

ANNUAL FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2025

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

In accordance with Rule No. 3.3.3 the following question was submitted to the Council from Councillor Peter Harris:

“The Bus Improvement Grant for 2025-6 is allocated by the East Midlands Combined County Authority. The capital element of this grant is equivalent to over £130,000 for Southwell. How is the Leader of the Council monitoring this expenditure to make sure that this money is spent on capital improvements on Southwell's bus services?”

Reply from Councillor Paul Peacock – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance

“Thank you for your question, it's worth mentioning my role within the East Midlands Combined Counties Authority, I was elected by the Leaders of Nottinghamshire District and Borough Councils to be one of two representatives on the EMCCA board, my role there is to reflect the views of all District and Boroughs. This position is classed as non-constituent without voting rights. Meetings are advertised widely and meetings are live streamed and meeting agendas and minutes made available to the public. There is also opportunities for public involvement at the meetings, I am sure Councillor Harris would be warmly welcomed if he wanted to raise issues himself.

It is a matter of public record that I have raised on several occasions at these public meetings that District and Borough Councils are not consulted widely enough and have too little influence over decision making, I'm pleased to say that EMCCA are now listening and are indeed consulting more widely. I still expect this to improve further as EMCCA matures as an authority.

I am also pleased that Peter has raised the question of transport infrastructure funding as it gives me a chance to congratulate Mayor Claire for bringing in an extra £88M for transport projects across Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, bringing the total to £175M for 2025/26, this level of funding is unprecedented. Of this Councillor Harris will be pleased to know that £21M has been made available to the 4 constituent Councils for Bus Service Improvement Plans. Nottinghamshire County Council published the details of its Bus Service Improvement Plan for 2025/26 in 2024. The Bus Service Improvement Plan will be delivered through the County Council as the Highway Authority for 2025/26 with EMCCA assuming control of Bus Service Improvement Plans from 2026, in line with the Transport Transition Plan and to coincide with the emerging East Midlands Local Transport Plan in 2026. We will be able to contribute to the consultation of the Local Transport Plan in the autumn of this year as individuals and collectively and I would welcome contributions from all members.

In terms of understanding and making representations about Southwell's transport infrastructure needs, indeed any area's transport infrastructure needs, I need members to raise issues directly with me, I'm not sure a formal question to council is the most effective way to bring this to my attention. It is worth noting that Councillor Harris hasn't contacted me about any transport issues in Southwell during the entirety of my Leadership or my term of

office as a EMCCA Board member, I am accessible for most parts of every day, which I'm sure most councillors, officers and residents will confirm.

I do know that Southwell is well catered for regarding Bus Service Infrastructure in comparison to other places within the District and County, particularly in regard to Real Time Passenger Information Displays.

As a current member of the EMCCA Board and the EMCCA Transport and Digital Connectivity Committee I will continue to raise local issues and I will be pleased to work with any Member to discuss issues within their wards to make sure your voices are heard".

Supplemental Question from Councillor Harris

"Will the Leader report back on the rural capital spend across the District Council area after he has spoken with Mayor and the EMCCA?"

Reply from Councillor Paul Peacock – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance

"In terms of real time displays, Southwell currently have 11, Retford have 7 whereas Worksop will have more but of course is a larger town. The infrastructure is in place but that does not mean that this should not be increased further. Monies from the fund should be used properly and local people should be consulted. The Leader of Southwell Town Council and the District Councillors should be consulted on where, how and what should happen with that funding. I am happy to discuss this with you and come to Southwell to look at where you think that money should be spent and to lobby for that in the same way I have spoken to other Members about improvements to the A614 and A6075, whereby I spoke to Members along those roads who were tired of waiting for those improvements to take place, so I lobbied the Mayor of the EMCCA to secure an additional £7.5m contribution towards those projects. That is the type of power we can have but I need Members to come and talk to me about these things, and I am more than happy to lobby on Members' behalf whether within this District, or the other districts which I represent on the EMCCA board and the EMCCA Transport & Digital Connectivity Committee."

In accordance with Rule No. 3.3.3 the following question was submitted to the Council from Councillor Matthew Spoors:

"What is the Council's understanding of the impact of the withdrawal of the sustainable farming initiative, and what will its response be?"

Reply from Councillor Claire Penny – Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Economic Development

"The Council understands that the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) encourages farmers and land managers to adopt practices that support sustainable food production while also protecting and enhancing the environment. It provides financial rewards for implementing specific "SFI actions" that benefit both the environment and farm productivity. The SFI aims to reduce the environmental impact of farming, improve soil health, increase biodiversity, and help farmers adapt to climate change. We understand that 37,000 agreements are in place in the UK, but do not know exactly how many are in operation in Newark & Sherwood.

We do understand that the closing of the current programme will only have affected those farmers who have yet to submit an application, and not those who have been confirmed agreement (who will continue to receive funds). We do understand that whilst the current application process closed in March 2025, that there will be a reformed SFI programme after the spending review in summer 2025. We will encourage applications to the new programme when it is launched for farmers in our area”.