

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, 25 October 2012

Question by Michael Northey to

Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Very good health developments in recent years have resulted in people living longer. Many residents in Kent and in my Canterbury South East division are now concerned about the ever increasing cost of long term social care. It is worrying that in some cases people must sell homes to cover the cost of their care.

Would the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health please advise me what actions he has taken to encourage the Government to implement the recommendations of the Dilnot Commission?

Answer

The Member for Canterbury South East division is correct to point to the evidence that people are living longer which, good health provision and social care support play important contribution.

I can advise Members that KCC's residential care policy makes provision for people with property moving to residential accommodation, to enter into a deferred payment agreement with KCC. As a result the sale of a property can be delayed.

Turning to the actions that I have taken, I can confirm that I have used every opportunity in the past year to press the case for the implementation of the Dilnot Commission's recommendations. I have lobbied ministers and Kent MPs in my capacity as the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health.

I have used my position as the chair of the South East Councils Adult Social Care, a network of cabinet members of local authorities, to raise the general profile of adult social issues with directors of adult social care and government officials. I would also like to mention the key role played by Paul Carter, in his capacity as the chair of South East England Council to make the case in the recent 'Fixing a Broken System' report, that was published in June 2012.

Some of the details of the actions have included:

Briefed Kent MPs on two occasions in February and June this year

I took part in the future of adult social care and support roundtable discussion with Paul Burstow, MP, the then Care Services Minister in July 2012, on the invitation of the Local Government Association's Community Wellbeing Board.

In a nutshell, the key messages I have consistently delivered are:

Firstly, advocate that the Government should push forward with implementation of the Dilnot Commission recommendations that do not require new money, mere policy changes.

Second, that a re-prioritisation of some existing public expenditure might be needed. For example, continuing with a shift of some of the NHS money to pay for the implementation of Dilnot.

Third, support state sponsored risk- pooling insurance approach to help individuals with long term care costs.

Finally, the extra cost that comes with the implementation of Dilnot is an appropriate investment to protect “our nation’s humanity” and the dignity of older people across the country.

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Question by Mike Harrison to

Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Performance and Health Reform

My question is directed to Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Performance and Health Reform asking him to be kind to enough to give me and fellow members an update on the present position with regard to the seating arrangements here in the Council Chamber? I am given to understand that a request from numerous members has been made via your good self to have the present excellent chairs here in the Chamber serviced? I am sure that you will have noticed that many of them are in dire need of some TLC such as the hydraulic mechanism which is failing badly on many of them.

I do believe this work was to be included along with the upgrading of the sound system, which I am given to understand is still work in progress.

Answer

Property & Infrastructure Support in September engaged a company to review the faulty chair mechanisms in the Chamber. The replacement parts for these chairs have proved difficult to obtain due to their age and specialist nature however they have located a UK manufacturer and are awaiting confirmation as to the price of the replacement parts. Following receipt of the prices consideration will be given to replacing the faulty mechanisms initially on the chairs which need them as a priority.

Additionally a condition survey has been commissioned for all the chairs within the Chamber which are functioning correctly to determine remaining life span and to issue a report on which we can base any future changes and expenditure. This survey was carried out on Friday 12 October and the report is expected to be available on Friday 26 October.

Once Property have established when the parts will be available for repair they will update Democratic Services accordingly, in addition to sharing the results of the condition survey when received.

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Question by Richard Parry to

Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills

“Would I be right to blame the Labour government for reducing the choice to parents in primary school places given the surplus capacity limits, et al?”

Answer

Following the general election in 1997, the Labour Government introduced a series of substantial changes to the framework within which Local Education Authorities sought to balance local supply and demand of school places.

Following an Audit Commission report, Kent, like other authorities, was strongly recommended to remove surplus places to as little as 5%.

Surplus capacity, which hitherto had afforded parents a level of choice in selecting schools for their children was removed to meet the demands of the new framework.

Kent County Council therefore had to take action in the mid-2000s to reduce the number of school places. At that time, for example, Dover had overcapacity of 16%, while in Tonbridge and Malling the figure was 15%. The action recommended by the Audit Commission removed places from the system and impacted the choice available to parents.

Since being appointed as Cabinet Member, I have ensured that a new Commissioning Plan for Education Provision has been formulated to identify the expansions of schools which are now needed to help ensure that parents get the choice they deserve. Through the new commissioning plan, I expect to provide for a surplus capacity of up to 10% in localities, to rectify the situation that as was a result of the Audit Commission's recommendation under the previous government.

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Question by Tim Prater to

Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning & Skills

At the September meeting, the Cabinet Member informed the Council that it was not possible to report on the exact number of children who would have previously been eligible for free home to school transport, who may not qualify under the new arrangements and that he would report back to the Council at the November Council meeting.

However, as there is no Council meeting in November scheduled, and unhappy at the prospect of waiting until December for information I feel should be available to the Council, I resubmit my question for a full response. Would the Cabinet Member for Education, Learning & Skills kindly inform this Council how many children have started this school term in Kent excluded from free home-to-school transport they would have been entitled to prior to the cut imposed by this Council on home-to-school transport provision?

Answer

The number of year 7 pupils starting secondary school being transported free from home to school at this time last year was 2457. This year that figure has reduced to 983.

This change is a reflection of the reduction in entitlement to home to school transport

The new policy is being introduced gradually – older pupils previously entitled under the old policy have retained that entitlement and will continue to be transported free.

It is impossible to be certain of the exact number of children who would have previously been eligible under the previous policy for two reasons:

- many parents have not applied for transport this year knowing that their children would not qualify under the new policy (there have been over 1000 fewer home to school transport applications this year) ;
- the numbers of children being transported changes constantly.

The Kent Freedom Pass has provided a welcome solution for some and 3000 more passes have been issued than at this time last year, bringing the current number of KFPs to almost 27,000.

Regardless of the changes to the transport policy, the number of pupils starting in Kent's grammar and denominational schools this year is slightly higher than last year.

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Thursday, 25 October 2012

Question by Les Christie to

Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

Following the Report on Home Care Agencies by Inside Out BBC South East on 15th October, can the Cabinet Member confirm what checks he makes to ensure Care Quality Commission guidelines are being followed by any Care Agencies he commissions to provide domiciliary care for the people in Kent? In particular can he confirm that of the 191 such agencies inspected by CQC in the South East KCC does not use any of the 4 which have failed to carry out CRB checks or any of the 5 identified as failing to have applied Safe Recruitment Procedures. Can he further advise if KCC is using any of the remaining 255 agencies not yet inspected by CQC and if so how many? If KCC is using any of that 255 what safeguarding actions has he taken to ensure that CQC guidelines are being applied.

Answer

The statutory regulation of domiciliary care agencies is undertaken by CQC and KCC will only commission agencies that are registered through CQC. In letting contracts we ensure that providers meet the quality threshold.

People receiving a KCC supported service are reviewed regularly by KCC staff who pick up issues in relation to quality of care, safety and wellbeing. As at 30 September 2012, 7,102 service users were receiving a domiciliary service and in 2011/2012, 30,441 individual service user reviews were undertaken. These reviews are one of the key ways of monitoring the effectiveness of the service for the individual.

Additionally KCC staff meet regularly with Health, the Police and other key organisations to share information on safeguarding and focus improvement efforts where needed. Safeguarding Co-ordinators and contracting staff have a key role in ensuring good practice.

Regarding the recent BBC South East programme, I can confirm that KCC does not commission services from the named agency that was the subject of specific concerns. We asked the BBC before the programme was broadcast to share the information they based the programme on and have repeated that request this week. Accordingly, we cannot currently confirm how the BBC have produced these figures or how they affect the people of Kent.

However I can tell council that, of the 122 domiciliary care agencies the council uses, there are only 2 which have not fully met the CQC's safe recruitment practices. Both of these were identified in the last 12 months and there has been intensive work undertaken with both care agencies by KCC's safeguarding and contracts staff to

ensure the agencies have raised their standards. Both agencies are awaiting re-inspection by CQC to confirm that they now meet the required standard.

CQC targets its inspections on those agencies about which it has the most concerns, meaning that high performing agencies are inspected less frequently. From information provided by CQC, of the 122 agencies KCC uses, 49 have not been inspected by CQC in the last 2 years. As described earlier, regular service user reviews, quality monitoring and shared information from other organisations ensures that the council maintains current information on the quality of these agencies and that the welfare of vulnerable people is safeguarded.