

CABINET – 28 JUNE 2016
ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions received from the following Members:

1. From Councillor Lilly to Councillor Tilley

“I am advised that a large number of children are now attending our library’s for the excellent children’s reading programmes recently introduced. How does this impact on children’s overall education?”

Answer

“Oxfordshire Libraries have been delivering the Summer Reading Challenge since 1999, working in partnership with The Reading Agency to engage young people across the county to take part and so maintain their reading for pleasure throughout the summer break from school. During summer 2015:

- 8402 children took part
- 4923 children read 6 or more books. 199 children joined their library in order to take part.
- 44% of those taking part were boys and 56% were girls.

Alongside the Summer Reading Challenge the Library Service offers other reading related activities throughout the year: Children’s Book Clubs, young volunteering opportunities, author events, class visits to branch libraries and other seasonal, topical events such as our hugely successful Harry Potter Night events where young people come into libraries to join in fun activities inspired by books and reading.

“Research shows that one of the most effective ways of helping children to reach their potential is to engage them in reading for enjoyment. Children who read for enjoyment make more progress in maths, vocabulary and spelling between the ages of 10 and 16 than those who rarely read and young people who read regularly are significantly more likely to attain a professional or managerial position than those who do not read.” **Clémence Pabion and Christina Clark: The Impact of Chatterbooks on Children’s Reading Enjoyment, Behaviours and Attitudes: Final report. National Literacy Trust, 2016”**

2. From Councillor Lilly to Councillor Carter

“May this council be updated on the disabled Blue badge Scheme and steps being introduced to avoid Fraudulent usage.”

Answer

“There are currently 25724 Blue Badge holders in Oxfordshire. Of these, 25003 are individual badges and 721 are badges used by organisations.

In the last 12 months (to 31st May 2016) 9087 badges were issued and 731 applications were unsuccessful because they did not meet the eligibility criteria.

A pilot scheme for Blue Badge Enforcement was carried out in late December in Bicester, Banbury and Oxford City, focussing on a number of designated disabled parking bays in those towns, and (with their agreement) a number of major supermarkets in each town.

During the exercise over 200 badges were checked by the officers involved, who were regularly approached by members of the public with comments of thanks and support for tackling this type of crime.

In the course of three days, 10 blue badges were seized by the officers for blatant misuse. These included cases where the badge holder was not present and the badge was being used by persons not entitled to use it, using out of date badges and even using the badges of deceased persons. In each of these cases, offenders have been interviewed and legal action is under consideration.”

3. From Councillor Howson to Councillor Tilley

“Who is responsible for prosecuting pupils attending academies, UTCs and free schools for non-attendance at school and what part, if any, does the County Council and the Regional School Commissioner play in the process?”

Answer

“The Council is responsible for prosecuting parents of pupils who persistently fail to attend those institutions.

The role of the Council is to respond to notifications from schools of poor attendance/unauthorised absences, issue warning notices and, if necessary, initiate prosecution. In addition, the Council draws to the Regional Schools Commissioner's (RSC) attention those schools which have notably poor levels

of attendance. The RSC's role would be best ascertained by asking him when he appears at Education Scrutiny Committee meeting on 04 July."

4. From Councillor Patrick to Councillor Nimmo Smith

"In the LTP4, it states that the location for a rail station in Grove will have to move from the current site where planning permission was originally granted because the recent alignment of the road bridge along the A338 means that they cannot build it there now. As the Leader has already stated his support for a station in Grove, where would he suggest would be the best location for it to be built?"

Answer

"A preferred location has not yet been identified as more work needs to be done with the rail industry and the Vale of White Horse as Planning Authority. We have stated the need to do this work in our emerging Rail Strategy."

5. From Councillor Webber to Councillor Hudspeth

"Please would the Leader summarise what he sees as the implications for County Council services of the recent Referendum result?"

Answer