



The balloon goes up as festival is finally axed

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THE balloon festival has been axed as part of this year's cost-cutting budget.

Northampton Borough Councillors debated late into the evening last week over this year's 'difficult' finances.

But after a long battle the Liberal Democrats managed to pass the budget, meaning there will be no balloon festival, public toilets may be faded out and there will be changes to neighbourhood warden services.

The budget was passed even though two amendments were made by the opposition.

Council leader Tony Woods summed up the budget and said: "This budget transforms this council from inefficient to a lean and effective organisation."

"We are doing this in the depth of the worst recession in my lifetime."

"This council has come a long, long way."

"Make no mistake the changes are absolutely vital."

"However, the very sad fact is these could have been introduced three, five or, in some cases, ten years ago."

"If they had been this council would have been in much more of a robust state."

Cllr Tony Clarke (Independent, Castle) said the council was suffering from shifting the blame.

He said: "BSE disease, blame someone else."

He put forward his amendment to the budget as he wanted to see a cut in councillors' expenses to help fund public

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- Cllr Tony Woods

toilets and neighbourhood wardens. He also wanted to put money aside in an attempt to save the balloon festival.

Cllr Clarke said: "Councillors all have choices."

"This council needs its finances to protect its services. Our individual expenses or cuts to the services?"

Cllr Clarke drew attention to the fact that this year would have been the 20th anniversary of the balloon festival.

He added: "I believe we should protect the balloon festival that brings in income to traders in the town."

He was backed by members of the opposition.

Cllr Joy Capstick (Labour, Lumbertubs) said: "The balloon festival is an iconic popular event."

"This town needs a landmark event."

Cllr Clarke's amendment was defeated by the Liberal Democrats.

The Conservative group also had a go at making an amendment to the budget.

They wanted to reduce councillors expenses to fund neighbourhood wardens.

Leader of the Conservative group Cllr Tim

Hadland (Conservative, Weston) said: "People that have neighbourhood wardens in their area, they want more."

He also stated that people that haven't got a warden in their area would like one.

Cllr Colin Lill (Conservative, Nene Valley) said: "The wardens play an important role."

"It has been said it is not a 'cut'."

"Fifteen to nine, it's practically a 50 per cent reduction."

"I think we are short falling the people in this town by lining our own pockets."

"The decent thing we could do is accept this amendment."

The proposal was again defeated by the Liberal Democrats.

Cllr Woods added: "If we don't learn from history we repeat the errors of history."

"This is a difficult budget and we really want to make sure this council is the best council in Britain."

■ What do you think? Is it a fair budget this year or are you disappointed by it?

Send your letters to: The Editor, Herald & Post, Newspaper House, 9 Derigate, Northampton, NN1 1NN, or e-mail them to julie.fisher@hpnorthants.co.uk

Party poopers

PIGEONS pooping over flowerbeds makes up the latest exhibition at the Fishmarket.

'60 Miles by Road or Rail' lays out the work by four artists.

In 1980 The Northampton Development Corporation produced a single which was released nationally by EMI called '60 Miles by Road or Rail'.

The record was intended to generate publicity for the town.

The main gallery is home to Tom Woolner and Bill Drummond.

Tom's automated pigeons is said to provide a rhythmic backdrop to the space as they repeatedly defecate over flowerbeds, whilst Bill Drummond's work is a call for action, engaging with Northampton's public.

In gallery two Will Daniels and Tom Price occupy the space.

The exhibition will run until March 28.

For more information visit: www.fishmarketgallery.co.uk

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