

Councillor Beardsworth to Councillor Nunn:

At the Council Meeting in November 2018 the Council agreed to work with a range of stakeholders to produce a People's Plan by July 2019 to influence the priorities for Northampton in the first year of the new West Northamptonshire Unitary Council.

We are now 4 months from that decision and 4 months from the stated deadline for producing the plan and no indication is evident of any start on this Council motion.

Can the Leader please provide an update setting out the stakeholders consulted the progress to date and provide an assurance that the People's Plan will be produced by July 2019?

Reply:

The People's Plan refers to regeneration projects across Northampton and the wider vision for the town, but must take into account the views of a huge number of people and organisations.

Since the motion was passed in November 2018, we have also received the details of the government's 'Future High Streets' fund, and in order to ensure that there is a way of both capturing the views and aspirations of so many people and groups, and to also ensure that we submit a good Future High Streets Expression of Interest (EoI), NBC has recently coordinated a new stakeholder group (Northampton Forward) to further look at the wider regeneration of the town. Given the time pressure of the Expression of Interest deadline of 22nd March, and it's focus on funding the built environment, the initial focus of this group is demonstrating to government the town's need and ambition, and beginning to shape a vision and masterplan that will create a vibrant and sustainable future.

Stakeholders in this initial phase include those that the government will see as being vital to the success of any EoI that they support, such as Northamptonshire County Council, University of Northampton, Town Centre BID, Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, Royal & Derngate, Northamptonshire Police, Grosvenor Centre, Trickers, South East Midlands LEP. The group is chaired by Northampton Borough Council, who will also be the accountable body for the Future High Streets bid, and once the EoI has been submitted into the governments £675m Future High Street Fund, and the key elements of this publicised, the next phases of work on the wider vision and regeneration of the town can commence.

This must involve the widest possible consultation, and it is essential that this consultation is not narrow, and therefore Northampton Forward may coordinate consultation, but the process must involve panels or sub groups across different subject areas, open consultations etc., and ensure that it takes account of the views of a vast number of sources, from the public, to the council's forums, partners across very many other areas such as health, sport, Voluntary Sector, and community groups including those that have recently formed to themselves consider the future of

Northampton. It must, therefore, go far beyond the reach of a single panel, and it will give everybody the opportunity to contribute.

Councillor Beardsworth to Councillor Hibbert:

At the Council Meeting setting the budget in February the Capital Programme included the heading of ***“Temporary Accommodation / Housing with a value of £8M”*** which is clearly a major initiative to address the escalating cost of Homelessness.

Will the Portfolio holder indicate the time scale for spending under this budget head and indicate exactly what projects, services and activities the public can expect to be delivered for this £8M of investment?

Reply:

The Capital Programme involves the sum of £3m (not £8m) to support the Council’s efforts to reduce the amount it spends on temporary accommodation. These funds are available from April 2019 and Officers are already working on a programme that will start to deliver early in 2019/20.

Councillor B Markham to Councillor Larratt:

The Council passes Motions in good faith to improve the working of the Borough Council and the services provided to residents of Northampton. Members of the Council have previously expressed concern that motions disappear into a “black hole” and never appear to get implemented.

At several council meetings the Deputy Leader has said that the promised progress report to Full Council is ‘close’ to being produced.

Can the Deputy Leader list the problems and reasons why, once again, this agenda fails to provide all councillors with a progress report?

Can he also confirm that a comprehensive progress report will be provided at the next Council meeting?

Reply:

Please see Item 8 – Update of Carried Motions

Councillor B Markham to Councillor Hill:

The last Local Plan approved by the Borough Council in 1997 and is now out of date.

In December 2014 the Joint Core Strategy was approved, providing the higher level strategic context to develop Part 2 of a local plan with specific coverage of Northampton.

The Borough Council has now had 5 years to produce a Part 2 plan for Northampton but there is currently no clear date when this will be available to submit to the Planning Inspector for approval while both Daventry and South Northants District Councils have each considered drafts of Part 2 Local plans for submission to the planning Inspectorate.

Will the Portfolio Holder provide:

- an update on the progress of NBC Part 2 plan?
- target dates for the Part 2 submission for Northampton to be shared with councillors and submitted to the Planning Inspector?
- an assessment of how long Northampton residents will be disadvantaged by not having a local plan in place to protect them from developer-led development?

Reply:

The last plan approved by the Borough Council is the Central Area Action Plan in 2013. This, together with the Joint Core Strategy, form part of a suite of development plans which are being used to determine planning applications.

The production of a Local Plan Part 2 is a complicated process which needs a significant body of evidence which is both up to date and accords with current Government legislation. The Borough Council has had to review its Local Plan Part 2 timetable on several occasions, particularly in light of ongoing housing delivery when compared against the Core Strategy trajectory, which has delayed the drafting of the Plan. The current situation is that the Local Plan Part 2 will be brought to Cabinet in late Spring for approval for public consultation over a 6 week period. The results of this consultation will be used to inform the submission version of the Local Plan Part 2. This Plan will be brought back to the Council for approval to submit to the Secretary of State in late 2019. The Plan would then be subject to an Examination in Public, the timing of which is not within the control of the Borough Council.

Given that the intention is to submit the Local Plan Part 2 before the Core Strategy becomes out of date will allow increasing weight to be attached to it as an emerging document when determining any speculative applications.

Brian Hoare to Councillor Eldred

Only one member of the public attended the budget meeting on the 5th February 2019.

At that meeting you told the audience that the meeting had been “extensively advertised via social media”

I emailed you the next day asking for details of the publication of this meeting but have yet to receive a reply.

Can you please advise:

- 1) When and where was this meeting advertised to ensure effective participation by the public?
- 2) What level of attendance would in your mind constituted a successful level of engagement with the public?
- 3) Do you think that the administration can claim that it made every effort to engage with the public which is a statutory duty when proposing the budget and council tax charge for the following year?

Reply:

- 1) **The public consultation on our budget proposals for 2019/20 was approved by Cabinet on 12 December 2018.**

Survey start date: 21 December 2018

Survey end date: 1 February 2019

This consultation was formally closed when the budget was adopted in February 2019 at Council.

The draft Budget also went to the following meetings, with all meetings open to the public and all papers published in advance:

Audit Committee 28th January 2019

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 4th February 2019

Cabinet 20th February 2019

A press release was circulated and posted on our website on 8 January. This went out to a total of 230 recipients including all NBC Members and parish councils.

<https://www.northampton.gov.uk/news/article/2884/views-sought-on-council-s-draft-201920-budget>

This was followed up with posts on Facebook and Twitter on 10 and 18 January, including one about the public meeting.

The public meeting was also promoted on the consultation web page - where people would sign on to access the survey and corresponding documents

We also published the news on our website and posted two social media alerts on both of our primary social media platforms as follows:

Facebook post on 10 January – 1,865 people reached

Facebook post on 18 January – 2,276 people reached

Twitter post on 10 January – 1,538 people reached

Twitter post on 18 January – 1,741 people reached

- 2) The Council advertised the meeting as one part of the consultation process and provided other opportunities for the public to participate in the budget process as included above.**
- 3) The Council fulfilled its statutory duty in respect of proposing the budget and council tax charges for 2019/20.**

Councillor Marriott to Councillor Hadland:

Northampton has a statutory duty to produce a Northampton Local Plan (Part 2) which sets out the vision, objectives and strategic policies for delivering growth for the borough, and set out development management policies up to 2029. It will complement the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) which was adopted in 2014.

Given that NBC is due to be encompassed into an unwelcomed Western Unitary why has this plan not been completed?

When will it be completed?

As the other authorities have completed theirs this failure will undoubtedly place Northampton at a disadvantage

Reply:

The production of a Local Plan Part 2 needs to be evidence based, reflect the current situation and be both up to date and accord with current Government legislation. The Borough Council has had to review its Local Plan Part 2 timetable on several occasions, particularly in light of ongoing housing delivery when compared against the Core Strategy trajectory, which has delayed the drafting of the Plan. The current situation is that the Local Plan Part 2 will be brought to Cabinet in late Spring for approval for public consultation over a 6 week period. The results of this consultation will be used to inform the submission version of the Local Plan Part 2. This Plan will be brought back to the Council for approval to submit to the Secretary of State in late 2019. The Plan would then be subject to an Examination in Public, the timing of which is not within the control of the Borough Council.

Councillor Smith to Councillor Hibbert

When will the Loughborough report be implemented?

We are approving private sector lets which provide minimum space per person. The standard is very low. Can we set our own standards and when will they be implemented?

Reply:

Loughborough University was commissioned to review the effectiveness of the current Interim Planning Policy Statement for Houses in Multiple Occupation and the results of this have been published. One of the recommendations was to produce a town-wide article 4 area, which would require all changes of use to HMOs to need planning permission. There is a legal procedure which has to be followed to establish this, and preparatory work has started on this.

Councillor Ashraf to Councillor Hibbert:

Has the Social Lettings Agency been a success or a failure?

Reply:

In response to the urgent need to reduce the number of homeless families being placed in Bed & Breakfast and out-of-borough accommodation, it was necessary to redeploy the Social Lettings Agency staff to focus on temporary accommodation.

This redeployment has been very successful in improving the housing conditions of hundreds of homeless households, but it has also limited the Housing Options & Advice Service's ability to help people access good quality rented accommodation.

In the Council's 2019/20 Budget, additional funding is being provided to support the restructure of the Housing Options and Advice Service, including a dedicated Temporary Accommodation Team.

When the Temporary Accommodation Team is in place, the Social Lettings Agency staff will revert back to their primary role of procuring affordable private rented accommodation that can be used to meet housing need and prevent homelessness.

Councillor Ashraf to Councillor Hibbert

Have NPH set up Community Hubs around the town?

Reply:

Yes. NPH have set up 16 Hubs across the town all of which are used for various activities. The Hubs are:

- **Leicester Street Community Hub**
- **Bouverie Road Community Hub**
- **Eastfield Close Community Hub**
- **The Liburd Community Hub**
- **George Nutt Court Community Hub**
- **Blackberry Lane Community Hub**
- **Montague Crescent Community Hub**
- **Parsons Meade Community Hub**
- **Cardigan Close Community Hub**
- **Hinton Road Community Hub**
- **Market Street Community Hub**
- **Arlbury Road Community Hub**
- **Eden Close Community Hub**
- **James Lewis Court Community Hub**
- **Goldcrest Court Community Hub**
- **Spring Boroughs Hub**

Councillor Ashraf to Councillor Hibbert

Have NPH set up Housing Officer Surgery around the town?

Reply:

Yes. Each Housing Officer holds at least one surgery each month. They are held in the Hubs and other community facilities, and are often held in partnership with other agencies. Full details of all the surgeries can be found on the NPH website

<https://www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/housing-advice-sessions>