

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 1

Question to Cllr Hadland from Councillor Meredith

The Cabinet approved in November 2014 the purchase in principle of Albion House for redevelopment. What was the purchase price and what was the market valuation at the time of purchase?

Response

The purchase price was £500,000. The valuation was below this price, but as was highlighted in the Cabinet Report "the terms reflect the additional worth of the property to the Council as a strategic landowner and the fact that the property wasn't advertised for sale on the open market

Councillor Tim Hadland
Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 2

Question to Cllr Hadland from Councillor Beardsworth

Can the administration update the council on the plans to develop Albion House to provide "additional car parking capacity" linked to the existing St Johns Multi Storey car park?

Response

Work is underway to look at the potential costs of developing the car park.

Councillor Tim Hadland
Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 3

Question to Cllr Hallam from Councillor Meredith

Since the purchase of the Albion House please advise the rental income from any tenants and the value of Business Rates paid by NBC up to 31st March 2016?

Response

Rent received to date is £24,713. The total amount of business rates we have paid up to 31st March 2016 is £20,007.32.

Councillor Michael Hallam
Cabinet Member for Finance

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 4

Question to Cllr Markham from Councillor Beardsworth

In answer to my question at the last council meeting the Leader assured the council that steps were being taken to improve the level of voter registration at the University. Can the Leader advise the Council what action has been taken in the last 4 weeks and what improvement in registration has been achieved in Polling District NN0L2

Response

The Elections Team have continued to promote and advertise registration of all electors across the Borough and this has been helped by a significant national campaign. Canvassers have been active in all parts of the Borough including in the University and in areas where many students live. The most recent student focussed activity, a presence in a communal area used by many students for one day, delivered 3 additional immediate registrations and about 100 students took away details on how to register themselves.

As at the 5th April 2016 there were 86 voters registered in Polling District NN0L2, which is a 100% increase since December and a 20% increase since last Council. As explained at the last Council this figure is lower due to national changes in the method for registering students at their place of study as part of the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration.

In September 2016, a new intake of students will join the University and the Elections Team are making arrangements for a registration presence at Freshers' Week and to canvass University halls of residence as the new students take up their places.

However it is no longer the case that students can be automatically registered at their place of study and it is a matter of choice for each student as to whether they wish to take up their right to be registered at their place of study instead of or as well as their place of family residence.

I commend the Elections Team for their hard work to encourage all to register, including students. I would advise Councillor Beardsworth and all other Councillors that if they have further questions on electoral registration these may be addressed to the Electoral Registration Officer (the Chief Executive) at any time.

**Councillor Mary Markham
Leader of the Council**

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 5

Question to Cllr Markham from Councillor Beardsworth

The Boundary Commission require equality of representation but allow a variance of plus/minus 10%, currently 9 Councillors or 20% of the Council represent wards where the variance is greater than 10%. Does the Leader anticipate another Boundary review or will the Council take action to address the level of under registration of voters which is causing this problem?

Response

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England decides when to carry out Periodic Electoral Reviews of local authority electoral arrangements within existing principal area boundaries. They monitor the levels of electoral imbalance across all principal local authorities in England annually, and those that meet their published criteria will, at some point, be included in their review programme. This decision is taken by the Commission and not by this Council.

To correct your question, the criteria published by the Commission for initiating a review are as follows:

- more than 30% of a council's wards having an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; and/or*
- one or more wards with an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; and*
- the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.*

Based on electoral data as at 5th April this year, there are 8 wards out of 33 where there is an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for the Council, or 24%. Therefore the first criteria has not yet been met.

Based on electoral data as at 5th April this year, there is one ward which has an electoral imbalance of more than 30%. Therefore the second criteria is currently met.

The ward that meets the second criteria at present includes the University Park Campus. As has been previously reported, changes in the method for registering students to vote has reduced the number of students registered at their place of study, here and around the country. As in the answer to your previous question, numbers of students registering has improved and further work is in hand on this. At the same time, over the next few years, new housing development is planned for Park Campus following the move of the University to its new campus. It is therefore likely that registration levels will rise significantly over time in this ward. It would be for the Commission to judge whether the third criteria therefore has been met or not.

As development takes place around the Borough, there will I am sure come a time when the Commission will decide to conduct a Periodic Electoral Review and we will of course work constructively with the Commission when they decide that the time has come for that to happen.

**Councillor Mary Markham
Leader of the Council**

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Question 6

Question to Cllr Bottwood from Cllr Davenport

When NBC or NPH next write to residents and tenants could they also encourage them to keep their area free of litter? Is there a local campaign NBC can run such as 'Best Kept Streets' or 'love Northampton, clean Northampton' and encourage people and resident associations to take?

Response

Thank you for your suggestion, it is most welcome. As you know, I am very keen that everyone plays their part in keeping Northampton clean and tidy. I am always open to ideas on how we can improve the cleanliness of the town. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss your suggestion in more detail and also what else councillors can do as leaders in their communities to positively impact their local environment.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 7

Question to Cllr King from Cllr Davenport

There is a problem with street drinking in Clinton Road/Delapre Street/Abbey Road (both day and night). There is also a problem with motor bikes off road in Briar Hill as well as in Far Cotton and Delapre. What can the Borough Council, in conjunction with the Police, do about this?

Response

Thank you for bringing it to my attention. The local Neighbourhood Warden is linking in with the local policing sector officers to discuss and scope the issues you have highlighted.

Street Drinking - A robust approach will be taken and alcohol will be removed and warnings issued. Names will be taken of any repeat offenders and referrals made to the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit.

Off road motorcycles - We are currently liaising with the police on off road motor cycle issues, and are in the process of designing warning signage for the hot spot locations across the town. The police are also deploying their off-road motorcycle officers in these locations in order to disrupt and deter, and if required take relevant enforcement action.

Councillor Anna King
Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 8

Question to Cllr Markham from Cllr Stone

We have a LAC champion. Who is it and what are they doing to support our Looked After Children?

Response

Councillor Stephen Hibbert is the Council's Looked After Children Champion. He has recently been responsible as Cabinet Member for the development, led by NBC, of an accommodation protocol for care leavers which has been adopted by all local authorities in the county.

**Councillor Mary Markham
Leader of the Council**

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Question 9

Question to Cllr Eldred from Cllr Stone

LAC Children's forum have requested a free leisure card for LAC. How can we facilitate this?

Response

Northampton Leisure Trust are currently looking into this request positively and we support them doing so.

**Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet Member for Community Engagement**

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 10

Question to Cllr Markham from Cllr Stone

Cllr Stone to Cllr Markham. Do we have any apprenticeships we can offer Care Leavers?

Response

The Council offers apprenticeships and is able to consider any applications we receive. I am sure that we would welcome any applications from care leavers.

**Councillor Mary Markham
Leader of the Council**

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Question 11

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Marriott

Why is the Borough paying for Highways that are the statutory responsibility of the County Council? I refer to Abington St, Guildhall Rd, St Giles, St Peters Way?

Response

The Borough Council investment within the public realm is done in partnership with the County Council. Regarding Abington Street, numerous traders have publicly supported the project and acknowledged that it has brought in additional visitors and shoppers to the town centre. The Guildhall Road project enhances an important area of the "Cultural Quarter" and has recently been a primarily enabler to the Theatre being able to apply for planning permission for outdoor seating linked to their new restaurant and bar.

St. Giles Street was awarded "Great British High Street of the Year" in 2015 and the planned improvements in the public realm was a key commitment as part of that successful application. The public realm works to St. Giles Street continues to receive considerable support from traders and businesses alike.

The County Council work in partnership by delivering the works and then accepting the maintenance liability of the upgraded materials used as part of our public realm works.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 12

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Chunga

Cllr How many people are on our housing waiting list?

Response

There are currently 4,076 households on Northampton's Housing Register.

Of these, 374 households are seeking sheltered accommodation and 3,702 households are seeking general needs housing.

**Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing**

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 13

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Chunga

How many people coming to us for housing in the last 12 months for housing have been directed to the Private Sector?

Response

During 2015/16, 2,848 households approached the Housing Options & Advice Service for advice and assistance. Each of these households was given advice on all of their housing options and was encouraged to consider private rented housing.

**Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing**

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 14

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Birch

How much does it cost a motorist who takes advantage of the 2 hour free parking if they park for 2 hours and 15 minutes?

Response

Any vehicle parking beyond the 2 hours free parking offer will be charged £2.40 which is the standard charge for 3 hours parking.

**Councillor Tim Hadland
Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning**

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 18

Question to Cllr King from Cllr Birch

What can the Borough Council do about selling legal highs as they can be a problem?

Response

Unfortunately as current legislation stands there is very little we as a Local Authority can do to prevent the sale of legal highs from retail outlets, as they are currently not illegal.

However, the Government have taken the issue very seriously and the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 gained royal assent in January. This piece of legislation will make the over-the-counter sales of these substances illegal. It was due to come into force on 6 April 2016. Unfortunately this has now been put on hold and a new date is awaited.

We do however have control over what is sold on our Market and the sales of these substances from market stalls was stopped in 2014. This was further added to with the banning of the sale of 'poppers' too.

The situation and associated problems regarding these substances continue to be monitored by all relevant partners, and if at all possible, enforcement action will be taken whenever and wherever agencies can do so.

Councillor Anna King
Cabinet Member for Community Safety

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Question 17

Question to Cllr Bottwood from Cllr Davenport

With safety in mind, can we please investigate the possibility that all our wardens, and park rangers, are equipped with cameras on their jackets like traffic wardens and other enforcements officers?

Response

Neighbourhood wardens are currently trialling two body cameras in the town centre and will consider how we progress matters once the pilot is over and impact has been assessed.'

**Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment**

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 16

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Duffy

New fire precautions prevent mobility scooters being kept in flats. At a pensioner's forum recently it was suggested that mobility scooters could be kept in garages. What is the policy on this?

Response

With advice and support from the Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, NPH has recently agreed a Fire Safety Policy that ensures that the Council and NPH comply with their statutory obligations under the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005.

The Fire Safety Policy requires communal areas to be kept clear at all times, and means that mobility scooters and other items cannot be stored in communal areas.

Permission can be given to store mobility scooters inside flats, but on condition that this is done safely, for example it is charged during the daytime. Advice on safe mobility scooter storage is available from NPH's Housing Officers and Fire Safety Officer.

Although mobility scooters can be kept in garages, they would probably need to be charged safely elsewhere as garages do not normally have any charging facilities.

**Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing**

Question for Full Council Monday 18th April, 2016

Question 15

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Duffy

Dangerous derelict empty garages are a concern. How many have asbestos roofs? What is council policy regard to vandalised garages?

Response

Although the Council holds only limited information about the number and location of garage roofs that include asbestos containing materials, it is normal practice to assume the presence of asbestos before carrying out any repair or refurbishment work and to arrange a 'pre work' asbestos survey to inform the workforce.

The data that the Council and NPH hold in relation to the garages is improving and NPH has embarked on a full asbestos survey on the garage blocks at Kings Heath. This approach will be repeated in other sites where appropriate.

As NPH is responsible for managing the Council's stock of garages, it has a duty to ensure the integrity and safety of the garages. However, in past years, there has been only limited investment in the garages and, coupled with acts of vandalism and the damage caused by cars colliding with the garage blocks, some garages are marginally viable due to the scale of the repair / improvement costs.

The problem is compounded, of course, by the fact that many of the garages are unpopular and remain empty because they are perceived to be insecure and/or too far away from tenants' homes, or they are just too small for modern day cars.

For those garage sites that are unpopular and/or unsustainable, the Council and NPH will be considering different solutions and/or uses.

**Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing**

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Question 19

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Norman Adams

On 10th March 2014 the Cabinet Member for Housing stated the following " The 16 "Airey" type properties in Toms Close are to be decommissioned so that we can create a cleared site for the development of new homes.

Question:

Have NBC created a cleared site for the development of new homes?

LINK TO MARCH 2014 statement

<https://northamptondefendcouncilhousing.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/cabinet-member-report-for-housing-10-03-14.pdf>

Response

No

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet member for Housing

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Question 20

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Norman Adams

Having seen a number of reports about NBC using some land at Dallington Grange for the building of 100 Council houses

Question: What safe guards will be put in place (if any) to protect any new build from 'Right to Buy' discounted sales of up to 70% of the market value?

Response

As the Council will own the 100 council homes that are built at Dallington, tenants who are eligible will be entitled to purchase their home in accordance with the Right to Buy legislation and scheme

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet member for Housing

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Question 21

Question to Cllr Bottwood from Mr S Miller,

The Council has previously advised me that the Low Emissions Strategy is complete and will go out for public consultation shortly before adoption by the Council later in 2016. Please could the councillor advise of the timetable for this process and when he would hope this strategy will be formally adopted.

Response

A report will be presented to Cabinet in the early summer to launch the public consultation on the Low Emissions Strategy. This consultation will take place over the summer and the finalised strategy should be presented for formal adoption before Christmas.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet member for Environment

