

## Northampton Disabled Peoples' Forum

### **Rats service and tenants handbook/advice:**

NBC should be concerned with all pests, not just rats. NBC should be more efficient in how it does what it already does. 95 flats with red ants and cockroaches have been treated over the last 10 months but if all were at home or done on the same day this could be tackled in one go. As it is, the problem and the costs, continue, because nobody writes to let people know when the pest people are coming so people can't plan to be home. There are ongoing monthly visits but again people aren't told when they are going to happen. People have individually been spending money on sprays etc but this they have since learned was the worst thing to do. The occupant in the apartment thought to be the source of the issue is never home when the pest people come and they never get access to that property. Tenants need better advice from NBC. If communication improved by NBC lots of costs and problems would be reduced. Similarly the heating system – nobody told tenants when the new system was put in that they needed to bleed the radiators first before calling out people to repair it – this was a waste of time and money. Tenants need more information so as not to call in people inappropriately.

### **Gateway and B&B:**

Data sharing concern if private sector housing and other 3<sup>rd</sup> parties outside the Council are involved in the arrangements for housing people;

### **Social Lettings Agency:**

If an individual loses their job they will end up back on the housing list as they can't afford to rent in the private sector and social housing rents are increasing, but jobs aren't increasing. The policy looks impressive but NBC may find it's a pointless exercise to look to put people into non-council housing.

### **Bed & Breakfast:**

After World War II there was a shortage of housing. Today there's a shortage of council housing. Back then the government built prefabs. You can buy them today. School sites need clearing. It might be cheaper to look at how much it would cost to build prefabs on the disused school sites.

The Forum went on to discuss hate crime. Within that discussion comments were made which are relevant to the PCSO option. There was a general feeling that "PCSOs lack training – are useless" and the example given that they had not recorded verbal hate crime reported by some of the disabled people at the forum. There were other concerns about lack of response from the Police.

## **Northampton Diverse Communities Forum**

### **CCTV:**

- E-law on decision-making relates to the current duty to have due regard. How are you doing that? In respect of good news e.g. Enterprise Zone other authorities have put in equality targets for how many jobs to go to BME people, youth etc. Can NBC do this too?
- Who is deciding where it will be non-manned and is this in liaison with the Police? Will CCTV in buildings etc still be serviced?
- I did chair a community safety group and I became aware that the UK had more than almost the rest of the world of CCTV cameras and Northampton within the UK had a particularly high amount of CCTV. This raised personal freedom questions. When the Police made a training film years ago about CCTV they said that CCTV is only as good as the person following the CCTV.
- Can we have mobile CCTV to offset the impact of losing CCTV in some places and help address hotspots? I'm not too unhappy about this option. We should also remember that business premises have a responsibility to protect their own facilities not expect local taxpayers to do so. Housing and flats have a separate sort of CCTV so again I'm not too unhappy

### **PCSOs:**

- A large reason for concern is a Police reason. The Police have been hiring less and less black officers over the past years. In contrast PCSO recruits see a good amount of BME and LGBT diversity. That's where the diversity in the Police staffing has been. It has a significant part to play in endorsing good relations in the community. So if NBC makes the proposed cuts how will NBC show that it's being proportionate so that the Police staff doesn't lose that diversity?
- I agree with the comments made. My big concern is safety. We'll increase the numbers of people in the town. If we reduce the numbers of Police now how will we maintain people feeling that they live in safety?
- They've done a good job. They should be funded somewhere along the line. I met Police Cadets – it was great as they were already community-orientated and they were going out with PCSOs for experience. The Police's job will be harder as they will need to put in more resource. What is the desirable or required ratio of Police per person? What's the ratio of the number of criminals per person in the population?
- I've a strong view that those authorities responsible should provide them e.g. NCC for youth, while NBC can choose to have a youth forum. With regard to Policing it's a Police responsibility. I'd rather see NBC invest more in neighbourhood wardens and park rangers. There's one warden covering 2 or 3 parks. I'll be very angry if Northampton loses the PCSOs – we need to keep them but it's for the Police to make sure we do, not NBC.

## **Review of Discretionary Rates**

- Rates review potentially impacting on charities and voluntary organisations: I've got a concern. I've no idea how many would be affected. Funding is always a problem for voluntary organisations. To know NBC is going to take more £ or put more constraints on this sector is a concern especially as voluntary organisations are types of channel particularly used by BME and LGBT people so they could be disproportionately impacted by the policy.
- Rates review: I want to see dialogue with charities. How do you plan to review non-domestic rates and concessions? Existing funding cuts are already taking grass roots organisations down and they are ceasing to operate. So how will you reach those people and organisations? Charities are chasing the same money as bigger organisations so they don't get a chance of getting the funding – most big funds have their organisations that they regularly fund year after year.

## **Rat service:**

- Is the fund for people who identify the rats? Or the people where the rats are coming from? Often rats travel from other places. So the policy doesn't make sense.

## **Other comments:**

- Sunday parking makes sense e.g. to go to Quaker meetings, but NCC is reducing availability of blue badges so that may affect the impact of the charging policy on disabled people.
- Bus interchange: much of the £ should have come from Legal and General. I'm happy to see a new interchange but not to have to fund it via the council
- NBC should have regard to the impact of things like the Cube and the Enterprise Zone on neighbourhoods as there's bound to be some crossover.
- Leisure: I have concerns as I don't see any options to do with leisure or heritage which promote celebrations of diverse communities – things like Carnival and Diwali. Given there's a rich diverse community there should be something. I wonder how will you cover promoting community cohesion through these budget options? I don't see how you will – it doesn't seem to make sense. I want more investment in celebrations in Northampton town.
- Neighbourhood planning: NBC need to get their heads around the impact on BME communities. Most BME organisations in Northampton organise themselves on a town-wide basis. So it's difficult when you get local planning on a specific part of the town. So NBC needs to find a way to be fair and equitable with these organisations when they have bases or premises in the town centre while having their members in various parts of town. This needs to be thought about in how you set it up. A huge amount of people, for example, have Northampton Volunteering Centre as their office address.
- Modernising IT: does this look at translation too? Are you monitoring what you put in place? To make sure you take account of everyone's needs?
- Back office v frontline: they need someone behind the frontline staff to support them, so please monitor the impacts of cutting the back office.

## **Northampton Pensioners Forum**

### **CCTV:**

- It won't work in any case where there are no lights because they've been turned off. You need to consider the impact of the lights switch off in thinking about implementing this option.
- We only keep CCTV tapes for a month, so in considering implementing this policy, NBC should consider whether it needs to start keeping them for longer if monitoring of the cameras is to be reduced.

### **Rat service:**

- It's appalling as an option. Dealing with rats should be a public service. Hardship fund approach is illogical as rats move around. It seems heartless too to make someone go through a hardship assessment when they've got rats.

### **PCSOs:**

- Police should provide PCSOs.

### **Other comments:**

- A lot of stuff in the budget options is quite positive
- Social Lettings Agency: is this with the idea of bringing all the rents to the same level i.e. raising the rents to the level of non-council housing?
- Is Housing to be floated off by NBC? We need to understand the figures, the details, what's in and what's not in the contracts. Councils get taken to the cleaners e.g. by Enterprise. It's difficult even on freedom of information to find out enough detail about how my council tax is being used. We don't get a say when services are privatised or put out to contract. The paperwork doesn't show how the Council is in fact moving to offload its services.
- Grants funding: I appreciate the council is looking to maintain the current levels but NBC needs to consider in deciding to do so that need is increasing as other funding that pays for say benefits advisors is reducing and so that will have an impact on people's access to council services
- Allotments: we have had 2 reviews in 5 years. We need a strategy rather than just reviews. We have had a big waiting list for allotments.
- Some 10 – 12 years ago there was a move to stop putting people in to B&B accommodation. Money was spent converting barracks and accommodation in Cliftonville for them. What's happened to that policy?
- The Capital is a concern. I notice people are not registered on the electoral role so they get services but the government doesn't recognise them in funding formula for Northampton.
- There's no mention of the railway station?
- In May 2010 NBC's O&S issued a report on the use of consultants and agency staff which I believe has always been out of control. Why do we have to employ consultants? Is this situation now controlled as I believe it's senior management who decide to employ them rather than the councillors we vote for?

## **Northampton LGBTQ People's Forum**

### **PCSOs / CCTV:**

- They keep a high profile, visible presence so in proposing to cut them NBC should consider about how it can keep a visible uniformed presence out there so people feel safe.
- These options are likely to be associated with an increase in fear of crime, not necessarily actual rise in crime, but fear of it – especially where people might stop walking around and perhaps not go to use businesses, or might suffer falls and trips e.g. on bins put out for recycling collection on terraced streets when they can't be seen in the dark as they're just dark or black objects. I think NBC need to look at the links between these policies and on other ways it works like putting out black and dark bins into dark streets

### **Rates review:**

- I have some concerns and interest in this for the voluntary sector. How will NBC consider the impact on the ability of LGBT groups for example, to participate in the community? I'd like to see it consider the impact on the types of service e.g. LGBT, BME not just on 'charities', recognising that the impacts of this policy could impact on its equality duties to promote good relations and participation, tackling discrimination etc.

### **Other Comments:**

- Grants: pleased to see level of funding should be maintained
- Gateway: there can be distrust and stigma about using these services by LGBT people so it would be good to see and promote that the service will allow anonymous contact by email and phone initially