

COUNCIL – 23 FEBRUARY 2017

ITEM 6 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR D EVERITT TO COUNCILLOR R BLUNT

“Since last year’s Cabinet meeting held on February 19th 2016 there have been 11 Cabinet meetings. At these meetings decisions are announced by the six Cabinet members. No meaningful debate takes place.

During the same period of time there have only been 7 full Council meetings in which Councillors of all parties have the right to question and discuss councillor business on behalf of the electorate.

Does the Leader recognise the importance of constructive criticism or support when making decisions, and is he aware of how lack of meetings is perceived by interested observers, and how does this serve democracy?”

RESPONSE FROM COUNCILLOR R BLUNT

“The Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council discretion as to how many Council meetings it holds in any year. The number of Cabinet meetings is entirely at my discretion. In the interests of effective administration the dates of the Cabinet and Council meetings are set in advance to ensure that they are timed to fit in with the regular business of the Council e.g. the performance monitoring, the budget etc. Other reports for decision are then added to these dates thus ensuring that meetings are not being held for meetings’ sake as I appreciate how busy members are and I know they would not thank me for arranging additional Cabinet meetings to discuss individual matters. Hence why we have an Executive Decision Notice which gives elected members and the public advance notice of all forthcoming reports for decision. These have been carefully timed to fit into the meetings timetable, thus ensuring effective and timely decision making. The Executive Decision Notice is included in the agenda papers for every meeting of the Policy Development Group and allows members to see the decisions which are planned over the forthcoming months. Members also have the ability to call in decisions made by Cabinet where they have evidence which suggests that the Cabinet did not take the decision in accordance with the decision making principles laid down in the Constitution.

In terms of serving democracy, each Council meeting has provision to enable debate and every Cabinet and Council meeting provides for questions by members and the public. Advance notice is given of the deadlines for submitting motions and questions. I do not see how spreading the business of the Council over more meetings, diluting the content of each meeting and calling on the services of elected members and officers more frequently would make the decision making process more efficient. I am therefore satisfied that in North West Leicestershire we serve democracy well and the number of Council and Cabinet meetings held each year is appropriate to the needs of the business of the Council.”