

Question for Full Council Monday 11th December, 2017

Question 1

Question to Cllr Hallam from Mr Steve Miller

I'm sure Councillor Hallam is aware of the Council's legal obligation to provide an annual Progress Report with respect to the AQMAs in Northampton. Could he please advise when the Progress Report for 2015 (due by June 2016) and the Progress Report for 2016 (due by June 2017) will be published?

Response

The report for 2016 has now been finalised, submitted to DEFRA and posted on the NBC website. It is available at

<https://www.northampton.gov.uk/downloads/download/3454/air-quality-annual-status-report>

Councillor Hallam
Cabinet member for Environment

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Question 2

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Beardsworth

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing tell me how many people are being housed in emergency temporary accommodation at this time and how many of those are in Bed & Breakfast accommodation?

Response

As of 30 November 2017, there were a total of 220 households in temporary accommodation. Of these, 75 were living in Bed & Breakfast accommodation.

Councillor Hibbert

Cabinet member for Housing & Wellbeing

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Question 3

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Meredith

Are Northampton families still being housed in temporary accommodation in Wellingborough?

Response

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, homeless families are still living in temporary accommodation outside the borough. As at 30 November 2017, there were a total of 12 families living in temporary accommodation in Wellingborough.

Councillor Hibbert

Cabinet member for Housing & Wellbeing

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Question 4

Question to Cllr Eldred from Cllr Stone

Will the administration write to Government asking for the roll out of Universal Credit to be halted?

Response

At this time I won't be writing to the government, this is due to the announcement the chancellor made at the autumn budget and the guarantees he has given us on Universal Credits, he stated that claimants will not have to wait 7 days, the repayments for advances will be extended from 6 months to 12 months.

These changes have been welcomed by one of the Chief executives of Citizens Advice stating: 'the changes announced by the chancellor today are a very welcome step towards fixing the problems with UC, and shows that the government is acting on our evidence about the impact it's having on people's lives.

I will however monitor the UC and take the appropriate action if necessary.

Councillor Eldred
Cabinet member for Finance

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Question 5

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Cllr Ashraf

Please can we have the up to date figures for people in temporary and emergency accommodation? How many are families with children? How many children?

Response

As of 30 November 2017, there were a total of 220 households in temporary accommodation. This included 178 families containing 369 children.

Councillor Hibbert

Cabinet member for Housing & Wellbeing

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Question 6

Question to Cllr King from Cllr Duffy

Can we have the latest crime figures by category? Domestic abuse as a separate category.

Response

All statistics are available in the link:

<https://www.police.uk/search/?next=policing%3Aforce%3Aneighbourhood%3Acrime%3Aindex>

In the new financial year I will provide a 12 month update of what has been achieved 2017-2018 and the next 12 months priorities, which are linked to crime statistics and ongoing trends in crime.

Councillor King

Cabinet member for Community Safety & Community Engagement

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Question 7

Question to Cllr King from Cllr Duffy

How many children in the Borough are living in poverty?

Response

Northamptonshire analysis captures various data sets and you can search by postcode. Includes lots of info on children and young people regarding education and health. I have copied the link below.

<https://www.northamptonshireanalysis.co.uk/profiles/>

Councillor King

Cabinet member for Community Safety & Community Engagement

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Question 8

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Birch

Who made the decision about which design to go forward with the town centre museum and why wasn't there public consultation as promised? When will the museum expansion be completed?

Response by Cllr King

Cabinet made the decision to move forward with the museum expansion project and there was extensive public consultation.

Councillor King

Cabinet member for Community Safety & Community Engagement

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Question 9

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr McCutcheon

What difference has One Angel Square had on town centre footfall?

Response

The footfall cameras in the town centre are located in Abington Street, Market Square, Sheep Street (opposite North Gate Bus Station) and top of the Drapery. Therefore these cameras do not show any significant changes.

However, since One Angel Square opened the St Johns multi-storey car park has shown significant increases in usage and growth in parking income. Since OAS opened we have had to close the car park every week on one day or another. In recent months we have closed the car park on most days (Mondays- Thursdays) with the closures commencing any time after 9.30am and these can last between 10 – 30 minutes.

With Christmas season and the additional 2 panto shows in the Royal & Derngate during the day, the car park closures have increased and are lasting longer.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 10

Question to Cllr Nunn from Cllr Smith

In this colder weather has the Council implemented the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) yet?

Response

The SWEP was implemented on Friday 8th December and is expected to continue until 7.00am on Wednesday 13th December. So far, it has been used by a total of 13 homeless people (11 men and 2 women) and, each night, it has been used by between 9 and 11 homeless people.

There is no strict definition of what counts as 'severe weather'.

SWEP will normally operate, however, when the temperature falls below freezing and is forecast to remain below freezing for a period of at least three consecutive nights.

In consultation with the Hope Centre, the Council will determine when SWEP should be activated. It will do this by closely monitoring the Met Office's weather forecasts and taking into account any weather (including extreme cold, wind and rain) that is likely to increase the risk of serious harm to people who are sleeping rough.

Although winter often poses the greatest risk to people's health, and the SWEP is used to address this risk and prevent risk of deaths on the street, it also provides increased opportunities to engage with entrenched rough sleepers and other hard-to-reach groups because they may be more likely to accept support at this time of year.

The importance of this opportunity to engage with rough sleepers struck me when I learnt that, of the thirteen rough sleepers that were identified across the borough by the rough sleepers count in November, five were known to us but not engaging, and four had returned to sleeping rough after having had accommodation provided to them. This illustrates the complexity of the issue.

SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PROTOCOL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THIS WINTER

Although the Council will continue to co-ordinate SWEP, and provide funding and volunteers, its priority is to make sure that Northampton's Emergency Night Shelter remains fully staffed and operational, so that it remains available for those who meet the access criteria.

Northampton's Hope Centre has kindly agreed that with the support of the Council, Midland Heart and NAASH, it will host SWEP during the winter of 2017/18 and will take the lead in ensuring that everything runs smoothly on the nights that the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol is operational. This means that, on those nights of severe weather, the Hope Centre will provide shelter for those people who are unwilling or unable to access Northampton's Emergency Nightshelter.

Councillor Nunn
Leader of the Council

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Question 11

Question to Cllr King from Cllr B Markham

The administration commissioned a feasibility study for the expansion of the Central Museum and Art Gallery and has now received planning consent for their proposals.

To date this Council has not seen a business plan with such details as:
the projected capital costs of the project
the annualised revenue costs on completion
information regarding possible income streams during the refurbishment and after the museum re-opens
timescales for construction and fit-out.

Can the Portfolio holder advise when the business plan will be completed and made available for the Council and the public to inspect?

Response

The full business case and business plan for the development and operation of the new museum service and detailed budget cost plan for the museum expansion project is still in development and will be finalised during January 2018. The business case and business plan will be referred to and inform a report to be presented to Cabinet in March 2018.

It is not usual for internal business case documents to be made available for public inspection.

Councillor King

Cabinet member for Community Safety & Community Engagement

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Question 12

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Mr Neil Clarke

Extra homes that have been created (through the conversion and reconfiguration of existing buildings) in Eleanore House, Dovercourt and Woodstock.

Could you PLEASE give detail of how many extra homes

- a) Eleanore House
- b) Dovercourt
- c) Woodstock

Response

An extra 10 homes have been created in the three schemes:

- a) In Eleanore House, an extra 6 homes have been created (including 4 that are fully wheelchair accessible)
- b) In Dovercourt, an extra 2 homes have been created
- c) In Woodstock, an extra 2 homes have been created

Councillor Hibbert

Cabinet member for Housing & Wellbeing

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Question 13

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Mr Neil Clarke

Construction work has started at Little Cross Street to provide 9 new flats and 9 new maisonettes.

Could you PLEASE give detail of how many flats were subjected to demolition to make way for them?

Response

There were originally 23 flats on the site.

Councillor Hibbert

Cabinet member for Housing & Wellbeing

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Question 14

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Mr Norman Adams

In your report to council you state:

NPH has been addressing fire and safety issues at Overslade House, Camp Hill and has decanted the scheme in preparation for major reconfiguration and refurbishment

Question:

- a) Will this reconfiguration result in more or less homes?
- b) Will installing a sprinkler system be part of the refurbishment?

Response

a) A number of options appraisals have been developed and these are subject to consultation with the local planning authority. As no decisions have been made yet on the new design and layout of the building, it is not yet known exactly how many homes there will be when Overslade House is reconfigured.

b) There is no mandatory requirement to install sprinklers. Consideration will be given, however, to the installation of sprinklers as part of the design.

Councillor Hibbert

Cabinet member for Housing & Wellbeing

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Question 15

Question to Cllr Hibbert from Mr Norman Adams

In your report to council you state:

Construction work is progressing well in relation to the 14 family homes being built at Lower Bath Street and the 2 large family homes being built at Althorpe Street, and these are due to be completed in February 2018.

Question: What rent model do you intend to use, will it be “social rent” or “Affordable rent”?

Response

It will be 'Affordable rent'.

Councillor Hibbert

Cabinet member for Housing & Wellbeing

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Question 16

Question to Cllr Hallam from Mr Thomas Appleyard

When will the Northampton Borough Councillors Litter strategy be ready to fall in line with the Governments April 2017 25 year Litter Strategy?

Response

The council's litter strategy for the next ten years is embedded within the specification for our new environmental services contract which will go live in June 2018. In accordance with national litter strategy, our new contract will aim to apply best practice in order to achieve reductions in litter and littering behaviour. We have also just appointed a specialist enforcement contractor to help reduce litter, fly tipping and other environmental nuisances.

Councillor Hallam

Cabinet member for Environment

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Question 17

Question to Cllr Hallam from Mr Thomas Appleyard

Over 1500 litter fines have been handed out in Northampton Town centre since January 2017 which is to be applauded. However, can you tell me how many litter fines have been handed out to business including shops and fast food chains in the same period?

Response

During the period from 1 April 2016 to October 2017 (the period covered by the littering statistics) a total of three fixed penalty notices were issued to businesses for waste offences. The littering FPNs were mainly issued as part of the pilot of an environmental enforcement service which did not have powers to deal with waste from business premises. The new environmental enforcement service will potentially have powers to deal with a wider range of offences.

Councillor Hallam
Cabinet member for Environment

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Question 18

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Choudary

What is going to happen with the Vulcan works site now the University has withdrawn from the scheme?

Response

A report to the 6th December 2017 Cabinet meeting sets out how this project will be taken forward. Given that this is both a positive and full report there is nothing more to be said at this time.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 19

Question to Cllr Hadland from Cllr Choudary

Railway Station car park, town centre museum, Vulcan works, Greyfriars site, St Edmunds Hospital, Delapre Abbey and so on. Would you agree there are a few regeneration projects that have fallen behind schedule?

Response

The timing of regeneration projects depends on a number of factors including prevailing market conditions, availability of funding and the appetite of partners, who we work we work closely with, to progress matters within particular timescales. It seem self-evident that sometimes these things take longer to deliver than first anticipated, be they public or private sector led, within or outside of Northampton.

The fact is that many projects are moving positively forward, such as Vulcan Works and Horizon Park (National Grid Site B), whilst others are being actively developed, such as NSCP and the Museum. Meanwhile, Delapre Abbey is moving towards completion.

When appropriate matters are reported to Cabinet which enable Council to see what progress is being made.

Councillor Hadland

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

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Question 20

Question to Cllr Eldred from Cllr Birch

Will Women's refuges still get receive the Housing Benefit for their residents if the proposed changes go ahead?

Response

No, Women's refuges will not receive Housing Benefit for their residents if the proposed changes go ahead. They will fall into the category of short term and transitional supported housing, which includes supported housing for homeless people with support needs, people fleeing domestic abuse, people receiving support for drug and alcohol misuse, offenders and young people at risk. This category will be entirely taken out of the housing benefit and universal credit schemes.

It is proposed that 100% of this provision will be commissioned at a local level, funded locally through a ring-fenced grant, and underpinned by a new local planning and oversight regime. This means all the funding for housing costs (including rent and eligible service charges) that were previously met from Housing Benefit, will instead be allocated to local authorities to fund services that meet the needs of their local areas.

This model will come in to effect from 2020.

Councillor Eldred
Cabinet member for Finance