

## **ELECTED MEMBER QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 22 May 2024**

### **1) Question from Councillor G Kinsella to Councillor C Cupit, Cabinet Member for Highways Assets and Transport**

“There have been over 450 flood resilience applications received by Derbyshire County Council, the majority relating to Storm Babet in October 2023. Over six months later and still no payments have been made. How much longer must residents wait to receive this much needed support?”

Councillor Cupit's response:

“I know that many residents and communities sadly continue the clean-up following last year's Storm Babet and the Council, particularly our Flood Team, continue to support many of the over 1,675 properties who were impacted so devastatingly between the 19-25 October last year. Along with Councillor Lewis we wrote to the Government asking them to make this support available at the time and I thank them for doing so.

As a current update we have now received over 520 PFR applications. I would just urge whilst answering this that any properties who haven't yet applied to do so the deadline for applying is August. Of all the applications received so far we have verified and confirmed more than 80% of these and sent letters to the residents and businesses confirming this.

As Councillor Kinsella may be aware in the majority of cases a survey has to take place pre- and post-installation of the resilience measures and it is at that point that the payments are formally made, so the question is incorrect to imply the support is not progressing. These surveys for those who choose to use our appointed surveying contractor started a few weeks ago and are booked in and progressing over the coming months.

Just as wider context for this Chamber, in our region we seem to be one of the furthest ahead in terms of progressing the grants despite sadly being one of the most impacted counties last year. For instance, I don't think one of our nearby city neighbours has actually opened their scheme at all yet and in Derbyshire's case it is predicted to be a £2.5m grant scheme which will have helped residents and businesses and administered.

In addition, I hope you will all agree it has been important to get this scheme right and that is what we have been working to do. As a couple of examples here in Derbyshire with the help of a few of our Conservative MPs we led on getting the survey threshold amended to avoid any potential costs to residents and we also chose to proactively offer a surveying contractor in order to simplify the process for applicants and provide them with confidence around

their surveying and measures being recommended to them, which I hope you will all agree are positive changes but have taken time.

I hope the above is reassurance that extensive work has been taking place with regards to progressing these grants and explains the process in a bit more detail in terms of ensuring the grants are spent on the best possible resilience measures.

We are ahead of the game but to me it is not a race. We need to get it right for the communities and people affected and that is what we have been working to do. I would like to put on record my thanks to the Flood Team for the tremendous amount of work they have been doing in this regard.”

Supplementary question from Councillor Kinsella:

“I do find that hugely, hugely disappointing. Firstly I didn’t say that support is not progressing. I said specifically that payments have not been made. This is payments for people whose houses were flooded in October 2023 and we are still waiting. We are still waiting for the surveyor to come out in the majority of cases and we are still waiting for payment. Not one payment has been made. I would have hoped that there would have been some recognition of the situation my residents have been in waiting for a surveyor to come in before they can carry out any work.

I find the whole situation very frustrating and to compare us to some of the worst in class I don’t think that is a good position to be in. Yes, there are other Councils that are performing badly but to compare us to them I don’t think that is a great benchmark, so I would really press the Council to progress this issue and put in place those payments that have now been outstanding for over six months. It is really really not acceptable?”

Councillor Cupit’s response:

“I think I went into a lot of detail about the process that is underway. I think, Councillor Kinsella, you have just implied that we are not progressing them. We are. It has not been six months in terms of when we launched the process. This has been a tremendous undertaking for the Flood Team. As I say I am not benchmarking I was just outlining what we were doing in terms of a region but the surveys have to take place and I have also outlined two other things to you that made sure that the surveys and the grants have been paid right and for the right measures and aren’t having an impact on those affected. I think you flipped it in an interesting way but I hope the Chamber and the public will recognise the process that we are following and that we are progressing this at pace.”

## **2) Question from Councillor G Kinsella to Councillor C Cupit, Cabinet Member for Highways Assets and Transport**

“On three occasions over the past year, I have asked if the Administration will publish performance information on a ‘right first time’ approach to pothole repairs. When pothole repairs fail within a six-month period this is reported to the public. When I asked this question at Full Council in September 2023, Councillor Cupit said “I completely agreed on ‘right first time’” and went on to say that she had “been discussing how to better represent key highways’ performance indicators”. Can she update me on how this work has progressed and whether a ‘right first time’ approach will be reported to residents?”

Councillor Cupit’s response:

“As noted last time you raised a question on this back in September. I am always happy to discuss this or any other matter with you in detail and I note you have not taken me up on that as yet but happy to do so.

I think it is fair to say that after we discussed this last September, and as Chair you have already acknowledged earlier on, we have seen an unprecedented and challenging period for our Highway Service and for our roads. We have just discussed one example of that in relation to your previous question and as we all know the impact Babet had on our roads and structures (preceded and followed by record and persistent rainfall which sadly we have again got today) has caused significant challenges for the Service. We have been reacting to this though which is why we have been working through the resurfacing of 150 hotspot sites so far; have extra bumper teams on who have been doing further sectional resurfacing and now the weather hopefully allows, albeit not this week, progressing our capital programme with bigger resurfacing works.

Because of the scale of this programme, which is pretty unprecedented in recent history for highways, combined with the poor weather and impact this has had on the roads but also on our ability to do repairs, it has sometimes been necessary to carry out temporary repairs which isn’t the aim or motive that we want to do. We have had to do this for safety purposes but also to try and minimise costs. We are about to come and do some of the permanent works that I have just been outlining and that we are booking in.

We are also focusing on the right repair for the right location and as I have just mentioned permanent resurfacing works as far as we can. Quite often the need to go back to pothole repairs is indicative that wider works are needed, as I think we discussed back in September, which is why we launched the hotspot resurfacing programme with the additional money we received last year, so whilst new performance indicators is still something we want to do to demonstrate the work we are doing, the priority for me at the moment is to get

the repairs right and to carry out major repairs, not to just count them, so that is what we are focusing resources on at the current time but happy to keep you updated.”

**3) Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Care**

“At the time of the last debate on Care Homes, it was said that fears of the closure of more care homes in the future were ‘plain scaremongering’. We now face just that: a plan to close more care homes. Who was correct during the previous debate and how can we believe any guarantees that are given during this debate?”

Councillor Hoy’s response:

“The information provided at the time was correct. At the time there were no plans to look at any options of any further homes.”

Supplementary question from Councillor Fordham:

“My supplementary question actually comes from a constituent.

“I would be grateful if you could ask Councillor Hoy...” this is your supplementary: “...when they closed The Spinney my mother was moved to another care home. She has barely been there two years. It is now up for closure. What is the best outcome, closing the second care home she has lived in or her death from the stress?”

I am not quite sure that is an appropriate question to ask so I am not going to ask Councillor Hoy to answer it.”

**4) Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Care**

“What is the physical maximum occupancy for each of DCC’s care homes, what is the current number of advertised vacancies and what is the current occupancy (by number and percentage) for each of the care homes?”

Written response from Councillor Hoy:

“There are a total of 528 beds within the 16 residential care homes directly operated by the Council. 78 of those are Community Support Beds specifically designated to support hospital discharge and delivered in partnership with health partners. I have excluded these from the numbers used as they are not impacted by proposals currently under consultation and including them would

affect the figures leading to a lack of clarity around standard residential care bed occupancy and numbers.

Of the 450 standard residential beds there are 266 or 59.1% which are occupied, leaving a total of 184 or 40.9% unoccupied.

In terms of staffing, there are a total of 1110 staff working across the 16 residential care homes operated by the Council and there are currently 200 vacancies. There have been 467 posts advertised with a significant number of those adverts containing several vacancies.”

**5) Question from Councillor E Fordham to Councillor C Hart, Cabinet Member for Health and Communities**

“Would the Council consider developing a partnership front-line service of DCC staff in Adult Care and trained with an understanding of mental health to work in Chesterfield in connection with the Hospital, CBC and Police to enable an earlier intervention and a more nuanced constructive engagement with what are often difficult situations in the Market Squares? Can consideration be given to a highly visible 1-stop shop open at the hours needed to secure effective engagement for those people who find themselves in need of help and advice, so we can provide pro-active assistance before someone’s life enters a downward spiral.”

Councillor Hart’s written response:

“As I said at the last Full Council meeting we are working hard in all areas of the County to combat mental health problems and raise awareness. The Council currently works in partnership with key local organisations through a range of forums and programmes. These include boards and delivery groups as part of the Joined Up Care Derbyshire and Community Safety and programmes such as the Better Care Fund and Right Care Right Person.

Decisions about the provision of services and care are based upon the needs of the local population and local communities. In partnership, the Council considers proposals on how to deliver the most appropriate and accessible care and support.”

**6) Question from Councillor R George to Councillor A Dale, Cabinet Member for Education**

“When will plans be announced for the £30 million of SEND capital funding allocated to Derbyshire but so far unspent?”

Councillor A Dale’s response:

“It is worth highlighting from the outset that of the £30m allocated to Derbyshire since 2021 in the DfE’s High Needs’ provision capital allocations we have so far received £25.9m and we are awaiting a further payment of £4.2m which I understand will not arrive until later in the financial year.

It is also worth clarifying when exactly the funding was announced and how the payments were profiled. £2.5m was announced in 2021; £13m was announced in 2022 and £14.5m was only announced two months’ ago in March 2024, although as I have said over £4m is still to be received.

To suggest, as some of your Labour colleagues have in recent weeks, that we have been sat on this money since 2019 is frankly a bare faced lie and should be called out as such and I hope that you will seek to distance yourself from these sort of remarks.

I am extremely disappointed at the way in which Labour politicians have so opportunistically sought to score cheap political points on what is clearly a very emotive issue without accepting that it is also a complex one, especially when this includes grossly misleading the public along the way.

You will know from having attended many of the same meetings that I have, Councillor George, and from the briefings I am sure you will have received from officers, that this has been a very significant piece of work which has been ongoing for many months and that progress has been made in the background.

I have said it before and I will say it again: it is money that can only be spent once so it needs to be based on detailed sufficiency work to ensure we provide the right sort of places in the right areas to meet the different demands we are facing. This is not easy in a county with a geography like ours and does unfortunately take time. Rushing to make ill-thought through decisions around allocations would mean we would fail to adequately meet the needs of Derbyshire children further exacerbating the issues around the spread of provision I have referred to and ultimately cost the taxpayer far more in the longer term.

Whilst some smaller Authorities may have the luxury of being able to build a single new Special School this option wouldn’t work for Derbyshire because of our geography and the need to consider very significant home-school transport costs so a far better approach for us is to grow the number of places we have in our existing 10 Maintained and Academy Special Schools which clearly takes a lot more work.

However, I am delighted to inform you that that is exactly what we have been doing in the past few years. Since 2020 through the better utilisation of existing capacity we have been able to increase the number of places we

commission at these schools by 200 rising from 1,022 to 1,227 and this week we have announced that we will be investing around £10m of our SEND capital allocation to further increase the number of places in our 10 existing Special Schools by 300 over the next two academic years. This means that over six years we will have increased the capacity of our existing Special Schools by around 50% and the approach will mean a fairer distribution of all new places around the county to ensure they are as accessible as possible to all Derbyshire children.

It is worth stressing that this is just the first part of a wider three strand project which also includes creating additional places to promote inclusion for children with special needs in mainstream schools by investing in more places in Enhanced Resource Schools, SEND Units and alternative provision. We will also be supporting mainstream schools with more basic spatial and environmental adaptations to enable them to better meet the needs of any children on roll who require SEN support, particularly those who with the right early intervention we can prevent needs escalating. There is a lot of evidence that shows that in many cases children with additional needs will get better outcomes in a mainstream setting with the right support put in place.

There has been some criticism by National Parent Groups, including the Special Needs Jungle website, that too much of the capital allocated so far across the country, around 75%, has just focused on specialist places and not enough on promoting inclusion in mainstream schools. We agree and that is why our approach will focus the majority of our capital allocation on mainstream settings.

Due to the sheer number of schools involved and the need to ensure a fair balance of provision around our disparate geography, this work is taking longer. However, we are making good progress. We now have a strong and active education partnership covering the whole county where all schools and academies have been divided up into area-based clusters and are working constructively together. This means we are better able to map existing provision and identify where there is a need for expansion and schools will be able to work together to share the benefit of any new investment in their clusters.

We have consulted with all schools in all clusters and so far we have received over 50 expressions of interest for different projects to meet local needs. We are analysing each of these while finalising our sufficiency strategy with the latest available data and we hope to be able to make some announcements on the allocation of the remaining funding over the coming months.

Finally, I just highlight that you can make as many nice shiny announcements on the allocation of capital funding and the creation of new places as you like but to be honest that is the easy bit. There is absolutely no point in creating

new places at schools if they haven't got the adequate staffing with the specialist training and the resources required to be able to fill those places. This in itself is a big piece of work with our schools which is ongoing but further emphasises the point that we should not be rushing to create new places that our schools cannot possibly keep pace with. We need to work in close partnership and in tandem with our schools to ensure we make the best use of this important capital funding and it successfully delivers for the needs of our most vulnerable children and that is exactly the approach this administration is taking."

Supplementary question from Councillor George:

"Councillor Dale may recall our meeting in April 2018 when I spoke to him of the need for additional enhanced resource places in schools and I am very glad that he is now agreeing and will come to deliver that, but in terms of this capital funding which we have known about for at least two years, if not more, the vast majority of it, then most local authorities by November 2023, over six months ago when asked by the Special Needs Jungle how they were proposing to spend that money were able to tell them and were able to show their plans for 20,000 special needs' places.

Why is it that Derbyshire is so far behind the curve in planning for the spending of this money and is Councillor Dale totally satisfied in the very well paid consultancy team who are doing the job of looking at it?"

Councillor A Dale's response:

"I am absolutely satisfied that the team have been working flat out to try and deliver the places that we need across Derbyshire. As I have explained I don't think we are particularly behind the curve because what most other Authorities have been doing is providing specialist places in Special Schools and not focusing on the mainstream inclusion.

Now our planning does include the increase of specialist places. We have increased already by 200 places in the past few years, we are increasing by a further 300, but we are really importantly focusing on that harder work, that harder work of working with 400 schools rather than just 10 to try and really deliver inclusive education in mainstream school.

I know she seems to think that she tells me everything that I am now doing and apparently she is excellent at teaching me to suck eggs but we have been working on this for a long time and you know we are getting on with delivering it. It does take work time. It does take hard work. It would be really helpful if the Labour Group didn't mislead the public into suggesting that we have held on to this since 2019 which is totally untrue and actually I think it is pretty disgraceful the way that you have been using our most vulnerable children as



your own political football. I really think it is not on at all. I would ask you to think again about the approach you are taking.

Finally what I would say to Councillor George is if you want this to go any quicker then perhaps you should refrain from wasting my senior officers' time by hauling them into meetings to ask whether you can use some of this capital money to purchase alpacas for a school in your Division. What planet are you on for goodness sake?"

**7) Question from Councillor L Ramsey to Councillor C Hart, Cabinet Member for Health and Communities**

"Re: the proposal to consult on the cessation of Corporate Services and Transformation discretionary grant funding, how and what will be used to ensure residents of Derbyshire can still access vital support services in all these areas, as the cessation of funding could cause organisations to close?"

Councillor Hart's written response:

"I can only respond with more or less the same things that I said at the Cabinet meeting when I presented the report outlining our consultation on the discretionary grant funding in the Corporate Services and Transformation Directorate.

We have prepared a draft EIA on the proposals which is supporting us to anticipate the impact of proposals affected organisations and help shape the consultation with the sector, the EIA will be updated following the consultation. We will be conducting our consultation concurrently and in combination with Adult Care's consultation and their grants to support us to understand both the individual and cumulative impacts of these proposals and the mitigating measures available to support those who may lose funding (and their beneficiaries) is proposals are implemented.

It should not be assumed that ceasing funding will mean that the activity associated with that funding will stop. We have discussed the possibility of funding ceasing with the organisations over some time and even a year ago they were informed that ongoing funding could not be guaranteed. When the consultation is concluded we will then consider all feedback to assess the viability and implications before making any decisions and if any withdrawal of funding was to happen then this would not take place until April 2025."

**8) Question from Councillor L Ramsey to Councillor C Cupit, Cabinet Member for Highways, Assets and Transport**

"Can Derbyshire County Council carry out and an urgent review into traffic around all schools in the Derbyshire area, to ensure safer roads and to reduce

the risk of accidents and injuries, protecting the most vulnerable members of the community?”

Councillor Cupit's response:

“Our Road Safety and Traffic Team are constantly reviewing all school areas and working with both local schools, residents and organisations to promote road safety near our schools. In addition even just over the last few months I have met with several schools and local members to discuss issues and concerns on how to try to resolve these and various measures. I know Councillor Dale does this through his role regularly too. Together with Councillor Dale we have also been working on some bigger projects and initiatives for the county to try to promote school road safety further, particularly with regards to parking concerns and speeding.

As a couple of examples after lots of work on this and a cross-Party Working Group I can confirm that in June we are about to trial School Streets with several local schools who initially volunteered and there will be more info on that over coming weeks, and we are also looking at the use of enforcement cameras where necessary.”

Supplementary question from Councillor Ramsey:

“Just to say I have had a meeting with one of my schools and on a daily basis they have near misses. Obviously there must be a number of schools around the county that have similar issues and problems. That is why I think we need a review so that all parties and all stakeholders can be involved. Thank you.”

Councillor Cupit's response:

“Again as I say I am happy to work with members outside the Chamber, as lots of members know and contact me, and as I have just outlined we are doing several county-wide initiatives that have come through speaking primarily to my own members in terms of that that are coming up, which will be on offer to all schools, and have indeed been offered to all schools through various letters that Councillor Dale has written over the last year or so.”

**9) Question from Councillor A Clarke to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Care**

“In the list of closures to be consulted upon, Jubilee Centre New Mills, appears along with other Day Care Centres. You have publicly stated that 'Derbyshire has an aging population choosing to live at home for as long as they possibly can, and that DCC must look to meet those needs', also that 'dementia sadly is, high up there, as a need for people in Derbyshire'.

The majority of the Jubilee Centre's residents have dementia, the website advertises that, 'A patient centred approach is taken to all activities to promote and maintain independence. Staff are fully trained in dementia care'. Jubilee Court provides professional support for dementia sufferers and helps maintain residents in their own home. Two criteria highlighted as important by yourself and this council.

So why, have you not included at least one option in the consultation where such Day Centres would be retained?"

Councillor Hoy's response:

"Jubilee Court isn't a specialist dementia unit. A lot of the activity is NHS related and not entirely social care activities. If you look on the website it will make reference to dementia, as we would expect in many adult social care health settings. The website also clearly states: "The Centre provides nail care; occupational therapy; health checks; venepuncture" as it isn't a specialist dementia facility."

Supplementary question from Councillor Clarke:

"If you are genuinely wishing to consult with the public should you not have waited until your own consultation on the Dementia Strategy and Engagement due to close on the 24 June had finished before looking to close dementia services and support such as the Jubilee Centre in New Mills?"

Councillor Hoy's response:

"No, I think it is the right time to consult. You know we have been very open and transparent about the situation surrounding the Authority and what I would do is urge your residents surrounding this Centre to take part in the consultation so we can look at their views as part of the process."

#### **10) Question from Councillor A Haynes to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Care**

"What promises and reassurances has Derbyshire County Council given to the Member of Parliament for South Derbyshire, Heather Wheeler MP that the Castle Court Care Home would not close?"

Councillor Hoy's response:

"It is difficult to respond to your question with the level of detail you have provided. If you can provide me with more detail then I can give you a more detailed answer."

Supplementary question from Councillor Haynes:

“The letter I have in front of me is that it will be sold to an interested party and carry on caring for my elderly residents. If this is the case so quickly into the consultation all I can say is that this is a good viable business and why can't the County Council run this care home? The care home is running at 50/55% capacity with spare beds. Why are we not filling these beds?”

Councillor Hoy's response:

“Your supplementary doesn't actually relate to your question regarding Heather Wheeler. The truth is we can't force people to go into care homes it is about choice and control, but just going back to your question about the comments that Heather has made, perhaps Heather was checking - I am just thinking about this - perhaps Heather was checking we aren't at any decision making stage which would mean she is looking for reassurance of which she would have received because no decision has been made to close any homes, but just going back to your question that has gone off from a supplementary from this we can't force people into care homes. There is a decline of people going into residential care.”

#### **11) Question from Councillor J Bryan to Councillor N Hoy, Cabinet Member for Adult Care**

“Regarding adult social care co-funding - a resident recently contacted our parliamentary candidate, Dr Adam Thompson, to alert us to the fact that their co-funding bill has recently skyrocketed from £200 to £360 per month. What support is the council going to give to help people like my constituent who are struggling to pay this money for the services they desperately need?”

Councillor Hoy's response:

“Again without the individual's details and circumstances it is very difficult for me to comment on this. Perhaps if you had contacted me away from the Chamber instead of waiting for today I would have been able to help swiftly in our response to your constituent and getting them the support they need.”

Supplementary question from Councillor Bryan:

“I got this only half-an-hour before submission for questions and added it in. If I could have a meeting with the member and my constituent I would be very grateful but this arises around the wider issue of care co-funding which has increased for everyone, not just my particular constituents but for many people across the whole of Derbyshire and what is being done to help those people because many of them cannot afford that rise so what is being done generally across the whole county to help not just my particular resident?”

Councillor Hoy's response:

"As I have said I can't comment on any person's personal circumstances without further detail. We do have a dedicated team to support people through this process. Like I have said you have waited until full Council meeting to ask this question instead of contacting me directly. I would suggest rather than trying to promote your candidate, which is what this question is, you concentrate on representing your Division and the people that you are meant to represent."

**12) Question from Councillor J Bryan to Councillor A Dale, Cabinet Member for Education**

"How many children across the county are currently waiting for a school place, and what efforts are being made to get these children into schools?"

Councillor A Dale's response:

"Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to highlight the success of our Admissions Team who every year work extremely hard to ensure as many children as possible benefit from a place at one of their preference schools on National Offer Day. They regularly out-perform the national averages and have really shone for as long as I can recall having been in this post.

To give you an idea of the figures. In relation to the Reception intake we continue to receive late applications even now, but as at the beginning of this week we have offered 7,611 places, 95% have secured their first preference and around 98% have secured one of their first three preferences. There are a further 9 applications receiving attention which were submitted late by the parents in the last few days and the team are working very hard and as quickly as possible to try and allocate places to those children.

In relation to the Junior intake, as of this morning we have made 2,761 offers to Derbyshire children who are attending an Infant School in Year 2 at the moment and who are obviously transferring into Key Stage 2 provision this September. Of those 97.7% were offered their first preference but because we already have a complete dataset for this year group, because they have already done three years of school we were able to identify all the children and make the offer of a placement at a school even when the parent hasn't actually applied, so there are no children in junior school without a school place for the next year. Those school places will have either been the normal area of school or the nearest Derbyshire school with vacancies if they hadn't made an application.

In relation to Secondary intake we have offered 8,610 places to Derbyshire children. 95.3% have secured their first preference. All Derbyshire children were offered a place on offer day, as again they have already done several years in education so we have a full complete dataset for them. Where no application is received by the Council then we offer the children either the nearest normal area school or the nearest Derbyshire school with vacancies.

Then finally in relation to in-year admissions it is more difficult to say because we receive these on a daily basis but we do work under the Schools Admissions Code which requires parents to be informed of the outcome of an application within 15 school days. Parents do have the legal right of appeal if it is a refusal and for refusals if a child is currently attending a school then obviously it is assumed that attendance will continue so they do technically have a school place. For refusals with no current school we do monitor to make sure that the parent does either apply for another school or submits an appeal and we do offer to support as much as we possibly can, we are regularly in touch with those parents. I understand there are 66 of these cases currently receiving attention and that was true as at the beginning of this week.

I think that covers it all so I hope you will agree that our fantastic Admissions Team absolutely deserve the Council's recognition for such a strong performance ensuring that as many Derbyshire children as possible are able to benefit from their preferred school place and enables them to get the best possible start in life."

Supplementary question from Councillor Bryan:

"I would actually like to join in in thanking and praising the staff who are doing a really good job. The reason this question came about was because of an issue I have had with a constituent. They moved to the area in around September. The child is still struggling to find a place in school and I appreciate all the work that is being done by the team who are doing a fantastic job. It is really difficult with in-year admissions which is why I asked this question.

Really pleased to hear that there is no one waiting for junior schools but yes, it is those in-year ones that worry me and how long some of them - while it may only be 66 and I am really pleased that it is as low as that - how long some of those cases are, especially when schools struggle when they are full in-year to take in new people. I am just wondering what support we can give those schools as well to help them take these children?"

Councillor A Dale's response:

“It is a complicated one with schools in that some schools, particularly Academies, have their own Admissions Authority so they do have to notify us but don’t necessarily have to use us if you like as their Admissions Authority but we do try and support schools as much as possible. There are regularly cases where we get for example an over demand of places in a particular year group, we get bulges in year groups through demographics, as you understand, and we will work with that school to see if they can offer an additional 10 places above their published admissions number for example just to be able to deal with that bigger cohort in year, so we do try and work with schools as much as possible.

In-year admissions as you say is a very difficult challenging one and finding school places halfway through the year is a challenge, particularly in Key Stage 1 because of the legal limit on class sizes being 30, so yes it is very challenging. We do try and work with our schools and support them as much as possible as well as the families to try and get them into a place.”

### **13) Question from Councillor J Bryan to Councillor C Cupit, Cabinet Member for Highways Assets and Transport**

“For many months, residents in Long Eaton and Sawley have been blighted by roadworks on Tamworth Road that disrupt the whole town for weeks at a time. Roadworks have been near-constant, and gridlock has become a permanent fixture of our town - local residents have even defaced local "Welcome to Sawley" road signs with additional slogans proclaiming our town as the "Home of Roadworks"! What is the Cabinet Member doing to ensure roadworks are planned to minimise disruption and done in a timely manner?”

Councillor Cupit’s response:

“This is an issue I am fully aware of and have been working closely with Councillor Athwal and also one of the local borough councillors, Councillor McGuinness on. I know if Councillor Athwal were here today he would be shaking his head at the roadworks but probably also giving me a wry smile at all the conversations we have had on this, as well as also the local Parish Council. They have all contacted me at the time of any roadworks or issues.

In the specific instance of Tamworth Road we cannot prevent essential utility works in the area but we have been using all the powers we as DCC have as we fully understand how busy this major route is so the impact even well co-ordinated temporary lights unfortunately has on residents and businesses in the area.

Our Network Management Team are constantly stepping in to either prevent or discourage works wherever possible, emphasise the importance of properly manning temporary lights (which is now formally conditioned on any permitted works on the road) and then intervening whenever issues occur, particularly in the case of emergency works carried out by Utilities as has been the cause of some of the recent issues, or most of the recent issues. Following these recent issues one of the Utilities involved received two fines for the disruption they caused. I am sorry to residents that that occurred and I hope the Utility will be apologising to residents too, I am also seeking a meeting with their executive team to discuss this.

Given the issues we have experienced with utility works not just here but across the county, including in my own Division, I am also personally and constantly trying to speak to the Utilities to highlight the problems their works can cause and encourage better management and communications and at least one of the Utilities has sort of engaged positively in that regard, which I welcome.

Alongside this we continue to work to encourage Utilities wanting to access either Tamworth Road or any other busy routes in the county to find alternatives wherever possible and we are also supporting the Government's ongoing street works' legislative changes to give us more enforcement powers in this regard, so I hope this reassures you that we have been proactively working and taking action on this and using everything within our power."

Supplementary question from Councillor Bryan:

"In regards to Tamworth Road specifically would it be possible to ensure in the future that roadworks done on there are also presented with the date as to when they are expected to be finished by so residents know and are more aware and then make sure it is enforced as much as possible, I know it is difficult, but those roadworks are finished within the time they say they will be done by just to help residents navigate their way through the difficulties that these roadworks no doubt cause them?"

Councillor Cupit's response:

"Yes, that is the case on the system and usually signed on site, so on the one.network system which you can sign to update for. I know a lot of residents in that area because of the issues have signed up to one.network so yes, it is already in-train, and similarly with emergency works we have been urging them to also be clear on their communications. As I say I know one utility has improved communications and I am now trying to sort the rest of the utilities to follow suit."



#### **14) Question from Councillor C Dale to Councillor J Patten, Cabinet Member for Children and Families**

“In a recent Cabinet paper subject to consultation, to charge Parents and, Guardians of children taken into local authority care and also directly charging children of 16 years who are already in care; If the authority fails to recover contributions for their care from the parties, will the child no longer be eligible for local authority care and what will happen to them?”

Councillor Patten’s response:

“I can tell you that no current children in care, or their parents or carers will be asked to contribute to their care arrangements. We will only consider applying a charge where circumstances support this and in line with Children in Care arrangements under the Children’s Act 1989. No child’s looked after status will be affected. Children’s safeguarding needs remain our paramount concern and we will *not* be charging any children of any age.”

Supplementary question from Councillor C Dale:

“So when it comes to charging I appreciate what you have said but if in future the parents and guardians have to make a contribution will it be the full cost of their care or will it be a proportion?”

Councillor Patten’s response:

“What I can tell you is there are several Councils that are already doing this and already charging for a contribution towards care and that is exactly what we are looking to do. It is a contribution towards care and we are looking to charge around 50% of the care charge.

I have to tell you something else as well. The other reason that we are also looking at this - obviously with budget restraints and everything we are looking at everything within the portfolio - but we do have a cohort of parents who are professional workers who are resistant to the advice of our very experienced social workers that suggest, especially we are looking at teenagers where they have been disruptive or quite difficult to work with and we suggest working with our social workers to keep that child within the home because we all know the best place for a child is within the family unit even if there are some problems because coming into care is not a good start for any child and repatriation is always difficult, but where these parents are just resistant and say “No no, we don’t want them, you can have them”. This we believe will also act as a deterrent to those people who can afford it and it will all be done on a means basis so every single case will be looked at individually but we believe this is the right way to go and it is the right thing to do for our children.”

