

CABINET – 4 JUNE 2018

ITEM 3 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Question received from the following Member:

Question from Councillor Howson to Councillor Hibbert-Biles

1. "How willing and able are other schools and colleges about taking some of the Northfield students?"

Answer

"We have had some early discussions and positive indicators from local academies and external providers. Once the decision is made we will pursue those offers and go out to tender for the number of places needed to suit the location and needs of the students."

Question from Councillor Howson to Councillor Lindsay-Gale

2. "Had the rebuilding the school on the Northfield site with a more suitable layout already been discounted in the SEND Review as an option?"

Answer

"The SEN Review will define the needs for SEN provision across Oxfordshire in the medium term. Once this need has been defined we will then consider all property options to determine how best we can meet the needs of pupils with SEN."

3. Question from Cllr Emily Smith to Councillor Lindsay-Gale

"Despite teaching and support staff at Northfield School doing an excellent job, parents tell me the building has been falling apart around them for sometime. I also understand the layout of the building does not meet the needs of these students. Why haven't the cabinet tackled the maintenance and layout problems sooner?"

Answer

"Northfield School was not purpose built as an SEN/SEMH school. This is not unusual but it is one the reasons why we are doing an SEN Review to ensure we have a sound long term plan for provision across the county.

Maintenance budgets for school buildings are delegated to schools and it was the school's responsibility to maintain the condition of the building. However, we had also put Northfield School in the School Structural Maintenance Plan, where we help schools with bigger maintenance issues such as Northfield's

roof. The asbestos incident meant we moved to fixing the immediate issue and working with CEF to determine the best future for the school, not just in terms of property, but in terms of education provision.

It is also worth saying that, as you know, the County Council outsourced to Carillion the end-to-end management of property. We terminated this relationship because we were unhappy with the poor service they provided. We are sorry that the children of Northfield were affected but now the service is in house, we will do everything we can to ensure we meet the educational needs of all our children.”

4. Question from Cllr Judy Roberts to Councillor Hibbert-Biles

“With such a huge demand for special school places already, what will happen to the Northfields students for whom you will not be able to find suitable placements for (as was confirmed as a possibility by the Director of Children’s services during Performance Scrutiny)?”

Answer

“We believe that commissioning places for larger numbers will open up the market . Also, approaching local providers differently with a new commitment from our Council commissioning team working with SEND and Education officers will obtain more positive results. Early indications are that we will be able to accommodate students successfully. There will be a ‘base camp’ at Northfield to enable transition and provide familiarity for students in the interim period as requested by parents at the recent information evening.”