

CABINET – 21 FEBRUARY 2017

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Question from Councillor Phillips 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

“Following the motion at the November Council meeting to take up the Local Authority Mental Health Challenge we welcome the email advising that Cllr Heathcoat is the Council's Mental Health Champion.

One requirement of the role is to 'identify at least one priority' and could we be advised of what priority has been identified and how this work will be managed'

Answer

A full council meeting on 1 Nov 2016 voted unanimously to sign up to the Local Authorities' Mental Health Challenge and to support measures to promote positive mental health in Oxfordshire, enhancing our joint working with our partners in the NHS, the police authority and the voluntary sector.”

I am delighted to have been asked to lead the council's work across children and adults population in the important area of mental health and wellbeing.

Everyone knows these two facts about mental health and wellbeing:

- Our mental health and physical health are closely linked.
- 1 in 4 people in the United Kingdom will experience some form of mental distress during their lifetime. This can include depression, anxiety, panic disorders and eating disorders, as well as forms of psychosis such as bipolar and schizophrenia.

But not everyone knows that there are simple things we can all do to improve our wellbeing. Such as the [five ways](#) to wellbeing recommended by [Mind](#), the mental health charity (see overleaf for more information):

- Connect
- Be active
- Take notice
- Learn
- Give

In talking to my colleagues across the Council about my new role I have identified three areas for action:

- 1) **Looking after ourselves and our communities** - I want to build on our achievements to date in helping staff employed by us directly

(through an extensive Employee assistance programme) or by provider organisations, that we fund, to look after themselves. This can be achieved by raising public mental health awareness through targeted training and publicity campaigns.

This year we will commission Mental Health First Aid training - a two day educational course which teaches people how to identify, understand and help a person who may be developing a mental health issue. We will make it available to our elected members in the first instance acknowledging their front line engagement with the public. By learning these new skills our elected members will be better equipped to approach and assist someone who might be experiencing a mental health issue and encourage them to seek the support they need to recover.

- 2) **Early support for children and young people** - Growing up is not easy, and sometimes it's hard to cope with whatever life throws at you. Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are tasked to help families, schools and young people themselves to be able to seek support early. These services are undergoing significant transformation nationally and locally.

I want us to play an active part in helping Oxfordshire young people to build their emotional resilience in preparation for adulthood.

- 3) **Living well** - I want us to deliver on Oxfordshire system wide ambition for better life outcomes for people with mental health needs. The council together with the Clinical Commissioning Group invest £36.5 million in the Mental Health Outcomes Based contract that provides health and social care services to around 2,400 people. In reviewing the contract performance in its second year I want to focus on improving access to timely and effective support, embedding the Recovery model and performing better in areas of life that matter to people, such as getting a job and stable affordable housing.

I want to finish with a quote from Professor Stewart-Brown who said:
"No-one can give wellbeing to you. It's you who has to take action".

We are here to support people in this endeavour.

"No-one can give wellbeing to you. It's you who has to take action," says Professor Stewart-Brown.

Five steps to mental wellbeing

Below are five things that, according to research, can really help to boost our mental wellbeing:

- **Connect** – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbors. Spend time developing these relationships. Learn more in [Connect for mental wellbeing](#).
- **Be active** – you don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life. Learn more in [Get active for mental wellbeing](#).
- **Keep learning** – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike? Find out more in [Learn for mental wellbeing](#).

Councillor Phillips has also indicated that if she had been able to receive an answer at the meeting she would have asked the following supplementary question:

“My supplementary question would be about whether there is scope for a cross party group to discuss how Oxfordshire can effectively respond to the Local Authority Mental Health Challenge?”

Answer

“I do not believe that a “cross party group” is required to be set up. I am aware that Councillor Glynis Phillips together with the Leader, Councillor Brighthouse is in receipt of an opposition member’s briefing which is a regular occurrence and officers will be able to ensure that the opposition is fully briefed. Equally, I understand, Councillor Janet Godden receives briefings regularly too and thus intelligence on the role and work done will be passed across to her, too. This will ensure that all are fully aware of the measures to promote positive mental health in Oxfordshire. “

Questions received from the following Members:

1. From Councillor Williams to Councillor Hudspeth

'Having read the document on the reorganisation of the Local NHS would she agree with me that the proposal with their closures, £200 million cuts and continued privatisation are unacceptable to Oxfordshire County Council and will she give me an assurance that the County will be a statutory objector to these proposals and will she write to the secretary of State to State to outline her utter disgust and rejection of these proposals'.

Answer

“Thank you for your question. Before I answer the specific issues, I need to correct some factual inaccuracies made in the question.

- 1) The plan does not propose to cut £200M, but it is suggested on page 8 of the document that, 'If healthcare continues as it is today.... there will be a gap in funding of £134M' by 2020/21. I.e. it is a future projection of

an overspend. I acknowledge that this puts NHS services in a difficult position.

2) There are no proposals for privatisation in the document.

With regard to being a statutory objector and referral to the Secretary of State, these are precisely the issues Cabinet will be debating during this meeting. There is also a recommendation from officers that the Cabinet's view should be heard at HOSC and debated in Full Council, so, it would be premature for me to speak for Cabinet as a whole."

2. From Councillor Tanner to Councillor Hudspeth

"I understand the County Council has launched a campaign for One Oxfordshire. Could you tell me how much taxpayer's money the County Council is spending on this campaign?"

Answer

Information has been freely publicly available for a number of weeks that the overall cost is approximately £200,000, including a detailed financial review and a representative sample of resident views by an independent research organisation. However we are currently spending £400,000 per week on running six councils which we don't need to spend.

Two independent reports – one commissioned by the county council and one by the districts including the city council – agreed on this. This is money that could be spent on day to day public services here in Oxfordshire. This amounts to £100m over five years that could be put in to precisely the local services that Cllr Tanner has had a long and distinguished track record of stoutly defending – on many occasions at previous meetings of this county council cabinet.

Cllr Tanner is a strong campaigning politician – perhaps he would like to give further thought to the idea of having one council providing a better, simpler system of local government. This would allow a future brand new council much better choices in terms of available finance for the services that Cllr Tanner and many others value, be that adult social care, highways, children's services, daytime support, libraries, housing, leisure or the many others provided by local government in Oxfordshire.