

QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 13 DECEMBER 2012

QUESTION 1

From Councillor David Brickhill

M6 A500 Junction

Could the Portfolio Holder for Highways explain please why work has not yet started on the M6 A500 roundabout and approach road from Crewe, which in April he promised would be completed by October.

Why has he not pressured the Highways agency to progress and approve the plans submitted by Goodmans who have offered to pay the entire cost of £12M for these much needed improvements.

Would he also explain please why the lists of Ringway Jacobs highway repairs he promised (both works anticipated and completed) are not reaching me?

Response:

As explained previously, the Council has worked closely with the relevant Highways Agencies to progress this project. There has been a series of high level meetings to maintain realistic pressure. Evidence of that commitment from all parties can be seen on the ground with the site clearance works that have been undertaken. Good progress has been made although there remain a few outstanding technical approvals required and these will be addressed over the next few months. All the necessary approvals from Cheshire East Council are in place.

Unfortunately, the delay is no longer only associated with approvals but is also associated with the funds required by the Developer to undertake the works. Currently, the estimated costs to complete the works are higher than anticipated. In the current climate it has resulted in a delay until the Basford West developer has had the opportunity to assess all the options available to address the viability of the development. The Council will continue to work with the Developer to deliver this valuable improvement to the Highway Network as soon as possible. We are assured that the intention is to start the works in February so that is indeed is good news.

The third paragraph of the question refers to a statement at Council on 19 July and advance notice given of the plans to make available to all Members, information on road works programmed. This is a continuation of the ongoing commitment to have as much information as possible available on the website and no timescale was given.

However I am pleased to be able to inform Council that a Members' Area is now ready for use and that usernames and passwords will be sent to Members in the very near future. This section of the web site will deal primarily with works that are promoted by Cheshire East Highways.

Separately the team are conscious that there are numerous utility company and private openings on the network throughout the year. These works are already

available to view via the public section of the Cheshire East Highways' website, visit www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/highways and select "Latest Roadworks" on the main page.

The Cheshire East Highways team will be arranging a number of familiarisation sessions for members early in the New Year, Members are encouraged to attend where possible

QUESTION 2

From Councillor Peter Nurse

Question:

Bus Timetables

When will the bus timetable from 1/1/13 be published?

There is anxiety among passengers many of whom travel to work by bus and different timetables are being made known. The result is confusion

Response:

The Council is not responsible for publishing bus timetables. The vast majority of the bus network that operates in Cheshire East is operated commercially – that is, without subsidy from Cheshire East taxpayers. It is for bus companies to ensure passengers have accurate and up-to-date information in order to plan their journeys.

Nevertheless, the Council does update publicity on certain bus routes. The Council updates information no more than 2 weeks in advance of a change, since the Council's experience shows it would otherwise lead to confusion for the travelling public.

If Cllr Nurse wishes to let me know the details of the bus route or bus routes he has concerns over, I can give a written response as to what publicity is planned to be published and when it will be made available. In the meantime, I recommend that Cllr Nurse looks at the bus timetable information on the Council's website for the most up-to-date information available.

QUESTION 3

From Councillor Brendan Murphy

Question:

Lyme Green Investigation

GIVEN ...

- a. The widespread public anxiety over the financial and legal implications of the Lyme Green affair dating back to the October 2011 AND
- b. The decision of the Staffing Committee, 25th June 2012, to commission an independent external review of employee conduct in this connection AND
- c. The £1000 a day cost of the Independent Investigator's fees AND
- d. The continuing blight on staff reputations AND
- e. That "Justice Delayed is Justice Denied" together with growing public distrust in the Council's integrity and/or competency caused by excessive and unreasonable delay,

... CAN THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TELL THE COUNCIL

- a. Why has the procedure become so prolonged AND
- b. When will the matter be concluded and the public fully informed of the outcome AND
- c. Will the cost of the investigation be greater than the net outcome cost of the Lyme Green affair?

Response:

I can confirm that events have moved on since Councillor Murphy submitted his question to Council.

As all Members were advised on 11 December by the Chief Executive, at my request, the report of the investigation by the Designated Independent Person (DIP) was received by the Council earlier this week. I was pleased to receive this eagerly awaited report so quickly, as it is not unusual for such independent reviews to take more than twelve months to complete, but we have reduced this timescale significantly and so kept the costs involved lower.

Following receipt of the report, arrangements have been made for the Staffing Sub Committee to meet before the Christmas break to consider what actions are appropriate in light of its findings and recommendations.

Members are aware that this remains sub-judice until these matters have been fully concluded and I will not therefore be saying anything further today, other than to remind all Members that we need to avoid public comment or conjecture on this matter, until all aspects of the procedure have been completed. All communication and comment on this matter will, therefore, be managed by the Council's Communications Team, in liaison with the Chief Executive and me.

Once all of the investigation, and any disciplinary, procedures have been completed, including the conclusion of any appeals, the Chief Executive will arrange for a fuller public statement to be issued, this will be agreed with me.

QUESTION 4

From Councillor Brendan Murphy

Question:

Leadership Training

Has any one of the Council's employees been given - or likely to be given - training in "leadership" by the organisation known as Common Purpose?

Response:

Yes. The Council has jointly commissioned a Management and Leadership programme with Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Cheshire West and Chester Council, NHS Cheshire, Warrington & Wirral and Warrington Borough Council and has worked in partnership with Common Purpose during 2012 to deliver this programme (the 2011 Collaborative Leadership Programme delivery partner was the Office of Public Management (OPM). Common Purpose successfully won their bid to deliver the programme following a competitive tendering exercise.

Along with Cheshire West and Warrington Council's, Cheshire East had 11 delegates on the programme this year.

At the heart of the Collaborative Leadership Programme is an ambition to deliver a cost-effective programme through a hybrid of activities managed and delivered using in-house resources predominantly (action learning sets, masterclasses, facilitation etc), and some external provision for bespoke activities (e.g. Common Purpose delivered four core 1 day modules within the programme). The programme is extremely cost effective and provides excellent value for money for the Council.

QUESTION 5

From Councillor Brendan Murphy

Question:

Incentive Payment Scheme

What progress has the Chief Executive made in devising a means of measuring employee productivity and effectiveness, particularly with regard to devising an "incentive payment scheme" as an alternative to/replacement of the current incremental payments scheme?

Response:

In response to the first part of the question, during 2011/12, a comprehensive competency framework was developed and integrated into the Council's Performance Development Review process (PDR). This has been in place since the 1st April 2012 and ensures that managers focus not only on the achievement of individual objectives but also on the core behaviours and use these to determine an overall performance rating for each employee (from a choice of 5 ratings). This new process will enable a much clearer and robust performance assessment and ensure that the Council has an effective means of measuring employee productivity and effectiveness in the future.

The next step is to consider the potential option to link each individual's level of contribution to pay and/or other rewards and how this could be achieved. The Council's HR team have been researching practice in other authorities and exploring a range of options for the Council. A Member led, cross party Policy Development Group has this item on its work programme and has recently met to scope out the work and agree how it should be progressed. Their findings and recommendations will be reported to the portfolio holder and Cabinet in due course.