

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, 13 December 2012

Question by Mike Harrison to
Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills

"My question is to Mr Whiting and it is really quite simple. Can he please explain just where we stand with the new KCC Home to School Transport Policy with the following with regard to funding of H 2 S transport?

1. Free Schools
2. Academies

I am given to understand that within the grant from Central Government given to these schools for each and every student there is a small amount which is to go toward transport to and from school. If this is in fact the case how do we (KCC) make sure that the various schools pay their way for this transport?"

Answer

The funding provided to Academies and Free Schools does not include any element for Home To School Transport and we have confirmed that with the DfE. Academies and Free Schools are state maintained schools, albeit independent of the local authority. As such we are still required to provide (and fund) Home To School Transport for students attending those schools, applying the same criteria under the Home to School Transport policy, as we do for Kent maintained schools.

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13 December 2012

**Question by Martin Vye to
Bryan Sweetland, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

Will the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste inform the Council of:

- a) the total cost to the County Council of all the works connected with the Westgate Towers, Canterbury closure scheme, including the costs of highway realignment, signage, new pedestrian crossings, Public Notices, and the planned traffic lights

and

- b) the increased volumes of vehicular traffic that have been measured along London Road, upper St Dunstan's Street, and Station Road West since the beginning of the scheme?

Answer

The scheme cost to the County Council to date is £66,290. This includes the traffic signals at the Westgate Towers, design fees for traffic signal support and KCC staff time. These costs have been paid from a fund for local sustainable transport projects provided by the Department for Transport. The other elements of the scheme detailed in Mr Vye's question have been paid by Canterbury City Council.

A traffic count was carried out in October 2012 which showed that, compared to just before the trial started:

London Road traffic flows have increased by 20%

St Dunstan's Street traffic flows have increased by 21%

Station Road west traffic flows have increased by 24%

I can also report that congestion in St Peter's Place has dramatically reduced in both directions. North Lane and Pound Lane previously suffered from high volumes of through traffic which have now been substantially reduced, and the dual carriageway section of the ring road itself is flowing more freely between Wincheap and Broad Street.

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Question by Leslie Christie to
Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills

Can the Cabinet Member confirm recent press reports that the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2011/12 shows that Kent is the 10th worst local authority in England for pupils attending a good or outstanding primary school? If so can he explain how Kent got into this situation and what are they doing to get out of it, including how much it is costing to repair this self-inflicted problem?

Answer

The Government has rightfully raised the bar and the Ofsted inspection framework has become more rigorous. School improvement and the attainment of Kent's young people has been of the top priority list for 16 years. Last year we had the best ever results by Kent young people.

Kent's pupils are achieving. At the time of the report's publication, more pupils from Kent achieved 5 GCSEs graded A*-C including English and Maths compared to the national average, with over 60% of Kent's pupils reaching this benchmark, despite the debacle over the marking of English papers.

According to figures released at 9.30 this morning by the DfE, Kent's key stage 2 results have risen from 72% in 2011 to 78% in 2012 which shows how the quality of teaching is accelerating rapidly. There were 18 primary schools, some from our most deprived areas, where 100% of pupils achieved level 4 in English and Maths at key stage 2.

In addition, in 2010 there were 97 schools that were below the national floor standards of 60% English and Maths Level 4 combined. In 2012 this has been reduced to just 23.

These, our best-ever results, can only be achieved by good teaching, which is one of the elements of a school which Ofsted inspect on their visits to schools. Ofsted also look at other elements in addition to pupil progress, such as the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and how well the school is led and managed. In essence, Ofsted focuses on schools rather than the pupils.

Members may not be aware but the information within the Ofsted report is out-of-date. At the start of this week, 73% of Kent's secondary schools are good or outstanding, 58.5% of primary schools are good or outstanding and 78% of Special schools are good or outstanding.

As we said in Bold Steps for Education, our vision is for Kent to be the most forward looking area in England for education and learning so that we are the best place for children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve.

Good or outstanding leadership and teaching are at the heart of this plan. Over the next three years, Bold Steps for Education aims for at least 85% of primary and secondary schools and 100% of special schools to be judged good or outstanding by Ofsted, and for no KCC school to be in special measures or notice to improve.

We will do this by focusing relentlessly on improving standards and the quality of education and learning so that excellence is promoted across the system. We are challenging and supporting leaders within schools, helping them to direct their energy and resources where it will be most effective.

We are also developing teacher training such as Every Lesson Counts.

We are working with governors to train them how to better hold the school leadership to account and how they can better fulfil their important role.

We are encouraging schools to work in collaboration, so good practice can be spread across the whole county. We are supporting the best schools and school leaders to lead the system and drive improvement across all schools, transforming outcomes for all of our children and young people.

In summary, the Ofsted judgement is just one measure of performance. Kent's schools can be rightly proud of the substantial improvements they are making for the benefit of our young people.

COUNTY COUNCIL

13 December 2012

Question by Tim Prater to
Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Customer & Communities

On searching through Google for "Kent County Councillor Mike Hill", a link is found to Mr Hill's Councillor profile on the kent.gov.uk website, but the description underneath reads that "*A description for this result is not available because of this site's robots.txt*".

Councillor details - **Mike Hill**, OBE - Kent County Council

www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/your.../mike_hill_obc.aspx

A description for this result is not available because of this site's robots.txt – learn more.

The same applies to many other pages across the site, and the indexing of still more files on the kent.gov.uk are explicitly blocked.

- a) In these days of transparency and openness, would the Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities explain why?

and

- b) Given web users must therefore visit the KCC site to acquire any description, could he also inform the Council what prior consent is sought from users of kent.gov.uk to store cookies on users computers?"

Answer

- a) This particular issue is simply a technical problem, which was caused by a change in the way Google searches our site – this is a recent update made by Google and we are already making the necessary amendments to accommodate the changes. Effectively, those changes affect the page description Google results show when specific search results are given. We are working with Google to find a solution but the problem is intermittent and several improvements have already been made. For example, entering Mr Hill's name into Google on Tuesday 11 December delivered the appropriate result.
- b) Our approach on managing cookies has been informed by the Information Commissioners' Office guidance published in April this year. Our approach mirrors that of many other councils and organisations. Since we don't use cookies to identify individuals or target advertising, we've taken a sensible approach that will explain why and how we use cookies, direct people to information elsewhere on the web to find out more about cookies and to websites that explain how they can disable them if they wish on their

browsers. It will also allow the usability and accessibility of the website to remain unaffected while still observing ICO guidelines. This approach has been agreed by our Information Governance Team.

Here is the link to our cookies policy -

http://www.kent.gov.uk/website_information/how_we_use_cookies.aspx.

COUNTY COUNCIL

13 December 2012

Question by Rob Bird to
Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning & Skills

Of 150 councils inspected by Ofsted, Kent is tenth from the bottom and for the fourth year in succession 45% of our primary schools are under-performing; for the same period the percentage for England as a whole averages at 31%. I am sure all Members would agree that Kent's performance is still totally unacceptable.

We have plenty of excellent teachers and head-teachers across the county and no-one doubts their commitment, hard work and dedication to their pupils. However, there are fundamental problems in far too many of our primary schools.

Would the Cabinet Member for Education, Learning & Skills inform this Council what steps are being taken to address this dire situation as a matter of priority and will he also give his personal assurance that Kent can expect better results in Ofsted's report next year and in subsequent years?

Answer

Members will note this question replicates the one already made by Mr Christie so, whilst I thank Mr Bird for acknowledging the commitment, hard work and dedication to their pupils of our excellent teachers and head-teachers across the county, I would refer him back to the answer I have given previously.

Thank you.

COUNTY COUNCIL

13 December 2012

**Question by George Koowaree to
Bryan Sweetland, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

"With regard to the maintenance and repair of the Shared Space in Ashford, would the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste please tell the Council if he regrets the decision to purchase and ship materials for the shared space from China and Belgium rather than using a UK source and was there any political input in making that decision? Can the Cabinet Member confirm that he will go back to the original scheme that included the expansion of the station forecourt and say how the expansion will be financed?"

Answer

Materials sourced from overseas have been commonly used in shared space schemes, particularly granite from China. Those used in the Ashford Shared Space scheme were considered appropriate at the time. The design stages of the scheme were informed by a Champions' Group, which included political representatives of Kent County Council and Ashford Borough Council. There have been maintenance issues with the scheme, and we are currently commissioning an independent review to assess their extent and recommend appropriate solutions.

The station forecourt public realm scheme is being reviewed in the light of experience with the Shared Space, and in the context of the extent of funding that will become available for it through contributions related to redevelopment of the Commercial Quarter immediately to the north.

COUNTY COUNCIL

13 December 2012

**Question by Richard Parry to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Performance & Health
Reform**

Currently if you live in Sevenoaks West, especially in the villages near the A25, the Broadband service is truly awful.

For many residents Broadband speeds are not only very slow they are also erratic. In essence the service is little better than that which might be obtained from a “dial up” line, with the recorded speeds ranging from 0.6 Mbps to the occasional maximum of 2.2 Mbps.

In other parts of Sevenoaks, for the same line rental cost, Broadband speeds are normally in the region of 14 Mbps!

Despite the several assurances and “the message that there is of course the DEFRA bid” there does not appear to be any positive news or even an indication of when there will be improvement.

Therefore will the Cabinet Member, without any obfuscation, inform the residents of Sevenoaks West when they are likely to be able to benefit from having a reliable and speedy Broadband Service which is compatible with the needs of the 21st Century.

Answer

Kent County Council is working in partnership with the Government’s Broadband Agency, Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), to deliver a major project to transform Kent and Medway’s rural broadband infrastructure. The project aims to bring broadband to every property in Kent and Medway and will ensure that most will be able to access superfast broadband.

Without this project many rural businesses and communities would continue to have either no or very slow broadband services as there are no market-led plans to upgrade infrastructure in many rural parts of the County.

Kent County Council is investing over £10 million to enable this upgrade, which has been matched by £9.87 million from the Government.

Excellent progress has been made in taking forward the Make Kent Quicker project, including securing an early slot on the Government’s national pipeline. As a result, Kent businesses and communities will benefit from these improvements ahead of many other areas.

We were given the green light by the Government to launch our procurement at the end of October and will be appointing a supplier in April 2013. Whilst precise delivery timescales cannot be confirmed until we have completed the procurement exercise, we anticipate that work will start in 2013, the first services will come on line in 2014 and services will become available to all properties during 2015. We have, however, been informed by the suppliers and BDUK that it will not be possible to confirm the geographical phasing for the rollout until after the procurement has been completed and initial survey work has been undertaken.

In addition, Sundridge and Brasted parishes and parts of Halstead, Seal and Knockholt have submitted a combined Expression of Interest application to the second round of the Defra's Rural Community Broadband Fund. This national programme is targeted at areas that may not receive a superfast broadband service under the BDUK programme. We understand that, should this application receive a green light to proceed in the next bidding round (timings still to be confirmed by Defra), upgraded services would need to be on line by March 2015. Kent County Council has been working with many communities and District Councils on Kent-based applications to maximise the draw down of this fund into Kent – and will continue to support Sevenoaks District Council in the development of this application.