

CABINET – 18 OCTOBER 2016

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Question received from the following Members:

1. From Councillor Howson to Councillor Tilley

“Will the Cabinet member please confirm that any rural primary school in Oxfordshire that meets the definition of such a school in the 2006 Education and Inspection Act on becoming an academy of any description would no longer have the protection provided by the Act regarding the procedure to be adopted should closure be contemplated? As an academy the school can be closed by no more than a phone call from the trustees to the Education Funding Agency. This means many rural primary schools in Oxfordshire have already lost this safeguard.”

Answer

“The current statutory guidance which includes a “...*presumption against the closure of rural schools.*” requires that consideration is given to a number of factors before proceeding. Such consideration is only required to be given in the case of “*maintained*” schools and , by implication not in the case of academies.

However, any significant proposals for amalgamation or merger with another academy can only be determined through what is known as the full business case route to the Education Funding Agency and will involve consultation with the local authority. Officers would expect a proposal to close an academy to follow a similar route and are aware of at least one other proposal nationally that has done so. However, there is no specific reference to rural primary schools anywhere in this or other academy regulation documentation that officers are aware of.”

2. From Councillor Tanner to Councillor Nimmo Smith

‘The white lines and signs on the roads on my division are becoming more and more faded and increasingly difficult to discern. This is creating a dangerous situation for motorised traffic, cyclists and pedestrians, not least at the wide junction of Iffley Turn, Iffley Road and Henley Avenue where there are no traffic islands. Could the Cabinet member tell me when those white lines and signs will be repainted?’

Answer

“I am sure all Members are aware that there has been a deterioration in the maintenance of signs and lines in many parts of the County in recent years as we have had to prioritise where limited resources are directed. Officers do try to focus funds on locations where the lack of lining can particularly impact on safety or traffic flow, and on that basis the junction mentioned would not have

a high priority. However I can inform Cllr Tanner that the junction is on the list being compiled for re-marking in 2017.”