



COUNTY COUNCIL - THURSDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2022

Agenda Item No

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Questions put and answers given

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Question 2

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 15th December 2022

**Question by Mr Richard Streatfeild to
the Leader of the Council, Roger Gough**

Ofsted has concluded that KCC has not made any significant improvements on the nine key areas of weakness identified since it's last inspection in 2019. Parents, children, and teachers in my division of Sevenoaks Town feel that KCC is failing in its statutory duty to provide adequate SEND provision.

Does the Leader share the view of parents, children, and teachers in Sevenoaks Town that KCC is failing in its statutory duty to provide adequate SEND provision for the whole of Kent?

Answer

The Ofsted/CQC inspection report is on the agenda for today's County Council meeting and it clearly sets out a range of shortcomings for both the Kent area and individual partners, including KCC.

We have fully accepted the findings in the letter and offered our heartfelt apologies to all the children and their parents and carers who have been let down by the insufficient progress across our services. We are very sorry for the impact this has had on families.

We recognise that across the area there are families who have failed to receive adequate SEND provision and have apologised for our part in this both individually and as part of the broader Kent Area with partners. I am aware that areas of statutory compliance will be explicitly referred to in this year's Annual Governance Statement which will be presented to Governance and Audit Committee in January.

We continue to work with the Department for Education to produce an Accelerated Progress Plan to transform services and we will be publishing further details of this, what it entails and who it will involve as soon as possible.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 15th December 2022

Question by Mr Alister Brady to, Rory Love
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Between 27 and 29 September 2022 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) revisited the area of Kent to decide whether sufficient progress had been made in addressing each of the areas of significant weakness detailed in the inspection report letter published on 22 March 2019. It was determined that Kent County Council had not made sufficient progress in addressing ANY of the nine significant weaknesses.

As the newly-responsible Cabinet Member, can you explain to me why these failures occurred?

Answer

The joint area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) team from Ofsted and the CQC reported in their Revisit Letter that the Kent area has not made sufficient progress in addressing weaknesses. This was painful and disappointing both to the three partners who share the responsibility for SEND arrangements in Kent; namely Kent County Council (KCC), Education settings, and the NHS, and to the children, parents, and carers who use these services.

For our part, KCC issued an immediate unreserved apology for what has happened, has sought to understand and explain why it has happened, and has set out how we intend to lead the area to accelerated improvement and transformation.

We have explained very clearly all three strands of our response to the Revisit Letter in a statement and media conference on 9th November conducted by The Leader of the Council and the Corporate Director, Children, Young People, and Education; in a public report to the Children, Young People, and Education Cabinet Committee on 29th November; in a public report to Cabinet on 1st December; and in the public report on today's County Council agenda on SEND Transformation.

At the heart of all these explanations is one golden thread of building on our strengths. We had a ten year journey to 'Outstanding' in Children's Services. We will draw on the strengths of the organisation to apply this same approach to SEND services.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 15th December 2022

Question by Mr Paul Stepto to, Miss Carey
Cabinet Member for Environment

Kent has 2,220 food and drink production enterprises (as at 2021) and there are approximately 2,700 farms and agricultural holdings in the county¹. We farm crops, meat and fish, and we process and manufacture meat, fish, dairy, fruit and vegetable products, animal feed and much more. The energy required to produce and bring food to market, together with the subsequent disposal of food waste, produces large volumes of greenhouse gases.

Two thirds of Council climate action plans miss out food, despite food and farming contributing between 20-30% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The top councils for tackling food emissions are Bristol City, Camden, Cornwall County, County Durham, East Lothian, Enfield, Hounslow, Lewisham, Middlesbrough, Stockport, Stroud District, Somerset West & Taunton, and Southwark.

Can the Cabinet Member for Environment confirm what measures are included in KCC's climate emergency mitigation plans to tackle greenhouse gas emissions arising from food production and consumption?

Answer

DEFRA, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, is the lead organisation for work to do with food and farming and KCC is involved with DEFRA on various aspects of this work.

Some examples of this include the work done by both the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONB and the High Weald AONB on the DEFRA funded 'Farming in Protected Landscape's grant programmes as well as the work done to promote regenerative farming. KCC acts as the employing authority and a supplier of line management and technical services to the Kent Downs AONB Unit and they are a key partner in many of our environmental projects.

KCC also works with key stakeholders such as the NIAB Crop Science Centre, the East Malling Research Centre, the University of Kent, Produced in Kent, and other local groups on the 'BLUEPRINT to a Circular Economy' project to address food waste at a domestic and consumer level.

We work jointly with the District and Borough Councils on campaigns to minimise waste and, where they have kerbside collections of food waste, we recycle this to produce biogas and fertiliser at Blaise Farm in Kent as part of our circular waste economy which aims that waste produced in Kent is processed here in Kent.

The Kent & Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy will be looking at how emissions from consumption could be calculated and incorporated into future area pathways/targets as this strategy evolves. This is joint work with the Districts and Medway and is best dealt with in partnership with them. In the meantime, KCC is engaging directly with Kent Residents through our Kent Green Action and the Great Big Green Week campaigns where all aspects of people's carbon footprint including food are covered.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 15th December 2022

**Question by Ms Constantine to,
The Leader of the Council, Roger Gough**

At the last meeting, I asked about future CO2 emissions from the planned Manston Air Freight Hub and how this related to KCC's Net Zero activity. In addition to the climate impact, increases in emissions, air pollutants and noise from Manston and other large-scale developments, and the related traffic increase in the Kent area, represent a risk to the long-term health of Kent residents, such as respiratory problems and other illnesses caused by sleep deprivation.

As this Council has already committed, via its Strategic Statement, to work with partners to support the prevention of chronic respiratory disease, can the Leader of the Council please explain how air quality and other relevant health implications of large-scale developments like Manston are taken into account by KCC and partners on the Integrated Care System? In answering the question, can the Leader clarify as part of the Council's commitment to 'improving the health of Kent's population and narrowing health inequalities', what action is already being undertaken to address this issue?

Answer

Firstly, I can assure you that the Council is strongly committed to improving the health of Kent's population and narrowing health inequalities. As a County Council we can only work within the responsibilities within the legislation that are set out for us. As an Upper Tier Local Authority, since April 2013 we have been responsible for improving the health of our local population and for public health services. The Secretary of State continues to have overall responsibility for improving health with national public health functions delegated to the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities and the UK Health Security Agency.

Specifically, with regards to Manston, in KCC's response on the 21st July 2017 to the Preliminary Environmental Information Report we placed an expectation on River Oak Strategic Partners to conduct a participatory Health Impact Assessment (HIA) with local communities. Whilst undertaking a HIA is seen as good practice as part of major developments, it is not a requirement of the Aviation Policy Framework. In July 2018 the HIA was completed as part of the Environmental Statement. The then Kent Director of Public Health was consulted in November 2017 on this HIA and inputted into the HIA Scoping Statement. The HIA identified several impacts on health and wellbeing both positive and negative and included a number of mitigation measures for those health impacts plus further recommendations.

The health implications mentioned, would be considered by the Planning Inspectorate when they determine the proposal. Therefore, whilst we can be involved in the process and make comments, we are not the decision maker and cannot influence specific issues. I can assure you that we have been involved where we can, and we will continue to try to influence the Health Impacts of the proposal.

In addition to the above, the air quality impact of the airport's road traffic on Kent's highway network will be included as part of the development work for Kent County Council's new Local Transport Plan. The new Local Transport Plan will consider traffic on the local road network from the reopened Manston Airport, along with other existing and planned developments. A public consultation on a draft new Local Transport Plan is being planned for next year. We will also ensure that we work with the airport operator and local transport providers to encourage greater uptake of sustainable travel options to the airport, including the use of the new Thanet Parkway Railway Station which is due to open next year.

I also thought it was important to mention that following the Secretary of State's decision on 18th August 2022 to grant development consent for the reopening of Manston Airport to operate as a dedicated freight Facility, a Ramsgate resident, has applied for a Judicial review against this decision. The Court still has to decide whether to allow the appeal. It is for the courts to decide the outcome of this appeal and there is therefore nothing at the current time we can do to influence this decision.

COUNTY COUNCIL**Thursday 15 December 2022****Question by Mr Mark Hood to Mr Brazier,
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

Over the past year, £32,000 of cost has been incurred by the removal of control panels from pedestrian crossings in Tonbridge and Hadlow. KCC officers requested the use of mobile CCTV owned by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council to monitor the KCC assets at affected sites and it became apparent that the cost to the borough council would have been £1,200. The exceedingly high cost is a barrier to using our street furniture in this way and can be counterproductive in our efforts to engage in partnership working with districts to tackle fly-tipping, antisocial behaviour and other criminality.

Can the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport confirm what KCC are doing to address the high costs being borne whenever mobile CCTV is attached to a lamppost belonging to the council? In answering this question, can the Cabinet Member confirm whether the Council will consider waiving the costs incurred for installing mobile CCTV?

Answer

There have been a number of thefts of this year of the controller boxes on pelican crossings within Tonbridge and Hadlow. A suggestion has been made (I understand by Tonbridge & Malling) to utilise CCTV to monitor the crossings however CCTV does not always provide an adequate deterrent.

Street lighting columns are not designed to carry additional loads. A load test is therefore required to ensure the column has sufficient structural integrity to carry the additional load. This is standard practice and the costs attributable to this testing are the direct costs of the load testing company for their investigation and report and not costs from KCC.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 15 December 2022

**Question by Mr Rich Lehmann to Mr Brazier,
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

One of the biggest barriers to electric car ownership across Kent is the lack of available charging infrastructure, especially in rural areas. This shortage is disproportionately felt by those with no access to off street parking, who do not currently have an option to charge their car while it is parked outside their home.

I've recently learned from a resident in my division that a number of other Highways authorities, including Hampshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk, offer various schemes which allow the placement of cables across pedestrian footways to enable cars to be charged whilst parked outside their owners' homes. A solution which bypasses the obstacles and expenses involved in the installation of on street charging infrastructure.

Could the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport please confirm what actions KCC is taking to support homeowners with no off-street parking transition to cleaner modes of transport, and in answering the question, please could he explain whether KCC has explored following the pragmatic examples set by Hampshire and Lincolnshire County Councils?

Answer

Kent County Council has produced guidance for District Councils to follow to enable safe and sensible on-street installations of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. A number of the Districts have used it already and officers are currently working with some more District Authorities to bring forward further installations in early 2023. The guidance ensures sufficient pavement width to allow those in wheelchairs or with prams to pass safely and requires the electrical equipment to be safely installed and maintained.

Trailing cables across the pavements is not allowed due to the safety and accessibility concerns for other highway users. In March 2022, the Government published "**Taking Charge; the electric vehicle infrastructure strategy**" where they set out the roadmap for charging in the UK. While the Government encouraged Local Authorities to consider on-street charging, where appropriate, they state "When assessing different chargepoint options, local authorities should avoid street clutter and prevent trailing cables, and maximise pavement space for those with disabilities."

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 15 December 2022

**Question by Ms Mel Dawkins to Mrs Chandler,
Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services**

According to the September 2022 CYPE Directorate Scorecard, 'the average caseload in the Children's Social Work Team (CSWT) is 24.5 cases, which is above the target caseload of 18'.^[1] One reason why caseloads remain so high is because as an employer we are struggling to recruit and retain qualified social workers. In a bid to attract social workers, I understand KCC offers 'Assessed and Supported Years of Employment' (AYSE). However, at the end of the AYSE period, qualified social workers receive no wage increase despite a significant increase in caseload, prompting many to leave the profession. This also creates a scenario whereby experienced social workers with higher caseloads earn the same wage as newly qualified social workers with comparatively smaller caseloads.

Keeping the above in mind, can the Cabinet Member please explain what the service is doing to attract and retain qualified social workers, including any incentives around increased pay and career progression?

Answer

The recruitment and retention of child care social workers remains a national challenge as well as one for Kent. In May 2022 the DfE published the results of a workforce survey into the children's social work profession. Of the 3,630 social workers who left permanent local authority social work roles in 2021, 77% left children's social care altogether and 23% moved to agency roles. The majority of those leaving were in local authority work for less than five years. The highest proportion of social workers who moved into agency roles were aged 20-29 (ie. in the early stages of their careers).

Source: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2022-0142/>

For Kent, although the majority of ASYEs (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) are within the age range of 20-29, our data is not currently demonstrating that this group of Social Workers are leaving immediately upon completing their programme in significant numbers. There is a recognisable pattern of staff leaving at around the 2 years of experience which shows a minimal difference to previous trends. The Council has a range of retention strategies in place to keep social workers in the local authority including the payment of market premiums at strategic points during the year

In recognition of the need to keep social workers at the end of their first year in assessed practice, in 2019 we brought forward the market premium payment of £3000 previously paid to experienced practitioners, for the ASYEs staff upon completion of their programme. This was previously paid one year further on from the completion of the programme i.e. at

^[1] CYPE Published Report - <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s115280/CYPE%20Directorate%20Scorecard%20-%20September%202022%20-%20Full%20Version%20with%20Districts.pdf> (page 5).

the end of their second year of practice. In addition to this, the Directorate is exploring awarding a cash award for the 2021/22 ASYEs given the caseloads they experienced were higher than to be expected during and after the pandemic, although still appropriately discounted and less than peers' caseloads.

On ASYEs completing their programme of post qualifying study, staff are invited to immediately join a nationally accredited programme of development in their second year of employment to become experienced practitioners. On completion, which usually occurs during their second year of practice, successful social workers are lifted from KR9 to KR10. KCC is one of a few LAs nationally participating in the programme, and offers both the opportunity for further financial enhancement and professional development ensuring that SWs remained employed at KCC. This in turn enables succession planning to develop our senior practitioners and managers of the future. Whilst some SWs are still leaving KCC around the 2 years' experience point of their career, our programme of professional and personal development and fast track opportunities are retaining more of our staff with more than 2 years experience which is above the national picture. This strategy is also supporting KCC in being able to recruit to Team Managers and Service Manager posts without the need to access the agency market.

Finally the May 2022 Ofsted ILACS inspection of children's services identified KCC as having a strong training offer to develop practice, and provides appropriate support to Social Workers to manage challenging caseloads, keeping the impact on families to a minimum. The above strategies in addition to the Ofsted Action plan to be implemented in January 2023 will further support efforts to improve caseload management.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 15 December 2022

**Question by Antony Hook to David Brazier,
Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport**

On 27th November, a woman in her 50s was tragically killed after a collision on the London-bound carriageway of the M2 between Junctions 5 and 6 for Faversham and Sittingbourne. This stretch of road is a hot spot for road traffic collisions, where serious accidents and fatalities are becoming all too common.

In line with KCC's Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy, can the Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport please explain what work KCC is doing, alongside partners at Highways England and Kent Police, to address the alarming rate of road traffic collisions between Junctions 5 and 6 of the M2?

Answer

Thank you, Mr Hook, for your question regarding this tragic incident and your concerns relating to the safety of this section of the M2.

Our Vision Zero Strategy has a long-term aim of reducing the number of collisions that result in death or very serious injuries to zero by 2050.

As part of this aspiration, we are committed to working with partner agencies and with the communities of Kent to bring about changes to the way in which our road networks are managed and used.

We have already put in place new weekly operational liaison meetings that involve representatives from KCC, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, National Highways and Medway Council to discuss incidents on the networks and intervention initiatives that are being delivered. Monthly meetings to discuss possible solutions to the most serious of recent incidents also take place.

The M2 forms part of the National Highways network and is, therefore, managed, monitored and maintained by them. KCC, as part of the Kent Casualty Reduction Partnership, will continue to liaise with National Highways to help identify problem areas and do all that we can to assist in finding appropriate solutions.

National Highways, Kent Police, and DVSA work individually and in partnership to deliver education and compliance events on the M2. These events are aimed at reducing the number of high-risk vehicles and drivers on the network and therefore also reducing the likelihood of incidents.

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