

Northampton Borough Council - Northampton Pensioners' Forum

Thursday, 20 March 2014

Present: Cllr Oldham (Co-chair), Roger Rumsey (Co-Chair), Ann Timson (Spring Boroughs RA), Tony mallard (Eastfield RA), Brian Nichols, D. J. Hewitt, Brian Dix, Norman Sharp, John Rawlings (Quakers), J. Forrest Smith, Mike Hill (Pensioners Voice), Dale Robertson (NBC), Lynn Horwood (NBC), Vicki Rockall (NBC), Alice Morgan (NBC*)
(*took minutes)

1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Tendai Ndongwe (NHFT) and Jean Anderton

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

AM provided AT with a response from Bill Lewis (Assistant Head of Finance at LGSS), which clarifies the detail around the Decent Homes Grant:

...the money is ring-fenced to this specific purpose, however if it not spent on this purpose within the specified timeframes, the Council will likely lose the ability to claim any further money. The grant is paid over on a quarterly basis following submission of a grant claim. This is claimed on the basis of equal amounts of the allocation for the year being paid in each quarter. At the end of the year, a return has to be completed showing actual spend and outputs. This end of year return is subject to an external audit. If it transpires that the amount of expenditure or outputs is not at least of the level expected, some of the grant for the year could be repayable or withheld.

DH highlighted that Enterprise have been typed to Amey, referring to p.2. of the last minutes.

VR followed up AT's concerns about contact details being given out by NBC to an external company. The feedback from NBC's Housing Team was that if there is work that needs to be done to a property, and this work is being contracted out, then the details of the tenant will be given to the contractor for contact before the work is carried out. Details are not given out freely.

BN raised that a copy of the bus shelter map was supposed to be circulated – AM confirmed that this had been circulated to members, via email, or post.

A mistake was noted on the minutes of the last meeting. The final page of the minutes is supposed to read 'REFUSE', not 'REFUGE'.

3. ALMO - DALE ROBERTSON

DR went through the background of the ALMO (Arm's Length Management Organisation) for the forum, including the objectives of the Housing Options Review, the key stages of this review and an outline of those involved in the process. DR then gave an explanation of the ALMO. This will be a separate legal entity. It was confirmed that tenants' rights will stay the same, and that tenants can still contact their councillor to raise issues.

Further information about the ALMO, including details of the ALMO board, can be found here: <http://www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200235/setting-up-the-almo>

DR told the forum about a possible opportunity for the ALMO to be set up as a Community Interest Company (CIC), on top of being a company limited by guarantee - no other ALMO has been set up as a CIC before. The ALMO would not be a profit making body, and the opportunity to become a CIC could possibly add an additional benefit/protection – this will be looked into further and tenants will be kept aware of any further progress.

It was asked whether Homelessness Services would also be transferred over to the ALMO. DR explained that there are some grey areas, including where Homelessness Services will sit, but these service areas are being discussed to find out where and how they would be best delivered.

Another question was raised around the position of Sheltered Housing. DR advised the forum that this is another grey area due to the current process of funding for Sheltered Housing – critically, the funding for the Independent Living Team from NCC is coming to an end, and they are currently looking at how this will be taken forward. However, the day to day management of Sheltered Housing will be included in the ALMO.

A forum member asked whether NBC would remain as the employer, who would hold the money, and whether the ALMO could be sold in the future. DR advised that staff would be taped over to the ALMO. Furthermore, a management agreement would be negotiated between NBC and staff as to how the ALMO will be delivered. NBC would still own the assets, and there are lots of regulations which protect this.

A forum member asked where the ALMO would stand if Northamptonshire became a Unitary Authority. DR advised that if there was a unitary bid, that the asset of the ALMO would still be held by NBC. If it did combine with the County, there would have to be a full options appraisal process again, as the report states. Furthermore, there are legal protections already in place through Government restrictions.

With reference to the name of the ALMO, DR advised the forum that this would be discussed at the tenants group and the employee focus group. DR advised forum members that another survey will be released in June, followed by a conference in July, consulting tenants on what they think the ALMO should be focusing on.

Cllr. Oldham asked for somebody to return to the forum in the future to update on the progress. DR advised the forum that the best people to invite back in the future would be Suzanne McBride and Cabinet Member Cllr. Mary Markham. It was **AGREED** that the forum would invite SM and Cllr. Markham to the Pensioners Forum meeting on Thursday 24th July.

4. PLANNING THE WORK OF THE FORUM - DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS

VR introduced the action plan template to the forum.

It was **AGREED** that the Pensioners Forum would support the WW1 War Memorial

Intergenerational Project proposed by VR and AM. The forum gave their feedback and ideas on the project, which include:

- The project could teach a lot to younger generations who may have a limited knowledge of the world wars. Also, focus on war memorials would be valuable – it was felt that some war memorials in the town are isolated.
- DH recommended that VR/AM contact Kate Wills at Northampton's Western Front Association to ensure we do not duplicate work that may already be planned, and also look into collaborating and working with others.

VR/AM have a list of 8 war memorials which have been selected for the project, these include those that are in the worst condition. Those who are interested in volunteering to participate in the project, please contact either VR or AM to register your interest.

It was **AGREED** that the second action plan would be focused on increasing attendance at the forum. VR and AM are also working to do this, and are working on a communications plan to increase attendance. RR said that in the past a PCSO has attended the forum – VR to contact the Police to see if this would be possible again.

5. COMMUNITY NEWS EXCHANGE

- JR - the Quakers will be doing an exhibition for WW1. Also recommended that the Irish Support Group is invited to Pensioners forum and Diverse Communities Forum.
- TM – Friends of Eastfield Park will be holding an Easter Fete. Also working on an activity for WW1, such as getting a plaque for local people who died in the war. More details to follow in coming months.
- LH – Community Development Officer from the Independent Living Team – remit is to develop Community Rooms in the Borough. Undertaking pilots of 4 of the community rooms currently. Main focus is to improve health and wellbeing, and also to provide help and information sessions within the community rooms. The team have worked with NCC neighbourhood learning to run activities in the rooms, and are starting to make contact with health services. The Princes Trust has been involved with refurbishing rooms and garden areas. There will be open days for the community rooms; these dates are currently being set. LH will circulate forum information to community rooms and to support officers for further circulation.
- AM told the forum about an opportunity for the Pensioners Forum to have an article in the Age UK Northamptonshire Magazine. The forum **AGREED** that an article would be included to introduce the forum.

PHIPPS NORTHAMPTON BREWERY COMPANY - ROGER RUMSEY

RR told the forum about the reopening of Phipps Brewery in Northampton in May. Phipps Brewery are asking for old photographs of people in the past who were involved with Phipps, or any old photos of the Phipps Brewery - those who send photos will get an invite to the opening. If any forum members have old photographs please feel free to send to AM or VR who can pass these on to Phipps for you.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- A forum member raised difficulties in contacting the council, due to long wait to speak to the contact centre. Cllr. Oldham advised that this is an issue which would need to be raised with Marion Goodman.
- DH asked for information on the signs on Abington Street about cycling on footpaths – who enforces the £30 fine, and how many have been enforced?
- NS raised concerns over the seating in the bus station, stating that 178 seats were on the plans, but now believes that there are only 104 seats. Some forum members raised concerns over the 20p charge for the use of the toilets.
- MK told the forum about receiving his Council Tax demand. There was not any information from the Police or NCC about rate increase with the demand. NCC advised MK that information can be accessed online about this – many older people may not have access to computers. After requesting, MK received a document from NCC outlining their budget spending totals, and received a two page document about the Police.
- A forum member raised concerns over the increase in parking charges for nurses at NGH.
- DH asked for clarification over what is in the contract with Amey – rubbish on Claire Street which has never been swept up.

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS OR FORUM ACTIVITIES

- Health Service
 - o Update on the coming together of Health and Social Services
 - o RR advised that there is a draft timetable of changes, which is being reviewed by the next Northamptonshire Wellbeing Board. RR is going to ask permission at the meeting for this draft timetable to be shared with the Pensioners Forum.
 - o A forum member suggested that it would be useful to have a meeting by meeting update on the changes.
 - o RR will also propose that the lead commissioner for local GPs to attend a meeting to tell the forum what they are going to commission.
 - o The forum **AGREED** that they would like to invite other speakers from Public Health, and then look at developing an action plan around health issues in the future.

- Bus Station - It was agreed to review this after six months operation at our September meeting

8. DATE AND VENUES OF FUTURE FORUM MEETINGS

Thursday 29th May, 14:00-16:00 in the Jeffery Room.
Items on the agenda: NHFT and Refuse Collection.

The meeting concluded at 4:05 pm