

COUNTY COUNCIL

Thursday 17 July 2014

**Question by Angela Harrison to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

Given the continuing press coverage of non-LEA controlled schools, would the Cabinet Member for Education let me know what would happen if an Academy failed and was closed down? Would the land, buildings and other assets revert back to the LEA?

Answer

The Secretary of State has powers to remove an academy from the control of one trust and put it under the control of another. He would typically exercise this power where it could be demonstrated that the trust had failed to maintain educational standards, adequate financial management or had breached its funding agreement with the Secretary of State, for that academy, in some other way. There is no known limit to the number of times an academy could be assigned to a new trust as there are few precedents.

If successive trusts were unable to raise standards or make the academy financially viable and it closed then the position regarding land would depend on the predecessor school's former designation.

The Local Authority is obliged to grant a 125 year lease to the acquiring academy trust for former community school sites. If the academy were to close and the funding agreement dissolved then the lease would terminate and the site would revert to the LA.

In the case of a foundation school the site is already owned by the school and its governors are the freeholders to the title deeds. Accordingly it is not held on KCC's capital register of assets. At the time of conversion to academy status a direction is issued by the Secretary of State to allow this ownership to transfer to the academy trustees. As the LA had no previous interest in the site then presumably no part of it would have to revert to us following an academy closure.

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**Question by Colin Caller to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

Mr Gough is probably aware of the significant number of parents that were unable to secure a primary school place of choice for their children in the Gravesham East area. This problem appears to have been exacerbated by the number of schools in the area such as Academies and Voluntary Aided Schools that are permitted to apply a different admissions policy to that of the primary schools controlled by Kent County Council. This inconsistency in admissions policy across the schools not only generates confusion for parents when making their preference choices but also results in children living miles from a school being given a place in preference to another child that is living within a few yards of a school's gate.

Can Mr Gough reassure parents of my division by advising what further action is to be taken in time for the next academic year to increase the number of primary school places in the Gravesham East area and inform members whether he supports or opposes the establishment of any more schools that are outside the control of this council?

Answer

Schools do indeed have different admissions arrangements, if they are not maintained by the local authority and if they are church schools, and every effort is made to communicate these differences to parents in the KCC annual Admissions booklets for applications to Primary and Secondary schools. It is government policy to have a more diverse education system and the growth of academy schools means each school is its own admissions authority, but within the prescriptions of the national Admissions Code. Distance continues to be the main criterion for applications to all schools, alongside other criteria that express the particular characteristics of individual schools.

We recognise the particular pressures that this creates in some parts of the county. Kent's Education Commissioning Plan has identified Gravesham as a priority area in need of additional school places, and an additional 78 places have been created for September 2014 and a further 6 forms of entry (180 places) between 2015 and 2018.

On Primary offer day in April 2014 there were more places available in Gravesham than the number of first preferences received so whilst it will have been disappointing for some parents not to have secured their preferred school, sufficient school places were available for the LA to meet its duty to offer a school place to every child that wanted one.

Any local authority school which has changed to Academy status must retain the existing admissions arrangements in the first instance and then consult should the governors decide to amend arrangements at a later date. This legal requirement

affords the LA and indeed the local community, the opportunity to ensure admissions criteria are not introduced that might restrict admission to local schools.

It is slightly different for church schools and in Gravesham there are a number of very popular faith- based schools which prioritise pupils who are practicing families of that faith. This is a long standing arrangement and KCC recognises the significant demand for such schools and the place for them amongst the rich and diverse mix of schools in Kent.

Legislation now requires that any new school must be either an Academy or a Free School, therefore any new schools will have admissions policies outside direct local authority control.

It should, however, be reassuring to Mr Caller's constituents to know that new non – faith academies invariably set admissions arrangements that serve the local community first and foremost, so it is expected that any new schools that do not have a faith- based intake will serve their immediate local communities, as do many faith schools also.

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**Question by Mike Eddy to
David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport**

Can the Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways outline his proposals to deal with the road safety issues on Deal seafront, particularly in the vicinity of the Royal Hotel, bearing in mind that my county councillor colleague and I have found that any meaningful change is well beyond our now reduced Members' Highways Fund?

Answer

The County Council takes road safety extremely seriously and to this end I have just approved a new Casualty Reduction Strategy in which it is set out how the County plans to reduce road casualties in Kent up to 2020 by using a combination of education, enforcement and engineering intervention measures.

Currently the County Council prioritises road safety funding to those locations where crashes are occurring which result in personal injury. This is to ensure we get the best value for the public out of the limited resources and budgets that are available. In the new casualty reduction strategy it is however proposed that in future other risk factors such as damage only and local concerns will be taken into account as opposed to simply relying solely on the crash record. This process is still in development therefore funding is currently still being targeted and those sites with the poorest crash history in the first instance.

The personal injury crash record for Deal seafront has been analysed and in the past three years, up to the end of February 2014, there have only been two slight personal injury crashes along the whole front, neither of which occurred in the vicinity of The Royal Hotel. The Police reports for these crashes both indicate the major contributing factor was driver error and there is no evidence any intervention measures available to KCC would have prevented them.

We are aware of that there was road traffic crash by The Royal Hotel which occurred in April of this year and we are awaiting full details of the crash from Kent Police. If, as a result of their investigations, the Police raise any concerns about the road, we will of course take any necessary and justifiable action to address these concerns. There are currently 'road narrows' warning signs and road markings in place on the approaches to the Hotel. I have received a number of tranches of an informal petition bearing, for the most part, the names of people without the town of Deal. I made a visit to Deal on a recent weekend to achieve a better understanding of the officer briefings I have received: I am not, of course, an engineer, but there was nothing about the physical environment of Beach Street or any behaviour I saw or thought likely that persuaded me that any intervention on the highways authority's part was necessary.

As far as I am aware the local member has not submitted an application to his Combined Member Grant to investigate improving road safety at this location and if

this is indeed an important local issue then I see no reason why an application could not be submitted for officers to investigate and suggest affordable highway improvements.

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**Question by Sue Howes to
David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport**

Mr Brazier is no doubt aware of the high level of complaint by residents of Gravesham in relation to the "Safe and Sensible Street Lighting" initiative. Residents have voiced particular concern about street lights being switch off after midnight in minor roads, alleyways and other routes that are used by pedestrians to get to/from work or where there is an on-going problem with anti-social behaviour.

Would Mr Brazier please advise members whether consideration was given to the position of a street light; pedestrian usage; or the surrounding environment to determine whether a light should remain lit and would he also advise members whether this initiative had the positive support of Kent Police, Kent Fire and Kent Ambulance services.

Answer

We are converting around 70,000 of our 120,000 street lights to part-night lighting so that they switch-off at around midnight and then back on again at about 5.30am GMT (1am and 6.30am BST respectively). This was backed by 75% of residents who took part in a summer-long consultation.

All street lights are suitable for conversion unless they meet one or more of the exclusion criteria that we consulted upon. We will not be switching off any street lights in town centres, areas with CCTV, antisocial behaviour areas, at busy road junctions, roundabouts or sites with road safety issues.

We have worked very closely with Kent Police, using their crime statistics and experience, to identify sites having a record of crime or the potential for increased crime if the street lighting regime was changed; these sites continue to be lit on an all-night basis. We continue to work closely with the Police and will review the lighting requirements if any increase in crime can be attributed to the absence of street lighting. Kent Police have recently said that it is too early in the scheme to give any accurate indication as to whether the reduction of lighting levels has impacted on crime.

We also consulted with Kent Fire and Rescue Service and South East Coast Ambulance Service and they did not object to our Part-night proposals, on the basis that there are numerous other roads in Kent that are unlit, they carry their own light sources and use satellite navigation devices.

I acknowledge that a minority will be a little inconvenienced but we need to make savings to support frontline services. The intention here is to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions by switching off lights when they are least needed.

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**Question by Roger Truelove to
Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

Just over a year ago I asked you how the completion of the Northern Relief Road in Sittingbourne from East Hall to Bapchild was progressing. I think you gave me an optimistic reply. Could you give the Council a further update?

Answer

As Mr Truelove will be aware a public consultation on a preferred route option for the last section of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road/ Bapchild Link (SNRR) was carried out by KCC in 2010. The results of that consultation were inconclusive with no consensus on a preferred option. At the same time the national economic situation meant that funding for major transport schemes was significantly reduced with the incoming Government halting many pipeline schemes.

The establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships over the last couple of years, along with Governments' intention to devolve significant funding for transport, housing and skills through the Single Local Growth Fund via the LEPs from 2015, now provides a means of funding projects such as the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road. This scheme was one of 42 transport schemes put forward by KCC for funding through this mechanism.

Government announced on 7 July the Growth Deal for the South East LEP. Unfortunately, Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road has not been awarded funding and given that this funding mechanism is the principal one for delivery of major transport schemes, it appears unlikely this project will be funded in the short to medium term.

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**Question by Lee Burgess to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

With the advent of the new National Curriculum for Primary Schools in September can you inform me as to where within it the topics relating to the First and Second World Wars will fall?

At the moment schools tend to use either Britain since the 30's or the Second World War to fulfil this necessary function and I would like confirmation that similar opportunities will still exist from the new school year, I invite the Cabinet Member to advise the Council on this important issue.

Answer

The new National Curriculum for both Primary and Secondary Schools differs to its predecessors in that it is much less prescriptive about the subject content that must be taught at each key stage. Ultimately it is up to each school to determine for itself the amount of focus that they give to the First and Second World Wars and how these subjects are approached as part of the history curriculum. The new National Curriculum provides an outline of core knowledge around which teachers develop lessons to promote the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum. The new National Curriculum programmes of study for each subject have been published, setting out the 'matters, skills and processes' to be taught at each key stage. Schools are free to choose how they organise their school day and subject content, as long as the content of the national curriculum programmes of study is taught to all pupils.

In Key Stage 1, pupils will be given the opportunity to gain some conceptual understanding of what "war" is and as such teachers may touch upon the First and Second World Wars as examples but this is not specifically stated in what pupils should be taught.

In Key Stage 2, pupils are to be taught the chronology of Britain and whilst it is not specifically written that the First and Second World War should be taught at this stage, these events can be used as a frame of reference when learning about different historical contexts. Schools will be familiar with teaching aspects of the world wars and it is reasonable to expect that they will continue to feature in the history projects covered by pupils.

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**Question by Eileen Rowbotham to
David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport**

Could the portfolio holder for Environment and Transport inform this Council what action he has taken to address the problems caused by Southern Water's failure to address the inability of the mains drainage system in Albert Road, Deal, to cope with even moderate rainfall as demonstrated in May this year and on previous occasions?

Answer

As the Lead Local Flood Authority, the County Council has a duty to investigate incidents of surface water flooding. Our Officers are leading a full investigation of the incident on 21 May and the outcome of this will be shared with the divisional Members and residents in early August.

Our highway drainage system discharges into the Southern Water surface water sewer. Work completed to date has confirmed that although our own infrastructure is in good condition, it is believed that the surface water sewer was overwhelmed by very heavy rainfall on the evening of 21 May. This situation was made worse by an unexpected electrical fault occurring at a nearby Southern Water pumping station which exacerbated the situation and ultimately resulted in the foul sewer surcharging on Albert Road.

Southern Water Services are conducting their own investigation into the incident and so far, have been fully cooperative. If continued support from Southern Water to resolve this issue is not forthcoming, senior officers and the Cabinet Member will be advised so that the matter can be escalated within Southern Water. If necessary, intervention from the industry regulator OFWAT may be sought.

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**Question by Roger Latchford to
Paul Carter, Leader of the County Council**

The Manston Airport issue is now subject to mounting public concern and the apparent lack of involvement and support by KCC. Can the Leader please advise this Council what the current situation is and what steps KCC is taking to resolve the current impasse with Mrs Gloag, in order to keep Manston open as an operational airfield.

Answer

Securing a strong viable economic future for Manston is of prime importance to the County Council, and the County Council is taking all appropriate action.

The announcement of the closure of Manston Airport had been unexpected and as soon as I heard the news, I ensured arrangements were in place to support the local people whose jobs were at risk.

I have been very supportive of the task force set up by Sir Roger Gale to seek a successful future for Manston and I have attended the meeting at Portcullis House, led by Sir Roger and Laura Sandys MP, to consider the best way forward.

I have let it be known publicly that I'd welcome a meeting with any prospective investor that had a viable and credible business plan for Manston as an airport. To that end, I met with RiverOak on 19 June and requested a copy of their airport business plan so the Council could form a view of their proposal, and I await their response. I am also liaising with the Thanet & East Kent Chamber of Commerce to receive their plan.

This month, I met Ann Gloag to hear her own plans. She told me Manston Airport had made losses for 15 years and the previous owner had spent two years trying to sell it. When she bought the airport she believed she could succeed: she had brought in a highly skilled and respected aviation turnaround team to work alongside her. She said that, despite her team's strenuous efforts, no potential passenger or freight carriers considered Manston a viable option for them. That, coupled with the financial situation and negative projections of future revenue, had left her with no alternative but to close the airport.

She told me she had received a number of credible approaches from legitimate parties interested in being part of the future of Manston and she would be reviewing these over the coming weeks. At present, she was reviewing all possible options.

I said that the County Council was ready to work with Mrs Gloag and any other potential investors to secure an ambitious future for Manston. We concluded the meeting with Mrs Gloag agreeing to discuss with me her future proposals when these were clearer.

Recognising the pivotal role played by Thanet District Council, I have also had discussions with TDC's Leader and Deputy Leader on how we can work together to secure the best outcome.

At all my meetings and in all my endeavours I have made it quite clear that Kent County Council will do all that is within our power to act in the best interests of the East Kent economy. I have clarified that we are ready to help and support any viable and credible investor just as I led the highly successful taskforce implementing the packages of support three years ago when Pfizer announced they were pulling out of R&D at Sandwich.

As members will recall, this Pfizer taskforce transformed the site, whose future lay in the balance, into one of the most successful enterprise zones in the country by securing £40 million from the Regional Growth Fund, flood defence funding and immediate start-up grants for new businesses in East Kent, so there are now 60 companies employing 1400 people in total.

I am in no doubt that a similar bright future can be secured for Manston.

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**Question by Brian MacDowall to
David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport**

Given the Westgate traffic trial in Canterbury was returned to the original road layout after strong public protest, what is KCC's response to the Westgate Towers "Mark 2 or Little Brother" scheme announced recently in the local press and to be paid for with taxpayer money

Answer

I cannot comment upon what Mr MacDowall may have read in his local paper. However, what is being implemented in the St Dunstan's area of Canterbury are the measures directly supported by the public consultation in late 2013 and endorsed by the Steering Group set up to determine this matter. These comprise speed, width and weight restrictions; a new pedestrian crossing of Station Road West and the consolidation of the widened pavement in St Dunstan's Street. The layout of the public highway will remain exactly as it is now. My officers and I remain more than happy to personally brief Mr MacDowall on this matter.

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**Question by Nick Bond to
David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport**

Could the Cabinet Member for Transport please explain how the Canterbury District Transport Strategy be issued for consultation without any input/involvement from the area's county councillors or indeed consulting the Canterbury Joint Transport Board?

Answer

Canterbury City Council are currently conducting a full public consultation on their Local Plan and the associated transport strategy as part of the statutory process which all such documents must follow. This is the City Council's prerogative as the plan making authority and it has been done without any endorsement or approval from the County Council's Cabinet. The transport strategy and the views of the public upon it being gathered now will be reported to the September meeting of the Joint Transportation Board, subject to KCC receiving a number of key assurances around the viability and phasing of the Plan to ensure that the public infrastructure it requires can be delivered sensibly and practically. It is my firmly held belief that, as the upper tier infrastructure provider, the County Council must reserve its position until these fundamental issues are addressed.

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**Question by Martin Vye to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

Given the recent well-publicised measures taken by the Government, OfSTED, and the local authority with regard to certain schools in Birmingham, will the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform outline the measures taken by his Directorate to monitor the possible transmission of dangerous extremist views in schools in Kent; and will he list the number of racist incidents logged in Kent schools for each of the last four years?

Answer

Schools and their governing bodies have a duty to ensure that they undertake work to build cohesion within their communities. There is strong evidence that schools in Kent do this work.

The LA does not monitor the transmission of dangerous extremist views in schools in Kent. There has been no indication from schools that there have been incidents relating to the transmission of dangerous extremist views in Kent schools. Schools would alert the LA if any such incidents arose.

Schools are aware of the challenge and risks in relation to safeguarding the wellbeing of young people from grooming and exploitation. A key element of this concerns the transmission of dangerous extremist views. It is expected that schools and governing bodies are able to identify and respond to those who are vulnerable to the transmission of extremist ideas both in relation to young people and staff. No school, in an Ofsted inspection, has been found to be failing or to have a cause for concern in relation to this issue.

Zak Programme

PREVENT is part of an overarching national counter terrorism strategy that aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. The ZAK programme, delivered by Kent Police, was developed through Kent's Prevent Steering Group. The ZAK team have visited a number of schools across the County and worked with leaders in order to explore the radicalisation of young people and respond through early intervention. Meetings held in Ashford schools and Tunbridge Wells in early spring were well attended by key members of staff from schools in those districts. The ZAK lead officer has also worked on a one to one basis with young people in the county through referrals.

Safeguarding

Kent Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) is a partnership group that works to promote the welfare of children, and ensure the effectiveness of body's in that purpose. The Education sub-group will monitor schools and education settings to

ensure children are getting effective care, and will offer support, advice and guidance in this area.

Cabinet Office Report Recommendations

There was a recent report from the Cabinet Office called *Tackling Extremism in the UK* that made a number of proposals, including setting out that all schools must expect to be inspected and assessed on measures to protect their pupils from extremist material.

Racial Incidents in Schools

Number of racist incidents reported by schools in the last 4 academic years:

2009/10 – 874 (24 schools did not respond to survey)
2010/11 – 929 (24 schools did not respond to survey)
2011/12 – 749 (73 schools did not respond to survey)
2012/13 – 803 (103 schools did not respond to survey)

The Equality Act 2010 removed the requirement for schools to report racial incidents to the LA. Kent continues to ask schools to voluntarily supply this information in order to support schools to respond not only to racial bullying but all identity based bullying incidents. The data also allows the LA to see trends (if any) in order to provide strategic support and advice. The occurrence of racial incidents is not an indicator of extremist activity.

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**Question by Tom Maddison to
Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education & Health Reform**

Would the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Education please inform me if the admissions criteria for Primary Schools in the county has changed, in particular with the priority previously given to siblings attending the same school.

I have recently received concerns and complaints from a number of parents in my division who have been refused a place for their second child to attend the same school as their first.

Answer

There has been no change to the admissions arrangements for primary schools where KCC is the admissions authority in relation to the priority to pupils with a sibling link. We are also not aware of any other primary schools having removed or amended their sibling link arrangements so if Mr Maddison would care to refer any specific admissions cases to Mr Scott Bagshaw, Head of Fair Access he would be happy to investigate further.

Mr Maddison should be aware that it is possible for the sibling link to be broken. If a family have an older sibling in a school and have moved out of the immediate area of the school to a distance of more than 2 miles, from when the older child was admitted, then the sibling link is broken for the younger child. This policy was introduced to prevent families moving into catchment areas for schools to secure a place for a first child and then moving out of the area but retaining a sibling link which displaced local children. As a broad county policy we have long considered schools should serve their local communities first and foremost.

Mr Maddison would need to look at the circumstances of the individual cases. If his constituents have secured places in faith schools, but are not practicing members of that faith, it should be noted that some faith schools will prioritise children who are practicing members of a faith, which is the same denomination as the school, ahead of siblings from families who are not of faith.

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**Question by Brian Clark to
David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport**

Can the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport provide details of any planning applications where KCC has raised flood risk concern in the last year?

Earlier this year KCC raised no great concern with a housing plan for Langley Park and subsequently the planning application was passed. At the time land at the south of the site was severely affected by flooding at Brishing Dam (prompting KCC emergency planning response). Given the cost of flood response, can he assure members that KCC will now provide a clear opinion to planners on the suitability of housing development, based on the latest flood risk data and the lessons learned from recent flooding in Kent?

Answer

KCC is the lead local flood authority for Kent. The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 gives lead local flood authorities powers and duties for the strategic overview of local flooding, which is flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. KCC is not a statutory consultee in planning for flood risk matters, but I would like to assure the council that where KCC is approached, either by a developer or a planning authority, we provide advice and guidance on local flood risk using all current information available'.

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

With increasing demands on teachers it is vital that schools are led by Headteachers who are healthy, motivated and happy in their roles. Across the country it is increasingly difficult to find suitably qualified Headteachers who are capable of taking on the stress and challenge of improving under-performing schools.

Can the Cabinet Member for Education and Young People highlight what steps KCC are taking to ensure that the health and wellbeing of our Headteachers is supported to increase retention in an ever-decreasing vocation in Kent?

Answer

Kent County Council has a strong commitment to supporting all schools to improve and to securing the best educational outcomes for all children and young people. As the champion of families, children and young people our priorities are to ensure a good or better school is available to all learners; we secure and support the highest quality school leadership and governance; we promote the best educational practice; and we broker the influence of the best schools by facilitating strong collaborations between schools and with the local authority.

This means providing strong support for Headteachers to be effective, so that we achieve continuous improvement in standards, a significant narrowing of achievement gaps for vulnerable groups of learners, and a rapid rate of improvement in the number of good and outstanding schools.

We recognise that the best education systems have highly effective school leadership and consistently good and better teaching. Instructional leadership and system leadership are highly prized skill sets that we strive to develop and promote across the county.

The majority of schools in Kent are well led and are on a secure pathway to further improvement. 76% of schools are currently (July 2014) rated good and outstanding by Ofsted, compared to 80% of schools nationally. This includes 72% of Primary schools, 83% of Secondary schools and 79% of Special schools in Kent. We have been and continue to close the gap with national levels.

The quality of school leadership is key to success. Our strategy is to work directly with and support school leaders to be highly effective; to support and advise governors to make the best appointments to headship; to provide mentoring and leadership development opportunities for newly appointed headteachers and those in the early years of headship; to provide leadership development opportunities and succession planning for aspiring headteachers and senior leaders; and to facilitate peer support and collaborative work among school leaders that helps to spread the most effective educational leadership skills across the county.

We provide advice, practical help and support, training, headteacher mentoring, and regular contact with experienced headteachers who are Kent or National Leaders of Education and joint work through collaboration with other schools.

All schools have a designated LA officer / consultant who links directly with the school, undertaking **monitoring and support visits**. These visits are undertaken to support Headteacher's in their role and are an opportunity for the Headteacher to raise pressing issues and request support.

Newly appointed Headteachers are assigned an experienced Headteacher to be their **mentor** and they have access to the **LA Headteacher Induction Programme** consisting of six one day sessions which are funded by the LA. One key focus of this programme is the wellbeing of these Headteachers.

All Headteachers have **Dedicated Headship Time** by right, being up to ten percent of the working week. It is the responsibility of the governing body to ensure that their Headteacher has a reasonable workload, in support of a reasonable work-life balance, having regard to their health and welfare. To that end, through the Appraisal procedure, governing bodies are duty bound to make sure that this time is being taken and that work-life balance is monitored.

The LA also runs **targeted leadership programmes for Headteachers**, particularly those leading challenging schools where significant improvement is required. These programmes are generally six sessions across the academic year where the strategic role of a Headteacher is discussed and a key part of that is the Head's own wellbeing and health.

Most schools in Kent are now part of **collaborations** and peer to peer Headteacher support is a fundamental underpinning principal of this structure. Increasingly schools are also formed into triads or pairs with Headteachers in a coaching role. To that end the LA also runs three day **Mentor Coaching courses** for teachers, senior leaders and Headteachers; which are very well attended. The LA works in very close partnership with the Kent Association of Headteachers to ensure that support for school leaders is equitable across the county and is targeted towards those in need of additional support. .

Each District facilitates **Headteacher Briefings**; these are designed to keep Headteacher abreast of current development nationally and locally with the express aim of helping to reduce individual workloads.

The majority of Kent schools still buy in to '**Support Line**' which enables teachers and senior leaders alike to access six confidential counselling sessions by trained counsellors. The LA Recruitment and Retention team have also facilitated '**Wellbeing sessions**' targeted towards Headteachers and senior leaders.

In addition to this support, Kent teach.com, a KCC trading unit providing recruitment and retention advice to schools, also offers a Wellness Programme. This aims to support Headteachers in both managing their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their staff, highlighting potential problem areas and giving advice and guidance for making improvements. The team is also currently exploring other ways in which we can support Headteachers' wellbeing in cost effective ways for schools of all sizes.

Overall, therefore, we believe Headteachers in Kent are well supported professionally and have access to a wide range of networks and opportunities to promote their wellbeing and professional development. Currently there is not a high vacancy rate for headteacher posts, 17 schools out of 600 are without a permanent headteacher and all have effective interim management arrangements in place.

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**Question by Trudy Dean to
John Simmonds, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement**

In view of the Church of England's decision to withdraw from all connections with pay day lending firm Wonga, can the Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement please say what action KCC has taken to withdraw from all connections with such firms, to issue consumer advice to our own staff and report on the performance of KCC supported alternative products.

Answer

Firstly I am able to say that the Council has no investments with organisations such as Wonga who prey on those in society who are most vulnerable.

Mrs Dean will be aware that the Council has been a key supporter and, more importantly, funder of the Kent Savers credit union which was established 5 years ago. This is a very tangible way of addressing financial exclusion in the community. Kent Savers has issued loans of over £1.3m in total in this time. With the support of the Church they have recently established a sub branch in Murston and this is particularly welcome as it addresses wider issues of advice and support. We hope that further sub branches will open.

We are keen to see other bodies in the county such as the Church, District Councils and Housing Associations play their full part in making Kent Savers financially viable in the long term. It is our intention to meet up with these bodies with a view to helping Kent Savers grow and thus provide a service to the vulnerable. In doing this we must always be aware of the risks involved.

We are also working with Kent Savers to make KCC staff aware of their services.