

Council**Thursday, 13 September 2018, County Hall, Worcester -
10.00 am****Minutes****Present:**

Mr B Clayton (Chairman), Mr A A J Adams,
Mr R C Adams, Ms P Agar, Mr A T Amos, Mr T Baker-
Price, Mr R W Banks, Mr C J Bloore, Mr G R Brookes,
Mrs J A Brunner, Mr P Denham, Ms R L Dent,
Mr N Desmond, Mrs E A Eyre, Mr A Fry,
Mr S E Geraghty, Mr P Grove, Mr I D Hardiman,
Mr A I Hardman, Mr P B Harrison, Mr M J Hart,
Ms P A Hill, Mrs A T Hingley, Mrs L C Hodgson,
Dr A J Hopkins, Dr C Hotham, Mr M E Jenkins,
Mr A D Kent, Mr R C Lunn, Mr P M McDonald,
Mr S J Mackay, Mr L C R Mallett, Ms K J May,
Mr A P Miller, Mr J A D O'Donnell, Mrs F M Oborski,
Ms T L Onslow, Dr K A Pollock, Mrs J A Potter,
Prof J W Raine, Mr A C Roberts, Mr C Rogers,
Mr J H Smith, Ms C M Stalker, Mr R P Tomlinson,
Mrs E B Tucker, Mr P A Tuthill, Mr R M Udall, Ms R Vale,
Ms S A Webb and Mr T A L Wells

Available papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. 7 questions submitted to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (previously circulated); and
- C. The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2018 (previously circulated).

**2020 Apologies and
Declaration of
Interests
(Agenda item 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Bennett, Mr R J Morris, Mr P Middlebrough, Mrs M A Rayner, Mr A Stafford, and Mr C B Taylor.

An apology for being late was received from Mr C Rogers.

**2021 Public
Participation
(Agenda item 2)**

Mr Slezakowski presented a petition urging the Council to review its decision and grant a traffic management permit to the contractor to build the footpaths and a bus stop for Choules Close, Pershore.

Ms Bond, Chair of the Worcester bus users' forum, made comment and asked a question in relation to the public

		transport infrastructure.
		Ms Daffin made comment on recent changes to bus services in Welland.
		The Chairman thanked all the public participants for their contribution and said they would receive a written reply from the relevant Cabinet Member.
2022	Minutes (Agenda item 3)	RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
2023	Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 4)	Noted.
2024	Reports of Cabinet (Agenda item 5)	<p>The Leader of the Council reported the following topics and questions were answered on them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The establishment of the Worcestershire wholly owned Council Company for Children's Social Care (Worcestershire Children First) • Children's Social Care Services Improvement Plan • Future Provision of Overnight Unit-based Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities • Joint Local Area SEND Inspection – Local Area Action Plan • A38 Bromsgrove Major Scheme • Minerals and Waste Local Development Scheme.
2025	Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 1 - Bus and Community Transport Provision (Agenda item 6)	<p>The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Prof J W Raine, Mrs F M Oborski and Mrs E B Tucker.</p> <p>The motion was moved by Mrs E B Tucker and seconded by Prof J W Raine who both spoke in favour of it.</p> <p>The Council agreed to deal with the motion on the day.</p> <p>In the debate, the following principal points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An urgent cross-party scrutiny exercise was required to address public transport issues and to help officers and the Cabinet Member get the best service possible from the available funding. Particular focus should be on those residents with no alternative transport and to avoid social isolation. The scrutiny should both feed into the budget process and find longer term solutions

- The Council did not work collaboratively with local bus companies or understand passenger needs, had not reduced car usage, congestion and air pollution, and had not spent the available £1.8 wisely. Further cuts to services were due next week despite investment in bus shelters and dropped kerbs. Local councillors had not been informed of timetable changes until the last minute. A petition was submitted asking for the reversal of the decision to change bus services in South Worcestershire
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways thanked all members who attended the meeting on 13 August with the Managing Director of First Bus in relation to timetable changes and proposals to increase future bus use. He accepted the Notice of Motion on behalf of the administration. The Council was a bus-friendly authority with buses seen as an alternative to car usage. However the Council did not have the funds to replace lost bus services. He accepted that there was no alternative for some people and the potential for social isolation, particularly for the elderly. He wanted to provide a stable foundation for buses services, planned and co-ordinated with other forms of transport including a network of community and voluntary transport. Therefore a review had already been commissioned together with a public consultation exercise. The review should take 6 months to complete. He thanked the transport team for their work in mitigating the impact of the reduction of bus services and members for submitting comments on behalf of local residents. He was concerned about the impact on officer-time of this scrutiny exercise taking place in parallel with the review
- An important function of scrutiny was policy development therefore this scrutiny exercise could work effectively in tandem with the bus services review
- There were only four bus providers in the county which left the Council in a poor bargaining position
- There were cuts proposed for the no. 2 service through Habberley, Kidderminster for which the Council had refused to fund a replacement service. For urban areas of this nature, community services were not an appropriate alternative option
- It was important that scrutiny received the requisite officer support to enable it to do its work effectively and make the right recommendations

- reflecting the needs of bus users in the county
- The Council had made a political decision to cut subsidies to bus services which had led to a reduction in the number of passenger journeys in the county. Commercial bus companies were only interested in running services that were profitable and the Council had even less influence over those decisions
- A closure motion was moved and seconded. The Chairman was satisfied that sufficient debate had taken place and the closure motion was put to the vote and agreed.

On being put to the vote, the motion was unanimously agreed.

Council RESOLVED "The Council is concerned at the unexpected cuts in bus services announced by First and Diamond bus companies in August which take effect on 17 and 3 September respectively.

We welcome the undertaking that the Council will carry out a fundamental review of its entire subsidised services which will involve a public consultation exercise.

We ask that this review is supported by an urgent cross-party scrutiny into current bus and community transport provision which should include the availability of transport at crucial times of the day to get to work, to school or college, to medical appointments and for shopping. The scrutiny exercise should be completed by middle/late November to feed into the 2019/20 budget-setting process."

2026 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 2 - County Bus Services (Agenda item 6)

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Mr R C Lunn, Mr P Denham, Mr P M McDonald, Mr R M Udall, Ms P Agar and Ms C M Stalker.

The motion was moved by Mr R C Lunn and seconded by Mr P Denham who both spoke in favour of it.

The Council agreed to deal with the motion on the day.

In the debate, the following principal points were raised:

- The aim of the Notice of Motion was to increase bus usage and thereby encourage bus companies to extend service provision. There were examples

elsewhere in the country where bus services operated successfully, for example the Channel Islands. There was no reason why this Council could not learn from such examples. The Council should consider: asking bus companies to put on more services at peak work-related times; encourage smaller bus companies to take up routes; provide help/expertise to bus companies to run on time; unblock obstacles on urban routes; and encourage bus companies to listen to users

- Unless car drivers were encouraged to use buses, service provision would continue to decline. Reducing subsidies did not make economic sense as it led to increased car usage and associated congestion and pollution. This Council needed to help bus companies run better services by unblocking bus lanes and improve marketing and communications
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways accepted the motion on behalf of the administration. The Council had a good relationship with First Bus and consequently the no 30 and 35 bus services had been reprieved. A first class bus service was expected from all bus operators. The Council was already improving reliability and marketing, providing real-time information, removing parking and bus lane obstacles, addressing issues with utility companies, introducing traffic lights management and a congestion programme, co-ordinating bus timetables/schedules and integrating them with train timetables, and providing greater ticket flexibility. The school run was a particular obstacle and parents should be encouraged to walk their children to school
- This Council should act as a "critical friend" for bus users. Bus company operational matters seemed to be prioritised over customer needs
- Congestion led to incremental loss of time which led to reduced services and thereby reduced confidence in bus services as a whole, resulting in the erosion of the bus network
- Some parents were unable to walk children to school because of work commitments
- Overall bus services in the county were really poor. In particular, bus provision in the north of the county was unreliable with buses prone to break-down.

On being put to the vote, the motion was unanimously agreed.

2027 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 3 - Nitrous oxide abuse (Agenda item 6)

Council RESOLVED "Council calls on the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways to consider presenting a report to Cabinet, which should include a series of proposals to improve usage, reduce fares and remove some of the main obstacles that slow down buses.

As the County Council are unfortunately not allowed by Government legislation to run its own bus services, we are keen to encourage more people to use the services in the county as this is the best antidote to further service cuts.

We also urge the Cabinet Member to constantly request the very highest standards of service from the county's bus providers and to consider providing an annual report to Cabinet on the relationship between the Council and bus providers and on ways he can encourage and improve the public transport service within the county"

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Mr P M McDonald, Ms P Agar, Mr R M Udall, Mr R C Lunn, Mr P Denham and Ms C M Stalker.

The motion was moved by Mr P M McDonald and seconded by Ms P Agar who both spoke in favour of it.

The Council agreed to deal with the motion on the day.

The following amendment replacing the last paragraph of the motion was moved by Mrs L C Hodgson and accepted by the mover and seconder of the motion which therefore became part of the substantive motion as altered:

"Therefore, this Council calls upon Trading Standards and other partners to consider ways of increasing the awareness of the dangers of this product to rid our streets of this hippy crack."

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

- There was evidence that anti-social behaviour had been linked to the use of nitrous oxide which had become a significant concern. Cuts to the Trading Standards service had contributed to the increase in use. Trading Standards needed to liaise with

partner organisations to take appropriate action now

- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and that this was not just a matter for Trading Standards but also partner agencies including the Police, district councils and the NHS. The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 included reference to nitrous oxide but did not give any specific formal powers to the Council. Trading Standards were keen for people to contact them to provide a greater understanding of the issue
- Currently the possession of nitrous oxide was not an offence because there were legitimate reasons to possess it. However it was illegal to supply it or import it for human consumption. Although there had been no deaths in the West Mercia region last year, crimes had been reported associated with its use
- A clear message should be sent to the Government that neighbourhood policing was the most effective method of dealing with substance abuse and reductions to this service were undermining this work
- The reductions in youth service provision had had an impact on the ability to gather information about levels of abuse in local communities.

On being put to the vote, the substantive motion was unanimously agreed.

Council RESOLVED "Used gas canisters are increasingly littering our streets as the use of nitrous oxide spreads across the county.

Nitrous oxide, laughing gas or hippy crack is among the latest illicit substances to hit our streets. Nitrous oxide is a colourless gas that when inhaled can make people feel euphoric and relaxed.

The effects of the gas have seen it nicknamed "laughing gas", but it can also cause some people to have hallucinations. The effects are caused by the drug slowing down the brain. Nitrous oxide is normally bought in pressurised canisters. It is then transferred to a container such as a balloon to be inhaled.

It is extremely dangerous: It can cause dizziness and affect your judgement, creating a risk of accidents. In large quantities it can also cause the user to faint or

2028 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 4 - Domestic abuse (Agenda item 6)

pass out. If nitrous oxide is inhaled through the mouth from a pressurised gas canister or in a confined space it can cause sudden death through lack of oxygen. Heavy, regular use of the drug can cause a deficiency of vitamin B12 and a form of anaemia.

Yet it is illegal to sell it for the purpose young people are using it for and action needs to be taken now before we see young people's health damaged for life and even fatalities.

Therefore, this Council calls upon Trading Standards and other partners to consider ways of increasing the awareness of the dangers of this product to rid our streets of this hippy crack."

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Mr R M Udall, Ms C M Stalker, Mr P Denham, Mr R C Lunn, Mr P M McDonald and Ms P Agar.

The motion was moved by Mr R M Udall and seconded by Ms C Stalker who both spoke in favour of it.

The Council agreed to deal with the motion on the day.

Those in favour of the motion made the following comments:

- This motion would not only protect the Council's employees but enable this Council to show leadership and an example to other employers in the county. The current policy of allowing 5 days compassionate leave at the discretion of the relevant Director or to use sick leave was insufficient. The proposed 10 days paid leave would boost employee confidence and provide financial security
- Lack of self-esteem and confidence was a major factor affecting victims and anything that could help them in these circumstances was vital
- The flexibility of the current arrangements meant that approval was discretionary and not a right. The three main concerns of victims were housing, finances and health and each of these factors needed time resolve. In some cases, there was the need to protect children
- It was surprising that the administration was unwilling to support this motion. It was the right to receive this leave that was important, giving

employment protection rather than relying on the discretion of managers. Only a small number of employees would be affected by this right and therefore the financial impact would be minimal.

Those against the motion made the following comments:

- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning commented that the Council had committed to a pledge against domestic abuse and sexual violence. The Council had a range of policies to support employees with time-off with pay including up to 7 days special leave. The Council's current policy framework was flexible and could be utilised to support employees experiencing domestic abuse beyond the 7 days. Employees were encouraged to disclose issues to line managers who could respond flexibly to requests for time off and seek approval for special leave. Given this flexible approach, the notice of motion was unnecessary
- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families argued that this motion was flawed because it sought to make the victim suffer whilst the perpetrator was left untouched.

On a named vote, the motion was lost.

Those voting in favour were:

Ms P Agar, Mr C J Bloore, Mr P Denham, Mr A Fry, Mr M E Jenkins, Mr R C Lunn, Mr P M McDonald, Mr L C R Mallett, Mrs F M Oborski, Prof J W Raine, Ms C M Stalker, Mrs E B Tucker, Mr R M Udall (13)

Those voting against were:

Mr B Clayton, Mr A A J Adams, Mr R C Adams, Mr A T Amos, Mr T Baker-Price, Mr R W Banks, Mr G R Brookes, Mrs J A Brunner, Ms R L Dent, Mr N Desmond, Mrs E A Eyre, Mr S E Geraghty, Mr P Grove, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr A I Hardman, Mr P B Harrison, Mr M J Hart, Mrs A T Hingley, Mrs L C Hodgson, Dr A J Hopkins, Mr A D Kent, Mr S M Mackay, Ms K J May, Mr A P Miller, Mr J A D O'Donnell, Dr K A Pollock, Mrs J A Potter, Mr A C Roberts, Mr C Rogers, Mr J H Smith, Mr R P Tomlinson, Mr P A Tuthill, Ms R Vale, Ms S A Webb. (34)

Those abstaining were:

Dr C Hotham. (1)

2029 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 5 - Adult Social Care - Green Paper (Agenda item 6)

There was insufficient time to consider this motion within the allotted 90 minute time limit for the consideration of Notices of Motion.

A procedural motion to grant a maximum of 20 additional minutes to consider Notice of Motion 5 was lost.

2030 Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility - Cabinet Member for Children and Families (Agenda item 7)

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families presented his report which concerned a number of overarching issues:

- Service Improvement Plan
- Ofsted
- Early Help
- Troubled Families
- Finance and Human Resources
- Worcestershire Children First
- Corporate Parent (and Corporate Parenting Board)
- Serious Case Reviews
- Children's Centres
- Short Breaks Respite for Children with Disabilities
- Adoption Central England
- Strategic Commitment, Investment and Leadership.

The Cabinet Member answered questions about his report which included the following topics:

- The Family Front Door
- Conflicting advice received from Ofsted and Essex County Council
- Early Help intervention and consistency of service
- Early Help likely outcomes
- Impact of the employment of agency staff on permanent staff retention
- Budget overspend
- Current Children's Centres attendance levels
- Short Breaks consultation sessions with parents/carers groups.

2031 Report of the Cabinet Member with Responsibility -

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills presented his report which concerned a number of overarching issues:

- The Schools Landscape

**Cabinet Member
for Education
and Skills
(Agenda item 7)**

- School Places
- School Funding Issues – General context – High Needs – F40 Group
- Budget
- Babcock Prime Education Services
- Attainment – Key Stage 2/GCSE/Key Stage 4/A level results
- Education and Skills Board
- Virtual Schools
- Worcestershire Schools Forum
- Governors.

The Cabinet Member answered questions about his report which included the following topics:

- School place planning – working with developers
- A school admission appeal for Woodrush High School
- The work of Babcock Prime Education with North Bromsgrove High School leading up to its Ofsted report
- Key Stage 2 SATS results
- The number of applications for school places
- State school selection on faith grounds
- High Needs budget
- Replacement of mobile classrooms
- Shortage of SEN school places
- Sale of Stourminster Special School
- statistical neighbour comparison of the average scaled schools in reading and maths for Key Stage 2 pupils
- Agricultural, farming and horticulture skills shortage and campaign for GCSE in this area
- Key Stage 4 results in the County
- Virtual School celebration event
- percentage of Looked After Children who attended University annually.

**2032 Question Time
(Agenda item 8)**

Seven questions had been received by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The answers are attached in the Appendix.

**2033 Reports of
Committees -
Audit and
Governance
Committee**

The Council received the report of the Audit and Governance Committee containing a summary of the decisions taken.

The Committee Chairman confirmed that the Statement of Accounts 2017/18 had now been signed off by the external auditor on time and with an unqualified opinion.

(Agenda item 9)

He expressed his gratitude for the excellent work of the Council's financial team.

The meeting ended at 1.30pm.

Chairman

COUNCIL 13 SEPTEMBER 2018 - AGENDA ITEM 8 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Mr R M Udall will ask Simon Geraghty:

"Can the Leader of the Council confirm if he is satisfied or has any concerns about staff morale among employees of the County Council?"

Answer

Thank you Richard for your question and the opportunity it gives me to thank staff for the work they do in delivering services and helping us achieve the ambitious plan we have set out for our County, especially in the challenging financial environment in which we all operate.

As part of our commitment to engage with our workforce, we undertake an annual staff survey and this gives employees the chance to voice their opinions anonymously. This helps us track views on a range of issues and these are summarised each year and presented back to the organisation. I'm pleased to note a high response rate of 52% - up from 28% in 2013 – and whilst overall engagement levels were average when compared with the scores of other organisations using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, there were a range of very positive results for wanting to participate in activities to improve my service, good working relationship with colleagues and pride in the work they do. One area I would like to see us improve is in relation to creating a culture that encourages new ideas and solutions.

Alongside the annual staff surveys, we do hold regular staff briefings including those delivered by myself and the Chief Executive, as well as spending time with staff across the organisation to ensure we understand the challenges they face and help address any issues. I am however always open to suggestions as to how we can improve our engagement and ensure staff feel valued.

Supplementary question

In response to a request to support a national campaign to increase the number of public holidays for staff, Simon Geraghty commented that this was a matter for the Government to determine.

QUESTION 2 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Alan Amos:

"Due to the 2017 legislative changes which appear to prohibit County Councils from running their own bus services, can the Cabinet Member tell us what would happen if a bus company withdrew from an area of the county and no other appropriate company wanted to replace them?"

Answer

I thank Cllr Lunn for his question.

The County Council has statutory minimum duties in accordance with Section 63 of the Transport Act 1985. Whilst there is no duty under the Act to provide bus subsidies, the Council does have a duty to consider the public passenger transport needs of its area with specific duties in relation to the elderly and disabled and provide transport arrangements that are appropriate to their needs. If the Council deemed the withdrawal of a service or bus company from an area meant that it had that statutory duty in that area and that no alternative, such as community transport, was available or appropriate and it had been unable to tender that work to a commercial operator, regardless of financial cost (i.e. not being able to afford the cost is not a reasonable excuse) then it may be possible for the Council to operate services for a limited period only until alternative provision can be found.

QUESTION 3 – Mrs A T Hingley will ask Alan Amos:

"What proposals are being put forward to fulfil the statutory duty of WCC to deliver a Public Transport Service to the residents of Habberley Estate (900 properties) in light of the decline in the commercial services delivered by Diamond Buses in Wyre Forest?"

Answer

I thank Mrs Hingley for her question

The Bus Services Act 2017 prohibits Local Authorities from operating their own bus services.

We have considered the implications of the withdrawal of the number 2 from Habberley in relation to the Transport Act 1985. We have assessed the detriment of the changes and this does not contravene our statutory duties. For example, the maximum distance from a discontinued stop to a stop with a regular service is 800m. The area is also currently served by two Community Transport scheme operators that can assist residents who are unable to access public transport due to mobility issues.

I fully understand the concerns raised by Cllr Hingley and I commend her for her hard and persistent work to ensure that a suitable bus provision remains available. Therefore, I am pleased to confirm that officers are currently meeting with interested parties and engaged in serious discussions to find a solution. The negotiations are at a very sensitive stage so it would be unwise of me to comment any further at the moment or give any firm commitment at this point. But, certainly, every effort is being made to bring them to a satisfactory conclusion and I hope there can be an announcement very shortly.

Supplementary question

In response to a request that the matter be treated as a high priority, Alan Amos promised that every effort would be made to find a solution and Mrs Hingley would be kept informed of developments on the provision of a bus service for the residents of Habberley, Kidderminster.

QUESTION 4 – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Lucy Hodgson:

"I am, of course, delighted that a reprieve has been granted to School Crossing Patrols on Zebra Crossings.

We were originally told that ceasing to operate 15 Crossing Patrols would equate to saving £45,000 pa which would seem to imply that each patrol costs £3,000.

Could she please tell us: when the actual cost per Patrol will be available and how long Community Groups will be given to arrange sponsorship?"

Answer

Work is currently taking place on identifying the expected charge for sponsoring a school crossing patrol. This charge will need to cover other on-cost such as the management of staff and their equipment. The charge will therefore be more than just the salary of the Patrol. This work is due to be completed and communicated to schools and relevant community groups by the end of September and a response will be required by the middle of November (16th) so all new arrangements can be formalised by the start of the spring term (January 2019).

Supplementary question

Could the Cabinet Member liaise with the Safer Roads Partnership and possibly the Police and Crime Commissioner to educate motorists about safe driving, particularly outside schools? Lucy Hodgson acknowledged the problem and the suggestion of working with the Safer Roads Partnership. She indicated that work was already taking place to address this issue for example, Operation Lollipop in the Bromsgrove area which involved community guardianship in relation to the behaviour of motorists outside schools.

QUESTION 5 – Mr P M McDonald will ask Karen May:

"Would the relevant Cabinet Member with Responsibility please inform me of the number of temporary and casual workers employed between 2016 and 2017 and the total cost?"

Answer

The Council uses a variety of employment types including permanent, temporary and casual.

During 2016/17, excluding school and permanent staff on secondment, the Council directly employed 295 staff on a temporary contract at an approximate salary cost of £3,273,683. The Council also had 683 Casual Workers registered and approved to be able to work.

The Council is not currently able to split out salary costs for casual workers but the new Mercury functionality across HR and Finance will allow greater insight into this type of spend for the future.

The Cabinet Member with Responsibility is happy discuss with the member the specific nature of his question to provide further information.

QUESTION 6 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Simon Geraghty:

"Can the Leader of the Council set out what risks he sees from the proposed switch in our revenue receipts from central government funding to keeping our local business rates from 2020. Does he perceive this to be dangerous at a time of extreme high street retail pressure?"

Answer

Firstly I would like to thank Robin for his question on an important aspect of our funding.

Business rates account for the second most important element of our funding of the net revenue budget after Council Tax receipts. The Government signalled a move towards the localisation of Business Rates some while ago with an initial aim of moving towards 100% retention now revised to 75%. In principle policies that incentivise Councils to focus on economic as well as housing growth is in my view a good move. In Worcestershire we have worked with our LEP to develop an ambitious Strategic Economic Plan and secure

significant funding for projects on the back of that plan to improve our infrastructure and help to businesses to grow. We now have one of the fastest growing local economies in the country so anything which links economic growth to our funding should in theory be a good thing.

However, the details of how the changes to Business Rates will operate are still unclear especially as in a two tier environment where tier split will be an important aspect and a revised Funding Formula will be needed to distribute the remaining monies. That is why we are working with CCN and the Society of County Treasurers to make the case for Counties and the vital role we perform both in delivering demand led services and supporting economic growth through our economic and transport roles. Until the details of the new Funding Formula are published and the precise nature of how the new 75% Business Rates retention will operate are known it is difficult to assess the benefits and risks. However, we will continue to lobby on this issue and I would be more than willing to engage with Robin and other group leaders on this work.

In terms of the impact of localisation of Business Rates on the high Street, as the current plans do not include changes to the actual rates paid by businesses the current plans are unlikely to have any direct effect on businesses. If such changes were proposed this would be a separate matter from the current debate around how the income is divided up.

Supplementary question

Would the Leader support the idea of a pilot project nationally to see how the revenue receipts funding process would work in practice and for the Government to introduce a tapered safety net? Simon Geraghty responded that the Council had submitted an application to take part in the Government's business rate pilot scheme. The Council's proposition (with the support of district councils) was to pool some of the gains through the 75% proposition to support Adult Social Care. This depended on the bid being successful this year.

QUESTION 7 – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Marcus Hart:

"Last term there was a predicted shortfall in the County in Special School Places for this term. Can the Cabinet Member please tell me: How many pupils with EHC Plans were without appropriate in County SEND School places on the first day of term this September? How many have had to be placed out of County? How many are without any school place at all?"

Answer

Six children did not have a school place on the first day of term, of which three moved into the County in the latter half of the summer term or in the holiday period. There is a plan for each of the six children that is being actively progressed by officers, in each case an alternative is available.

There have been 19 new out of county placements for September in non-maintained and independent special schools and 20 new placements in independent specialist colleges. There are 173 out of county education placements.