County Council Questions and Answers

13 July 2017

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Question 1

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 13 July 2017

**Question by Karen Constantine to Matthew Balfour,
Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste**

Can Mr Balfour confirm the status of the street lighting LED retro fit in Thanet. How many units have been retrofitted to date; how many more need to be undertaken; and how many units are there that cannot be retro fitted with LEDs and what is the plan to replace these?

Answer

Phase One of the LED conversion project is substantially complete, all the conversions that could be completed in this phase have been converted to LED and returned to all-night lighting. There are however a number of assets that have been moved to Phase Two as we have had a number of issues with: access, vegetation and concrete columns, which we are unable to convert at present.

The residential areas of Thanet has approximately 9931 street lighting assets for conversion in Phase One, of those we have completed 6922. We still have 3009 to convert of which around 2500 are concrete columns (separate details have been provided to Cllr. Constantine) the remainder are ornate style lights that are due for conversion in Phase two, as part of the original programme.

Whilst we have funding for the LED conversions the Council had not anticipated such a large number of concrete columns requiring replacement at this stage. We are therefore considering funding options for the replacement of the concrete columns, including the submission of a bid against the forthcoming capital programme. Subject to funding, we anticipate the replacement programme would be complete in line with the LED project end date of May 2019.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 13 July 2017

Question by Barry Lewis to Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste

Following Paul Carter's enthusiasm for alleviating the pot hole crisis in Kent, what is the criteria for the allocation of monies to each division of the county; and when was this decision originally made?

Answer

As advised to Mr Lewis at the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee of 15th June 2017, and again at the Member induction session on 20th June 2017, over a number of years the initial criteria for the allocation of pothole fund monies to each District is based upon the road length within each District. However, this is subsequently refined depending upon the distribution of pothole enquiries amongst the district areas, and the relative difference in rates between districts (as the process for procuring works results in a number of local providers across Kent with varying rates)

Progress is monitored throughout the duration of the Pothole Blitz, and further adjustments in the distribution of funds are made during the course of the campaign in order to ensure that monies are allocated according to need.

I would add that, as of 10 July 2017, £1.6m has been spent repairing potholes across the county from a budget of £4.1m. This money is in addition to Highways Operations budget for 2017/18 for £1.4m for emergencies and minor repairs; £4.2m for routine carriageway and footway repairs and £7m for major patching work.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 13 July 2017

Question by Antony Hook to Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste

Given that air pollution is now well recognised as one of the biggest causes of premature death and serious illness in our society and that people in Kent rightly wish to see air pollution including from vehicle emissions reduced, what steps will Kent County Council be taking to promote and support the development of new infrastructure for electric vehicles in all parts of our county, so that switching to zero or low emission electric vehicles becomes more feasible for more of our people?

Answer

This issue was discussed at Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee where it was noted that KCC should lead on the development of a Kent Low Emissions Strategy, working in partnership with Medway and Kent's District and Borough Councils to address Air Quality. A working group is being set up with the aim of achieving a first draft strategy by end of 2017.

The strategy will include developing a strong evidence base using air quality monitoring and health data. Actions will need to be developed at both a strategic and local level to take account of areas where air pollution levels and the impacts on health are more significant. It is anticipated that EV charging infrastructure will have an important role to play. We will work with our district and borough partners to identify where existing infrastructure could be expanded further, taking advantage of government financial incentives available and also identify where we could establish commercial partnerships for the benefit of local communities.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 13 July 2017

**Question by Lauren Sullivan to Graham Gibbens,
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care**

What guarantees can you give my constituents, that the sheltered housing wardens in Northfleet and Gravesham will not suffer further cuts, thereby preventing the wardens in their role of supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our society?"

Answer

The County Council does make a contribution towards these services for housing related support. Of course Gravesham Borough Council is responsible for delivering these services in Northfleet and Gravesham and it is they who will take any decisions. Consequently I cannot give the reassurance that Dr Sullivan seeks

The way that all supported housing, included sheltered housing, is funded is expected to change in light of the recent government consultation. The County Council is working with the districts and boroughs and with providers of these services throughout Kent to help them understand and prepare for these changes. Our intention is to make sure that Kent is not disadvantaged in any way by the new arrangements. We will continue to liaise closely with stakeholders and providers to minimise disruption and I, and officers, will be meeting providers next week.

As we do this work, the County Council will be continuing to ensure that its own Care Act responsibilities, to the people who are living in these schemes, will be fully met.

For further information, there is a report on this matter going to the 20 July Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee and the papers for that meeting are now publicly available.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 13 July 2017

**Question by George Koowaree to Matthew Balfour,
Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste**

At the last Ashford JTB the committee approved the recommendation to Highways England from KCC, to have Traffic Lights installed at Barrey Junction with A2070 in Ashford, which I have been demanding for nearly 20 years.

Unfortunately KCC highlighted that they did not have the immediate funding for the works therefore will the Cabinet Member lobby the Deputy Prime Minister Damien Green who is also MP for Ashford for the necessary funds, as in the words of the JTB Vice-Chairman it is vital that the scheme progresses and the urgency is not lost?

Answer

I was very pleased to note that the report to JTB was well received and recommendations endorsed. As you will be aware, this is a Highways England responsibility and there has been a great deal of progress in recent months with KCC Officers leading on developing a feasibility/options study, an independent cost assessment of the options and working with colleagues at Ashford Borough Council, we have collectively maintained pressure on Highways England to undertake and fund improvement works at the junction whilst the main M20 junction 10a scheme is under construction.

I understand that Highways England Officers have submitted an internal bid for funding and in the meantime, Officers will be writing to the funding Lead at Highways England. It is imperative that the good progress achieved in recent months is maintained, the Cabinet Member will be happy to write to Damien Green to seek his support and I believe that Ashford Borough Council are considering a similar approach.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 13 July 2017

**Question by Ken Pugh to Paul Carter,
Leader of the County Council and
Cabinet Member for Traded Services & Health Reform**

Would the Leader explain the response from KCC to the down grading yet again of the Kent and Canterbury Hospital, by the removal of some 30 junior doctors. The CEO of EKHUFT reported CQC/BMA had stated that there was insufficient senior supervision of those junior doctors that made some services unsafe. The CEO's solution was to disperse them to QEQM and William Harvey.

Answer

As members will understand, this is a decision taken by the East Kent Hospitals Trust necessitated by health regulatory bodies. The issues at East Kent Hospital Trust forms part of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda tomorrow. To date, this council has not had any input in to their decision.

Kent County Council is fully engaged with health partners in the delivery of the STP for Kent and Medway with major components being future development of local care and hospital care in Kent.

I personally find the temporary reconfiguration across the East Kent Hospital Trust regrettable.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 13 July 2017

**Question by Rob Bird to Roger Gough,
Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education**

Barming Primary School is a 2 Form Entry school. Like many other schools it is struggling with budget constraints and the school has recently announced it is having to lay off 5 staff.

The school has been allocated 34 Year R pupils next year which will mean it will need two form teachers but will receive income for just over one form, resulting in a shortfall of roughly £85,000 pa. Meanwhile, the West Borough Primary School nearby has been asked to take on a bulge class and has been allocated 87 Year R pupils. Also, the nearby 1 Form Entry Jubilee Primary School has been allocated 21 Year R pupils. Clearly it would have been possible for Barming Primary to have been allocated a more cost effective number of pupils which would have also assisted the neighbouring schools.

Would the Cabinet Member explain how this unacceptable situation arose and what steps his directorate are taking to rectify the additional financial burden which will be placed on Barming Primary School?

Answer

The use of the word 'Allocations' is misleading in this context. KCC is required by law to meet parental preference wherever possible, and for the most part the figures cited by Mr Bird reflect parental preference rather than allocation decisions made by the Local Authority.

To take in turn each of the schools mentioned by Mr Bird:

- West Borough Primary School, with a Published Admissions Number (PAN) of 90, had 133 named preferences, of which 75 were first preferences. The school was therefore able to satisfy these 75 first preferences as well as 9 other named preferences. There were just 3 allocations made by the Local Authority

- Regrettably, Barming Primary School saw a fall in preferences. The school had 77 named preferences for its PAN of 60, of which 32 were first preferences. This was a decline from the 2016 level of 43 (which was in turn markedly lower than pre-2015 levels), while other schools have seen an increase in first preferences

- Jubilee Primary (Free) School received 63 named preferences for its PAN of 30, the same figure as in 2016, although there was a reduction in first preferences to 19 from 29 in the previous year. This may reflect the uncertainty over the school's intake at the point of applications being made.

It is true that West Borough's PAN reflects its taking a temporary 'bulge' form of entry. This reflected the severe pressures experienced in Maidstone, of which Mr Bird will be very

much aware. Factors underlying this include the growing number of primary age children placed in Maidstone, often at very short notice, as a result of the housing decisions of two London Boroughs, and the inability so far of the Jubilee Free School to secure its planned two forms of entry.

Had the decision to temporarily expand West Borough not been taken, we would currently face the very real prospect of being unable to operate with suitable levels of surplus capacity or to ensure that every child can access suitable education during the 17/18 academic year. We also anticipate that, given the continuing pressures, the remaining school places in the area are likely to be filled during the year. Across Maidstone the current Year R has been subject to such pressures.

KCC sets out a commitment to meet parental preference as far as possible. We also have a duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places. This can be very hard to predict and much harder to resolve if there are too few places as opposed to too many. The operation of parental preference may mean that, as in this case, surplus places are concentrated in one or a few schools rather than spread across the system.

In terms of funding for a school well below its admission number, it is an issue for all schools that fall below their operating capacity. This situation may require the school to call on its reserves or as an academy it can seek additional financial support from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 13 July 2017

**Question by Dan Daley to Matthew Balfour,
Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport & Waste**

Last October, Trevor Drive in Allington was given the long awaited and much welcomed benefit of a complete footway restructure.

On 3 July Southern Gas Networks arrived to conduct routine work and started digging holes outside the 183 properties.

I have no doubt that there was a licence granted by Highways for this work, but could the Cabinet Member please tell me WHY and HOW this work was not known so that the reinstatement and expensive restoration could have followed the work which is now disfiguring the whole residential road and wasting the effect of the expensive restoration which is less than nine months old?

Answer

The footway of Trevor Drive was placed under a Section 58 restriction under the New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991 after the reconstruction works were completed; this applies for a period of 2 years. During the period covered by this notice, the Highway Authority is able to restrict the execution of works on the area, however KCC is unable to flatly refuse works which are either an emergency or are intended as new connections for new developments. Whilst the Southern Gas Network works are not considered an emergency there have been a number of leaks reported and this work is intended to address this before it becomes an emergency.

We have made it a condition of their works permit that full width reinstatement must be made around their excavations. This means that there will be much less damage as there will be fewer joints on the footway. The works once completed, will be inspected and any issues found with the reinstatements will be defected and Southern Gas will have to put this right. The requirement for connections to the new Croudace development will mean many requests for utility works within the area including Trevor Drive and we will ensure that we place requirements on all utility companies to coordinate works to minimise disruption and to ensure that the footpath network in this area is restored to its original condition upon completion of all the works.

We are happy to arrange a meeting with local members to look at the planned works in the area to ensure that they are fully updated on coordination and restrictions.