

CABINET – 15 OCTOBER 2013

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Question received from the following Member:

1. Question to Councillor Tilley from Councillor Howson

In view of the importance to a number of rural schools of a 'sparsity' factor being included in the DSG what briefing of councillors was conducted as a part of the consultation on changes to the funding formula advised by County officers, and were these suggested changes highlighted to councillors ahead of the Schools Forum meeting so that councillors could discuss the possibility of a sparsity factor being included with the governors and heads responsible for voting on the change to the DSG formula?

Answer

The has been no briefing for all Councillors as part of the consultation, nor have all Councillors been alerted to suggested changes prior to the Schools Forum meeting, indeed it would not be our normal practice to do so in relation to a decision which is proper to the Forum and which, through its representational membership, is able to come to a view which takes account of the interests of all schools.

Having said that, I must point out that there was no recommendation in the consultation about introducing a new sparsity factor. However, potentially eligible schools were asked to provide evidence of significant additional costs they faced as a result of their rural location before a final recommendation is made to Schools Forum. Of the 20 potentially eligible primary schools and 2 secondary schools, only three provided some evidence of additional costs.

2. Question to Councillor Tilley from Councillor Howson

How many unfilled places in Year 7 were there across the County in September 2013, and what is the estimate for 2014 for unfilled places at both Year 7 and Year 10 in view of the new 'direct grant' school places imposed on the County by the DfE in the secondary sector?

Answer

The number of unfilled Year 7 places will not be known until the October pupil census returns have been analysed which will probably be nearly complete in time for the November Cabinet. At the time of the first allocation round in March 2013 there were 1022 places not allocated but not all of these will have been taken up and, in the meantime, there have been applications for places for children moving into the County.

The Heyford Park Free School, which opened in September 2013 added a further 60 Year 7 places to the Oxfordshire schools' capacity. The Banbury

Space Studio School will, if it opens on schedule, add a further 75 places at year 10.

The current Year 9 cohort (Year 10 in September 2014) is approximately 5800 and the number of Year 7 places initially allocated for September 2013 was about 50 larger. Therefore, if the Banbury Space Studio School opens there are likely to be similar numbers of spare places in Year 10 in September 2014 as there are in the current Year 7.

3. Question to Councillor Nimmo-Smith from Councillor Fooks

How much money is held by the County Council as S106 contributions to 'cycling measures' and how will its spending be decided?

Answer - awaited