

# **Borough Council matters – November 2011**

## **1. Council spending cuts**

At this time of cuts and economies across the country it is perhaps worth noting that our local councils are also affected. Wellingborough Council is on target to achieve savings of more than £5m. Since the need for cuts was announced last year the council has already saved more than £1.5m. The majority of the savings so far have come from a reduction in employees, with 67 voluntary and 17 compulsory redundancies. Up until now these redundancies have saved around £920,000, including £560,000 from a management restructure. Some services are still being restructured and employees are still working their notice, meaning more savings from redundancies of around £800,000 are still to come.

Other savings have come from reducing budgets, changing the ways things are done, and increasing income. Examples include a £7,000 reduction in the party in the park budget, £8,000 by banning the use of first class mail, £2,500 from stopping refreshments at meetings, £3,000 by cleaning windows less often, and £37,000 by reducing the cost of legal and ICT services. Councilors now only get one payment for taking on extra responsibilities, meaning a saving of more than £5,000, and the cancellation of the councilor ward support scheme means a further £35,000 saved. Income has been generated by increasing fees and charges to be more in line with the average charged by other councils. Further savings due in the future include closing the council's cash desk and moving to a more convenient and flexible system of payments in local shops (£57,000), temporarily stopping garden waste collections over the winter months (£63,000), and reducing caretaking and cleaning arrangements (£28,000).

It's good news that the council is on target to achieve these savings, but the sheer amount they have had to save, plus the loss of such a large number of hard working and dedicated employees, is obviously having an impact on services. There are fewer people to do the work and some of the people that have left had been there for a very long time and had extensive knowledge and expertise. It should be recognised that all members of staff are working very hard to adjust to new roles and responsibilities so that as high a level of service as possible is maintained for the public.

## **2. Brown Bin Collections**

As part of the overall cuts the fortnightly Brown bin garden waste collections were stopped at the end of October. This will save £63,000 a year. Garden waste is accepted at the [Household Waste Recycling Centres](#) and can be easily composted at home. Home compost bins are currently on offer and can be purchased online at <http://www.northants.getcomposting.com/>

## **3. Domestic Bonfires**

If you do need to have a bonfire it should only be on a very infrequent basis, care should be taken in what you burn; you should have regard to neighbours and preferably advise them of your intentions. If a neighbour causes a nuisance by having

a bonfire it is usually best to approach them yourself and see if you can resolve the problem.

If this is unsuccessful contact the Environmental Protection section and they will investigate your complaint. The Council has powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to abate smoke nuisances where there is a regular or severe problem such that it is considered to interfere with the use or enjoyment of your property.

The Council has produced a leaflet on '[Garden Bonfires](#)' which can be downloaded or sent to you on request. **Contrary to many peoples perceptions there are no times of day when bonfires are prohibited**

#### **4. New Planning powers**

The [Department for Communities and Local Government](#) has opened a consultation on the proposed new planning powers giving communities the ability to shape the character of their neighbourhood. Under the neighbourhood planning regulations, communities will have a voice in deciding the look and feel of development in their area, including the location of new homes, the design of buildings, the shops they want in their high street, and the green spaces that should be protected.

The new powers being will also give local people the power to decide the types of development that can be granted automatic planning permission, through a [Neighbourhood Development Order](#). The regulations include how a neighbourhood area will be defined, how to set up the forums that will propose plans, and outlines the requirements for establishing a Neighbourhood Development Order.

The regulations draw on existing procedures where possible to minimise the time communities and councils need to become familiar with the new system. For further information on the consultation, which closes on [5 January 2012](#), visit [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningregulationsconsultation](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningregulationsconsultation).

#### **5. Review of services for the deceased and bereaved**

There is a widely held view that Wellingborough would benefit from the creation of a crematorium. The nearest facility at Kettering is now struggling with demand due to the size of the chapels and a local alternative would not only be more convenient but would provide an additional source of income.

It has been agreed that the council will undertake a wide-ranging review of burials, alternative options such as green burials and cremations, and services for the bereaved. A working group has been set up to carry out the review and will report back to the committee in early 2012.

#### **Contact**

If you wish to discuss anything regarding council services then please contact me on 01933 224790 or email [barry.graves@virgin.net](mailto:barry.graves@virgin.net) Cllr. Barry Graves  
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