

COUNCIL 9 NOVEMBER 2017 - AGENDA ITEM 9 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Mr P M McDonald will ask Andy Roberts:

"Would the Cabinet Member for Children and Families please inform me the number of children taken into care each year over the last four years?"

Draft Answer

In response to Mr McDonald's question regarding the number of children taken into care each year over the last four years I can confirm the following, which also includes the first two quarters of the current year 2017/18:

Looked after Children	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18 Apr-Sep
Children starting to be looked after in the year	272	312	240	329	144

Supplementary Question

In response to supplementary question, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families would provide a more detailed breakdown of the number of children in care for Mr McDonald.

QUESTION 2 – Mr M E Jenkins will ask Alan Amos:

"Would the Cabinet Member for Highways inform me of the amount of money that is spent per person per year on highways for each year over the past 5 years, with a breakdown of the proportion that is spent on walking and cycling."

Draft Answer

The table below provides Highways Maintenance spend / budget for the last 5 years (budget for 2017/18). The figures relate to Highways maintenance and as well as core maintenance spend, includes some projects such as flood risk projects, Driving Home etc).

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Notes
Highways core spend (£m)	21.90	24.20	23.70	31.20	38.70	Figures for 2016/18 and 2018/19 include Driving Home Programme 2017/18 increase also due to Flood Risk Schemes and NPIF
Footways (£m)	1.66	1.76	2.49	3.51	4.00	Figure for 2017/18 is an estimate
PROW (£m)	0.40	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.38	Public Rights of Way
Walking & Cycling (£m)	0.59	0.47	0.33	0.22	0.67	Estimates for walking and cycling only projects
<i>Sub Total - Walking & Cycling (£m)</i>	<i>2.65</i>	<i>2.62</i>	<i>3.20</i>	<i>4.12</i>	<i>5.05</i>	<i>Sub Total for Walking & Cycling includes Footways, PROW and other Walking / Cycling spend.</i>
TOTAL (£m)	24.55	26.82	26.90	35.32	43.75	
TOTAL (£k)	24,553	26,820	26,902	35,320	43,747	
Population	566,169	566,169	566,169	566,169	566,169	Based on 2011 Census data for Worcestershire
Spend per head (£)	43.37	47.37	47.52	62.38	77.27	

The trend is positive showing:

- an increased investment per head of population; and
- an increase in the investment in walking and cycling.;
- investment in walking in cycling is over 11% of the total. An amount that has nearly doubled in the past 5 years to over £5m this year
- The number of cycling/walking schemes delivered were as follows 18 in 2012/13, 21 in 2013/14, 23 in 2014/15, 20 in 2015/16, 15 in 2016/17 and 20 schemes underway this year

The figures do not include spend on major infrastructure projects or public realm schemes, e.g. Hoobrook Link Road, Southern Link Road.

The Council has launched a programme of footway improvements totalling £6m which will give 50 extra miles of pavement. An additional £3.4m of funding had been received from the Government specifically for cycling and walking in Bromsgrove.

QUESTION 3 – Mr P M McDonald will ask Ken Pollock:

"Would the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure agree with me that the actions of Network Rail in reneging on the promise to install a lift at Barnt Green Railway Station is a discriminative act and thus a slap in the face for the less able?"

Draft Answer

My understanding is that Network Rail are no longer proposing to install a lift due to funding constraints. However, they remain committed to completing the electrification project which will facilitate improved services from Barnt Green and Bromsgrove. Nevertheless, I too would like to see improved access at the station and I have asked Network Rail to provide me with a briefing on what might be possible.

Supplementary Question

The Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure would write to Network Rail to get a more precise date for the installation of a lift at Barnt Green Railway Station.

QUESTION 4 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Alan Amos:

"Can the Cabinet Member for Highways confirm if he will consider 20MPH speed limits in certain built up residential areas. If so, would he consider the Smallwood area in Redditch for such a trial?"

Draft Answer

This is a current issue, and I am pleased to say that a trial in Rubery has recently been concluded that will inform potential revisions to the Councils position with regard to pursuing reduced speed limits such as 20mph speed limits.

The analysis of the Rubery trial has been completed and a draft report on our position is almost complete and the conclusion would be studied. I understand that Smallwood consists of primarily Victorian terraced properties with lots of parking limiting the carriageway width and deterring speeding. Before considering the area further I need to investigate the level of accidents to understand the extent of any issues requiring the implementation of a 20mph speed limit.

Another factor is the role of the Police in enforcement. My understanding is that the Police will not enforce 20mph speed limits. However if they have changed their position or considering changing their position then I would certainly take that into account as well.

The issue of 20mph speed limits is a question of practicality not principal. It is a question of whether 20mph speed limits in any area make a difference to road safety or not.

Supplementary Question

The Cabinet Member for Highways undertook to check whether police will enforce 20 mph speed limits.

QUESTION 5 – Mr R M Udall will ask Alan Amos:

"Can the Cabinet Member for Highways outline his priorities for the year ahead?"

Draft Answer

I thank Cllr Udall for his question. I'll be delighted to.

1. Firstly, there was an internal issue of the communications system between Highways and Members and Highways and the general public not being fit for purpose. So, Members will have received my e-mail yesterday outlining a brand new system in which we have taken back Highways enquiries/casework from the Hub to a dedicated team of experienced and knowledgeable highways officers who will speak to people and deal with any complex or routine issue. No more do-not-reply e-mails; no more calls/e-mails not being answered; and no more matters not being actioned to resolution.
2. To develop and reinforce one of our most valuable and valued assets, namely our team of Liaison Engineers by providing one for every District. We now have a full complement of 6 helping Members to get things done.
3. To keep traffic and people moving and businesses open by attacking the problem of congestion on our roads, using the extra £5m Congestion Fund we have put in the budget which has now also levered in an additional extra £6.6m for schemes in Bromsgrove and Worcester.

4. Using traffic light management to address our congestion hotspots and there'll be an announcement shortly about that for Worcester City.
5. To increase our road capacity by building more roads and making better use of existing capacity
6. To adopt a much more vigorous approach to utility roadwork overruns and delays by imposing the maximum fines possible and naming and shaming the offenders, and by extending the permit system to unclassified roads and using the extra income to employ more inspectors.
7. Get the condition of our roads and footways up into the top quarter best in the country, and we're virtually there.
8. To implement a public realm scheme in St John's Neighbourhood Shopping Centre to make it more attractive to business via improvements to the pavements and other public areas.
9. Encourage greater bus use by e.g. introducing a proper real-time bus information system so passengers can have more reliable services.

Supplementary Question

The Cabinet Member for Highways undertook to consider including cycleways in his list of priorities in particular issues surrounding the interaction between cyclists and pedestrians.

QUESTION 6 – Mrs J A Brunner will ask Adrian Hardman:

"Could the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care please inform this council how the pilot work undertaken by Social Workers entitled 'The Three Conversation model' has progressed in Redditch?"

Draft Answer

The 3 conversation model looks to work with individuals to help them achieve greater independence by focussing on their strengths, networks and services in their neighbourhoods. They achieve this by having better, more in-depth conversations with more people that request our support. Redditch Central was one of the two initial innovation sites and has been using this approach since the 24 April 2017. The emerging evidence to date from this approach has demonstrated a very positive impact with positive feedback from members of the public, partner agencies and the social work staff. It has shown that people are being contacted by the right person quickly and they are able to discuss their needs with one person and then have continued support until it is the right time to disengage. They are receiving timely support in a crisis and then we are able to talk to people to try and avoid these things happening again in the future. People are being given advice and support regarding things in their local communities and we are able to focus more time on conversations with people than completing assessments and recording on computers. This approach also results in less requirements for ongoing long-term support.

Supplementary Question

Adult Services are committed to rolling out the Three Conversation Model throughout Worcestershire following a period of innovation in Redditch Central, Pershore and Upton. Redditch South have just completed a 4 week preparatory piece of work and have gone live on the 6th November 2017. We are delighted that more adults will receive support delivered in the same way really focussing on their strengths. A number of other teams have now started or will start soon including the additional social workers in the acute hospitals that will help deal with winter pressures. It is important that the staff receive sufficient support to

roll-out this new way of working in a robust and careful way. We expect all of Worcestershire to benefit from this new approach in the Spring of 2018.

QUESTION 7 – Mr P Denham will ask Andy Roberts:

"Is the Cabinet Member for Children and Families aware that all the special needs and looked after children who attend The Riversides School building at Spring Gardens, Worcester, in my division, were denied access to their school on 9 October? The reason these children missed their education on that date was because an internal wall was in a dangerous condition, close to collapse.

I made the Cabinet Member aware of the total unsuitability of this building at our Council meeting in a motion on 13 July, which requested you to check for yourself whether the premises were fit for their purpose. All Conservative councillors inexplicably voted against the motion.

Now that we know that this building is not only unsuitable to continue as a school, but it is also dangerous to health and safety, what assurances can he give us that urgent action will be taken to permanently rehouse these students?"

Draft Answer

Officers in the Council were made aware of the issue at Riverside by the Academy Trust. The school was closed for one day. Council staff confirmed that Place Partnership Ltd were working with the school to rectify the issue in the short-term and to identify a long-term solution. The priority is ensuring the safeguarding of all users of the site and that the children and young people continue to achieve their full potential in education. Matt Greenhalgh, SEND Group Manager carried out a visit to Riverside to ensure that children's educational needs were being met. The Virtual Head Teacher Gwen Fennell has advised me that she is satisfied that the Looked After Children at Riversides are having all their educational needs met. Any individual concerns would be highlighted through the Personal Education plan (PEP) and Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process and escalated and resolved accordingly.

Place Partnership has provided advice to the school that there is no immediate risk to the building but further remedial works should be undertaken quickly. Some of the works may impact on the operation of the school and they were advised that they may wish to consider such works during the holiday. No further instruction has been received from the school for Place Partnership to arrange for any works to be undertaken.

Riverside School in Worcester is an academy and part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). As such, the school is not under our control. Funding for the maintenance of the condition of the building goes direct to the Advance Academy Trust from the Education Funding Agency.

The Council receives no grant funding that could be used to support Riverside to move into a new building. As is the case with all academies, should the Academy Trust feel Riverside School needs new accommodation they would need to make a business case direct to the Education Funding Agency, who manage the funding for academies.

Supplementary Question

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families would liaise with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to see if any alternative premises could be found for the Riversides School.