

Questions for County Council Meeting

26th September 2019

Question to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transportation from Cllr Peter Martin:

Q1 Members will be aware of the problems with home to school transport that have caused problems for a number of parents and pupils at our schools. Can the Cabinet Member give us an update on the home to school transport situation?

Members will be aware that there have been significant problems over the last few weeks with clarifying arrangements and issuing passes for Home to School Transport. I would like to offer my sincere apologies on behalf of the County Council to those families that have been affected.

The problems have mostly affected discretionary Paid for Transport. In general arrangements for those pupils who have a statutory entitlement to free home to school transport have worked well albeit I accept that there were some communication shortcomings in this area.

We were late in concluding the process of assessing the capacity that was available for Paid For transport and hence letting families know whether their applications for Paid For transport had been successful. This in itself was unacceptable and the situation was then exacerbated by three technical failures: the failure of the bus pass ticket printing machine; the failure of the on line payment service and; the call handling system capacity being met and some calls not being taken

A core team of officers has been meeting daily to manage the situation and put in place solutions that will ensure that the current difficulties are remedied quickly and that we improve the delivery of school transport for all families and students in the longer-term.

In addition we will be meeting with parents' representatives to understand their immediate concerns, learn from the experiences that they have had and use these to redesign our processes so that this type of failure does not happen again.

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

Q2 Buckinghamshire children have been given a flawed 11+ examination paper.

In view of the variation in how this was addressed and the different impact of this on individual children, should the exam be repeated?

During the Secondary Transfer Testing process on September 12th 2019, we were alerted by schools to the inconsistencies between the question and answer sheets in

four questions. The test is commissioned by the grammar schools from GL Assessment.

GL wrote to parents and head teachers on 20 September and have confirmed that it was their error and also that no retesting is needed. They will update parents again during the week commencing 30 September, with their future plans.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment from Julia Wassell:

Q3 In recent data revealed to the public about incidence of flytipping, private land was excluded.

This may need more investigation and how would you advise those of us with a persistent problem on private land? There are cases where the owner is absent or has given up.

Buckinghamshire County Council compiles data provided by the four district councils regarding waste dumped illegally on public land excluding highways. This data has been consistently gathered and kept since 2002/3 and refers to the numbers of fly-tips 'cleared' rather than the number of deposits which took place – we have seen when using surveillance cameras that what appears to be one pile of waste may be the result of several different fly-tips. It is impossible to measure accurately the exact number of dumps which have taken place.

We use this data set as an indicator of trends – a measure of rises and falls in fly-tipping rather than an absolute measure of all fly-tips which have taken place. It is the best data set available for Buckinghamshire fly-tipping

Data for private land was not 'excluded' from the published data – it is simply not gathered by anyone. There may be occasions when some private land data is gathered by individuals, but there is no consistent data covering private land in Buckinghamshire, or indeed as far as we are aware for any significant part of the county.

The Waste Partnership for Buckinghamshire has long taken an enlightened view regarding its response to fly-tipping on private land. The authorities offer free deterrent signage to landowners and to investigate without charge suitable cases where dumping has taken place on private land - this including surveillance work where appropriate. While we cannot offer to clear away the dumped wastes (due to high costs and potential for 'rogue landowner' abuse), we investigate and prosecute suitable strong cases at court ***without charge*** to the landowner.

Where the landowner has incurred expenses in cleaning up (including workers' time) we apply for compensation on the landowner's behalf at court if the case is strong enough to allow successful prosecution. We offer this because a person who fly-tips on private land may also dump on public land. If the private land case has the strongest evidence it makes sense to the authorities to investigate and prosecute the

case at the earliest and best opportunity. This helps reduce overall dumping and reduces costs for private and public landowners.

Of 730 cases convicted in Buckinghamshire since 2004, **77** (over 10% of cases) resulted from the investigation of dumping on private land and thousands of pounds of compensation have been obtained for private landowners at court.

Most English local authorities take the simple view that dumping on private land is not their responsibility. In Buckinghamshire we feel we have struck a compromise which helps both the public and private land owners without excessive cost to council taxpayers.