

Questions for Council Meeting

21 October 2020

Question(s) to the Leader Councillor Martin Tett

Question 1 from Councillor Majid Hussain:

In the light of some regrettable twitter postings by a member of this council, saying that it was a waste of time to have discussions about Black history or unconscious discrimination, would the Leader agree with me that it is important that council members are not only fully compliant with the law of the land but supportive of diversity training so that we can serve all our constituents?

Question 1 from Councillor Rafiq Raja:

Can the Leader provide reassurance that a proper 'risk assessment' has been undertaken to ensure that Buckinghamshire is not disadvantaged as a result of withdrawing from the Oxford to Cambridge 'ARC Leaders group'?

Question(s) to the Cabinet Member for Resources Councillor Katrina Wood

Question 1 from Councillor Mohammed Hanif:

Local governments graduate development programme is bringing new talent into councils to help them improve local communities.

It's a vital scheme that provides a gateway for graduates to carve out a career in local government. It also ensures that the views of the younger generation are represented at every level within the council.

Councils have until end of March 2021 to express an interest for next year's intake.

What practical steps will the Buckinghamshire Council take in order to recruit students who will truly represent the local communities?

Question(s) to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change: Councillor Bill Chapple OBE

Question 1 from Councillor Chris Whitehead:

Could members be advised as to whether the revenue received from the recently introduced charges for the disposal of non-household waste more than covers the increased costs associated with the collection and disposal of fly tipping that may have resulted from those unwilling to pay the charges?

Question 1 from Councillor Mohammed Hanif:

Transport is now the biggest emitter of carbon of any sector in the UK. Last year, the LGA, declared a climate emergency that has been looking at the decarbonisation of transport.

The Covid 19 pandemic has forced us all to reevaluate how our transport networks operates but they have not altered our commitment to reach net zero recovery.

What practical set of actions does Buckinghamshire Councils have to work towards our net- zero goal?

Question(s) to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills: Councillor Anita Cranmer

Question 1 from Councillor Mark Bateman:

Is there any evidence to suggest that the desired progress towards narrowing of the gap for disadvantaged children has been achieved over the last 12 months?

Question 2 from Councillor Mark Bateman:

What measures have been applied in Buckinghamshire to mitigate for those children who have not received a continuous education over the last 12 months?

Question 3 from Councillor Mark Bateman:

Can you provide me with attendance figures in Buckinghamshire since the children have returned to school by year group?

Question 4 from Councillor Mark Bateman:

Given that the motion below was deemed inappropriate to be discussed by Buckinghamshire Councillors at the Full Council meeting on 21st October. Could the Cabinet member for Education tell me who the 11+ testing system in Buckinghamshire is accountable to, as it is clearly not the Buckinghamshire Council?

Could the Cabinet member tell me how much the expenditure was for the Buckinghamshire Council in 2019 to administer the allocation of secondary school places within the County?

Could the Cabinet member tell me how many grammar school places were provided for children residing outside of Buckinghamshire following the 2019 tests?

- This Council recognises the difficulties that the Coronavirus epidemic has caused in providing Buckinghamshire children with their education in 2020. It wishes to ensure that no child is disadvantaged with regard to 11+ testing. It has therefore decided that it would not be appropriate for children to sit the 11+ examination in 2020.
- The Council will secure an appropriate method of allocating secondary school places for September 2021 without children undertaking the 11+ examination.

Question 1 from Councillor Rafiq Raja:

It is now recognised that children especially from lower socio economic backgrounds have lost a considerable amount of learning time due to the Pandemic. Is the Council monitoring the levels of missed education especially for this year's year 6 pupils and what are the Council's plans to ensure that such children are not on course to lose a significant part of their learning time and suffer a further disadvantage in realising their full potential?

Question 2 from Councillor Rafiq Raja:

Buckinghamshire was identified as one of a select handful of local authorities where the educational attainment gap was the widest between children from well to do backgrounds and those from poorer households. During the time of the coalition government Bucks was heavily criticised by the Education Ministers for failing our disadvantaged children. A consultation was organised under the chairmanship of Professor Strand, which looked at the reasons for this disparity and yet nothing changed in any recognisable way. Can we be informed as to what action has been taken regarding the recommendations in the Strand Report and has 'educational attainment gap' narrowed in the last 5 years?

Question(s) to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness Councillor Isobel Darby

Question 1 from Councillor Robin Stuchbury:

Currently under the Bucks Home Choice Allocation Policy the historical Aylesbury Vale area has a sub allocation policy which the Buckinghamshire Council has inherited, whereby 50% of New build and 25% of relets are allocated to people within one of the four set allocation areas in which they live, in line with the agreed policy.

There are concerns that the Council is not following the agreed policy for the Aylesbury Vale area, which was agreed and voted for in September 2013. Will the Cabinet member confirm when the Council will be undertaking a full review of the Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy which will involve a full consultation with the residents about the sub allocation policy within the Aylesbury area?

Question 1 from Councillor Rafiq Raja:

Before the dissolution of District Councils, each District Council had a housing target in its local plan. Is the Cabinet member for Housing able to reassure us that the Council is on target to achieve the number of affordable and Social housing identified in each district councils' local plan and where exactly are we with the Housing targets?

Question(s) to the Cabinet Member for Sport and Leisure: Councillor Clive Harriss

Question 1 from Councillor Mohammed Hanif:

Sports and physical activity have a key role to play in supporting and leading communities through Covid 19. The pandemic has a major impact on providers with more than two-thirds saying their future is insecure and facilities are at risk. One in four community clubs report they may close. With more than half of those most at risk are located in deprived areas.

What actions the Buckinghamshire Council intend to take to ensure that these centres are supported in difficult times?

Question(s) to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor Mark Shaw

Question 1 from Councillor Mark Bateman:

Risks have been identified in the Children's Social Care Budgets which could increase expenditure considerably as the Covid Pandemic continues, including Home to School Transport. Could these risks be outlined in full along with any mitigating actions planned to reduce this expenditure?

Question 1 from Councillor Robin Stuchbury:

In light of the impact of COVID-19 on the health and wellbeing of the young population within Buckinghamshire and in addition to the portfolios responsibility to support Prevent, by interacting and engaging with our young people in Buckinghamshire to ensure they aren't radicalised, has the council got enough financial resilience to meet the above responsibilities within the portfolio for youth provision going forward into 2021/22?

Buckinghamshire County Council cut funding to youth services radically in 2010/11 with a decade of budget restraints, pressures and cuts. Does the evidence suggest that this is now time for the New Buckinghamshire Council to look at investing again in youth provision to mitigate against known negatives and risks to our young people growing up in Buckinghamshire? National and local press articles in the past decade have expressed concern about a decade of cuts in youth funding with a recent article calling for the reinstatement and ring fencing of youth services funding to 2010/11 levels to provide targeted support for all young people. Services such as youth centres and youth work make a real difference to young people's lives.

Question(s) to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health Councillor Gareth Williams

Question 1 from Councillor Mohammed Hanif:

The corona virus pandemic is a worst tragedy most people have suffered in their lifetime. It has devastated families and communities, and changed the way we live, perhaps for ever. Loved ones have been taken away before their time.

Essential workers, such as doctors, nurses, care workers and even shop assistants have given their lives protecting and, serving the public.

I think the least we can do is make sure those who have tragically died from virus are never forgotten. Can Buckinghamshire Council help to put some permanent memorials in our towns which I'm sure the idea will have widespread public support as a fitting and respectful way to remember all these who have so tragically lost their lives?

Question 1 from Councillor Rafiq Raja:

We welcome the setting up of the Community boards, which have generated a lot of activity and I must say that we are encouraged by the range of small scale projects being considered by the HWCB. However, would the relevant Cabinet member reassure us that the CBs will not just be 'talking shops' but adequate funds will be made available for small and worthwhile projects identified by the Community Boards in general and those by the HWCB, so that these projects can start and finish (where possible) by the end of March 2021?