

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

held at the Council House, Nottingham,

on Monday 11 February 2013 at 2.00 pm

ATTENDANCES

✓ Councillor Unczur	Lord Mayor
✓ Councillor Ali	✓ Councillor Longford
✓ Councillor Arnold	Councillor McDonald
✓ Councillor Aslam	✓ Councillor Malcolm
✓ Councillor Ball	✓ Councillor McCulloch
✓ Councillor Bryan	✓ Councillor Mellen
✓ Councillor Campbell	Councillor Molife
✓ Councillor Chapman	✓ Councillor Morley
Councillor Choudhry	✓ Councillor Morris
✓ Councillor Clark	✓ Councillor Neal
✓ Councillor Collins	✓ 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
✓ Councillor Liversidge	

79 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ball, Dewinton, Molife, Watson and K Williams.

80 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillors Aslam, Culley, Grocock, Ibrahim, Morley and Morris declared an interest in agenda item 7 – Council Tax Discounts for Empty Properties, as landlords within the City boundary, and left the Chamber prior to consideration of the item.

Councillor Morley also declared an interest in the urgent item – Introduction of Size Criteria in the Social Rented Sector – ‘The Bedroom Tax’, as a landlord with a tenant receiving Housing Benefit, and left the Chamber prior to consideration of the item.

81 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS FROM CITIZENS

Questions from citizens

No questions from citizens were received.

Petitions from Councillors on behalf of citizens

No petitions from citizens were received.

82 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 28 January 2013, copies of which had been circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Lord Mayor.

83 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Chief Executive reported the following communication:

Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Energy Efficiency Award 2013

Nottingham is one of 6 local authorities short-listed for the LGC Energy Efficiency Award 2013, which is a new category, with the announcement

of the winner on 13 March 2013. Making Nottingham the UK's Energy City is the Council's objective. The Council is building upon strong foundations and a rich history of City-scale energy planning and management, such as district heating through to solar panels, with a firm programme in place to reduce the City's energy usage that includes reducing energy wastage in homes and properties and introducing the Nottingham Energy Tariff.

84 QUESTIONS

Bedroom Tax

Councillor Jones asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Adults, Housing and the Community Sector:

Wendy Morrison, here with us today, is about to be hit by the bedroom tax. Aged 51, living in a 3 bedroom council house with her daughter, she finds herself 'under-occupying'. She has lived in the same house for 13 years. Her eldest daughter having moved away, she has a spare room – a small box room hardly suitable to be classed as a bedroom. Since the age of 16, Wendy has always worked, with the exception of 3 years during which she was caring for her young children. Her house is well maintained and she takes great pride in it. She lives in a community she is very much a part of and her daughter goes to school nearby. Could the Portfolio Holder for Adults, Housing and the Community Sector tell us how the bedroom tax is going to affect people like Wendy in Nottingham?

Councillor Liversidge replied as follows:

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

First of all, I welcome Wendy to this Council meeting this afternoon.

Now let me make it clear what this bedroom tax is. Well, the Government is changing the rules for Housing Benefit for working age tenants in Council and Housing Association housing. This means that for people aged between 16 and Pension Credit eligibility age, the amount of Housing Benefit they can receive to help pay their rent will be limited to the payment for a property judged to be appropriate to the size of their family.

They are saying that if you are deemed to have one more bedroom than your family needs, you will get a reduction of your benefit of 14% of your rent, if deemed to have two bedrooms too many your benefit will reduce by 25% of your rent.

So, Wendy, along with about 4,500 others, you have one bedroom too many and will lose about £11 per week in rent. For the 1,600 or so people under occupying by 2 bedrooms it will be about £22 per week, even if you are on partial benefit.

So how are you deemed to be under occupying? The Government's criterion allows one bedroom for each for the following:

- a couple;
- a person who is not a child (aged 16 and over);
- two children of the same sex under 16;
- two children who are under 10;
- any other child, other than a foster child or child whose main home is elsewhere;
- a carer (or group of carers) providing overnight care.

What are your options? The Government have stated that there are a number of options open to people who are affected by any benefit reduction because of the under occupancy rule. These options are:

- move to more appropriately sized accommodation;
- transfer to another property, ministers are saying this could be in the private sector, but the rents in the private sector are higher and so the Housing Benefit will be higher;
- mutual exchange;
- take in a boarder/lodger – back to the thirties where single men trudged the country looking for work;
- ask family members to contribute more to cover extra rent;
- increase income through employment or increasing hours worked. Lib Dem Minister Steve Webb holds this out as the way people should finance their rent;
- some people may be able to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment, e.g. disabled people living in specially adapted homes or foster carers. This payment has been increased by the government from £275,000 this current year to just under £700,000 next year, with no indication this will be continued. This payment has to be

applied for every year and does not necessarily continue year on year, even if there are funds available.

In trying to defend this change the Tory/Lib Dem Government uses two arguments, one financial and the other social. Firstly it says it needs to reduce the deficit and one way is to reduce the benefit burden, as it calls it. It says that there are 660,000 under occupying in the Social rented sector across the country. At an average of £14 per week, their figures, this will reduce the benefit bill by approaching half a billion pounds. This, of course, assumes that people don't move to the private sector where it will cost more in benefit, but this is only half of the amount of money they are giving away to the rich by reducing the top income tax rate from 50% to 45%, and this is their figures, some estimates area that 3 times that will be given away. The social reason it gives is the more efficient use of the Social Rented Sector, encouraging families to move into smaller properties to free up larger properties for larger families.

This brings me back to Wendy. You say you have lived there for 13 years and, as such, you will be emotionally attached to that house. It is where you have brought up your children, where you live in a settled neighbourhood, have decorated the house to your liking and want to continue living there. It is your home. As such, you are in the same situation as most of the 6,000 people affected in Nottingham, the 660,000 in the country. You have an emotional attachment to your home just like owner occupiers and other tenants across the City and country.

This change is not only going to reduce 6,000 people's income in this City, income that naturally is spent in this City, it is going to cause heartbreak and uncertainty to all those families and even their neighbours, not knowing what is going to happen from one month to the next.

If this second reason is genuine, the government could look at where the real problem lies. There are many older people who are not affected by this benefit cut who have lived in their homes for longer than Wendy and who are finding it more and more difficult to keep their home going. The government could find help and incentives for older, through their own choice, to move to a new home that meets their needs. This would free up these larger family homes. But I don't believe this spurious second strand that the Government are trying to push. It is financial and it is aimed at cutting down the poor to help the rich. It is an attack on the welfare state.

I am bringing an emergency motion later to allow us to lobby government to change this ill thought out bedroom tax and I will be asking the citizens of Nottingham to help in petitioning for a removal of this tax.

High Speed Rail

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

Could the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation tell us how the recently announced HS2 stop at Toton Sidings will benefit Nottingham?

Councillor Urquhart replied as follows:

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

High Speed 2 (HS2) will provide an enormous boost to the East Midlands and Nottingham in the future as it will be a key factor in rebalancing the economic prosperity of the UK away from the South East. It will also add significant extra capacity to the rail system, which is in danger of being overcrowded in the medium term if present trends continue.

HS2 will provide a boost to the economy in Nottingham through the creation of thousands of new jobs in the East Midlands, and greatly improved connections from the City to the rest of the country.

More directly, for Nottingham we will see an integrated HS2 and classic rail station at Toton, about 6 miles from the City Centre, creating an East Midlands hub.

Nottingham will be connected to the new station by a frequent rail shuttle serving Nottingham Station. Other rail services will be modified to provide connections from Leicester and other destinations.

The Nottingham Tram system could be further extended to the new station, providing easy access to locations such as Nottingham University, the Boots campus (Enterprise Zone), Queen's Medical Centre and other important businesses. With lines 2 and 3 of the tram being built now, and due to be completed at the end of 2014, a further small extension could be ready well ahead of HS2. And, of course, a number of existing bus services could also connect into the site.

Passengers will be able to travel from Toton to London in just 51 minutes and Birmingham in 19 minutes. The journey times between Nottingham City Centre and London would reduce by over half an hour, from 1 hour 44 minutes to just 1 hour 8 minutes, with the time to Birmingham halved from 1 hour 13 minutes to 36 minutes, including allowing for 7 minutes transfer time and 10 minute connection to Nottingham Station via the shuttle.

Travel time from Nottingham to Leeds will also be slashed by an hour to just 46 minutes with up to five trains per hour and, similarly, new travel opportunities to the North East and Scotland will become available.

HS2 anticipate that 1,500 jobs will be created at Toton specifically. This is in addition to opportunities from the 10,000 construction jobs being created across HS2. Overall, the Government estimates that the HS2 network will support over 100,000 jobs across Britain.

High Speed Rail will also open up our City, making it more accessible for visitors. Shorter travel times making Nottingham an even more attractive place to visit for short breaks or even for conferences and combined with the current programme of upgrading and electrifying the Midland Mainline, this improved connectivity will unlock the enormous potential and opportunities that cities like ours have to offer, making them more attractive places to locate and do business, consistent with our Economic Growth Plan.

And, of course, in Nottingham, we know well the benefits that investment in infrastructure can bring, we have hundreds of jobs currently having been created building lines 2 and 3 of the tram, many more at the station transformation, and more yet to come through the ring road project. We have used these projects, through our work with the employer hub, to make sure that these investments lead to jobs for local people, and we would do the same with the opportunities from HS2. Because of the huge economic impact and job opportunities, my only regret is that the whole thing is going to take so long, I will therefore take every opportunity to make the case for the HS2 timetable to be moved forward, so that we can realise the benefits more quickly, and so that any uncertainty for those affected by the route is reduced, and I will also be keeping up pressure to improve our present rail connections, so that in the interim time, travel via the Midland Mainline becomes quicker and easier too.

See It, Report It Campaign

Councillor Morris asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Area Working, Cleansing and Community Safety:

Can the Portfolio Holder for Area Working, Cleansing and Community Safety report back on the See It, Report It campaign?

Councillor Norris replied as follows:

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

See It, Report It is a Community Protection campaign that's aimed at tackling that very small minority of irresponsible dog owners who think it's ok to let their dog foul and to leave it for someone else to clean up.

Members in this Chamber will be aware, because we've spoken about it before, that cleaning up dog mess costs the City a quarter of a million pounds a year. At the best of times this would be too much, but given the challenging financial circumstances that we find ourselves in, clearly this is unacceptable.

We try to tackle the problem at various different stages, from education in schools, investing in equipment and staff to clear up the mess and, in this case, to enforce against those who offend. This campaign has taken various forms and there's been neighbourhood roadshows that I was at, and Jackie was at as well, radio adverts, social media, which is always a favourite of mine, information being handed out by neighbourhood staff, Nottingham City Homes, the NHS, Park Wardens, so everyone is playing their role where we see people to let them know that if they're seeing this sort of stuff to report it. What we've been asking people to do is when they've seen someone do this, if they've seen someone foul and then walk off, to call it in to us with a description of the individual and this helps us build up a profile of where this is happening and who is doing it so that we can then do either overt or covert operations to try and find out who's doing it, to catch and then, obviously, hand out the requisite fines or what not.

The campaign's in its infancy, we launched it last month, but I am happy to say, at this stage, it has been a great success. We had a bold target to start off with; we wanted, through this campaign, we were going to double the level of reporting, and I'm happy to say that in January we not

only doubled it, but we added another extra 25% on top as well, so that's a great first stage, so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank people who have rung up and encourage them to keep doing so, and also, it's a good prompt for myself and others to have that material on us too when we see people in our Tenants and Residents and other meetings to hand out the info. This is an issue I know we all take seriously, we all will be very aware that it consistently is at the top of residents' concerns, so we're putting lots of effort into tackling it and will continue to do so.

Cost of the Council Tax reforms

Councillor Healy asked the following question of the Deputy Leader:

Could the Deputy Leader tell us what the financial cost of the Council Tax reforms will be for Nottingham?

Councillor Chapman replied as follows:

Can I thank you for the question.

The cost of implementing cuts in Council Tax support over 2 years, which will take £12.2 million from the poorest people in Nottingham, is £5.25 million. All £5.25 million are overheads and consist of £2.5 million in admin and IT costs, £2.2 million in debt collection, legal costs and write-offs. I've got very accurate figures. It is all non-productive spending, most of it going into bureaucracy, into bailiffs, into legal profession's pockets. Not one penny of this is going into the growth and wealth creation within this City. It is all wasted money.

These costs do not include the social costs which will result from the compounding of a number of other cuts the government has instigated for the same vulnerable groups, and these costs will be increasing personal debt, increasing health problems from anxiety, which the Health Service will have to pick up, possible homelessness, which, again, we will have to pick up and family break-up, which, again, we will have to pick up, and possibly even the police. Do not think these things are a figment of our imaginations, they are real situations and they are rising from real problems which have already started.

Then we have the economic impact. You are taking millions of pounds of spending power from this City and transferring it to recipients – bailiffs, lawyers, who do not necessarily live in the City. You are taking money

away from shops and trade people who, at the moment, desperately need that demand. But, worst of all, by this process, in order to save a spurious £12.2 million, and actually it's £11.6 million if you take away the government's support for the admin that we're going to have to confront, then the total cost to Nottingham will be £5.2 million. But, I will repeat, Council Tax payers in this City are being forced to pay £5.25 million to give back £11.6 million to the government. That is 45% in order to give the government money back and, in so doing, to inflict misery on fellow citizens, most of whom are working and/or disabled and also, in so doing, they are taking demand out of the economy. You couldn't make it up, you could not make it up, unless, of course, you remember the instigators of this particular piece of genius are the same people who came up with the Poll Tax.

'Government cuts to council funding' budget consultation posters

Councillor Culley asked the following question of the Leader:

Considering that they clearly serve a party political purpose, does the Leader of the Council not think it would have been more appropriate to use Nottingham Labour funds to produce the Council's 'Government cuts to council funding' budget consultation posters rather than spending £2,727 of public money?

Councillor Collins replied as follows:

Thank you, Lord Mayor.

There is nothing party political about the posters Councillor Culley is referring to, and if she wasn't so determined, yet again, to put the interests of her party before the interests of the City, she'd understand that.

Councillor Morley left the Chamber.

85 URGENT ITEM – INTRODUCTION OF SIZE CRITERIA IN THE SOCIAL RENTED SECTOR – 'THE BEDROOM TAX'

The Lord Mayor was of the opinion that this item, although not included on the agenda, should be considered as a matter of urgency in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, to allow for timely consideration of the issue.

The report of the Portfolio Holder for Adults, Housing and the Community Sector, as circulated around the Chamber, was submitted.

Councillor Culley expressed concern at the late submission of the report as she felt it did not allow for proper consideration of the issue.

RESOLVED that, on the motion of Councillor Liversidge, seconded by Councillor Chapman, the Council support the amendment of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 in order to repeal changes to Housing Benefit, commonly known as the 'bedroom tax', and lobby the Government to rethink its plans to cut Housing Benefits for thousands of citizens.

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

Councillors Aslam, Culley, Grocock, Ibrahim and Morris left the Chamber.

86 COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS FOR EMPTY PROPERTIES AND THE PREMIUM ON LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES

The report of the Deputy Leader, as set out on pages 321 to 330 of the agenda, was submitted.

RESOLVED that, on the motion of Councillor Chapman, seconded by Councillor Healy, pursuant to sections 11A and 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, with effect from 1 April 2013:

- (1) for classes A, B, C and D dwellings, as defined by The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended by the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2012, the discount under section 11(2)(a) shall not apply;**
- (2) the discount under section 11(2)(a) shall not apply and an additional premium of 50% (making a total 150% charge) shall apply to long term empty dwellings as defined in section 11B of the Act, subject to the provisions of The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003**

as amended by the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012.

Councillors Aslam, Culley, Grocock, Ibrahim, Morley and Morris rejoined the meeting.

87 NOTTINGHAM CITY ALIGNED CORE STRATEGY, SUBMISSION TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The report of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation, as set out on pages 331 to 338 of the agenda, and appendices which had been circulated separately, were submitted.

RESOLVED that, on the motion of Councillor Urquhart, seconded by Councillor Clark:

- (1) the submission of the draft Broxtowe Borough, Gedling Borough and Nottingham City Aligned Core Strategies, along with the Schedule of Changes, and accompanying submission documents, as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the report, to the Secretary of State for independent examination be approved;**
- (2) the Inspector be requested to recommend any modifications which were necessary to make the draft Core Strategy sound, under section 20(7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended);**
- (3) delegated authority be granted to the Corporate Director for Development to approve any necessary amendments to the submission draft Core Strategy of the types outlined in paragraph 5.5 of the report.**

88 MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR COLLINS

Moved by Councillor Collins, seconded by Councillor Edwards:

“This Council believes that corporate tax avoidance by large companies making huge profits is unfair, unjust and morally wrong.

As public services face huge cuts and ordinary households are facing an ever tightening squeeze, this Council notes:

- That companies and organisation who purposely avoid paying their taxes are failing to meet their social obligations
- That these same bodies do not make a fair contribution to the communities from which they draw their profits
- That tax avoidance by major corporations is a direct result of Central Government's failure to regulate properly

This Council resolves:

- To do all that is reasonable to fight tax avoidance
- Wherever possible, to prevent tax avoiding organisations from securing contracts with Nottingham City Council
- To lobby the government to legislate to prevent corporations using tax havens and to increase the transparency of corporate accounts
- To engage with local tax justice campaigners and promote their cause”

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

In paragraph 2, bullet point 3:

Delete “Central Government's failure to regulate properly” and insert “successive Governments' inadequate regulatory regimes”

In paragraph 3, bullet point 2:

Delete “tax avoiding” and after “organisations” insert “who breach the General Anti-Abuse Rule”

In paragraph 3, bullet point 3:

Delete “lobby” and insert “support” and after “Government” insert “in its efforts”

Delete bullet point 4

Amended motion to read:

“This Council believes that corporate tax avoidance by large companies making huge profits is unfair, unjust and morally wrong.

As public services face huge cuts and ordinary households are facing an ever tightening squeeze, this Council notes:

- That companies and organisations who purposely avoid paying their taxes are failing to meet their social obligations
- That these same bodies do not make a fair contribution to the communities from which they draw their profits
- That tax avoidance by major corporation is a direct result of successive Governments' inadequate regulatory regimes

This Council resolves:

- To do all that is reasonable to fight tax avoidance
- Wherever possible, to prevent organisations who breach the General Anti-Abuse Rule from securing contracts with Nottingham City Council
- To support the Government in its efforts to legislate to prevent corporations using tax havens and to increase the transparency of corporate accounts”

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

RESOLVED that the substantive motion be carried:

This Council believes that corporate tax avoidance by large companies making huge profits is unfair, unjust and morally wrong.

As public services face huge cuts and ordinary households are facing an ever tightening squeeze, this Council notes:

- **That companies and organisation who purposely avoid paying their taxes are failing to meet their social obligations**
- **That these same bodies do not make a fair contribution to the communities from which they draw their profits**
- **That tax avoidance by major corporations is a direct result of Central Government's failure to regulate properly**

This Council resolves:

- **To do all that is reasonable to fight tax avoidance**

- **Wherever possible, to prevent tax avoiding organisations from securing contracts with Nottingham City Council**
- **To lobby the government to legislate to prevent corporations using tax havens and to increase the transparency of corporate accounts**
- **To engage with local tax justice campaigners and promote their cause**

Councillors Morley, Parton and Steel requested that their abstention from the vote be recorded.

The meeting concluded at 5.05 pm