

APPENDIX TO COUNCIL MINUTES: 24TH FEBRUARY 2005

MINUTE 117: QUESTIONS WITHOUT DISCUSSION

(1) Question 1 (Councillor Teri Bryant)

Could the Leader please advise me how much money has been saved by this Council's decision to support your proposal over councillors remuneration at its last meeting viz -:

- A. To reduce the level of increase in remuneration we receive from the 23%+ recommended by the independent review panel to a figure of just above 3% (in line with RPI)
- B. By voting not to give ourselves access to the Local government pension scheme if all members took the maximum benefit
- C. By voting not to give ourselves access to the Local government pension scheme last year (again if all members took the maximum benefit) I note in passing that, on a recorded vote that I called for last year, Cllr Bisnauthsing voted for entry into the pension scheme and not, as he stated at the last Council meeting, against entry into the scheme.
- D. By not accepting anywhere near in full all the other recommendations that the independent remuneration Panel made following its extensive parity survey.
- E. Am I correct that we have to write to the remuneration board and advise them of why the council was minded not to accept their considered recommendation and has this been done!

Response: Councillor Mrs Linda Neal

I thank Councillor Bryant for this question because it gives me the opportunity to give the figures, the costs that would have been incurred by the Council taxpayer had the Remuneration Panel's recommendations been approved. In response to question A: £45,700; question B: £19,500; question C: £17,201; and question E: legislation requires us to publish the findings to the public but does not provide for informing the Panel of any decisions taken by members.

Supplementary Question: Councillor Teri Bryant

I welcome that. I am a little surprised that, adding all those up together comes to £82,400 that we turned down from our own pay. Can you confirm that that is about 2% on a Band D that we are saving? I am a little bit concerned that what we are saying gets reported accurately in the press and actually gets reported accurately in election leaflets that come out in the very near future; I hope nobody distorts things.

Response: Councillor Mrs Linda Neal

Yes, I can confirm that what Councillor Bryant is saying does equate to just over 2% on the Council tax.

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

Part of the answer given by Councillor Bryant on 27th January 2005 to my Question Without Discussion on the CAB internal audit report included statements that he had read all the available papers and that the information in that report – being the CAB internal audit report -was clearly available to any Councillor who asked for it.

At the cabinet meeting of 8th November 2004 Councillor Bryant stated in public that, and I quote:

“to be helpful if Cllr O’Hare actually wants a copy of the audit report I can obviously make it available to him like I did to all the Administration and the Cabinet but it is not for publication because it is an internal document because it is to be a background paper”

I was the same day provided with 2 pages part of which had been blanked out.

Was the provision by him to a fellow councillor of just one and half pages out of 21 pages of that internal CAB audit report his idea of ensuring that the information in that report was made available to any Councillor who asked for it?

Response: Councillor Teri Bryant

No, but as by the end of the day Councillor O’Hare did not take up my helpful offer and seemed to have lost all interest in the matter and I thought he had a duty to read the auditor’s recommendations as a minimum, I provided just that: the auditor’s recommendations.

Councillor Stephen O’Hare:

Well, first of all, Mr Chairman, I would actually like an answer to the question asked because of course, a supplementary can be based either upon the question already asked or the answer given. Therefore, it limits my choice in respect of a supplementary if the question is not answered. I ask you to direct Councillor Bryant to answer the question.

Chairman:

The Chairman, or anyone, cannot direct, by advice from the Chief Executive, what the answer will be or directing what an answer may be.

Supplementary Question: Councillor Stephen O’Hare

As Councillor Bryant has admitted to giving copies of a document this Council does not possess (being the CAB internal audit report) to certain Councillors but not, I note, to all members of the Labour, Liberal Democrat and the then Independent groups on this Council, was he distributing to the chosen, the foreword and the twenty one page document or the one and a half page version?

Response: Councillor Teri Bryant

I thought I answered that before by saying: at the Cabinet meeting, I advised Councillor O'Hare the twenty one page document was available from me as a helpful opportunity if he came to see me. He walked past the Cabinet room whilst I was sitting there. As he did not come into see me, as he has not contacted me – he has not contacted me since the election in actual fact – I turned round and made sure, as I said before, that he ought to read the auditor's recommendations, which is a summary. Rather than send him the twenty one pages, I sent him the two pages which were the recommendations.

(3) Question 3 (Councillor Mike Williams)

The front of Grantham Guildhall, Abbey Gardens and St. Peter's Hill Green are attacked almost nightly by litter louts, graffiti artists, skate boarders and vandals. How are we to convince the general public that we are getting to grips with anti social behaviour when we don't seem able to address the problem on our own front doorstep.

Response: Councillor Ray Auger

The Council will respond to litter louts and graffiti artists as part of the commitment to the street scene. That is via CCTV, PSCOs, Police officers, etc. Skate boarders and vandals are antisocial/crime and disorder events and are currently being addressed by Alan McWilliams, our recently appointed Community Safety Officer.

Supplementary Question: Councillor Mike Williams

When?

Response: Councillor Ray Auger

As I just stated, Mr McWilliams has only recently been appointed. I spoke to him yesterday and he is in conversation with the various partnerships on crime and disorder to address this. Litter louts and graffiti is already part of our street scene action plan and is ongoing as you can see in the Grantham Journal.

(4) Question 4 (Councillor Fereshteh Hurst)

In the light of recent strong indications from the Government that much greater help is planned for local authorities for social and affordable housing initiatives, will Councillor Martin-Mayhew urgently review his current hopelessly inadequate policy in this area?

Response: Councillor Peter Martin-Mayhew

Thank you to Councillor Fereshteh Hurst for her interest in our affordable housing policy. I would ask you to take account of recent policy developments relating to sustainable communities and in particular, the need to take a strong view on the

Homes for All document from the Government Office. In light of what I have just said, we are at the moment requesting a review to be undertaken of the Council's affordable housing policy.

Supplementary Question: Councillor Fereshteh Hurst

We better do something about it; as a Cabinet, you have to do something about it otherwise it is out of our hands and we won't get any help from the Government if we don't do something about it. Are you going to do something about it, definitely? Because, we have been saying this for two years and you have not done anything about it.

Response: Councillor Peter Martin-Mayhew

Well, what can I say? Fereshteh Hurst just has to look at the paperwork, the protocols, the strategies and everything else that has been coming out and we have been following them to the 'T' and we are up to about fifty affordable homes each year and as we can see if we read the Grantham Journal, there are properties up the road with the Housing Association. There are many properties in there that will become affordable homes. We have all sorts on the ball; just read the paperwork – it's all there. If she wishes, I will get her some of this paperwork and policies so that she can look at exactly what this authority is doing. It is 100% at the moment and we cannot do anymore because of limits from the Government, unfortunately.