

## **APPENDIX B**

### **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 18<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2018 QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN**

#### **Question to the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee from Councillor Samantha Deakin**

Can the Chairman please update the Council on how much money this Council has made from fining families for unauthorised absence in the past year and inform the Council on what happens to the money?

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

The income from fines that were issued for unauthorised absences during the 2016-17 academic year was £186,600. This is being used to finance the scheme.

#### **Question to the Chairman of the Planning and Licensing Committee from Councillor Tom Hollis**

At the last Council Meeting, members from all sides of this Chamber spoke about the importance of protecting areas like ancient woodland in Sherwood Forest from the dangers of fracking and seismic surveying. A recent Freedom of Information request revealed that INEOS, a UK-based petrochemical company sought and won permission from authorities to survey sensitive areas in Sherwood Forest. This is despite making public statements claiming it would exclude areas in Sherwood Forest from seismic surveying.

What are the Council doing to ensure that the 'jewels in Nottinghamshire's crown like Sherwood Forest are protected from seismic surveying and ultimately fracking?

#### **Response from Councillor Chris Barnfather, the Chairman of the Planning and Licensing Committee**

When I saw the article, I had similar concerns Councillor Hollis. The County Council in its role as the Minerals Planning Authority received a prior notification from INEOS in May of last year, to carry out seismic surveys in the county as permitted development. The prior notification excluded sensitive areas, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) including those in Sherwood Forest. The Minerals Planning Authority has agreed to an extension of time to carry out the surveys until 31<sup>st</sup> January, but no amendment has been made to the areas in which the survey can take place.

I am aware that the Freedom of Information Request referred to indicates that an agreement to work in sensitive areas of Sherwood Forest was part of a licence agreement between INEOS and the Forestry Commission. However, such an agreement does not change the scope of the permitted development rights confirmed by the Minerals Planning Authority to INEOS and any surveys outside of the area that the County Council has already received prior notification for, such as

SSSIs in Sherwood Forest would need to be preceded by the Minerals Planning Authority receiving a further prior notification from INEOS.

If prior notification was submitted for sensitive areas such as SSSIs in Sherwood Forest, the Minerals Planning Authority would consider each notification on its own merits and would be able to exercise its powers to remove permitted development rights if it was satisfied that it was expedient to do so, using an Article 5 Direction. Any such Direction would only be served following consultation with specialist consultees such as Natural England and would result in INEOS having to apply for planning permission to carry out any seismic surveys in the sensitive areas referred to in the Direction.

I would finally like to highlight that the carrying out of seismic surveys represents the very start of the shale gas development process. Any production of shale gas, involving hydraulic fracturing, would only take place after planning applications for exploration, appraisal and production have been submitted to, thoroughly assessed and then determined by the County Council as the Minerals Planning Authority. In addition to this, other permits and approvals would be required from regulatory bodies such as the Environment Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and the Oil and Gas Authority.

I can assure members that this is the most rigorous and thorough process and rightly so.

**Question to the Chairman of the Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Kevin Greaves**

Could this Council please confirm that there are no plans to reduce grass verge cutting throughout the county for this coming year?

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

I can confirm that there are no plans to reduce the frequency of grass verge cutting throughout the county in the coming year 2018/19.

However, I am considering a trial of a very small number of sites in rural areas, to test different cutting patterns where it is safe to do so. This would only be pursued with the support of the local community, for example on the basis that it could encourage wildlife and wildflowers to flourish.

I have asked officers to bring a report to Communities and Place Committee in the future so that Members can discuss the potential of this approach.

The following two questions were taken together:-

**Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Jason Zadrozny**

Following the news that Carillion has gone into liquidation, will the Council Leader please update this Council on the impact on public services in Nottinghamshire and what plans this Council are putting in place to ensure those services remain as protected as possible?

What support can this Council give to the hundreds of residents across Nottinghamshire whose jobs may be under threat?

**Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Alan Rhodes**

What contracts do the County Council currently have with Carillion, what is the value of those contracts, and what provisions are in place to protect such contracts and ensure works continue to completion?

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

The immediate impact on the County Council services from the collapse of Carillion is minimal, with any affected facilities continuing to operate on a 'business as usual' basis.

Nottinghamshire County Council has an ongoing Private Financial Initiative (PFI) contract with East Leake Schools Limited for two school sites, East Leake Academy and the Lantern Lane Primary. It also has a contract for East Leake Leisure Centre provided on behalf of Rushcliffe Borough Council where Carillion provide subcontracted "hard" Facilities Management (FM) services on site, such as building management and maintenance.

Although there is no direct contractual relationship between the County Council and Carillion through its PFI arrangement, Carillion further subcontracts the provision of soft Facilities Management such as catering, cleaning and grounds maintenance for those sites back to the County Councils Catering and Facilities Management Service.

East Leake Schools Limited, and the Official Receiver, are ensuring that all these sites are continuing to operate as normal in the short term, and in the longer term a new contractor will be appointed to provide the building management and maintenance services previously undertaken by Carillion.

In the medium term, and subject to the approval of the Official Receiver, East Leake Schools may 'step in' and operate the current Carillion services direct, ensuring that the sites continue to be open as normal until these new contractual arrangements are formalised.

Additionally Hucknall Town Centre Improvement Scheme was delivered through a Joint Venture arrangement between Tarmac and Carillion. The contract was awarded using a framework contract and all works are complete.

At the present time the Carillion position is not impacting upon the contract close out, because the company remains involved in the Joint Venture and under the current contract terms any outstanding issues default to Tarmac.

Members of the Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee were briefed on the issue of outstanding invoices from our Traded Services to Carillion at its meeting earlier this week. The picture from the Operator of the PFI Scheme and the Official Receiver will become clearer as the month progresses and Members of the Finance and Major Contracts Management Committee will receive more information as this becomes available.

#### **Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Alan Rhodes**

Could the Leader of this Council please clarify whether she intends to proceed with plans to transform this Authority to a unitary status, and provide a timeline for implementation of said plans?

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

Yes, this Administration does intend to present proposals for a unitary model of local government for Nottinghamshire, but I am not yet in a position to provide a timeline. As soon as I can, this information will of course be provided to all Members.

#### **Question to the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee from Councillor Rachel Madden**

Time and time again residents are raising the poor standard of repair to potholes via social media or directly to councillors.

Given the number and repetition of these complaints, does the Chair of Communities and Place consider the current method of repair shows Value for Money for the taxpayers of our County?

This question fell as Councillor Madden had sent her apologies to the meeting.

#### **Question to the Chairman of Health Scrutiny Committee from Councillor Kate Foale**

Following the establishment of a new committee structure in May 2017 which removed the Joint City/County Health Scrutiny Committee, how can we ensure that the scrutiny of cuts to health services accessed by both City and County residents are being communicated to relevant committees at the County Council, particularly when the impact of such changes will put pressure on our County Council Services and may adversely affect our residents?

#### **Response from Councillor Keith Girling, Chairman of Health Scrutiny Committee**

It was approved at Full Council in May last year that there would be one Health Scrutiny Committee to cover health scrutiny across the whole Council area ensuring that the same considerations are given to all health care issues across Nottinghamshire.

As an authority with a population of over 800,000, it is important that those matters pertaining to our electorate are properly examined by this Council. I am sure Nottingham City Council have in place appropriate scrutiny processes for those matters which are more city-focussed and affect City residents.

Our Health Scrutiny Committee enables County Members to build up a coherent cross-county picture of the organisations involved and the services they provide. By so doing, this allows us on behalf of County residents to influence plans for the NHS in Nottinghamshire including Nottingham University and Sherwood Forest Hospital Trusts, both of which serve our area.

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

Quarrydale Academy on Stoneyford Road in my Division is one of the fastest growing schools in Nottinghamshire with well over 1,000 pupils and rising. The Chairman will be aware that widening Stoneyford Road to make it safer at school times by creating extra space for parents dropping off their children is one of my priorities. More and more parents are complaining about road safety at the school. They claim that it is an accident waiting to happen.

Can I invite Councillor Cottee to the school to see for himself the extent of the problem and ask that sorting out the current unsuitability of the road for such a growing school is prioritised to protect our young people and pedestrians?

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

You will be pleased to know that the Quarrydale Academy has, as part of its recent expansion of facilities, decided to incorporate a loop road within the site to allow parents to pull off the highway and then drop their children off safely within the school grounds.

The works to build the loop road are due to be carried out by Via East Midlands on behalf of the main contractor. The work will be done during the Easter school holidays. That is March this year.

Full details of the facility are contained in the planning application documents that can be viewed on the Ashfield District Council website. But I have brought with me the planning details and some maps of what they are doing which I am happy to pass over to you.

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

Given the high level of unclaimed benefit payments nationally, can you explain what measures the County Council is taking to ensure that people with disabilities and older people, who are eligible for support, are benefitting from the income for which they are eligible?

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

The Council provides welfare services and rights advice to our residents through a combination of our Benefits, Training and Advice Teams which are part of the Adult Access Service. And of course our front line staff.

Firstly, the Benefits Team offer a telephone-based service that advises service users and their carers on their entitlement to state benefits, for example Attendance Allowance, Pension Credits and the Personal Independence Payments, and other forms of nationally acquired benefit. During the financial year 2016/17, the team helped Nottinghamshire residents to access over £2.8 million in unclaimed benefits. This money helps individuals to remain living in their community for longer, whilst also allowing this Authority to charge the appropriate level for care services that we are providing.

In addition the team is able to signpost people who need support with form filling to the Council's funded Connect Service. The Service can in turn refer people to the free Representation Unit at Nottingham Trent University, who will assist claimants with tribunal representation should it fall to them.

Secondly the team maintains the benefits information on our own County Council website and also on the 'Notts Help Yourself' website. These pages have details of individual benefits and fact sheets that can be downloaded by the public, including information on local advice providers that can deliver face to face advice if the claimant required.

Finally, we support people through the delivery of bespoke training and awareness sessions to our own teams, particularly front line teams, within Adult Social Care and Health and the voluntary sector. The team are now looking at how we can provide training and awareness sessions for the carer groups across the county.

In summary, as a Council we are doing a great deal to help people maximise their income through the efforts, expertise and dedication of our staff. I think it would be wrong for me not to also inform the Council that the work of our Benefits, Training and Advice Team was recently acknowledged when they were shortlisted for the team of the year category at the East Midlands event for the Great British Care Awards. A fine achievement and I do applaud them on their efforts.

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

Would the Chairman of the Communities and Place Committee agree with me that we welcome the introduction of a new additional camera car to help monitor

inconsiderate parking issues that jeopardise the lives of our school children? Would he also agree with me that the Nottinghamshire Civil Parking Partnership needs to be radically enhanced to help solve some of the inconsiderate parking issues on the rest of the highways, because the Police have now made these issues that blight all of our everyday lives across our County a low priority?

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

The provision of a second camera car was agreed at Communities and Place Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017. I am pleased that you welcome this additional car, which will be an important addition to our parking enforcement.

The seven Borough and District Councils and the County Council are collectively responsible for on and off street parking enforcement across the county, through The Nottinghamshire Parking Partnership.

Civil Enforcement Officers are deployed by local Parking Managers to provide a proportionate level of enforcement across the county that meets the needs of the partner authorities and reflect local concerns.

Consequently, officers are more typically deployed in towns than in outlying villages, although all restrictions should be enforced. The Partnership has proved very successful over the last 10 years in providing a cost-effective level of enforcement that is commensurate with the traffic management needs of a shire county.

By emailing the County Council, our local schools are able to “book” one of the camera cars to help enforce restrictions outside their premises. If you provide details of the specific issues that are concerning you, I will ask officers to consider enforcement measures at those locations.

Your question asks whether the Nottinghamshire Civil Parking Partnership needs to be radically enhanced. I do not know about ‘radically’, but it is fair to say we are always looking at ways services can be improved, and this area of our work is no different. We always try to work closely with the Police, but parking enforcement does seem to be a lower priority to the Police now than maybe it was in the past, which means the burden of enforcement falls increasingly on the County Council, particularly outside schools.

**Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Michael Payne**

The former County Council depot at Rolleston Drive has been vacant for at least five years. Apart from some security fencing and remedial works following an arson attack, there’s no visible sign of progress on the site. Gedling Borough Council have pushed and pushed for the site to be developed and even offered to buy it, such is the frustration from local residents, councillors and the MP at the lack of progress. I’m aware that a funding application has been submitted to Homes England but please could the Leader confirm what the County Council plans to do with the site and if no decision has been reached yet, why is it taking so long and when will such a decision be made?

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

The circumstances surrounding the management of the Rolleston Drive site have been wholly unsatisfactory ever since it was vacated by County Supplies in 2013.

The Labour administration took control in the Spring of that year, and it is fair to say very little happened over the next four years. I gather from my conversations with you, Councillor Payne, that as the local Member you frequently raised concerns, not just about the lack of progress with the sale, but also about the visual condition of the site and the apparent ease of access to it by unauthorised persons.

Within two months of the Conservative administration returning to office in 2017, a fire was set by vandals, and concerns were raised at the time by the fire service that the gas and electricity had never been disconnected, that no security fencing was in place, and that CCTV was not installed, with local people reporting that youngsters were regularly scaling the fencing.

The County Council has funded the demolition work on the Rolleston Drive site, with the project due to be complete by the end of February 2018. There are currently two bids awaiting consideration by the HCA to help fund the development of the site. The timelines for development will be different, depending on whether the bids are successful, and the amount of funding available.

There are regular monthly meetings held with Gedling Borough Council (GBC) officers to keep them appraised of progress. Planning Policy Guidelines have been prepared in conjunction with Gedling Borough Council officers to develop the site for housing whilst retaining a third for a future school need and any other County Council premises which may be required in this area.

This Administration is determined to bring forward sites in the County Council's ownership for the much-needed housing, and I know from my meetings with the Chief Executive and the Leader of Gedling Borough Council that they would welcome an early development here, and so would I.