

CABINET – 19 SEPTEMBER 2017

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions received from the following Members:

1. Councillor Howson to Councillor Hibbert-Biles

'Eighteen months ago, St Gregory the Great School was placed in financial special measures by the ESFA; recently it received a challenging Ofsted report about aspects of the work of the school; there have also been concerns about both attendance and exclusions.

What steps have the authority, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the diocese taken to ensure the children forced to attend the school because of a shortage of secondary school places in the city will receive a high quality education that ensures they can achieve their potential?'

Answer:

"As Cllr Howson knows, due to our very effective pupil place planning processes, we don't have a shortage of secondary school places in Oxford City, or anywhere else in the county for that matter. It is, however, the case that there aren't enough spare places in other schools to accommodate every pupil currently attending St. Gregory the Great.

I and Lucy Butler, Director of Children's Services, have met with the head teacher and a representative of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Our safeguarding team has put a lot of effort into helping the school's leadership address a number of pressing safeguarding issues - a return visit has been arranged for October to make sure that improvements are fully embedded.

As Cllr Howson is aware, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the diocese have responsibilities given St Gregory the Great School is an Academy"

2. Councillor Phillips to Councillor Hibbert-Biles

'The Royal College of Nursing is asking the government to provide funds for local authorities to fully fund school nursing services. Can you provide an update of the current staffing position of school nurses in Oxfordshire and the progress being made for primary schools to have access to school nurses?'

Answer

“Oxfordshire County Council supports the Royal College of Nursing in their call to Government to provide resources to local authorities for school health nursing for all children.

We are aware that other local authorities have reduced their school health nurse provision in the last few years however the Council has prioritised the public health of younger people by increasing public health nursing support in schools and colleges of further education.

Oxfordshire’s School Health Nurse service provides a team of school nurses for primary schools and has school health nurses based in secondary schools and nurse’s based in colleges of further education.

In line with other front line services there are difficulties with recruiting skilled professionals to work in Oxfordshire however there are currently only 3 vacancies in the service which are all being advertised to fill the posts.”

3. Councillor Phillips to Councillor Hibbert-Biles

‘There is increasing evidence of 6th form pupils being expelled from schools because they have failed to achieve top grades in AS and equivalent internal examinations. Can you give assurances that this practise is not taking place in 6th forms in Oxfordshire?’

Answer

"Unfortunately no, I cannot give Cllr Phillips the assurance she is seeking. With the exception of two sixth forms which between them have about 150 students, the remainder, around 6,000, attend academies. Although the council is notified of formal permanent exclusions and schools are required to advise us when pupils join or leave, they are not obliged to provide us with the reasons and wouldn't I am sure, identify those departures which are due to unlawful exclusions such as appear to have been happening from the high profile Kent grammar school."

4. Councillor Pressel to Councillor Constance

It is now several weeks since the County Council received the draft feasibility study on options for a possible zero emission zone and/or more clean air zones. Why are we STILL waiting for the launch of the public consultation?

Air quality is a matter of huge public concern. The Cabinet MUST address it urgently, instead of wasting time and further endangering our health.

Answer

“As you will be aware the County Council alongside Oxford City Council jointly commissioned a feasibility study which considers the implementation of a Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) for Oxford to 2035.

This is in hand and the requisite briefings to Councillors have been scheduled with a wider locality briefing planned for early October.

Once the briefings have been completed we will be sending out a press release and then commencing a public consultation (currently expected mid-end of October.”