the Treasury has provided a £34m transformation fund to support family hubs opening in 12 areas, and £82m was pledged in the spending review to support the rollout of hubs in 75 areas.

On 2nd November the Children and Families Minister, Will Quince addressed the National Centre for Family Hubs. He said, and I quote:

“At their simplest, a family hub is where families with children of all ages know they can get help and support. They may go to a building, or they may access that help online – or maybe a mix of the two. The exact service offer will vary from place to place, as it should, reflecting the needs of the local population, but will have a great ‘Start for Life’ offer for parents, carers and babies at its core.”

“Of course, this in itself is not a new idea. We have had family services, family support units, children’s centres for many years. But the family hub model builds on what we have learned, what local councils and professionals have learned, and what families have told us all, about how to give them the very best support we can – the support that they deserve. This is summarised in the three principles that characterise and define family hubs – access, connections, and relationships.”

Will Quince’s statement also highlighted the range of Government departments who are promoting the development of Family Hubs, so this is a truly co-ordinated and cross-cutting project anchored upon the Family Hubs Unit created by the DfE.

In the Local Government Chronicle the Minister stated that Family Hubs should build on the existing children’s centre model to support greater numbers of families. He said that while the children’s centre model promoted by the last Labour Government was “only for children from 0 to five”, Family Hubs will be for “the whole family”. To clarify, the intention is that they should be for children from 0-19.

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families is also supporting the initiative by leading the National Centre for Family Hubs, which supports best practice. Will Quince has however stated that “ultimately”, family hubs will be “for local authorities to deliver”. He has said, “We want them to be creative, innovative, and really push the boundaries as to what a family hub model could deliver.”

He said: "I don't want to be overly prescriptive. I will make absolutely clear what my expectation is as to what a family hub must be and must deliver. But if they want to go further, I would absolutely encourage that."

So Chairman, we are looking closely at how this new opportunity can benefit Nottinghamshire families, including those in Beeston North and Lenton Abbey. This may well involve modernising and delivering services a little differently in future to what we do at present, but the aim will always be to achieve the best outcomes for children and families across Nottinghamshire.

Question to the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee from Councillor Anne Callaghan BEM

Nottinghamshire County Council commission the Small Steps Service to support families of young children, where there is no formal diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), but where behaviours may be indicative or characteristic of these conditions. Many of these children are struggling both at home and in school and experience several school exclusions due to displaying extremely challenging behaviours.

Do you believe that it is acceptable that many of these children are waiting up to two years for an appointment to this Service and ten months for an intervention?

Response from the Chairman of Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee, Councillor Boyd Elliott on behalf of Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee, Councillor Tracey Taylor

To be clear, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) commission the provider Family Action to deliver the Small Steps Service. Nottinghamshire County Council are not the responsible commissioner for the Small Steps Service.

The service is commissioned to provide additional support as part of the support and diagnostic pathway for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). When commissioning of the service transferred to the CCG in June 2020, funding increased by a third to address increasing demand.

The CCG is aware that waiting times for assessment and interventions are not acceptable and is working with Family Action and system partners to urgently address this, with the CCG investing additional non-recurrent funding to reduce waiting times. A waiting time improvement trajectory is being agreed between the CCG and Family Action with the aim to reduce waiting times to achieve contractual standards during 2022. Support is provided to families awaiting assessment including access to the provider's helpline, workshops and evidence-based parenting courses.

The Children's Integrated Commissioning Hub, hosted by Public Health, work on behalf and with the CCG to ensure improvements in health outcomes for children and young people.

Question to the Chairman of the Transport and Environment Committee from Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan

The Communities and Place Committee approved on 1st October 2020 that a new Household Waste Recycling Centre in Rushcliffe, near Cotgrave, be progressed towards a formal Planning process. We are now over 12 months further on and there has been no planning application submitted and no news on its current status. Would he give an update on the situation and reasons for the delay?

Response from the Vice-Chairman of the Transport and Environment Committee, Councillor Mike Adams on behalf of Chairman of the Transport and Environment Committee, Councillor Neil Clarke MBE

The County Council's new Administration is currently reassessing its priorities to ensure best use of the available capital funding and has therefore paused progress on the proposed recycling centre at Cotgrave pending the forthcoming implementation of the National Resources and Waste Strategy and the associated Environment Act.

This Strategy and the Act will fundamentally change the type and amount of waste collected at the kerbside and through the recycling centres. A report setting out a proposal to undertake a strategic review of the current network of centres in light of those changes, and the lessons learnt through the Covid 19 pandemic, will be considered by the Transport and Environment Committee early in 2022.

Once that review is complete, further proposals to improve recycling in the county will be brought forward.

Question to the Chairman of the Governance and Ethics Committee from Councillor Lee Waters

Does the Chairman agree that this Council has a legal and moral duty to be transparent and beyond reproach?

Response from the Chairman of the Governance and Ethics Committee, Councillor Philip Owen

As far as I know this is the only time that there has ever been a question to the Chairman of the Governance and Ethics Committee, and after you've listened to the answer there will probably not be another one in the foreseeable future!

I cannot help but observe that a question on transparency could not be more opaque. The simple, short answer, clearly, has got to be 'yes'. I was tempted to say 'no' but that would have mucked up your pre-prepared supplementary, so I thought I had better not!

But there is a fine balance to tread, Chairman.

There are occasions when this Council, its Members, its employees or the organisations we work with could be unfairly disadvantaged by being wholly transparent. For example, when considering complex legal or commercial matters, or

matters affected by General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), a lack of sensitivity on such matters could leave this authority, and the taxpayers who fund our services, worse off.

If Councillor Waters is fortunate enough to serve as a councillor for as long as I have, he will no doubt come across plenty of occasions where taking necessary precautions around the release of personal or commercially sensitive information serves the best long-term interests of the public.

To that end, I would draw your attention, Chairman to the paragraph at the top of the Excluded document where it says 'By virtue of Schedule 12A any disclosure of this report or a part of this report, circulating information, is possibly legally actionable by individuals or the Council'. So, if I were to release information that I shouldn't be, or the Council shouldn't be releasing, then I could end up in prison perhaps! Now there are many who would say that's the best place for me, and many of them are sitting on my side of the house!

Fundamentally, Chairman, officers and members of this council must abide by the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life. These acknowledge that no individual – and therefore no local authority – is completely beyond reproach, not even me, and that we must therefore allow ourselves to be challenged, and as a result be open to change.

This is the nature of the democratic process. It places the duty on us as councillors to ensure that we have appropriate checks and balances in place to ensure that we are acting in the public interest to the best of our ability.