

## Minutes of the meeting of the City Council

held at the Council Chamber, Council House

on 11 September 2023 from 2.00 pm - 5.10 pm

### Attendances:

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|--|---------------------------------------|
| ✓ Councillor Carole McCulloch (Lord Mayor) |                                       |
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| ✓ Councillor Saj Ahmad                     | ✓ Councillor Sam Lux                  |
| ✓ Councillor Liaqat Ali                    | ✓ Councillor Sulcan Mahmood           |
| ✓ Councillor Leslie Ayoola                 | Councillor Farzanna Mahmood           |
| ✓ Councillor Cheryl Barnard                | ✓ Councillor AJ Matsiko               |
| ✓ Councillor Steve Battlemuch              | ✓ Councillor David Mellen             |
| ✓ Councillor Graham Chapman                | ✓ Councillor Sajid Mohammed           |
| ✓ Councillor Kevin Clarke                  | ✓ Councillor Fozia Mubashar           |
| Councillor Audrey Dinnall                  | ✓ Councillor Salma Mumtaz             |
| ✓ Councillor Michael Edwards               | ✓ Councillor Sana Nasir               |
| ✓ Councillor Nadia Farhat                  | ✓ Councillor Devontay Okure           |
| ✓ Councillor Faith Gakanje-Ajala           | ✓ Councillor Nayab Patel              |
| ✓ Councillor Samuel Gardiner               | Councillor Georgia Power              |
| ✓ Councillor Sam Harris                    | ✓ Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos        |
| ✓ Councillor Jay Hayes                     | ✓ Councillor Ethan Radford            |
| ✓ Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora       | ✓ Councillor Nick Raine               |
| ✓ Councillor Imran Jalil                   | ✓ Councillor Eunice Regan             |
| ✓ Councillor Corall Jenkins                | ✓ Councillor Sarita-Marie Rehman-Wall |
| ✓ Councillor Maria Joannou                 | ✓ Councillor Samina Riaz              |
| ✓ Councillor Kirsty Jones                  | ✓ Councillor Andrew Rule              |
| Councillor Kirsty L Jones                  | ✓ Councillor Naim Salim               |
| Councillor Helen Kalsi                     | ✓ Councillor Michael Savage           |
| ✓ Councillor Angela Kandola                | ✓ Councillor Matt Shannon             |
| ✓ Councillor Anwar Khan                    | ✓ Councillor Hayley Spain             |
| ✓ Councillor Zafran Nawaz Khan             | ✓ Councillor Maria Watson             |
| ✓ Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan                | ✓ Councillor Adele Williams           |
| ✓ Councillor Neghat Khan                   | ✓ Councillor Linda Woodings           |
| ✓ Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis               | ✓ Councillor Audra Wynter             |

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✓ Indicates present at meeting

### 28 Apologies for absence

Councillor Audrey Dinnall – personal

Councillor Helen Kalsi - unwell

Councillor Kirsty L Jones – leave

Councillor Farzanna Mahmood – personal

Councillor Georgia Power - personal

### 29 Declarations of Interests

None

### **30 Questions from Citizens**

#### **Display of Religious Symbols**

A citizen asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture: What is Nottingham City Council's policy on the permanent display of religious symbols on publicly owned land?

Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis replied as follows:

The policy was agreed by the Council's Executive Board and is available online within the Committee Reports section of the Council's website. The title of this policy is "New Statues, Monuments and Public Artworks in Parks and the Public Realm Owned by Nottingham City Council". It is important to note that the policy does not cover commemorative trees and benches, nor does it cover temporary installations, murals, plaques, or any installations on private land, although those may require planning permission. The policy provides an extra layer of nuance and due diligence, looking at considerations such as location, local history, funding, maintenance of structures that are proposed, quality of materials, community support, etc. When the policy went through the Portfolio, I did ask for a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion – considerations to ensure that future monuments and installations express the full diversity of lived experiences in our city. We looked at areas such as the representative function of space for people from diverse ethnic and gender backgrounds. There is still a way to go in terms of achieving equality of representation in our public spaces, but this policy, as well as the new street naming policy which was brought forward last year, is a positive way forward in making space more representative, and space more accommodating to all of our diverse communities. It should be noted, lastly, that the statues and monuments policy does not replace the traditionally known planning process. Planning is a statutory function and anyone who proposes any installation which is of a certain scale will need to go through planning processes, depending of course on their application and the size of the proposed installation. The statues policy is an extra layer of consideration for issues related to culture which takes place before the planning process in most cases. That means that approval can be given by the Portfolio Holder responsibility for culture on a specific installation, but in most cases that will require a further approval which is given in relation to planning considerations, and that will be given either by a Planning Officer or by the Planning Committee depending on the scale of development. I hope that answers your question, thank you.

#### **Playgrounds**

A citizen asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services and Parks: What is the Council's current spending commitment to maintain, repair, improve and expand the provision of playgrounds in Nottingham? How does this commitment compare to patterns of spending over the past decade?

Councillor Corall Jenkins replied as follows:

With regards to the delay in replacing the swings in Ruddington Lane Recreation Ground, may I first apologise for the disappointment caused by the delay in the replacement. The old swing unit was removed because it had become dangerous, and, as always, our priority is to maintain the health and safety of the users of the

play area. However, I have spoken to the Green Spaces Development Team and I can confirm that the swings have been delivered and we are now waiting for contractors to confirm a date for the installation of the swings. Unfortunately, the play equipment is often made to order and delivered by specialist play area contractors. Clearly, this can create some delay and there can be supply chain delays, and also timetables can be delayed by the capacity of contractors. However, the Service understands your concerns, and will take steps to ensure advance communication is carried out to inform ward councillors about any future removals or any delays in installing replacement equipments.

### **Audit Committee**

A citizen has asked the following question of the Chair of the Audit Committee: The recent Ernst and Young audit report concerning the Council's finances has reportedly not been reviewed by the Leader, Deputy Leader (notably the councillor responsible for finance), or other Council members. Additionally, the public, who have contributed £240,000 in council tax for this consultancy, has not been privy to the findings. Yet, decisions regarding the Council's response to the report were finalised in the Audit Committee meeting on 30th June. Given the Council's previous history of making political decisions without comprehensive information, evident from situations like Robin Hood Energy and the discrepancies in the Housing Revenue Account, two questions arise: a) Is the Chair of the Audit Committee content with the resolutions agreed upon during the 30th June meeting? b) Is it a routine practice for the Committee to make fiscal decisions using taxpayers' money without thorough knowledge of the facts?

Councillor Sam Gardiner replied as follows:

As has previously been communicated at Full Council, the report was prepared by EY. It was developed to give technical advice and opinion as to the effectiveness of financial controls at Nottingham City Council. To address the first question, I remain satisfied as to the appropriateness of the resolutions agreed at Audit Committee on 30 June 2023, which included the following: The Audit Committee noted the outcomes of the controls review, specifically the findings of the controls assessment, which underpins a conclusion that Nottingham City Council is operating within a considerably weakened control environment which is not fit for purpose in allowing a local authority to enact effective financial stewardship; and noted the immediate steps that the Council will undertake to address the findings. The Audit Committee requested future updates on the remediation work through the financial improvement plan reports; discussed establishing a sub-group that can assist the remediation work, and also wants to establish new panels, the remit of which will be established at a future meeting. Finally, the Audit Committee members want to voluntarily undertake a CIPFA self-assessment of the Audit Committee to provide assurances externally. It is clear, Lord-Mayor, that there were several outcomes from this one agenda item on Audit Committee on 30 June. It is clear that this will remain a standing item with the progress of remediations being monitored. It is worth nothing that the Audit Committee does have Opposition councillors within its membership, and there was a closed door session where councillors could ask any questions or seek clarity where they saw fit.

As to the second part of the question in relation to the Committee making fiscal decisions, the Committee has not taken a fiscal decision. The Committee has listened to the advice of the professional officer, reviewed it, and agreed with the

proposed course of action, but to be absolutely clear the Committee was never asked to make a fiscal decision.

The Audit Committee has a job to do, Lord-Mayor, and I am confident it will carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively.

### **31 Petitions from Councillors on behalf of Citizens**

None

### **32 To confirm the Minutes of the last meeting of Council held on 10 July 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

### **33 To receive official communications and announcements from the Leader of the Council and/or the Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive made the following announcements:

I'm pleased to report that the Council has received 15 Green Flag Awards, the international quality mark for parks and green spaces. 15 sites, including the Arboretum, Collett Country Park, Victoria Embankment, Highfields Park, Wollaton Park, Woodthorpe Grange, and two cemeteries – Highwood and Wilford Hill – have been accredited. The awards are testament to the hard work and dedication of Council staff and volunteers who make the city's parks and green spaces such great places for everyone to enjoy.

The Council has also been shortlisted in two other national awards. The Local Government Chronical Awards - this, in respect of our Public Health Team and our Change Academy where staff, many from under-represented groups, have been supported to develop their skills in Business Analysis and Project Management, and working on our improvement programmes – and also the Association for Public Service Excellence Awards for our frontline services. This covers our parks and our horticultural and our best climate action plan for decarbonisation.

I've got three sad announcements. Firstly, Phil Saunders, an officer in our Housing Management Division, died peacefully at home at the beginning of September. This was within a few days of taking retirement after 41 years of public service. Secondly, we join Nottinghamshire Police in mourning the sad loss of Sergeant Graham Saville who tragically died after being hit by a train while trying to help a distressed man. And thirdly, we also mark the passing of Valentine Nkoyo, and remember her for her work with the Mojatu Foundation which empowers and supports communities in Nottingham at risk from ongoing prejudice. Our thoughts are with the family and friends of all those we have lost.

Councillors David Mellen and Andrew Rule spoke in tribute to Graham Saville, and Councillor AJ Matsiko and Councillor Sarita-Marie Rehman Wall spoke in tribute to Valentine Nkoyo and Phil Saunders respectively.

A minute's silence was held.

**34 Questions from Councillors - to the City Council's lead Councillor on the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority**

None

**35 Questions from Councillors - to a member of Executive Board, the Chair of a Committee and the Chair of any other City Council body**

**Homelessness and Housing Funding**

Councillor Sam Harris asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Housing: Does the Portfolio Holder for Housing share with me my shock and utter despair at the reports in July that Michael Gove returned nearly £2 billion back to the Treasury? And could the Portfolio Holder tell me how this money would ease the homelessness and housing crisis in Nottingham?

Councillor Jay Hayes replied as follows:

Yes, I do share your concerns about this matter. Funding like this would have been valuable to help us tackle the homelessness and housing crisis in Nottingham and I'm sure a number of councillors up and down the country would have been able to use this money to do the same. The Chartered Institute for Housing stated that such a sum would have bought five thousand affordable homes into use. Five thousand families could have had a decent, long-term secure home with this funding.

To give a sense of the scale of the problems many families in Nottingham are facing, we have over nine thousand households on the waiting list needing support through social housing in the city. We have 761 of those households in temporary accommodation, including B&Bs and hotels, and every day new households are seeking advice and support from the Council's Housing Aid Service. Many of those are seeking help because of rising rents across the city and in the private sector which have outstripped the levels of the local housing allowance because this benefit has not kept up with the inflation in the rental market. More and more people who are relying on the housing allowance are actually in work and need this because of low pay. They need this money to support paying their rent or support their rent – and this is even before we consider the number of households who learned about their mortgages going up or that will go up in the next few months through the interest rate increase. That is because of the failure of the Conservative Government under Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak, who have failed to take any action to support people with mortgages or in private rented accommodation. Funds like this handed back to the Treasury could and should have been used to provide more low cost social housing, which is in such urgent demand. It could have been used to help to replace homes sold under the Right to Buy scheme with one-to-one replacements in Nottingham. Over the past seven years we have lost 1,750 council houses to the right-to-buy scheme and we have not been able to get the full money to replace them.

The Government offers funds in ways which make it hard for us to accept because they come with strings attached. Much of the funding we have to find or borrow from other resources, and with the borrowing caps and the financial difficulties we face, and that many other councils face across the country, it has been impossible for us to do so. A good example of this is the recent Local Authority Housing Fund allocated to support refugees with housing. Like us, many other authorities have not taken this

money, because it is only partly funded by the Government and the rest will have to come out of the City Council's budget. Yet again the failings of Government passing the burden on to local authorities. We already have subsidised funding to provide homes through the so-called One-for-One Right to Buy Replacement Fund, but these monies only meet 40% of the costs, so every house we sell through Right to Buy we only get 40% of that money in return. We have to find the rest to build a new property. Last week the Municipal Journal ran an article detailing the significant proportion of local authorities who also couldn't use this money due to the lack of matched funding finance or the fact that the funds are designed to buy homes on the second-hand market which is actually inflating the cost because of how much prices and interest rates have gone up over the last few years. If Nottingham City were able to secure a share of the funds that were given back to the Treasury without any strings attached they could have replaced all of our One-for-One Right to Buy replacement services. That's over two thousand houses we could have replaced with that money if it was given straight to us. Last year, Nottingham City Council unfortunately reached a great milestone. We have lost over half of our housing stock to the Right to Buy, which is increasing in demand and putting people into high-rent private accommodation which is unaffordable and putting more demand on us to find vulnerable families and people a decent home to live in.

While the Government has scrapped housing targets, in Nottingham we, as this Labour Group and this Council, haven't. I'm proud to say that last Council term we delivered on 1,000 new houses in the city for families to move in to, and this year we were elected on a winning manifesto that put 51 of us in this Chamber today to build another. I'm determined to see that we meet that target by the end of this term. But this money could have been spent – it doesn't need to go back to the Treasury – it could have remained in Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, it could have been spent in other ways. It could have been spent on levelling up. How many times have we been rejected for levelling up funding in this city and other places like it when a nice wealthy place like Richmond that the Prime Minister sits in gets levelling up funding. If the Government doesn't have any ideas on how to spend this money, maybe the Opposition Party in Parliament do, and a Government without any ideas is a Government that should call for a General Election.

### **Afghan Refugees**

Councillor Liaqat Ali asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods, Safety and Inclusion: Does the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods, Safety and Inclusion agree that the Government's decision to "evict" Afghan refugees from hotels and temporary accommodation is a shameful failure of duty, and yet another example of the Government's callous and uncaring views on refugees to this country?

Councillor Sajid Mohammed replied as follows:

My honest and fair appraisal Councillor Ali is that we can only describe this Government's performance as shameful failure – to everyone. I want to provide some context to the question which I feel would be helpful for members in the room. I think many of us remember exactly two years ago in late August, the images we saw of Kabul Airport, the so-called planned evacuation of British personnel, Afghans who had connections with Britain and also Afghans who worked for Britain during the war, and I think it's widely accepted that the planned evacuation was poorly executed. This inevitably led to the resettlement program being done off-the-cuff. In fact, we

could just describe it. I would describe it from my perspective as a continuous work-in-progress as policies continuously changed. It inevitably led to the Government looking for bridging accommodation, and we were very fortunate in Nottingham that Nottingham has two hotels – there isn't that many in the Midlands, but Nottingham had two – and we had the opportunity to resettle these Afghan refugees in the hotels. Unfortunately, as I would describe a bolt of lightning but as many of us could foresee given the aggressive nature against refugees by this current Government, all Afghans received a Notice to Quit three months ago in June. They were told that they only had twelve weeks to find accommodation and leave the service accommodation and hotels. That's twelve weeks. Many had children. Now as you can imagine, the resettlement program has always had a patchy response. Local governments have provided different responses in different ways and many were not offered places of accommodation even now. But Nottingham is a city of hope, a city of welcome, a city of opportunity and I'm proud to say that our officers have worked extremely well. I'm very proud of our response, and we have managed within those twelve weeks to find all Afghan families private sector accommodation. Not one has gone on to be homeless, not one has presented at Housing Aid – and this is down to our ability of partnership working. I want to recognise the great work we have done together with the Department of Work and Pensions and with the Home Office Liaison Officer. Not only have we found private sector accommodation for those families, bar 3 who are currently still in a hotel and we expect within the next four to six weeks they will move into their accommodation. We are waiting for special adaptations to be made by the landlords so that they can move in. So we've managed to do that, but not only that – we've ensured that all the Afghans received English classes and were supported by the Department of Work and Pensions. Many have already started to work in the city, and many more are going to join the employment market and help this city.

Now Councillor Ali, it remains to say that your description was 'is this a shameful failure of duty?', and I want to say that who haven't this Government failed? When we think about our children that were denied free school meals by so-called English MP patriots. They wrap themselves in the Union Flag, they wear badges of the Union Flag, yet millions of people in this country are using food banks. Even now, they haven't invested in our schools, and our schools have become dangerous buildings to our own children. They've brought the NHS, these so-called patriots, to breaking point. They've tanked the economy, where everyone is paying higher prices for gas and electricity and mortgage rates are going up, small businesses are being affected, and they have been crushing the public sector services through austerity measures, and now we're paying the price of high inflation. I want Nottingham to be reassured that this Group – Nottingham Labour – are the true patriots. We are committed that every child in this city will thrive, that no one will go hungry, that we will try our hardest to house, provide good education, good employment, and support local businesses. The only solution there is, is for an immediate General Election where we can get rid of these fraudsters, patriots who only have helped – it's easier, Councillor Ali, to ask the question 'who have they helped?' – well they've given tax cuts to petroleum companies so that they can continue polluting our world; they've given billions of money to their favourite friends and associates for personal protective equipment – most of it was never delivered, and at a higher price; and they have broken and tried to sell this country off all over the world to private companies and industry. It's only a Labour Government that is full of patriotism, that loves this country, that loves its people, that's going to bring back the housing.

## **Nottingham Castle**

Councillor Sam Lux asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture: Over 60,000 people have visited the Castle since its reopening, would the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture join me in celebrating this and can he confirm what future events are planned at the Castle for this year?

Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis replied as follows:

On Monday 26 June Nottingham Castle reopened its gates. In the ten weeks since it was reopened, until 1 August 2023, I am pleased to report that we have hosted over 60,045 people visiting the Castle site, so slightly more than 60,000. If we consider the events prior to the full opening, the total number of people through the gates would rise to 72,005. So when you consider that we've set the target of 200,000 people in one year, isn't that realistic? Isn't that reassuring in terms of our ability to bring people through the doors? Seeing families queuing to go into the Castle and enjoy the redeveloped museum and the Brewhouse Yard, has been extremely gratifying to witness. Clearly the pricing strategy – pay once, visit all year, with under fifteen-year-olds going free – has had a great rapport with the people of Nottingham, and I think that it's a great thing to have as well if we think about Nottingham as a city that is child-friendly.

I want to acknowledge the hard work and professionalism of all of our teams in the Museums and Gallery Service in reopening so quickly. Yet again, it's the steer of Labour Councillors and a promise made to the Nottingham public about reopening the Castle in June, and we've obviously followed through on that promise. The Team and I are now focused on the Autumn program and developing a range of talks and events with partners. Details of these will be announced over the next number of weeks and will be linked to specific dates which will obviously be announced. However, I would like to take this opportunity to give you a brief overview of events and activities that are going to take place, which I think many of you are already waiting for. So, in September we obviously have the Heritage Open Days. We had two, on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of this month just passed. We had the £1 ticket for the Heritage Weekend at Nottingham Castle. We had heritage talks from the people at the '70 Objeks & Tings' off the Windrush exhibition being held at the Castle at the moment. October will see events being planned in partnership with the universities for a special Freshers' Week promotion for the Castle, and I'm sure that Councillors Matt Shannon and Sam Lux sitting here are happy to hear that their support and their help to the Student Unions has come to fruition in terms of us having something happening in the Castle. It's really important when we have feedback from Councillors to see how we can make our heritage more friendly to our student population, more welcoming to our young people. There will also be a planned event with the organisers of the '70 Objeks & Tings' for the Caribbean finale celebration of the exhibition for the celebrations of Black History Month that will happen next month. In November we will see the launch of a twelve-month season of programmes dedicated to neurodivergent art with the world premiere of Stim Cinema. The exhibition will show how autistic filmmakers document the autistic perspective of the pleasure of repetition. The Castle will also be hosting talks as part of the University of Nottingham Being Human festival in the city, these being based at the Castle Rebellion and including the Goose Fair Cheese Riot of 1766. In December there will be a Christmas through the Ages event on the site featuring our own Castle Father Christmas and Christmas Market. This is just a brief outline of events taking place



that we are planning, and people should check the Castle website for further details. This has been an exciting time for Nottingham Castle – troublesome indeed this year, but also very exciting in terms of us being able to bring it back and have such an exciting programme coming in. I'm really proud of our work here and I'm looking forward to it developing further in 2024 and beyond.

### **Water Pollution**

Councillor AJ Matsiko asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services and Parks: Could the Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services and Parks confirm how polluted the river water is in Nottingham - in the Trent, the Leen and other water courses?

Councillor Corall Jenkins replied as follows:

As a local authority, we do not have direct access to the data on how polluted our waterways are. This is held by the Environment Agency. They have provided us with some statistics for the city, but unfortunately this is not broken down by river. In 2023 there were 21 sewage incidents in our rivers including burst water sewages, combined sewer overflows, pump station failures and sewage work issues. Because we do not have direct access to water pollution data, I am unable to give you a clearer picture as to how polluted our rivers in Nottingham are. However, the River Trust also publishes sewage leakage data. This data only covers 85% of the leakages and it is possible that water companies are concealing leakages. In 2022 there were 46 storm overflows of sewage in Nottingham waterways, all of which were monitored. There were 619 sewage spills, for a total of 1,909 hours, equating to 79.5 days. Again, this is only covering 85% of the actual leaks that took place. It is unacceptable that many sewages spills are occurring in the city. It is unacceptable that the waterways are polluted in this manner. We know who to blame for this, and it is the Conservative Government. It is under their watch that water companies have been getting away with breaking the law, with blatant dumping of sewage in waterways across the country, dumping it into our seas and polluting the country. The Government has failed as it allows water companies to effectively self-regulate their own actions. They have, like in many other areas of Government, abdicated responsibility. Perhaps the worst thing is that the water companies, when faced with the scale of their failures, have publicly stated that in any mitigation and improvement to the treatment of the system of sewer waters and the pipes etc. would lead to an increase in bills for the hardworking people of this country. In the midst of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, this is unacceptable and highlights the failure of privatisation of water companies. Perhaps, this is the reason why the UK is the only country in the world that has solely privatised water treatment companies. So I am sorry to report that the waters in Nottingham are more polluted than they should be because the Government has failed to regulate correctly. In my view, it is not acceptable that as a local authority we do not have direct access to the Environment Agency's figures on water pollution and sewage dumping. We need to know how clean our waterways are. It should be a matter of course that we are kept informed, after all it impacts all the residents of Nottingham. The people of Nottingham deserve clean water in their rivers, and I think that anything less than that is completely unacceptable.

### **Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete**

Councillor Michael Edwards asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education: Could the Portfolio Holder for Children,

Young People and Education tell us what is being done to check that schools in Nottingham are not at risk due to the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)?

Councillor Cheryl Barnard replied as follows:

Well, which of us had heard about RAAC before a couple of weeks ago? The City Council and academy trusts running schools within the city have been working with the Department for Education (DfE) during the last year, to identify any schools where the presence of RAAC may be suspected or where there is uncertainty over its potential use in school buildings. As a result of initial survey returns to the Department for Education, no City schools or academies were identified as requiring full or partial closure prior to the beginning of the new academic year. The change to DfE guidance prior to the new school year has prompted the increased focus on awareness of risks associated with RAAC. The local authority has ensured that all our maintained schools have received the updated guidance during the first week of the new term and has requested that headteachers and school site managers review their buildings accordingly. As a result, schools responded to the updated guidance. Where any new concerns or uncertainty has been raised by schools, we have deployed a project manager from our Major Projects teams to the school site to provide their professional opinion. This has resulted in three school site visits being undertaken in the first week of term, but in all cases no RAAC or suspected RAAC has been identified upon second inspection.

We are conscious that the raised awareness has naturally created greater levels of concern amongst parents, carers, children and staff about the safety of school premises. Therefore, though not an explicit requirement of the revised guidance, it has been agreed that a programme of inspection by external chartered surveyors is commissioned. Funding from the Schools Maintenance Contingency Fund has been approved, and that programme will be running over a number of weeks during autumn term. We believe that this is a sensible and proportionate measure to provide assurance to all stakeholders. We are also requesting that the DfE assure us that all academy trusts running schools in the city have complied fully with the guidance to ensure that City children are not at risk attending non-local authority maintained schools.

I'm unsure why the Conservative Government, despite the collapse of a RAAC roof in a school in 2018, had not given priority to the safety of children and young people until just before the start of the 2023 autumn term. The former Permanent Secretary for Education, Jonathan Slater, stated in an interview last week that when Rishi Sunak was Chancellor he was asked by the DfE to double the number of new schools from 100 to 200 but instead cut that number to 50. Also, the total school capital funding for repairs budget that was £9.8 billion in 2009 dropped to £6.4 billion. This is at a time when costs have risen, so it doesn't just represent a drop of around 30% but is more like a 50% drop. I would also add that the Government axed the Building Schools for the Future programme in 2010 and embarked upon opening free schools using disused buildings with no detailed surveys. Michael Gove made much of the fact that ministers would be tearing up planning laws to enable this. The refurbishment of these buildings ran to millions of pounds, whilst other state schools struggled with leaking and decaying buildings in urgent need of repair. One of these refurbished free schools closed 18 classrooms last week due to RAAC – no detailed survey or understanding of risk.

So were the Government aware of the state of our schools? A Condition of School Buildings survey in May 2021 found that the backlog of maintenance needed came to £11.4 billion, with £1.5 billion relating to school roofs. Not all of this would relate to RAAC, but it does indicate that major rebuilding of schools was necessary, and that the schools maintenance grant that we receive can only deal with the most urgent of repairs. I believe that our children deserve better. I'm sure that all councillors will agree with me that they have been let down by our Government.

### **Strategic Council Plan**

Councillor Devontay Okure asked the following question of the Leader of the Council: In May, local elections delivered 51 Labour Councillors on the basis of an ambitious manifesto. Can the Leader report on progress on adopting these manifesto commitments as Council policy and on progress to date on the current Council Plan?

Councillor David Mellen replied as follows:

4 May 2023 was indeed a proud day for our City when Labour secured 51 seats out of a possible 55 - well-illustrated in this Chamber today. We increased our majority from the last electoral term and we saw the end of the Conservative Party in Nottingham, who failed to win a single seat, and who are no longer represented on this Council for the first time. This is a trend I look forward to seeing replicated at the next year's General Election when the Tories will hopefully face a similar rout on a national scale.

So, I'm proud to stand here as the Leader of the Labour Group in Nottingham. Not only did we increase our majority in this Chamber, but we did so with 62% of the popular vote. The people of Nottingham spoke loudly and clearly, they support the valuable work carried out by the Labour Authority and they have given us a clear mandate to continue. They are right to do so – out of the 140 pledges made in 2019, we delivered 127 of them. This included the building of 1,023 new affordable homes, helping 7,635 people into work, training or education, alongside protecting advice services, 75 community protection officers, 6 leisure centres and 15 community libraries. But we are honest about what we can achieve. It wasn't 140, it was 127. 13 of them we didn't manage to keep for one reason or another. If we'd kept all of them I would suggest that the manifesto was a bit too easy. But we're honest, we achieve and we're open and transparent about work that is still needed. We are aware that local government continues to be underfunded and that pressure on our demand-led services is increasing, but we are no less ambitious in our new manifesto for this new electoral term.

Our top five priorities are to continue to tackle the cost-of-living crisis; to provide 1,000 new affordable and social rented homes to rent or buy; to keep our streets, neighbourhoods and the city centre clean; to become the first carbon-neutral city in the country; and to support 3,000 Nottingham people into work. The Strategic Council Plan was refreshed in March earlier this year, and our new 105 manifesto pledges will be incorporated into a plan to be published when we next set the budget in February, where they are seen to be affordable and where finances are currently available.

Following May's election, work is already underway to make good progress against the 105 pledges. So, for example Lord-Mayor, we've already heard in this Chamber

today about the successful reopening of the Castle – one of the key pledges to the people of Nottingham. We are already working towards becoming a UNICEF Child-Friendly City. We're continuing to work with other councils to maximise investment in our communities through the Combined County Authority. We are promoting the work of our Clean Champions by extending our network to 10,000 people across the city involved in this valuable activity. We have a plan for restoring the Embankment paddling pool. We are working with the Nottingham Business Improvement District (BID) to continue to make Nottingham a safe place to enjoy a night out, and Lord-Mayor I could go on. Some of these pledges involve campaigning and these will be led by councillors. These include things like campaigning for the electrification of the Midlands Main Line, something which we have been involved in already, campaigns to see that qualifications achieved by many of our residents abroad are recognised here, and campaigning for Nottingham to receive its fair share of police funding. These pledges are led by councillors who will work with other people who share the same aims to seek to bring about the necessary change.

I look forward, Lord-Mayor, to reporting back on further progress on all of these and more when we bring back the Strategic Council Plan to this Chamber for approval at the beginning of next year.

### **Cemeteries**

Councillor Kevin Clarke asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services and Parks: Could the Portfolio Holder explain the thinking of getting members of the public to remove cherished items from on and around their loved one's graves unless they renegotiate the terms of the leases they have?

Councillor Corall Jenkins replied as follows:

I'd like to say that Nottingham City Council understands that bereaved families may wish to leave gifts on their lost loved ones' graves and the Bereavement Service continues to work with families to do this whilst ensuring that access to enable essential ground maintenance and/or further burials to take place remains. We recognise that the design of the lawn grave does not provide a designated area to leave gifts and where we can we work with families to provide options such as an official half-kerb set which then gives the family space to place items within a designated and controlled area that doesn't impede these ground works.

We also need to ensure that our cemeteries are accessible for all, so those with mobility challenges can also access the facilities. Within the lease agreement with reference to how lawn graves are to be maintained it states that memorabilia cannot be placed on these graves. The Cemeteries Service is current consulting with families to inform them of what memorials are allowed and to help provide information about alternative memorial options, which may result in a different lease agreement. As we progress the management of these areas we ensure signage on site and also write to specific families where issue have been identified to ask them to contact us and to remove items. All the families, where possible, are being informed and clear signage is being place out in the cemeteries to notify the families before any items are removed. Families are asked to make contact with the Cemetery Services to discuss the removal well before anything is actually removed. In some

cases where there is no response the items are removed, and these items are then stored and available for collection.

Nottingham Cemetery and Crematorium Services continue to work with all families with graves within the cemeteries to ensure that the site is maintained to a high standard and remains accessible for all. This policy is laid out in the grave lease document and it is also detailed in the new Cemeteries and Cremations Services Policy that is available on the Council website.

### **Victoria Market**

Councillor Kevin Clarke asked the following question of the Leader of the Council: Could the Leader of the Council provide an update on the future of the Victoria Market and what is being done to finalise compensation arrangements for those traders who already vacated the market in good faith and incurred additional costs as a result?

Councillor David Mellen replied as follows:

Let me start by assuring him that our work to resolve the future of the Victoria Market continues and that we remain in regular contact with the traders. This remains a high priority for the Council and is being well-led by the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture. I know this has not been a quick process. In January 2022, approval was given to negotiate the Council's exit lease with Global Mutual, who own the Victoria Centre, and to agree terms with the market traders to leave the market. However, following negotiations with the traders where provisional compensation agreements were reached with the majority, but not all, of the traders, the cost envelope was beyond the agreed budget and a commercial review was undertaken. Since then the deadline to vacate the market has passed and Global Mutual, the owners of the centre, have terminated the agreement for surrender. While there is no longer any legal agreement to allow the surrender of the Victoria Market lease to Global Mutual, it is still the Council's preferred position to exit the Victoria Market. We have undertaken a review to identify the options available and these will be considered by members later this year. These options will include arrangements for trader notice compensation and arrears. Traders that have incurred legitimate costs in leaving or preparing to leave the market, such as abortive legal fees, can provide appropriate information to council officers, and these requests will be considered on an individual basis. Traders have been informed of this arrangement.

### **Women's World Cup Final**

Councillor Kirsty Jones asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture: Does the Portfolio Holder agree with me that it was a missed opportunity for the Council not to publicly broadcast the Women's World Cup final and bring the residents of Nottingham together to support the England Lionesses, and that the grounds of the Castle would have been an ideal venue to do so?

Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis replied as follows:

Firstly, can I start by congratulating the Lionesses for their fantastic achievement in the reaching the 5<sup>th</sup> Women's World Cup Final last month and particularly the goalkeeping heroics of Nottingham's own Mary Earps. Her performances were inspirational, rightly being named and recognised as the best goalkeeper in the World Cup tournament, claiming the Golden Glove award. More recently, Mary has also been nominated alongside Millie Bright, Rachel Daly and Georgia Stanway for the

Women's Ballon d'Or which will be awarded later this year. The role that the England's Women Football Team in inspiring girls and women in sport cannot be underestimated. As a city with sport very much at its heart, I want to thank them and do wish Mary and all the English players every success for the future.

Despite this tremendous achievement, it was disappointing that we were not able to, on this occasion, offer a public screening of the Final. The decision was taken for a number of reasons. The cost is the first reason. The cost of undertaking such a screening would have been significant, and may I just explain that it was also unbudgeted in the sense that this is an ad-hoc event that came in – it was not on the standard events cycle, it was an extra event that would have to be funded – and obviously the other issue with it was that there was an absence of sponsorship. Previously, for example, when we held the Coronation and the Eurovision Song Contest, we had Department for Culture, Media and Sport funding available from the Government to do this sort of thing. Obviously, in this occasion, we didn't have funding available for this screening therefore it was more difficult to do. Also, the time difference between the UK and Australia was an issue in terms of finding the right way of delivering it, and lastly, capacity. The Final fell at the same time as the Carnival and we had all our Teams there so, logistically speaking, we had to focus on the Carnival. I hope this lays out some of the reasons why, on this occasion, we were not able to screen this very important Women's World Cup Final. When it's possible to celebrate national celebrations we will always consider what is achievable. Accepting the financial constraints of course is something we have to do. We have a duty to have a balanced budget so we have a duty to make sure we do this in the appropriate way.

### **Community Centres**

Councillor Maria Watson asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture: Can the Portfolio Holder provide further detail on how the concept of community benefit will be applied to mitigate potential rent charges to the City's community centres?

Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis replied as follows:

The Community Asset Transfer Policy will adopt a mechanism for calculating the social value of activities run or managed by each of the community centres. The Communities Team has worked in collaboration with colleagues in the Property Team to develop a social value scoring matrix. That's going to create opportunity for centres to achieve a discount to the stated lease rent which is less than the market value. The categories that carry the most benefit in terms of percentage discount reflect those objectives that are identified on the Council Plan, linked of course with local communities, and those will be areas like combatting social isolation, combatting social deprivation and finding solutions for food poverty. Those are just some examples of activities that will score well in terms of helping those centres in the future, scoring well on the matrix and reducing the rents that they have to pay. The scoring matrix will also assist centres to identify activities and areas of need that are reflected in the Council Plan, which in turn will help centres in the development of a plan that will obviously focus on those areas that have the maximum impact for our residents. This is the most rational way of delivering this. This style of evaluating social worth of community centre activities is one that a number of authorities have

already adopted, and it will be part of the corporate landlord management system that is in the process of being implemented. It's not limited specifically to community centres, so this will be connected to other areas of community asset activity and so on.

### **Housing Revenue Account**

Councillor Andrew Rule asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Housing: Following the well documented unlawful spend from the Housing Revenue Account, the Portfolio Holder's predecessor indicated at the budget meeting that there was a strategy in place to prioritise how monies repaid to it would be prioritised to benefit tenants. Could the Portfolio Holder provide further detail on this and particularly focus on how this will benefit those tenants with properties requiring outstanding repairs?

Councillor Jay Hayes replied as follows:

All of the monies returning to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) are ringfenced and can only be spent on the priorities of the tenants. A layer of scrutiny for all HRA activities is provided through the governance and decision-making process, the Strategic Director of Housing and the new developed Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee. This should provide assurance to all members and residents and other stakeholders that funds are allocated and spent in line with HRA guidelines. Additionally, the Social Housing Regulations Act has brought a new regulatory regime to drive up standards in social housing. The new tenant satisfaction measures and customer standards will be used as an additional measure to hold all social landlords to account for the service they provide. Members will be provided with feedback on our performance in due course and we are undergoing the second part of the tenant engagement and feedback.

The Housing Department has a thirty-year business plan which helps to inform priorities of the HRA spend on the maintenance of our homes and assets. This plan is currently being reviewed and updated with the latest financial and stock information and all of the returned funding will be incorporated into a long-term plan. Residents have identified the importance of good quality neighbourhoods with a strong sense of community and good value. As landlords we have to demonstrate that we meet our statutory and regulatory landlord responsibilities identified in the housing tenancy. Our priority is to aim to deliver the most effective balance between making decent homes, preventing homes from falling below the standard through the customer-focused delivery model and we will discharge these obligations through the Repairs, Maintenance and Investment Service. We have consulted with tenants on their priorities for investment in their homes, both as a part of the roadshow prior to bringing Nottingham City Homes back into Nottingham City Council. Tenants identified priorities including safety, security and warmth. Our investments in the maintenance programme have focused on spending on customer safety, including the installation of Secured by Design windows and doors, we have grade A boilers that are regularly maintained and we deliver a comprehensive compliance programme for electrical, water, building and fire safety. We will be reviewing our investment priorities based on the data we have on the condition of our stock to ensure we are addressing the emerging investment needs. Our repairs service is aimed at ensuring the properties are maintained in a reasonable state of repair as outlined within the Government guidelines. We are reviewing our offer to ensure that

we are able to manage and increase the service demand, and to increase what our customers can expect from the repairs service. We are using our resources in an aligned, efficient and effective manner and we target activities where we will make an impact in the safety of tenants and our ability to carry our essential day-to-day activities in their homes. Investment is always important because properly planned investment programmes is what's need to create long-term secure and safe homes for people. We understand there has been a challenge in the repairs service, and over the summer months our office has been working hard to uncover and go into detail about the issues with the housing services. We will be putting forward a detailed plan of how we are going to continue to invest in our local communities, invest in our properties for the benefit of tenants in due course and all of the HRA spending plans will be brought for approval in the appropriate manner.

### **Ruddington Lane Recreation Ground**

Councillor Andrew Rule asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services and Parks: In February the Council removed the swings from the Ruddington Lane Recreation Ground. It is now almost six months since they were removed. Can the Portfolio Holder provide a timeframe for when they will be replaced and outline what can be done to ensure that replacing equipment does not take this amount of time in the future?

Councillor Corall Jenkins replied as follows:

I've covered some of this already in response to another question, but I'd just like to say that firstly I apologise for any disappointment caused by the delay to the replacement. I've spoken to the Green Spaces Development Team and I can confirm that the swings have been delivered and we are now waiting for the contractors to confirm a date for the installation. Unfortunately, the play equipment is often made to order and delivered by specialist play area contractors, and we have no control over that delivery time. This can create delays, and these can be supply-chain delays and also the timetable can be delayed by the capacity of the contractors. The Service does understand your concerns and will take steps to ensure advance communication is carried out to inform all ward councillors about any future removals and delays in installing replacement equipment and keep that dialogue going.

## **36 Oral Health**

Councillor Linda Woodings, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health, proposed the report about the state of oral health in the City and opportunities to improve oral health, including through water fluoridation. The report was seconded by Councillor Samina Riaz.

**Resolved to:**

- 1) note the evidence that demonstrates children in Nottingham experience worse dental health than many other parts of England;**
- 2) note the evidence that water fluoridation is shown by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities to benefit children and adults throughout their lives and is a safe and effective tool to improve oral health and reduce some of the health inequalities felt by communities;**



- 3) reaffirm the Council's commitment to improving dental health including advocating for a local water fluoridation scheme for Nottingham City; and
- 4) delegate to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health and the Director of Public Health to work with other local councils, the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and ask the Secretary of State for Health and Care to conduct a more detailed exploration of a water fluoridation scheme that benefits Nottingham City residents.

### **37 Decisions taken under Urgency Procedures**

Councillor David Mellen, Leader of the Council, presented the report detailing urgent decisions that the Council is required to note, which had been taken under provisions within the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and Access to Information Rules. The report was seconded by Councillor Audra Wynter.

**Resolved to note:**

- (1) the following decisions taken under the Call-in and Urgency provisions of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules:

| <b>Decision Reference</b> | <b>Subject</b>  | <b>Decision Taker</b>               | <b>Reason for Urgency</b>   |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>4996</b>               | <b>Lease of Highwood House to Nottingham City Homes Registered Provider Ltd</b> | <b>Portfolio Holder for Housing</b> | <b>Delay would have had onward implications for other disposals including those with statutory timeframes, and potential to severely delay the new lease being activated.</b> |
| <b>5006</b>               | <b>Purchase of Nottingham City Homes Fleet</b>                                  | <b>Leader of the Council</b>        | <b>To enable the vehicles to be used for service provision and payment made to NCH enabling financial year-end closedown procedures to be completed as soon as possible.</b>  |

- (2) that there were no decisions taken under the Special Urgency provisions of the Access to Information Procedure Rules since the last report to Council.

### **38 Motion in the name of Councillor Dr Nayab Patel**

Councillor Nayab Patel moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Linda Woodings:

Council resolves to adopt the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Charter, which sets out the care and support that local people living with MND and their carers deserve and should expect.

The MND Charter is made up of 5 points:

1. The right to an early diagnosis and information
2. The right to access quality care and treatments
3. The right to be treated as individuals and with dignity and respect
4. The right to maximise their quality of life
5. Carers of people with MND have the right to be valued, respected, listened to and well-supported.

By adopting the MND Charter, this Council agrees to promote the Charter and make it available to all councillors, council staff, partner organisations and health and social care professionals who deliver services for the Council.

We will raise awareness of MND and what good care looks like for those living with this devastating disease, as stated in the Charter, and do everything we can as a council to positively influence the quality of life for local people with MND, their families and their carers living in our community.

**Resolved to carry the motion.**

### **39 Motion in the name of Councillor David Mellen**

Councillor David Mellen moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Angela Kandola:

Council notes with dismay the news that the Department for Transport and the 13 train operating companies it manages have announced plans to close almost all staffed ticket offices in England, totalling nearly 1000, following changes to the Government's guidance relating to ticket office opening hours and operation. Statutory Consultations began on 5th July and finished on 1st September. Council believes that ticket offices provide a vital service to residents in Nottingham and support passenger safety, security and accessibility. Having a central place in the station for people requiring advice and assistance provides certainty and confidence for customers who may struggle to otherwise locate station staff and also acts as a point of safety for passengers. At many stations, access to facilities such as toilets and waiting rooms is reliant on ticket office staff. Not all residents are able to use ticket vending machines or online ticketing platforms. Many journeys require human assistance to ensure customers purchase the most appropriate and cheapest tickets, and do not incur penalties from mis-booked tickets. Ticket office staff have a wealth of knowledge which ensures that customers get appropriate advice for their whole journey. Council is concerned that the closure of ticket offices will disproportionately affect disabled, Deaf and older residents in Nottingham – as well as those with poor literacy and IT skills or on lower incomes. Council also notes the possible implications for current station staff and believes that the closure of ticket offices could lead to a de-staffing of rail stations.

Council therefore resolves to:

- request that the Leader writes to the Secretary of State for Transport, expressing Council's opposition to the possible closure of staffed rail ticket offices – and in particular the offices at local stations, and;
- request that the Leader writes to East Midlands Railway expressing the Council's opposition to any plans to close the staffed ticket offices at local stations.

Councillor Michael Edwards proposed an amendment to the motion, which was seconded by Councillor Eunice Regan to insert a new 4th paragraph: "Council notes the proposal to reduce the number of ticket office windows at Nottingham station from 3 to 1." And after the words "expressing Council's opposition to the possible" insert the words "reduction of ticket office windows at larger stations and"

**Resolved to pass the amendment.**

Councillors debated the amended motion.

**Resolved to carry the amended motion.**

#### **40 Committee Membership Changes**

The following changes to committee membership were noted:

- 1) Councillors Farzanna Mahmood and Eunice Regan had replaced Councillors Sam Lux and Matt Shannon as members of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
- 2) Councillor Sam Lux had replaced Councillor Eunice Regan as a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board
- 3) Councillor Matt Shannon had replaced Councillor Farzanna Mahmood as a member of the Regulatory and Appeals Committee
- 4) Councillor Angela Kandola had replaced Councillor Matt Shannon as a member of the Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Committee

#### **41 Extraordinary Council Meeting**

**Resolved to hold an Extraordinary Council meeting on 13 November 2023 at the rising of the Ordinary Council meeting on that day to appoint Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen.**

The Meeting concluded at 5.10 pm