

## **APPENDIX A**

### **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2017 QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN**

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

Does the new administration intend to increase the budget and accelerate the programme for pavement repairs? Because under previous administrations they have been allowed to deteriorate into a shocking state due to lack of funding and are now in such poor conditions that radical action needs to be taken immediately if any attempts are ever to be made to resolve this issue.

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

The Conservative and Mansfield Independent Forum administration recognises that our highway network is a vital asset to our local economy and our communities, and it is requiring adequate investment for its maintenance and improvement.

At the Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2017, we allocated £1 million of extra revenue funding to help address the deterioration of our network including pavements.

In addition to this extra £1 million, a report is being presented at the Communities and Place Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> July to recommend the investment of a further £3 million over the next three years on larger highway maintenance schemes, which include pavements, to tackle the worst of the network's problems and to ensure a balanced spend to accommodate the intervention measures such as surface dressings which prolong the life of our roads. Officers will be writing to all Members of the Council shortly to gather candidate locations for future programmes.

#### **Question to the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee, from Councillor John Peck JP**

Does the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee join me in congratulating yet another Conservative u-turn regarding the abolishment of universal free school meals for infant aged children and does he, therefore, recognise that this was an ill-thought out policy that would have been at the expense of over 19,400 infant school aged children in Nottinghamshire including over 2,700 infant school aged children living in the area of Mansfield?

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

The 2017 Conservative General Election Manifesto stated:-

'We do not believe that giving school lunches to all children free of charge for the first three years of primary school - regardless of the income of their parents – is a

sensible use of public money. There is now evidence that school breakfasts are at least as effective in helping children to make progress in school. So under a new Conservative Government, schools in England will offer a free school breakfast to every child in every year of primary school, while children from low-income families will continue to receive free school lunches throughout their years in primary and secondary education.'

Her Majesty The Queen, during her speech at the State Opening of Parliament, outlined Government plans to introduce 27 Bills and Draft Bills. Many of these relate to delivering an optimum Brexit and are sufficiently complex to keep Parliament extremely busy over the next two years.

Councillor Peck reflects in his question that the current legislative programme does not include a Bill to change policy regarding school breakfasts or school lunches, so our opinions on the merits of such policy would be, I think, premature because there is no substantial legislation put forward at this stage, for us to comment on.

It is not my position to dictate which legislative measures the Government should bring forward, or when. My duty, so far as national policy is concerned, is to deal with policy and law which currently exists in relation to Children and Young People. I will of course also keep a close eye on Bills going through Parliament and make representations if necessary at the time that they are going through Parliament or during the earlier consultation stages, but I see no reason to formulate a comment on a Bill that does not yet exist.

If a future Queen's Speech brings forward a new legislative proposal in relation to school breakfasts and lunches, then that would be the appropriate time to discuss the matter further.

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

A site on Lowmoor Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, which borders my Division has recently become a waste transfer station. Many of my residents and other local people have begun to suffer from overpowering stench and biblical swarms of flies. Kirkby residents are dismayed that this site has been placed so close to residential properties with little consultation. Clearly the site is not being managed properly and much needs to be done to ensure that if it is to remain there it is not causing such problems for local people.

Would the Committee Chairman agree to meet with me and other local members to explore options to resolve the matter? I believe we need the Environment Agency to act to help us resolve the issue and any pressure the Chairman can put on them to bring them to the table would be much appreciated.

**Question to the Chairman of the Communities and Place Committee, from Councillor John Knight**

Is the Chairman of the Communities and Place Committee aware of the foul stench coming from the Veolia site in Kirkby in Ashfield, which is making local residents'

lives a misery, they are not able to have their windows open or sit out in the garden, and the smell is coming into their house, what is the council intending to do about this as it is clearly affecting many residents? Will the Chairman talk to me about the lack of consultation which took place amongst residents by Veolia and what actions will he be taking to work with the Environment Agency to make sure the remedial procedures are put in place?

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

Firstly, I fully agree that residents should not have to suffer from odours or insect infestations resulting from the operation of a nearby business, which is why the County Council contracts with Veolia, one of the leading waste management companies in the world.

The site is subject to controls imposed under both the Planning Permission and the Environmental Permit. Veolia are actively involved in discussions with both the Environment Agency and the Waste Planning Authority to resolve the current problems being experienced with this facility. Veolia have prepared a programme of works to address these issues. Some of these works, where these relate to site management and operational practices, have already been implemented and subsequent visits indicate that these have resulted in improvements in odour control and fly management.

A number of further operational and infrastructure changes to help improve the situation have also been proposed and are currently being investigated. A meeting is scheduled with representatives of the local community, Veolia, the Environment Agency and the Waste Planning Authority to discuss the current position in the near future.

However, to say that the facility was built with little consultation is simply not true. The site has been through a full Planning and Environmental Permitting process with both the County Council and the Environment Agency. As part of the planning process, consultation took place with 33 local residents, Ashfield District Council, and the other interested parties. A single letter of objection was received from a neighbouring business and the application was reported to Planning and Licensing Committee for determination.

Please rest assured that the County Council as both Waste Disposal Authority, and Waste Planning Authority is working closely with Veolia and the Environment Agency to ensure the current issues are short lived.

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

What is being done to ensure the residents and businesses of Nottinghamshire do not suffer from financial hardship as a result of Brexit and what work do you intend to do in order to ensure that the services and projects currently funded or part funded by the European Union in our communities across Nottinghamshire continue after Brexit?

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

Negotiations on Brexit began less than a month ago in fact 19<sup>th</sup> June so, so far it's too early to be predicting the outcome of those negotiations.

There is an implicit assumption in Councillor Foale's question that the Brexit deal - if there is one - will be damaging for Nottinghamshire. However, as a confirmed 'Vote Leaver' and an advocate of 'Hard Brexit', I do not share such pessimism.

Clearly, there will be a major change to the way we work financially, legally and politically, and I expect there will be a period of turbulence as we make those adjustments. Nevertheless, I am confident it will not take long before business across the country begins to benefit from the ability to trade more freely on a global basis.

I believe Brexit must be treated as an opportunity for established and developing Nottinghamshire businesses to grow and create new jobs. I am also confident that with a global outlook we can attract and accommodate new industries that previously may not have had a significant presence in our county. This positive vision is reflected in 'Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future', our Strategic Plan, as you probably noticed.

Of course our approach the economic development and other policy areas will be flexible, to respond to whatever form Brexit eventually takes, but I do not accept Councillor Foale's premise that Brexit is a route towards financial hardship. Nor do I accept Councillor Foale's assumption that a loss of European funding will automatically mean a lack support for local services and projects going forward.

I do not dispute that "so-called" European Funding has benefited some projects in this county. But I use the words "so-called" for a reason. European money is not actually European, it is ours. It is our taxpayers' money that we have given to the EU. The EU then recycles it, takes away a decent slice of it, and hands the remainder back to us on their terms, with their branding. Not a bad business model while you can get away with it!

In 2016 the UK government paid £13.1 billion to the EU budget, while EU spending on the UK was forecast to be about £4.5 billion. So the UK's 'net contribution' was estimated at £8.6 billion and I had the independent website verify those figures. Each year the UK gets an instant discount on its contributions to the EU – the 'rebate' won for us by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1984. It was worth almost £4 billion last year. Without it, the UK would have been liable for £17 billion in contributions.

So let us not pretend that European Union funding is doing us an irreplaceable financial favour. The one area where I would agree with Councillor Foale is that, assuming these contributions are not paid to the EU in the future, then we must ensure that a fair share of that retained money is devolved from Central Government to Nottinghamshire. That way, elected local representatives can decide where it needs to be spent, rather than some Whitehall mandarin or some Brussels bureaucrat.

Irrespective of the European funding situation, this Council seeks to seize every opportunity to urge Government to strike the best deal for businesses - be that through the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership, local MP's, or through the Midlands Engine Chair, Sir John Peace. We are committed to getting our fair share, and that is why there is significant work underway, outside of this dependency on the EU, to make sure Nottinghamshire can stride ahead and I refer there, of course, to the tying of the knot on our friendship with the Chinese dedication, which came a few weeks ago.

The new Conservative and Mansfield Independent Forum administration has already looked to expand the county's horizons in international trade and investment far beyond the constraints of Europe. Last month's China Symposium was hugely successful. Here the County Council worked proactively with the private sector, introducing them to 60 Chinese firms as part of an exclusive trade summit to open doors to lucrative new opportunities.

The work underway in relation to the Prosperity Plan (which will be shared with Policy Committee in there early autumn) will set out the concrete actions we will be taking. This will include investing in what we do well but also tackling some of the long-standing productivity barriers in the county, including skills and connectivity.

So, to summarise, whatever the future holds for this country and this county with regard to Brexit, Nottinghamshire County Council will get on with the job of serving its residents and promoting its businesses. I believe the best way to do that is to be positive about the future and talk up the prospects of this county, because that is what attracts investment from Government and private enterprise alike.

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

Does the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee join me, the majority of head teachers, teachers, governors, teacher unions, Labour Members of Parliament, many Conservative Members of Parliament and the former head of OFSTED in welcoming Theresa May's u- turn on her " blast from the past", vanity project of the re-introduction of Grammar schools across the country, and does the Chairman agree with me that the funding Theresa May found for the re-introduction of Grammar schools should now be used to support existing schools which are facing unprecedented, real- term budget cuts for years to come, including over £39 million worth of cuts to schools in Nottinghamshire?

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

As I said to Councillor Peck earlier, my duty is to deal with current national policy in relation to Children and Young People, and to keep an eye on Bills going through Parliament. It is not a requirement for me to comment on Bills that don't yet exist.

However, on this occasion Councillor Plant already knows my position, because we were both present in this Chamber in September last year when Councillor Foale

and former Liberal Democrat Councillor Ken Rigby tabled a motion against the introduction of grammar schools.

Conservatives voted against that motion, and our stance was supported by councillors from the Mansfield Independent Forum and the Ashfield Independents.

Eight months later, it was the Conservative, Mansfield Independent Forum and Ashfield Independent groups who gained seats at the County Council Elections, while anti-grammar school Labour and Liberal Democrats were the big losers, so make of that what you will.

Councillor Plant boasts in her question that she has the support of head teachers, teachers, governors, teacher unions, Labour MPs, some Conservative MPs and the former Head of OFSTED in welcoming the absence of grammar schools from the current legislative programme.

I notice that in all of that she doesn't consider parents or children to be worth any mention one way or the other in her list, which probably tells us everything we need to know about where Labour's priorities and loyalties lie.

Councillor Plant's question also repeats the scaremongering about school funding which of course worked so well at the County Elections for her former colleagues in towns like Hucknall and Retford. Some Labour leaflets urged voters to visit the 'School Cuts' information website to find out how much their school would lose, that of course based on data compiled by those bastions of political impartiality, the NUT, the NAHT, the GMB, not forgetting Unison and Unite. No agenda there, then.

Naturally, I couldn't resist a quick look at the website myself, and it stated at the bottom of the opening page that this was, and I quote, "An Outlandish Website". Let's just say it certainly lived up to its name!

Back in the real world, the truth is that the Government conducted a public consultation on the National Schools Funding formula between the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016 and 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017. This was the second phase of the consultation, and after that we had the General Election. The upshot is that final decisions on the National Schools Funding Formula have not yet been made, so any calculations around schools gaining and losing from the eventual formula are speculative.

What we do know is that the Conservative Manifesto pledged to inject an extra £4 billion into the schools budget by 2022 to ensure no school loses in cash terms from the new National Funding Formula. The original intention was to fund this from savings made through changes to the school meals policy, but, as we discussed earlier, this is not yet part of the legislative programme. Nevertheless, the Government reiterated its promise of "fairer funding" in the Queen's Speech, and Education Secretary Justine Greening MP clarified in Parliament, only two weeks ago (27<sup>th</sup> June), that the Government remains committed to ensuring no school loses money under the new National Funding Formula.

At this point we await details of exactly where that money will now be found, but I am reasonably confident it will come from a more sustainable source than Jeremy Corbyn's magic money tree.