



COUNTY COUNCIL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

17 SEPTEMBER 2015

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COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 17 September 2015

**Question by Jim Wedgbury to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform**

I am concerned that the information given out for obtaining school places is not identical on all forms of electronic devices. Could the Cabinet Member provide an explanation and confirm that this will be corrected before next year's admissions process begins?

Answer

Kent County Council's website uses mobile responsive technology to ensure that it is available regardless of which device is used to access it. While the appearance of the website may change depending on which device is used, the content of each page is consistent for every user. The information provided online for the public is the same, regardless of the device used. Some devices will require the user to scroll around pages to see all the information available. This is a feature of many websites and users will be used to having to scroll to see all relevant content especially when using small devices with a limited screen size.

Mr Wedgbury can be assured the information provided on our website is identical regardless of device, however the way it is displayed on different devices is outside of our control. Consequently we cannot guarantee users will view all the content when seeking information on school admissions, just as we could not guarantee that all the content of the admissions booklet was viewed when it was produced in paper form. We do however make sure the information is available and monitor the usage of KCC web pages, seeking feedback from the public in order to identify ways in which we might improve the customer journey year on year.

If there is a specific part of the site which raises concern, officers would be keen to have this drawn to their attention and will endeavour to make any necessary improvements.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 17 September 2015

**Question by William Scobie to
Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport**

Within my Division there are several roads and areas that I feel would benefit from being made 20mph. My experience so far though is that this is extremely difficult to do. Would the Cabinet member please explain the process for making a road 20mph and the criteria that KCC uses?

Answer

At the Environment, Highways & Waste Cabinet Committee held on 3rd October 2013 Members were asked to consider the process for funding and implementing 20mph speed limits and schemes. Following this meeting it was agreed, that the County Council would:-

- (i) implement 20mph schemes where there is clear justification in terms of achieving casualty reduction as part of the on-going programme of Casualty Reduction Schemes.
- (ii) identify locations for 20mph schemes which would assist with delivering targets set out in Kent's Joint Health and Well Being Strategy.
- (iii) enable any schemes that cannot be justified in terms of road safety or public health benefits but are locally important to be funded via the local County Councillors Combined Members Grant.

It was also agreed that all schemes must be implemented according to the criteria set out in Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 Setting Local Speed Limits which is the current national guidance to Local Authorities on the setting and implementation of new speed limits. For 20mph the criteria includes aspects such as:-

- Successful 20mph limits and zones are generally self-enforcing which is achieved either, by the existing road conditions or using measures such as signing or traffic calming to attain mean speeds compliant with the speed limit.
- There should be no expectation on the police providing additional enforcement unless explicitly agreed.
- The full range of options should be considered before introducing 20mph schemes.
- Zones should not include roads where motor vehicle movement is the primary function.
- While the Government has reduced the traffic calming requirements in zones they must include at least one physical traffic calming feature such as a road hump or build out.
- 20mph limits are generally only recommended where existing mean speeds are already below 24mph.

Requests for the implementation of 20mph limits and schemes should be directed to the Traffic Schemes & Member Highway Fund team. Kent has introduced approximately fifty 20mph schemes which includes over 800 roads across the county including such places as Ashford, Canterbury, Herne Bay, Whitstable, Dartford, Dover, Sandwich, Gravesend and Tonbridge.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 17 September 2015

**Question by Tom Maddison to
Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health**

With the recent very disappointing news from the Government announcing their decision to defer the long-awaited central plank of the much heralded Care Act, namely the u-turn on its manifesto commitment to introduce a cap on the amount an individual would spend in their lifetime on care, will the Cabinet Member please inform members and the residents of Kent the cost in time, money and resource incurred by this Council in preparation to meet the original date set of April next year for the implementation of the said £72,000 cap?

Answer

I can confirm that KCC has been judicious in its use of time, money and resources in preparation for the implementation of the cap, which was originally planned for April 2016. As members will know, the Government announced on 17 July 2015 to delay the introduction of the cap on social care costs and other related policies.

Of the list of policy decisions that have been delayed, 'brokering' residential care for self-funders was of one the areas that may have brought further significant cost pressures onto KCC. We therefore commissioned a piece of research to help us come up with a more robust evidence to lobby the Government. The cost of the commissioned work was £10,000. This is the total money spent specifically as part of our preparation work for the changes that had been planned for April 2016.

With regards to time and resources that KCC had put into the preparation for the implementation, I believe members may know that, the vast majority of the provisions in the Care Act are to do with the implementation of phase one of the new law. With my support, the Corporate Director for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing and his team had focused their time and resources on making sure that, come the hour, KCC was able to demonstrate that we complied with the duties placed on the council within the specified timescale.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 17 September 2015

**Question by Roger Truelove to
Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services**

The Minister for Sport, Tracy Crouch MP, has recently criticised the FA Premier League for failing to adequately support grassroots football. In the light of Kent County Council's attempts to support football in Kent, would you agree with her?

Answer

I welcome and strongly support the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport's call for a greater proportion of the Premier League's income to be shared with grassroots football. I met with the Minister on 17 July 2015 and raised this issue and I am pleased to report that the role of professional sport, including Football, in supporting grassroots community sport has been included in a recently published DCMS Consultation on a new Government Sports Strategy.

Kent County Council, working alongside the Kent Football Association, has been supportive of the grassroots game for many years. This positive working relationship has resulted in a positive impact for football locally. Examples of this work include:

- **Facility developments** - a focus of both the Kent FA and KCC investment into new 3G 'all weather' football pitches. Over the last four years KCC has invested £78,500 from the Small Sports Capital Grants programme, which has levered in £3.7m of external funding (including from Kent FA and the Football Foundation) for Football facilities, such as Artificial Grass Pitches, improvements to drainage of playing fields and new/improved Clubhouses and Pavilions. This equates to £47 of external money levered in for football for every £1 of KCC funding.
- **Participation programmes** - using Sport England monies, the KCC Sport and Physical Activity Service has awarded in excess of £83,000 to local school and community footballing programmes for young people in the last four years.
- **Coaching** - KCC has funded five football coaches (at various levels) through a Coach and Official Scholarship Programme within the last twelve months. Working with the Kent FA, we have funded those coaches with greatest impact on the local game.
- **Local Partnerships** – KCC has provided opportunities for Kent FA to present its strategy to grow the game to local authority partners, in order to support the development of opportunities for more young people, women and girls and disabled people to play football.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 17 September 2015

**Question by Pam Brivio to
Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health**

Does the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care have any concerns that leading Universities are pulling out of providing undergraduate social work degrees for the next generation of social workers?

Answer

I am happy to confirm that I have no concerns about this.

Both of our local universities, Canterbury Christ Church University and University of Kent, are clear that they have no intention of pulling put out of delivering the undergraduate degree in Social Work. Indeed, Canterbury Christ Church has now also developed a foundation degree in Social Care to expand the pathways to enable people to subsequently study for the professional Social Work qualification.

On the national stage, the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families recently confirmed explicit support for undergraduate Social Work training and so there is no sense that this route to professional qualification is at risk.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 17 September 2015

**Question by Rob Bird to
Paul Carter, Leader of Council**

At the beginning of August local and national media reported on the case of Lithuanian workers who had been held in Maidstone houses and forced to work in a chicken farm just a few miles away. Unfortunately there may be many similar cases here in Maidstone and in other parts of the county.

The 2015 Modern Slavery Act sets out the responsibilities of county councils, district councils and other agencies to identify and support the victims of slavery and human trafficking. Is the Leader satisfied that the current arrangements in Kent are adequate and, if not, what steps are being taken to address the situation?

Answer

Modern slavery has emerged as a serious and pressing issue which affects all sectors – public, private and voluntary – across the whole of the UK. Indeed, as a 'gateway authority' the risks for Kent are heightened. However, in order to find ways to effectively tackle this issue we cannot work in isolation. Agencies need to work together to share information, intelligence and to forge collaborative relationships in order to recognise the signs of modern slavery, as well as to protect the victims of this abuse and to prevent it from continuing to occur in the future.

To this end, Kent County Council is in discussions with colleagues from Kent Police, the NHS, Fire and Rescue, alongside district authorities as well as voluntary and community organisations, to determine how we can best respond to, and collaborate in, the fight against modern slavery, trafficking and exploitation. A Kent Anti-Slavery Partnership Group has recently been set up to facilitate the discovery of - and to formulate responses to - incidents of modern slavery, and KCC is represented at these meetings. Kent is also working with the Essex Anti-Slavery Partnership Group in order to find how we can best respond to this challenge across the south east region.

Our service managers and staff, the Kent Safeguarding Children Board, as well as Members who attend Informal Member Groups (such as the Children's Services Improvement Panel) are familiar with the responsibilities the Modern Slavery Act has levied upon us as a local authority. Indeed, the Act requirements now inform our social care staff's everyday working practice and multi-agency training is being rolled out to ensure that all frontline workers are aware of this issue and what they need to do to respond to it at an individual level. In some instances our organisation has been ahead of the curve in this regard, having already volunteered to be part of a Government child advocacy pilot before the Modern Slavery Act, which seeks to make child advocacy compulsory, was granted Royal Assent. A significant amount of the detail underpinning the Act is still in the process of being set out in secondary legislation and guidance, and our Officers will keep us notified as things progress in this regard. Given this, I am satisfied that the arrangements in Kent between KCC working with other statutory partners are adequate, but we remain vigilant and will review and improve arrangements wherever and whenever required.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 17 September 2015

**Question by Hob Birkby to
Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health**

With the disappointing reports from the CQC with regard to KCC's mental health provision, can the Cabinet Member please inform the Council what steps are being taken to address the situation?

Answer

Adult Mental Health services in Kent are delivered by the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT) and it was KMPT which had a CQC inspection earlier this year. This identified some areas of "good" practice, such as in having caring staff. It did also identify concerns in some of their in-patient units and overall rated KMPT as "requiring improvement". It is worth noting that CQC identified no "inadequate" services, that KMPT's leadership was rated "good" and that they are actively addressing the concerns raised.

As members will know, KMPT is separate to KCC, although we do have Mental Health Social Workers and some other staff seconded into their community services. There were two issues in these services that CQC identified as needing action which relate to some caseloads being high and to keeping care plans up to date.

KMPT are working through an action plan which will address these areas. In addition in August the KCC Director of Disabled Children, Adults Learning Disability and Mental Health visited all 8 Mental Health localities to go through each localities' position with regard to KCC's seconded staff, workloads, budget, recruitment and retention.

There are regular KCC/KMPT Partnership Board meeting, chaired by my Deputy Cabinet Member, and attended by KCC members, non-executive Directors from KMPT's board and senior officers from both organisations. These meetings monitor both the quality of the services that include the KCC seconded staff and the Trust's delivery of their improvement action plan, in so much as it affects those services. In addition, I regularly meet with the Chairman of KMPT. KCC Directors and other officers also regularly meet their KMPT counterparts as part of the partnership arrangements.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 17 September 2015

**Question by Martin Whybrow to
Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport**

In light of another set of very poor Kent road safety statistics announced last month, it is clear that we are nowhere close to meeting our Casualty Reduction Strategy targets. The total number of people killed or seriously injured increased for a second consecutive year, to 658 (an eleven per cent rise, year-on-year), and the figures for the number of deaths, motor cycle collisions, cyclist collisions, and child casualties all headed in the wrong direction. It is vital, in my opinion, that KCC needs to seriously set about lowering traffic speeds rather than focusing so much on reducing car journey times. Does the cabinet member acknowledge that, in light of the statistics, there is an urgent need to revisit the Casualty Reduction Strategy, with the emphasis on moving to proactive speed enforcement and finally jettisoning our almost fanatical opposition, in collusion with Kent Police, to 20 mph limits?

Answer

The increase in killed and serious casualties on roads in Kent, including those managed by Highways England, in 2014 is indeed a serious concern. Albeit this does appear to be part of a wider national trend with similar increases across many areas of the country and figures for Great Britain increasing from 23,370 in 2013 to 24,582 in 2014. I understand DfT research implicates weather conditions and higher traffic flows for part of the increase.

The Kent Casualty Reduction Strategy was adopted in April 2014 as part of the County Council's approach to pressing down on road casualty rates. We are now implementing the interventions set out in the action plan including further 20 mph limits which you make specific mention of in your question. 20mph zones are being introduced as part of our work to promote cycling and walking to contribute to wider public health outcomes. Outline design is progressing well and I am hopeful that up to 10 schemes will be implemented in the New Year, subject to due process.

Along with other driver behaviours, vehicle speeds is certainly noted as a key contributory factor in the crash reports and I am particularly keen to see more proactive enforcement of speed limits. I am due to meet with the Chief Constable shortly to make this very point.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 17 September 2015

**Question by Martin Vye to
Paul Carter, Leader of Council**

In recent weeks we have seen two large charitable organisations fold through economic problems, Kids Company and the British Association for Adoption and Fostering.

Kent County Council relies on many local and national Charitable and Voluntary organisations for the delivery of a wide range of crucial services. Is the Leader satisfied that adequate checks are regularly made on the financial soundness and governance structures of these organisations, as I am concerned that KCC's commissioning arrangements could jeopardise the financial stability of these organisations.

Answer

Sustainability is a key issue for the social care market in particular; with unprecedented pressures on resources and a growing demand it is vital that we ensure we meet our Care Act obligations, pay the right price for the care provided and work to cultivate a streamline mixed economy of provision, which meets the current and future needs of Kent residents. Economic problems can be caused by a number of issues, such as over reliance on government funding paid at unsustainable prices, financial mismanagement and poor business models.

Conscious of the need for sustainability, the social care team has undertaken work in conjunction with our efficiency partner Newton Europe to review the Adult Disability Residential Sector - both in terms of the oversupply of provision and our approach to price increases. Historically a blanket approach has been undertaken, however for the last 2 years we have adopted a tailored evidence-based approach which has enabled us to allocate funds to where the market needed the most help. This was achieved through the development of a cost model to consider the benchmark costs of services and a detailed analysis of financial returns, including management and statutory account reviews.

Moving forward, it is key that this approach be adopted across all service areas, with commercial contract management becoming a key driver to enable this level of scrutiny and sustainability assessment. This will require a more joined-up approach with commissioners and corporate services to ensure the right skills are available in the right place to achieve this goal.

Financial mismanagement of services to Kent County Council is a more worrying and often complex area, however again this can be overcome through ensuring a more robust approach to grant allocations and contract letting, as well as supporting our contract managers by giving them the skills and resources to conduct commercial assessments of the services that are delivering on our behalf. Indeed to this end our Internal Audit team is undertaking a 'grant' audit this year.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**Thursday 17 September 2015****Question by Trudy Dean to
Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport**

The A20 between Borough Green and Coldharbour, Aylesford has been accepted as exceeding its capacity by Kent Highways, and is subject to high levels of congestion daily. It is also the emergency relief diversion route for M20 when closures occur. Can the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport please update the Council on the current progress on feasibility studies to relieve congestion particularly at junctions? In his reply will he please include the feasibility work being done on j5 slip roads to M25.

Answer

The County Council, as local Highway Authority, in recognition of the traffic levels on the A20 corridor as stated by Mrs Dean, has recently commissioned its consultants, Amey, to undertake a study of the A20 within Tonbridge and Malling Borough. The study will examine current and future travel demand at the key congestion hotspots and identify a range of potential improvements. These will be developed with a number of key objectives in mind, which include the need to assist traffic flow, accommodate future growth and enhance safety for vulnerable road users, whilst also promoting sustainable forms of transport.

KCC are working closely with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and an extension to the brief for the study is currently being discussed and will be the subject of an officer level meeting on 23rd September 2015. This will establish how the study can be progressed in a manner that assists the Borough Council's progression of their new Local Plan.

The scope of the study will encompass an assessment of travel demand and the development of potential options for improvement of the A20 corridor. It is anticipated that consultation with the community will be undertaken at a subsequent stage once the deliverability of any options to be taken forward can be confirmed. The arrangements for consultation are likely to be influenced by the Borough Council's Local Plan process, which will seek community input on the infrastructure necessary to support planned future growth.

Mrs Dean also asks about the feasibility work being done on the J5 slip roads to the M25. While the responsibility for these roads lies with Highways England and is beyond the scope of the study brief outlined above, KCC are collaborating with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) in undertaking an economic study. The purpose of this study is to understand the economic case for improved connectivity between the A21 and the M25/M26 at a number of possible locations in the vicinity of Junction 5. The overall objective is to present evidence to Highways England that could potentially help boost the priority of these works for their delivery programme from 2021 onwards. The study is due to go out to the market shortly with the work to be commissioned during November.