

Council**Thursday, 9 February 2017, County Hall, Worcester****Minutes****1881 Question Time**

Questions asked and answers given at the meeting.

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COUNCIL 9 FEBRUARY 2017 - AGENDA ITEM 7 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

QUESTION 1 – Mr Hardman will ask Mr Hart:

"Would the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways please advise what is the current policy with regard to Mirrors used to warn of traffic approaching a householder's drive where there is a restricted view, placed on either the Highway or private land? The use of these mirrors has grown in recent years, and I have a concern for road users and cyclists"

Answer

WCC have never given authorisation for mirrors opposite private driveways due to the countless numbers of situations where they would be requested as a consequence. In these situations if they are erected on public highway, they should be considered as an illegal object within the Highway and removed, as per our existing policy.

Supplementary Question

In response to a supplementary question Mr Hart responded that on Highways owned land mirrors would be taken down which would negate any liability on behalf of the Council.

QUESTION 2 – Mr P M McDonald will ask Mr Bayliss:

"In the light of this county being unable to secure fair funding for our schools does the Cabinet Member for Children and Families support West Sussex governors writing to MPs to warn they will refuse to carry out their services, including signing off budgets or carrying out supervisory work. The letter says they have been in "shock and incomprehension" about what funding cuts will mean for schools."

Answer

The County Council has been campaigning over a significant number of years for the introduction of Fair Funding for all its schools. This has been in conjunction with all Worcestershire Headteachers and Governors, County Council Members, Worcestershire MPs, the Worcestershire Schools Forum and the F40 Group of local authorities.

As a longstanding and active member of F40, the County Council at both Cabinet Member and Officer Level has played and continues to play a full part in both their Executive Committee and Finance Research Group. This has involved developing a national funding model for Department for Education (DfE) consideration, engaging directly with the DfE and continued challenge on the unfairness and inequity of the current position.

The current DfE proposals are at a consultation stage and not yet Government policy. As such they will be subject to further review, refinement and discussion. Indeed the County Council, as part of its discussions in the F40 group and its own analysis, will be raising particular issues as part of the DfE consultation process particularly on the proposed

national funding formula weightings, the evidence base used for their proposals and the cost pressures being faced by schools.

On the current proposals the illustrations provided by the DfE estimate an increase in the total Dedicated Schools Grant for Schools and High Needs in Year 1 of nearly £6m (+1.7%) rising to nearly £9m (+2.6%) in the full national funding formula. The DfE estimate that nearly 70% of mainstreamed schools in Worcestershire will see an increase in their funding. However, in responding to the proposals, the County Council is currently reviewing and analysing the plethora of information and data provided as part of the Stage 2 consultation. We are working with the Worcestershire Schools Forum and directly with schools in supporting them to respond to the consultation, which closes on 22 March 2017.

The Fair Funding the national debate continues and will be developed further when the DfE analyse the responses they receive and require Local Authorities to implement their actual future policy.

Supplementary Question

In response to a query about what else could be done to address the funding issue Mr Bayliss responded that Councillors should continue to work together to make the case for enhanced resources.

QUESTION 3 – Mr P M McDonald will ask Mrs Blagg:

"In its submission to the Treasury ahead of March's Budget, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (Adass) has urged ministers to deliver £1bn in emergency funding to prop up the social care system. The association argued that more elderly and disabled people would not get the care they need without extra money. Does the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care support Adass request for more funding."

Answer

I understand the call from ADASS for a significant amount of emergency funding, however, Adult Social Care needs proportionate annual funding increases to meet its statutory duty, delivering services to more eligible elderly and disabled people, to ensure that they can lead healthy and independent lives and that care services, Worcestershire now being the second best in the country, remain of high quality.

Other financial challenges brought about by changes to legislation like new duties in the Care Act, the national living wage, transforming care, sleep-ins and deprivation of liberties need sustained central ring fenced funding support to manage into the future. In Worcestershire that further has to be seen in the context of the Council supporting a significantly challenged Health system.

The long-term problems related to eligible social care and universal community care will not be resolved through one off funding or recycled funding, a sustainable solution will have to be found.

QUESTION 4 – Mr R Lunn will ask Mr Smith:

"Does the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Well-being, regret the suggestion made by the North Worcestershire CCG to tighten the criteria for performing replacement Hip and Knee joint surgery? Does he also agree that this does not give a positive view of health provision in Worcestershire, either to local residents or the wider world?"

Answer

'Thank you for your question. It is of course for the NHS to make its own funding decisions, and I am well aware of the financial challenges they face. I do support the making of evidence based decisions which are cost-effective and which aim to maximise the health benefit for the individual within the financial envelope available. This message is one that tells the wider world that Worcestershire is a County where the NHS is doing all it can to strengthen the evidence base in shaping the service offer. We continue to work closely with NHS colleagues to make sure that a system-wide approach informs the work of both the County council and the local NHS

Supplementary Question

In response to a supplementary question Mr Smith responded that the issue would be considered at the next Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Worcestershire was not a special case as other areas had already changed their criteria and the facts were being considered.

QUESTION 5 – Mrs F M Oborski will ask Mr Hart:

"Silverwoods Way (Hoobrook Link Road) is a great success; not only does it provide a much quicker route from eastern Kidderminster towards Stourport but it is also extremely popular both with joggers and cyclists who use it on circuit routes that start and finish at the new Wyre Forest Leisure Centre. Could you explain why the part of the road which forms the bridge over the River Stour and the Canal is the only part without street lighting?"

Answer

Yes lighting the section you refer to was never part of the approved planning consent. This was a deliberate and conscious decision because the area described is a designated wildlife corridor in close proximity to an SSSI.

QUESTION 6 –Mrs F M Oborski will ask Mr Hart:

"When the new Wyre Forest Leisure Centre, on Silverwoods Way, was planned we were told that the intention was to ensure that it was served by a bus service. Could you tell me what progress, if any, has been made in negotiating for the provision of such a bus service?"

Answer

We are advised that Diamond are looking to re-route the 3 service to serve the new leisure centre and to avoid the Stourport road to improve reliability they will however divert the 1 service to Stourport road to serve the stops that will no longer have the 3 service.

The Diamond quid pro quo - they would like some additional stops for the 1 service in areas that may not be suitable for stops we are investigating this. They have suggested unless they can have stops in the areas they wish they may not divert the 3 service via the Leisure Centre.

When we have collated all of the information we will be in further discussions with Diamond.

Supplementary Question

Mr Hart responded to a supplementary question regarding Councillors being kept informed that there had not previously been anything to report but the Local Member had been kept informed.

QUESTION 7 – Mr R M Udall will ask Mr Smith:

"The Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being will recall recommendation 12 of the Increasing Physical Activity Scrutiny Report of May 2016:

Recommendation 12: As part of the development of the Action Plan for Physical Activity, the County Council should carry out a Needs Assessment to establish any 'gaps' between what is needed and what is currently provided. The Needs Assessment should also look to identify what are the barriers to taking part in physical activity.

Can he update Council on progress towards achieving this recommendation?"

Answer

Thank you for this question Cllr Udall. I can assure you that we continue to use our influence to improve participation levels. Since the Scrutiny report in May 2016, we have produced a JSNA briefing on Physical Activity to inform our work. This highlights the underutilisation of green space as well as the low levels of physical activity across the county, although these compare relatively well with comparator authorities. We work closely with the Sports Partnership to support the development of local campaigns and opportunities. We are currently submitting a joint expression of Interest bid to Sports England for new monies to include insight work with a targeted sedentary, population.

Supplementary Question

Mr Smith was sympathetic to the lack of community Rugby pitches and agreed that someone should look at the possibility of asking schools or the University to make their facilities available to the Community.

QUESTION 8 – Mr T A L Wells will ask Mr Hart:

"Who instigated the construction and erection of the Council's promotional signage along the Southern Link and A449? How much did this initiative cost and why were they were all removed last week?"

Answer

Corporately, keeping residents informed about the reasons for our major infrastructure projects that are underway in Worcestershire is really important to us. Signs are one small part of this activity which includes direct engagement with local residents and businesses, media relations and messages shared across the County Council website and our social media channels.

Each sign has cost £139.59 and the total cost of the initiative has been £1,954.26

The signs were always intended to be located temporarily and relocated from time to time. With the progressive changes on the Southern Link Road and imminent works for Worcestershire Parkway, all related signing is being relocated.

QUESTION 9 – Mr R M Udall will ask Mr Hart:

"Can the Cabinet Member for Highways confirm how many new pedestrian crossings will be installed during 2017/18?"

Answer

Currently DE&I are planning to deliver 2 controlled crossings next year (i.e zebra, pelican or toucan). One is in Webheath, Redditch and the other is in Fernhill Heath, Worcester. They are both linked to local schools and are funded through our Integrated Transport Block Settlement connected to the Local Transport Plan. In addition to this, we hope to deliver additional crossings that are funded through S106 agreements linked to new developments. We also plan to deliver up to 15 sets of dropped kerbs with tactile paving and 1 pedestrian refuge with dropped kerbs and tactile paving.

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

"In thanking Cllr. Bayliss for the written answers to my questions at the last meeting, can I ask if your department has any plans to assist or advise middle schools in the south west of the town, which you describe as likely being subjects of over capacity, as to how to prepare for the future impact of the increase in secondary provision and the conversion of first schools to primary?"

Answer

As confirmed previously, legislation permitting schools to change their age range has resulted in additional capacity at secondary level in Redditch. In the case of both Tudor Grange and Ridgeway, as an academy the decision to approve the change rested with the Regional Schools Commissioner, in this instance on the basis that choice of high schools was a parental preference. While these changes will create additional capacity, projected growth in population in Redditch means we will need additional places in the future. Similarly, while first schools may transition to primary status, population growth will absorb some of these places. Middle schools in the town, as elsewhere, are working with the local authority and other appropriate authorities (e.g. the Diocese, Multi Academy Trusts) to ensure effective planning for future pupil places.

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

"Can the Cabinet Member for Highways advise as to what the resources of Fleet Services are to provide temporary or long term fare stage operation, what current use is being made of them and what resources are held in reserve?"

Answer

The vehicular assets to provide public transport i.e. fare stage operation has been reduced as the function is primarily provided by commercial operators.

Fleet do have 6 vehicles that are legally compliant for public transport use. These vehicles are currently used for various public transport operations.

Fleet have 6 vehicles and they are currently being used for:

Public Transport Services

- 16 - Stourport – Bewdley split 50/50 with Rigby Hall School. Wyre Forest District
- 9/9a - Kidderminster- Cookley- Caunsall. Wyre Forest District
- 147 - Catshill-Romsley- Halesowen. Wyre Forest District
- 360- Ryall-Upton upon Severn – Now provided by Community Transport. Malvern District
- 560 - Charlton-Fladbury-Lowermoor. Wychavon District

QUESTION 12 – Mrs E B Tucker will ask Mr Roberts:

"Please list the capital spend and the revenue spend on County Hall buildings and campus, including Wildwood and the Countryside Centre, for each year since 2010/2011 to date. What is the net cost for each year after taking into account rental income from external organisations?"

Answer

The answer is best provided by a spread sheet that I will provide but in summary:

In 2010/11 the total revenue spend was £2,732,000 this has varied by year but was last year £2,609,000 and to date this year is £2,011,000.

Rental income has grown from £308,000 in 2010/11 to £492,000 in 2016/17 and so far this year stands at £1,357,000.

Consequently the net cost position has steadily decreased from £2,424,000 in 2010/11 to £2,117,000 last year and will decrease significantly in the current year – so far the net cost position is only £653,665.

Capital spend has grown from £60,000 in 2010/11 to £249,000 last year, though there has been significant differences between years. This year the capital spend is £47,500 so far (which excludes some significant work done recently on improving reception for customers and the lake which serves as water reserve in case of a fire).

	2016.2017 £ - to date	2015.2016 £	2014.2015 £	2013.2014 £	2012.2013 £	2011.2012 £	2010.2011 £
Revenue Spend in Detail -	Total Campus	Total Campus	Total Campus	Total Campus	Total Campus	Total Campus	Total Campus
Total Revenue Spend	2,011,007	2,609,832	2,659,472	2,786,479	2,725,039	2,879,390	2,732,645
Rental Income external	-1,357,342	-492,698	-304,035	-298,781	-358,311	-335,639	-308,181
Net Cost Position	653,665	2,117,133	2,355,437	2,487,698	2,366,729	2,543,751	2,424,463
Capital Spend	47,550	249,716	952,124	390,228	191,879	10,034	60,055

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