

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

11 December 2008

**Question by Miss S Carey to the
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

In October 2008 Environment and Regeneration published a booklet entitled 'Our Journey'. In the section on Operation Stack we are told that a lorry park of 3,000 places will be a permanent solution to Operation Stack. We are also told that 'consultation is planned with the local community'. An earlier press release from KCC indicated that three lorry parks were planned.

How many lorry parks of how many places constitute a 'permanent solution' to Operation Stack, what type of consultation is proposed and will it be a consultation in the genuine sense of the word with the prospect of a change of mind?

Answer

We are proposing only one lorry park to deal with Operation Stack. It is intended that the site will be dual purpose, to provide facilities for overnight lorry parking as well dealing with Operation Stack. We are working to identify two further overnight lorry parks, one along the M2 corridor and the second along the M25 corridor in Kent.

The proposed Stack Lorry Park site at Sellindge is considered to be the preferred site because of its location, its proximity to the Channel Tunnel, direct access on to M20, natural screening and absence of formal land use designations. The next stage of feasibility work is in hand, to carry out the full range of engineering and environmental surveys so that the proposal can be progressed to the next stage and the environmental impacts and mitigation can be assessed.

In addition, an Economic Impact Assessment study is being commissioned to quantify the socio-economic effects of Stack. When this work is completed and the further feasibility work has made substantive progress, then the way forward can be reviewed. It is at this stage in about summer 2009 that I would envisage public consultation in its widest sense.

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**Question by Mr M Fittock to the
Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills**

How many schools in Kent have had five or more Headteachers in the last three years?

Answer

I have been advised that only Vale View Community School in Dover has had five headteachers in the last three years. The Substantive Headteacher left in May 06 and the deputy acted up for over a year before leaving the school himself to take up a post at a different school. Following his departure, two retired heads were asked to cover the vacancy for a very short period until the replacement substantive head was able to take up his post in January this year.

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**Question by Mr R Parker to the
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

If the £17.5m allocated to re-organising the Kent Highways Services had been spent on road and pavement repairs, would the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste inform the Council how many miles of roads or pavements could be resurfaced?

Answer

£17.5m would fund either:

135 km (1.6% of the network) of Carriageway resurfacing.

OR

584 km (16% of the network) of Footway resurfacing.

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**Question by Mrs E Tweed to the
Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational Achievement**

What does the termination of SATs for 14 year olds tell us about the last 15 years of their existence and what benefits can KCC derived from this decision?

Answer

The use of Standardised Assessment Tests (SATs) at Key Stage 3 has provided useful information both locally and nationally by setting national and local attainment targets to provide a focus for improvement.

However, alongside KS3 SATs, the Kent Secondary Strategy has encouraged schools to look at innovative curriculum design and practice and has focused on progress from the end of Key Stage 2 through to the end of Key Stage 4. Some schools have experimented with early entry into KS3 SATs in order to move swiftly on to GCSEs

The announcement of the termination of KS3 SATs has been largely welcomed by schools and there are a number of benefits as schools use the flexibility of the new secondary curriculum to focus on the needs of all pupils. The pace of learning will be uninterrupted as time will not have to be diverted into testing and there will be a greater emphasis on teacher assessment to guide pupils' learning on a day to day basis, removing the reliance on national testing.

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**Question by Mr R Parry to the
Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills (CFE)**

Would the Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills provide a report on the status and any progress of the proposed Sevenoaks Academy including a brief summary of how the very worthwhile ethos and aspirations of the Bradbourne and Wildernesse schools will be transferred to the proposed academy?

Answer

An Expression of Interest has been submitted to DCSF to establish an Academy in Sevenoaks, to replace the Wildernesse (Foundation) School for Boys and the Bradbourne (Foundation) School for Girls. Ministerial approval to proceed to Feasibility stage is awaited.

Integral parts of the Academy Expression of Interest submitted to the DCSF, are ethos, vision and curriculum statements. Predecessor school representation has supported the development of the Expression of Interest with the express intent of building on their current strengths, while capitalising on the contribution of Sponsors to establish a high quality school of choice for Sevenoaks town, together with a hub for learning, leisure and extended services for the community.

The proposal is for an 11-19, co-educational, Academy with 240 places in each year group, plus a sixth form with 350 places available. It would specialise in Languages (English being foremost, to focus on Literacy skills) and the Expressive Arts (to build on Bradbourne's success in Visual Arts). The lead specialism is reflective of the interest and skills of the Lead Sponsor, Mr Gordon Phillips and of the education Co-Sponsor, Sevenoaks School. KCC would also be a Co-Sponsor. The opening date is planned for 1 September 2009.

Ministerial approval would prompt the DCSF to appoint independent project management consultants to manage the Academy project through a detailed feasibility stage. This would include full public consultation on the proposal. Project management consultants would lead on all matters relating to the establishment of the Academy, while KCC would lead on the necessary closure of the predecessor schools. If ministerial approval were to be received before Christmas, it is likely that the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board would be sought at the 8 January 2009 meeting regarding undertaking a public consultation. If progressed, this consultation would take place early in the New Year.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

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**Question by Mr T Birkett to the
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

Would the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste inform the Council what progress he has made in getting the blocked drains at the junction of Mill Hill/Mill Road/Manor Road, Deal cleared since his visit to the area on 7 August when he promised to get the work done?

Answer

I am assured that the work is now complete, but I can only apologise to Mr Birkett for the delay involved. Suffice to say I did give instructions for Mill Hill/Mill Road to be inspected directly after my visit but I regret that this was not done.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

11 December 2008

**Question by Mr T Maddison to the
Chairman of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee**

Following the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee meeting on 22 October does the Chairman of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee feel reassured by the stated intention of the Portfolio holder for Public Health to include Children and Adult's Social Services in the remit of the Kent Healthwatch?

Answer

Although I welcome the Cabinet Member's stated intention to include social services in the remit of Kent Healthwatch, I agree with the statement made at the meeting of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee by my colleague Roger Truelove, that data being collected through Healthwatch should be used effectively to monitor KCC's own service delivery and make any changes required as necessary. I also agree with Mrs Dean's observation that the name Healthwatch should be amended in some way to mention its remit with regard to social services. Otherwise Healthwatch may be seen as nothing more than a political stunt by the Conservative administration at the expense of local health services and paid for by council taxpayers.

Question No. 8

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

11 December 2008

**Question by Mr S J G Koowaree to the
Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills**

Will the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational Achievement give Members an update on the establishment of a Children's' Centre in South Willesborough, Ashford.

Answer

This question fell as Mr Koowaree was unable to attend the meeting.

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Question by Dr M Eddy to the
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste

Following media coverage of a recent death in a collision on Hadlow Road, Tonbridge, would the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste please inform the Council whether Kent Highway Services was given £300,000 as part of a planning agreement in January 2006 by the developers of the Castle Court retirement home where the deceased was a resident, to install a pedestrian crossing on Hadlow Road and why, if so, the crossing has not yet been installed, nearly three years later?

Answer

Following on from the approval of Planning Permission for 54 elderly residential units, at Castle Court, (McCarthy & Stone Development), there was a condition within this planning permission, (and a Section 106 Agreement), to provide a '*Pelican type pedestrian crossing*' on the Hadlow Road, (A26), in the vicinity of Castle Court.

A financial contribution of £35,000 has been set aside from the developers and is currently being held by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. This funding is available for the installation of a signalled controlled crossing up to the 10th January 2011.

This £35k is a **contribution** towards a crossing facility, as the crossing itself will cost in excess of £50,000. Kent Highway Services have secured the additional necessary funding through the Local Transport Plan.

Kent Highway Services went to out to public consultation on a proposed Puffin Crossing facility on the Hadlow Road in July 2008, following a number of objections from local residents and a petition being submitted against the proposed location of this crossing; this matter was then referred to the Tonbridge & Malling Joint Transportation Board in September 2008 for a decision as to whether or not to proceed with the crossing at the proposed location. - The Members of the Board approved the proposed location at this meeting in September.

The necessary orders have since been written and advertised, and the required road closure has been applied for to allow the contractor to undertake these works. The construction works for the crossing on Hadlow Road have been programmed with our contractor to commence on February 9th 2009.

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**Question by Mr M Vye to the
Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational Achievement**

Will the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational Achievement inform the Council of the cost of the animated advertisement for the recruitment for the post of Managing Director of Children, Families and Education and whether he believes an advertisement targeting potential Father Christmases reflects the gravity and complexity of the position and the professionalism of the Directorate?

Answer

The advertisement for the Managing Director of Children' Families and Education was commissioned through KCC's recruitment advertising agency, Tribal whose brief was to ensure the scope and impact of the role was reflected as an integral part of the campaign. The animated version appears on the microsite for the vacancy. The advert very much reflects the complexity of this critically important role by subtly stressing the impact the postholder will have on children in Kent. Whilst this job has enormous gravity, which is fully reflected in the extremely comprehensive content of the microsite, this does not mean the recruit advert should to be dull and doom laden. The seasonal nature of the image, the humour and the fact that the primary focus of the campaign is to drive potential applicants to a state of the art and very informative microsite should be celebrated - recruitment adverts should capture people's interest and make them curious to find out more. This advert achieves this absolutely and at a cost for the whole microsite of £3,270 (which is considerably less than the cost of a single press advertisement in a national newspaper) also represents good value for money. It is part of a professional campaign which portrays KCC as a modern, vibrant organisation which values appropriate use of humour (people who are serious candidates do not need reminding about the gravity, they will be only too well aware of it) and recognises the critical nature and impact of this key role. It exactly reflects and captures what is good about this Authority.

Already twenty high calibre individuals have shown interest in the post, which demonstrates the advertisement's appeal.

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**Question by Mr G Rowe to the
Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational Achievement**

Given the increasing complexity of child protection cases and the continuing extra pressure on Children's Social Services, will the Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills inform the Council whether there has been a review of the maximum caseload per Social Worker and whether extra resources, to ensure that the effectiveness of individual Social Workers is not prejudiced by having to deal with too many cases, are being identified in the preparation of the 2009/10 budget?

Answer

Comprehensive reviews are undertaken on a monthly basis at area, district and team levels. The Social Services' Policy Team monitor monthly activity levels and there are periodic audits of cases. In effect, we constantly review our service and ensure that those social workers with a larger caseload receive appropriate supervision and support.

The service has also been reviewed by external inspections. In the past year, both the APA (*yet to be published*) and JAR inspections have highlighted the fact that safeguarding functions in Kent are highly effective.

Like everybody, we were disturbed by the tragedy in Haringey but we are confident from these reviews that our services are robust and that we have a highly motivated, trained and effective staff group, who are hard working and committed to safeguarding vulnerable children within the County. Our confidence does not however blind us to the need for constant vigilance, the avoidance of complacency, and a rigorous recognition that there are dangerous families in our communities and that in the face of even the best funded and professional services, tragedies may still happen.

There will need to be further investment in the front-line delivery of social services. We are actively exploring the provision of additional funding in order to achieve this. Members will be kept informed.

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Question by Mrs T Dean to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste

Would the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste please explain whether bus journeys taken between 9.00 and 9.30am by over 60s and people with disabilities in Kent will be paid for in full by KCC or not, and if not will he explain which journeys will be paid for by KCC, and who will be paying for the remainder?

Answer

Members will be aware that the statutory Concessionary Fares Scheme only operates between 9.30am and 11pm. This is currently the responsibility of our Districts, a number of who are seriously disadvantaged by the way this service is funded nationally.

Earlier this year Kent County Council took the decision under its “well being powers” to extend this service from 9am. This has been welcomed by many.

Kent County Council has undertaken to meet ALL additional costs from this extension.