

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

held at the Council House, Nottingham,

on Monday 11 June 2012 at 2.00 pm

### ATTENDANCES

✓ Councillor Unczur		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 Urquhart
✓ Councillor Jenkins		Councillor Watson
✓ Councillor Johnson		Councillor Wildgust
✓ Councillor Jones	✓	Councillor K Williams
✓ Councillor Khan	✓	Councillor S Williams
✓ Councillor Klein	✓	Councillor Wood

## **16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors McDonald, Trimble, Liversidge, Longford, Watson and Wildgust.

## **17 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Grocock declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Review of the Nottingham City Council Statement of Gambling Policy, as a Council appointed Director of Nottingham Racecourse Limited, which did not preclude him from speaking or voting.

Councillor Hartshorne declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Review of the Nottingham City Council Statement of Gambling Policy, as a Council appointed Director of Nottingham Racecourse Limited, which did not preclude him from speaking or voting.

Councillor Bryan declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Review of the Nottingham City Council Statement of Gambling Policy, as a Council appointed Director of Nottingham Racecourse Limited, which did not preclude her from speaking or voting.

Councillor Gibson declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Review of the Nottingham City Council Statement of Gambling Policy, as he was involved with a Community Centre that held games of bingo, which did not preclude him from speaking or voting.

Councillor Wood declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 – Review of the Nottingham City Council Statement of Gambling Policy, as a Council appointed Director of Nottingham Racecourse Limited, which did not preclude him from speaking or voting.

## **18 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS FROM CITIZENS**

### **Questions from citizens**

The following questions from citizens were received:

#### **5 term school year – educational standards**

The following question was asked by Mr Marcus Clarke-Smee to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services:

There is no educational case for the 5 terms year and so attempting to introduce it in this way, without proper consultation and in the face of clear opposition from teachers and parents, would seem to make the sole purpose of it to be to make as much fuss and City education noise as possible. So is this really about NCCs ineffectual school management 'jobs worths' trying to distract from their lack of progress in actually raising educational school standards? Blaming the timetable now.

Councillor Mellen replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor, and can I thank Mr Clarke-Smee for his question.

I disagree with his opening statement; there is an educational case for changing the school term pattern.

The key driver for considering change in Nottingham has been a commitment to increase attainment for all of the City's children. Research, particularly from the John Hopkins University, Baltimore, highlights that the "learning loss" associated with longer summer holiday breaks particularly impacts on the long term attainment of children and young people from low income families. More recently, 'Thursday's Child' research by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) in this country concludes that a different holiday pattern should be adopted across the nation, and Frank Field, in his Child Poverty Report in 2010, is of the opinion that for children from homes on low levels of income, the summer break is too long.

Studies have shown pupils show learning loss if they do not engage in formal educational stimulating activities over the summer holiday, but that the impact on low income children is far greater than on their higher income peers, particularly in reading skills, where studies show that many middle class children actually make reading gains in contrast to those from lower income families over the summer holiday.

Given the high proportion of children in Nottingham living in low income households; 70% of Nottingham households rely on some benefit or other, 35% of children live in households where nobody is working, these findings are of particular concern and shortening the time that children are away from formal education in the summer break is a means of addressing this potential for increasing the gap in achievement between the poorest and the richest. Of course, this change should not be viewed

as the only answer, but an important “piece of the jigsaw” nevertheless of actions and initiatives in improving attainment, attendance and aspiration in city children and young people.

Your point concerning the consultation not being proper is wrong. The City Council ran a very open and transparent consultation on this important proposal. Consultation took place between June and September last year, being before, during and after the summer holidays, and totalled 75 days in length. Government suggests that when you make changes of this nature, six weeks of consultation would be appropriate; we nearly doubled the amount of time. 70,000 printed documents were distributed through schools to all staff, governors and parents at every City school, and key partners in the City and conurbation. Meetings were held for staff, governors, parents/carers and members of the community at different locations and times across the City. A full page article was included in the Nottingham Arrow, distributed to every home in the City.

When a member of staff in the City challenged the validity of the consultation at the office of the Local Government Ombudsman, the Ombudsman found in the Council’s favour and declared there was no maladministration or fault in the consultation process.

Not all teachers, head teachers and parents/carers are against the proposal. During the initial consultation about 20% of school staff out of the 7,700 replied individually. 23% of those responding were in favour of the change, and obviously the majority of teachers were against, but 57% of parents who responded were in favour of the change and there is no reason to suppose that this has changed.

Our concern is, and always has been, about what is best for the children of Nottingham. What will help them to maximise their achievement and improve their life chances by leaving school with as many qualifications achieved, and skills acquired as possible. We have made significant progress in the City in raising standards for our children in our City schools. Since 1998 we have nearly tripled the percentage of young people leaving school with 5 good GCSEs. Improvement has also been significant at primary level, with just last year an improvement in primary standards of 4 times the national average rate of improvement. The majority of our schools are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, and many of our schools offer much more than the traditional curriculum, such as pre-school breakfast clubs, after school activities, holiday

activities, educational trips and support for parents and carers. So we are not blaming the timetable Lord Mayor, we are using every minute of it.

But we are not complacent; we know we need to improve even further the educational outcomes of our children and young people, and we remain relentless in driving this agenda. When I visit schools and talk to our teachers, governors and head teachers, I see hard working staff who are often asking what more can be done to improve standards further.

Therefore, it is important to look at all aspects of how we deliver education. The times of the school terms have varied very little over many decades, yet the changes we see now in other aspects of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are massive. Business and industry have changed dramatically. We no longer see the 'shut downs' we used to see across the country for 'work weeks', we see that the industry needs to move with the times, so why not education?

To conclude my answer to Mr Clarke-Smee's question, Lord Mayor, I make no apology for keeping a high profile for education in Nottingham. I think it is really important to make 'noise', as he puts it, about education in the City. The children and young people in our schools are the citizens of the future here in Nottingham, we want, and indeed need them to get the best education possible, and contribute to the City's economy. If that involves looking at and changing the holiday and term pattern to make it more appropriate for the children in our City, then we must do so.

### **5 term school year – school staff against its introduction**

The following question was asked by Ms Mary Rutherford to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services:

Now we know that parents, headteachers, teachers and governors are all against the proposed change to a 5 term year, and that the majority of City secondary schools oppose it, will the Council back down from its plan to change to a 5 term year and disrupt the family life and education of many families?

Councillor Mellen replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor, and can I thank Mary Rutherford for her question.

As I have said, the aim of the 5 term year is not to disrupt family life and education, but to give a term and holiday pattern which is best suited to the needs of young people in our City, many of whom do not benefit from an extended holiday in the summer. We believe there is evidence that a shorter summer break would be better for our children and for their educational achievement, as I outlined in the previous question. That is why we made the decision to change to the 5 term year at the Executive Board in October last year.

It is not true that everyone is against the decision to change to a 5 term year. Our extensive consultation last year showed that over half the people returning consultation responses were in favour; amongst City residents this was 57% in favour of the change.

Whilst it is true that teachers have been consistently against the change, 36% of head teachers expressed a view in favour of the change when asked last summer. This is not a majority, but it does indicate differing views across the profession.

Governors were also split in their views last year, with 42% in favour and 55% against. More recent contact with governors also indicates differing opinions. Whilst the City of Nottingham Governors Association's online survey showed a big majority of those expressing a view to be against the change, a recent meeting of 60 local authority governors at Loxley House showed a much more mixed picture, with significant numbers of governors in favour of the change, whilst others eagerly took summaries of the evidence to further consider the arguments and a number of Council members were at that meeting.

Parents responded to the consultation in large numbers last year, with 58% of them expressing a view in favour of the change, and only 38% against. Whilst more recently a parents against the 5 term year group has been formed, contact from this group has overwhelmingly come from 2 areas of the City where there are less families of low income who will benefit from the change.

Secondary schools have differing views, with some academy schools wholeheartedly committed to following the new pattern, with others pledging to adopt a pattern close to the 5 term year. A recent letter received by the authority from 13 of the 14 secondary school heads in the City does make a commitment to consider a shorter summer break, whilst expressing concerns about some other aspects of the 5 term year.

So, no, it is not the case that everyone is against the change and we will not back down from our plan to change to a holiday pattern that is more beneficial to the children of this City.

We have recently completed a three month collective consultation with the workforce and although the decision to change was made in October 2011, and a change to the 5 term year remains Council policy, the consultation was concerned with the effect of the change and how it would be implemented. During this process we remained open to look at any other holiday patterns within the spirit of the 5 term year that were brought forward. Although consultation has now finished, meetings have taken place under the auspices of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) with the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and a further meeting is taking place this Thursday in an attempt to reach collective agreements on the change with the representative Trade Unions.

We remain committed to doing whatever is necessary to give our children and young people the best life chances.

### **Housing Benefits Service**

The following question was asked by Mr Andy Platt to the Deputy Leader:

Should the Portfolio Holder and the Council not be concerned at the extremely poor performance of the Housing Benefits Service in this time of continued recession and Tory benefit cuts?

According to the latest statistics available (Q2 and Q3 of the last financial year) Nottingham was the second worst in the country for speed of processing new claims. It was the fifth worst for processing changes in circumstances. Does this not exacerbate the problems of benefit cuts and poverty already experienced by claimants? Don't delays in processing changes in circumstances lead inevitably to more overpayments, which is in neither the Council's or claimants' interests?

Furthermore, NCC has had to repay considerable sums of overpaid housing benefit subsidy. Over £400,000 in 2008/9, £78,000 in 2009/10 and potentially £729,000 for 2010/11. If a claimant received overpayments of benefits so consistently they'd be prosecuted for fraud. When will this issue be tackled?

Are the Portfolio Holder and the Council also not deeply concerned about the alarming maladministration of the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme?

In the 11 years of the existence of the Discretionary Housing Payments Scheme, the Housing Benefits Service has paid out the equivalent of the full government grant in only two years (2009/10 and 2010/11) and has never paid out more than 51% of the full amount it is allowed to by law in any financial year. And yet the majority of applications are refused. The highest success rate for applications was 55.4% in the first year of operation. After that it varied between 21.2% and 53.3%. Over the life of the scheme 33% of applications have resulted in an award. Is this high rate of refusal not a strange anomaly?

In terms of the amounts paid out, over the life of the scheme so far NCC could have received £889,132 in central government grant for DHPs yet it only paid out £527,614. That is £361,518 that could have been paid out to Nottingham's poorest citizens at no extra cost to the council.

Except that it's worse than that. Between the years 2003/4 and 2010/11, if the previous year's allocation from central government was not fully utilised, the following year's allocation was reduced. This happened in Nottingham year on year from 2003/4 to 2008/9. Imagine if the central government grant had remained at 2003/4 levels throughout the rest of the life of the scheme (up to 2011/12 when the system changed) Nottingham would have received £1,131,390. That is a very conservative estimate, all it would have required would have been for the Housing Benefits Service to have paid out what it was given by the government and it makes no allowance for any inflationary increases. And of course, if more had been paid out then the next year's allocation would have increased. On this very conservative basis then Nottingham's citizens have lost out on £603,776. Think how many evictions that could have prevented, all at no extra cost to the City Council. Does the Portfolio Holder and the Council see this as a success?

In 2011/12 the system was changed to take into account vicious Tory cuts to mainstream Housing Benefits. DHPs were increased in an attempt to offset the worst of the effects. Nottingham's central government allocation increased to £119,386 from the previous year's £55,863 i.e. it more than doubled. Applications increased to 701 from the previous year's 556, perhaps reflecting the initial bite of the cuts to mainstream benefits. So what happened to the number of successful



applications? It dropped from 201 in 2010/11 to 176 in 2011/12. So, the grant allocation was doubled, mainstream benefits were cut and we continued in recession, yet the Housing Benefits Service decided that FEWER people should be paid a bit extra to help with their rent. Can the Portfolio Holder explain why this was the case?

During this time Nottingham faced a recession, like the rest of the country. The council launched a campaign called 'We're On Your Side'. Why were DHPs not promoted as part of this? One Nottingham has held two sessions to discuss the effects of benefit cuts on the citizens of Nottingham yet DHPs were never even mentioned, when the scheme is one of the few measures at the council's disposal to mitigate these cuts. Why are they not shouting about DHPs from the rooftops?

What is the Council going to do about this double whammy of bottom-of-the-table performance of the mainstream Housing Benefit scheme along with the year on year failure to properly administer the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme that is faced by Nottingham's poorest? Does this not reflect an abject failure by the Housing Benefit Service Management?

Councillor Chapman replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor, and I promise that the answer will be marginally shorter than the question.

Between May 2009 and May 2012 there has been a 14.8% increase in the benefit caseload increasing the annual benefit paid from £133 million to £175 million, that is an increase of 31%. Although not a national comparator, Nottingham puts 82% of cases received into payment, compared with a Core City average of 70%. In simple terms this means that more people that need support are getting that support in Nottingham than in the average Core City, and that is very important point.

There has also been a marked increase in the caseload for the private rented sector, an increase of 63% over the same period. Now I am aware that on basic statistics, Nottingham's performance on speed of processing new claims and changes in circumstances relative to other English local authorities is not brilliant. For 2011/12 Nottingham City Council performance for all new claims was 53 days and 27 days for

changes of circumstance. The All England average was 24 days and 12 days respectively.

On average we allow 36 days for provision of information, with reminder letters and follow-up action taken to secure evidence in support of claims, whereas the vast majority of high performers allow around 14 days, with limited follow-up activity. If our focus was only on processing times and only on the stats, rather than getting money into people's pockets then 12%, or some 5,000 people, would not have received support they have. That is quite the opposite of what is implied in the question. In other words, we do not have a cut off date which allows us to say the case has been dealt with, we keep the case on file and work with it, and that way we get far more money into people's pockets, but our performance statistics don't look as good, and if anybody asks me which one I prefer, I prefer getting money into people's pockets than having nice neat performance statistics which show us in a false light.

Since July 2011 the benefits service has been working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to improve performance however. There has been significant investment in the service, both in terms of 13 new posts and additional temporary staff to assist with the speed and accuracy of processing. As a result, new average claims processing time has reduced by 9 days to 44 days in May 2012, and we anticipate further improvements. Performance on changes in circumstances will take longer to improve, the focus of activity during June, July and August is to bring the change of circumstances to a 14 day turnaround. On this matter the questioner does have a point, we are concerned, but we are doing something about it.

Now, on subsidy, it is acknowledged that in 2010/11 housing benefit subsidy was qualified to the value of £729,000. This was out of a total claim of over £157 million, so that means it is a 99.53% accuracy rate. This is consistent with other authorities of our size and complexity. Some £300,000 of the £729,000 was subsidy claimed in error when the equivalent expenditure had not been incurred, so there was no loss to the public purse nor citizens in the benefits system. Again, this is not what the question implied.

On to discretionary housing payments (DHP). Unsuccessful applications for discretionary housing payments are in simple terms the result of the claim not meeting the qualifying criteria. The local policy and criteria itself was developed in line with the national parameters and in consultation

with benefit practitioners, the welfare rights sector, housing professionals in the City, and we have a very good relationship with them.

In 2011/12, in recognition of the impact of changes to local housing allowance rates, the Government increased DHP fund allocation, more than doubling it for Nottingham, and I'll give the Government credit for that. However, due to a transitional protection scheme introduced by the same Government, the full impact of the local housing allowance reforms was not felt during 2011/12, therefore, to expend the money would not have been appropriate. The DWP therefore agreed that the authority's underspend could be carried forward to the next financial year. Nottingham City requested that £62,741 be carried forward to 2012/13 making our total provision £274,621.

The take-up and availability of DHPs are widely promoted by frontline benefit colleagues as well as colleagues in housing, welfare rights and within the charitable sector. Thank you.

### **Petitions from Councillors on behalf of citizens**

Councillor K Williams submitted a petition on behalf of 114 signatories opposing the installation of a skate park and BMX track on Colwick Woods nature reserve.

## **19 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2012, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Lord Mayor.**

## **20 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS**

The Acting Chief Executive reported the following communications:

### **Crisis Communications**

Almost a year ago we all pulled together as 'Team Nottingham' to address the challenges which confronted us in August. To add to our success stories in how we handled the situation in Nottingham with our partners, I would like to share with you that on 28 May the One Nottingham submission entered for the Crisis Communications category

in the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Excellence Awards was a winner.

## **Sportivate Project**

Sport and Leisure have recently facilitated a partnership with the Bobbersmill Community Centre and Ridewise that has been successful in applying for funding and delivering a 6 week cycling project targeting young people from the BME community in Forest Fields and Hyson Green. The project has been funded by Sportivate, a £32 million national Sport England programme that gives 14-25 year olds the opportunity to participate in 6 week courses of different sports, and is part of the Olympic legacy programme.

10 young people have been successfully engaged in this 6 week project, all achieving level 1 awards in road cycling proficiency (delivered by Ridewise) and participating in introductions to BMX and mountain bike sports through taster workshops.

The success of this partnership has resulted in the project winning the Sportivate Project of the Year award for the East Midlands in May, ahead of 38 other projects nominated across the region.

On 29 May, Ann Rippon (Sport England), Neil Danns (former British skateboarding champion) and Ken Pollard (Sport Nottinghamshire) presented the award to all the project partners and young people involved in the project at the Bobbersmill Community Centre. As part of the presentation, young people took part in an organised cycling activity led by Ridewise and were presented with their cycling proficiency certificates for a media photography and filming opportunity.

Due to the success of this project in engaging under represented young people, the partnership has recently submitted an further three Sportivate funding applications to deliver this model with young people from the other BME communities in Nottingham later this year. Through Sport and Leisure's extensive partnership working with City clubs, the partnership will further link these projects to sustainable exit routes.

## **Game On – Inspire Projects**

On 16 May, London 2012 marked UK Inspire Day to celebrate the exceptional projects that have been inspired by the London 2012

Olympic and Paralympic Games to do something special in their local communities.

The programme is an accreditation that is awarded to local and national projects that are genuinely inspired by London 2012. Around 2,700 projects and events have been awarded the coveted Inspire mark for their work in one of six areas – sustainability, education, volunteering, business, sport or culture.

London 2012's Inspire programme helps bring the benefits of the 2012 Games to every part of Nottingham. Through Game On and Sport and Leisure, the City has an impressive number of projects that have been awarded the Inspire mark.

Nottingham City was the single largest recipient of Inspire marks in the East Midlands, with 14 Inspire projects across the City.

Of the 14 projects, 9 will continue beyond London 2012 leaving a lasting legacy of high quality programmes and activities in Nottingham City.

### **Ability Nottingham Launch**

To mark 100 days to go to the Paralympics, Nottingham City Council and Oakfield Schools and Sports College launched the Ability Nottingham project. The project received £256,413 of funding from the Big Lottery Reaching Communities fund and has achieved the Olympic Inspire mark and will run until December 2014.

The launch started with an outstanding dance performance from the students at the school, many of whom are participants of the Ability Nottingham project, inspired by London 2012 and the torch relay. Tim Redish OBE, Chair of the British Paralympic Association, then gave a speech about his role in Sport Nottingham City, his career as a paralympian and BPA Chairman. The new project logo was revealed with the help of the sheriff and Nicholas Keynes, a project participant who's original design inspired the project logo.

### **Public Private Partnership Awards**

The Public Private Partnership Awards took place on 31 May. They were organised by the Partnerships Bulletin publication and were judged by key decision makers in the public and private sectors. The international

awards aim to promote best practice and recognise innovation and excellence in public private partnerships.

Bulwell Riverside Joint Service Centre was the winner of the Best Community Project award. The new £23 million centre opened in January 2012 and includes a range of services encompassing GP practices, health clinics, welfare rights advice and housing services, youth and play services, Councillor surgeries, along with a library and café.

Big Wood School was Highly Commended in the Best Operational Project category, Nottingham Express Transit Phase 2 PFI was Highly Commended in the Best Transport Category, and Jim Mason, former Director of Major Programmes for Nottingham City Council, was Highly Commended in the Best Individual Contribution category.

### **Honorary Alderman John Riley and Anne Turnpenny**

Honorary Alderman John Riley passed away on 18 May aged 89.

John Riley was elected to represent the Clifton West ward on 3 May 1979 and was a Councillor until the late 90s. He was Deputy Leader in the 1980s and held the role of Lord Mayor in 1989 and made Honorary Alderman in 2001.

His legacy includes a successful fight to keep Nottingham's bus service under local authority control in 1986, when the Transport Act privatised the bus industry, and the Council set up Nottingham City Transport Limited.

He also introduced tours of the Council House.

His funeral was held last Friday at Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church in Clifton. He leaves behind three sons and three grandsons.

Anne Turnpenny, former Committee Clerk, passed away on 8 June, aged 71.

Anne started her career with the City Council on 27 July 1957. She had a brief break from the Council from 30 December 1968 to 28 June 1970, when she worked for Beeston and Stapleford UDC, but returned on 29 June 1970 until she retired on 16 June 2000.

In her time with the Council Anne held several roles, including being the first female in the typing pool, secretary to the Deputy Town Clerk, a Committee Clerk servicing full Council and the Planning Committee for many years, and towards the end of her career she briefly took on the role of Lord Mayor's secretary.

In November 1989 Anne went to Namibia with Michael Hammond (the then Chief Executive) for the United Nations as an observer to the first 'free and fair' elections there, and these elections subsequently led to the country's independence in 1990.

Anne will also be remembered for her involvement, throughout her career and through her retirement, with the City Secretary's Cricket Club, as organiser and scorer.

Councillors Gibson, Malcolm and Culley paid tribute to Honorary Alderman John Riley.

Councillors Gibson and Culley also paid tribute to Anne Turnpenny.

The Council stood in silent tribute to their memory.

## **21 QUESTIONS**

### **5 term school year consultation**

Councillor Morley asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services:

We are delighted to hear that the Portfolio Holder has had the good sense to re-open the consultation with schools and teachers regarding the wildly unpopular 5 term school year. Can he give assurances that this will be a genuine consultation exercise with a real opportunity for a change of direction, and that the Council will make it clear during the course of the consultation that the decision to have a 5 term year is definitely not a fait accompli despite the article in the Arrow stating otherwise?

Councillor Mellen replied as follows:

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

It seems a popular subject for discussion this afternoon. The decision to change to a 5 term year was made at the Executive Board last October. This followed examination of the research, a huge consultation, as mentioned in my previous answers, scrutiny of the proposal at Labour Group and further discussion at the Executive Board before the decision was made. Now Councillor Morley, you and your colleagues have 2 places on the Executive Board with speaking rights to express your concerns. I understand that, because it was before the time that I was on the Council, that a lot of discussion was had before those places were given, and this opportunity was regularly taken up by former Councillor Sutton during the time of last Council, who regularly questioned the decisions and asked for further information. Whilst I did not agree with many of his challenges, there was no doubt that he was doing his job as an opposition Councillor in holding the executive to account. Now I can't recall there being a Conservative Councillor present at the Executive Board meeting in October 2011 when the decision to move to a 5 term year was made, in fact, I can't ever recall there being a Conservative Councillor present at the Executive Board at any point taking your democratic opportunity to question decisions. But the decision was made in October last year; the Arrow isn't presenting an inaccurate position, and the change to a 5 term year is Council policy.

However, much of the past few months has been spent undertaking a consultation with the workforce on the effect of the decision and its implementation. This further consultation is explained in the Arrow article. The responses of the further 90 day consultation with the potentially affected workforce is now being analysed and will be reported to the Executive Board later in the summer. It hasn't been a consultation on whether we've made the decision or not, or what decision we would make; that decision has already been made, this was a further consultation of the effects of the change. During this period some of the National Union of Teachers members took industrial action resulting in 3 days of school closures due to strike action. Although we considered this strike action unnecessary and pre-emptive, given that consultation was ongoing at the time and no other trade unions thought it necessary to take this action, we were obviously keen to stop children's education being disrupted in this way, and so, following a meeting with both national and local NUT officials, it was agreed that the union would call off further strike action if the City Council would agree to meet with them under the auspices of ACAS. We, of course, readily agreed to this and met with union officials for 2 days in the week before last. As a result of



those discussions, a further meeting has been arranged on Thursday of this week to discuss other models of holiday and term patterns with all the unions representing staff in schools. Holiday and term patterns which are in the spirit of the 5 term year.

So yes, there will be meaningful discussion with the representatives of the workforce, but it does not mean we are re-opening consultation. We have conducted extensive and real consultation, and the City Council throughout this process has always been open to look at alternative models in the spirit of the 5 term year, which include a shorter summer break. A shorter summer holiday is the main thrust behind our move to a new holiday pattern, it has been supported by research, consultation and a democratic decision. We believe the best way of delivering the shorter summer break is the 5 term year, but, of course, are willing to consider alternative patterns if they meet our other objectives. What we want is the best for our young people in our schools. This is, and always has been, the motivation behind this change.

### **Wollaton Park children's play facilities**

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

As the Council has spent £250,000 on play equipment at Bulwell Hall Park, and £300,000 on facilities at Highfields Leisure Park, does the Portfolio Holder not think; especially considering the mystery sum of money we received from Warner Brothers for the hire of Wollaton Hall, that Wollaton Park children's play facilities deserve similar investment; and if he will now sanction these improvements, which are vital to the reputation of a park of city wide and regional importance, will he devolve funding to the Area Committee so that those Councillors who do care have the means to sort it out?

In Councillor Trimble's absence, Councillor Collins replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor, can I start by thanking Councillor Culley for her question and remind Councillors that, following last month's discussion on the matter, there is no disagreement on the need to improve the play area on Wollaton Park. However, there are, apparently, a few inaccuracies in Councillor Culley's question.

The funding for the Bulwell Hall Park and play area totalled £140,000, not £250,000, and this was made up from local area capital and DCSF play path finder budget. Spending on Highfields Park play area totalled £120,000, not £300,000 and this was made up from Section 106, parks budgets and a contribution from Area 8 local area capital budget, after the Wollaton Area Committee refused to support the project, even though the park's in their area.

3 years ago Wollaton Area Committee was allocated £147,000 for parks and playgrounds. I understand that at the time, officers recommended that some of this was invested in Wollaton Park playgrounds, but Councillors on the Committee chose to spend it elsewhere.

Furthermore, Wollaton Area Committee has, over the last 3 years, seen their area capital budget grow to over £90,000. This remains to be allocated and could reasonably be used as a contribution to playground improvements, as has been the case at other Area Committees.

As for using the Batman funding, that has been used to offset the annual cost of running Wollaton Hall and the cost of borrowing the £8.6 million recently spent improving the building, so isn't unallocated and isn't available to spend.

Finally, the Parks and Open Spaces Team are already planning to consult on the kind of playground visitors would like to see in Wollaton Park, but the scope of these improvements will depend on the funding available and, crucially, on the contribution Wollaton Councillors are prepared to make from their area capital budget. The Parks Team have a great track record of securing external funding for work on parks. They're prepared to play their part, there'll be some central funding available too, so with a contribution from Wollaton Councillors we can get on with it.

## **Road safety measures**

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

We all appreciate the need for road safety and responsible motoring, but with a view to the increasing number of complaints we as Councillors receive about inappropriate or poorly designed traffic management systems, particularly the over-sized humps that can have a significant adverse effect on regular motorcars, whilst having no effect on those

motorcycles and four wheel drive vehicles driven by the irresponsible few, is it time to review the methodology of achieving speed reduction without damaging citizens' transport?

Councillor Urquhart replied as follows:

Thank you, Councillor Parton for your question, and I am pleased to hear that you, at least, are supportive of road safety, it's a bit of a pity, therefore, that one of the first acts of the Tory/Lib Dem coalition was to cut the funding for road safety by cutting Local Transport Plan funds by 50%, and cutting road safety camera funding entirely. We can hope, I suppose, that you are more enlightened on those matters than your national party.

The City Council has used traffic calming for many years as an important, but not the only, means to reduce vehicle speeds and to improve road safety, and this has benefits for all road users, particularly pedestrians and cyclists, and, most importantly, monitoring has shown such schemes have delivered reductions of over 50% in the number of accidents that have occurred in places where there has been traffic calming implemented. Such a significant level of reduction is impressive and it means that fewer people have been injured on our roads than would have otherwise been the case had these features not been in place.

But traffic calming does always seem to raise mixed views, Labour Councillors use the Council's casework system, and the evidence that we have from that system in our records is that shows that, for us, we haven't seen any increase in complaints about traffic calming. They do continue to be regular requests for new traffic calming schemes in different places across the City. I'm not sure, therefore, where your impression of increased complaints about traffic calming come from, and whether they are limited to the areas that you represent and are not representative of the whole City.

All traffic calming features implemented by the Council have to conform with national regulations. It's one of those things where localism hasn't won out. Those regulations govern the size and extent of traffic calming features, and there aren't any features on our highway in Nottingham that exceed those national regulations. The research that is available about traffic calming features indicates that they do not cause damage to properly maintained vehicles that are driven in a responsible manner,

and our experience shows that traffic calming does result in lower speeds for all traffic, including those that are motorcycles and four wheel drive vehicles. In some instances where we use cushion type humps, those vehicles do or can avoid the full impact of the features, however, we still see a reduction in overall average speeds. Those types of features are generally employed on bus routes, where the alternatives would not be supported by the bus operators and, of course, we always have to balance out bus routes and speed reduction.

Of course, as a Council, we do actively review the methods used to achieve speed reduction, especially when we are looking at areas where there's a history of accidents that have caused injury to people. This review does include the use of safety cameras, lower speed limits, narrowing road widths and, you'll be aware I'm sure, of the current consultation in the Sherwood area about a larger scale 20mph zone in the residential areas of Sherwood. That being a different approach aimed at reducing speed, increasing safety and improving the experience of the roads to encourage cycling and walking.

So, in conclusion, we are always reviewing the most appropriate methods to achieve speed reduction. We're prepared to innovate. Speed humps can be the right answer in some places, and in other places, that would not be the case. Achieving safer roads and reduced speeds though can have a significant financial cost, and it's clear from the decision they have taken, the funding for this type of activity is not something that the Tory and Liberal Democrat coalition are not going to prioritise and, I guess, as Councillor Collins mentioned in his previous answer, we will have to see whether Councillors in the areas represented by the Conservatives feel that this is the kind of thing that you want to prioritise from your area capital funds. This Council will continue, however, despite the funding cuts that we have been impacted by, to do our best to make further reductions in the number of people killed or injured on our roads, using the most appropriate methods to fit the particular circumstances of the geography and location where the issues arise.

### **Summer events in the City**

Councillor Morris asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

Following the success of the Diamond Jubilee, this week's visit of the Royal Family, the Olympic Torch celebrations and many other events planned for Nottingham, could you please comment on the range of great summer events organised in the City and why it's so important?

Councillor Collins replied as follows:

Can I thank Councillor Morris for her question.

I'm happy to comment on the programme of events and activities taking place in Nottingham over 2012.

The June edition of the Nottingham Arrow included a 'what's on' calendar highlighting over 40 events that are taking place between now and December. These events range from sporting activities, through to theatre, carnival, music and exhibitions that people in the City will be able to enjoy at little or no cost. For example, on July 13-15 there will be a new event, Cycle Live, which will be based down on Victoria Embankment and will provide 3 days of cycling displays, racing participation and performance, and will incorporate the Great Nottinghamshire bike ride.

Between the 20 July and 28 August we will have Nottingham by the sea returning to the Market Square, and on 21 July we will have the biggest ever Splendour in Wollaton Park, with Dizzee Rascal and Katy B headlining.

Between 7 and 16 September the World Event Young Artists will come to the City. This event will bring together over 1,000 young artists from 100 countries to showcase work across all art forms from live music, dance, film and visual arts.

Other events, cheap or free, that will be coming to Nottingham, include:

- the night of festivals;
- Olympic Torch Relay;
- Armed Forces weekend;
- outdoor theatre season;
- food and drink festival;
- British Open Wheelchair Tennis Championships;
- Nottinghamshire Pride;

- Caribbean carnival;
- heritage open days;
- the cycle tour of Britain;
- Robin Hood half marathon and mini marathon;
- Goose Fair;
- Game City;
- Robin Hood Pageant;
- Living in Silk exhibition;
- Christmas Wonderland; and
- New Years Eve fireworks;

and that's not even a comprehensive list.

The benefits that a programme like this bring to a city like Nottingham are clear. Events provide an opportunity for people from across the City to come together to celebrate national occasions and also to celebrate what's great about living in Nottingham. Events are an opportunity to promote the City internationally, nationally and locally as a destination for visitors and tourists, and events provide a cheap or free way for families to spend time together, and to entertain the kids.

I am proud of the events programme we continue to be able to provide in Nottingham despite the budget and funding cuts, and I'm sure other Councillors are too. The programme is a credit to the City and a credit to all those within and beyond the City Council who work so hard to ensure our events are a success.

### **Council Tax benefit**

Councillor Ottewell asked the following question of the Deputy Leader of the Council:

Would the Deputy Leader please comment on the likely effect of the Government's devolution of Council Tax benefit and particularly the unfairness of the scheme towards big cities.

Councillor Chapman replied as follows:

What is happening with Council Tax changes is a further surreptitious raid on the finance of cities by the Government, in a way which is unfair, and I've got to say, underhand.

The transfer of Council Tax benefits will mean a 10% cut in the benefits for non-pensioners. As ever, the number of people affected will be higher in cities, 23,000 people in Nottingham. If it all works out as the Government states, then that will mean a £3.5 million loss to the City, on top of all the other cuts that we are suffering. However, everyone knows that the number of people on benefit is increasing because of what is now a recession, the whole world knows that this number is increasing, but not, apparently, Her Majesty's Government. In the fantasy world of the Treasury and Government, the assumption is that the numbers will decline by 2.3% by 2013/14, and this is a very convenient fantasy because it means that they can transfer less money to councils and, particularly, to cities so that the cuts will be greater than 10%. So for us, it means that what was going to be a £3.5 million deficit, is likely to turn into a £6.3 million deficit. But, not only this, they add insult to injury, every authority will be given transitional money to help with the change over, £84,000, it will cost a lot more, but we will be given £84,000 and every authority gets the same, and that sounds ever so fair, doesn't it? Everybody gets the same, but does it? If you are West Somerset and your population is 35,000, which I think is smaller than Clifton, isn't it? You get £84,000 for your transitional arrangements, that is £2.40 per person. If you are Birmingham, which has a population which is marginally bigger than West Somerset, and even than Clifton, the population is 1,050,000 then you only get 8p per person, and if you are Nottingham, with a population of 305,000, then you end up with 27p per person. So, compared with Birmingham we are doing very well, but compared with West Somerset we are not doing well at all. So why is someone in West Somerset worth 9 times more than someone in Birmingham? But not only this, the chances are that whilst the budget in Nottingham may receive a cut of over 10%, £6.5 million, this £84,000 subsidy in West Somerset may well insulate the authority from any cut whatsoever. In other words, the benefit reductions may actually be less than £84,000, so they won't actually feel the effect at all in West Somerset, whereas we are getting a £6.5 million cut.

What is the difference West Somerset and Nottingham, and every other major authority, apart from the fact that West Somerset is more affluent? Like the vast majority of small district councils in rural areas, it is currently Conservative controlled. I draw no conclusions, other than that the Government appears, yet again, appears to be behaving in a way which is very unfair, which is devious, which is politically prejudicial, and where cities, once again, are losing.

## **Government's growth agenda and u-turns**

Councillor Edwards asked the following question of the Deputy Leader of the Council:

Would the Deputy Leader please comment on the Government's growth agenda and have the Government's u-turns highlighted their lack of competence?

Councillor Chapman replied as follows:

Thank you, Councillor Edwards, for your question.

Currently the economy is in minor recession, I don't want to exaggerate. Nottingham, although benefiting from over £¾ billion worth of capital investment is not immune. Unemployment, as with most cities, is above the national average, retail is struggling from erratic demand. In short, we are trundling along at a fairly low ebb. We, as a City, have a growth plan to try and make our contribution but, ultimately, it is up to Government nationally, and acting internationally, that will make the difference. So what support is the Government giving the economy and this City?

Now since the election there have been 3 phases of Government economic strategy. Just after the election the line was benign neglect, the assumption was that if the state got out of the way, the private sector would automatically flourish, it would create growth by spontaneous combustion, because the state was not getting in the way and crowding it out. Well we all know that that philosophy did not get us a long way. The 1.9% growth that the current Government inherited has been transformed, as if by magic, to a -0.3 loss of GDP in 2012, so that wasn't too successful, was it?

Phase 2 when the Government, pushed by the CBI, realised that Phase 1 wasn't working, the idea was to invest some state money, but not a lot, so we had the regional growth fund one, we had enterprise action zones, and we had, admittedly, some quite good transport spend. I will almost exempt transport from some of the problems I'm going to outline later. But this was too little and, apart from the transport funding, it got bogged down in what's called due diligence, simply because there weren't enough civil servants to deal with the spend, the Government having abolished RDAs. So by December 2011, the regional growth fund



underspend was 77%. The Government is now hiring more people, more bureaucrats, in order to be able to spend the money.

Phase 3, because Phase 1 and 2 are not working, the idea now is to spend more, but because it is more, to keep it off the state balance sheet, in order not to scare the bond markets. So we end up with a series of complex schemes, such as the new buy mortgage indemnity, the use of capital bonds funded by pension funds and funded by ordinary borrowers and small savers, all at higher interest rates than the Government could borrow, this is the irony of it, in order to get round the PSBR problem, they are talking about borrowing money on the private market from small savers at higher rates than they would be able to borrow it themselves. It all smells very much like the PFI system that they so despise, even though they invented it.

Now, we are keen to work with Government. The future of the economy and the City are dependent on growth, and we are currently working up plans for a growth strategy. We are also talking to the Government about a city deal which has a number of merits, and there are people in Government who are genuinely trying to help, but there has got to be greater simplification and clarity, and, yes, believe it or not, far less bureaucracy about the way the Government is going about its growth strategy.

We can use private sector funding for loans to private firms, but you cannot use private sector funding to the degree they want in order to boost the economy through infrastructure investment, through housing, schools, transport and, indeed, even the provision of ultraband. You need direct state funding or subsidy paid directly and possibly, I would suggest, through quantitative easing. I would also suggest that we need a state bank in order to oversee it, because the money isn't getting in the right places, and the Bank of Scotland, for example, is not loaning to the degree it should have been.

But, ultimately, the only main instrument left, now we've abolished the RDA is, and it's interesting that Jon Collins went to the wake of EMDA last week, so it's dead, dead as a parrot, no more, the only alternative is local authorities and it is interesting that Eric Pickles, only this morning, is talking about dealing with local authorities in order to help problem families. Up until recently, they were talking about dealing with other agencies, it is interesting that they have come back to the one agency which they can rely on, which is local authorities. I welcome that

damascene and conversion, but I would like the same damascene and conversion for the economy. So I just hope it doesn't take too long for the Government to recognise this solution, because at the moment they are struggling and, to be frank, they do seem to be out of their depth which is a shame because the longer they go on, the more dire the economy becomes.

## **Nottingham Rocks**

Councillor Arnold asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

Can the Leader explain why 'Nottingham Rocked' on 29 May? How can we make sure Nottingham keeps trending?

Councillor Collins replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor.

Get Nottingham Trending Day on Tuesday 29 May was the idea of local businessman Tony Bates, and quickly gathered support from other businesses, local people, the City Council and MP for Nottingham South, Lillian Greenwood. The simple plan was to make Nottingham one of the most popular topic on the social media network Twitter. The benefit of a topic 'trending' is that it appears on lists that other people can see and follow, so messages can reach wide audiences quickly and cheaply, and media and other companies monitor trends to decide what to write about and promote.

The trend needed as many people as possible tweeting and, in this instance, tweeting what they love about Nottingham by using a special hash tag, which is #nottinghamrocks.

Within half an hour of releasing the nottinghamrocks hash tag, the topic had begun to trend on Twitter, meaning it was one of the most popular topics at the time. At various points through of the day #nottinghamrocks was the top trending item in the UK and even made it to number three on the worldwide trending list. More than 15,000 tweets were sent out using the hash tag reaching over 200,000 Twitter accounts, some of which had 100,000s of followers.

This was a creative and low cost way to positively raise the profile of Nottingham to millions of Twitter users across the country and world. The campaign resulted in thousands of Nottingham residents and businesses talking openly about the positive aspects of their life in the City. These included local and national celebrities such as Gavin and Stacey star Matt Horne, Torvill and Dean, Carl Froch, This is England actress Vicky McClure and headliner at Splendour, Katy B. Local media also gave it extensive positive coverage that reached people who may not use Twitter. Thanks in particular to Delia on that matter.

The City Council played its part, taking the opportunity to ask people to tweet their top five reasons for being proud of Nottingham, and sending an early tweet to our 8,000 plus Twitter followers that helped to prompt the first trending session.

The response was overwhelmingly positive and revealed what a broad range of things people love about Nottingham. The range of topics tweeted were enormous: education, sport, arts, and the countryside were all mentioned. Many people were proud of Nottingham because of the quality of its shops, restaurants, bars, parks, sport, transport and famous people linked to the City.

A small selection of tweets from the day were:

- “not many cities can boast a fabulous Square like ours”;
- “Nottingham Forest, Notts County and Trent Bridge all within 200 metres of each other”;
- “so many great independent shops, restaurants, bars and cafes”;
- “picnic in Wollaton Park, ice cream in Slab Square, brandy snaps at Goose Fair, art at the Castle and much more”;
- “Nottingham rocks so much it had to invent ibuprofen to cope with the aftermath”.

Plans are now being developed to harness the pride people clearly have for Nottingham and its achievements, with those behind the Get Nottingham Trending Day to see how we can help to maintain the momentum. It really was a fantastic day of collective effort across the City and, again, huge credit to those who took the lead in organising it, and particular mention to Tony Bates who very much took it on himself to organise this, but who was actually very ably supported by Lillian Greenwood and, it should have said it in the question, but, it is true, Delia who was very prolific on the day.

## **22 DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER THE URGENCY PROCEDURE**

The report of the Leader, as set out on pages 92 to 94 of the agenda, was submitted.

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

## **23 REVIEW OF THE NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY**

The report of the Portfolio Holder for Area Working, Cleansing and Community Safety, as set out on pages 95 to 98 of the agenda, was submitted.

**RESOLVED that, on the motion of Councillor Norris, seconded by Councillor Grocock:**

- (1) that the Draft Statement of Gambling Policy 2013-2016 be approved and released for consultation;**
- (2) that the ‘no casino’ resolution be retained.**

## **24 MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR MELLEN**

Moved by Councillor Mellen, seconded by Councillor Heaton:

“Barnardo’s has launched the ‘Cut Them Free’ campaign to end the horror of child sexual exploitation in the UK. Child sexual exploitation is an appalling and often hidden crime; a form of sexual abuse where perpetrators manipulate children and young people into performing sexual activities on them, by offering something in return, such as drugs, gifts or affection.

Nottingham City Council supports Barnardo’s campaign to cut children free from sexual exploitation and will take the necessary steps to tackle the risk of this abuse in the City.”

**RESOLVED that the motion be carried.**

## **25 CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP**

**RESOLVED** that the removal of Councillors Morley and Steel and the addition of Councillors Spencer and Parton to the Health Scrutiny Panel membership be noted.

The meeting concluded at 4.35 pm