

COUNCIL
29 JULY 2009
SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

7. (a) Question raised by Mr. P.R. Batty and addressed to Mr. S. L. Bray

“I would like to ask the Executive Member for Green Spaces and Leisure whether it is good practice to inform Parish Councils and publicise the fact that the Borough Council’s Sports Road Show will take place on Parks in their Parish and then with barely 2 weeks notice, advise the Parish Council that the published event has been cancelled due to poor attendance in a previous year and the need for economies to be made but at the same time effectively pass the responsibility for any disappointment to local kids back to the Parish Council by offering a pitiful £200 donation for the Parish to organise their own replacement event with qualified coaches in less than 2 weeks. Would the Executive Member confirm whether this sort of action that will almost certainly disappoint a number of young children who have seen the Sports Road Show advertised can be considered to be consistent with that of a Council that prides itself with the Logo “A Borough To be Proud Of”? Could I also please ask the Executive Member to provide a list of the venues where the Summer Sports Road show will still be taking place this Summer and a list of last year’s venues and attendances at each venue.”

Response from Mr. S. L. Bray

Councillor Batty will be aware of the difficult decisions that this council is having to make in order to deliver its services within budget. This applies equally to Cultural services as to all other services. It is regrettable that the level of provision of Sports Roadshows has had to be reduced.

Throughout June, Officers liaised with the Strategic Leadership Board and Executive Members with regards to provision of summer activities. Reviewing operational activity and aligning resources to where the need is required is ongoing.

Councillor Batty refers to ‘2 weeks notice’ but I can confirm that Parishes were notified in writing on 19 June, four weeks prior to the start of the Roadshow.

Having reviewed last years activities, on average only 17 children and young people within your Parish participated in the Sports Roadshow. To offer the best possible service to young people from across the borough and within budgetary constraints, the Council is targeting its resources towards the Priority Neighbourhoods and those sessions in Parishes with high attendance figures.

Details of previous years’ attendance figures, revised schedule for 2009 have been forwarded to the Groby Parish Clerk.

I would like to remind the Councillor that the LSP's What's Going Down brochure, issued to all young people in the Parish, details on page 28 sports courses for 5-11 year olds that are being held at Groby Community College. Therefore, there is existing local sports provision.

It is a shame, given the strong feelings on this matter, that Parish and Ward Councillors have not worked together and submitted a funding bid to provide additional activities for young people.

Please be assured that the Council is committed to working in partnership with Parish Councils and by empowering at a local level, opportunities for children and young people can be maximised. However, all activities of the Council must be managed within available budgets.”

Roadshow average numbers 2008

Roadshow	Ratby	7	Stopped
Roadshow	Hinckley	35	
Roadshow	Burbage	24	
Roadshow	Barwell	31	
	Newbold		Stopped
		V e r d o n	
Roadshow		16	
Roadshow	Groby	17	Stopped
Roadshow	Clarendon	36	
Roadshow	Thornton	3	Stopped
Roadshow	Markfield	23	
Roadshow	Stoke G	35	
Roadshow	Witherley	9	Stopped

(b) Question raised by Mr. P.R. Batty and addressed to Mr. D.O. Wright

“I would like to ask the Executive Member for Corporate Services as to who made the insensitive decision that now requires Elected Members to pay for their own Data Protection Registration necessary in respect of their role as elected Councillors. At a time when Members of Parliament are being accused of abusing their extremely generous expenses and media allegations that all Councillors are paying themselves generous salaries, how can the Council justify such “penny pinching” when Members of this Council already very much have to pay their own expenses relating to their duties such as phone bills, postage, stationary and IT costs. It is not the £35 additional expense that bothers me but it is the principle of the apparent discriminatory attitude by the Council towards elected members. Therefore, could the Executive Member please publicly state for the benefit of the media the amount of basic allowance that

Elected Members of this Council receive before tax and confirm that this is among the lowest in the region, thus by enlarge providing excellent value for money to the Borough's Council Tax payers in respect of the many hardworking Councillors in this Chamber, who unlike their counterparts in other Authorities are not provided with PC's, the cost of internet connection or the reimbursement of other costs incurred in their duties. Finally, could the Executive Member in the light of the forthcoming introduction of the home-working policy confirm that the removal of duty related expenses will be consistently applied to both officers and elected members."

Response from Mr. D.O. Wright

"Can I thank Councillor Batty for his questions.

Firstly with regard to the issue of Data Protection Registration, the decision was taken by the Head of Corporate and Scrutiny Services, who is also the Council's Data Protection Officer with the agreement of the Chief Executive. The Cost to each individual Councillor is £35.00, however the cost to the authority is £1,500 inclusive of administration and officer time costs. In this time of having to account for every £ spent of tax payers money it was determined to be an appropriate action to discontinue covering the cost of notifications.

What is important to note is that Members only need to notify – pay the £35.00 if they hold information which IS NOT related to carrying out work relating to council business and IS NOT related to acting on behalf of a political party, as these areas are covered by the Councils notification and the Political Parties notification respectively. A letter and guidance on this has previously been issued to Councillors.

The basic allowance for elected members before tax is £272.92 paid monthly. With regard to others in the region, allowances vary as do additional benefits such as provision of IT equipment. Allowances for members are reviewed by an Independent Remuneration Panel who makes recommendations to Council for agreement. The ICT Scrutiny Panel is currently considering the provision of laptops and internet connections for all Members paid for by the Council.

With regard to Home Working, the Council has a Flexible Working Policy for its employees which deals with both time and location flexibility, promoting improvements in service delivery, staff retention and monetary savings. The Flexible Working Policy does not apply to elected Members."

Agenda Item 7

BRIEFING NOTE OF DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND PLANNING SERVICES AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

Local Authorities: bidding for Social Housing Grant.

The recent Government announcement "Building Britain's Future" has highlighted the additional resources being made available to develop more affordable housing, kickstart development and help underpin housing growth and development. Local authorities have been identified as having an essential role in the direct development of new homes, with up to 3,900 new homes being directly developed by local authorities on their own land. For this purpose the original £100m identified in the 2009 budget has been increased to £350m.

Interested Local Authorities can bid to the Homes and Communities agency for an allocation of the funding. The closing date for the first bidding round is 31st July 2009, with a second bidding round closing on 30th October 2009. Following this Local Authorities will be able to bid along side Registered Social Landlords for social housing grant in the normal bidding process.

In order to place a bid a Local Authority has to identify land and the proposed scheme for that site. It is anticipated that suitable land will be infill and garage sites, where small scale development can take place and be completed by the deadline date of March 2011.

The Asset Management and Housing Teams have worked together and have identified sites which may be suitable for such a bid. However, there are significant financial implications to be taken into account as outlined below.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION ON THE GENERAL FUND

To fund the authority's capital commitment up to March 2012 there is a shortfall of £1.346m. This shortfall is due to a reduction in the net amount anticipated to be received from the sale of council dwellings and from the reduction in planned capital receipts from other land disposals.

Any suitable land holdings that are deemed for disposal are therefore needed to fund the current capital programme (quite apart from additional capital requirements beyond the current capital programme). Failure to secure additional receipts would either seriously impinge on the delivery of the current capital projects or would lead to additional cost of borrowing of over £107,700 by 2011/12 which would need to be met from the General Fund Revenue Budget. This would add £2.91 (2.64%) to the Council Tax.