

COUNCIL – 23 SEPTEMBER 2014

QUESTIONS

(a) From Councillor Moore to the Executive Member for Finance

Can the Executive Member for Finance tell me how much the annual increases and average rise in council tax of the last Conservative Council (2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 budgets) compared to the average rise of the Lib Dem administration from the 2008 budget onwards?

Response from Councillor Lynch:

Thank you Cllr Moore for your question. A summary of the average Band D Council Tax levels for the Borough Council together with the average percentage rise are set out below. Please note that the Borough rate for the years 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 was set by the Conservative Administration. During these 4 years the average Band D Council Tax increased by 19%. In contrast, in the last 7 years i.e. 2008/09 to 2014/15, this Administration has reduced the amount of increase of Council Tax each year with a complete freeze over the last 4 years of this Administration.

Average Band D Increases

2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
72.90	77.35	79.82	86.71	90.67	93.78	96.02	95.96	95.96	95.96	95.96
	6.10%	3.19%	8.63%	4.57%	3.43%	2.39%	-0.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

(b) From Councillor Moore to the Executive Member for Finance

Can the Leader of the Council provide me with figures in relation to short stay parking charges for the two administrations (Periods 2004 through 2013)?

Response from Councillor Lynch:

Thank you Cllr Moore for your question. The short stay car parking charges from 2004/05 to 2014/15 are set out below.

Please note that the charges from 2004/05 to 2007/08 were set by the Conservative Administration.

CATEGORY	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<u>Short Stay</u>												
Up to 1 hour	0.40	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.50	0.50
Over 1 hour and up to 2 hours	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.00	1.00

(c) From Councillor Moore to the Executive Member for Finance

Can the Executive Member for Finance provide me with details of how Hinckley and Bosworth's Band D council tax level compares with other Leicestershire and neighbouring districts?

Response from Councillor Lynch:

Thank you Cllr Moore for your question. Hinckley and Bosworth's average Band D Council Tax compared to the Leicestershire Districts and immediately neighbouring authorities of North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth is set out below. It is noteworthy that this Council's average Band D Council Tax is 10.52% lower than the next lowest authority's rate (Charnwood Borough Council) and 58.40% lower than the highest of the Leicestershire Districts (Melton Borough Council). When compared to our neighbouring authorities across the border, this Council's average Council Tax is 85% lower.

2014/15	Av. Band D CTax		
	District	Special Exp	Total
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	95.96	16.20	112.16
Harborough District Council - Inc Average Parish Requirement	150.10	17.93	168.03
NWLDC	158.58	0.00	158.58
Oadby & Wigston Inc Average Parish Requirement & Special Expenses	202.60	0.00	202.60
Melton	177.66	0.00	177.66
Charnwood	102.62	21.34	123.96
Nuneaton & Bedworth	207.56	0.00	207.56
North West Warwickshire	207.30	0.00	207.30

(d) From Councillor Camamile to the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services

Bearing in mind this Council has publicly stated its' commitment to achieving the highest possible level of recycling, can the Executive member please explain why residents who have been magnificent in their efforts to recycle are now being told that they must now put a significant amount of materials clearly marked "suitable for recycling" in their black (landfill) bins and can he please confirm the cost to the council tax payer of the Council employing "bin police" who have been reported sneaking up people's driveways to inspect their bins so they can put exclusion stickers on recycling bins.

Response from Councillor Crooks:

New regulations are being introduced to improve the quality of recycling collected and produced. These affect the Materials Recovery Facilities (MRF's), the locations to which recycling loads are transported for sorting, and from January 2015, Councils are required to make a separate collection of waste paper, metal, plastic and glass, unless it is clearly demonstrated that it is not practical to do so. Unfortunately, there is a large amount of materials placed within the blue lidded recycling bin which is either rubbish, types of plastics which cannot be recycled, or material which we do not collect as part of our recycling scheme. In July, 13% of all material in the blue lidded bins was unsuitable. Incorrect recycling costs the Council money and we have therefore put in place information stickers and additional staffing to improve the quality of recycling. By taking this action within existing collection arrangements, we are seeking to maintain the low number of containers, reduce 'contamination' and maintain low costs.

The staff checking bins have been employed as some residents have not responded to our previous communications about not recycling certain types of plastic. We intend that this is a constructive measure, to assist residents who may need further explanation and advice. Most councils will not collect bins if they contain incorrect materials. The cost of the additional staff is £21,000 and this has been met from existing resources.

(e) From Councillor Camamile to the Executive member for Neighbourhood Services

Can the Executive member please advise elected members of the anticipated increase in waste going to landfill as a consequence of this change in policy and can he explain why these changes did not come to Council for full scrutiny before they were put in place.

Response from Councillor Crooks:

There is no change in policy by the Council. We are simply encouraging and reinforcing the good practice from residents over many years and seeking to explain what now needs to be done to meet changes in regulations. There will **not** be an increase in landfill per se, as the offending materials are currently removed by the contractor and sent to landfill. Conversely, these materials also contaminate higher value plastics, which means these also cannot be recycled. In addition, by putting plastic film and bags in the residual waste bin, landfill can be avoided by extracting this via mechanical and/or biological treatment to make Refused Derived Fuel (RDF).

The changes being put in place were in response to decisions made by central government, itself responding to EU regulations. The Council was not changing any policy, nor was it changing its methods of collection; to do so would have incurred additional costs. We constantly seek to keep service costs to a minimum and maintain a method of collection with which our residents are familiar and to which they continue to make an excellent contribution. Because there has been no policy change, there was no requirement for any decision at full Council.

However, I am concerned that future promised withdrawal of recycling credits by the County Council WILL lead to an increase in landfill. A policy supported by Councillor Camamile and her Conservative colleagues.

(f) From Councillor Morrell to the Leader of the Council

Further to a recent article in the Hinckley Times confirming that the developer of the bus station site was actively encouraging interest in the Crescent from established businesses currently located on Castle Street and no doubt offering very attractive inducements for them to move to the Crescent, can the Executive member please advise what proactive policies this administration has in place to fill any key shop units that become vacant and in general what initiatives will this administration be promoting to consolidate and indeed attract new business to Castle Street.

Response from Councillor Bray:

I am pleased to report that Castle Street remains strong in retail performance and occupancy. The current vacancy rate is only 3.48% which comprises just four shop units. This is well below the national rate of 10.1% and East Midlands rate of 11% for town centres.

As you will be aware, the Council is a key partner on the Hinckley Town Centre Partnership and BID. There are a range of initiatives and support available to encourage businesses to start up in Castle Street and the rest of the town centre. These include:

- New business start-up support grants.
- Business advice support from the BID office.
- Website provision for the new business.
- Promotional write up for new businesses in the BID monthly newsletter.
- Access to 5,000 loyalty card members to profile business and offer incentives.
- Planning advice surgeries for incoming and existing business.
- Small business grant relief.
- Hinckley Digital Market Town initiative – making Wi-Fi accessible to all businesses in the town centre.

In addition to this, the very fact that the Council has facilitated a multi-million pound shopping and leisure regeneration scheme at the Crescent will help further in raising the profile of Hinckley as a town to come and shop and spend leisure time in.

Councillor Morrell and his colleagues of course opposed this in this Council Chamber.

- (g) From Councillor Morrell to the Executive member for Culture & Leisure

At the recent Council meeting held on 2nd September when it was unanimously agreed by the Council to improve the specification of the swimming pool in the new leisure centre, concerns were raised not only about servicing the cost of any additional borrowing but also additional running costs for the improved swimming pool. Therefore, can the Executive member please confirm that the Council working with input from Hinckley Swimming Club will exhaustively investigate any potential additional leisure centre revenue that will be generated from these improvements and from the increase in useable floor area for leisure activity above the new leisure centre's original foot print.

Response from Councillor Cope:

I can confirm that PFP will work closely with Hinckley Swimming Club, the ASA and Council Officers to seek additional revenue streams resulting from the installation of the moveable floor in the main pool.

- (h) From Councillor Richards to the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services

Since the introduction of civil parking enforcement officers and in the context of the very restricted times allocated for parking enforcement outside of Hinckley, parking restrictions on double yellow lines are regularly flouted and often completely ignored out of office hours. As this is a worsening problem how does the administration propose to address this blatant disregard of parking restrictions that were obviously implemented for good reason in the first place.

Response from Councillor Crooks:

On street parking and the enforcement of double yellow lines is the responsibility of Leicestershire County Council, not Hinckley and Bosworth. I'm surprised that Cllr Richards, having been a County Councillor for the past 5 years, wasn't aware of this fact?

Given the concerns you raise are outside of Hinckley I'd suggest you ask the relevant LCC members to raise this with LCC on your behalf.

- (i) From Councillor Ladkin to the Executive Member for Culture & Leisure

My colleague Cllr. Richards put a question to a recent Scrutiny meeting in respect of concerns voiced by a number of members that there may not be adequate parking provision for the new leisure centre. The response was that there would be more than adequate parking, this claim was based on a traffic impact assessment projecting a 30%

increase in usage. Therefore, can the Executive member please explain how this tallies with the 400% increase in usage on which the operator's business case is based.

Response from Councillor Cope:

Your reference to a 400% increase in usage figures is wildly incorrect. The Council report dated 2 September, Appendix F (question 3), details Officers response to the question which has already been posed.

- PFP's tender submission calculated the usage of the facility will rise from the current 650,000 visits per annum, to 880,000 in year 3 maturity (35% increase).
- The new pool will increase the participation in swimming by 40% (from 268,000 visits to 373,000 visits).
- The facility will be served directly by Mount Road car park – 106 spaces.
- Argents Mead location will have approximately 264 spaces available from conveniently located car parks. In addition, the bus station car park will have over 500 spaces.
- There will be an overall net increase in the number of car parking spaces in the town centre of around 19% following the opening of the Crescent.
- Busy periods for Leisure Centre are 5pm – 9pm when the town centre businesses are predominantly closed.

(j) From Councillor Ladkin to the Leader of the Council

In the Leisure Centre report to Council on 2nd September, 2.10 on page 1 it refers to *"an income budget of £20,000 for 2015/2016 should be approved to reflect one off income received from PFPLM for car parking provision"*. Could the Executive member please elaborate on this and confirm whether or not the developer will be using all or any part of Mount Road car park during the construction phase of the new leisure centre, either for reserved contractor parking, material/plant storage or general accommodation.

Response from Councillor Bray:

Currently, all SLM employees receive a car parking pass for which the contractor pays. This will change when the new facility opens. Just ten dedicated employees of PFP will receive a pass. For example, the Engineer and Duty Managers, who open and close the facility, will have a pass, allowing them to park close to the facility on Mount Road car park. This arrangement will continue during the length of the contract. As you rightly note, the Council has negotiated an income of £20,000 as a one-off payment to fund this arrangement.

The site compound, which will include material/plant storage on general accommodation, will be located on Argents Mead, utilising the former short stay car park. It is the Council's intention to keep Mount Road car park operational to members of the public during the construction phase. It is likely that sub-contractors may need to utilise the car park. At this stage, it is envisaged that they will have to purchase car parking tickets.