

Northampton Borough Council - Northampton Pensioners' Forum

Thursday, 29 March 2018, 1:30pm-4pm. Holding Room, The Guildhall

1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES - 5 MINS

ATTENDANCE: Cllr Brian Oldham (BO, Chair), Roger Rumsey (RR, Co-chair), Toby Birch (TB, Community Spaces Northampton), Michael Macleod (MM, NBC), Jamie Wells (JW, NBC), Cllr Sally Beardsworth (SB, NBC), Alan Wright (AW, Individual), Ann Timson (AT, Independent), Tony Mallard (TM, Veteran Club/ERA), Brian Nichols (BN, Individual), Cllr Jonathan Nunn (JN, NBC), Norman Sharp (NS, Individual).

APOLOGIES: Jaqueline Forrest-Smith.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING - 5 MINS

Send minutes and agenda out via post.

ACTION: Chairs to chase Andy Leyton from NBC/Highways.

3. TOBY BIRCH - COMMUNITY CENTRES - 15/20 MINS

TB talked through his involvement with community centres over the years and his role at Community Spaces Northampton and what their community centres can offer.

Taken over 8 community centres which used to be directly run by the NBC.

The leases were agreed at 30 years. Community Spaces do a lot of outreach work and work in the community trying to build up new groups.

The buildings that Community Spaces run are Bellinge Community Centre, Briar Hill Community Centre, Kingsthorpe Community Centre, Lodge Farm Community Centre (gym for disabled adults currently being developed), Rectory Farm Community Centre, Southfields Community Centre, Standens Barn Community Centre and Vernon Terrace Community Centre.

Currently negotiating the lease on St Crispin Community Centre.

TB talked through the current situation trying to finish the deal with St Crispins and the uses of the building.

Usage of Community Centres have increased 24% in 5 years.

Part of Locality which is the main governing body for community groups.

Applied successfully to the national Community Organiser Programme.

Mohamed Sonnie looks to help decrease isolation by creating groups for people

with shared interests.

Q: Do you run as an independent company?

A: We are and we work with the community engagement section of the borough council but we are a totally independent organisation.

Q: How are you viable/profitable?

A: It is a struggle but we look to build reserves. We also look for external funding to keep us running.

SB: Your work is very important, with county council going down PFI route with schools and pricing many groups out, we need community centres now more than ever.

4. COUNCILLOR NUNN - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - 60+ MINS

Few high profile items that need to be discussed.

We have a new chief exec starting on 30th April. We had a long recruitment process which involved many different people.

Gave apologies for what happened at Sixfields – because of this there has been a lot of positive changes within the council.

The chief executive who worked here for the 6 previous months was very good and we are moving forward and learning from previous mistakes. We are hoping that this leads to better service.

New exec has been a theatre manager, his work in Shropshire has been mostly working on improving on the town and the facilities.

Northampton has changed recently, the retail option is not the only reason for people to come here. We have so much history and heritage that we need to capitalise on and display for people to see.

The new contract coming in – Veolia – in June, should make the town a cleaner area. There are now subcontractors who will be working with Veolia to provide a better service.

The news at the county council has not been good for anyone but the books here are balanced. There have been changes to council tax and weekend parking.

The government suggest Northampton go to a unitary council. The PFI's that are left from the county council and are moved onto the responsibility of the other councils that will need to be figured out.

All political parties are coming together as one united front to help Northampton/Northamptonshire move forward.

Q: if in the business world you go bust, you can't honour the contract signed, and

the money owed is not shifted onto another individual. Why may this be the case in the council?

A: as it is signed off as a central government decision.

Forum councillors discussed the difficulty of being able to build new homes because of the many rules.

JN: We are trying our best to make the town as attractive to people as possible, whether residents/businesses, we need to do our best.

BO: It seems as though we may go unitary and we need to figure out the best deal possible.

JN: All councils agree and we need to work out the best options, social care should no longer be a local council responsibility and it should be a health care issue.

SB: Northampton is the biggest town in the country, there are places that will be involved in a unitary council in Northampton that do not have any similarities so it is difficult for all to agree.

NS: There is a bit of confusion with the bus station safety check, it says the motion has been passed but it hasn't been passed.

JN read through the minutes of a previous meeting passed on from Norman about the bus station.

NS: It is a health and safety issue that the bus bays are on a gradient.

JN: Health and Safety approval was given by professionals, so the station was built.

AT: There is often a lack of communication to tenants of certain areas. There are often people such as drug addicts getting into buildings as the locks aren't working.

AT: Also, there are certain things such as sheds being built, without tenants knowing much information about them or who has ownership of them. This is responsibility of NPH, however say they will respond but they do not, this leads to contacting NBC councillors even though it is not their responsibility.

JN: I have not heard many complaints about NPH, however, these are everyday queries that many people have so there needs to be a more satisfactory response as you and other residents are having issues.

Q: Why are the lights on in the multi-storey car parks all day?

A: Not entirely sure, often a safety precaution.

JN: I only do my job because I want to make the town as vibrant as possible. Consultations are important and things cannot always go to vote because there has to be work and research so we can get it right.

The minimum criteria for a unitary council is 300,000.

Q: Community Centres are currently owned by the Borough, if unitary does happen,

what does the future look like then, would there be re-negotiations?

A: The answer is we do not know until it happens. It seems as though the contracts might stand but it is all to be seen in time. This would apply to a lot such as the Market Square and Delapre Abbey for example.

BN: The only complaint I have with the new bus interchange is the drapery bus stops are always busy and people are likely to get soaked. Another criticism is that the pick off and drop off point for the coaches is not close enough to other public transport.

Also, the public do still not know what happened to the money that went to the Cobblers.

JN: There is an investigation ongoing by the Police. This is the most thorough way of carrying this investigation out. When the Police find out information and whether there was wrongdoing, more news will then be announced. Also assets will be returned if the Police deem there has been criminal activity.

BRIAN WILLETT - HOTEL SERVICES MANAGER NGH - 15/20 MINS

6. COMMUNITY NEWS EXCHANGE - 10/15 MINS

TM: Saturday coming up there is an Easter event at Eastfield Park.

Also doing a fundraiser for British Legion crosses.

There are a lot of new houses and flats being built in Eastfield but it seems that they will be backing onto people's houses/gardens.

BN: Is there any news on the old Broadmead pub?

Forum members discussed that there isn't any known plans.

TB: we run/host residents groups in our community centres free of charge as we think this is part of the community provision and it is our contribution to the community.

SB: There has been motorcycle nuisance down cycle and dog walking tracks. Does not seem that police are as visible there as they have been in previous years.

ACTION: MM to send another e-mail to commissioner.

BO: If we get the PCC in – make it the only item on the agenda.

TB: there has been vandalism at the community centres and we have called the Police and they have not come out to help. We have had to police them ourselves which shouldn't be the case.

NS: There are two people doing the same job, litter pickers and people giving tickets out for littering, they should be picking up litter instead.

SB: It is about education and acting as a deterrent, it is the people that litter and they need to learn that it is not correct.

BO: There is a lot of litter but equally, many bins are overflowing and they need to be emptied more often.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS - 10 MINS

8. DATE AND VENUES OF FUTURE FORUM MEETINGS - 5 MINS

31st May 2018

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified