

## **Responses to questions raised at the meeting of Full Council on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2012**

***The on-going success of Jubilee 2 will depend on financial decisions in respect of leisure centres. Given his statements in the local media and in election addresses published and produced by him is he or is he not going to, as Leader with a Labour Cabinet, reopen Knutton Recreation Centre?(Cllr Ashley Howells)***

### **Response:**

'The decision to close down Knutton Recreation Centre was made by the previous Conservative-led Cabinet in June 2011. As the then Labour opposition felt this decision was wrong it was called-in for review. After this call-in, the Conservative-led Cabinet reaffirmed their decision to close Knutton Recreation Centre later in October 2011 and Knutton Rec was, as such, closed with its budgets being used to run the new Jubilee 2 centre.

The Cabinet, while welcoming the continued success of Jubilee 2, is conscious of the impact that the Conservative-led Cabinet's decision to close Knutton Rec has had on the local area. In particular, the proposal to impose a small supermarket on the development site demonstrated a lack of understanding that the Conservative-led Cabinet had of both local need and desires.

Sadly the decisions made by the previous Conservative-led Cabinet means that it is simply not possible to reopen Knutton Recreation Centre. This is a situation I regret but it is the situation that we have inherited from the previous administration.

Although we cannot reverse the decision, we retain the right to criticise the previous administration for the poor judgement they showed over this matter.

The closure of Knutton Recreation Centre and the abandonment of the Knutton community by the previous Conservative-led administration is, however, being rectified by the current Labour administration. Dialogue is taking place with officers on the potential redevelopment opportunities of the Knutton Recreation site.

Officers have been given clear instructions that, as a result of the redevelopment, investment in community facilities in Knutton must be included and options are currently being explored. This matter was referred to the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their consideration and Cabinet will consider the options available in the near future.

Should the Council wish, I will be happy to provide regular updates on the progress of the redevelopment of Knutton Recreation Centre site and for those members who are keen enthusiasts, I would be happy to host you in my ward to demonstrate what a wonderful village Knutton is and the potential it has.'

***What is the current relationship of the Council to Gatedale Ltd, original lease holders of the leisure development and car park which now houses inter alia and the Vue Cinema in view of Gatedales subsequent winding up (2008) and the Councils position as a residual lease holder in the development? Can the***

***Council be assured that all financial and other obligations by the parties and their representatives or agents are being met? (Cllr Robin Studd).***

**Response:**

The Council granted a 125 year lease to Gatedale in 1998 with the Council retaining the freehold ownership of the overall site including the multi-storey car park. Under the terms of the lease Gatedale redeveloped the site to its current mix; multi plex cinema , retail and leisure units.

Gatedale appointed a firm of Liquidators to manage their affairs in August 2008 and the Liquidators have continued to trade the complex with a view to disposing of it as a going concern.

The Liquidators have continued to pay the rent throughout this period as the rent is a first charge against the complex along with taxes HMRC. Other creditors are secondary to the rental charge even those banks which have a mortgage charge against the lease.

In the light of the Council's work to repair the concrete structure to the Midway car park the Council, as landlord, requested Gatedale's Liquidator to carry out a similar survey of the multi storey car park to the Vue cinema complex. After some delay on the part of the agents acting for the Liquidator, a firm of structural engineers, (Shepherd Gilmour) were appointed to carry out the survey. This work commenced in May and will encompass a report of the findings, a specification of remediation works to rectify any problems identified in the survey, finally preparation of tender documents for firms to bid to carry out any works of remediation. Any works of repair or remediation are the tenants responsibility under the terms of the lease.

***How much extra money is it costing to hold Cabinet meetings in the evening and how much extra is the additional Cabinet Portfolio Holder costing?***

The additional cost for Officers to staff the evening meeting is approximately £210. However, this does free up officer time during the day when Cabinet meetings used to be held.

The additional cost for the Cabinet Member is £5660 but this is offset due to the fact that the Chair of the Coordinating Committee and the Chair of the Transformation and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the same person and as such only one allowance is claimed resulting in a saving of £2830.

***Would quarterly reports be required from the County Council before any money was handed over by the Borough Council with regards to the Public Sector Commissioning in Partnership work (PSCiP)?(Cllr Mrs Cornes)***

The following is an extract from the report that went to Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

In examining the Programme and its potential for the Borough Council, consideration will be made of Borough Council service outlines; as well as assessing whether maintenance of some form of budgetary control with a preference to pay quarterly on receipt of performance returns can be retained, as well as seeking to regularly review performance directly with service providers and in general protect the interest of both Newcastle residents and the Borough Council.