

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2019

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Question from Councillor Turnbull to Councillor Heathcoat

The following question was omitted in error from the last meeting and forwarded for response to Councillor Heathcoat. The question and response are set out below

“How much of the apprentice levy will be left unspent at the end of the 2018/19 financial year and will be returned to the Treasury, and what percentage of this figure was collected from schools”.

In addition, the following question on the same topic has also been received for this meeting. The question and response to both are set out below:

Councillor Roberts to Councillor Bartholomew

““How much money was collected from a) maintained schools and b) other council services as unspent from the money collected as a result of the apprenticeship levy in the year 2017-2018? What happened to the unspent funds.”

Answer:

At 31st March 19, the Council had accrued a total of £2,201,424 in our apprenticeship Levy account which is comprised of £1,981,028 employer contributions plus an additional 10% government top up. Approximately £880,053 (44%) has come from schools' contributions. These figures are cumulative from May 2017 to March 2019. These monthly payments are deducted by HMRC and accrue in our Levy account. Funds are valid for a 24-month duration, after which time they expire if they are unspent. The government has not specified what happens to these expired funds, so we assume they are returned to the Treasury.

Payments for apprenticeship training are made on a monthly basis according to Education Skills Funding Agency rules. At 31st March 19, the council had spent £255,970 (12% of our Levy funds), with a further c.£550,000 Levy funding committed to apprentices who are currently in training. In total, £879,000 of Levy funds have either been spent or are committed to be spent within the next two years.

It is helpful to have some context for this level of performance. Based on a survey of local authorities in February 2019, the Local Government Association estimate that councils in England have spent c.12-15% of their Levy funds.

Looking more closely at schools' performance, Oxfordshire maintained schools have recruited/trained 35 apprentices since the Levy was introduced in May 2017, with a total of £335,000 Levy funds committed over the duration of their training. We are looking to build on this performance in the next financial year by diversifying the range of apprenticeship training available that is relevant to Schools, including new types of apprenticeships aimed at management and leadership roles in schools,

school business managers, teachers and learning mentors. We are working hard to develop appropriate procurement approaches to put in place this greater range of apprenticeship training in time for starts in the new academic year.

No funds have been returned to the Treasury yet. We estimate that, based on actual and predicted spend, we will need to start repaying the Levy in September 2019. We do not have any repayments to make ahead of this date as we will have fully spent the Levy we accumulated between April and September 2017. Current projections are that unspent Apprenticeship Levy monies will begin to expire in September 2019, at a rate of £46,706 per month, however this may change as more apprenticeship training commences.

Questions received from the following Members:

1. Question from Councillor Howson to Councillor Reeves

“How many maintained schools in Oxfordshire have either solar or photo-voltaic panels on their roofs or elsewhere on school grounds?”

Answer

‘The Council does not hold a database with this information, as schools would need to register for the FIT (Feed In Tariff) themselves, information on the installation and/or registration is not readily available.

On request at such short notice we have been able to ascertain that 30 of our maintained schools have either solar or photo-voltaic panels on their roofs or elsewhere on school grounds.’

2. Question from Councillor Price to Councillor Heathcoat

“Could the Deputy Leader outline why the most recent Community Risk Management Plan did not include explicit reference to the planned piloting of Initial Limited Response (Crew of Three), therefore missing the opportunity for the widest possible engagement with residents, interested partners and elected members who would have a valuable contribution to make to the debate?”

Answer

Thank you for your question. The Fire and Rescue Service identified in the **2017-8** Community Risk Action Plan that :-

Project 2 “Would review and implement changes to key stations and provide area based strategic cover”.

As a result of this review an operational project was established to pilot an initial limited response. The review took the form of:-

- All Whole time watches have been visited to discuss the pilot. All On Call Stations were invited to locality meetings
- Attendance by OFRS at public meetings with town and parish locations
- FBU invited to Charlbury Fire Station to discuss changes in procedure with the operational staff
- FBU provided with all operational procedures and the relevant risk assessments for the pilot
- FBU representative attended the visit to Kent FRS to see how this had been implemented in other FRS.

Following the closing of the consultation amendments were made.

3. Question from Councillor Bearder to Councillor Hudspeth

“Following our resolution at the last full council for yourself and the Cabinet Member for Transport to write to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government – demanding that a fuller consultation is carried out asking local residents if they want an Expressway and associated construction before any route is considered, could you please update council as to where we are with this? Whether the letter has been sent or a reply received and what time scale we can expect on the actions of this motion. Could you please also supply copies of any correspondence sent or received from either party thus far.”

4. Question from Councillor John Sanders to Councillor Hudspeth

“Has the Leader or the Cabinet Member for Environment yet written to the Government asking it to conduct a consultation among Oxfordshire's residents asking them whether they want an Expressway and if not, when?.”

Answer

“Yes, the letter has been sent (copy attached as an Annex), no we have not received a reply and cannot say when the reply will be sent.

It is my standard practice to send copies of any reply to all councillors.”

Annex

Date: 18 April 2019

The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Minister of State for Housing, Communities & Local
Government
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Leader's Office
County Hall
New Road
Oxford OX1 1ND

Councillor Ian Hudspeth
Leader of the Council

Dear Mr Brokenshire

Motion at Oxfordshire County Council – 2nd April

We are writing to you following a motion resolved at Full Council on 2nd April as follows:

“Most people accept that building more roads creates more traffic. Council instructs that the Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment jointly write to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government – demanding that a fuller consultation is carried out asking local residents if they want an Expressway and associated construction before any route is considered.

The Leader and Cabinet Member should also ask the Minister whether the million extra houses outlined in the National Infrastructure Commission's vision for housing along the route of the arc are in addition to, or included in, the 100,000 houses planned for by the Oxfordshire authorities outlined in the growth deal”

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



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