

County Council 13 July 2017

Agenda Item

Page No

8 CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS
Written questions and answers

3 - 6



Questions for County Council Meeting Thursday 13 July 2017

Questions to the Cabinet Member for Resources from Mr Charlie Clare:

- 1. After the Tragedy of Grenfell Tower can you reassure us that there are no buildings in the County that are similarly at risk? And in the wake of the Kensington and Chelsea Council's response to the fire, which has been roundly condemned as inadequate, are we confident that our emergency protocols are robust enough?**

The teams in Property Consultancy and Schools Commissioning have carried out a thorough check on the County Council's built estate and concluded that there are no relevant buildings in our estate that are at risk due to aluminium cladding of the same type used at Grenfell Tower. The criteria used to determine checks were set by the Government and include buildings of 4 storeys or more and/or ones used for residential purposes. The County Council has also expanded the criteria to include buildings catering for the more vulnerable users – such as day care and special schools. The Property Team have been in contact with all architects/contractors that have been involved in extensions/new schools over the last 15 years and all the responses received confirmed that there was not any cladding of a similar nature involved in their construction. In addition all schools across the County have been asked to supply details of their current fire risk assessments for scrutiny. The County Council's high occupancy buildings are built for rapid evacuation in an emergency situation and emergency protocols are kept under constant scrutiny; for example the recent complete upgrading of the fire alarm system, fire doors, emergency lighting and evacuation lifts in the County Council's tallest building, the 14 storey New County Offices in Aylesbury. Regular Fire safety checks are undertaken at all our buildings.

The County Council has a Business Continuity Management (BCM) Policy & Programme and all services are required to have Business Continuity Plans. These Plans are in place to provide continuation of identified Mission Critical Activities in the event of a disruption to internal services and are tested regularly through exercises.

Questions to the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing from Mr Charlie Clare:

- 2. After the collapse of Bucks Care at the end of last year, and the Regulatory and Audit Committees' meetings on the causes and lessons learnt; when will there be a public facing report that demonstrates that**

we understand what went wrong and states what lessons we have learnt?

As indicated within the question there have been a number of reports and updates following the closure of Buckinghamshire Care Limited at the end of last year. Cabinet commissioned a review of the different delivery models developed in recent years, including Bucks Care, and the lessons arising from the Council's experiences with these. This report is on the forward plan for Cabinet on 24 July 2017.

Questions to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills from Mr Chaudhary Ditta:

3. How many parents in Buckinghamshire, specifically Wycombe, have not had their first choice of school for their child? What is being done in East Wycombe to provide more school places?

In the absence of any clarity of which phase/which area; we have made some assumptions – that it relates to the whole Wycombe district and it is a secondary query.

There are 2071 secondary transfer age children in Wycombe district, and, taking qualification into account, 1762 (85%) were offered their highest preference, although some (56) subsequently refused it. Of the 309 children (15%) in the district not currently offered their highest preference, only 129 (7.5%) are on the waiting list for their highest preference school. These include schools outside the county (25), outside Wycombe itself (63) and within Wycombe (41).

There are varied reasons why parents have not secured a place at local High Wycombe preferences as yet. Reasons include: expressing preferences late; some Highcrest 'band C' applicants could not be offered; some expressed a preference for Highcrest but did not sit the Highcrest banding test; and some are non-faith applications for St Michael's Catholic School.

Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) plans at planning area level to acknowledge the complexities of parental preference and in line with Department for Education (DfE) best practice guidance. It is not possible to plan for a perfect match between pupil demand and capacity at catchment level due to a number of factors including parental choice; 11+ qualification rates; and migration/housing growth. This is acknowledged within the admissions code which does not allow Local Authorities to guarantee places at catchment level due to year on year volatility in parental choice/population migration.

Across the Wycombe planning area, there are currently sufficient secondary school places although these do tend to be concentrated at two or three

schools (currently Bourne End Academy, Sir William Ramsay and Princes Risborough) as places at other schools are filled as a result of parental choice.

BCC has recently expanded capacity at Marlow School, Sir William Ramsay and St Michael's RC School by an additional form of entry to meet the rising demand in the area. BCC will also be expanding Highcrest Academy by an additional form of entry from next September. Further, feasibility studies are being undertaken to expand Holmer Green Senior School, Misbourne School and Princes Risborough School to meet the projected increase in the secondary age population.

Questions to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills from Ms Julia Wassell:

4. A number of parents are complaining to me about the delay in Education, Health and Care plans (EHC). This delay is causing problems for them due to the lack of a specialist school place for September 2017. What can be done to improve timescales, expedite these plans and provide specialist placements in a timely manner?

Plans and support are always tailored to meet individual needs. We have an expectation that all services across education health and social care will contribute to these plans so as to provide a joined up child-centred approach which will result in a positive educational experience. It is important to get this right and on occasion there may be variations in completion times.

Furthermore, the Special Educational Need (SEN) Service has experienced a significant increase over the last two years in demand for Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans as well difficulties in recruiting Educational Psychologists who contribute towards the EHC assessment process. We are currently working hard to ensure an effective and timely response to requests for EHC plans and have made improvements in this area.

We are also working with the head teachers of all of our specialist services to ensure sufficiency of school places and we will support, where our resources allow, development of further provision in line with the needs of our vulnerable children and young people.

