

Questions from County Councillors

**Questions from Cllr Jon Andrews to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Community and Resources in relation to Central Government Funding**

Question

What representation has our new cabinet made in pressuring our Dorset MPs to get the Treasury to look at the unfair central government funding formula.

This formula is having a severe impact on DCC's ability to provide statutory services let alone the non-statutory services that our residents expect. An £11.5 million cut in 2018/2019 is not sustainable. The average shire county gets an additional £70 per person more than us and we have to bear in mind that we keep the average down.

Has the Dorset shortfall been brought up with MPs and if so when? What action has been decided?

Will the Leader commit to sending a delegation to Westminster to lobby for change both to the new funding formula and the Dorset shortfall and to ensuring that all political parties are involved?

Answer

I believe this question arose from Councillor briefing where Cllr Andrews talked about contacting our MPs about the inappropriate way Dorset is financed by central government. Not being one for tilting at windmills we took that comment away and looked what might be a reasonable change in Government policy. We considered other options but the route that appears achievable for central government to fund, but substantial in its impact on us, is changing the Revenue Support Grant calculation only in that the RSG cannot go negative. That seems a sensible principled position, grants should not be taking something away from you. To put this in context this affects a relatively small number of councils, but those who are affected are badly affected. In 18/19 seven councils, of which we are one, will have 46% of all the negative grants in the country.

We are in the process of exploring the possibilities of how to take forwards this with our MPs. We will, of course, work with our MPs to obtain the best outcome for Dorset and if sending a delegation is the best way to achieve that, a delegation is what we will send.

We will update councillors as the position evolves.

## **Question from Cllr Susan Jefferies to the Cabinet Member for Economy, Education, Learning and Skills in relation to the Youth Service**

### Questions

1. Is it true that less than 2 years after the last reorganization of the Youth Service, which saw all the Youth Clubs closing and the majority of Youth Workers lost, that more consultation and reductions are planned? That newly created DCC Family Zones are to be reviewed and Youth Worker posts to go?
2. How is this going to leave our Young People, particularly when they have to wait for an appointment with the CAMHS service for too long?
3. Has an Equality Impact Assessment been done? Does this chime with the pledge to increase Early Intervention?

### Answers

1. Since September 2016, the targeted youth service have worked with 565 vulnerable children, and the current review of family partnership zones is an exercise which seeks to simplify, strengthen and consolidate the management structure and create a flexible and multi-skilled workforce which can deliver a comprehensive early help offer.

No youth work posts will be lost as a result of this process and the targeted youth offer will not change where it is required. In addition, youth workers will be included as part of Reinvigorating Social Work.

2. A targeted youth service was created as part of our family partnership zones which delivers evidence based group and individual based work and interventions to young people who have been proactively identified as having the potential to benefit from an early help offer. This includes support around health and wellbeing. CAMHS is an NHS service, and I understand that waiting times have been improving and new referral guidance has been produced that is helping in this matter.
3. As with all consultation an Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The arrangements that are proposed in the consultation are to strengthen both the management and frontline delivery of family workers in order that we can work with more families in need of early intervention. Family Partnership Zones are Children's services approach to making an offer to families where needs have been identified through a range of indicators. Our commitment to early intervention and prevention remains, as it always has, as our preferred delivery option.

**Question from Cllr Susan Jefferies to the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Economy, Education, Learning and Skills in relation to the Children's Transport Appeals process**

Questions

I understand from the Children's Transport Appeals process that the County Council is now using a new GIS system to more accurately calculate distance from children's homes to schools. This system is apparently not available to the public, nor easy to use without training. This means it is not available to the general public, in particular to parents, when making decisions about applications for School admission. Does the Leader of the Council consider that this is transparent and fair to the Council Tax payers?

Answers

This is complex and this is not a new system.

Within the admissions team a GIS system that maps each individual property and school to a set point is used. We then use these fixed points to measure straight line distances. We have always had this type of system. They are referred to as Eastings and Northings. There has never been access to this system to the public. The measurements are consistent across all systems.

When parents apply they are given the straight-line distance from their home address to the various schools they may be considering. So parents at the point of application do have that information about which is their nearest school.

There are web applications that are open access where eastings and northings can be entered and measurements between two points can be made – they will generate the same results as our system.

It would be impossible to supply every family with the Easting and Northing that we hold for their property.

Training with Members who sit on transport appeal committee, to explain in detail how we use this system, will take place on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017.