

**WILTSHIRE COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**15 MAY 2012**

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**QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

**FROM CLLR NICK FOGG, MARLBOROUGH WEST DIVISION**

**TO CLLR LIONEL GRUNDY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**Question 1**

- a) Where would you say responsibility for OFSTED's finding of 'serious and significant shortcomings' in Wiltshire's care for at least some of its vulnerable children may lie?
- b) What precise steps are being taken to remedy these failings?
- c) Is the report in the Gazette & Herald of April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012, which stated that care workers had not been invited to child protection meetings, even though they were best placed to represent the child's interests, correct?

**Response**

- a) The Ofsted report highlights that all partner agencies must take responsibility for ensuring that vulnerable children are safe. Each agency is accountable for making sure they are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities. All partners have stated that the main priority is to safeguard children and young people and minimise the risk of them being subject to harm and they are in agreement that the improvement plan and actions must be delivered with some urgency, to ensure that Wiltshire children and young people are protected.

A multi-agency Safeguarding Improvement Board has been established and is responsible for monitoring progress and overseeing the delivery and evidence of improvement. The inspectors judged that there is adequate capacity to improve safeguarding services and for looked after children the capacity to improve is good and that the political and managerial ambition and prioritisation across all partners is to improve and be better than adequate across all services.

- b) The inspectors reported that as soon as the issues were raised with the council that immediate and appropriate action was taken to ensure the children and young people identified were re-assessed and appropriately protected. A detailed improvement plan was drafted and shared with inspectors before they left. This plan has subsequently

been developed following receipt of the inspection report.

The immediate actions as set out in the inspection report and the improvement plan are either well underway or have been completed. An Improvement Board has been set up and has already met twice. The terms of reference for this board and its role have been agreed. Its key purpose is to oversee, challenge and support the delivery of improvement. Membership is at senior level and includes representatives from the council, health services and police and the chair of the newly established safeguarding scrutiny task group. An independent chair has been appointed. A multi-agency operational group, will support the board to ensure that the improvements are delivered.

An external audit of all child protection cases and cases held within the Referral and Assessment team has been undertaken and action has been taken in response to any identified issues. Additional management capacity is in place. Staff and managers are regularly updated and invited to attend development sessions.

The Department for Education has confirmed that our actions to date have been timely and appropriate and the inspectors stated that the council is committed, within challenging budget reductions, to protecting its front line services.

c) Without knowing where these comments originated it makes it very difficult to respond to the Gazette & Herald's coverage. However, the Ofsted inspection team, throughout the duration of their inspection and in the final report did not raise any concerns about the attendance of professionals at child protection conferences.

There is a clear process in place; the Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LSCB) has an escalation procedure which sets out the steps to be followed if there are any concerns in respect of child protection practice. It is the responsibility of all professionals to follow this procedure if they have concerns. We can confirm that no specific concerns of this nature have been highlighted to the LSCB or to the Director of Children's Services.

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**QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

**FROM CLLR DAVID JENKINS, WESTBURY NORTH DIVISION**

**TO CLLR RICHARD TONGE, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND  
TRANSPORT**

**Question 1**

With regard to the car parking alterations made under HT-22-12 for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, it is important to the people and businesses of Westbury that Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June is included.

There will be a whole range of events taking place the Town which has been organised by the Town Council and other outside organisations for over two years. The events will vary in size, the numbers of people who attend and choice. They will run through the Saturday and into the evening. It is part of a comprehensive full four day programme of celebration, therefore in view of this can Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June be included in the alterations to parking arrangements?

**Response**

The final date for comments on the 'intention to make a decision' is 15th May. I will discuss the responses with officers very soon after the 15th and issue a decision shortly after that.

The submission by Councillor Jenkins has been logged in and will be considered together with others received.



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**QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

**FROM CLLR CHRIS CASWILL, CHIPPENHAM MONKTON DIVISION**

**TO CLLR TOBY STURGIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR WASTE, PROPERTY,  
ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL SERVICES**

**Question 1**

Does the Council's agreement with ING for the redevelopment of the Bath Road site in Chippenham (a) include an expectation that ING will provide alternative facilities for youth service provision currently housed in the Bridge Centre (such as the cafe) or (b) require a cash payment in lieu?

**Response**

The Development Agreement with ING obliges the company to either provide alternative youth facilities or make cash payment in lieu, at the Council's discretion.

**Question 2**

If (a) which facilities fall within the ING remit? Or if (b) can we be given an assurance that all the funds provide under this aspect of the agreement will be used for the re-provision of current youth services?

**Response**

The relocation provision covers all youth services currently operating from the Bridge Centre. It is intended that that if a cash payment was made then it would be used to fund whatever alternative facility is to be provided. For instance, if the service was to be relocated in a community campus then the payment would go towards such a facility.



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**QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

**FROM CLLR CLLR CHRIS CASWILL, CHIPPENHAM MONKTON DIVISION**

**TO CLLR JONATHAN SEED, CHAIRMAN LICENSING COMMITTEE**

**Question 1**

- a) What progress has been made towards revision of the Council's Licensing Policy to take account of recent legislative changes and the Government's published Alcohol Strategy?
- b) Will that revision process include consideration of introducing Cumulative Impact Zones in Wiltshire towns?

**Response**

- a) The question regarding the review of the Licensing Policy was raised at the last Full Council meeting (item 22 draft minutes, Council meeting 28<sup>th</sup> February 2012).

At this time Councillors were advised that members of the Licensing Policy Committee were aware of the impending changes within the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act.

It was also reported that the commitment to review the policy was already contained within the work programme of the Committee and that this process would start as soon as full details of the proposal (and guidance) were available. These are now known and officers are working to consider the impact these will have on the review of the Licensing Policy, together with the proposals contained within the National Alcohol Strategy. This review will include a consultation process with both the public and partners together with appropriate training for members of the Committee.

Two measures specifically outlined in the National Alcohol Strategy, the Late Night Levies and Early Morning Restriction Orders will not be available until October 2012.

It is hoped that a revised Licensing Policy will be considered by the Licensing Policy Committee at its meeting in September 2012, and subsequently commended to Council.

- b) Any review of the licensing policy will consider whether it is appropriate to include provisions relating to cumulative impact. Any decision to have such provisions must be based on relevant evidence and will be considered in light of the revised guidance.



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**QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

**FROM CLLR CHRIS CASWILL, CHIPPENHAM MONKTON DIVISION**

**TO CLLR JANE SCOTT, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**Question 1**

As the Council now has the executive ability to act in licensing matters, and is not confined to a quasi-judicial role, will consideration now be given to including licensing policy in a Cabinet portfolio, and to a revision of officer responsibilities to provide for a more active approach?

**Response**

Section 7 of the Licensing Act 2003 provides that all matters relating to the discharge by a licensing authority of its licensing functions are referred to the Licensing Committee established under s.6 of the Act. That committee then arranges for some of those functions to be discharged by its sub-committees or officers as appropriate. Even with the recent changes to the Licensing Act brought about by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, there is no provision for any Licensing Act functions to be the responsibility of the Executive. In addition the retention of the licensing policy as a Committee matter allows members to have a real influence on all licensing matters.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 amended s.13(4) of the Licensing Act so as to make the licensing authority itself a 'responsible authority' thereby allowing it to object to applications and call for reviews. This will require a separation of roles within the Licensing Team (as set out in paragraphs 9.17 - 9.18 of the revised statutory guidance) and an amendment to the scheme of delegation to allow officers to make representations on applications on behalf of the licensing authority. These amendments and reviews are in hand.



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**FROM CLLR CHRIS CASWILL, CHIPPENHAM MONKTON DIVISION**

**TO CLLR LIONEL GRUNDY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**Question 1**

- a) What services are now provided by Connexions in Wiltshire?
- b) How are those services being advertised?
- c) How are the services which are no longer being provided by Connexions being made available to the young people who need them?
- d) What steps are being taken to monitor the provision of these kinds of support services in Wiltshire secondary schools?

**Response**

- a) The Connexions brand no longer exists. Remaining Connexions staff are now part of the Integrated Youth Service (IYS). Their primary role is to provide support for young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET) or at significant risk of this.

All Integrated Youth Service staff (Youth Offending, former Connexions staff, Youth Development staff and others) have a youth engagement role to work with young people who are identified as being vulnerable e.g. NEET or risk of NEET, Special Educational Needs, Disability, Child in Care, Young Offender, Teenage Parent, Substance Misuse etc. As such, the IYS provides 'targeted' support to those young people who need it most.

However, a universal 'open access' youth work offer remains in each community area delivered by local Youth Workers. Changes to Connexions have been made in light of statutory government guidance stating that responsibility for careers guidance (formerly 'Information, Advice and Guidance') moves to schools (including academies) and colleges from 1st September 2012 – supported by the new 'National Careers Service'.

- b) Integrated Youth Services are advertised in several ways:-

- Through commissioning consultations directly with young people.
- Regular communications with schools and academies.
- Communication to partners of Children and Young Peoples Trust.
- On 'Sparksite' (youth website) and as communicated by IYS Delivery Teams.
- Within Job Centres where Integrated Youth staff are still present at set times.

We are currently undertaking work to continue to clarify our overall youth offer and to explore the best way of promoting this to local young people. Young people will be involved in this.

- c) Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (which the Council no longer delivers from 1st September) will be provided by schools including academies. As such, there should be no reduction in the overall offer, although it is now split between the Local Authority (focus on vulnerable young people) and schools/colleges (universal offer of careers guidance to all young people). Between May and September, an interim offer of service is in place and has been accepted by schools and colleges.
- d) There is currently no requirement for the Local Authority to monitor the provision of Careers Guidance in schools. However, our Schools and Learning Team are working with schools and colleges to support the provision of careers guidance in schools through our local Raising Participation Age Strategy and Plan, of which schools are a key partner. In addition the Schools and Learning 13-19 Team are working with and encouraging schools to obtain the careers 'Quality Mark' status. Overall the Department for Education will have a lead role in ensuring that effective quality careers advice is delivered by schools and colleges.

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**QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

**QUESTION FROM CLLR ERNIE CLARK, HILPERTON DIVISION**

**TO CLLR JANE SCOTT, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**Question 1**

What progress has been made to recover 'the enhanced element of severance' from the former Kennet staff members? Also, I understand that the auditor was of the opinion that the original 'non-pensionable honoraria' payments should not have been made. Accepting that this is the case, what steps are being taken to recover these payments? If no action is being taken could you please explain why.

**Response**

Recovery action is still being pursued. Since the last meeting of Council on 28 February 2012 when this matter was raised a further request for information has been made by one of the party's solicitors. Council Officers are trying to locate this documentation but it is proving to be difficult due to its historical nature.

Once we have complied with the latest request, as far as this is possible, we will be able to require an answer from that party and then any defences raised can be considered and a final decision made as to whether Court proceedings are justified.

With regard to the original non pensionable honoraria payments the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Solicitor to the Council, Chief Finance Officer and myself as Leader, decided not to pursue recovery of these payments as the costs and litigation risks involved in doing so were likely to be disproportionate to the amounts in question. This approach was endorsed by the Audit Committee on 24 March 2010.

