

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

held at the Council House, Nottingham,

on Monday 13 September 2010 at 2.00 pm

### ATTENDANCES

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

## **25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hartshorne, Heppell, Johnson and Smith.

## **26 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Foster and Liversidge declared personal interests in agenda item 8, City Energy Strategy, as Council appointed directors of EnviroEnergy Limited and members of Nottingham Energy Partnership, which did not preclude them from speaking or voting.

Councillor Wood declared a personal interest in agenda item 9, motion in the name of Councillor Liversidge, as a tenant and Council appointed director of Nottingham City Homes Limited, which did not preclude him from speaking or voting.

Councillor Arnold declared a personal interest in agenda item 10, motion in the name of Councillor Chapman, as her child attended Trinity School, which did not preclude her from speaking or voting.

Councillor Ahmed declared a personal interest in agenda item 9, motion in the name of Councillor Liversidge, as a Council appointed director of Nottingham City Homes Limited, which did not preclude him from speaking or voting.

The Lord Mayor declared a personal interest in agenda item 10, motion in the name of Councillor Chapman, as a Chair of Governors at Southglade Primary School, which did not preclude him from speaking or voting.

Councillor Campbell declared a personal interest in agenda item 10, motion in the name of Councillor Chapman, as a Governor at Westglade Primary School, which did not preclude her from speaking or voting

## **27 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The following petitions were submitted:

### **(a) Councillor Liversidge – Work to trees in St Anns**

Councillor Liversidge, on behalf of Councillor Johnson, submitted a petition to the Lord Mayor, on behalf of 1,000 local residents, seeking to get trees cut back in St Ann's to reduce the height and width of them.

### **(b) Councillor Newton – Provision of new park facilities on Stockhill Lane/Nuthall Road, Basford**

Councillor Newton submitted a petition to the Lord Mayor, on behalf of 98 local residents, requesting that serious consideration be given to the provision of new park facilities on Stockhill Lane/Nuthall Road, Basford.

## **Public Questions**

No public questions were received.

## **28 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the last meeting held on 12 July 2010, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Lord Mayor.

## **29 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chief Executive reported the following communications:

### **National Transport Awards**

Councillor Jane Urquhart had received the Outstanding Contribution to Local Transport award at the National Transport Awards 2010 for her work developing transport in Nottingham.

### **Nottingham Tennis Centre**

The grass courts at the centre had been reported as excellent by the Sports Turf Research Institute.

## **Sports Development**

Sports Development received an 'Inspire' award for 4 of its projects:

- championing Notts Sport Volunteering;
- free swimming;
- the Women's Leadership Programme;
- the Disability Support Project.

The Inspire Programme was an accreditation issued by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOGOC) that recognised outstanding non-commercial projects and events inspired by the games. It was the only way for community based projects to utilise the 2012 branding.

## **Green Flag and Green Pennant Success**

Nottingham City Council was ranked third, out of the 8 Core Cities, in the Green Flag listings. This was an increase from 4 in 2006 to 14 listings in 2010.

The City had also been awarded 9 Green Pennant Awards for community managed green spaces.

## **RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) Britain in Bloom 'It's Your Neighbourhood' Awards**

This year 137 local community groups and tenants' and residents' associations had all been successful in the RHS Britain in Bloom 'It's Your Neighbourhood' Awards, which had increased from 80 in 2009. Certificates would be awarded at a ceremony at the Council House on 22 September 2010.

## **Tackling health inequalities**

Greater Nottingham Lift Co won the 'Tackling Health Inequalities' award at the third annual LIFT Awards on 8 July 2010.

## **Honorary Alderman Kay Elliot**

Honorary Alderman Kay Elliot passed away on 3 September 2010.

Kay had seen two world wars, the coronation of four monarchs and the introduction of votes for women. She worked as a Councillor for 18 years and was an Honorary Alderman of the city.

On 4 August 2010, a celebration was arranged to mark her 104<sup>th</sup> birthday. She met the Lord Mayor at the Firs Nursing Homes, in Sherwood, where she lived. Staff and her fellow residents had a party, before Kay joined Councillor Grocock in the civic car to travel to the Council House, where she was joined by Nottingham's 18 other Honorary Aldermen.

Miss Elliot was born in the women's hospital on Peel Street, Nottingham on 4 August 1906. She studied at Mountford House School and Nottingham High School for Girls, before going on to Oxford University.

During the Second World War she helped to produce army clothing.

She was elected as a Councillor for the Abbey ward in May 1956 and was elected as an Alderman in February 1975, in recognition of her long service as a Councillor.

The Council stood in silence as a tribute to her memory.

### **30 QUESTIONS**

#### **Mental Health Awareness week activities**

The following question was asked by Councillor Newton of the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services and Health:

Would the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services and Health highlight the planned activities for Mental Health Awareness week during October?

Councillor Campbell replied as follows:

Can I thank Councillor Newton for his question and outline that the City Council is a partner for Mental Health Awareness Week, and different services are included with this as well. So there are currently 30 events planned from 4 October to the 14 October. I understand that Councillor Newton was sent a list because there were so many events happening across the City for this event.

The list of activities planned, and I won't name them all Lord Mayor, because there are too many, but there are events for carers support events, 'Labels' launch service for user groups, there is 'Artful Minds' an exhibition for Nottingham Health NHS Trust, and 'Best Foot Forward', 'Introduction to Mediation' services.

'Love your mind' is another event planned as an introduction to complimentary therapies, and in the evening a film at the Broadway cinema.

There is a World Mental Health Day which is planned on 10 October, there is an 'acts of rhythm' and local artists mental health wellbeing event. There is 'Unwind with Word' poetry reading and 'Narratives and Delusions' philosophical discussions.

There is 'Self Harm Awareness' and in the evening a live music and social event. There is 'Visit Ecoworks Community Gardens', there is 'Visit the Human Library'.

The events are facilitated and organised by a mixture of service user led organisations. Lord Mayor, there are a number of events planned in October regarding Mental Health Awareness, so these events are very key to deal with the issue and awareness of mental health services.

The events really are to highlight an awareness around what's happening with mental health, and it's also to help carers, parents and individuals to understand what is the emphasis of mental health. As Members know, mental health can affect all levels of society, it's not something which just primarily affects a few people. So, therefore, as a portfolio holder I am very committed to ensure that mental health is addressed. It's included as part of my portfolio for the services, and I work quite closely with some of the operatives who are dealing with mental health, as well as NHS Nottingham City.

So, as I explained, there is well over 30 events and, therefore, it will be difficult to say all of them, I want to assure Councillor Newton that I take the issue very seriously, because I know it can actually affect any of us.

One of the things we want to do which I feel is very important, is have links to the World Mental Health Day which is planned for 10 October. I think it is something that we can actually get Governments to buy into. So I hope that answers the Councillor's question, and I want to say to

members of the Council that if they are interested in these events, these will be delivered across all wards, so I want you to be aware of the events happening across the city.

## **Exam achievements**

The following question was asked by Councillor Packer of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services:

How do the achievements of pupils taking exams in Nottingham's Schools this year compare with previous years?

Councillor Mellen replied as follows:

Thank you Lord Mayor, and can I thank Councillor Packer for her question.

This summer at 'A' Level, which only involves a minority of our schools, we have initial indications that results have improved although we haven't yet got all the results collated from FE Colleges in the city. The average point score per pupil at 'A' Level in the city in 2006 was 729.6 and in 2009 this had risen to 781.3. This improvement was twice the national average and we are confident that this year we will see further improvement.

At GCSE the city has again seen a very pleasing improvement in outcomes. The proportion of pupils achieving 5 good GCSEs was 72%.

In comparison to last year there was a 5 percentage point improvement from the 67% of pupils who achieved 5 good grades. If we look further back to 2006, only 45% of pupils achieved this level.

Going back to the time when Nottingham City regained the responsibilities for educational provision in the city, the proportion of young people gaining 5 good GCSEs was just 26%. So over the last 12 years there has been a 277% improvement in young people's achievement at 16.

Although national comparators for 2010 are not yet available, it is worth noting that between 2005 and 2009 on this measure, results in Nottingham have improved by three times more than the national figures.

The national focus in recent times has been on the proportion of pupils achieving 5+ A\* - C grades including both English and Maths and on this measure there was further improvement of 2.5 percentage points taking the city performance to 44%. Improvement at this measure between 2005 and 2009 was twice the national average.

It is useful, I believe, to dig further into these results to look at just how far our schools have come. For this purpose I have looked out the school exam results for 1998. We had just taken over as an education authority and 18 years of Conservative Government had just ended in the country.

In the summer of 1998 at Alderman Derbyshire School in Bulwell, just 5% of pupils achieved 5 good GCSEs; up the road at Henry Mellish just 8% of pupils achieved that measure. Lots of work from staff and governors, a 'Fresh Start' of Alderman Derbyshire school as River Leen School, input from the City Council School Advisory Service, an amalgamation of the two schools as the Bulwell Academy and a completed new building has, this year, resulted in 63% of the pupils achieving 5 A-Cs at GCSE; a remarkable change around.

Academisation has been one route to improvement but not the only one. In 1998, Glaisdale School in Bilborough had only 9% of their pupils achieving 5 A-C grades at GCSE. A fresh start as Haddon Park, a new building, involvement of the Co-operative Educational Trust and other partners and, of course, a huge amount of work on behalf of the staff and governors of that school has meant that this year 50% of those pupils have achieved 5 good passes.

And some schools have not had academisation or 'Fresh Start'. At Top Valley School 41% achieved 5 good grades in 1998 – it was one of our higher performing schools. This year, the work that the school, in partnership with the local authority, has wrought 83% of the pupils gaining 5 good grades.

And I could go on. With stories of improvement, stories of success, stories of improved life chances and of changes for whole communities brought about by educational improvement.

The ongoing improvement at Key Stage 4 is down to a number of factors. City schools have been working hard to make their curriculum offer meet the needs of their students and so ensuring that they are motivated and engaged. The last government's National Challenge programme



introduced a robust focus on schools below the 30% floor target for 5+ A-C including English and Maths and this brought with it additional support and challenge to these schools. It is also notable that the Partnership of Secondary schools in the city has strengthened considerably over the past two years and this is providing a forum for schools to work more closely together in a supportive way.

But most of all these results have been achieved by a combination of investment and prioritisation of education by the last Labour Government which invested in teachers – their pay and working conditions, cut class sizes, introduced thousands of teaching assistants across the country and which invested in school buildings through a variety of capital schemes, and introduced initiatives to improve teaching and learning through the Literacy and Numeracy strategies. This was the achievement of the last government and we wait to see whether the new government will continue to prioritise the education of our children; I have to say Lord Mayor that the early signs are not good.

But, not just national government investment – local government determination and commitment to improve too; a commitment to improve the life chances of the young people of this city. Lord Mayor, we have prioritised this council's resources, we have led with boldness using all measures including 'Fresh Start', 'Academisation' and Trust Status where appropriate to ensure that by some means and by all means children would have their eyes lifted, their aspirations raised and their potential realised. We believed it was not good enough to say 'What can you expect from Nottingham young people?' and together with our staff, governors, parents and pupils have shown that in this city we can achieve, that excellence and high performance is possible and that with a partnership approach improvement can take place and that instead of just over one quarter of our young people leaving school ready for the world of work and further education and training as we were in 1998, we are now just three percentage points away from three quarters of young people achieving that mark.

A remarkable achievement Lord Mayor and one for which our school staff and governors and our young people should be congratulated.

### **Control of houses in multiple occupation**

The following question was asked by Councillor Williams of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Regeneration:

Will the Coalition Government's changes help Councils control houses in multiple occupation in ways local communities are requesting?

Councillor Clark replied as follows:

Thank you Lord Mayor, and I thank Councillor Williams for his question.

Since April 2010 when the C4 House in Multiple Occupation use class was introduced, it has been necessary to obtain planning permission to change from a C3 dwelling house (single household/family house) to a C4 house in multiple occupation (3-6 unrelated people sharing). The proposed changes will mean that this change of use will become permitted development, and the City Council will therefore lose its recently acquired and highly valued automatic ability to control the number, location and effects of new C4 Houses in Multiple Occupation.

If councils wish to retain control over such changes of use, they will need to issue an Article 4 Direction to remove the permitted development right that the October changes will be introducing. Councils will need to justify their use of such Directions, which will only cover defined geographical areas.

The changes will not help councils control houses in multiple occupation because:

Firstly, there will no longer be an automatic requirement to obtain planning permission to change a C3 family house to a C4 House in Multiple Occupation. The changes will therefore reduce the ability of councils to control the numbers and effects of houses in multiple occupation.

Secondly, although the Government is saying that Article 4 Directions can be used to reinstate the requirement for planning permission and therefore the ability of councils to control changes from family houses to C4 Houses in Multiple Occupation where there is a local need to do so, their use would need to be separately justified in each case, they would only cover specified geographical regions, there would be legal and practical difficulties in using them and substantial costs and risks to the councils that did use them.

Thirdly, the October changes will not give additional powers or flexibility to councils in relation to their use of Article 4 Directions. Article 4

Directions have been a tool available to councils for many years. They have not been used extensively because of their drawbacks and limitations. The October changes do not deal with any of these limitations, or the costs and risks involved in their use. Nottingham City Council has in the past explored the use of Article 4 Directions to control houses in multiple occupation issues, but has been deterred from doing so based on advice received from the Government Office for the East Midlands.

Fourthly, the main issues with councils being required to use Article 4 Directions to regain control are:

- the costs associated with Article 4 Directions that would deter and/or preclude their use. These include evidence gathering, liability to pay compensation, the work involved to support and make the directions and the loss of fee income that would ordinarily be generated from planning applications. Under the proposed rules, councils would remain liable to pay compensation in cases where an application was refused or granted conditionally unless 12 months' notice was given of the Article 4 Direction coming into force. This compensation liability would be substantial. For example, the rental income generated from a dwelling in Class C4 HMO use can be far greater than that yielded from a Class C3 family dwelling. Exposure of councils to this level of compensation liability would be highly likely to make the use of Article 4 Directions for controlling houses in multiple occupation without first giving twelve months' notice, and therefore at a time when they would be most effective, unaffordable, and therefore prohibitive;
- the delays to a local authority's ability to take action arising from the need to first make a case for, and then remove permitted development rights by direction, and then subsequently prepare the statutory policy context by which the applications would then be determined. This would actually encourage HMO conversions in an area to first emerge and then escalate before measures can be introduced to deal with future problems, whilst offering no scope to reverse the impacts that have already occurred;
- difficulties in compiling robust and precise evidence to support the case for Article 4 Directions due to the nature of the issues associated with HMO uses, and problems with establishing a clear and defined boundary around an affected area, together with the

adjoining areas which could be considered to be at risk of emerging concentration;

- the Article 4 approach being wholly inadequate when the fluid nature of changes in HMO demand and supply will move quickly beyond the areas strictly in defined control, and there being insufficient provision to quickly modify and/or extend the Article 4 boundaries;
- and finally, an absence of up to date policy guidance that provides a supportive framework for widening the scope of use of Article 4 Directions to deal with local issues beyond, for example, those associated with conserving narrowly defined physical fabric in conservation areas that has so far been one of the main focuses for Article 4 Directions, and is very much reflective of the emphasis of current guidance set out in Circular 09/95.

## **Tax and benefit changes**

The following question was asked by Councillor Edwards of the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Economic Development and Reputation:

What is the impact of national tax and benefits changes announced in June on residents of Nottingham City? Should the changes be described as progressive?

Councillor Chapman replied as follows:

Thank you Lord Mayor, and can I thank Councillor Edwards for his question.

There is a potential for this answer to go on all afternoon, it won't, but it won't be short either. The Government, as if we didn't know it, is planning to reduce benefits. Indeed, as I think some of us said before the election, given the fact that the Conservatives were talking about ring fencing health, they've got a restraint on education reductions, there wasn't much else left that it could hit. We did note that it was likely to be benefits, and we weren't wrong. Benefits are going to get a very, very heavy hit in the next round of budget reductions, nor is that hit going to be progressive. The last budget was in fact very regressive. The IFS study showed that the progressive reductions which the previous Labour Government had in its last budget have been turned into regressive reductions by the

Conservatives and Liberals, which is quite a feat. You turn a progressive budget into a regressive budget, it takes a lot of effort; more effort than just creating a regressive budget. That's how harsh those changes have been. Up until last week, the Chancellor was looking to take £11 billion out of the £100 billion spent on benefits. During the week, he announced a further £4 billion would be taken out, amounting to £15 billion worth of reductions. That's a large chunk, and it's a large chunk in particular because the number of people on benefits is likely to rise, so if you're capping the amount that's there or actually reducing the amount that's there then there's even less to go round because unemployment is rising and will continue to rise, because there is no 'Plan B' in order to avoid a rise in unemployment. So things are far worse than they even appear at the moment, so where are they looking? I'll just give a smattering because I can't go through the whole lot, it would take all afternoon. Most of the money, most of the savings, are going to come from a change in the system of operating. They're going to be using the CPI, and not the retail price index. That will save £5.8 billion, so it means that the way that inflation is calculated is changed, and the amount by which benefits are up rated will not keep pace with average inflation. There will be a cap on housing benefit, it will not affect Nottingham to the degree it will affect London. They will be taking away the £15 excess which currently exists, and there will be a reduction in the percentile that is used to calculate housing benefit from 50% down to 30%, and that will affect 6,500 people in Nottingham, and take £4 million out of the Nottingham economy. There will also be pressure to reduce the benefits of people who are under occupying, and that may create instability in the housing market and in communities with people shifting around more than they need to.

I'll give them credit, what they are doing is up-rating the child tax credit by £150, and that is positive and it is beneficial. I don't want to be totally negative; there are one or two good bits, but only one or two. What they are also doing at the same time which will negate a lot of this, is freezing child benefit up-rating for three years. They are also limiting the Sure Start maternity grant, and they are also abolishing the pregnancy grant, so that is hitting children. What will hit the disabled is they are going to be ignoring £2,500 of any loss of income when a person becomes ill or unable to work, that is when they're calculating the tax credits and even the MacMillan Trust is getting upset about that potential change. There's going to be stricter qualifications for claiming Employment Seeker Allowance, and there will be possible reductions we are told (the Guardian leaked it at the weekend) in the employment seeker allowance. The unemployed will also face a reduction in housing benefit by 10%

after, I think, 2013 if they've been unemployed for 12 months. So if you've been unemployed for 12 months, your housing benefit will reduce by 10% if you haven't found a job. They are also putting lone parents on JSA when the child is 5. The Labour government I think introduced an age limit of 7; this is being brought down to 5. I think it's a bit precipitous, 5, but there we go. Labour was heading in that direction to be fair.

In addition, VAT is going up and the people who are most affected by VAT are the people on the lowest income because it takes a higher proportion of their income purchasing basic goods. So on the whole, the poor are going to be hit more than the better off. There was the option to increase taxes, there was the option, which I favour actually, to claw back through the tax system some of the universal benefits, and I think that is an option which we should be looking at. I'm not pretending that things don't have to change, what I am saying is that this is not a very good way of doing it.

Now behind this is the coalition concept that there are lots of people who have chosen unemployment and benefits as a 'lifestyle choice', and they quite enjoy being on benefits and there is a principal behind this, which is to shift people from Incapacity Benefit onto Employment Seekers Allowance, which is a reduction, then onto Job Seekers Allowance, and then to cut the Job Seekers Allowance. It's a sort of cat and mouse game where you squeeze people and you push them gradually into a corner, and you're reducing the benefits as you go along and the principle behind that is that what you will do is force the feckless into employment. Now this deserves a response. We all know that there is abuse of the system. We're all ward councillors and we weren't born yesterday, we know that there are some people abusing the system. But what Mr Osborne has done is to use this cliché of a 'lifestyle choice' to hit everybody on benefits, irrespective, and it's a bit like inflicting group punishment because there's been some sinning by one or two individuals.

I don't want to overdo it, but people used to take out whole villages because one or two people had been doing very unfortunate things during wars, and it's a bit like that in some respects. Now there are a number of problems with this, first of all it is unfair to target the worst off. I do not notice the same energy going into pursuing people who are avoiding VAT, who are avoiding taxes, indeed many of them have actually been invited to be Government Ministers. I do note that Philip Green whose wife is a tax exile, has been invited to be a Government

Minister. So if you're on benefits, then you get punished, if you're fiddling taxes or tax avoidance, you become a Government Minister. Now that doesn't seem terribly fair to me. The second point is the practicality of this. By what magic formula is somebody who is now abusing the system, going to not abuse the system once benefits have been reduced? It will still be difficult to illustrate they're abusing the system. The reason why people continue to abuse the system in many respects is it's almost impossible to get absolute proof; that is the difficulty. And these changes make no difference to the burden of proof it requires in order to illustrate that somebody is abusing the system. So actually they will just go on doing it. It will make no damn difference whatsoever to people who are abusing the system, and they are a minority and not a majority as we are led to believe.

Next, where oh where are the jobs going to come from that they're going to be forced into? Where will those jobs be? Because at the moment there aren't enough jobs for people not on benefits, never mind the people that are on benefits. So how are you going to get them into jobs? And how are you going to get people into jobs who are not work-ready? And how are you going to get the employers, even if there were the jobs, to employ those people who have been on benefits for a long time? That is the sort of thing that the Labour Government was working on very, very hard at the point of full employment, how are you going to do it when there's no employment? It doesn't answer that question, and that is actually the \$64,000 question.

In my view, this rhetoric about lifestyle choice is actually camouflage. It is camouflage because the Government wants to hit benefits, it does not want to hit tax, and therefore it has come up with all these clichés but ultimately it provides a moral justification for what, in my view, is almost immoral. And what it is doing, and I'm looking at the Conservatives here, it is turning you back into the 'nasty party'. You tried so hard to get away from that because you had nice Mr Cameron. Nice Mr Cameron, Nasty George Osborne. And who is calling the shots at the moment? It's nasty Mr Osborne, not nice Mr Cameron. You've got your fig leaves, because you've also got Duncan Smith who is a fig leaf. Now the point about Duncan Smith is that he's actually right. Duncan Smith is right about benefits, and it's what Labour was trying to do. I talked to Graham Allen who is a mate of Duncan Smith's and they were as one over benefits. The difficulty is of course, is Duncan Smith will not get the amount of money up front to shift the benefits system to move people to become work-ready, and you as Liberals know that. In addition these cuts are

going to undermine anything Duncan Smith does, and what is going to happen is that they'll cut the benefits harder, they'll give a few bob to Duncan Smith, they'll use that as camouflage but at the same time everybody else's benefits will be reduced and it'll sabotage everything he tries to do. The second fig leaf, I'm looking at them, it is the Liberal party. How many of you came into politics to be in a position to cut the benefits, across the board, of your constituents? Not one of you. You are cutting the benefits, very often of the disabled, the vulnerable and the unemployed. People that up until last May you would have been standing in this Council chamber defending. And you are in that position now. And don't come back and say "we are attenuating the damage" because last week your party was brushed aside because there was another £4 billion of cuts and you weren't even consulted. You don't know the content of it, it's going ahead, and your position within Government was as nothing, you were utterly and absolutely used and that is the sad thing. But you are rolled out now and again to be told that you are the respectable side, the respectable face of the coalition but you are being used. Quite honestly you could have been the sword of Damocles outside the Government waiting to pounce on stuff like this. But you didn't, you swapped it for a mess of pottage which is in fact the change to the voting system which you're not going to get. That is your problem. Instead of the sword of Damocles, you're turning into a fig leaf, and rather a wet one at that.

So we are in a position where we have changes which are not going to have the impact that they were supposed to, changes which are unfair, changes which will hit all our constituents; people we are responsible for and are supposed to be there to defend, changes which will hit Nottingham harder than many other places in the country; the city you are supposed to help defend, and changes which will take money out of the economy, and changes which will not produce one additional job. The interesting point is the way of getting benefits down is actually to create jobs, and you are going in the opposite direction. Benefit costs will go up under the policies that you are pursuing. So not only will you hurt people, you will actually make things worse for the economy as a whole and make things worse for the city as a whole. Thank you.

### **Area committees**

The following question was asked by Councillor Price of the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Area Working:



Can the portfolio holder assure me that; there are no plans to amalgamate Areas 8 and 9; that the Area Committees will not be restricted to quarterly meetings; and if there should be changes to Area Committee structure, that proper consultation will be carried out with ward councillors and local residents?

Councillor Urquhart replied as follows:

Thank you, Councillor Price for your question.

I have a real sense of deja-vu as you asked a similar question at a similar point last year. In my answer I recall saying that I felt our work in neighbourhoods had proved to be very successful, though not always organised as it is now, and that if there were to be changes, there would indeed need to be consultation.

There is, of course, always an imperative to see if we can improve upon the way we work. Currently we are facing significant reductions in funding due to the policies of the Coalition Government, as are many of our public sector partners, and I am sure Councillor Price would expect me to continue to consider ways of operating that could prove to be more efficient, and to consider the practical impacts of this for other public sectors organisations also facing the ConDem cuts, like the Police.

So, there are no immediate plans to amalgamate areas 8 and 9, but it is always right to review, and as Councillor Price will know changes to the way areas are managed have come in. In order to preserve delivery at the front line and to enable us to spend money on safeguarding children and providing for the vulnerable, the 2010/11 budget reduced the number of Area Managers we have, such that areas 8, 9 and the City Centre now share an Area Manager and have an Assistant Area Manager. Other areas have also been affected, including my own, but each ward has a Neighbourhood Action Officer.

It is right, though, that I continue to look at this service area and think about the way we deliver our work, in order to maximise efficiencies for the whole of area working and potentially both other departments and partners. This process has begun and Councillor Price may be aware that during 2009 and earlier this year there have been a number of discussion sessions held quite openly at Area Chairs Panel, and another one scheduled for this week, where we have looked at what functions are best delivered at an area level and which are best delivered at a ward

level. This process has been very open and will continue to be so.

In terms of frequency of Area Committee meetings, that is for the Committee, usually through the Chair, to determine. The usual pattern has been bi-monthly, again I have been open with Chairs in saying to them that if they decide to meet less frequently and perhaps do more ward based activity, then they can do so.

I think that reviewing the way we work is right, and improved efficiency is something that I hope Councillor Price would approve of.

### **Training expenditure**

The following question was asked by Councillor Culley of the Leader of the Council:

Can the leader justify spending £30,000 of council money on a training programme for 10 executive Councillors when the City Council is expecting significant cuts in the budget?

Councillor Collins replied as follows:

I have, in response to previous questions in Council, explained the value of this work, and therefore won't waste Members time repeating myself. However, in response to Councillor Culley, the total spent on Members Development is on average around £2,000 per Councillor. The sum to which Councillor Culley refers is part of the total Member Training and Development budget and amounts to an average of £3,000 per Executive Member. Furthermore the budgeted sum in the current year is already significantly less than last year's. At a time when the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Government seems intent on driving through savage unwise and largely unnecessary cuts in public spending, I'm sure the Member Development budget will face close examination as we prepare next year's budget. This year, however, and from a total net Council budget of £272 million, spending of around £3,000 per Exec Member on training and development seems reasonable.

### **Radford Unity Complex**

The following question was asked by Councillor Price of the Portfolio Holder for Housing Delivery and the Voluntary Sector:

Could the portfolio holder update the council on the current status of the Radford Unity Complex; the whereabouts of the organisations that were tenants at the time of the call-in; and can he update us on the Council's asset transfer policy and any lessons learnt from the call-in process?

Councillor Liversidge replied as follows:

1. The whereabouts of the organisations that were tenants at the time of the call-in

All the community groups continue to occupy offices and use the wider premises for their activities.

Officers from Communities and Property Services met with representatives of the community groups in May 2010 to present proposals by which the groups could acquire the Radford Unity Complex premises by means of extending their tenure of the Complex. In essence, the opportunity to purchase a 125 year leasehold on the premises. The Council will require the prospective purchasers to develop and implement a sustainable management structure allowing for all of the occupying Groups future needs to be met on an equitable basis. This approach was taken in this case because of the groups long term tenure of this building

The groups were asked to present a business case relating to the possible acquisition and future operation of the Radford Unity Complex building. With the assistance of City Council grant aid the groups have engaged a suitably experienced consultant to assist them with the development of the business case. The Business case was delivered to the Council on 7 September 2010. It is currently being assessed by officers. Officers have arranged to meet with the RUC groups and their consultant to discuss the step.

The Business Plan shows that a consortium of three of the groups propose to purchase the lease: Sikh Community and Youth services (SCYS), Shiefton Youth Group and Supplementary School and Nottingham Teaching College. All the other groups; i.e. ERONDU, Catch 22, Gujarat Samaj, Hindu Youth Group have confirmed that they support the plan. The Council will check that these groups are treated equitably within the business plan proposals.

## 2. Community Asset Transfer framework

Since the Call-in Committee officers from Property Services and Neighbourhood and Communities have met with the Development Trusts Association and Nottingham CVS. The outcome of those meetings is that officers are currently developing draft proposals for consideration by relevant Portfolio Holders. Prior to the proposals coming forward to Executive Board a consultation will take place with stakeholders. The framework will include transparent criteria which will be used to assess whether the transfer of the assets will meet with Council priorities and that the organisation wishing to receive the assets has sufficient capability and capacity to sustain the management of the building and ensure it is open to use by a range of communities, not just one organisation

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been briefed on process and it has been agreed that reports on both items will be scheduled for the October meeting.

## 3. Learning from the Call-in process

Communication plans are now an integral part of the planning of all projects involving changes to voluntary and community sector services.

In response to Scrutiny recommendations the format of papers for the Executive are being amended to ensure that equality and diversity, and issues impacting on communities are clearly identified. Advice from the City Council's Equality and Diversity Team on how best to address this issue has been obtained and a standard question requiring justification for not carrying out an EIA will be included in all executive reports and the report writing guidance will be updated to include information to assist officer-colleagues in undertaking EIAs.

The Executive Board was also asked by the Call-in Sub-Committee to consider its decision making processes to ensure that, as far as possible, delegated decisions taken by senior officers were not, and were not perceived to be, pre-emptive in respect of specific courses of action still to be decided by Portfolio Holders, regardless of the financial threshold of the delegated decision. To respond to this recommendation, it is proposed that a Constitutional amendment be made to the preamble to the delegated decision making scheme whereby narrative would be added requiring senior officers not to exercise their delegated power in

such a way that could be perceived to be pre-emptive in respect of executive decisions regardless of the financial threshold. This proposed amendment will be included within part of a wider review on delegated decision making taking place in the coming months which will require the approval of full Council prior to implementation.

### **31 NOTTINGHAM CITY CENTRE RETAIL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)**

The report of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Regeneration, as set out on pages 215 to 219 of the agenda, was submitted.

**RESOLVED on the motion of Councillor Clark, seconded by Councillor MacLennan:**

- (1) that the Nottingham Retail BID proposed Business Plan for the five year term of the BID, commencing January 2011, be approved;**
- (2) that authorisation be given for entering into the Operating Agreement under which it would collect, on behalf of the Retail BID, the levies due;**
- (3) that the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Regeneration be nominated to hold the proxy vote on behalf of the Council as an eligible levy payer in the BID ballot.**

### **32 CITY ENERGY STRATEGY 2010-2020**

The report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change, as set out on pages 220 to 235 of the agenda, together with a copy of the City Energy Strategy 2010-2020, were submitted.

**RESOLVED on the motion of Councillor Bull, seconded by Councillor Edwards, that the Energy Strategy 2010-2020 be approved.**

**33 MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR LIVERSIDGE – ‘NOTTDECENT’ CAMPAIGN**

Moved by Councillor Liversidge, seconded by Councillor James:

“This Council supports the Tenants and Leaseholders Congress Campaign ‘NottDecent!’ to call on the government to continue funding the Decent Homes Programme in Nottingham”.

Councillor Culley proposed an amendment that was not valid as it deleted the original motion in its entirety.

**RESOLVED on the motion of Councillor Liversidge, seconded by Councillor James, that this Council supports the Tenants and Leaseholders Congress Campaign ‘NottDecent’ to call on the government to continue funding the Decent Homes Programme in Nottingham.**

**34 MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR CHAPMAN – TOP VALLEY SCHOOL AND ENGINEERING COLLEGE AND TRINITY SCHOOL**

Moved by Councillor Chapman, seconded by Councillor Mellen:

“This Council calls upon the Government to fulfil the promise of Partnerships for Schools to rebuild Top Valley School and Engineering College and The Trinity School hereby avoiding legal challenge to its decision to stop the schemes”.

Moved by Councillor Morley by way of amendment and seconded by Price that:

After ‘this Council calls upon the Government to’ delete all and insert ‘find the funding to rebuild Top Valley School and Engineering College and the Trinity School’.

The amended motion to read:

“This Council calls upon the Government to find the funding to rebuild Top Valley School and Engineering College and the Trinity School”.

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

**RESOLVED on the motion of Councillor Chapman, seconded by Councillor Mellen, that this Council calls upon the Government to fulfil the promise of Partnerships for Schools to rebuild Top Valley School and Engineering College and The Trinity School hereby avoiding legal challenge to its decision to stop the schemes.**

The meeting concluded at 7.40 pm

**Council Question requiring a written response**

The following response was circulated to all City Councillors on 20 September 2010:

Councillor Davie asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Economic Development and Reputation:

Can the portfolio holder outline what specific help the City Council is offering to businesses on Mansfield Road in the City centre during this difficult time?

Councillor Chapman replied as follows:

We recognise that Mansfield Road is an important, arterial gateway into the city and continues to offer a vibrant and diverse range of shops and leisure activities. We also appreciate that retail and leisure, is one of our identified key development sectors, and the continued development of small and medium sized enterprises is vital to the economy of the city.

We have put in place a wide range of support for local businesses in all sectors, and areas of the city, as a part of the Council led Economic Resilience Forum. These range from direct help with payment of business rates, help with employment and training needs, and through our partners in Business Link, one to one support through a dedicated business adviser for specific business needs including managing cash flow and accounts, access to loan finance, support with sales and marketing, new technologies and innovation.

In addition and specifically of benefit to retail businesses is the development of a retail Business Improvement District (BID) in the city, that was discussed and supported at full Council on 13 September. Although this does not cover the whole of Mansfield Road it will help to improve the retail offer across the city which will ultimately have benefits beyond the formally defined BID area.

However the greatest help of all would be an attenuation of government budget proposals which are suppressing demand in the economy. Particularly damaging will be the proposed increase in VAT. I would be grateful if Councillor Davie would join me in urging the Government to



review its VAT proposals in particular which will add to the economic difficulty of the area he is concerned about as well as hurt the worst off in the city.