

Northampton Borough Council- Northampton Pensioners' Forum

Thursday, 28 January 2016 at 2:00 pm until 4pm

The Jeffrey Room, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE.

Agenda

1.Welcomes, introductions and apologies

Present: Present: Cllr Oldham (Chair, CO), Roger Rumsey (Co Chair, RR), Debra Taylor-Bond (NCC) Ann Timson (AT), Veronica Male (Northants Dementia AA, VM), J Forrest-Smith (JFS), Brian Nichols (BN), Tony Mallard (NFRA Veteran ERA, TM), David Hewitt (DH), Nicki McKenzie (NPH, NM), Darren Berwick (NPH, DB), Christina Owusu-Akuffo (COA), Hazel Tuttle (HT), Jay Beece (JB), Alice Morgan (NBC, AM), Janice Duffy (JD), Alan Jones (AJ), Anna King (AK), Madeline Boys (MB), Nisha Mejer (NBC, NM1)*
*Took minutes

Apologies

Maureen Hill, Mary Dianne Atkins

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2.Minutes and Matters Arising

AM / NM to chase NCC about actions from previous meetings.

AM/NM Health & Wellbeing consultation documentation will be sent out via email and post.

No answers yet on breakdown on how many elderly people are on benefits.

TM raised concern on homeless. Will put this issue on the agenda for future meetings.

3.Debbie Taylor-Bond, Strategic Manager for Transport and Highways, NCC

DB: We deliver services through 3 contracts:

1. Day to day service
2. Balfour Beattie – lighting service
3. NSL – parking enforcing.

Contracts are delivered to County Council policies and standards are set. We share data with 20 other councils. We are confined annually on what we pay and to which service eg – pot hole repairs. Money is benchmarked.

Benchmarking is difficult. Take data from councils to do an in depth analysis and then targets are set. If there is a failure to reach the targets, reductions can be made to service providers. Also monitor effectiveness of work and monitor ourselves.

Can receive 50,000 reports of potholes per year. These are categorised. Emergencies are dealt with within 2 hours.

Category 1 pothole: 50 mm depth. Dealt within 5 days.

Category 2 pothole: Everything else. 4 months to do repair.

Timescales are the same with footways and category 1 pothole needs to be 20mm depth.

ACTION: Details of repair to be circulated once DTB has sent them.

BN: Received emails from Andrew Leighton. These emails were read out. BN stated that Andrew responded to the emails but failed to address the issue.

BN felt that the council philosophy is wrong. Would like to see NCC to abandon its current strategy until all the roads which have the worst potholes are repaired.

DTB went through the strategy. It is preventative and based on budget costs. The dept has received 11% reduction on the budget. Roads which have reached end of life need resurfacing. If issues are tackled in isolation the money will be spent quickly. Some roads are resurfaced and some are not. Need to manage asset in longer term. Have to have a strategy to look at all the roads across the county. The number of potholes has decreased.

Cheaper treatment was used for Link View estate as this was deemed the correct option.

BN: Still could not understand the strategy. How can this be justified when roads are terrible elsewhere. Thought it would be very difficult for the residents of Austin Road.

DTB: Picking cheaper treatment covers more of the network. Covering more protects the water coming in. Money was awarded and the Westone area was chosen.

DH: The budget is not deliverable. County Council is on the verge of bankruptcy. Contracts were set up that repairs would last 75 years. But this doesn't work. For eg – Brooklyn Road junction – potholes keep appearing and are repaired over and over again.

Contracts have to comply with the Environmental Protection Act. When are you going to manage the contractor? Cannot see changes and cannot see value for money.

TM: There is a petition for Burwood Road. Mayfield Road has dreadful potholes.

DTB: Don't think Northamptonshire is the only County Council with these issues. Nationally the quality of roads is declining. Do prioritise schemes. Work is based on needs.

When we prioritise, this is not always acceptable to the local community. Trying to apply for extra funding but this is not confirmed yet.

BN: Because potholes are widespread feel that this is the wrong approach.

Cllr O: It doesn't feel like the number of potholes has decreased. How long will it take for all the potholes in Northamptonshire to be repaired?

DTB: 60 years. The ask is huge and we are taking small steps. Funding is being sought.

TM: 50 – 60 years is very long.

HT: What about footpaths? School children use the A400 and there are loose stones and the paths are dangerous. Footway to Weston Flavell is terrible and one particular path is flooded.

ACTION: DTB will look into this. There is a lower threshold with footpaths.

RR: We have a neighbourhood watch scheme in our area and people could get training.

DTB: There is a Highway Warden Scheme and residents are given training. People can also report roads which need repair. The planned work programme by Highways is published on the website. We would also like to go to neighbourhood groups eg – residents associations.

ACTION: AM/NM to send details of residents association groups to DTB.

4. Darren Berwick and Nicky McKenzie , Northampton Partnership Homes, Anti-Social Behaviour.

A new policy will come into force on 1st February. All common areas shared by more than one person have to be kept clear of fire hazards. There will be a zero tolerance approach to this to ensure fire safety. Signs are being erected to notify people of this.

The department will be legally entitled to clear any unguarded material eg potted plants, coffee tables, doormats, prams and mobility scooters. Personal balconies are exempt.

The fire risks are categorised:

Category 1: Imminent fire risk items eg – sofas, mobility scooters. Will ask owners compliance immediately. If the owner cannot be found, a sticker is placed on the item. If the object is not removed within 1 day, it will be taken away.

Category 2: Medium fire risk items eg bikes. The risk is not imminent but can cause concern.

Category 3: Low fire risk items, Items have to be moved within 7 days. Letters are given to ask owner to remove them.

The issue is that a lot of properties are no longer fit for purpose. There are long corridors and mobility scooters create obstructions for wheelchair users.

Bungalows are assessed when they become empty. Assessing flats is more complicated. If there is no safe storage then it may be that the tenant will have to move to another location. This will be assessed on a case by case basis. Will look at future proofing flats eg – placing racks for buggies.

TM: Agreed with the zero tolerance approach. Watched a film and saw how fast a pram caught fire. These are big fire risk.

JD: Is it essential to move people?

DB: Not everyone has a medical need for a mobility scooter. If there is a need, then we can help people move.

Cllr D: Will people have to sell their scooters?

NM: Majority of scooters will fit in the doorway. They cannot be stored in the lobby. A business case would be put forward for each case and efficient ways will be looked at. If someone is struggling with disability, we will do our best for them. Priority will be given.

VM: concerned that policy will start Monday and there is no assessment of people yet.

NM: People have been informed beforehand.

DB: There is information on website and signs have been erected. Members of staff visited people to inform them too.

VM: Asked what feedback has been given.

NM: Feedback given and are addressing this. Help will be given to people in the interim period. Recognise that creative thinking is needed.

DB: Some people buy scooters second hand which could be dangerous.

AT: How will inside blocks be monitored? Does this apply to end of blocks? There is a concern that if your scooter is not suitable then people have to move even if they don't want to.

NM: We don't want to be telling people to move. The first option is to keep people in their homes. We need to think creatively and don't know yet about the problems. We need to make people aware to have the correct type of items. We also want good quality accommodation and have to deal with lack of investment. There have been serious fires and this needs to be addressed.

DH: Is there another agenda here? You say doormats are a fire risk. Where is the evidence for this? Where is the common sense in this? Telling people to move as

a solution is not common sense and it appears to be “social cleansing” occurring. Where are you going to put these people? There is a housing shortage. When the media hear this there will be an uproar if no research has been done.

Cllr O: What are the criteria to take up tenancy?

NM: Historically age restricted and disability. Found that we lots of mixed blocks.

Cllr O: You have to be careful on how to select. When people come to sheltered housing they also own a car. Disability bays could be put in.

DB: doing a property review for sheltered housing. Eg – lower plug sockets and radiator valves need to be put on the top.

TM: Don't like the words “zero tolerance.” Where do you draw the line? Eg – height of a plant pot?

DH: This will not help people and will cause stress and upsetting for the elderly. People are living for longer. Moving people because they are a problem - can't see the research done on this.

DB: Did a check on 7 blocks. All had fire safety checks. Eg – Big TVs, bikes, scooters were left in the corridors. If there had been a fire they would have been an obstruction. This causes anti-social behaviour – eg flytipping. This is the driver to do this. It is not to “cleanse” people out of accommodation. We will support all our tenants and want people to stay home and enjoy their lifestyle. Our job is support people. If we support early on we can assess. Service is to be fluid and people can dip in and out of it. We will work with people to find solutions.

AT: Would that mean reviewing your policy on letting?

NM: Yes.

ACTION: Any further issues – can Forum members contact NM on NMckenzie@northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk.

5.Action Plan

AM: Liz Carroll-Wheat will attend the next meeting to talk about an intergenerational project. This is a 3 year scheme.

6.Suggestions for Items for Future Meetings or Forum Activities

DH: Would like to know the impact on the elderly with the County Council budget. Would like to invite finance officer Glen Hammond to talk about this.

TM: Would like to invite the Hope Centre.

Community Law also want to attend.

ACTION: Chairs and AM and NM to have a pre meeting to prioritise what goes on the agendas.

7.Community News Exchange

RR: Hate Campaign group has been formed and based in Kettering.

AM: Learn dancing skills in the Great Hall in the The Guildhall – 18th June.

8.Any Other Business

NM to email/post Health and Wellbeing strategy draft. A survey will be attached.

DH: Thank you to all who organised Houses of Parliament trip.

Clean for the Queen event being held. A campaign to get a million people out and about cleaning up their communities is being backed by Northampton Borough Council. Supported by the Government, Clean for The Queen has also won the backing of councils across the UK and is centred on a weekend of activity from March 4 - 6 2016.

9.Date and venues of future Forum Meetings

March 24 2-4pm. The Guildhall

Map and directions at: www.northampton.gov.uk/guildhall

For more information about this meeting please contact:

Alice Morgan, Community Development Officer



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More information about the Forum generally is at: www.northampton.gov.uk/forums



Facebook page: www.northampton.gov.uk/pensionersforumonfacebook

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