

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13TH DECEMBER 2018
QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

WRITTEN RESPONSES PROVIDED AFTER THE MEETING AS THE TIME LIMIT OF 60 MINUTES FOR QUESTIONS WAS REACHED

Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Jim Creamer

Would Councillor Kay Cutts inform members of the amount Nottinghamshire has received through European Structural Funds over the past 20 years and provide a list of the schemes and projects that have benefited from EU funding?

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

I have spoken with officers at great length on this question due to its complexity and scope. I am sure you can appreciate that gathering two decades' worth of information is no small task. Moreover, the Council's policy regarding retention of data means that it has not been possible for the Growth and Development team to reasonably guarantee the funds received by this Council over a period of greater than seven years.

With that said, officers have been able to confirm that between the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development – including the LEADER Programme – and contributions to the Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire project, this authority has received £6,206,273.81 over the last seven years. It would be remiss of me not to point out that in the same period, the UK's net contribution to the EU – which accounts for the money we 'get back' from Europe – was approximately £152 per person per year. This means that the people of Nottinghamshire paid the European Union a sum substantially in excess of £120 million per year, and this Council received less than £1 million back in structural funding each year for the privilege.

This says nothing of the time that has been required by officers of this Council in administering, accounting, and overseeing these funds over the last few decades. Thanks to the ever-shifting goalposts laid down by European regulations, we have had to use more and more officer time simply to apply for money which we have already contributed to the EU – money which, I feel I should again point out, comes out of our residents' taxes. In effect, every bit of funding this Council receives from the EU has already been paid for twice – once to give it away, and once to take it back.

I am sure it will not surprise you that I am very much looking forward to taking back control of our money, and making the case for Nottinghamshire on a global scale. We are already showing that we have an international presence with our Zhejiang partnership, and we are continuing to develop this with a visitor economy strategy that links the USA to its Pilgrim Roots in Nottinghamshire. There is no doubt in my mind that we will continue to thrive post-Brexit, and I will ensure that this county is firmly on the map.

Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Helen-Ann Smith

Latest government figures show there were 22,946 traveller caravans in England in January 2018, of which 87 per cent were on authorised land and 13 per cent on unauthorised land.

Can Councillor Cottee tell this Council the approximate total cost of obtaining court orders, employing bailiffs and cleaning up after travellers spent by this Council per year since 2015?

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

Shown in the table below are the recorded costs to Nottinghamshire County Council since 2015 of obtaining court orders, employing bailiffs and cleaning up after traveller encampments on unauthorised land.

Unauthorised Encampments 2015 Onwards

Year	Legal Costs	Bailiff Costs	Clean up/site security costs	Total costs
2015/16	£744	£0	Not recorded	£744
2016/17	£2,187	220	Not recorded	£2,407
2017/18	£919	£0	Not recorded	£919
2018/19 (to 31/12/18)	£1,587	£242	£8,589	£10,418

There will also be additional costs relating to the time of all the officers involved, including our Property team and Via, covering site visits, report writing and liaison activities with the borough and district councils and the public. The borough/district councils themselves will incur costs that are unrecorded because they are not charged to Nottinghamshire County Council.

(These figures have been researched by our Senior Solicitor (Litigation) and if you would like to speak to me for further clarification, I will be happy to assist.)

Question to the Chairman of the Children and Young People’s Committee from Councillor Errol Henry

Does the Chairman agree with me that funding for children in our schools for Special Educational Needs (SEND) is inadequate? If so, will he agree to a cross party representation (in writing) to the Secretary of State demanding a significant increase in funding to enable our SEND children to get the support they need to reach their full potential?

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

Yes, I do agree with you that funding for children in our schools with Special Educational Needs, or High Needs, is under pressure, and I have said as much before, in this Chamber and in other council meetings.

An external review of *'Funding for Children and Young People with High Needs in Nottinghamshire'* was commissioned by Nottinghamshire County Council and the Schools Forum, and carried out by 'Strategic Services for Children & Young People', an independent organisation that brings together a range of consultancy and support activities relating to services to vulnerable children and young people.

To briefly summarise the report, published last Spring, it found that *'Expenditure on provision and services for High Needs this year has significantly exceeded the budget allocated to Nottinghamshire by central government'* and that *'The overspend has been addressed in the short term through transfer of money from the Schools Block and reductions in funding for SEND'*.

The report observes that *'Nottinghamshire's position is not helped by its relatively low Higher Needs Block (HNB) allocation. Comparisons with the Authority's 10 statistical neighbours show that it receives the lowest allocation in the group (£406 per 2-18 overall population compared with a group average of £498)'*.

'The Government has set out its intention to move from historical HNB allocations to LAs, to distribution based on formula indicators. Nottinghamshire's budget is increasing as a result. However, gains are limited by: (i) Continuing use of a 'historical factor' in the formula; (ii) The application of a 'funding floor'...; and (iii) A 3% cap on annual gains for lower-funded areas [with no further increases guaranteed after the first 2 years].'

Your question suggests making a cross-party representation to the Secretary of State demanding a significant increase in funding, but in fact I have already been pressing the case in my capacity as Chairman of the Children & Young People's Committee. I have already met with three Members of Parliament from the governing party, and a representative of one other MP from the governing party, to discuss Nottinghamshire's concerns about SEND / High Needs Block funding in detail. I have fully briefed them on the situation and given them copies of the report commissioned by ourselves and the Schools Forum, and from feedback received so far I have every reason to believe these concerns have been communicated to ministers and civil servants at a high level and that our case is being heard and understood. Indeed, I believe there is every chance that I will have an opportunity to meet with a relevant minister in the foreseeable future to further press our case.

As and when I have any significant progress or anything conclusive to report regarding improved High Needs Block funding, I shall of course inform the Children & Young People's Committee.

Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Jason Zadrozny

The news that Crossrail is set for a further £1billion bailout is increasingly frustrating for the East Midlands. This is on top of an injection of £590million in July and a further £350million in October. This has increased the total cost of the project to £15.9billion.

A recent report by East Midlands Council revealed that rail expenditure is £91 per person in this region, compared to £746 per person in London. The latest bailout for Crossrail widens this further at a time when no progress whatsoever has been made on the campaign to reinstate the electrification of the Midland's Mainline.

Twelve months ago you said, 'For the first time there is clear and compelling evidence that people living in Nottinghamshire are consistently paying much more in and getting much less out – essentially propping up major spending elsewhere in the UK, and in London in particular.'

At the last Full Meeting of this Council you stated that it wasn't your job to lobby the Government for fairer funding.

In the light of the latest bailout for Crossrail, would the Leader of Nottinghamshire County Council wish to revise her statement and reaffirm her support for the reinstatement of the electrification of the Midland's Mainline?

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

This Council has always supported the case for electrification of the Midland Main Line, whether in the short-term, or through a longer-term, more staged process.

I have also stated previously that national investment in rail in the East Midlands is insufficient, but this is precisely why we will not be setting our face against proposed new or additional investment in our area, be that bi-modal trains, electrification or whatever.

It is for the Government and specifically the Secretary of State for Transport to decide how national infrastructure is prioritised and delivered, but we continue to press the case for improvements through our own contacts with Government, as well as through East Midlands Councils and Midlands Connect.