

## **APPENDIX TO COUNCIL MINUTES: 28<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2004**

### **MINUTE 69: QUESTIONS WITHOUT DISCUSSION**

#### **(1) Question 1 (Councillor John Hurst)**

Does the Leader understand that the implementation of the Council's defined set of priorities will lead to intolerable resistance from within the Community unless it be coupled with a thorough-going revision of our financial strategies?

#### **Response: Councillor Mrs Linda Neal**

The Council's financial strategies are always under review and they must apply to all.

#### **Councillor Hurst:**

Next time I ask a question can I have an answer that is not useless - that is utterly disgraceful. It doesn't give us any information. The test of a good answer is whether it contains any information. That contains no information whatsoever so I shall put that question down next time and I shall expect a much better answer or there'll be trouble.

#### **(2) Question 2 (Councillor Stephen O'Hare)**

Can the Leader of the Council (and Chair of the Cabinet) explain how it is possible for a member of the Cabinet to make a decision at a cabinet meeting when that Cabinet member was not present?

#### **Response: Councillor Mrs Linda Neal**

It is not possible.

#### **Councillor O'Hare:**

I'm most grateful indeed to have that confirmation. I am sure if I look later at those Cabinet minutes that has actually happened.

#### **Response: Councillor Mrs Neal**

I am probably guessing that Councillor O'Hare is referring to non key decisions. I am afraid I can inform the Council that Councillor O'Hare has again missed the plot. Non Key decisions are not made in Cabinet. They are made outside of Cabinet with an announcement in Cabinet of what the decision was that had been taken.

#### **(3) Question 3 (Councillor Stephen O'Hare)**

As Stamford Town Council on 14th September 2004 passed a resolution about Star Lane toilets in Stamford referring to continuing maintenance and running costs at an

unknown level (before going on to ask that these be allocated as a Special Expense Area for Stamford) will he confirm whether before a decision was made at Cabinet on 11th October 2004 he had before him a written report stating what the continuing maintenance and running costs would be?

**Response: Councillor Peter Martin-Mayhew**

No I did not.

**(4) Question 4 (Councillor Paul Wood)**

*Put in Councillor Wood's absence by the Vice-Chairman*

What explanation is Councillor Martin-Mayhew able to give, this time, to the people of South Kesteven about the fact that the accounts for 2003/2004 show that while budgeted to spend £1.5million on decent homes provision this Council did not spend a single penny.

**Response: Councillor Peter Martin-Mayhew**

£1.5m was really apportioned to Aire Road but unfortunately we did have some problems with sorting out demolition and other things. We needed to take the right action so we have hung on a bit. So the £1.5m will go onto the next year – it does follow on. It is wasted, it just stays there until we are ready and we are almost ready for this next year coming.

**(5) Question 5 (Councillor Paul Wood)**

*Put in Councillor Wood's absence by the Vice-Chairman*

Does the leader of the Council believe that decisions made in public should be based upon documents which are available to the public?

**Response: Councillor Mrs Linda Neal**

Yes, my answer is provided it doesn't require the release of private or confidential information which would breach the requirements of the Local Government Act which I am sure Councillor Wood should be aware of.

**(6) Question 6 (Councillor Mrs Maureen Jalili)**

The Cabinet's recommendation for the 2005/06 budget is for a 6% rise in council tax. When the Cabinet discussed the Star Lane toilets in Stamford on 11th October (and I appreciate that press and public were excluded for that item), then to the extent that there was any discussion on council tax increases affecting that issue will he confirm, without disclosing the precise figure unless he wishes to, whether the percentage increase was higher or lower than the 6% upon which the budget preparation for next year is proposed?

**Response: Councillor Peter Martin-Mayhew**

The time I spent at Cabinet on that day was pretty short. I don't recall any discussion regarding budget preparation in relation to Star Lane toilets.

**(7) Question 7 (Councillor Mrs Maureen Jalili)**

The Cabinet view when SKDC is paying, is that failure to meet 'requirements' attract harsh penalties. Will the Leader accept with good grace the same reasoning if it is applied by central government to SKDC particularly if central government 'requirements' have not been fully and explicitly spelt out to SKDC?

**Response: Councillor Mrs Linda Neal**

My answer to Mrs Jalili is that, unfortunately I have no choice other than to accept it. Indeed the situation is far worse than that. Often the present government seems to consider it a virtue to change the rules to suit its funding decisions. As we know from its refusal to use the latest census data and its draconian approach to capping, I am not sure why the question has been asked but if it was about CAB, you will appreciate that, unlike central government, the District Council made its criteria abundantly clear. That's how business is conducted in the private sector and our residents will expect us to have the same value for money approach.