

Northampton Borough Council - NORTHAMPTON PENSIONERS' FORUM

THURSDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2017 – 1:30PM – 4PM.

1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Present: Cllr Oldham (CO), Roger Rumsey (RR Co-Chair), Veronica Male (VM Individual), Tony Mallard (TM Eastfield R.A and Veterans Club), Ann Timson (AT Individual), Alan Wright (AW Eastfield Asoc), Michael Rogers (MR Northants Police), Jen Jenkins (JJ Northants Police), Norman Sharp (NS Independent), Hazel Tuttle (HT Independent), Alan Jones (AJ Northampton Bus Users), Michael Macleod (MM NBC), Jamie Wells (JW NBC), Nisha Mejer (NM NBC), John Rawlings (JR Quakers), Christiana Akuffo (CA Individual), Jennifer Shaw (JS Olympus Care), Brian Nicholls (BN Individual)

Apologies: Jaqueline Forrest-Smith, Maureen Hill, David Hewitt and Liz Fitzgerald.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Minutes are recorded as true as record.

AT: Cllr Hallam to be invited in January.

AT: How much compensation has been paid by NHS?

ACTION: JW to E-Mail Jeanette Pidgen.

Q: Why does it cost less to buy new equipment instead of disinfecting and cleaning already used equipment?

3. KAM GILL AND STEVE BURD - OPERATIONS - STAGECOACH

SB: Over 15 months carried out improvements.

SB: Employment centre means more buses at a wider range of times. More links have been created county wide. Worked with county to improve services to places eg Brackmills – brought a benefit to the local area such as Wootton – links to Brackmills and NGH.

SB: One issue is County Council withdrawing all funding to improve the bus service in Northampton. At the very least there will be major cuts which will take place in May next year. There are very few midlands routes which have support from the county council. Only 3 buses directly supported by the county council.

KG: Level of congestion is one of the largest challenges they face, 466% increase in the mileage lost to congestion in recent years – makes keeping to a schedule very difficult. Box junction being painted this week and will hopefully be able to make a right turn down the drapery soon.

Q: We are getting older and less steady on their feet, bus drivers are driving before passengers are seated and it is causing a risk.

A: Policy is for people to be seated before drivers more off, that is what they taught as part of their induction. Drivers are also taken out for a refresher course once a year. If they get complaints stagecoach will investigate.

Q: How many vehicles do you run from the bus station and from the drapery per hour?

A: Can't answer that now, there are 14 bays at the station and 8 on the drapery. Looking at all operators, more go from the station than the drapery.

NS: Over 200 vehicles through the drapery junction in 1 hour – trying to move forward but councillor Nunn will not respond.

SB: Interchange at the drapery was the best choice, gave passengers, particularly elderly and disabled the easiest access. Councillor Nunn has adopted a positive approach to improve the situation but these things to take time.

Q: Buses that are 'due' are often late, why can't that information about how or why the bus is late be conveyed to the passengers in real time?

A: Approx 18 months ago, new vehicle location system – can tell where buses are at all time. Some bus stops have real time information but not all. If it does not have real time information there is either a technical issue or that bus stop does not have the technology to give real time.

Q: How frequently are bus stops and buses technology checked?

A: The County Council are responsible – so it is unknown.

AT: communication is lacking, not sure who to go to and whether the organisation you go to are passing information onto the correct people.

Q: Why are the bus stops and posts/notice boards in such bad condition? Why is the colour scheme so hard to see for those with poorer eyesight? Why do drivers not clean up or leave on time?

A: Around 880 drivers nationwide, not everyone is going to reach the standard that is set. It is difficult to keep all drivers to that standard.

A2: All buses are cleaned daily but cannot be cleaned mid route or between every journey. Any rubbish on the bus is made by passengers. Stagecoach do not have the resources to clean between. If Stagecoach tried to add this as a necessity for the driver's job, it would be hard to keep employees and run on time.

Q: Will Stagecoach be supportive of having buses based near the Greyfriars. The infrastructure is there

A: Looking at provisions for having bus stops put there.

Q: If several routes use the same stop and there are already 1 or 2 buses there, often the bus will drive past which is not acceptable.

A: Drivers are aware that if there queues they should wait until the stop is free.

Q: Why are cars driving down the drapery?

A: Borough and County Council are lobbying to get cameras which will then lead to fines for those who break the rules.

Police do run an operation there but if they do stop people it causes more of a congestion, cameras should be the answer to stop this.

Q: Why didn't they make the road that buses pull into a one way road with two lanes?

A: They are going to, sometime in February (Bradshaw Street). This will allow buses to turn both left and right.

RR: Suggests that the pensioner's forum can become 'secret shoppers' in conjunction with Stagecoach. Then meet to discuss the issues.

SB: Would welcome that approach. Would look to do it quarterly.

AJ: Would be happy to sit on a forum to discuss matters. Suggests that the forum would need a county council transport officer to speak.

ACTION: MM to contact John Ellerby.

BO: Buses are pulling away early and that is not acceptable.

SB: If this is the case, drivers are given a warning to begin with.

Q: What are the rules with closing the doors of the bus when passengers are approaching?

A: It is policy that if they are at a standstill, they should re-open the doors, but if they have moved it is policy not to re-open them.

BO: Many young people are rushing to the bus doors as soon as they open.

SB: If we are advised that this is a regular occurrence, we can have an inspector head to that stop to look at the matter. If it is outside a school, the school will be contacted and asked to cooperate.

4. LIAM CONDRON - AGE UK

LC went through PowerPoint presentation which was similar to the one used at the Age UK AGM.

Many minibuses have been replaced, Age UK were given a grant to replace 10/11 minibuses so the repair bills are now much lower.

Q: How can Age UK provide assistive technology service at a charge where others (first for wellbeing) do not?

A: It is a product that is not forced on people but it does come at a cost.

Q: How can we possibly get in contact with the vulnerable pensioners across the county?

A: Some people are harder to reach than others but you are more likely to reach them if they are vulnerable if you are helping them cleaning and shopping for example. It is about being embedded in the community as much as possible.

Q: Age UK/Concern used to be back up services whereas now individuals are seeing them as the number one service to other organisations from places such as local authorities.

A: Age UK used to develop programmes which local authorities would take on. Local authorities struggled as less money became available. A lot of things have changed, such as the libraries and local authorities staffing, yet the funding model has not changed.

A2: No one agency has found a way to help a person in all aspects.

Q: How are volunteers given recognition for their hard work and dedication to Age UK.

A: Constantly looking at ways to recognise all Age UK's staff contributions. Age UK look to reward and congratulate employees internally and externally. That has been extended to volunteers now too. LC would be disappointed that managers do not recognise the good work that volunteers do because they help bring in vital income.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OR FORUM ACTIVITIES

BO: When Police Officers attend, add after Item 2 on the agenda for a 5 minute slot to give updates.

JR: Look at the impact of the CC cuts in the New Year.

VM: Voluntary sector may have to pick up the pieces of the cut.

BO: There is a huge strain on all sectors, especially voluntary.

December 19th the cabinet decision will be made, which will be reviewed at a future forum.

BO: ACTION: MM to invite Cllr Nunn to a future forum – talk about the current state of the NBC. 30 minute slot of questions and answers.

RR: Suggests that each talker should have a time slot.

AT: If there are specific questions, notify speaker before the forum of the questions.

RR: Suggests 15 minutes for Toby Birch.

BO: Suggests inviting the PCC to the forum.

RR: Invite PCC for later in the New Year.

ACTION: MM to contact PCC.

6. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Northants Acre – Attended meeting and found that it is mostly for Parish Councils. If anybody would like any more information on Good Neighbours contact BN.

Northampton Dementia guide has been published with available services

concerning dementia and information will be brought along to the next meeting in January.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8. DATE AND VENUES OF FUTURE FORUM MEETINGS

Thursday 25 January 2018, 1:30pm – 4pm