

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

held at the Council House, Nottingham,

on Monday 5 March 2012 at 2.00 pm

ATTENDANCES

✓	Councillor Wildgust		Lord Mayor
✓	Councillor Ali	✓	Councillor Liversidge
✓	Councillor Arnold	✓	Councillor Longford
✓	Councillor Aslam	✓	Councillor McDonald
✓	Councillor Ball	✓	Councillor Malcolm
✓	Councillor Bryan	✓	Councillor McCulloch
✓	Councillor Campbell	✓	Councillor Mellen
✓	Councillor Chapman	✓	Councillor Molife
✓	Councillor Choudhry	✓	Councillor Morley
✓	Councillor Clark	✓	Councillor Morris
✓	Councillor Collins	✓	Councillor Neal
✓	Councillor Cresswell	✓	Councillor Norris
✓	Councillor Culley	✓	Councillor Ottewell
✓	Councillor Dewinton	✓	Councillor Packer
✓	Councillor Edwards	✓	Councillor Parbutt
✓	Councillor Fox	✓	Councillor Parton
✓	Councillor Gibson	✓	Councillor Piper
✓	Councillor Grocock		Councillor Saghir
✓	Councillor Hartshorne	✓	Councillor Smith
✓	Councillor Healy		Councillor Spencer
✓	Councillor Heaton	✓	Councillor Steel
✓	Councillor Ibrahim	✓	Councillor Trimble
✓	Councillor Jeffery	✓	Councillor Unczur
✓	Councillor Jenkins	✓	Councillor Urquhart
✓	Councillor Johnson	✓	Councillor Watson
✓	Councillor Jones	✓	Councillor K Williams
✓	Councillor Khan	✓	Councillor S Williams
✓	Councillor Klein	✓	Councillor Wood

88 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Saghir and Spencer.

89 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Malcolm declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (minute 97), Budget 2012/13, as a Trustee of Clifton Advice Centre, which did not preclude him from speaking or voting.

90 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS FROM CITIZENS

Questions from citizens

The following questions from citizens were received:

City Webcam

The following question was asked by Mr Peter Humphreys to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Tourism:

Can someone please explain why there seems to be no working webcams in Nottingham supported by the Council? I can see views of continental cities and small towns with just a click of my mouse but if I try to view Nottingham I get either no webcam or a message saying 'webcam down'. This is very poor for a major city and can deter people from visiting if they cannot view the City. Can you please provide an explanation why this major feature of tourism is not being addressed?

Councillor Trimble replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor, and can I thank Mr Humphreys for both his question and his interest in tourism and the general wellbeing of Nottingham.

We did operate a live webcam on the Old Market Square during the construction of the new square. It is felt that there is no evidence that it was desirable to continue this service or that it would have been well used by potential visitors to the City.

Experience Nottinghamshire, who operate the destination management service for the City, have confirmed to us that the main interest being shown by potential visitors is in good quality video footage of the City. Not live webcam views.

Experience Nottinghamshire are currently exploring how this can be developed on their website to provide a positive and welcoming message to potential visitors to the City.

Aspley Lane Build-out

The following question was asked by Mr Martin Clough to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation:

What is the purpose of the new build-out on the south side of Aspley Lane, between the Ring Road and bus stop AS19?

A Council employee suggested that it was to help bus-drivers approaching the new bus lay-by, by preventing parking. However, this explanation was rejected by a bus-driver, who said he would not want such an obstacle. It would be preferable to have an occasional parked car preceding the lay-by rather than a permanent obstruction.

If the purpose is to prevent parking, why were yellow lines not used? This would have been cheaper, and would not have created a hazard for drivers and cyclists.

Councillor Urquhart replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor, and thanks to Mr Clough for his question.

There are a number of improvements that are currently being undertaken on Aspley Lane to improve safety and, as part of those works, the existing pedestrian crossing outside the Bluecoat School is being upgraded to a puffin crossing. This involves removing the central refuge and constructing a build-out so that pedestrians using the crossing can see, and be seen, if a bus is standing at the stop AS19 referred to. At this location there is one westbound lane through the crossing. Next to the crossing there is the bus stop which is well used by school children, at the end of the bus stop a further build-out divides the bus stop from street parking.

This location, like many schools, is busy at the start and end of the school day and our experience shows that parents dropping off and picking up tend, unfortunately, to ignore waiting restrictions that are imposed for this. At this location a succession of vehicles doing this are likely to encroach into the space needed by the bus to get to the stop, and this means that a bus would be prevented from approaching the stop to pull up to the raised kerb and, of course, if a bus cannot pull up to a raised kerb this makes it more difficult for disabled passengers, or people with pushchairs to get onto the bus because they use the level access provided by the bus stop. The build-out, therefore, physically separates the parking and the bus stop and acts as a stronger deterrent to prevent vehicles obstructing the bus stop. Nottingham City Transport have been consulted on the proposals and they have not raised any issues with the build-out in terms of it causing any problems for their services.

Drivers on Aspley Lane have to align themselves with the single lane through this pedestrian crossing, and the build-out protecting the bus stop and the head of the pedestrian crossing allows this to happen in advance of that crossing. In terms of cyclists, there is a cycle facility linked to the ring road cycle lanes that can be used for cyclists who do not feel confident in using the carriageway at this location.

These proposals have, of course, been subject to a full safety audit undertaken by a competent safety auditor qualified for the purpose. The scheme is therefore considered an appropriate highway layout to improve safety on this important section of Aspley Lane outside a very large school.

Clothing Allowance and Hardship Fund

The following question was asked by Ms Nicola Syvret for the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services:

As part of your PowerPoint presentation to Schools Governors via the Spring Term Forum you said that "the way the Government is imposing its funding cuts is unfair. It hits the poorest the hardest". Just six slides later you go on to propose a trifling £38,000 saving (0.01% of the 2012/13 £275 million budget) by cutting School Clothing Allowances by 20% and slashing the Hardship Fund from £25,000 to £5,000. Are you personally responsible for this cut? And if so, how can you justify persecuting our poorest and most 'in need' families at this difficult time? How are you any better than the Government?

Councillor Mellen replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor, and can I thank Ms Syvret for her question.

Although not a statutory requirement, this authority has historically offered financial help towards the purchase of school uniforms for families who met the appropriate criteria of receiving free school meals or Working Family Tax Credit.

During the financial year 2011/12 we took a difficult decision in our strategic choice programme to reduce the number of school years that the school clothing allowance was to be made available to. This was not a decision that we took lightly and at that time I, and my colleagues on this side of the Chamber, took the view that it was important that we maintained a school clothing allowance, but with a reduced financial contribution that reflected the ongoing pressures on the Council budget.

In making my decision I sought to find the times when families most need this financial support to buy school clothes. By focussing on five school years 1, 4, 7, 9, and 11, and only making the allowance available to these years, I felt it gave assistance to those families meeting the criteria and most in need, such as the first year of primary and the first year of secondary school, at what is an expensive time when having to purchase a new complete uniform. It also offers support mid way through the school years. This decision was implemented last year and widely accepted.

So during the strategic choice programme again this year with even greater financial pressures in place, I again felt that it was necessary to look at the school clothing allowance. This time I took into account the fact that all other East Midlands local authorities have completely withdrawn this kind of allowance, and that near neighbours such as Stoke, Newcastle, Leeds, and Birmingham no longer offered any clothing assistance.

We did consider the option of removing the allowances altogether in line with practice elsewhere, but we felt that as an authority we need to recognise the importance that school uniform brings to a child's self confidence and on school behaviour and identity. I am proud, Lord Mayor, despite the immense pressures on our budget, that we will hear about later in this afternoon's meeting, that we are committed to retaining this allowance and that, rather than persecuting our poorest and most in

need families at this difficult time, as Ms Syvret states in her question, this actually offers financial support to some of our most vulnerable families that they would receive almost nowhere else in the country. This is our principles of Nottingham Labour at work; this is a Labour Council providing protection for those most in need from the pernicious cuts of this Conservative Liberal Democrat government.

Our proposal this year maintained for those years for which the allowance is available, in years 1, 4, 7, 9, and 11, does reduce all allowances by slightly less than 20%. Whilst this proposal will reduce the Council's provision to assist pupils with the purchase of school uniforms, it has importantly retained an element of assistance to those families, albeit at a lower rate. We cannot escape from the fact that these government cuts do affect the ability of the council to retain the benefits it has previously been able to administer.

With regard to the hardship fund that is available, it has to be borne in mind that school clothing allowances are only available to those families who meet strict financial criteria, and for a family to qualify for a hardship payment, that has to be over and above that for a clothing allowance. The fact that the Council will reduce its hardship fund by about £20,000 has been taken knowing what allowances we have paid out from the hardship fund in previous years, and I am confident, Lord Mayor, that we can make this reduction and continue to make hardship payments where necessary.

In conclusion, the proposal to make cuts to the school clothing allowance was mine, supported by colleagues on this side of the Chamber, and was one that was made in the light of the extreme budget pressures that we find ourselves in at the moment. It was one that we took only after considering all other options available, and rather than persecuting our poorest and most in need families at this difficult time, I feel the allowances that this authority has in kept in place still offer assistance where it is most needed and that we are indeed offering the best we can in most difficult financial times.

Petitions from Councillors on behalf of citizens

Councillor Norris submitted a petition comprising 1,750 signatories to the Lord Mayor on behalf of Notts Save our Services urging the Council to declare the financial situation in the Council as an emergency, objecting to the cuts to local services for the coming year 2012/13, urging the

Council to open its books and work with relevant bodies in the City to set a needs based budget and to demand that government provide adequate funds to maintain local services.

Councillor Parton submitted a petition comprising 61 signatories to the Lord Mayor objecting to large business vehicles being parked on highways in Wollaton.

Councillor Wood submitted a petition comprising 67 signatories to the Lord Mayor on behalf of residents from Bridge Green in Strelley objecting to opening hours of the Co-operative supermarket and petrol filling station.

Councillor Morris submitted a petition comprising 426 signatories to the Lord Mayor objecting the closure of Marlstones Care Home in Bulwell.

Councillor Norris submitted a petition comprising 395 signatories to the Lord Mayor on behalf of Unison urging Nottingham City Council to not pass on cuts to the citizens of Nottingham, to use financial reserves to off-set cuts and to scrap the use of external consultants in the Council's East Midlands Shared Services project.

91 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2012, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Lord Mayor.

92 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Chief Executive reported the following communications:

Lawn Tennis Association Awards

At a ceremony held on 9 February 2012, Nottingham City Council and the Nottingham Tennis Centre were proudly presented with a Merit Award from the National Wheelchair Tennis Association for services to Wheelchair Tennis.

Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) Councillor Achievement Awards

Councillor Eunice Campbell has been recognised for her contribution to partnership working with a Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) Councillor Achievement award. She won the Partnership Achievement of the Year at a ceremony at Westminster City Council last week. The judges were impressed with her role in strengthening pre-existing health partnerships in Nottingham, as well as forging new partnerships in areas including childcare and crime and drugs. They recognised that health partnerships are among the most difficult partnerships for councils to forge and maintain and felt that her work in leading the integration of health into the wider strategic partnerships has left the Council in a much stronger position to fulfil its new public health responsibilities.

Victoria Leisure Centre

The brand new Victoria Leisure Centre opened to members of the public today. Over £9 million has been invested to transform the Centre into a state-of-the-art fitness facility, with a 70 station gym, fitness studio, 25m pool, teaching pool, children's splash area, sauna and steam rooms. The Centre is on the recently redeveloped Sneinton Square. It offers fantastic facilities and will be a great resource for the local community.

On 24 February, in the run up to the opening, Paula Platt, mother of murdered teenager Danielle Beccan, opened a fitness suite named in Danielle's honour.

Award for financial investigation and prosecution

Last week Naomi Matthews, one of our senior solicitors from Legal Services, was awarded runner-up in the Proceeds of Crime Act Prosecutor Award, part of the Keith Hughes awards for the foremost innovators in financial investigation and prosecution.

The awards ceremony recognised the achievements of those who have made an outstanding contribution in the field of financial investigation to fight crime. Many congratulations to Naomi.

Nottingham Circle

Nottingham Circle is a new membership organisation for people aged over 50. We recently commissioned this social enterprise to reduce social isolation and help older people to live more independently in their own homes for longer.

The Circle has an army of volunteers who provide practical help around the home. It also runs a full calendar of exciting social activities enabling older people to connect with one another. The Circle launched on 29 February and should be financially self-sustaining within three years. We're expecting great things from this new approach to 'building community capacity' through support networks, which can help people to understand and meet their own needs.

This form of early intervention develops resources in the community to help people deal with their problems and prevent them from escalating and requiring social care intervention. It's also 'win-win' because it means better outcomes for the individual and less demand on our social care services.

93 QUESTIONS

Chancellor's Upcoming Budget

Councillor Molife asked the following question of the Deputy Leader:

Would the Deputy Leader let Council know what he hopes to see from the Chancellor's upcoming budget?

Councillor Chapman replied as follows:

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

Now I could answer this question by offering a wish list of things I'd rather he didn't do. I'd rather he didn't take away money from the poorest local authorities to protect the better off; I'd rather he didn't penalise low income working families with children, which is what is about to happen, I'd rather he reverse the business rates proposals which will favour the south, as opposed to the north and the midlands; I'd like him to be a bit nicer; I'd like him to be more competent; I'd like him to go on a course of Keynesian economics; I'd actually rather like him not to be there at all;

but all this is in vain, so I will concentrate on what is needed for the economy and for this City and what may stand half a chance of acceptance.

To get the economy moving, we should concentrate on infrastructure in cities which are the motors for growth. We should concentrate on the infrastructure because it creates jobs in the short term, which creates demand, which creates more jobs and you get an upward spiral. Infrastructure also provides support and confidence to the private sector so that it is ready to take off and invest and the economic cycle turns round. So, in Nottingham, the top priority is the electricification of the Midland Mainline. It is then investment in green energy to provide a secure source of power for the City into the future, extending the District Heating System, restoring some of the incentives for solar panels, and the creation of smart energy networks to manage power consumption.

A systematic extension of ultra-band across the City, for which we have a bid in at the moment, it is a very good bid, and I would like to thank Councillor Ball for his contribution. We also would need a mainstream scheme for four year proper apprenticeships geared to industrial demand. We would want help with site preparation in anticipation of private sector investment. There is a need to connect up the Island site, in transport terms to the rest of the City, Southside and Waterside, and that would make us ready for when there is economic lift-off.

We need to pay for it. I would scrap the scheme for tax-relief on higher rate tax payers and pension contributions. We need to be diverting quantitative easing, which is currently going directly to the banks and recapitalising, it is not finding its way into the economy. This could be put into a national investment bank to pay for a lot of the infrastructure, and it would be repaid through the tax-take which the additional activity would create. Why would these proposals stand half a chance, because there are actually a few sensible Tories, Greg Clarke would be one that springs to mind, and the Confederation of British Industry, who are in favour of such an approach, indeed we are seeing some response from the government even in the most anaemic form, with an increase in the Regional Growth Fund, so it knows what it needs to do, it just can't get around to doing it.

Now, George Osborne may continue to manage the economy as he's done over the last two years, as though it was a dead beat corner shop in Grantham, and do nothing but retrench, or he may go for a tax

giveaway to the better off as was urged by the Tory right, where all the benefits will find their way out of the economy in the form of international investment or the import of luxury goods. Actually what is needed is a national industrial strategy, which not only supports infrastructure, but also gives incentives to research and development, backs winners in areas such as the games industry, on whose behalf I have written to the Chancellor, green energy, where we are going backwards as a nation since the Conservatives took over, and support for roll out of invention and innovation.

What we have at the moment is a retreat from intervention with a few pennies thrown in the form of schemes such as the enterprise action zone, and a few pennies also to the Regional Growth Fund. It is interesting that the big idea is the £4 billion investment fund from the pension scheme, £4 billion is peanuts when you compare it with the £325 billion which has been issued in the form of quantitative easing, it is totally disproportionate to the needs of this nation. Talking about pennies, we will see if the penny has dropped at budget time, but none of us should hold our breath. In the end, I think there is a lack of nerve and imagination in the government, and a subservience to the ratings agency, which would prevent him doing the right thing, or having any proper industrial strategy at all.

Lettings Boards and Implementation of the Article 4 Direction

Councillor S Williams asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation:

Would the Portfolio Holder comment on the Government's decision to award a control on letting boards for 90% of the area submitted and imminent implementation of the Article 4 direction?

Councillor Urquhart replied as follows:

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

As members will, I hope, be aware, for some time in Nottingham we have been working hard to ensure that the positive contribution made by our two universities to our City is balanced with a need to ensure that our communities remain safe, clean and places where both families, permanent residents and students would want to live. This does mean

trying to ensure that those communities have a balance between permanent and temporary residents, and it does mean seeking to control some aspects of the lettings market to achieve this, both control of lettings boards and the Article 4 direction help with this aim.

We want to build thriving communities of families, older and younger people who can support each other to sustain local services and facilities, and there is a history in many cities of areas where the majority of family homes have been converted into houses for multiple occupation populated by young single people. In those circumstances local schools, shops and other facilities can close because there are fewer families left to use them. In areas near universities where the majority of young people are students, it can also mean that houses and the majority of whole streets, can be empty for a third of the year. Creating and protecting balanced neighbourhoods has enormous benefits for everyone who lives there, it means having a variety of decent homes in safe and attractive environments, where people of all lifestyles and ages can live. So the introduction of both of these planning measures will help us curb further increases in the concentration of houses in multiple occupation, and ensure that neighbourhoods have a healthy mix of good quality housing and suitable facilities for all of our residents.

So we do believe the governments' decision is extremely good news for this Council, it fundamentally supports our position by ensuring that the detrimental environmental impacts of excessive to let boards in defined areas of the City, will now be controllable through the planning and Council enforcement system. The decision also vindicates the considerable amount of effort that Councillors and colleagues have made in working with the local community, and key stakeholders to collect the evidence of abuse of the voluntary lettings board regulation system, and developing proposals to make the submission to government and I would like, in particular, to thank Jo Briggs, Helen Cattle and Andrew Gregory for their hard work on this issue.

The key features of the decision we have, so far, are that the Secretary of State agrees, in principle, to the control of letting boards in nearly 90% of the area we proposed. The Secretary of State does, however, propose to modify the boundary of area to exclude some significant communities. So the Secretary of State, prior to finalising the direction has invited us to make comments which we will submit by March 17. We hope then that we will receive the relevant direction in late March to be able to implement in April 2012. Being able to control the type of lettings boards

and the length of time they can remain on the street, will help us to make areas of the City with a lot of lettable properties look tidier helping the whole neighbourhood to improve.

With this alongside the work of Unipol ensuring that many properties are properly registered and accredited in terms of quality, students too can be assured that renting in Nottingham is a reasonable and sensible step to take, though I hope that they will also know that we expect all of our residents, whether permanent or temporary, to take pride in their neighbourhood and to help to make it a great place to live whoever you are.

Regarding the fact that the government has supported 90% of the area we have proposed, we do think that we are in a strong position to challenge this and to give the government further information in support of the whole of the area we put forward. So we will be putting forward representations to the Secretary of State to ask him to reconsider those modifications. In the short term of course there will also be a challenge to ensure the smooth roll-out of the lettings board controls, and we would hope to introduce those new controls in April 2012, with a clear enforcement protocol and procedures having been agreed.

The Article 4 direction coming into affect later this month will help us to control any further loss of any family houses to houses in multiple occupation, whilst helping also to address the negative affects arising from high concentrations of shared rental properties. Guidance for property owners is currently being finalised in respect of this. The implementation of this City-wide direction, along with the control of lettings boards in those areas with high proportion of rental property, has a fundamental part to play in the creation and maintenance of mixed and balanced neighbourhoods providing decent homes to meet the needs of all people and giving people a safe and attractive environment to live. So both of these actions are in line with other actions taken by other cities to tidy up neighbourhoods, and to stop the cumulative impact of rows and rows of 'to let' boards that can be detrimental to local streets.

Of course, we are not banning 'to let' boards, but instead, we have a set of guidelines showing how we want letting boards to look and how long we want them to stay up for. They will be smaller, of a uniform design and have to be flush to the wall, and, of course, before we came to this decision we consulted widely over a long period of time on both the Article 4 direction and letting boards, and we believe that together that

they will make an enormous difference to the look and feel of many of our streets and neighbourhoods.

Fuel Poverty

Councillor Morris asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Energy and Sustainability:

With fuel poverty expected to affect 9 million households by 2016, an increase from 1.2 million in 2003 and 2004, would the Portfolio Holder comment on the effect of Government inaction over this issue and decisions such as the cutting of the winter fuel allowance are having?

Councillor Clark replied as follows:

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

Energy efficiency experts, Camco, calculated that on average the government will raise £4 billion a year in carbon taxes over the next 15 years. They estimate that if this revenue from the EU emissions trading scheme and carbon floor price was recycled to households to spend on energy efficiency measures, that it is enough to bring 9 out of 10 households out of fuel poverty.

It could also be used to create 200,000 jobs and quadruple carbon emission cuts, compared to the government's new energy efficiency schemes. The new research also presents the most up to date assessment of the number of houses in fuel poverty today and the number of households at risk in the future. It finds that 6.4 million households are now suffering from fuel poverty across the UK, meaning that they need to spend more than 10% of their income to keep their homes warm. The research reveals the risk that fuel poverty could affect 9.1 million households by 2016, the year in which the government has a target to eliminate fuel poverty. With fuel prices rising by 25% in the last year, loft and wall insulation, and micro-generation are obviously failing to keep up.

More fuel poverty means more people living in cold homes, further damaging the health of vulnerable members of society including children, older people, and people with disabilities and illness. More people die every year in the UK from living in a cold home than die on our roads. Nottingham saw annual excess winter deaths of 103 people in the last

calculated period 2009/10, across Nottinghamshire it was 505 people. Excess winter deaths are the number of winter deaths December to March, minus the average of non-winter deaths, the averages of August to November and April to July.

The research uses the government's estimate for the most likely future gas prices, it also takes into account the future impact of the government's new energy efficiency policies. It is the most authoritative, independent assessment of how effective they are likely to be yet published. It includes analysis of their flagship Green Deal programme, as well as the new energy company obligation, which will provide subsidies for insulation. It shows these programmes will fall short of meeting both climate change and fuel poverty targets unless significantly more financial support from the government is provided.

Taking that definition of 10% of net income there are, of course, two ways to get that figure below 10%. One is to decrease fuel bills, which Camco and others have analysed in great depth, the other is to increase net income. These are projections that Camco has been unable to make, the coalition government being less predictable than the world energy market.

Winter fuel payments for pensioners, however, were lower this winter than last by £50 for the over 60's, and £100 for the over 80's. The City has this winter, for the first time, a tackling fuel debt advice service run by Advice Nottingham, hosted by St Ann's Advice and funded by the British Gas Energy Trust. This winter saw the new Warm Home discounts of £120 on electricity accounts, but that replaced the social tariffs. But some of the hardest hit are ordinary working families on low wages. It is all very well to talk about taking so many out of income tax all together, but what about the 200,000 families hit by one working tax credit change, the pernicious 25 hour rule, and what other changes are in store for ordinary working families, and why is the government also picking on women in their 50's? There's plenty of government information out there, published at great expense, about all the changes in retirement ages, just one table shows women born in 1960 on a month by month basis, that their retirement age rises a month per month, and then there's the cost of writing to them all. But it's not just the pension that is affected, bad as that is when you've paid into the system for up to 45 years, then it suddenly changes. But this age is also used to determine exemptions from national insurance payments, concessionary passes, prescriptions and is linked to winter fuel payments. It is clear that the cohort of women

between 50 and 60 over the next 10 years will demonstrate the biggest widening gap between the best off and the worst off, and so little of it is within their own control. They just get a letter from the DWP stating the new retirement date that seems to be plucked out of the air, as it does not relate to their date of birth at all.

Direct Payments for Benefits

Councillor Khan asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Regeneration and the Community Sector:

Would the Portfolio Holder provide Council with his thoughts on the impact of the Government's direct payments policy for benefits?

Councillor Liversidge replied as follows:

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

My immediate thought is that it is a silly idea that has been tried before and failed before. It is going to come on top of a lot of cuts to benefits. I think if you are living in a middle class bubble, you've got a good job, you can budget, but if you are on a poor income, very low income then budgeting is extremely difficult. The actual introduction of the Universal Credit will replace a number of benefits including housing benefit, and it is going to be managed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) instead of everybody else the DWP, the tax and the local authorities.

The government are intent that the Universal pays a single monthly payment per household, so people will be getting like a salary from the DWP. This single payment will not itemise what it is due for. The direct payments provision to the social rented sector will be revoked as part of this welfare reform, and it is still unclear when this is going to take place, it could be next April, it could be later in the year or it could be never, we never know yet. They tried it before and withdrew it before it started.

In Nottingham, there are currently 19,660 local authority tenure housing benefit claims in payments amounting to a weekly amount of £1.2 million that is paid direct to Nottingham City Homes. There are 7,014 housing benefit claims by registered social landlords' properties, of which 6,547 are paid directly to the landlord, accounting for £600,000 a week.

There are a number of risks to both tenants and increased transaction cost recovery for social landlords and the benefit recipients. Nottingham City Homes has calculated that the additional transaction costs for collecting payments from tenants would increase by as much as £662,000 per year, along with an increased requirement for arrears management. For tenants there are a number of risks in terms of budgeting monthly and prioritising rent and Council Tax payments, the potential for increased rent arrears, and subsequent recovery action and, ultimately, eviction costs. The potential for some registered social housing sector is to opt out of the benefits system, there could be some companies who move out of it.

In response to these changes it is important that we, the Council, can provide guidance and support to those citizens that need it. Nottingham City Council, Nottingham City Homes and registered social landlords in the City are already looking at how we can support tenants through this in order to save tenancies, collect rental income, and ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to the communication at the time the details of welfare reform changes are known, and agree an approach of how the role of credit unions may be able to help support tenants, and access to benefit and debt advice through welfare rights.

So, overall, I believe that this is the final straw for people on benefits, and it's going to cost the City Council loads of money to administer, and create havoc for people who may find themselves evicted just because they are poor.

Mayoral Referendum Posters

Councillor Morley asked the following question of the Leader:

The Leader of the Council will have noted the return to Nottingham's streets of City Council sponsored local Labour propaganda, this time regarding the upcoming mayoral referendum. Does he think this is an appropriate use of Council Tax payers money?

Councillor Collins replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor, and can I thank Councillor Morley for her question, not least because anything that raises the profile of the referendum will help encourage turnout, and all the evidence from referenda elsewhere in the country on this issue suggests that a high

turnout is the best way of defeating those, including her government that are campaigning for a £1 million Tory extra mayor for Nottingham.

As for her question, I am at something of a loss as to how she concluded that this is local Labour propaganda, for a start, the posters don't even mention the Labour Party and, quite reasonably, I believe, explain the government's point of view, while also encouraging people to go out and vote.

Secondly, the posters simply reflect Council policy on the issue, as debated and agreed at the full Council meeting in July last year. It is because the City Council has a clear policy on the issue, that having been vetted by the Council's lawyers, the publicity itself is considered to be appropriately balanced and legally robust.

Third, opposition to a £1 million Tory extra mayor is not Labour Party policy, indeed, it is with some regret, that I have to inform Council that during its time in office, the then Labour Government promoted the idea and, for some reason, and despite all the evidence of the negative effects of this policy, still does.

Finally, opposition to a £1 million Tory extra mayor isn't confined to Nottingham Labour. Indeed, before the last election, and when the Conservative Group was rather more effectively led by somebody prepared to think for himself, there was an all-party consensus about the issue on the City Council, and while without Councillor Price in charge, opposition members might have decided to grovel along to the line spun out of Conservative Central Office, I can confirm that Nottingham Liberal Democrats remain opposed to a £1 million Tory extra mayor, and so they should be, as should anybody with the best interests of Nottingham at heart, because the arguments against a £1 million Tory extra mayor are clear.

It's a waste of money at a time when the government are already cutting millions from the City Council's budget. It's an extra politician with a fat cat salary. The average Tory extra mayor's pay across the country is more than £70,000, and the highest is nearly £140,000 a year. It'll lead to political stalemate because with an extra mayor from one party, and more than two thirds of the councillors from another, neither the extra mayor or the Councillors will be able to implement their manifesto.

There'll be no say for local Councillors because all the decisions will be taken centrally by the £1 million Tory extra mayor, there'll be more chance of corruption, because with a £1 million Tory extra mayor making all the decisions, there's only one person to influence.

It's introducing proportional representation by the back door just months after the electorate voted emphatically against PR in a referendum and it's a risk. Nottingham's made good progress over the last decade, and while there's still a lot to do, a £1 million Tory extra mayor could undermine all that. In Hartlepool they elected the monkey mascot from the local football club as their extra mayor. In Stoke having an extra mayor was such a disaster electors voted to get rid of it, and in Doncaster they're having another referendum to get rid of the fascist that they've got as extra mayor now.

Is that the kind of fiasco we want for Nottingham? The government clearly does and it is spending millions, not just a few thousands of pounds, promoting the idea. However, this Council has a different view, that point of view is clear in Council policy and the Council has a mandate to promote that policy in the same way that the government has a mandate to promote theirs.

Sunday and Evening Car Parking

Councillor Steel asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation:

Would the Portfolio Holder agree that if the cost of enforcement wardens and staff, to administer the extended evening and Sunday parking charges, is not achieving sufficient value for money or margins, nor indeed to sustain the intended predictions, the scheme should be scrapped forthwith, as happened with a number of other councils?

In order to mitigate the effects of this unwarranted tax on our businesses and retailers, who continue to complain of loss of business, can she update us on the current income and cost figures, and future projections. If not sustainable in the longer term can we expect an immediate return to unlimited free on-street parking during evenings and Sundays?

Councillor Urquhart replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor, and many thanks for the question.

Of course, it's a regular activity for me to have to answer questions from the Conservatives on parking of one variety or another, so it is good to be able to do so again.

Firstly, I'm sure everyone would be pleased to know that there hasn't actually been an increase in enforcement costs to support the extended evening and Sunday parking charges simply because, as I'm sure the majority of Councillors would realise, that there are already traffic regulations that needed enforcing on Sundays and in the evenings like for example disabled bays, double yellow lines, taxi ranks and bus stops, placed there to ensure safety and traffic flow, so having enforcement officers out on a Sunday or in the evening is not new, nor is it dependent on introducing charging for on-street parking. Changes to the scheduling of our civil enforcement officers and the way that they are deployed has been done but that hasn't increased the cost overall and, of course, those civil enforcement officers are there to support traffic flow, a task that is relevant on Sundays and in the evenings, as well as Monday to Saturday.

In terms of the financial performance of Sunday and evening charging, it is still only 3 months since the introduction of this scheme, but it is the case that this scheme will be expected to make a significant contribution to the overall street parking budget for 2012/13. The evidence from those first 3 months shows that the overall yield is in fact higher than had originally been thought when the decision was made and, of course, the original consideration of it was through a previous Council budget process, and then through a traffic regulation order process. I am sure Councillors will be pleased that revenue from parking is then, of course, used to support highway, public transport and environmental improvements, which are important in attracting businesses and customers into the City centre.

This source of revenue is, of course, increasingly important to us, and we've touched on this already today, thanks to the cuts to our budget made by the Tory led coalition. Its version of fairness is to cut money for places like Nottingham, while increasing the money available for places like Dorset. Later this afternoon we will be debating our budget for 2012/13, cuts forced upon us by the coalition, whilst our Tory Councillors seem to be advocating reducing our income even further. I wonder what would be cut to fund such a reduction in income.

Our current national economic performance as a country indicates to me that the Tory led government are economically illiterate and I'm afraid their local Councillors seem to be following their lead. So to summarise, there are not plans to cease charging for street parking on Sundays and in the evenings, but we have listened to all those who have a stake in the vitality of the City centre and, as such, we are reducing the charges so that on-street parking on Sundays and in the evenings is to a maximum of a £1 per stay, however long that stay is. This is something that was announced a few weeks ago now and was, of course, covered by the Nottingham Post, but that is the usual source for questions from the Conservatives. A return to unlimited free parking on street in evenings and on Sundays would, of course, not address the issue of churn of cars using those spaces, which was a crucial part of the rationale for introducing the charges in the first place, because it is through parking management that we can achieve turnover in use of spaces, enabling people to find a space when they need one, rather than finding that all the spaces have already been taken and are full all of the time.

As I have said when answering questions about parking before, the majority of parking spaces in our City centre are not free on Sundays, nor in the evenings, and never have been because they are in car parks, nor is public transport free at those times and, of course, we have a fantastic offer of great public transport, high quality car parks and the City centre on-street spaces that all combine to make Nottingham an attractive City. We are working with the retail and leisure Business Improvement Districts and the Invest in Nottingham Retail Forum to look at a comprehensive strategy for the whole City centre, thinking about all of things that contribute to improving the attractiveness of our City centre as a great place to visit for leisure or for shopping. As ever, we are keen to look at an issue holistically, addressing the value of our whole City centre, rather than the price of a single aspect of it.

East Midlands Shared Services Budget

Councillor Culley asked the following question of the Deputy Leader:

The Deputy Leader of the Council will be aware that Unison has called for a saving of £4.2 million to be made from our contribution to the East Midlands Shared Services budget. Would he like to comment on the wisdom of such a proposal?

Councillor Chapman replied as follows:

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

The City Council has no alternative; I'll repeat that, has no alternative but to replace its current Finance and Human Resources IT systems before April 2013 when they will end their life and, therefore, become unsupported. East Midlands Shared Services, which is our way of moving forward, will give us the opportunity to implement a new IT system at a much reduced cost and timescale than if we were to go alone.

Local government, and this Council in particular, has seen significant funding reductions in recent years, and further major reductions are forecast year on year on year. An efficiency and 'salami slicing', which we've done a great deal of, are just not enough anymore. The East Midlands Shared Services which we are embarking on with Leicestershire County Council, will also give Nottingham City Council the opportunity to share some back office and transactional services with, not only Leicestershire, but, eventually, perhaps other councils who are showing an interest.

In the future, we will be able to offer other councils this opportunity in order to generate new income and, further, to share costs. The upfront financial investment, which Councillor Culley identified as £4.2 million, but actually the Portfolio Holder Decision identifies as £7.6 million, and this is how expensive our IT systems and the changes are going to be, but it is over many years, will contribute to the following - the specialised Oracle and development systems expertise required, the design of systems and processes that meet the needs of Nottingham City Council, the purchase of licences to operate the Oracle software, the transition of employees to the new shared service, which will also have its cost, the development and training of Nottingham City Council employees and managers to use the new IT systems, programme management to ensure that the joint services are delivered on time at cost and at quality as we have designed. We expect, in the long run, and it's not that long, I think it's probably from 2016 onwards, but I'm guessing there so I don't want to be held to it, we expect the savings and it has been well calculated, to be £1 million a year to this authority. It will actually, overall, be £2 million split 50:50 with Leicestershire County Council.

So, in short, it is not a wise proposal to cut this budget as it would end in reduced services and eventually fewer jobs, in fact, it is very unwise.

Eventually, if we don't support this system, we could end up by not being able to hire staff properly or certainly pay staff properly, and I am not convinced that Unison would like that very much.

Bulwell Hall Park

Councillor Parton asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Tourism and Culture:

Would the Portfolio Holder care to enlighten us as to why the 'called-in' decision of May last, reference an Extended Grass Cutting Contract for Bulwell Hall Park with a Contracting Company, which we were assured at the Call In was completely legitimate, appears to have been quietly reversed and machinery and a housing building authorised to be acquired for the purpose? Have we any further surprises to come with the contracting company involved?

Councillor Trimble replied as follows:

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

There are no surprises and there has been no quiet reversal of the call-in decision. The grounds maintenance contract for Bulwell Hall Park was legitimately operated by Nottingham Golf Centre Ltd, call-in agreed to extend the contract until 31 March 2012 in order to give officers time to look at longer term arrangements. That is exactly what officers have done.

As part of the budget proposals being considered today, I have decided to bring the park maintenance back in-house. How Councillor Parton thinks making a decision through the budget proposals and it being the end of its contract is somehow quietly reversing a decision, I quite simply do not understand.

The whole budget is there for Councillor Parton and other Councillors to scrutinise, but I suppose Councillor Parton still has a lot to learn, and he probably also doesn't have a very good tutor. The Portfolio Holder Decision form was to provide the housing and necessary equipment in order to bring back the contract in-house.

This decision is not a surprise, I know of no further surprises, and if Councillor Parton knows of any surprises, perhaps he should let me or the relevant Council officers know. I don't know what it is, but every time there is an issue about a golf course the Tories seem to get over excited, so that just always happens, so no surprises Lord Mayor.

94 DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER THE URGENCY PROCEDURE

The report of the Leader, as set out on pages 309 to 311 of the agenda, was submitted.

RESOLVED that, on the motion of Councillor Collins, seconded by Councillor Chapman, the urgent decisions taken, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

95 REPORT OF THE LEADER ON THE PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2012/13

The report of the Leader, as set out on pages 312 to 316 of the agenda, was submitted.

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

- (1) Council approve and endorse the Council's pay policy statement for 2012/13;**
- (2) it be noted that the statement may need to be amended in-year for any necessary changes the Council may wish to adopt. Any such changes will be presented to full Council for approval.**

96 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2012/13 STRATEGY

The report of the Deputy Leader, as set out on pages 317 to 320 of the agenda, together with Appendix 1 which had been circulated separately, was submitted.

RESOLVED that, on the motion of Councillor Chapman, seconded by Councillor K Williams:

- (1) the 2012/13 treasury management strategy document, including the strategy for debt repayment and the investment strategy, detailed in Appendix 1 (Annex 1, pages 1 to 12) is approved;
- (2) the prudential indicators and limits from 2010/11 to 2014/15, detailed in Appendix 1 (Annex 1, page 13) are approved;
- (3) the revised Treasury Management Policy Statement, detailed in Appendix 2 is formally adopted by the City Council.

97 NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL BUDGET 2012/13

The report of the Deputy Leader, as set out on pages 321 to 327 of the agenda, was submitted.

Moved by Councillor Culley by way of an amendment and seconded by Councillor Morley that:

In recommendation 2.1 (1) add after “the revenue budget for 2012/13”

“subject to the following:

<u>Section 1</u>	2012/13
That the proposed corporate communications and marketing budget is reduced by £0.496m including the cancellation of the Arrow, Impact, and Proud campaign	-£0.496m
Cessation of payments relating to Trade Union activities (part year effect)	-£0.171m
Reduce budget for schools intervention	-£0.040m
Cessation of the Recycling – Education and Awareness activity under Sustainability and Climate Change (part year effect)	-£0.197m
Proposing a 0% council tax increase and accepting the Government’s offer of a council tax freeze grant equivalent to a 2.5% increase for 2012/13	- £2.512m

TOTAL NET FINANCIAL IMPACT

- £3.416m''

Section 2

It is recommended that the following budgets be reduced in 2013/14 to mitigate the financial impact (**£2.597m**) of the above budget amendment on the future years of the Medium Term Financial Plan:

- Review Marketing & Communications expenditure, excluding the web team, with a view to significantly reduce spend (**£0.871m**)
- Full year effect of the cessation of payments to trade unions (**£0.171m**) and cessation of the Recycling – Education and Awareness activity under Sustainability and Climate Change (**£0.066m**)
- Reduce the number of portfolio holders by 1 (**£0.018m**)
- Reduce the number of executive assistants by 5 (**£0.029m**)
- Following the Mayoral Referendum and Election, consider withholding the Special Responsibility Allowance in relation to the Lord Mayor role temporarily and making the role voluntary (**£0.025m**)
- Following the Mayoral Referendum and Election, consider withholding the Special Responsibility Allowance in relation to the Sheriff of Nottingham temporarily and making the role voluntary (**£0.013m**)
- Review Climate Change function under Sustainability & Climate Change (**£0.179m**)
- Review of payments to and business cases of all City Council supported Arts & Events activity with a view to put these on a more business like footing and reducing City Council subsidy significantly (**£1.225m**)

And amend the following recommendations as indicated:

- In recommendation 2.1 (3) (a) **£931,339,483** for £932,432,497;
- In recommendation 2.1 (3) (b) substitute **£830,870,916** for £828,547,812;
- In recommendation 2.1 (3) (c) substitute £100,468,567 for £103,884,685;
- In recommendation 2.1 (4) substitute £1,332.28 for £1,377.58

And amend the following sections as indicated:

- In section 5.3 and 5.6 substitute the following City Council taxes for the ones shown in the report:

Band	City Council
A	£888.19
B	£1,036.22
C	£1,184.25
D	£1,332.28
E	£1,628.34
F	£1,924.40
G	£2,220.47
H	£2,664.56

- In section 5.6 substitute the following aggregate council taxes for those shown in the report:

Band	Aggregate
A	£1,045.59
B	£1,219.85
C	£1,394.12
D	£1,568.38
E	£1,916.91
F	£2,265.43
G	£2,613.97
H	£3,136.76

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

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

(1) the following be approved:

(a) the revenue budget for 2012/13, including:

(i) the recommendations of the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) in respect of the robustness of the estimates made for the purpose of the budget calculations and the adequacy of reserves;

- (ii) the delegation of authority to the Deputy Chief Executive/Corporate Director for Resources in consultation with the Deputy Leader to finalise the MTFP for publication;
 - (iii) the delegation of authority to the appropriate Directors to implement Strategic Choices proposals after undertaking the appropriate consultation;
- (b) the capital programme for 2011/12 – 2014/15;
- (c) a council tax requirement of £103,884,685, including the calculations required by Sections 30 to 36 of the amended Local Government Finance Act 1992 (“the Act”), as set out below:
 - (i) £932,432,497 being the aggregate of the expenditure, allowances, reserves and amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act;
 - (ii) £828,547,812 being the aggregate of the income and amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act;
 - (iii) £103,884,685 being the amount by which the aggregate at (c)(i) above exceeds the aggregate at (c)(ii) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year;
- (d) a City Council Band D basic amount of council tax for 2012/13 of £1,377.58 being the amount at (c)(iii) divided by the amount at (2)(c) below, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (as set out in section 5 of the report);
- (e) the setting of the amounts of council tax for 2012/13 at the levels described in section 5.6 of the report;

- (f) the making of the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2012/13 in the terms of the previously adopted scheme, save for adjustments to mirror nationally determined rates for travel and subsistence (as applicable to officers) and for carers' allowances.

(2) the following be noted:

- (a) a Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority precept at Band D for 2012/13 of £69.69;
- (b) a Nottinghamshire Police Authority precept at Band D for 2012/13 of £166.41;
- (c) in January 2012, the City Council calculated the amount of 75,411 as its council tax base for the year 2012/13 in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992.

Councillors Culley, Morley, Parton, Spencer and Steel requested that their vote against the budget be recorded.

98 CANCELLATION OF THE 16 APRIL 2012 MEETING

RESOLVED that full Council meeting scheduled for 16 April 2012 be cancelled.

99 FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED that meetings of the Council be held at 2.00 pm on the following dates unless the City Council should at any time otherwise order:

2012

14 May
11 June
9 July
10 September
15 October
10 December

2013

11 February
4 March
8 April
13 May

The meeting concluded at 6.35 pm