

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

held at the Council House, Nottingham,

on Monday 3 March 2008 at 2.00 pm

ATTENDANCES

✓ Councillor Munir	Lord Mayor
✓ Councillor Ahmed	✓ Councillor Jones
✓ Councillor Akhtar	✓ Councillor A Khan
✓ Councillor Arnold	✓ Councillor G Khan
✓ Councillor Aslam	✓ Councillor Klein
✓ Councillor Benson	✓ Councillor Lee
✓ Councillor Bryan	✓ Councillor Liversidge
✓ Councillor Bull	✓ Councillor Long
Councillor Campbell	✓ Councillor MacLennan
✓ Councillor Chapman	✓ Councillor Malcolm
✓ Councillor Clark	✓ Councillor Marshall
✓ Councillor Clarke-Smith	✓ Councillor Mellen
✓ Councillor Collins	✓ Councillor Mir
✓ Councillor Cowan	Councillor Newton
Councillor Cresswell	✓ Councillor Oldham
✓ Councillor Culley	✓ Councillor Packer
✓ Councillor Davie	✓ Councillor Parbutt
✓ Councillor Dewinton	✓ Councillor Price
✓ Councillor Edwards	✓ Councillor Smith
✓ Councillor Foster	✓ Councillor Spencer
✓ Councillor Gibson	✓ Councillor Sutton
✓ Councillor Griggs	✓ Councillor Trimble
✓ Councillor Grocock	Councillor Unczur
✓ Councillor Hartshorne	✓ Councillor Urquhart
✓ Councillor Heppell	Councillor Watson
✓ Councillor Ibrahim	✓ Councillor Wildgust
✓ Councillor James	✓ Councillor Williams
✓ Councillor Johnson	✓ Councillor Wood

58 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

59 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Public Petitions

Councillor Packer submitted a petition to the Lord Mayor, on behalf of Clifton residents who were concerned about parking facilities at Fordham Green. The residents requested action be taken to resolve the extremely difficult parking issues.

60 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2008, be confirmed and signed by the Lord Mayor.

61 QUESTIONS

Banners

Councillor Marshall asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:-

Why should anyone take any notice of the banner propaganda of being "Proud of Nottingham" and the "Cleanest Core City" when the Council has failed to honour its pledge to clean the Council House and what of the Guildhall which is in a filthy state?

Councillor Collins replied as follows:-

Thank you, Lord Mayor.

Well, first the banners are no more or no less than the kind of publicity material used by councils all over the country and no doubt used by Liberal Democrat Councils in Hull, Liverpool and Newcastle.

Second, if the banners were propaganda they would be illegal and wouldn't have satisfied the District Audit's approved code of conduct.

Third, we haven't considered a proposal for cleaning the Council House because we are still waiting for advice from the Civic Society about how to do so without damaging the stone work.

Fourth, I am looking forward to, as part of, no doubt the Lib Dem budget amendment for them putting in a million pounds for doing the work and finally, even Lib Dem Councillors, I suggest should be proud of Nottingham. Not just because it's a great City to live and work in, because it is, but because on cutting crime, improving education results, street cleaning, recycling, public transport, investing in our neighbourhoods, child protection and services to the elderly, in fact, I suggest all of the services that your constituents are probably most interested in, we have made real and obvious progress on, in the last year.

Brian Clough

Councillor Long asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Economic Development and Skills:-

What does the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Economic Development and Skills think that Brian Clough - a self professed socialist - would make of the fact that the Council are to spend nearly three quarters of a million pounds to resurface a few square metres of Kings Street near his statue when the statue could have been placed elsewhere, eg outside of St Peter with St James Church, and the money used to resurface pavements elsewhere that have not been tackled for decades?

Councillor Parbutt replied as follows:-

Thank you, Lord Mayor and I would like to thank Councillor Long for his question.

This is interesting ground for a Liberal Democrat trying to second guess the views of Brian Clough. The question is very directly about Brian Clough's views of the works to King Street rather than the scheme itself.

Many of us in the Labour Party remember Brian Clough not just as a "self professed socialist" but as a very active member of the Labour Party. At one time no election launch or manifesto event was ever complete without Brian's presence and he was very much a part of the party. He was always happy to lend his support to party campaigning and events, and I understand that he also turned his hand to the occasional bit of canvassing, though what unsuspecting members of the public made of having Brian Clough knock on their doors is largely unrecorded.

It is probably also true that Brian was an unusual member in many ways and his views were also very much his own. Brian Clough was most definitely not a hair-shirt socialist, and he often turned up in his Mercedes to speak at party meetings, most notably when he was supporting Phillip Whitehead, another much missed Labour colleague in the 1979 General Election, references to which can be found all over the internet. When asked about this supposed inconsistency Clough said that "under my brand of socialism everyone will be able to buy a Mercedes." Brian most definitely believed in levelling up and not levelling down.

Which brings us to King Street. We need to do something with the bottom part of King Street, which, since the other changes is a stretch of road that goes no where. The layout was designed for the days when buses came off of Long Row to start their journey north and indeed we have an empty bus shelter there as well.

Since decisions have been taken elsewhere to place both the Brian Clough statue and the new speakers corner at this location, it seems a good opportunity to address this whilst creating an attractive public space and one that will complement the Old Market Square and be used as an extension of the Square at larger events. The actual cost estimate is £630,000 though this will depend on detailed design work. This could be done using cheaper materials, but not only would this look less effective, it would increase the ongoing maintenance costs.

I think it would be a fair criticism to say this money was being spent in the City Centre whilst other areas were being neglected if it wasn't for the fact that we are spending record amounts on footpaths and the public realm in local areas through the investment we have targeted at Area Committees. Over the last two years £11 million has been spent and a further £5 million has been committed to footpath works in local areas. With 502 footpath schemes having been completed and another 177 committed.

The capital programme identifies up to £40 million more to spend in the future on footpaths and works to the public realm in local areas. Highways officers will be working closely with Area Committees who will be the ones deciding how this money is spent. In this context it seems to me a reasonable and sensible decision to upgrade King Street and one which I think Brian Clough would approve of, but then again we all know Brian's attitude to decision-making as he always said "We talk about it for twenty minutes and then decide that I was right."

Bus Pass - Judicial Review

Councillor Sutton asked the following question of the Deputy Leader of the Council:-

Why is the Council considering seeking judicial review of the Government's plans not to pay for Gordon Brown's lavish 2005 election promise to buy older people a bus pass?

Councillor Edwards replied as follows:-

Lord Mayor, can I thank Councillor Sutton for his question and can I thank Councillor Foster for advising me on where the source of the question came from on Friday, above and beyond party political duty.

We welcome this bus pass scheme. The scheme will provide a nationwide scheme for all authorities to provide free local bus journeys on buses for older people and the less mobile consistently across the country. We estimate that we will be supporting four million more free journeys every year and we have budgeted as such.

We note that the Government's scheme to recompense Councils is a version of an option that found favour with most local Councils. But we are concerned that the proposed scheme may not fully recompense Nottingham City, and we said so publicly within a short time of the announcement of the scheme being made. I have also publicly raised concerns via the local government press and the LGA Assembly in December.

We have considered more than one way to respond to the proposed distribution of the national funds and judicial review is one of the options to consider. The specific answer to the specific question is that we will always consider potentially viable options to seek what we believe would be a fairer deal for Nottingham.

Our actual response has been to seek representation via Nottingham Members of Parliament, to the minister and senior civil servants involved and as a result we are currently exploring other ways to further develop what I regard as the best local bus services in the country, in partnership with the Government.

The national government have asserted that the national scheme is fully funded. That is only likely to be properly tested after at least one year of the scheme being in operation.

Providing free bus travel for older people and the less mobile has been the practice of Nottingham City Council for many years and, given damping of changes to the Government's formula grant, we are still subsidising the existing scheme.

Providing free bus travel for older people and the less mobile was a significant factor in sustaining a public transport network that is wider than networks seen in many cities elsewhere and it is a good thing for the environment and it is popular with the public. Despite our concerns, we are fully supporting the Government's scheme.

The surprise in Councillor Sutton's assertion that the scheme is "lavish". What are we to read into the word "lavish"? Because we know you take great care with words. We know how much you love to listen to Radio 4 and their style of humour with words and puns. The Councillor who invented the concept of the curate's omelette, for heavens sake! So you have chosen to emphasise "lavish" and it surprises us. Perhaps you are suggesting the scheme is generous when it shouldn't be and if so, I think you should be more upfront about it.

Indeed, are you saying that the Lib Dems don't support the scheme and if you find that we are a little bit sensitive to these little words, remember last time when we considered Workplace Parking Levy and the support that we got, in principle, for Workplace Parking Levy and you just managed to mention a little something and hallelujah you had got an editorial in the Nottingham Evening Post emphasising the doubts you had because you hadn't had enough information. So, come clean, are you back in the scheme? Have you got the steel to do something radical for public transport or the environment, or are you sitting on the fence?

Thank you, Lord Mayor.

Mediation Meetings

Councillor Benson asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:-

Have the mediation meetings between the Chief Executive and the Leader produced satisfactory results including a reduction in micro management?

Councillor Collins replied as follows:-

Thank you, Lord Mayor.

Although I have regular meetings with the Chief Executive, I don't really consider any of them to be mediation meetings. However, I have met staff from the IDeA to address the Audit Commission's concerns that, and I quote "the lack of agreement between members and officers on respective roles, risks affecting the Council's capacity to improve," and if these are the meetings you are referring to, then yes, I am happy with the outcome. As for micromanagement, I am still waiting for somebody to give me examples of what it is and until that happens it is difficult to judge how much of it is going on. Until then however, I am happy to say that I believe that members are appropriately involved in the activities of the Council at a level that ensures proper accountability and gets results for local people.

Thank you, Lord Mayor.

62 BUDGET 2008/09

The report of Councillor Edwards (as set out on page 327 of the agenda) was submitted.

MOVED by Councillor Long by way of amendment and seconded by Councillor Cowan:-

Insert new paragraph (1) and re-number remaining paragraphs:

"(1) that notwithstanding the repeated concerns in previous years of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, minority groups and individual councillors, it be noted that

- the Executive Board's budget papers were not dispatched to councillors until Monday, 11th February, only three weeks before the scheduled budget Council meeting;
- the form of the budget papers is opaque and does not enable reasonably diligent councillors to understand the substance of what the Council is being asked to approve either for 2008/09 or its effects on subsequent years;

- almost no non-financial information is provided about the effect of the budget proposals on the services of the Council;
- requests by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group last August for information relating to possible savings or additional expenditure in 2008/09 have only been partially answered. In addition, a request for supporting papers for all proposed additional expenditure and savings has not been met. Only requests for information on particular individual items have been met.
- the Departmental Service Plans, provided only 8 working days before budget day, in support of budget savings/developments are not consistent with, or referenced to, the developments/savings. Nor, in many cases, do they provide any further detail.
- there has been no adequate consultation with council tax payers or persons and bodies required to be consulted; and
- proper consideration has not been, and can not be given, to the budget proposals to establish what elements of it are reasonable and what are not

In view of this, Conservative and Liberal Democrat councillors cannot support the budget proposals as a whole.”

After discussion the amendment was put to the vote and was not carried.

RESOLVED on the motion of Councillor Edwards, seconded by Councillor Collins, that:-

- (1) the overall Treasury Management Strategy for 2008/09, including the Investment Strategy for 2008/09 and the Prudential Indicators be approved;**
- (2) the Capital Programme 2008/2011 be approved;**
- (3) the revenue estimates for 2008/09 be approved;**
- (4) it be noted that in January 2008, the City Council calculated the amount of 74,733 as its council tax base for the year 2008/09 in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 made under Section 33(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;**

(5) the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2008/09 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (“the Act”):-

- (a) £925,011,492 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32 (2) (a) to (e) of the Act;**
- (b) £670,275,952 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32 (3) (a) to (c) of the Act;**
- (c) £254,735,540 being the amount by which the aggregate at (5) (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (5) (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 32 (4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year;**
- (d) £161,158,336 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its General Fund in respect of the estimated formula grant, reduced by the amount of the sums which the Council estimates will be transferred in the year to or from its Collection Fund;**
- (e) £1,252.15 being the amount at (5)(c) above less the amount at (5)(d) above, all divided by the amount at (4) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year;**

(f) Valuation Bands

A	B	C	D	E
£834.77	£973.89	£1,113.02	£1,252.15	£1,530.41
F	G	H		
£1,808.66	£2,086.92	£2,504.30		

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (5)(e) above by the number which, in the proportion set

out in section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;

- (6) that the functions of the City Council with regard to council tax, non-domestic rate and residual poll tax, including their collection and recovery, continue to be exercised by the Executive Board;
- (7) it be noted that, for the financial year 2008/09, the Nottinghamshire Police Authority has issued the following amounts in precepts in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:-

A	B	C	D	E
£97.08	£113.26	£129.44	£145.62	£177.98
F	G	H		
£210.34	£242.70	£291.24		

- (8) it be noted that, for the financial year 2008/09, the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority has issued the following amounts in precepts in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (which has been amended by the Local Government Act 2003 to include Combined Fire Authorities), for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below:-

A	B	C	D	E
£43.63	£50.90	£58.17	£65.44	£79.98

F	G	H
£94.52	£109.07	£130.88

- (9) the Council in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the council tax for the year 2008/09 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

A	B	C	D	E
£975.48	£1,138.05	£1,300.63	£1,463.21	£1,788.37

F	G	H
£2,113.52	£2,438.69	£2,926.42

- (10) notice be published in accordance with the provisions of section 96(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;

- (11) the Members Allowances Scheme for 2008/09 be adopted with effect from 1 April 2008.

In accordance with Standing Order 19, the following members requested that their votes be recorded.

For the motion: Councillors Ahmed, Arnold, Aslam, Bryan, Bull, Chapman, Clark, Collins, Dewinton, Edwards, Gibson, Griggs, Grocock, Hartshorne, Heppell, Ibrahim, James, Johnson, Jones, A Khan, G Khan, Klein, Lee, Liversidge, Maclennan, Malcolm, Mellen, Mir, Munir, Packer, Parbutt, Smith, Trimble, Urquhart, Wildgust, Williams and Wood.

The meeting closed at 5.35pm.