

## COUNCIL – 1ST MARCH 2010

### ITEM 6 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

#### 6.1 Councillor Gay – Reforming Procedure and Layout at Council Meetings

In May and June of last year, I raised, with Councillor Max Hunt and others, the matter of reforming procedure and layout etc. at Full Council. As a result, I was invited to attend a meeting of Party Leaders and officers in order to discuss this. At this meeting, which took place as long ago as Tuesday 23rd June 2009, it was agreed that, to progress this matter further, officers would draw up proposals to be tabled at Cabinet. As far as can be ascertained from Cabinet agendas, this has not taken place. Could the Leader confirm that this is the case and inform Council of any moves to progress this matter?

*The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:*

*Council at its last meeting (11th January 2010) agreed changes to the Council procedure rules (minute 63.2) and these are being used for the first time at this meeting (1st March 2010). These changes were also considered by Cabinet on 17th December 2009 (Cabinet minute 127). The Constitution, which includes Council procedure rules, is reviewed annually.*

*Concerning the layout, Councillor Gay will remember that at the Group Leaders' Meeting on Tuesday 23rd June 2009, I spoke about plans to refurbish the Old Magistrates Court and use former Court Number 1 as a Council Chamber. Cabinet considered a report in respect of this matter at its meeting on 29th October 2009 and agreed Option 1 - "Retain the building and refurbish the ground floor to provide accommodation for commercial rent plus a Council meeting chamber facility" (Cabinet minute 104). Since then a Project Board has been established to manage the conversion of the Old Magistrates Court and this includes Cabinet Lead Members and Officers from Democratic Services. Plans are being drafted for the conversion of Court Number 1 into a Council Chamber and once in final draft form will be circulated to all members of the Council for their comments. A reasonable consultation period will be set in order to allow Councillors to seek clarification on the draft plans from Officers.*

#### 6.2 Councillor Max Hunt – Litter Picking and Bin Emptying in Loughborough

In a report of 16th February 2010, the Director of Leisure and Environment stated that litter collection and bin emptying on green spaces was now conducted by the Environmental Services Contract and the result was an overall reduction in costs across the Borough of £1.25m. However the report of the Chief Executive on 17th December 2009 stated that the costs for the various parks have increased

due to higher litter picking costs, which incurred a higher charge on Loughborough Council Tax payers. Could the Leader explain why such an apparently large reduction in costs across the Borough can result in higher costs in Loughborough?

*The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:*

*This is due to the apportionment of costs against the different land types as depicted in the Environmental Services Contract. Some areas of land in Loughborough that have been added to this Contract from Grounds Maintenance Contract responsibility previously, are a higher rate as it is being undertaken by Serco to a higher standard. Both the Grounds Maintenance and the Environmental Services Contract have improved the standards to which they are performing which have resulted in higher customer satisfaction ratings.*

### 6.3 Councillor Max Hunt – Grounds Maintenance Costs

- A. *Costs of Loughborough Grounds Maintenance* – On 16th February 2010 the Scrutiny Commission were told that "during the 2009/10 financial year on-going direct savings on Grounds Maintenance [across the Borough] of £88,600 have been achieved". Could the Leader explain why such an apparently helpful reduction in costs across the Borough can result in higher Grounds Maintenance costs in Loughborough?
- B. *Costs of Borough Grounds Maintenance* – Although a saving is projected for Grounds Maintenance in 2009/10 following the review which resulted in a new structure implemented in January 2009, there are apparently offsetting costs due to increases in Support Service costs. Could the Leader (a) quantify these costs and identify exactly what Support Services have increased and (b) tell Council what specific savings have been made this year through the freezing of posts in Grounds Maintenance under the Managed Vacancy policy?
- C. *Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing Grounds Maintenance Contract* – It is understood that the Borough's costs for grounds maintenance have increased due to a renegotiation of our contract with Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing. Could the Leader quantify the loss anticipated for 2009/10 and explain how the contract has altered to the Borough's disadvantage?
- D. *Contracts with Parish Councils in Charnwood* – Could the Leader list the Parish Councils who
  - (a) currently have a grounds maintenance contract with the Borough Council and the date on which they are each currently to terminate and which of these include litter picking of Green Spaces; and
  - (b) currently employ their own litter picking or additional cleansing staff, as far as it is known and indicate what losses are projected on income from Grounds Maintenance Services to Parish Councils in 2009/10?

The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:

- A. Please refer to response in 6.2. as this covers the same points and is also reflected in the response to question 6.8 raised by Councillor Miah at last Full Council meeting 11th January 2010.
- B. (a) The Support Service costs have increased by £30,000. In the main this is due to £14,200 increase in HR recharges; £7,900 increase in Performance & Internal Audit recharges, £3,900 increase in Payments recharges and £2800 increase in Payroll recharges.
- (b) A £51,200 saving has been made this year through the freezing of posts in Grounds Maintenance under the Managed Vacancy policy.
- C. The loss of income to Grounds Maintenance in 2009/10 from the renegotiated Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing (CNH) Service Level Agreement (SLA) is £12,900, based on the new SLA commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009.

The renegotiated SLA with Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing has not resulted in any disadvantages for the Borough. The changes involve the cleansing and litter picking elements being removed from the Grounds Maintenance SLA and a separate SLA being negotiated with Environmental Services for the cleansing and litter picking elements and these being added to the Environmental Services Contract.

- D. (a) Two grounds maintenance contracts with parishes ceased during 2009/10. As a result, there are currently no grounds maintenance contracts with Parish Councils
- (b) Officers are only aware of two Parish Councils. Syston Town Council and East Goscote Parish Council, that employ their own staff. They have had this arrangement (to litter pick and cleanse land that they are responsible for) for some years prior to current waste contract, so this had no bearing on the costs of new Waste Contract
- (c) The loss of income to Grounds Maintenance from Parish Council contracts in 2009/10 is £13,200. This is when these contracts ceased, and this concurs with the response in D (a) that there are currently no grounds maintenance contracts with Parish Councils.

#### 6.4 Councillor Bava – Criminal Damage – Birstall

During the last month in Birstall Watermead Ward, there have been nearly 30 reports of criminal damage, including ten to vehicles. Would the Leader indicate what assistance our Community Safety Unit has been able to provide the police and Birstall and Wanlip Neighbourhood Watch in identifying and eradicating the

on going problem? Could he also indicate how many visits over the last three months have been made by the IMPACT team and what positive assistance we are giving to young people in the village?

*The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:*

*As Councillor Bava may be aware Birstall has been the focus of ongoing partnership work led by the Charnwood Borough Council Head of Communities and Inspector Southall Syston LPU. All reports of criminal damage are recorded as crimes by the police and their figures are similar to those noted in the question.*

*Over the last twelve months the Birstall Action Group with members drawn from the Communities and Partnerships Team (Community Safety and Anti Social Behaviour Units) Charnwood LPU; Parish Council; Youth Impact Team and Leicestershire Youth Services have carried out the following actions:*

- 1. A Graffiti work shop was delivered in Birstall in July/August and art work completed on the football pavilion and Longslade School. This was well received locally.*
- 2. In support of local concern and in an effort to educate local young people about the consequences of perpetrating anti-social behaviour, an Acceptable Behaviour Contract programme was rolled out in Longslade School.*
- 3. Copies of the Charnwood Community Safety Partnership booklet 'Safe and Secure' was delivered to homes in Birstall and additional copies were left with the Parish Council for distribution.*
- 4. Monthly press releases were issued through the Birstall Post by the project team to provide reassurance to local residents and to update them regarding action being taken.*
- 5. Funding was identified to open a youth facility on Friday nights in an effort to engage local young people in diversionary activities.*
- 6. Funding was also identified to commission the making of a DVD called Youth Voice, which captured young peoples wants and needs.*
- 7. Numerous warning letters were sent out to young people and their parents in relation to graffiti and other anti-social behaviour.*
- 8. 5 young persons have been arrested in relation to graffiti offences and 4 more are due to be arrested. All 9 individuals will be referred to the ASB Steering Group for consideration of appropriate further interventions.*

9. *To deal with continuing problems the Head of communities and Partnerships and the Charnwood LPU Commander will be holding a problem solving workshop with other partners in early April.*

*The youth Impact Team are currently in Birstall 3 nights per week. During the month of January this was somewhat curtailed because of weather conditions and annual leave arrangements.*

#### PROCEDURE FOR QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Council Procedure Rule 5 applies to questions, which Councillors have given notice that they wish to ask. This rule enables a Councillor who has given the required notice to ask a question of the Leader or the Chair of a committee a question and ask a supplementary question and/or make a statement.