

## **COUNCIL 15 FEBRUARY 2018 - AGENDA ITEM 8 – QUESTION TIME**

**Questions and written responses provided below.**

**QUESTION 1** – Mr P M McDonald will ask Marcus Hart:

*"In light of the notifications of redundancies in the area of career advice for young people and NEET would the Cabinet Member with Responsibility inform me if these services will now be taken back in-house?"*

### **Answer given**

There is currently no intention on behalf of the local authority to bring any of the post-16 team employed by Babcock back into the local authority.

### **Supplementary Question**

In response to a supplementary question, the Cabinet Member commented it was not considered necessary to bring the service in-house because it would duplicate the work already being undertaken by the Council.

**QUESTION 2** – Mr P M McDonald will ask Andy Roberts:

*"Would the Cabinet Member with Responsibility please inform me of the total cost of any increased charges over the last two years by independent foster-care agencies used by this Council?"*

### **Answer given**

We currently have a West Midlands Fostering Framework that has been in place for 2 years with a number of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA). These prices are fixed. Providers do have an opportunity to request an annual uplift, this has not happened for any placements within Worcestershire. Being part of the Framework has generated savings on placements approx. 200k worth of savings were made in 16/17.

Therefore, the answer in short is that there have been no increases in contract prices.

We do use Spot providers, which are off our framework. With these providers we have a price agreed at the point of placement at which time we would raise an Individual Placement Agreement (IPA) agreeing the fee. This is signed by all parties. A provider could potentially increase their fees but these would only impact on future placements, the current placements we have would remain set.

Within our internal fostering placements and some of our external IFA's there are age bandings, which increase as a child gets older. These fees are also set and have not been increased.

**QUESTION 3** – Mr R M Udall will ask Alan Amos:

*"Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways confirm if he has recently visited the Bromyard Road in my St John Division in Worcester?"*

### **Answer given**

I thank Councillor Udall for his question. I am pleased to confirm that I have indeed visited Bromyard Road twice in the last week and always find it very nice to be there as part of it is in my own Division.

#### Supplementary Question

Subject to Mr Udall forwarding the details from a constituent, the Cabinet Member undertook to look into the charge made by Ringway for a footway crossing.

### **QUESTION 4** – Mr R C Lunn will ask Karen May:

*"Can the Cabinet Member inform Council of WCC's involvement with Capita, and the threat posed to our services if the review instigated by Capita's new Chief Executive leads to them withdrawing from certain service areas they are currently involved in?"*

### **Answer given**

We have a number of contracts with Capita PLC and its subsidiaries under the Capita PLC umbrella. Out of these Capita Business Services Ltd (trading as Capita One) is our primary supplier. They also provide the library management system which is named Talis, we are currently out to tender for a replacement to this system. We have been in dialogue with Capita, regarding the services they provide and at the present time they have confirmed these areas are unlikely to be impacted by the review. We will actively continue to monitor this situation.

### **QUESTION 5** – Mr T A L Wells will ask Simon Geraghty:

*"Following an incident relating to a resident in my Division, can the Leader outline what action he intends to take to ensure that photographs are not taken without appropriate consent by services contracted by the Council?"*

### **Answer given**

It is an expectation of the Council that all providers have and follow policies in relation to gaining permission for images to be made, stored or used in whatever form. In this particular case the provider in question did have policies and procedures in place which were not followed. Once this was brought to the Council's attention immediate action was taken. A full investigation was undertaken by the Provider with input from both the Commissioning Unit and the Quality Assurance Team. The Strategic Commissioner for Adult Services has assured me that all appropriate action was taken and that the Provider in question responded appropriately.

#### Supplementary Question

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader undertook to ensure that the policies/procedures relating to the use of images of service users by service providers is robustly followed in the future.

### **QUESTION 6** – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Karen May:

*"Several schools are reporting that keeping track of their budgets and planning for the next financial year are being made extremely difficult due to inaccuracies in financial reports on the Mercury System. Indeed one school has been told by a member of staff who assists them on the telephone to simply ignore what is on Mercury.*

*What steps are being taken to urgently rectify this situation?"*

## **Answer given**

It is very concerning that such issues are still being raised by schools. I appreciate it has been a challenging time and we continue to work with Liberata to ensure that the system and service standard meets both schools and the Local Authority's expectations. Schools have access to a team of finance professionals in Liberata to help resolve their issues. It is therefore disappointing to hear that problems are still being experienced. I can confirm that all concerns raised by schools are escalated through Local Authority officers with an appropriate and satisfactory outcome being sought. If more details are available and in particular, ownership in relation to a school is identified, we should be able to follow up with a greater possibility of satisfaction all round.

### Supplementary Question

Subject to Mrs Oborski forwarding the details to her, the Cabinet Member undertook to look into issues identified by schools in relation to the Mercury Finance System.

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

*"Parents are saying that at EHCPlan Reviews no real effort is being made to ensure Health and Care input as these Reviews appear to be "School led".*

*What steps are being taken to ensure that Reviews really do Review Education, Health and Care?"*

## **Answer given**

Worcestershire County Council, alongside many local authorities supported by statutory guidance adopted a procedure of school led reviews. This has resulted in a situation in Worcestershire and other local authorities of the new Education, Health and Care Planning process becoming an extension of the former statement review. Statements primarily focused on the education needs of a child. To ensure health and social care are fully engaged in the review process a new team around the child meeting is being convened at week 7 of the 20 week review timescale and a joint project with health and social care has commenced to re-design the end to end assessment process. This activity supports the implementation of the SEND Strategy.

### Supplementary Question

Subject to Mrs Oborski forwarding the details to him, the Cabinet Member undertook to look into concerns raised by parents about attendance by health and social care officers at EHCPlan Reviews.