

Questions from County Councillors

Questions from Cllr Paul Kimber to the Cabinet Member for Adult Health, Care and Independence in relation to Tricuro

Question

What were statements made by and the undertakings given by Dorset Council to Dorset staff about their terms and conditions as part of the consultation with staff on the transfer to Tricuro and will the Cabinet member circulate a copy of those statements and undertakings to members of this Council?

Answer

For our DCC staff, consultation was on the following basis:

- staff were informed that their terms and conditions would not change and would be protected at the point of transfer under the terms of TUPE
- staff were informed that all new staff would also be employed on the same terms and conditions i.e. no two-tier workforce
- staff were informed that the council, through their membership of the ESG, would have to approve any future changes to terms and conditions as this was agreed as a reserved item for councils to determine
- no commitment was given to staff that terms and conditions would not change in the future

In addition, the five year business plan included in reports to Cabinet did not include any savings to be achieved through changes to terms and conditions of employment

All the communication since 2014 and throughout the consultation was on the basis that terms and conditions would not change on transfer and there were no plans to change terms and conditions after this date, this was clearly said in good faith by management and HR on the basis of information at that time. Whilst terms and conditions are protected under TUPE on transfer, they can be changed if there is an economic, technological or organisational reason, unconnected to the transfer, which entails changes in the workforce. The pan – Dorset Business Case approved by the Cabinet on 17 December 2014 stated that although staff terms and conditions would not change on TUPE there would be a process of harmonising terms and conditions over the first 3 years of LATC operation. The business case confirmed that changes to staff terms and conditions would be a “reserved matter” for consideration by the ESG which has DCC elected member representation.

Question from Cllr Susan Jefferies to the Cabinet Member for Learning Skills and Children's Safeguarding in relation to Youth Clubs

Questions

Nearly a year ago our Youth Clubs were dealt a devastating blow by DCC when it was announced that funding was to be withdrawn. The suggestion was to transfer their management to local communities. I would like to request an update for each affected Club: their current status, the level of activities which are currently being provided, and an assessment of the changes which have taken place.

£200,000 was set aside to assist the communities and the Youth Clubs. How has the money been spent, and how much remains unspent? How much use and for what purposes has CrowdFunder UK, been used? Initially enthusiastic about Crowdfunding many Clubs were disappointed to learn that these funds were not available for running costs and salaries, just the expenses that needed immediate support in the initial set up phase.

Clubs were also promised assistance from DCC, however the Forward Together for Children team has been dispersed and it is not clear that this support is being provided. There has been one Council Officer on the premises team who has been exceptionally helpful on property issues but there has been little support for other matters.

In my own area of Corfe Mullen, the Youth Centre is within the premises of a school, although is not part of the school, as is also the case with several other Youth Clubs. Corfe Mullen brokered an individual deal with the Cabinet to share the building with the school; the building would be transferred to the school, once divided into two, and the Youth Centre would occupy half of the building under a long-term lease or similar. Building work will not start before July 2017 and as we are fully funded by the Parish Council, we have tried to arrange to rent the building in the evenings until July, for the Young People, but we are still, to date, unsuccessful and our Youth Workers are only able to do outreach work or meet young people at a local café. The Police report a significant increase in anti-social behaviour since the Youth Centre closed last July, yet the County Council does not seem to share our sense of urgency to get the Youth Centre up and running again. We feel this is not in the spirit of the Cabinet's decision, which was to enable the Youth Club to continue as seamlessly as possible.

Would the County Council agree that it is in its best interests and those of our young people to ensure that this initiative is a success and that a full report on the transition to communities should be presented?

Answers

Dorset carried out a bold transformation of the offer to young people in 2016. One year on:

- We have a targeted youth service which is working effectively with vulnerable young people at risk of social exclusion
- Community groups are running or about to take over 18 of our former youth centres – a transfer of some £2 million worth of assets into community hands
- Community groups are offering, or planning to offer, things to do, and places to go for young people in over 39 locations across Dorset
- We have held three workshops for local groups outlining how Crowdfunder works. Criteria have been simplified and made more flexible in response to feedback from these workshops. Over 30 groups have runs successful campaigns or are about to launch campaigns
- We are on target to realise £1 million worth of savings

Substantial support has been offered to these community groups by officers and the Forward Together for Children team has expanded. Matters in Corfe Mullen are dependent upon discussions between the youth trust and the school governors. Officer time is available to support this. A full report on the transformation of the youth service will be presented to an Executive Advisory Panel on 27 February 2017. Cllr. Jefferies is a member of this panel and should have received notice of the meeting.

Question from Cllr Richard Biggs to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Highways in relation to Emergency Planning

Question

A week ago there was an explosion in the generating hall at the EDF run nuclear generating facility at Flamanville France under 80 miles due south of Portland. Thankfully no radiation was released.

Can the leader clarify if DCC as the nearest U.K. mainland County was informed within hours of the event either by the UK or French Authorities and does he agree with me that with 56 ageing nuclear facilities just across the Channel our emergency planning for such an event needs to be urgently reviewed and practiced?

Answer

We were not informed of the incident as there was no release of any radiation products, if there had been we would have been notified by the Radioactive Incident Monitoring Net (RIMNET), the nuclear radiation monitoring and nuclear emergency response system; this was installed in 1988 to monitor the consequences for the UK of nuclear incidents abroad. This warning system is tested on a regular basis and DCC Emergency Planning Service receive notification of all tests and real incidents. (no real incidents have occurred since 88)

Radiation dose rate readings (gamma plus cosmic) from 96 sites around the UK are collected every hour and checked for any indication of abnormal increase. Any evidence of a nuclear incident of radiological significance for the UK would result in a national alert being raised.

The Dorset Local Resilience Forum (DLRF) also fulfils its duties under the Radiation Emergency Preparedness and Public Information Regulations 2001 (REPPPIR) which requires us to establish a framework of emergency preparedness measures to ensure that members of the public are:

- Properly informed and prepared, in advance, about what to do in the unlikely event of a radiation emergency occurring, and provided with information if a radiation emergency actually occurs.
- A "radiation emergency" is an event that is likely to result in a member of the public receiving an effective dose of 5 mSv during the year immediately following the emergency.
- Nuclear Incidents are part of the DLRF Risk Register and as such we have a REPPPIR Plan (written in 2015); this plan is due to be reviewed in the 3rd Quarter of 2017 and on completion either a multi-agency exercise or study day will take place to validate it.

DCC in conjunction with the MOD is also the lead agency for preparing, writing and implementing the 'Off Site Plan' for the Nuclear Submarines that occasionally visit Portland Port; this is called the Portland Port Off-Site Reactor Emergency Plan and is tested every three years (due 2019).