

Minutes



Meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

Date Thursday, 24th January 2008 (10.30 am – 4.00 pm)

Membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

Councillors

John C Allin (Chairman)

A The Hon Joan Taylor (Vice-Chairman)

Reg Adair		Pat Lally
Peter Barnes		Bruce Laughton
Chris Baron		Edward Llewellyn-Jones
Joyce Bosnjak		Ellie Lodziak
Martin M Brandon-Bravo OBE		Joe Lonergan MBE
Kenneth Bullivant		Mick Murphy
Richard Butler	A	Jim Napier
Steve Carr		Jim O'Riordan
Steve Carroll		Philip Owen
John Carter		Tom Pettengell
John Clarke		Sheila Place
Jen Cole		Peter D Prebble
Barrie Cooper	A	Darrell Pulk
John Cottee		Alan Rhodes
M J Cox		Ken Rigby
Jim Creamer		Sue Saddington
Mrs Kay Cutts		David Shaw
Yvonne Davidson		Mrs Stella M Smedley
Alan Davison		Mark Spencer
A V H Dobson		Andy Stewart
Sybil Fielding		John R Stocks
Andy Freeman		Mick Storey
Glynn Gilfoyle		Martin Suthers OBE
Keith Girling		Lynn Sykes
Albert Haynes		David Taylor
John M Hemsall		Parry Tsimbirdis
Paul Henshaw		Kevan Wakefield
Stan Heptinstall MBE		Keith Walker
Helen Holt		Chris Winterton
Richard Jackson		Brian Wombwell
Rod Kempster		Yvonne Woodhead
David Kirkham		Jason Zadrozny
John R Knight		

OPENING PRAYER

Opening at 10.30 am Councillor John Allin called upon the Chief Executive to lead Members of the Council in prayer.

Following prayers the Chairman asked Members and Officers to observe a minute's silence in memory of former Director of Education, Rob Valentine.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED: 2008/001

That the Minutes of the last meeting of the County Council held on 13th December 2007 be agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors:-

V. H. Dobson
Jim Napier
Darrell Pulk (on other County Council business)
The Hon Joan Taylor.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillors Chris Baron and Dave Shaw declared a personal interest in agenda item number 10 – Top Wighay Farm because of predetermination.

Councillor Bruce Laughton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item number 10 – Top Wighay Farm on the grounds that his cousin owned some of the land at Wighay Farm (this declaration was made later in the meeting but before the item was discussed).

Mrs. Jayne Francis, Head of Legal and Democratic Services declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item number 8 – Monitoring Officer – because she is the post holder referred to in the report.

4. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

(a) Presentation of Awards

Councillor Alan Rhodes presented to the Chairman a Green Apple Award, presented to Brooke Farm for its horticultural work.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman informed Council that he would be taking agenda item 12 – Presentation by Brigadier Jim Richardson MBE, Commander 49 East Brigade before lunch, so if the business of the County Council had not been completed he would stop proceedings and take this item at 11.45 am.

(b) Constituency Issues

Set out in appendix A attached to these minutes is a full note of the issues discussed by Councillors as follows:-

- (1) Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo – anti-social behaviour in the West Bridgford area
- (2) Councillor Andy Stewart – education governor appointments
- (3) Councillor Peter Barnes – in respect of concessionary bus fares for the over 65s
- (4) Councillor Lynn Sykes – eco-towns
- (5) Councillor Richard Jackson – green belt issues affecting Toton and Chilwell
- (6) Councillor Barrie Cooper – use of tarmac in maintenance.

5 (a) Presentation of Petitions

The following petitions were presented to the Chairman by Members as indicated below:-

- (1) Councillor Chris Winterton – a further petition regarding the proposed closure of Daleside residential home
- (2) Councillor Steve Carroll – regarding the proposed closure of Ashcroft residential home, Sutton-in-Ashfield
- (3) Councillor Richard Jackson – regarding Chetwyn Road, Chilwell and the number of accidents.

5(b) Report Back on Petitions

RESOLVED: 2008/002

That the matters contained in the report back on petitions received on 13th December 2007 be noted.

6(a) QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 6.1

Six questions had been received as follows:-

- (1) from Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo about recent I&DeA Peer Review Report (Councillor David Kirkham nominated Councillor Mick Storey to reply)
- (2) from Councillor Stan Heptinstall about Highway Repairs(Councillor Stella Smedley to reply)
- (3) from Councillor Bruce Laughton about Interactive Speed Signs(Councillor Stella Smedley to reply)
- (4) from Councillor Reg Adair about production of leaflet indicating advisory routes for HGV's (Councillor Stella Smedley to reply)
- (5) from Councillor Keith Girling about Train Services for Newark(Councillor Stella Smedley to reply)
- (6) from Councillor Bruce Laughton about recycling in Gedling(Councillor David Kirkham to reply).

The full text of the questions set out above together with the answers given is included at appendix B to these minutes.

Having received the answer to question (1), Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo gave notice to enable the matter to be discussed more fully as an adjournment debate in accordance with Standing Order 7.1. Councillor Brandon-Bravo indicated his intention at the appropriate time to move the adjournment of the Council.

During questions the Chairman indicated that he would take question (6) after the lunch break because, as previously announced he was moving agenda item number 12 'up' in the order of business. He also informed Council that he would be breaking for lunch following the Brigadier's presentation.

BRIGADIER JIM RICHARDSON MBE – COMMANDER 49 EAST BRIGADE

Brigadier Jim Richardson MBE gave an oral presentation to the Council on the current situation with regard to the military deployment of the east midlands troops. He also explained to Members his role as Commander of 49 East Brigade which covers both the east midlands and east anglia. His presentation was also part of an Armed Services initiative to allow leading local politicians/decision makers and members of the public be aware of the current situation regarding the armed forces. He also informed Members that it was the Territorial Army's 100th Anniversary this year and he hoped that the County Council would show support to the many events around the county celebrating this fact.

Members were then given the opportunity to ask questions of the Brigadier.

Members thanked Brigadier Jim Richardson MBE for his extremely informative presentation.

The Chairman, following the announcement that it was the 100th year of existence of the Territorial Army asked the Council to agree to the holding of a civic reception. It was therefore:-

RESOLVED: 2008/003

That the County Council host a civic reception in honour of the 100th anniversary of the Territorial Army.

The County Council then adjourned for lunch from 12.40 pm – 2.00 pm.

Following which, question (6) referred to above was asked and answered.

6(b) QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 6.2

There were no questions asked under Standing Order 6.2.

7. REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Leader presented the reports to the meeting. He also informed Members that they may indicate to the Chairman any questions or comment they wished to put to Cabinet Members on matters arising from them.

Comments and questions are included at appendix C to these minutes.

RESOLVED: 2008/004

That the reports be noted.

8. MONITORING OFFICER

Mrs. Jayne Francis, Head of Law and Democracy, following her declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting, left the room whilst discussion and voting took place on this item.

Members of all parties wished it noting that they were extremely saddened by the way Elizabeth Bennett had to leave the Council and also wished it noting she will be sorely missed, because of the hard work and dedication she had put into the Council during her years of service. It was:-

RESOLVED: 2008/005

- (1) That the retirement on the grounds of ill-health of the Assistant Chief Executive be approved and that her valued service to the Council be noted

- (2) that the temporary appointment of the Head of Law and Democracy to the post of the Council's Monitoring Officer pending consideration of the structure of the Chief Executive's Department be approved.

Mrs. Jayne Francis returned to the room.

9. AMENDMENTS TO THE WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY

On a motion by Councillor Ellie Lodziak, seconded by Councillor Sue Saddington, it was:-

RESOLVED: 2008/006

- (1) That the draft Whistle-blowing policy attached to the report as annex A be approved for adoption and implementation with effect from 1st February 2008
- (2) that approval be given for the payment of an annual subscription fee to the organisation Public Concern at Work and the procurement of 500 posters from the organisation.

10. TOP WIGHAY FARM, HUCKNALL

Following their declaration of interest at the commencement of the meeting Councillors Chris Baron and David Shaw left the meeting whilst discussions and voting took place on this item.

Councillor Bruce Laughton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and left the meeting.

On a motion by Councillor Mick Storey, Seconded by Councillor David Kirkham it was

RESOLVED: 2008/007

That approval is given to:

1. shortlist all 15 potential land purchasers/developers as set out in the exempt Appendix 1.
2. delegated appointment of the chosen land purchaser/developer to the Deputy Leader
3. the planning, design and construction of advanced enabling works, subject to an overall budget as set out in exempt Appendix 2.

Councillors Joe Lonergan MBE, Mick Murphy and Mark Spencer asked for their votes against the motion to be recorded in the minutes.

Councillors Baron, Laughton and Shaw returned to the meeting.

11. ADJOURNMENTS (MOTIONS) DEBATE

In accordance with the indication given earlier in the meeting, and to enable the issues raised in his question to be discussed more fully, Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo called for an adjournment debate because he had concerns about the way Nottinghamshire County Council would address the criticisms in the Peer Review.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mrs. Kay Cutts.

There then followed a debate conducted in accordance with Standing Order 7.1, which centred around the scrutiny role and how it was felt the Peer Review criticised the organisation in Nottinghamshire. Some Members indicated that they felt that the scrutiny process adopted by Nottinghamshire County Council was politically biased and there was a need for change in the way scrutiny was operated. They also felt that there was a loss of knowledge of specialist areas by disestablishing the Committee system.

Other Members commented that they felt that the scrutiny work done by the County Council, although had some weaknesses, on the whole members who sit on the scrutiny committees carry out a good job.

On a show of hands, the motion was declared to be lost.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

On a motion by Councillor Albert Haynes, seconded by Councillor Jim Creamer it was:-

RESOLVED: 2007/008

That under paragraph 3 of the Local Government Act (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining item of business on the agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information.

EXEMPT INFORMATION ITEM

13. EXEMPT APPENDIX TOP WIGHAY FARM

Councillors Baron Laughton and Shaw left the meeting before consideration of this item.

RESOLVED: 2008/009

That the exempt appendices to the Top Wighay Report (agenda Item 10) be noted.

CHAIRMAN
M_24Jan08

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING 24th JANUARY 2008

THREE MINUTE SPEECHES

3-MINUTE SPEECHES

Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo OBE:

“Mr. Chairman. I realise that I am not alone in having areas of trouble due to anti-social behaviour in my Division.

Many will express surprise that this could apply to West Bridgford and I accept I may have less than some other colleagues. However, for those affected, the disruption - indeed the destruction of the quality of their lives is not simply a matter of concern for them, but should be - indeed *must* be - a matter for us as a principal authority.

I wish to bring a specific case to Council, not just in the hope of action on this one case, but that it will galvanise the department and other partnership agencies to tackle this and similar situations.

Between Loughborough Road, just South of the fire station, and the cul-de-sac of Swithland Drive – this is a walkway bounded by three private residences which have been the victim of vandalism and anti-social behaviour for the past two years.

Four fires were started in May 2005. Toilet rolls doused in fuel oil were used and one of the residents spent £1315 replacing his fence.

In December of that year the fences were fired again and a similar sum spent.

In July 2006 a tree was burned, accessed through the wrecked fence, and in August six trees in the adjacent Cropston Close were burned.

That month the Police met 25 local residents, but in December a further fence fire occurred.

Last year, in July, drunken vandals smashed fencing panels and garden furniture.

Last December, one the residents tried to challenge three young vandals smashing his neighbour's fence, but was threatened and had to back off. At that same time fencing and a car were vandalised with paint spray.

We fenced our Council property on Loughborough Road and it has been suggested that the drug dealers have moved from that site to the Loughborough Road entrance to this footpath.

In the last ten months there have been 14 recoded incidents by the Police, in this small area, eight of which involved drugs.

The matter is known to the department, with which I have had a number of conversations and it has been raised regularly with the Police at local area meetings.

Chairman, it is too easy to spread our hands and say “what can we do?”

I believe these residents have put up with more than they should have tolerated and I hope we will now pull all the relevant agencies together and resolve this once and for all.

I commend this case to Council.”

Councillor Andy Stewart:

“Mr Chairman, I wish to raise an issue regarding the appointment of school governors to schools in the Farnsfield and Lowdham Division.

An enduring part of our schools' administration is the role of governors and the governing body. First introduced in the 19th century, since then their responsibilities and duties have evolved under the Education Acts, introduced by successive Governments. However, the value they add to our children's education is recognised and supported by all political parties.

In the recent past, democratic principles were introduced for appointing governors, notably the inclusion of staff, teachers and parents' representatives. Another change for the better was prohibiting councils from appointing the Chairpersons to schools' governing bodies.

Despite these changes, this Council still practices political bias when appointing local authority governors to schools in the Division I represent. We have six excellent Church of England primary schools and collectively their governing bodies have nine local authority governors. I am sure it will not surprise you to know that all are nominated and appointed by the Labour Group.

Despite local protestations, they practice the Stalinist principle of ignoring the elected opposition and appoint their friends instead. It is a blatant disregard of democratic principles and an insult to the voters of Farnsfield and Lowdham Division, who elected a Conservative as their County Councillor.

How can a party that pretends to be for the people shamelessly disregard the preference of 6,000 anti-Socialist voters and exclude these people from being appointed governors of their local schools?

Let us imagine for a moment that all the local authority governors in the Ollerton Division were appointed by the Conservative Party. Would the local Member be her usual self and meekly accept the situation? I think not!

It is for this reason I bring this unacceptable practice by the Labour Party to the Council's attention.

In seventeen months' time there will be County Council elections and a change in administration. This gives Councillor Kirkham and his Members adequate time to change the feudal policy which prohibits a Conservative Member from nominating people to serve as school governors in his Division.

If you do not change your ways, the new administration would have no choice but to continue the current selfish and undemocratic policy. Labour Members still have time to examine their consciences and mend their misguided ways."

Councillor Peter Barnes:

"Thank you very much Mr Chairman.

According to statistics, it is the most depressing day of the year.

So I thought it would be better that I found something positive to talk about.

Therefore, I would like to invite my comrades and indeed, all sides of the Chamber, to join me in thanking the Government for their implementation of the National Concessionary Fare Scheme for the over 60s which will come into force in April.

As many of us will know, the life of a senior citizen is not an easy one and getting from A to B can be a major issue for those of advanced years, who may not have access to private transport.

The Scheme, active in Nottinghamshire, in its fullest form, will help older people to get out and about to maybe visit their friends and go to the shops, without having to worry about the cost of their journey or limiting themselves to travelling only during certain times of the day.

So I hope that everyone, here, who is eligible, probably most, will be making a bee-line for the bus and helping to support the Scheme.

Thank you very much Mr Chairman."

Councillor Lynn Sykes:

"Thank you Chairman.

An old proposal to build a town the size of Loughborough has been cleverly disguised as an Eco-Town.

The idea for this new town was first mooted in the 1990s when it was rejected by Rushcliffe Borough Council. It has now been resurrected as an Eco-Town: the same project under an eco banner!

How can something which takes away vast swathes of green belt, destroys flora and fauna be called 'eco'?

The developers propose to build up to 6000 new houses on 600 hectares of green belt in the heart of the South Nottinghamshire countryside. It would swallow up a vast amount of historic parkland and a prime agricultural asset. Local villages and communities would be swamped without any change to the local infrastructure.

The concept of eco-towns has not been properly thought through. Who will pay for the new schools, shops, road improvements, medical facilities, churches and village halls?

An eco-town should meet certain criteria set down by the Government:-

It should relate well to the existing network of surrounding towns and villages:-

This one doesn't relate well to anything, it swamps and overwhelms an area of attractive countryside which has been protected by careful planning control over several decades.

It should not be an old scheme which has already been rejected – this has.

There should be high quality public transport already in place. Where is it?

The scheme for this eco-town is poorly conceived. It does not relate well to the settlement pattern or to nearby towns and cities. It is not a sustainable location; transportation routes and connections are poor and do not discourage car-borne traffic.

It makes no attempt to respect the character of existing villages and countryside.

It is an opportunistic proposal shaped only to fit a particular land-holding, with no regard to sound principles of land use planning or the consequences of increased commuting and congestion, as well as the destruction of particularly attractive countryside.

On Saturday 12th January, nearly 1000 people congregated at Kingston Village Hall to protest against the plans. 634 signed the petition which will go to the Prime Minister. To quote one of the protesters:-

“It is mad to call this an eco-town when its creation is going to destroy a huge amount of important countryside.””

Councillor Richard Jackson:

“Thank you Mr Chairman.

I want to talk about my constituents’ concerns about the threat hanging over the GREEN BELT in my Division of Toton and Chilwell.

This first came to my attention early in December when the panel looking into green belt around Nottingham was reported to be considering a number of so-called Sustainable Urban Extensions in the green belt – IN PLAIN ENGLISH, A SUSTAINABLE URBAN EXTENSION IN THE GREEN BELT IS DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT!

It puts you in mind of the famous quote from John Prescott when he said – "the green belt is a Labour achievement and I intend to build on it!"

In my patch the sites being considered have enormous value to residents. Land was protected with green belt status for good reason, to safeguard a few remaining green “lungs” between built up areas. To prevent URBAN SPRAWL and to maintain the identity of communities and provide some separation between them.

The proposed sites cover most of the northern edge of my Toton & Chilwell Division. The green belt there forms a natural break between Chilwell & Toton and Bramcote and Stapleford.

The “spin” on the original report seemed to reassure areas like mine when it talked about preserving the green belt between Nottingham and Derby, but when you read further into the report you realise that this Nottingham Derby demarcation can equally be drawn several miles to the west of the County boundary and well into Derbyshire. This leaves a threat hanging over the green belt that has always divided the counties, the report appears to attach little value to these, relatively, small pockets of green belt. My constituents disagree. For many of them the threatened development comes on top of the threat of a tram line and car park in the green belt.

I have to admit that the deeper I have dug into the process behind these proposals the more depressed I have become, the more I realise that there is a huge democratic deficit.

To condense it a bit, because I’ve only got three minutes...!

The City Council decide they want growth area status so they bid to the DCLG successfully, the upshot seems to benefit the City Council and at the same time heap the costs, in terms of additional development onto the surrounding districts across the County.

Of course, my area is not the only one threatened, nor would it be the worse in the County. Many colleagues can testify to similar problems.

Clearly we need housing, but it's the system of arriving at sites that seems so undemocratic. Unsustainable house building targets handed down to districts, sites emerging through a murky process – residents told “there is no facility for consultation at this stage” and a general feeling that some of these sites will be forced on us all.

In conclusion, the whole system seems unfair, it needs turning on its head, we need sensible house building targets that take local factors into consideration and we need to engage local people in the whole process. What we have is a system that seems to be designed to sideline public opinion.”

Councillor Barrie Cooper:

“Thank you Mr Chairman.

What is it about BLACK TARMAC?

I suppose it is cheap and used for all types of surfaces to walk and ride upon!

This Council spends hundreds of thousands of pounds improving the environment in areas where we all live. It is one of our priorities, emphasised again by the Leader of this Council in the latest edition of Nottinghamshire County News.

So what do we do?

If Members have not noticed, we patch nice new areas of RED tarmac with BLACK tarmac.

Equally, cracked and broken paving slabs are replaced with what? You've guessed it - more BLACK tarmac.

No one disputes the need for repair and maintenance.
Trip hazards to public footpaths have to be repaired immediately, fine.

However, we are told we do not carry RED tarmac as a matter of course.

The inference is that it does not matter if these areas - on which money has been lavishly spent in the first place - are then repaired in an unacceptable manner that leaves them appearing shoddy and unsightly.

Many of my residents think it is time that the whole policy is revisited. Is it too much to expect a supply of RED tarmac to be available at reasonable cost for such emergencies and uphold the appearance of these areas as was intended?

After all, Tarmac Limited are listed as one of our partners!”

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING 24TH JANUARY 2008

QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 6.1

Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo

The recent I&DeA Peer Review Report recommended that Nottinghamshire County Council should 'take steps to improve the Overview & Scrutiny Committee' and the 'scrutiny could be more effective and conducted less on party political lines'.

Given that our first Overview Select Committee was established under trial arrangements eight years ago, since when the scrutiny system has been reviewed and amended on more than one occasion, what plans does the Council have to address the current implied criticism by the I&DeA?

Response by Councillor Michael Storey, Deputy Leader of the County Council:

"Thank you Chairman.

The County Council invited an I&DeA Peer Review Team to visit the Authority in October 2007 to provide critical friend advice in preparation for the CPA Corporate Assessment this year.

The IDeA made 11 recommendations and as Members will be aware Cabinet will be providing a response to those. The County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be giving some consideration to the IDeA's report on Monday next.

Scrutiny was just one part of a very encouraging and wide-ranging review but as Martin has focused on scrutiny, so will I.

The IDeA report praises the County Council's Scrutiny work including our Joint Health Scrutiny Committee with Nottingham City Council and it also makes some suggestions for improvement. I must take issue with Martin's use of the quote that 'scrutiny could be more effective and conducted less on party political lines'. This is taken out of context, the report is referring to the call-in process. We have recognised the difficulties with call-in and proposals are being brought forward to address this through the cross party Member reference group as part of the effective scrutiny project.

The project is being overseen by a cross party member reference group and will seek to improve the scrutiny function, not just considering the peer review, but also the new powers for scrutiny

brought forward by the Local Government Public Involvement in Health Act. The Authority intends to learn from best practice elsewhere as well as utilise internal officer expertise to deliver this project.

Thank you Chairman.”

Question to the Cabinet Member for Environment from Councillor Stan Heptinstall

Will the cabinet member please explain how those areas in Nottinghamshire that have a partnership arrangement in place with District Councils to effect highway repairs will benefit from the budget proposal to create two special teams to perform additional repairs to roads and pavements in Nottinghamshire? I am thinking about the Broxtowe, Ashfield and Mansfield areas specifically.

Response by Councillor Stella Smedley, Cabinet Member for Environment:

“Thank you Chair and thank you Stan for your question.

Following our campaign victory to win a fair deal in Nottinghamshire, we have been able to allocate extra resources for road and footway repairs. I hope Stan will be able to support our budget, because it is good news for the County and of course, great news for the area Stan represents.

I always enjoy Stan’s fishing trips for information and am very happy to share with the Council how these new special teams will work.

The County Council has a highway partnership with Mansfield and Ashfield District Councils and Broxtowe Borough Council, and extensive work has been done to develop and promote joint working and efficiencies in this area.

It has only very recently been possible to provide funding for the additional highway response teams and their specific role is still being developed.

The overall principle is that the two teams, with their specialist equipment, will be available on a Countywide basis to attend emergencies, carry out priority highway repairs, assist with specific community work on highways and enable a faster and more efficient response to some of the more minor items which need attending to on our highways.

The two teams will definitely be available to our District and Borough Council partners and will be a joint and shared resource which will help deliver a significantly enhanced highway service.

Thank you Chair.”

Question to the Cabinet Member for Environment from Councillor Bruce Laughton

Is the Cabinet Member aware of the disappointment amongst residents of Kneesall in my division that they will only receive a short stay/temporary speed interactive sign, rather than the permanent signs they feel are necessary for their village?

Would she agree with me that the decision to include deprivation as a factor in the revised assessment process discriminates against those communities whose quality of life and local environment is badly affected by the volume and speed of traffic?

Response by Councillor Stella Smedley, Cabinet Member for Environment:

“Thank you Chair.

May I thank the Member for Southwell and Caunton for his question.

I welcome the decision to include deprivation as a factor in the process to assess safety measures on our roads. Tackling deprivation is what we are all about.....

I have always been very keen to install interactive signs at locations where good justification exists and criteria are met and I have recently agreed a programme of 74 additional interactive speed signs throughout the County. This will bring the total to 134 signs, which is way above the provision made by any other County in the country.

I am proud of the fact that this County is a pioneer in the use of these signs as part of our efforts to reduce the impact of speeding on the quality of life in local communities.

However, I am sure that the Member for Southwell and Caunton will appreciate that it is not possible to provide permanent signs at every location requested by Members or residents and that priority should rightly be given to those locations where a combination of the volume and speed of traffic and the level of deprivation has the greatest impact on the local community.

Short stay signs are being introduced as a way of dealing with sites with problems which are less severe, such as at

Kneesall where traffic flow is less than 70% of that needed to justify a permanent sign.

I am confident that the current policies and criteria in place achieve the necessary absolute fairness in treatment for all our residents.

The situation in Kneesall, as with all other locations, will be kept under review and should circumstances change then I shall be very willing to reconsider whether interactive speed signs should be provided as a permanent feature.

Thank you, Chair.”

Question to the Cabinet Member for Environment from Councillor Reg Adair

Whilst welcoming the Council’s proposal to produce a leaflet indicating ‘advisory routes for HGVs’ across the county, is the Cabinet Member aware that a recent survey carried out by residents of Tollerton and Plumtree recorded 300 HGV movements a day on the by-roads through the two villages?

Would she agree that this level of traffic causes considerable danger and environmental damage, and that residents should not have to wait another three years for significant action to be taken in the form of Environmental Weight Restrictions?

Response by Councillor Stella Smedley, Cabinet Member for Environment:

“Thank you Chair.

May I thank the Member for Ruddington for his question.

It’s a real shame that the Conservative Government destroyed the rail freight operation when they were in power. Another inconvenient truth. They started the shift towards bigger and bigger lorries using our roads and the movement of these vehicles is a blight across the County and not just in our villages.

I have recently agreed a programme of environmental weight limits for those roads that have been assessed as having the most serious problems.

There are many factors to be considered in relation to weight limits and in deciding our priorities for treatment such items as HGV–related accidents and environmental factors feature highly.

Five locations have been identified as having the greatest problems within the County and these are to be treated over the 2

year period of 2008/9 and 2009/10, with a further review and reassessment in 2009/10.

I am aware of continued concern from many communities including Plumtree and Tollerton about lorries cutting through their villages and have asked the Department to investigate the implications of adopting a similar approach to that of Leicestershire County Council where area-wide lorry bans have been introduced.

Thank you very much Chair.”

Question to the Cabinet Member for Environment from Councillor Keith Girling

The most recent station usage figures from the Officer of Rail Regulation suggest that Newark Castle railway station generates more passenger journeys than any other station within the Nottinghamshire County Council boundary.

In view of this, would the Cabinet member agree that this authority should press for a substantially improved train service and upgraded facilities at Newark Castle as a priority?

Response by Councillor Stella Smedley, Cabinet Member for Environment:

“Thank you Chair.

May I thank the Member for Newark West for his question.

I was going to give you the 6-page answer, but I have decided that I will give you the short answer.

I always welcome converts to the public transport system. Of course, even though when they vote against public transport improvements like the tram.

There is a problem with the Office of Rail Regulation figures, which for Newark Castle are nearly double the patronage figures quoted by the train operator and the DfT. Council officers are trying to resolve this discrepancy with the DfT and ORR.

However, whichever figures are correct, I fully recognise that Newark Castle is a very well used and important station. Indeed, I identified this two years ago, shortly after I took on responsibility for transport, as a result of which the Council has been actively pursuing improvements throughout 2006 and 2007:

- With the DfT during the consultation for the new franchise.

- With all the train companies bidding for the new franchise.
- With the DfT again through its 'Regional Planning Assessment' process, and
- With the new franchisee, East Midlands Trains (that is part of Stagecoach).

East Midlands Trains have agreed to a number of improvements suggested by the Council, including:

- using a longer train on the busiest morning rush hour train to Nottingham.
- Re-introducing a ticket office and staff at Newark Castle, from 06.00 hours to 14.00 hours each weekday, and remember there has not been any staff on our station for 20 years.
- To consider improvements to Newark Castle station, including:
 - A canopy on the platform.
 - Real time information.
 - Improvements to car parking.

In recognition of Newark's importance, the Council put in a CCTV at Newark Castle several years' ago - one of the first of Nottinghamshire' stations to receive one.

The Council is still pressing East Midlands Trains strongly for:

- A speed up, with faster journey times.
- An additional one or two trains into Nottingham in the morning rush hour.
- Better connections at Nottingham between Newark trains and other places.
- Active promotion of the route to generate increased usage and
- The introduction of services on Sunday mornings.

Those are all the things we are pressing for.

Stagecoach have indicated that it is open to increase the service to two trains every hour, but would only do so with the DfT agreement from the DfT to cover the additional costs. The Council has received a very helpful suggestion from a member of the public - a Mr Poynter - as to how to provide a second train per hour at relatively low cost. The Council is pursuing this as a high priority, but discussions will be complex as they will involve both the DfT and Stagecoach.

In December 2006 the Council commissioned from Network Rail a study of what work would be needed to raise the line speed from the current 60mph to 90mph, which could cut the Newark to Nottingham journey time to just 20 minutes. Network Rail have just completed the first stage of this work. Hopefully the third stage will be complete by the end of 2008, which would establish

what works need doing, and at what cost. Remember we have commissioned that.

All this clearly shows the importance that the Council attaches to getting comprehensive improvements for Newark Castle. It is part of my policy of trying to obtain the maximum possible improvements to rail services right across Nottinghamshire, so that as far as possible the whole County benefits. The greatest priority is given to the busiest places, in particular the Robin Hood Line, Newark and Beeston, though benefits for smaller places are also pursued when the opportunity arises, as Members know in terms of Colwick. As can be seen, I think, quite clearly, I personally have a commitment to extending mile usage wherever possible and the Council has been working extensively on this for the past 2 years.

Thank you Chair.”

Question to the Leader of the County Council from Councillor Bruce Laughton

At the County Council meeting on 28th June 2007, the Leader of the Council stated:

“I am disappointed that Gedling Borough Council have decided to turn back the clock and re-introduce weekly bin collections ... There is no doubt in my mind that the change will reduce recycling.”

Is he aware that Gedling Borough’s latest figures show it managed to collect 2,163 tonnes of glass, plastic and paper from its 47,000 households whilst weekly collections were in force, which is slightly more than the 2,090 tonnes collected during the same period in 2006?

Given that weekly collections did not impact on recycling rates in the way he feared, will he now commend Gedling for listening to the wishes of its residents, or does he advocate an unnecessary return to smelly bins infested with maggots and rats?

Response by Councillor David Kirkham, Leader of the County Council:

“Thank you Chairman.

We’ve ‘bin’ here before Bruce, so I will make my answer brief.

Gedling didn’t listen to the wishes of its residents on this issue, how could they? They never asked the question properly.

Before they introduced the weekly bin collection in the summer, the Council should have engaged people in proper consultation, setting out what was proposed, how much would it cost and the implications of the change.

I'm sure people would have wanted to know that they would be landed with a £150,000 bill for a service that, in the end, much less than half (40%) of households used.

I am pleased that recycling has increased in Gedling despite the policy change. However, the 'slight' increase in recycling ignores the trend elsewhere of big improvements in performance. Whilst other areas have increased the pace of their recycling effort, Gedling is falling behind.

What a waste.

Thank you Chairman."

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING 24TH JANUARY 2008

REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS

1. Adult Services and Health

Councillor Rhodes thanked Members for the comments on the disabled persons badge scheme and informed Members that the idea came from a member of the public and then Nottinghamshire took a pro-active stance and developed the scheme further. He also informed Councillor Zadrozny that he would ensure a written answer to a question he asked at the last Council would be given to him.

3. Children and Young People's Services

In response to questions and comments on:-

- how is the campaign to reduce holidays being taken by parents in term-time going to be tackled and what support will be given to the school if the parent is told 'no'
- the Learning Centre is celebrating achievement event held on 18th December 2007 and what was a very positive celebration
- it was felt that the launch of the Nottinghamshire Partnership Strategy "Challenging Racism – making a difference" was an extremely worthwhile event.

Councillor Bosnjak replied as follows:-

- there have been proceedings taken through the courts with regard to people continually taking their children out of schools to go on holidays. Also, some schools do have a zero tolerance on removing children during term-time for holidays
- the Learning Centre celebrations was a well attended event and is a 'good news' story for Nottinghamshire

2. Community Safety and Partnerships

In answer to questions and comments on:-

- the co-ordination of the distribution of the "doorstep calendar" needed to be looked at
- pub meals and the trading standards involvement in healthy eating
- boy racers at junction 27 seems to be happening again and it is disappointing that the police are unable to prosecute further for either

speeding or racing along the Hucknall bypass at speeds in excess of 100 miles per hour

- the age restriction sales – the report seems to suggest that there are still a number of under-16 year olds who are able to purchase alcohol from retailers
- it is pleasing to see that the youth workers and police are being invited to tasking meetings in the Ashfield Neighbourhood Governance Pilot
- it is pleasing to see the number of prosecutions as set out in paragraph 32 of the report.

In response to questions, Councillor Gilfoyle replied as followed:-

- co-ordination of the distribution of calendars was an issue and it was being worked on by Officers
- the Trading Standards Department was testing healthy eating and checking what the public were sold was what they get. The majority of the establishments being visited are those “chains” that offered the 2 for 1 deals
- with regard to the boy racers, I will have meetings with the police to see what can be done further and also meet with the partners over the deployment of speed cameras
- most shop owners are educated in the way they conduct selling alcohol to anyone but you cannot stop young adults purchasing alcohol for minors for a fee, although we do ask retailers to have regard to this
- I am pleased to see that the youth service is being invited to partnership meetings and really sure this moves forward.

4. Culture and Regeneration

In response to questions and comments on:-

- we should be very proud of the young sport stars Nottinghamshire is producing and there was an extremely good event at Kelham Hall for Junior Sports Review of the Year
- pleased to see that the Bestwood Country Park Winding House has received lottery money and that the Council is going to support the restoration project.
- Pleased to see that the tendering opportunities under the European Social Funding programme by the Learning and Skills Council had been successful.

Councillor Carroll replied as follows:-

- to thank Members for the comments on the Sports Review of the Year and offer the Council's congratulations for the young sports people who won the awards
- the Bestwood Country Park Winding Engine house was a good achievement and congratulations should go to the volunteers for the work that they had put into securing the lottery funding
- the skills agenda was moving forward and was pleasing to see the ESF funding was to continue

5. Environment

In response to questions and comments on:-

- changes proposed by East Midlands Train to reduce the service to Beeston
- the concessionary fares for the over 65s for the whole of England
- Sunday service to the north of the County on the Robin Hood line, is there any update

Councillor Stella Smedley replied as follows:-

- Nottinghamshire will continue to lobby the rail network about the rail service to Beeston and also the Sunday service on the Robin Hood line. As the Robin Hood Line is the jewel in Nottinghamshire's crown and we have a compelling argument with Mansfield and Ashfield being the largest districts in the country without a Sunday service
- the concessionary fare scheme was an excellent scheme and Nottinghamshire was going one-step further so our constituents can travel before set times in Nottinghamshire unlike the national scheme.

6. Finance and Property

In response to questions and comments on:-

- Carsic Primary School extension
- Rufford Country Park Mill
- Beckett School
- the approach from the Environment Agency regarding a financial contribution towards various minor flood alleviating schemes.

Councillor Chris Baron replied as follows:-

- the Carsic Primary School was long overdue and he was pleased to report the programme started this month
- Rufford Mill opens officially in a few weeks and Members will be invited to attend the opening
- with regard to the Beckett School, it is understood that the Wilford site will be sold for redevelopment
- there has been a £3 million offer from the Environment Agency to help alleviate the flooding problems at Bulcote

Councillor Baron also wished it noting that the Chief Executive had been recently appointed as the Vice-Chair of CIPFA and encouraged Members to reconsider, if they have not already joined the County Council's Pension Scheme.