

## Written Responses to Questions from Citizens

PQ1

**Question asked on behalf of PL of the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport and Parks at the meeting of the City Council to be held on 12 September 2012**

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I am a resident of the Clifton Village area (NG11) and have always wondered how a simple footbridge across the Trent River into Beeston could open up the communities between Beeston and Clifton. I think it would help provide students with access to both Universities and colleges, cut down on traffic congestion, bring money into the communities and provide an alternative route from the Clifton Bypass. Has this ever been considered/planned?

Councillor Audra Wynter replied as follows:

A proposal for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge linking Clifton to the Beeston Rylands area was suggested by the active travel charity Sustrans back in 2006. The proposal was initially supported by the City Council as a scheme that could improve access to green routes either side of the River Trent, better connect Clifton with Beeston and encourage more active travel trips. However, following fierce opposition from people living north of the river concerned about a potential increase in anti-social behaviour and some issues around disabled access, Sustrans chose to drop the proposal and the scheme was abandoned. Any cross boundary scheme of this nature requires the support of the local community, respective Borough Council and potentially the County Council to stand any real chance of being taken forward.

PQ2

**Question asked on behalf of AM of the Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Planning at the meeting of the City Council to be held on 12 September 2012**

**DC also submitted a similar question about whether there are plans for using libraries, including those under threat of closure, to help provide sanctuary from the cold.**

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In the light of the new cost of living crisis and the focus on the importance of Warm Hubs as a practical response to this, will the Council reconsider the closure of Aspley, Radford-Lenton and Basford libraries and also consider extending their opening hours; these are pre-existing spaces ideal for use as Warm Hubs with the additional benefit of books, computer and wifi use and information on a wide variety matters, including those relating to cost of living, available from librarians at the desk?

Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis replied as follows:

I fully recognise that libraries play a key role in our communities beyond just providing books. Libraries have always been an open and welcoming space, available and accessible to all. Given the current 'cost of living crisis', I do expect that libraries, alongside other community facilities including, those of charitable and

religious organisations, will play an important role in supporting our residents' needs. The Council has yet to make its decision upon the longer-term transformation of the library service and is reviewing all the facts and feedback received from the extensive consultation exercises recently undertaken. Since commencing this work I am very aware of the change in circumstances that has occurred in the country and the City as a result of the cost of living crisis. The Council does have a statutory responsibility to deliver a balanced budget, which is why we have difficult decisions to consider whilst ensuring we met our legal obligation. That is why I am looking to ensure, prior to making any decision on the future of the library service provision, that the Council explores all options and opportunities to ensure we have a strong and flexible network of service provision moving forward both now and into the future. In the meantime, I will look to ensure that our libraries still continue to provide safe spaces for our residents, that they will play a key role in the heart of their communities assisting to ease the cost of living crisis many individuals are starting to face.

**PQ3**

**Question asked on behalf of DC of the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Planning at the meeting of the City Council to be held on 12 September 2012**

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Will the Council reconsider the closure of Aspley, Radford and Lenton and Basford libraries for the reasons set out below?

The cost of living crisis, especially the 80% price hike in energy bills and inflationary spiral on food costs, has been much in the news in recent weeks, including the suggestion of utilising free warm havens (including libraries) to help alleviate the worst effects of the coming storm. Libraries Connected, the sector organisation which represents, supports and promotes public libraries, has recently published a briefing note entitled 'Libraries and the cost of living crisis'. This report pulls no punches around this emerging challenge: "... *vulnerable people were increasingly using libraries to keep warm, to avoid paying for energy.*" The Chief Executive of Libraries Connected, Isobel Hunter, signed off the report's introduction by stating: "Library services are ready and willing to respond but they must be adequately funded and supported to fulfil this vital community role." The Observer carried a front-page article on Sunday 21 August which included the demand from Libraries Connected for libraries as the perfect ready-made and pre-existing solution in this situation. The consumer champion Martin Lewis has also proposed the idea of using libraries as "warm banks" in a recent tweet. The City Council published its Library review 'Consultation Findings' last month which acknowledges (on page 43) the developing cost of living crisis: "There are a number of other considerations that have emerged since embarking on the Phase 2 consultation that are key factors in any decision regarding future library provision in Nottingham. New funding streams have opened up ... [and] ... the cost of living crisis has created a perfect storm of increasing demand and rising costs for local authorities. When the first consultation commenced this wasn't a key factor but is something that does now need to be factored in in supporting Nottingham residents." Moreover, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which met at Loxley House on 3 August 2022 also discussed this cost of living issue at length. Given the above, I would ask the Portfolio Holder whether now is the time to use this metaphorical 'Get Out of Jail Free Card' presented to them by this unwanted cost of living crisis, do the right thing by its

citizens and staff, and keep the three historic libraries of Aspley, Basford and Radford-Lenton open for business, with consideration of extended opening hours in the process?

The original research document published in January 2022 – The Next Chapter Full Report (Nottingham City Council Library Needs Assessment) – analyses the different service models available (p36-37) including a table (figure 21) which outlines possible Alternative Delivery Models. One of the options listed is maintaining the existing service model i.e. the library service ‘remaining in house with re-engineering’. Can the Council revisit this issue as a matter of urgency, and in the process consider extending the opening hours to accommodate the increased usage likely from the cost of living crisis? This provides the easiest solution to the reorganisation plans as it will avoid the need for a two-tier model across the library portfolio and maintain the in-house expertise currently available, providing crucial community hubs close to where citizens live. Now is not the time to switch to a volunteer-run model as the public will need the expertise provided by the knowledgeable staff.

Nottingham City Council's original motivation for proposing library closures was to save £233,000. But according to page 12 of the recent consultation report prepared for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and for the Council Leadership Team, a saving of £154,000 was achieved in 2021/22 by a staff restructure. This has left outstanding a total net saving of £78,880 over two years, which redefines minuscule in the overall scheme of things. As a result of this revised situation, will the Council now reverse its controversial decision to close these beautiful historic libraries, providing a much needed lifeline for the communities in Aspley, Basford and Radford-Lenton amidst an unprecedented cost of living crisis?

The Local Government Association, the main body overseeing Local Authorities across England recently published ‘must know’ guidance for Councils around Mental Health (November 2021) and Loneliness (December 2021). The evidence of our Save Nottingham Libraries campaign from attending the consultation meetings is that these are hugely important issues for citizens, as libraries play a crucial role in promoting the emotional health and wellbeing of users, combatting loneliness and social isolation in the process. The recent consultation report (page 44) acknowledges this as well: “The library service has also been identified as playing a central role in meeting the needs of individuals and communities who may be struggling to overcome the impact of the pandemic.” In the light of their own research evidence, and other published material, will the Council reverse its previous decision, and keep open the three libraries earmarked for closure earlier this year?

Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis replied as follows:

I would like to thank the resident who posed this question for thoroughly reading the documents published as part of the library’s transformation engagement and consultation process. It was always the Council’s intention that this review should be open and transparent so that everybody could participate in the debate. I recognise that libraries play a key role in our communities beyond just providing books. Libraries have also always been an open and welcoming space, available and accessible to all. In the current ‘cost of living crisis’ I do expect that the City’s libraries, alongside the wider City’s community, charitable and religious organisations networks, will play an important role. Helping keep people safe, warm and being a source of information and sign posting to help support those most in need. The Council has yet to make its decision upon the longer-term transformation of the library service and is deliberately looking at all the facts and feedback received from the extensive consultation exercises undertaken. Since commencing this work I am

also very aware of the change in circumstances that has occurred in the country and the city as a result of the cost of living crisis which is why it was important this was referenced in our thinking, which you have acknowledged. Therefore, I think it is correct that we reflect on this this new element and consider whether this changes people needs and requirements from what it wants from its local library provision. As the cost of living impacts upon each and every one of us as individuals and families, similarly this also impacts on library provision. Going forward the money we spend is going to buy us less as we face increased energy bills, inflation on resources and normal price increases. This cuts into the spending that the City Council has to deliver its services. The Council does have a statutory responsibility to deliver a balanced budget, which is why we have had to look at difficult decisions to ensure we met this legal obligation. That is why I am looking to ensure prior to making any decisions on the future of the library service, that I do explore all options and opportunities to ensure we have a strong and suitable network of facilities moving forward, both now and for the future.

PQ4

**Question asked on behalf of NG of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods, Safety and Inclusion at the meeting of the City Council to be held on 12 September 2012**

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I welcome the motion regarding this Council supporting care experience becoming a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and would like to ask for the Portfolio Holder's view on adopting the following as part of that motion:

- That future decision, services and policies made and adopted by the Council should be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, alongside those who formally share a Protected Characteristic.
- That in the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council includes care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a Protected Characteristic in services and employment.
- That it will treat Care Experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic by this Council.
- To formally call upon all other bodies to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.

Councillor Neghat Khan replied as follows:

Nottingham City Council is committed to promoting equality in areas. The Council uses the Equality Impact Assessment to ensure 'due regard' is paid to the Public Sector Equality Duty. This process can be updated to include 'Care Experience' as a prompt for officers to assess how the change they are proposing will impact on this group. We will investigate if our systems can be changed/adapted further to include publication of 'Care Leavers' information in all of our employment and services. We believe that treating Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic is a positive step moving forward. The City Council already treats 'Care Experience' as a priority group for recruitment and progression opportunities. We will explore further how we can treat Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic. We strongly believe that the Council has a leadership role in the city and, through our exemplary practice, we will

encourage and mobilise other bodies to treat care experience as a protected characteristic.

PQ5

**Question asked on behalf of EC of the Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services at the meeting of the City Council to be held on 12 September 2012**

**DC also submitted a similar question about plans for supporting people who struggle to afford heating and keep warm.**

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Please can Nottingham City Council explain if they intend to have 'warm hubs' where people that live within the city can go this Winter, to keep warm? In the light of a terrible cost of living crisis, and many community centres, youth centres and local libraries having been closed or are threatened with closure, many people in Nottingham will be desperate this winter and there could be many excess deaths. Could the City Council explain clearly what they propose to do to help, when they have, or are proposing to close so many community spaces where people used to be able to keep warm for part of the day please?

Councillor Sally Longford replied as follows:

With inflation and energy bills expected to rise again in October and, despite the intervention measures announced by the Government on 8 September 2022, we do anticipate that for many Nottingham City residents a serious cost of living crisis is imminent. Nottingham City Council's Public Health team have highlighted that, in England, nearly half of all excess winter deaths are a result of fuel poverty; Nottingham having a higher than national average rate of excess winter deaths. Growing up and living in cold homes and poor housing also has a direct and detrimental effect on physical health, mental health, and overall wellbeing, increasing demand for NHS services. For older people, living in cold temperatures increases the risk of strokes and heart attacks. Respiratory diseases, including flu, are more common, as are falls, injuries, and hypothermia. For Children, growing up in cold, damp and mouldy homes with inadequate ventilation can lead to a higher than average rate of respiratory infections and asthma, chronic ill health, and disability. The direct impact of 'warm banks' on health outcomes for individuals or communities is unknown. While they may not offer a long-term solution, they may, in the short-term, reduce exposure to some of the risk factors related to cold homes that contribute to poor health as well as having positive benefits for mental wellbeing. Nottingham recognises this challenge and work is taking place across the Council and with numerous religious, volunteer and charity organisations to look at the ways that resources can be identified and co-ordinated to provide 'Neighbourhood Warm Hubs' to support those in need of such spaces. Alongside these warm hubs we are also looking at ways that other advice, information and services might also be able to be provided such as welfare advice, food and nutrition, efficient use of energy advice, or debt/financial advice and potentially looking at opportunities to work collaboratively with colleagues from local Health Trusts to enable the provision of basic health checks. At the moment details for this work are still being finalised and once completed this will be realised and promoted across the City.

