

COUNCIL

Thursday 25 February 2016

Agenda Item 6

Questions from Members

Unanswered Questions – Responses sent subsequent to Meeting

8. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Leader of the Council

Would the leader agree with me that the report by Muslim Women UK to the Labour Party raises important points. Is it time that all political parties locally examine the barriers that exist for women's participation, particularly those from minority groups?

Thank you for your question Cllr Wassell, I have read the newspaper reports regarding the Muslim Women UK claims, and I think it is a travesty in this day and age that women are still being prevented or feel they are being prevented, from being empowered and playing a full part in today's Society. I am proud to be Leader of a party that fully reflects all Society and welcomes anyone who shares our values.

I am the fourth female Leader of Wycombe District Council in recent years, following on from Kath Peatey, Pam Priestley and Lesley Clarke OBE and I am honoured to be able to try and follow in their footsteps and to have the opportunity to emulate the work they have done in the District. All very hard acts to follow.

My Cabinet also represents the diversity in our party and opportunities for women and as you can see we are dominating this question session this evening

I am also pleased that the Conservative party was successful in electing the first Muslim female Councillor to Wycombe District Council in 2011. This alongside having selected a number of Muslim female candidates in past elections.

Following on from this report I do urge my Labour colleagues to look and see they are not allowing prejudice to creep into their selection process.

9. Question from Councillor R Raja to the Cabinet Member for Finance

The proposed revenue budget for 2016/17, based on the 4 year local government financial settlement, under which the Council receives funding from Central Government, has been reduced by 17% in 2016/17 and by 48% over the next 4 years towards the costs of providing services. The proposed budget is full of caveats, which makes the Revenue Budget nothing more than a guesstimate.

Can the Cabinet member with responsibility for the budget assure WDC residents that he has got his sums right and we will have sufficient resources to effectively carry out the Council's statutory responsibilities under any circumstances which are possible to know? and what happens if some of the assumptions upon which the budget is based do not materialise?

As with all budgets it is necessary to make a number of assumptions and judgments around expenditure and income based on the best information available at the time. The 2016/17 revenue budget has been prepared by the Finance team working with budget holders and Cabinet Members. The draft budget has also rightly been subjected to detailed review and challenge by the Council's Improvement Review Commission (via the Budget Task and Finish Group).

The detailed budget report that was presented earlier this month to Cabinet set out the key risks within the 2016/17 budget and the measures put in place to manage these risks in the event that they should arise. The Council's Section 151 Officer has confirmed to Cabinet that the budget is robust and that the Authority has sufficient reserves to manage any unexpected or unplanned expenditure or shortfalls to income.

I am satisfied that every effort has been made to prepare a robust and realistic budget for the coming year.

10. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Leader of the Council

Would you join me in thanking the GPs from the Lynton House surgery for the service they have given to East Wycombe residents? They have had deteriorating working conditions. It is some consolation that a new premises will be provided at Wycombe General Hospital

Thank you for your question Cllr Wassell and I am happy to echo your positive words about the sterling work of the Lynton House surgery in serving the needs of the town's residents. I understand that the existing premises were privately rented and are unlikely to meet the high standards required for modern GP practises and unfortunately it is not financially viable to bring the building up to the standards needed. I applaud the practise in ensuring good patient care and value for money for the taxpayers were their primary concerns leading to considering this move to a new site within Wycombe Hospital. The move intends to offer improved services benefitting patients.

Whilst we have raised concerns about the relocation with regard to parking and location within the site, I understand that NHS England have confirmed that they are exploring plans for a volunteer patient transport service with Cressex Health Centre, which runs the services at both Hanover House and Lynton House.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to wish all the staff the very best for the future and long may they continue to provide their excellent services locally

11. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Leader of the Council

What support will be given to Youth Enquiry Service now that the County Council is phasing their funding out?

Thank you Cllr Wassell for your question and I am pleased to be able to say that due to some extra funding they have received from the Government, Bucks County Council have been able to re-instate the grant for this year. The transitional funding received has now allowed Bucks CC to keep the full Budget for this year and then taper it for the following two years to enable the service to be in a better position to plan for its future. I also understand that the Cabinet member at Bucks CC will be meeting with them soon to try and assist them with researching other sources of funding and future support to enable the service to continue long-term. We are therefore hopeful that when the time comes the Service will be self-sufficient and able to support themselves.