

ELECTED MEMBER QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 2 FEBRUARY 2022

a) Question from Councillor R Flatley to Councillor C Hart, Cabinet Member for Health and Communities

“At the last Full Council meeting Cllr Fordham asked a question regarding pre-exposure prophylaxis (prep) where he stated that Derbyshire was the worst County in the East Midlands for late diagnosis. Could the cabinet member please confirm whether this statement was correct?”

Response:

“Thank you for your question, Councillor Flatley. Yes, you are right, Councillor Fordham did say that Derbyshire was the worst county in the East Midlands for late diagnosis.

I am pleased to tell you that he got his facts wrong. I can confirm that the most recent data, aggregated across 2018-20 shows that Derbyshire is not the worst county. In fact in comparison with local authorities who have similar characteristics to Derbyshire (which is our six nearest neighbours) it allows us to compare our performance more reliably against similar areas. Derbyshire is the sixth best performing out of this Group of 16 similar authorities, which includes five of the East Midlands’ counties.

I think it really would help if perhaps members checked any facts that they are quoting at full Council as it can be very misleading. The problem is that the press are usually in attendance and very often they take whatever is said as fact without sometimes perhaps checking for themselves whether the facts are correct so it does lead to a lot of misinformation out in the public domain. So no, Derbyshire is not the worst but sixth best out of 16 similar authorities which does include five of the six East Midlands’ counties.”

Supplementary question:

“Thank you, Councillor Hart, for your response. Councillor Fordham also stated that 50% of HIV cases in Derbyshire are recorded late. In light of your first response could you confirm whether this figure is also correct?”

Response:

“Yes, following on again I think Councillor Fordham got his facts wrong. It is not 50% of HIV recorded late but 40%. This equates to 14 people and covers the two year period 2018-20. This is very similar to the national average of 42.4%.

Of course we want this figure lower and we have worked with DCHS to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment to compare service access and uptake also before the pandemic and at various stages during the pandemic. We are involved in Public Health England, which of course is now the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities, in this work for independent assessment to challenge ourselves further. This work is ongoing and highlights our commitment to reducing inequalities. A piece of work has actually been applauded by PHE and was disseminated on their National Sexual Health and IV Commissioner's hub as good practice, so whilst it is good to put the facts right it is also good to show what good work we are doing in this area. Thank you."

At the council meeting, Councillor Fordham raised a point of personal explanation to explain a relevant earlier statement which she believed had been misunderstood. Details of the point of personal explanation will be published in the minutes of the meeting and available on the council's website.

b) Question from Councillor S Swann to Councillor B Lewis, Leader of the Council

"At the last Full Council meeting, while making unverified assertions about a lack of staff within the County Council's catering service, Cllr George made some quite shocking statements about children collapsing at school due to not getting any food.

Given the concerning nature of what was said by Cllr George, will the Leader please update Members on the findings of any investigations to establish the facts of this matter?"

Response:

"Thank you, Councillor Swann for raising this incredibly important issue. I know that Councillor Dale would be very keen to set the record straight on this one but he is unable to be here today.

Firstly, I would like to start by saying that immediately following the last meeting where the claims were made, Councillor Dale and officers were very keen to fully investigate those claims but have been hampered by any lack of engagement from Councillor George herself.

Multiple requests have been sent to Councillor George by Councillor Dale and officers to request clarity on exactly what she said and, in particular, the name of the school affected so that it could be looked into. All of these requests have been met by a wall of silence after it has triggered some alarm bells and we have been looking into it further.

As a result of this we have had to wait until the verbatim minutes were produced in order to fully investigate the matter, so for the benefit of all members in the room I will quote what Councillor George said during that last meeting. She said:

“In-school catering then the lack of staff is meaning that lunches are not served to all the children. In our local High School in Chapel we had children collapsing because they weren’t able to get any food during the course of the day. Children on free school meals were not receiving the lunches that they were entitled to and which they needed in order to get by because staff had opted to work in hospitality instead because they got better pay; they got better holidays and they could work during school holidays if they wished. They are paid just £9.25 an hour at Derbyshire County Council compared to £10 an hour at Morrisons and £9.55 at Aldi and Tesco at the local alternatives to me.”

That is what Councillor George said and therefore we investigated those claims in relation to Chapel High School and there are three fundamental problems with what Councillor George said.

Firstly, despite the very clear insinuation from Councillor George, Derbyshire County Council does not even provide a catering service for Chapel High and instead they commission a private contractor.

Secondly, officers have contacted the school’s headteacher who does not recognise these assertions. The headteacher has confirmed that if this had happened then free food would have been provided for the student in addition to an Early Help assessment being undertaken and signposting the student’s family to the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund.

Finally, Councillor George criticised the level of pay and holiday arrangements for DCC catering staff. In terms of pay according to the benchmarking we are significantly above our private competitors in this area. Catering staff, of course, already get good holidays based on the school terms and when you speak to many of them a lot will cite this as a reason they choose to work in our Catering Service. In the summer of 2020 the Service offered work to all 1,400 employees and, interestingly, only 39 expressed any interest.

I am sure you will agree this is deeply disappointing that Councillor George had chosen to make these claims in a public arena of a full Council meeting without first checking the veracity of their facts. In doing so she has completely unfairly besmirched the school and their contractors as well as our own Catering Service.”

Supplementary question:

“We are all aware that the Council has done a huge amount of good work to support vulnerable families during the pandemic and I am sure the Leader can provide a summary of such assistance, but would Councillor Lewis agree that Councillor George should consider both retracting the statement and offering an apology, not least to the teachers at the local school she mentioned, but also the County Council’s dedicated and hard working Catering Service colleagues who on the same day Councillor George made these comments were being commended by you, Chair, and being congratulated by the members in this room for receiving two national awards.”

Response:

“That is quite correct, Councillor Swann, we were indeed celebrating the successes of the Catering Services who do such a fantastic job for all our schools. Yes, I am quite pleased to be able to report the positive record that we have here in Derbyshire for supporting the most vulnerable children and their families and particularly during the pandemic.

Just to name a few of those examples, our Children’s Services led cross-Council activities to secure £5.4m from the DWP funding through the Covid-19 winter and local support grants providing 160,000 vouchers to vulnerable children and families and support to vulnerable adults during the school holiday periods between December 2020 and September 2021.

At the beginning of this winter we received an additional £5.4m for the Household Support Fund and working with partner organisations we estimate that by the end of the winter we will have helped approximately 6,000 families to receive cash grants with an average payment of £124 for a family of four and each family will be able to access two payments within the period.

27,000 children eligible for benefit related free school meals will have received a £50 food voucher in early February 2022 and we have distributed £1.2m to District Councils to support another 6,000 families with children with financial or practical housing related support.

We provided £190,000 in HSF grants to community and voluntary sector organisations which supports a significant proportion of the families out there as well and by utilising the Government’s £2.8m holiday activities and food funding we have established a network of 62 community and voluntary providers to deliver over 60,000 holiday activity and food places to vulnerable children eligible to free school meals over the summer and Christmas and an additional 816 places were offered by our Sports and Outdoor Education Services.

So you can see, Chairman, we do an awful lot for the young people across Derbyshire who are in need in this way. It is incredibly disappointing to hear those comments from Councillor George last time. One doesn’t like to use the

word 'liar' in relation to an elected member in this Chamber, and I certainly won't use that term, but the term 'grossly misleading the Council' scarcely does this justice."

At the council meeting, Councillor George raised a point of personal explanation to explain a relevant earlier statement which she believed had been misunderstood. Details of the point of personal explanation will be published in the minutes of the meeting and available on the council's website.

c) Question from Councillor R George to Councillor C Renwick, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Environment

"When will the landslip on the A5004 Long Hill be repaired?"

Response:

"Thank you, Councillor George for your question. I do understand there is history on this. I do understand the concerns with which you are perhaps asking this question because my colleague, Councillor Kemp, has brought this to our officers' attention on a number of occasions the concerns on behalf of the local residents, but to update you on the current situation we are currently in the detailed design stage for repairs to the A5004 Long Hill caused by the landslip.

A contractor has been commissioned. The detailed ground investigations, along with geophysical and ecology service have been completed. Extensive liaison has been undertaken with all the adjacent landowners and discussions undertaken with affected statutory undertakers. Detailed investigation of the existing drainage system is currently being undertaken and it is hoped to commence advanced utility works in the spring. Once the detailed design has been completed, and the scope of all the works needed to undertake the repairs analysed, a construction programme will be prepared and communicated."

Supplementary question:

"Councillor Athwal, thank you for your response, I urge you to ensure that these repairs can be done as soon as possible. I don't know if you have seen the road in question? I have raised it many many times with your department over the last two years. It has been collapsed for longer and is collapsing more almost by the week, especially over the winter. We were assured it would be started in the autumn. The budget for it expires at the end of this financial year. Please could I get your full assurance that if the work is not commenced before the end of this financial year that that budget will be allocated in the next financial year and that it will definitely be completed then? Thank you."

Response:

“Thank you, Councillor George, for your supplementary. Please be assured that officers are aware of the timespans and they are looking to action the repairs in a timely manner. As regards the budget I am sure it will be earmarked budget for the repairs in this area and I am sure they will be moved across appropriately.

As you will appreciate Derbyshire’s geography is quite different to many other counties and we suffer from quite a few geological slips and various aspects, especially with climate change and the like which are particular to the geography of Derbyshire itself. I have already had a conversation with officers and I have sort of encouraged them to work with partners say from places like Cumbria, Yorkshire which have topography like we have in Derbyshire itself to lobby Central Government to try and get some additional funds to help with these sort of issues because we do have a number of slips in there. Again I can only assure you that we will keep you informed. Thank you.”

d) Question from Councillor R George to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

“What are the Council’s plans to open up our Learning Disability Centres to the many people who would love to attend them again?”

Response:

“Firstly, I would like to thank all our amazing staff who have come forward and are helping to support our residents to provide a high level of care. I would like to reassure everybody that this is a temporary measure.

You will be aware of the current pressures that are being experienced in the health and care sector across the country and unfortunately Derbyshire is no different. The omicron variant has caused large numbers of staff to need to self-isolate and many more are absent from work unwell with Covid. This has led to resourcing difficulties in our residential homes and in providing home care for everybody assessed as needing help in the community. Consequently we are taking temporary action in order to help us direct resources to best manage the situation to help us provide the care needed for those people who are being impacted by the reduction in staff numbers.

To help us through this difficult time we needed to move some of our skilled staff from our services, including day services, to work in residential homes and home care across the county. I am aware that all people attending and their carers have been made aware of this situation and our central team of social workers are supporting people who need to find an alternative during this time. We still have three of our Day Centres open and we are supporting residents to get to these until they are able to open the ones that have been temporarily closed. This is under constant review and we will update all members when this situation changes.”

Supplementary question:

“It is not just the temporary closure or the temporary proposed closure because in some cases it has not actually happened yet that is of concern. Alderbrook Learning Disability Centre in my own Division used to cater for 83 people, it now caters for just 12 of whom all except one are on a part-time basis. This huge and beautiful Centre supports just six or seven people per day instead of the 69 that it used to support.

There are dozens of families with loved ones who would adore to attend that Centre again. They watch the bus go by with tears running down their cheeks because they can't attend with their friends. Parents and families have heard nothing of the long-term plans to open up those Centres again and this is what my question was directed to, when and how they are going to be opened up again to all of those who need them?”

Response:

“As I have said in my original answer this is under constant review. This is a temporary measure that unfortunately we have had to put in place because of the variant to ensure that we can deliver services. We have three of our Centres open and we are supporting residents. As soon as this situation changes we will advise all members. Thank you.”

e) Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor B Lewis, Leader of the Council

“There are many heralded benefits to Vision Derbyshire regarding back office functions, HR, personnel, fleet and procurement, to name a few. One area that has been largely unspoken of is in relation to the issues faced directly by residents. As Vision Derbyshire comes into formation can attention be turned to the schemes of all Council for reporting problems and issues by residents. This might apply to all areas of the work of local authorities within Derbyshire - this the opportunity to review the formal replies around potholes and roads and public estate. This could have the effect to end replies that say 'Not the responsibility of Derbyshire County Council' and rather, where it is known that it was say Amber Valley or Chesterfield Borough Council we might a) tell the resident which authority owns the lands and b) pass on the concern or issue direct to that authority? This could have the effect of making Vision Derbyshire something for which residents might see a tangible and indeed useful benefit. Does the Council agree?”

Response:

“Councillor Fordham, thank you very much indeed for your question. It is interesting you put this question in this way actually as part of Vision Derbyshire working. It is something that is seen as something of a potential panacea in the future for Vision Derbyshire approach, the sort of integration of complaint systems and online systems where you have a single front door almost for the county. As we know generally most people on the ground when they talk about “the Council” don’t perceive there are two tiers in places like Derbyshire and therefore absolutely quite sensible that the questions when they are asked should be dealt with and we can find an appropriate system for doing that. Other local authorities in the country, I believe there are one or two, have done this with a reasonable degree of success.

We ourselves as a local authority have moved relatively recently to the Channel Shift Programme which has meant that our own front door for the County Council has improved somewhat both for the general public and for members. I would assume that there is plenty of scope to integrate those systems in the future and as I recall from discussions I had quite early on about the Channel Shift system that we have operating here at the moment is we have that potential to upgrade and expand so we can do that. It shouldn’t be something that is predicated actually on a Vision Derbyshire model it is quite a sensible system that if a member of the general public jumps onto any particular Council website, asks a question or makes a request for a particular service that they should get that answer. I think the key is working at a pace that we are at the moment with the Districts and Boroughs as part of Vision Derbyshire approach in a way that is comfortable for them to think about, talk about, look at things like integration in this way. I think that is all I need to say about it at the moment, Chairman.”

Supplementary question:

“Just a very brief supplementary, if I may, just to ask the Leader if he would consider - I don’t think this need be a Vision Derbyshire thing but necessarily it could just be a pilot in a small area. I just find myself personally struggling with a reply that says “We don’t own the land” when in fact we know who does. I think there is something that could pilot this in a particular Borough or Town or even just Division or Ward or Parish whereby we had a joined up approach with a local authority that shared data. It doesn’t even have to be Derbyshire led it could even be *that* local authority or *that* Parish Council. I wonder whether the Leader would agree?”

Response:

“Thank you very much indeed. We will certainly consider doing that, I think. As I say there are conversations going on as part of Vision Derbyshire approaching a deal being dealt with by various Cabinet members, in here for example with Cabinet members in other local authorities as part of the Vision Derbyshire

approach and I am sure that there will be some detailed plans coming forward at a point when they are developed.”

f) Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor C Hart, Cabinet Member for Health & Communities

“More and more groups such as Food Banks, Service User Groups in Health and Social Care and countless volunteer organisations are increasingly the front-line (outside of families) for the support and help of those with mental health related issues. Given how many of these meet and operate from the many village halls and community centres up and down Derbyshire, is this now the time to review the level of risk and exposure these Groups are under from mental health patients who can no longer cope or who suffer from high anxiety and other conditions. Given the lethal incidents faced by MPs seeking to help troubled constituents, is now the time to provide advice, guidance and support for all such groups and venues who provide support, advice and venues in the community?”

Response:

“Thank you for your question, Councillor Fordham. I have to say from the start I do not think what you are asking is actually achievable. I am sure I do not need to point out to anybody there are literally thousands of groups and organisations, including food banks, right across Derbyshire. As pointed out they all meet in all sorts of venues but many of these organisations are not necessarily known to DCC. We of course can and do carry out our duties on our own staffing buildings though.

I can also say there is a Prevent Duty guidance which requires there is a venue hire policy covering any publicly owned buildings but I am also sure that the vast majority of the other buildings owned by other bodies such as large charities, organisations or perhaps smaller buildings owned by Parish Councils will all have their own policies and risk assessments in place.

In addition to address your concerns about mental health I have to say that our Public Health Team do an enormous amount of work in connection with mental health and they send out as much information and guidance and contacts for obtaining help as they possibly can.

I hear what you say about the fairly recent as you put it “lethal incidents” with MPs and yes, we should all be very aware, but I actually don’t think that the local organisations doing good work in the community probably come under such severe threats as MPs though again we must all be aware of this.

We have, as you know, given advice and guidance to our councillors and staff but to try and do this across all the organisations and groups across Derbyshire

is, as I have always said, probably an impossible task. However, having said that I will say we will always do our best to inform and give guidance in any areas of concern as best we can and we will do that not through our own websites and such like but also through our partners and stakeholders. Thank you.”

Supplementary question:

“I had an incident recently in a local community group of which I am a councillor for, or the area rather, where a resident did “explode” and it was a very difficult situation for the volunteers handling it. It is a Council owned venue and they haven’t taken steps really I would say to ameliorate it.

It is nearly 21 years to the day that I walked into the constituency office of the MP for Cheltenham to handle the aftermath of the murder of Councillor Andrew Pennington by a samurai sword. It is clear to me 21 years later that many of the lessons that we have taught MPs in their constituency offices with their volunteers have not been learnt here in Derbyshire and in our community centres. I think there is some opportunity for us to do more. I am happy that the MPs have advice and guidance. I think our volunteers deserve it too.”

Response:

“I would just say, Chairman, we will always share as much information as we can. We are always there for help and guidance but to cover every absolute organisation there must be hundreds and hundreds in Derbyshire doing various things that we don’t actually know about so all we can do is help, but we are there for any help that anybody wants. Yes, we should all be aware but hopefully these buildings anywhere and any organisations using premises should have risk assessments in place when they hire the rooms or use the rooms. Thank you.”

g) Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor T Ainsworth, Fire Authority Chair

“I note that Dexter, the East Midlands Fire Dog is to retire with his handler and that he is not being replaced thus ending decades of loyal, successful and indeed life saving service from Fire Dogs in this area. In noting our thanks to Dexter for his services, will the Council lend its support to a review of this retrograde step of ending animal support in emergency situations?”

Response:

”Thank you for your question. Derbyshire Fire and Rescue have had a regional commitment to fire investigation which means each Service contributing funds and roles to guide how fire investigation is delivered. Each Service pays a fifth of the cost of the dog handler and the dog.

Dexter and Dave, his handler, were Derbyshire staff and still are. We are proud of the work they have done in the past ten years. Dexter and Dave retire in the next couple of months and despite there being new technology available such as digital thermal cameras, Nottinghamshire have expressed an interest in providing a new dog and handler for this function. We will continue to contribute our portion, as will the other East Midlands' members, and we will have access to this valuable asset. There will be no loss during the term because as Dave retires he is actually going to go and work as a civilian at Nottingham Fire and Rescue until such time as they get the new dog, so they are going to take it over for the next ten years and it just goes round each area.

You have given me a nice situation in which to congratulate Dave and Dexter on reaching their retirement, thank them for the work they have done in serving the residents of the East Midlands and Derbyshire and wish them a long and happy retirement.”

h) Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

“Can the Council share any aspect of the consultation on Care Homes that has been welcomed by residents or families during the consultation process? Given this is a re-consultation, does the Council understand why many feel that this decision and consultation has been pre-determined?”

Response:

“Thank you. We fully recognise how difficult it can be for residents, their relatives and our staff to be engaged in a consultation on the future of the care homes in which they live and work. We have been assured by the fact that being involved in the consultation process has enabled people to have the clarity they want and need about the current position and the options being consulted upon. The consultation has also given residents and their relatives an opportunity to express their views about the proposals and raise questions to seek reassurance about the process. We have been able to reassure everyone who has taken part in the process that no decisions have been made and that all the views provided to the consultation will be presented to Cabinet in due course to support future decision making. Thank you.

Supplementary question:

“So if I understood that answer correctly the only aspect of the consultation that has been welcomed by residents or families is clarity. The only aspect is clarity. Is that correct, there is no aspect of the consultation regarding rewiring; moving; relocation; bus distances, no single aspect of the consultation has been welcomed except for clarity?”

Response:

“It is very very difficult because we are still in the middle of the consultation to give a full account of everybody’s comments. All members will have future opportunities to comment on this moving forward. Thank you.”

i) Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor K Athwal, Cabinet Member for Highways, Assets & Transport

“Cross Street in Chesterfield has, in my two and a half years as a councillor, been extensively patched, had full grit surface dressing, and then extensively patched again. It was due to be entirely replaced as none of these options has succeeded. This plan however, has been cancelled during the budget process leaving an unsatisfactory surface, threw failed repairs and a huge bill for the council and an ongoing problem for residents, cyclists, drivers and the school. Will the Council revisit this decision to cancel the works and reflect on the sums of money with three full scale repairs and a concealed fourth pending?”

Response:

“Thank you, Councillor Fordham, for your question. Our records, Councillor Fordham, show that apart from reactive repairs of potholes no other work has been undertaken on Cross Street. According to our officers we have no records of Cross Street having had full grit surface dressing and no staff are aware of this.

Recently yourself, Councillor Fordham, did enquire directly about any work undertaken on Cross Street and he was informed in the same manner, but if Councillor Fordham has any evidence to the contrary then I will be happy to discuss it with you if he is able to share that with me.

Mr Chairman, there is nothing concealed. No planned works have been cancelled. In the next financial year, as I stated at the September full Council meeting, we are proposing to resurface areas of Cross Street and this year we have added two adjoining streets, these are Hawksley Avenue and Tennyson Avenue which directly connect to Cross Street and this will give us the opportunity to carry out these works together to minimise cost and disruption. Thank you.”

Supplementary question:

“If I can thank Councillor Athwal for the open nature of his reply. This has become an illustration in a difficult street of a difficult problem. I have photographs of the surface being relaid and we now know that that work and those men did not place that resurfacing on the electronic system.

My principal concern was that Cross Street was just an example. My principal concern is what this is costing the Authority. You have just given a commitment that you will be resurfacing Cross Street along delightfully with Hawksley and Tennyson, but that will be the fourth time in the two-and-a-half years I have been a District councillor that you will be relaying that street. My concern is not on the state of Cross Street per se but on the cost of sending people down there four times in two-and-a-half years. I use it as an example and it is not alone. As Councillor Athwal knows I raised the issue with the officer who apologised and offered a street meeting there today. I have declined that and suggested Friday instead. I am happy to report back then, Chair, but I am concerned at the briefing Councillor Athwal has been given and I am happy to take that up with him privately.”

Response:

“Thank you, I don’t think there was really a question there but if I may elaborate further. I will be happy to have a discussion with yourself, Councillor Fordham, to look at what evidence you have and see what investigations we can make but I would like to say here and now: Mr Chairman, our roads/streets have not deteriorated over the last four or five years they have suffered from decades of under-investment in highways by the Opposition.

It is *this* administration who have worked hard to find a solution to this longstanding issue by putting into action a sensible and financially viable plan to improve our highways and byways by embarking on a three year capital investment programme of £120m. We are just completing the first year of a three year programme having invested close to £40m to improve our highways and there is a lot more to do. Indeed, Cabinet approved a £58m highways capital programme for 2022-23 only last month. Mr Chairman, this is by far the highest ever financial investment by this Authority to improve our roads/streets for all and I hope that Councillor Fordham, along with other members, will appreciate this.

I also want to place on record my thanks to our officers for formulating the extensive plans and the Cabinet for approving the highways capital programme. Thank you.”.

j) Question from Councillor C Dale to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

“Now we find ourselves in crisis in recruiting staff for residential and home care throughout out the County are we approaching the situation of failing as a Council in our Statutory Duty; On reflection would it have been better to increase care staff wages, provide a bonus in recognition of the sterling work they carried

out throughout the Pandemic and created a proper career pathway for apprentices?”

Response:

“Thank you for your question about the challenge of recruiting residential and home care staff across the county.

This is a challenge for us locally in Derbyshire as it is a regional and national and has been a whole market pressure for a number of years which has been consistently highlighted to Central Government by local authorities, the Local Government Association and ADASS as well as by care homes and Home Care Associations.

As the social care reform introduces a lifetime cap on the amount any individual will be required to contribute to the cost of their own personal care over their lifetime, funding will be allocated by Central Government to assist local authorities with funding the cost of this and we welcome hearing of Derbyshire’s allocation.

Going forward we will be using the Fair Price for Care model developed on behalf of ADASS and the LGA to help us understand the cost for each provider in the sector. This model will enable us to see the wages of local care workers, including whether they receive sick pay, the amount of pay training days received, and payments for travel costs.

What is already evident from the recent benchmarking exercise is that via our pay rates, which include payments for travel, Derbyshire County Council enables providers in the market to pay a higher hourly rate to care workers in the Home Care sector than neighbouring local authorities. This hourly rate is higher than the rate stipulated by the Home Care Association. Locally Derbyshire County Council is completing a wide range of activities to improve the recruitment and retention of care workers in care homes and home care and this includes collaborative work to develop and deliver a strategic work filled programme led by the Joined Up Care Derbyshire Place partnerships.

There is already collaborative working across our local system to join recruitment initiatives to mitigate against the risks of moving staff from one part of the system to another and ultimately to develop the opportunity for hybrid roles and apprenticeship schemes which enable employees to undertake a range of roles in health and social care.

Internally Adult Social Care is undertaking workforce planning for the whole of the market and has a range of initiatives to improve recruitment and retention internally in our Direct Care Services. We work closely with providers to understand and support them in trying to resolve their workforce challenges.

Our care worker workforce across the whole market is a real strength and enables Derbyshire County Council to continue to deliver its statutory duties to meet the needs of the people with care and support needs across the whole of the county. We are fully committed to ensuring that the value attached to this role reflects the skills, expertise and dedication of our care workers. Thank you.”

Supplementary question:

“I understand for our Home Care clients that because of the crisis situation there has been a reduction in services for some of the clients. How long is this likely to last do you think and what if a particular client who has a reduced service their health suddenly deteriorates, what provision have we got to cover this eventuality so that they receive the services back again? Thank you.”

Response:

“Again this is a temporary measure which is constantly under review and should a resident require additional support then this Council would provide it straightaway. Thank you.”

k) Question from Councillor C Dale to Councillor B Lewis, Leader of the Council

“The Council is committed to Vision Derbyshire. How many job losses are planned for the future and how are we going to fund the redundancies. Will it mean a substantial rise in Council Tax to cover this eventuality?”

Response:

“Thank you, Councillor Dale, for your question. This seems to have some familiar overtones from some of the rhetoric we have heard from the Leader of Bolsover District Council relatively recently, Councillor Steve Fritchley. I suppose there are a few ways I can answer this question but I suppose the most direct way is best.

One is the work that we are doing around Vision Derbyshire with Districts and Boroughs in some senses may be superseded by the process that we are going through as part of the County Deals process. We don't know that. As I say there is some detail yet to come on that but one thing we have always been clear about with regard to Vision Derbyshire is around setting pace with Districts and Boroughs that they are comfortable with and engaging with the process in terms of Vision Derbyshire again at their pace. It is theirs to control and they can opt in/opt out of whatever bits and pieces that make up the whole as they want to, but it does make a huge amount of sense in the process of looking at what we do as local authorities together to look at joining up or rationalising some of those particular services that we have across the piece. That is for the

benefit of some of the taxpayers but also for efficiency working across the piece with Districts and Boroughs. If we are all doing something that is the same then why do we all have to do it individually, can we rationalise it by bringing them together in some way and avoid that duplication? Procurement is another area indeed that we are exploring in a little bit more detail because I think there are some big wins around that in joining forces and getting more value for money in that process.

In terms of the other part of your question which is around redundancies etc etc, again that is something as part of that process that discussion can be had with individual Districts and Boroughs what they want to do and not do as part of that process. I suppose like ourselves and many other Districts and Boroughs if there were to be job rationalisations then they can be managed in much the way that we manage ours through natural wastage, voluntary redundancies, voluntary early retirement, those sorts of processes.

Indeed, I would expect that overall there would actually be a saving for local authorities and therefore a saving potentially to Council Tax payers in the long run. However, there are some services where we may see an increase in capacity, particularly around that bit where we deliver sort of joint growth. For example with Chesterfield Borough Council we have a Joint Growth Board, that utilises some of the Markham Vale business rates and as a consequence of that we have a team around that which enables us to deliver really good results around economic regen opportunities across the piece there.

I do understand where you are coming from because Bolsover is woefully under-invested with regard to regen. We don't see the pipeline projects. There isn't that sort of level of investment there that we would hope to see working with a Borough Council. I can only make the comment that if we spent as much in Bolsover on economic regeneration in the Borough than it did and it did on its own TV channel and its Leader's self-aggrandizement for vanity projects then we might be able to lower Council Tax bills a little further as well as get economic regen potential in Bolsover District. Thank you."

Supplementary question:

"So with Vision Derbyshire are you hoping to create new job opportunities and will that still lead to an increase in Council Tax?"

Response:

"I think I spelt it out quite clearly in my main answer, Chairman, I don't need to repeat myself. I thought I made that quite clear that there were opportunities for growth in areas like economic regen and potentially Council Tax reductions as a consequence of rationalising others."

I) Question from Councillor R George to Councillor B Lewis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Leadership, Culture, Tourism and Climate Change

“Community Arts organisations provide support to thousands of people across Derbyshire, many of whom have protected characteristics. Will an Equality Impact Assessment be prepared of any proposed cuts to these services, and what consideration will be given to the EIA and the impact on vulnerable residents before any decision is made?”

Response:

“Thank you, Councillor George, for your question. A report was sent to Cabinet in December in fact regarding the current review of voluntary community sector grants and that particular review. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken against those particular proposals in the report. It confirmed that further investigation and consultation was required to fully understand the impact on particular key groups, so this consultation has commenced and will run until the 23 March at which point that EIA will be reviewed and amended as necessary.

In addition a review of the Arts Service is being undertaken and an Equality Impact Assessment will be completed to understand the impacts of those proposals and this, of course, will be reported to Cabinet in due course. Full consideration of the outputs of both those EIAs will be given and appropriate mitigations developed if this is appropriate. Thank you.”

Supplementary question:

“That is good to hear that full consideration will be given to the EIAs and appropriate mitigations will be put in place. Could I just ask to make sure that people with mental health difficulties are included properly within the EIA? It is often difficult if they don’t necessarily have a full diagnosis to ensure that those difficulties are taken into account in impact assessments and I am simply asking to make sure that they are.”