

## CABINET – 17 OCTOBER 2017

### ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions received from the following Members:

#### 1. Councillor Howson to Councillor Bartholomew

“How much money will be collected from schools in this financial year as a result of the apprenticeship levy and how is the money being spent?”

#### **Answer:**

“The Apprenticeship Levy came into effect on 1 May 2017, and has an impact on a school’s budget if:

- staff are deemed to be employed by the local authority (community schools or Voluntary Controlled)
- the school is Foundation or Voluntary Aided AND has an annual payroll bill of more than £3m
- the school is an academy or part of a multi-academy trust AND has an annual payroll bill of more than £3m

The Apprenticeship Levy does not apply to every school in the same way as there are a variety of pay bill arrangements in place.

The council’s pot of Levy funding, generated from our payroll, includes c.£640,000 for schools where the local authority is the employer (i.e. the Council pays employer national insurance contributions for school employees). Central government funding rules specify that this money can only be used to pay for formal apprenticeship training, and is not available to pay for salaries or other support costs, or other types of non-apprenticeship training. Schools are encouraged to spend as much Levy as they want, there is no restriction on the amount they can access at present. However, in common with many other employers, schools report difficulties in deriving benefit from the Levy. The most significant issue is that schools report that they have very little spare resource available to fund salary costs of new apprentice roles.

Although there are a wide range of apprenticeship training options that can be funded by the Levy as career development for existing staff (see list below), many staff already have such a high level of on-the-job experience, training providers advise that they are not eligible to receive apprenticeship funding for the qualification. For example, a School Business Manager was recently advised she could not complete an Accountancy qualification as an apprenticeship as she had several years of experience already. However, the range of qualifications available is increasing all the time, so for example a teaching apprenticeship for graduate entry is in development, and due to be available in September 2018.

Apprenticeship training options that are relevant to schools:

Supporting teaching and learning in schools

Early years educator

Lab technician

Business Administration

IT technician

Caretaker/property maintenance

PE teaching

Catering

Cleaning and support services

There is no age restriction applied to apprenticeship training. Candidates may be eligible for funding even if they have existing or higher level qualifications. Some time off normal work duties is required. All qualifications take at least one year to complete, longer if staff are employed on a term-time only basis.

#### Support available for schools

Where the local authority is the employer, schools can access Levy funds via the council's HR team. The HR team will help to identify a training provider from our approved supplier list, and provide guidance on recruitment (if applicable). For apprenticeship qualifications undertaken as CPD by existing staff, a short business case will be required before funding is agreed.

Where a school is an academy, part of a multi-academy trust, voluntary aided, or a foundation school, other arrangements will apply. These schools can source support and advice from [Oxfordshire Apprenticeships](http://Oxfordshire Apprenticeships) on 01865 323477 or [info@oxfordshireapprenticeships.co.uk](mailto:info@oxfordshireapprenticeships.co.uk).

The Education Finance Services team offer support with financial forecasting, helping schools to understand the impact of the Levy on the school's budget.

Following promotion of the Levy via presentations and Schools News, the HR team have had approximately 25 enquiries from different schools around ways of spending the Apprenticeship Levy – mainly focused on apprenticeships as CPD.

At the moment there are 5 apprenticeships progressing in schools (either started already or in the process of doing so):

2 x Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools – 2 x new recruits

1 x Supporting Teaching and Learning in Physical Education – 1 x new recruit.

1 x Early Years Educator – CPD

1 x Food Production and Cookery – CPD

Collected so far for 5 month period is £192k, so full year looking like £458k

The most common reason why enquiries do not progress is that they are for CPD which is not an apprenticeship, and cannot be funded by the Levy”

## **Councillor Pressel to Councillor Hibbert-Biles**

Both questions relate to the Director of Public Health's Annual Report:

2. "Health impacts -- Please can we carry out an evaluation of the health impact resulting from the cutting of our bus subsidies and the withdrawal of money from many of our children's centres and day-care centres?"

I know an HIA was done beforehand, but we need to see what the effect on our communities has been, ever since we were regrettably forced to cut these budgets as a result of the government's appalling and mistaken "austerity" programme."

### **Answer**

"The impact of individual changes/initiatives work their way through and begin to show in the basket of indicators routinely used to monitor public health over long periods of time. The children's centres only closed in their previous form in April last year and the bus subsidy changes happened in 2016. Many of the children's centres are now operating again with assistance from county council grants and due to the impressive endeavour of local communities. Even then it will be difficult to directly attribute any one specific change as the sole reason for a trend of any kind. However our public health team clearly monitor a whole range of indicators all the time and if they see changes of a positive or negative way they will report them through the normal channels."

3. "Air quality – It is very welcome to see that the importance of air quality has AT LAST been recognised in this Annual Report. Please can you tell us why Oxfordshire County Council has apparently only *one* electric vehicle and no hybrid vehicles in its fleet of 479 vehicles? It is embarrassing to compare this with Oxford City Council, which has 17 electric and 22 hybrid vehicles, out of a total of 322. Why has there been such a lamentable lack of leadership in reducing emissions from our own fleet?"

### **Answer**

#### Oxfordshire County Council's Fleet

The 479 vehicles quoted refers to the number of vehicles that we insure, including a range of owned and leased vehicles from across the county council. These include for example trailers, motorbikes, fire engines and highways vehicles.

#### Oxfordshire County Council's Energy Strategy

Carbon Emissions from our travel activities has been picked up as a priority for action through our energy strategy, signed off by delegated decisions in October 2016 and available online:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/what-we-are-doing-reduce-our-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

This includes an objective to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our buildings and activities by 3% year on year, on average, in line with the Oxfordshire 2030 Sustainable Community Strategy commitment.

The strategy is monitored annually via CLT; during 2016/17 our green house gas emissions were 11% less than in the previous year and 34% less than in 2010/11 (the baseline for this measure), giving an average annual reduction of 7%.

### Organisational Travel Project

Flowing from the strategy, an officer has recently been employed to coordinate a one year project around organisational travel reporting to the Fit for the Future Programme Board. This project includes updating our small pool car resource. Data is actively being gathered to assess the feasibility of using electric vehicles and assess the business case. The project will also develop specifications around emissions standards in our wider fleet for both vehicle purchasing and lease hire. This will improve our emissions over time as vehicles come up for renewal.

### Use of OLEV Vehicles within Fleet Services

Fleet services has historically used mostly 16 seat diesel mini bus type vehicles to carry out the majority of their work. Currently about 80% of our vehicles are leased through Automotive Leasing and London Hire. All of the vehicles have to be coach built before arriving with us to have the modifications to make them accessible to wheelchair users. The main adaptations for the vehicles is the raising and fitting of a specialist floor with tracking to enable us to secure wheelchairs and also the fitting of a lift at the rear of the vehicle (usually underfloor but also includes butterfly type).

Until very recently there were no companies manufacturing vehicles that would fit our needs as concentration was pushed to perfecting small cars and to the much larger double decker type bus's and LGV's. Fleet services have trialled smaller electric vehicles for our low capacity school work, primarily the eNV200 by Nissan which could fit our needs on a few routes. The issue we discovered with these vehicles is that whilst they are advertised as being able to cover 90 miles on a full charge we found that was not accurate. As an example, starting on 90 mile range, when the heating was turned on the range immediately dropped by approx. 15%. It was used on a route that operated between North Oxford and Fitzwarren School in Wantage both am and pm. The vehicle proved to be very capable of operating this route however what became clear was that in between the morning and afternoon runs it could not be used for any other work as it would need to be plugged in to the mains to ensure there was enough range for the afternoon. Currently from flat to full charge the eNV200 takes around 13 hours through a mains charge.

Fleet services have agreed to be part of a stage 1 of a trial being conducted by EDF/Oxfordshire consortium with EV and V2G demonstrators, and are also

keeping a close eye on new developments and technologies with a view to recommending any suitable electric vehicles to our suppliers.

### Innovation

The Innovation Team within Communities are also actively pursuing funding, for example vehicle to grid projects that support electric vehicles to work smartly with the grid, also electric vehicle bulk buying of electric vehicles with other public sector bodies.”

#### **4. Councillor Dr Johnson to Councillor Hudspeth**

“Reports from OCC have been given to various bodies concerning the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway. Can you reassure concerned local residents that OCC has not formed a view as to which corridor the Expressway should take, and OCC will maintain neutrality on this issue until full public consultation has taken place”

#### **Answer**

“I can assure Cllr Johnson and all concerned local residents that OCC has not formed a view as to which corridor the Expressway should take. Whatever corridor is chosen it should ease the situation on the A34 which has to be a key priority for all of Oxfordshire’s residents.

As the national organisation responsible for the Strategic Road Network, Highways England is leading work on an Oxford Cambridge Expressway. The next stage is now starting and the consultants Jacobs have recently been appointed to undertake this work, examining in more detail the potential corridors and routes.

No decision has been taken on a preferred route and one is not expected until around 2019. The County Council will be working closely with Highways England and Jacobs to understand the pros and cons of different options and how well they would meet the project’s aims and objectives.

Highways England is planning a programme of stakeholder engagement as part of this next stage of work, beginning with a meeting on 18th October at which we will be represented.

The county council will consider all proposals carefully as they come forward, as well as the views of District Councils, local communities and other stakeholders. We have not yet adopted a position on this project and will not do so without member input. This could be (for example) in the form of a cabinet advisory group followed by a decision by full council. However, this would need to be before the close of Highways England's public consultation as we would be one of the key respondents to their proposals.

Whilst the proposed Expressway could be an opportunity to help address longstanding problems on the A34, it does not remove the need for short term safety and capacity improvement measures, for which funding has already

been agreed. The County Council is pressing for these to be introduced as soon as possible.”

#### **5. Councillor Dr Johnson to Councillor Hibbert-Biles**

“Director of Public Health’s Annual Report (p.14) states “the basics of prevention are in good order,” but there is no reference to prevention of mental ill-health. P.15 states funding is needed for preventative services. Can the member assure me mental ill-health prevention is high on the priority list for funding?”

#### **Answer**

“The Director of Public Health’s Annual Report is an independent report addressed to all organisations and to the public and the recommendations apply to all. The call for funding for prevention is a call to all organisations, including the NHS and District Councils. I am pleased to report that Oxfordshire County Council already makes a major contribution in this area as many of our preventative services have a direct bearing on the promotion of good mental health which cannot be separated from good physical health. These include our Health Visiting Service our Family Nurse Partnership Service, our School and College Health Nursing Service, our drug and alcohol addiction services and our sexual health services. We also lead partnership work to promote physical activity, prevent suicide, prevent female genital mutilation and reduce self-harm. The Council is also playing a major role in the fight against domestic violence and the promotion of safer communities. It is clear that all of these services have a major bearing on the promotion of mental wellbeing and are preventative, and so I am happy to confirm mental ill-health prevention is indeed high on my priority list.”