

COUNCIL 12 JANUARY 2017 - AGENDA ITEM 12 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Mr M McDonald will ask Mrs S Blagg:

"Would the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care please inform me the number of our residents receiving Meals on Wheels in year 2013, 2014 and 2015"

Answer

Figures that we have recorded on Frameworki for people with a purchased meals service in place are as follows:

- 2013 – 500
- 2014 – 225
- 2015 – 49

The data is only relevant to our eligible service users and does not include all residents across the County. Eligible users cover approximately 1.5% of the Worcestershire population.

QUESTION 2 – Mr P McDonald will ask Mrs L Hodgson:

"Would the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Localism and Communities please inform me the number of people sleeping rough in Worcestershire in the year 2014, 2015 and 2016?"

Answer

Thank you Councillor McDonald for your question. As I am sure you are aware it is the District Councils who have the statutory responsibility for homelessness provision. It is the districts who carry the annual count of rough sleepers. So that I can give you an answer I have contacted the districts and they have provided the following information:-

District	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Percentage Difference 2014/2015	2016
Bromsgrove	7	3	3	1	3	4	+25%	2
Malvern Hills	4	3	6	2	3	4	+25%	1
Redditch	1	3	3	2	3	0	-100%	5
Worcester	7	17	34	21	22	27	+19%	10
Wychavon	14	14	6	12	8	1	-88%	2
Wyre Forest	7	1	9	8	5	5		1
England	1,768	2181	2309	2414	2744	3599	+30%	
Worcs Total	40	41	61	46	44	41	-7%	21

The increase in rough sleeping has not been uniform across Worcestershire with both increases and decreases seen across the 5 years in individual districts. The total numbers of rough sleepers in Worcestershire has remained fairly static in the low to mid 40's with a

considerable spike in 2012. The annually required count has been undertaken for 2016 which has seen a significant decrease in numbers for Worcestershire and Worcester City but this information has to be verified before release by the Department of Communities and Local Government during January 2017.

There are a number of County Wide partnerships that work to together to look at the homelessness and the prevention of this is managed and this is where the county council may have an involvement.

- Worcestershire Strategic partnership – made up of CCG reps, 1 north and 1 south district rep, county council reps from Adults, children's and public health, DWP
- Worcestershire Strategic housing group made up of district housing officers and sets the county wide strategic and joint working and contracts
- Worcestershire Homeless Health Group

Where possible Homelessness prevention is managed county wide with many joint funding streams and projects and joint contracts to maximise the funding available and is coordinated with the groups mentioned above and include:-

- Rough Sleeper Entrenchment – partners work together to look at cases to see how they can work together to create a plan to take people of the streets, real evidence of success.
- Severe Weather protocol – this year been open 9 days with 56 stays. This is based on 3 nights or more where the temperature drops below a certain level and is run by CCP who will notify partners and located at Maggs day centre.
- There is a budget of £326k for use for providing temporary accommodation this has a 95% recovery of costs from housing benefits
- There was a recent announcement from DCLG of funding for rough sleepers and helping to develop no first night out. This will pay for a member of staff for each LA to identify those at risk and offer early intervention working with partners.

Support and help is also given to care leavers with pathway workers working with them to ensure they are housed properly.

QUESTION 3 – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Mr M Bayliss:

"Could the Cabinet Member for Children and Families tell me:

- a) The Location, number of staff and maximum Pupil Capacity of each MET Base?*
- b) How effective is each MET provision, by site? i.e in terms of pupil progress, value added, GCSE pass rates and achievement of 'pupil premium' pupils;*
- c) If young people can not access mainstream post 16 provision where do they go?*
- d) Which specific types of illness have resulted in young people needing MET intervention in the last two years?*
- e) What percentage of young people make a permanent transition back to mainstream school after MET intervention?*
- f) What are the inspection arrangements for MET Units?"*

Answer

(a) There are 3 bases – Worcester, Kidderminster, Redditch. Five/six staff per unit. This is a demand led service and numbers fluctuate over the year.

Some pupils attend the base and some receive home tuition, depending on individual need.

Pupil numbers have been as follows:

- 2010-11 =152
- 2011-12=184
- 2012-13=177
- 2014-15=132
- 2015-2016=137

(b) Results across all three units are comparable

For 2015/2016

5+ GCSEs		47%
Eng Lang	A* - C	47%
	D - G	53%
Eng Lit	A* - C	73%
	D - G	24%
Maths	A* - C	53%
	D - G	43%
Science	A* - C	50%
	D - G	50%
Additional Science	A* - C	79%
	D - G	17%

These results have to be placed in the context that for some students there are significant periods of absence prior to attending the MET units.

(c) Since the SEND reforms there is a duty to provide education for learners with special needs up to the age of 25, although this is not provided in the MET. The county has some post 19 special school provision, and is working with colleges to further develop this provision. In some cases it may be appropriate for education to be provided outside of the county.

(d) This is very varied but examples include – Mental health (anxiety, depression, body dysmorphic), Anorexia, Suicidal tendencies, ME, broken legs, spinal surgery, Cancer/chemotherapy. In addition, a number of pupils have a diagnosis (or are awaiting a diagnosis) of ASD and their access to school is affected by their SEN

(e) This is totally dependent on the year group the students belong to – the aim is for 100% of the students to return to mainstream. 100% KS2 return, approx. 80 – 90% of KS3 return to mainstream and the remainder go to specialist provision. KS4 Yr. 11 tend not to transition back unless they attended the MET for a physical condition.

(f) The MET bases complete their own self-evaluation, but are not subject to external inspection from Ofsted. This is not registered school provision, nor is it an SEN provision.

QUESTION 4 – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Mr M Hart:

"In February 2003, as a District Cllr for the then Sutton Park Ward of Wyre Forest DC, you presented a 2,000 signature petition to the Wyre Forest Highways Partnership Forum calling for either traffic lights or a roundabout to be installed at the Bewdley Hill/Sutton Park Road junction. You are quoted in the Kidderminster Shuttle as saying that, whilst you felt that £500,000 for a roundabout was probably unachievable, £50,000 for traffic lights could probably be found at County Hall. The LTP4 Consultation Document describes the A456 Bewdley Hill as a Key Corridor for Improvement. Will the installation of either traffic lights or

a roundabout at this dangerous junction be part of the improvements planned for this Key Corridor?"

Answer

Thank you for taking such a keen interest in my St John's Division Cllr Oborski!

I raised this very junction at a meeting I had with the Director just prior to Christmas when I indicated that this is the type of scheme I would like to see benefit from our £5 million congestion fund. I will also be ensuring that this scheme is considered as part of LTP4, but I fully support junction improvements, preferably traffic lights at this location and will continue to make the case as such.

QUESTION 5 – Mr T A L Wells will ask Dr K Pollock:

"Could the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure inform me which rail operators have formally stated they will use the new Worcestershire Parkway station?"

Answer

Great Western Railway and CrossCountry have both formally confirmed that they will serve the new Worcestershire Parkway station from the timetable change immediately following the date the station is open for public use, subject to finalising commercial agreements. As per normal industry practice, for both operators this commitment is conditional upon the rail industry timetable development process over the next 18 months confirming the current assumptions in respect of the impact on network capacity, connections and performance.

QUESTION 6 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Mr M Hart:

"Could the Cabinet Member responsible for Highways confirm the cost of Speed Activated Signs, and how much the cost has risen in the last 12 months?"

Answer

Mobile Vehicle Activated signs supplied by Westcotec cost as follows:

In 2016 (October): £2,925.00

In 2015 (October): £2,625.00

QUESTION 7 – Mr R M Udall will ask Mr S Geraghty:

"Will the Leader of the Council instigate emergency discussions with the ASHA Women's House Group to investigate how the County Council can help, with the use of balances, to help prevent closure. The ASHA House Group provides essential help and support to families across the county; its closure would be devastating and will leave vulnerable families and children with reduced support. Will he work with the Group and other agencies to secure funding which will enable their work to continue?"

Answer

Firstly can I thank Richard for his question.

We are aware of the work delivered through the ASHA centre, and along with other Voluntary Sector Organisations they have delivered various services to Worcestershire residents, that are funded from multiple sources.

As a commissioning authority, we commission services through an open and transparent process and actively engage with all sectors through our market engagement activities. Through our ongoing work with colleagues in the Voluntary Sector, we are ensuring that all Voluntary and Community Sector organisations are fully aware of our commissioning intentions, and ASHA along with other organisations would have had and would continue to have opportunities to tender for appropriate work to their field of expertise.

Whilst acknowledging the good work ASHA have done, I do not feel it would be appropriate at this late stage for the County Council to intervene in the way the member proposes.

QUESTION 8 – Mr R C Lunn will ask Dr K Pollock:

"Can the Cabinet Member for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure explain why in the consultations on the Local Transport Plan, public events have been organised in Malvern, Evesham, Bromsgrove, Kidderminster and Pershore, but not in Redditch? Will he work with Local Members to organise a Redditch based event during February, so that as many Redditch people as possible can take part in person as in the other districts of the county"

Answer

I can confirm that there will be a public consultation event in Redditch on January 26th at the Kingfisher Centre. Unfortunately we did not have confirmation of this at the time of updating the website hence why it was missing off the list. We are also looking to confirm a venue in Worcester City. The public consultation dates are as follows (between 2pm and 4pm):

Evesham – 14 January 2017
Bromsgrove – 17 January 2017
Kidderminster – 19 January 2017
Pershore – 25 January 2017
Redditch – 26 January 2017
Worcester – 30 January 2017

QUESTION 9 – Mr R W Banks will ask Dr Pollock:

"What progress has been made on getting Highways England to improve the A46 as part of the Midland Connect Long Term Transport Plan?"

Answer

Improvements to the A46 in Evesham are very high on the agenda for Highways England, Midlands Connect and Worcestershire County Council. The County Council are active members of a wider stakeholder group, both at an officer and member level, with a remit to pursue the case for improvements along the whole A46 corridor from between the M6/M69 (Coventry), M40 (Warwick) and M5 (Tewkesbury). The stakeholder group includes representatives from:

Highways England
Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership
Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership
GFirst (Gloucestershire) Local Enterprise Partnership
Coventry City Council
Warwickshire County Council

Worcestershire County Council – Adrian Hardman – Vice-Chairman
Gloucestershire County Council - Norman Smith - Chairman
Rugby Borough Council
Warwick District Council
Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Wychavon District Council
Tewkesbury Borough Council
Cheltenham Borough Council

We understand that the A46 Expressway concept is included in the Draft Midlands Connect Strategy to be published in March 2017.

QUESTION 10 – Mr G J Vickery will ask Mr Bayliss:

"Redditch is set to gain a fifth secondary school in 2017. In view of the current under population of at least one of the existing four, in the context of unilateral moves by an Academy to create a two tier system alongside the existing three tier structure, what implications for the future stability of the Redditch provision do you foresee?"

Answer

Tudor Grange Academy Redditch (formerly Kingsley College) altered its age range with effect from September 2016 following an application to the office of the Regional Schools Commissioner. At that time, although a middle school, Ridgeway offered secondary places so there has been secondary age provision in Redditch in five schools since September 2016. This has to an extent been complemented by age range changes in some of the town's first schools to all through primary. The short term impact of this is that there is likely to be over capacity in the town's secondary schools. In the longer term, this will to an extent be offset by demographic growth and the development of new housing, although as yet we are unable to quantify that demand. The transfer of first schools to all through primary schools should safeguard primary education, but there may again be over capacity in the middle schools sector

QUESTION 11 – Mr G J Vickery will ask Mr Bayliss:

"The former Social Services Director of Hackney Council, Sharon Shoesmith, has recently alleged that deaths of children identified as vulnerable by Social Services Authorities in England and Wales as a whole number in their hundreds each year. Would the Cabinet Member for Children and Families comment on the credibility of these statements and give the recent years' statistics for Worcestershire?"

Answer

The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP), under the governance of Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) and chaired by Dr Felix Borchardt, formally reviews the deaths of all children and young people under 18 years of age in Worcestershire. This includes deaths which are expected, for example because a child has a life limiting illness or condition, and those which are unexpected, such as those arising from accidents, suicide and abuse or neglect. The total numbers of child deaths in Worcestershire are relatively low compared with other local authority areas: 37 in 2013/14, 43 in 2014/15 and 38 in 2015/16.

The suggestion by Ms Shoesmith is that there are worryingly high numbers of children dying who have been assessed as vulnerable by social workers. Without further explanation of the term 'vulnerable', however, it is difficult to determine which children she is referring to specifically. The CDOP collates data for the Department of Education on those children who die whilst subject to a Child In Need Plan or Child Protection Plan. Arguably

all of these children are vulnerable to some extent (many of them by virtue of their disabilities or complex needs which are addressed through a Child In Need Plan), but they will not all be at risk from significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect which is very different. The numbers of Worcestershire children who die whilst subject to a Plan are extremely small.

If Members considered it helpful the CDOP could retrieve data on the numbers/percentage of children who have died in Worcestershire whilst being subject to a CIN Plan and/or a CP Plan up to the end of 2015/16. This data is available (but not routinely published) and may not relate specifically to the children being referred to by Ms Shoesmith. The CDOP does not collate data on the numbers of children who were known to Children's Social Care at the time of their death but were not subject to a CIN or CP Plan at the time, such as Looked After Children and those being assessed but not yet subject to a Plan. This information would only be available if a review of all the relevant paperwork pertaining to the death review for each child were to be undertaken manually, a time consuming process but one which could be undertaken if required.

The DFE would have collated data in respect of those children who have died whilst subject to a CIN Plan or CP Plan in England and Wales. This could be requested if considered helpful.

QUESTION 12 – Mr R M Udall will ask Mr Hart:

"Will the Cabinet Member for Highways comment on the relationship between the County Council and First Bus?"

Answer

The County Council and First Bus have a professional working relationship. First Bus is a commercial organisation and is ultimately responsible to its shareholders. I clearly recognise that some of their commercial decisions have had an adverse effect on services in Worcestershire, however in such cases First are working with the County Council to enhance communications and provide some mitigation where possible.

In summary the relationship is functional whilst recognising different corporate aspirations and objectives.

QUESTION 13 – Mr T A L Wells will ask Mr Geraghty:

"Does the Conservative administration have any plans to increase members' allowances in 2017?"

Answer

I thank the member for his question.

The administration has no plans to increase or decrease members' allowances during this Council.