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COUNCIL
21 January 2014

MEMBER QUESTION TIME

Questions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 12

1. Councillor Gill Thornton

Can the Leader comment on the impact that the recently announced Local Government Settlement will have on Bradford District and how reductions in funding for Bradford compare to other areas?

Answer

The Local Government Settlement confirmed what the Council had been expecting and saying for the last six months. Local Authorities will continue to suffer significant reductions in funding for the next two years with the worst impacted being authorities with high levels of deprivation and need and the least badly affected being authorities in some of the most affluent parts of the country.

Compared to now, by the end of 2016, Bradford's general revenue support grant will have reduced by over £77m.

However, "Revenue Spending Power" is the Government's preferred measure of funding and one which includes Council Tax and controversially in 2015-16 a share of the pooled Health Better Care Budget. Bradford's reduction in spending power will be 8.2% over two years, significantly higher than all other West Yorkshire authorities and a cut per dwelling of £192 compared to an average for all authorities of £116.76.

Meanwhile the Spending Power of the ten least deprived authorities in the country will increase by an average of over 1%. Spending Power in the least deprived authority, Wokingham, will increase by £3.8m - equivalent to £60 per household or £24 per person; In Windsor, the increase is equivalent to £36 per household and £15 per person, in Central Bedfordshire £42 per household and £18 per person. On average, by 2015-16 Spending Power in the ten least deprived unitaries will have risen by £18.83. If Bradford were to receive comparable treatment it would have over £5m more in 2016 than it does now to invest in local services but instead, the Council is on the receiving end of deep cuts. Even where very wealthy Districts will see cuts in Spending Power they are at a vastly lower level than in Bradford.

The settlement failed to provide any clarity on the Government's policy on Council Tax referenda thresholds and freeze grants and that clarity has still not been forthcoming. So we find ourselves at this late stage in the Council's budget setting process without any clear understanding of the rules.

The scale of the cuts in Council funding means that an impact on frontline services is inevitable. The Council cannot continue to provide and commission all the services local people currently use.

Additional Information - Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA)

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Change since 2013-14
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Business Rates	67.2	68.5	70.4	3.2
Top Up Grant	54.4	55.5	57.0	2.6
Revenue Support Grant	182.9	149.3	105.7	-77.2
Settlement Funding Assessment	304.5	273.3	233.1	-71.4
Annual change from previous years SFA		-31.2	-40.2	
Percentage Change %		-10.2	-14.7	-23.4

2. Councillor Miller

Could the Leader of the Council agree to a review of procedures relating to the time afforded to objectors to planning applications, in order to allow each unconnected objector to speak for five minutes at the relevant meeting, rather than unrelated objectors having to share five minutes as is presently the case?

Answer

The arrangements for the public speaking at meetings of the Regulatory and Appeals Committee and Area Planning Panels is set out in Planning Advice Note 10 which states that "If there are several objectors and/or supporters who wish to speak on an application each group will need to organise a spokesperson to speak on their behalf. Each side will normally be allowed no more than 5 minutes to make his or her case."

A review can be undertaken of Planning Advice Note 10; however, I would not want to propose any outcome to the review in advance of views being obtained through the consultation process. I suggest that this issue ought to be considered by the Planning Chairs at their next meeting to determine if they wish to review the arrangements as set out in Advice Note 10.

Supplementary Question

I thank the Leader for this answer and I hope that when the review has been undertaken we do look because I think sometimes chairmen of some committees are overruled or feel enthused to go with what the officers suggest sometimes, having been to a recent planning meeting where I was told to switch off all mobile devices, recording devices and everything else. I have asked for advice, well someone did say they would get back to me and I have not had an answer fully yet, but it is not quite clear and I think it could be viewed if the consultation review goes through to when there is more than one or two people coming to complain for a certain planning that you allow it to give them chance to speak. That is all.

Councillor Green

I suggest that you feed your views in as part of the review in that paper and that the Council can then consider your sage words.

3. Councillor Middleton

What has happened regarding Bradford Council's plans reported in September 2013 to let the empty Rawson Market building for an Asian Bazaar in Bradford City Centre?

Answer

The City Solicitor has produced a draft lease for approval in respect of the proposed letting and is responding to the suggested amendments made to the draft by the tenant's solicitors. A detailed building condition survey is also in the course of being produced and agreed with the tenant who is required to identify the buildings current state of repair and the condition in which it has to be handed back to the council at the end of the lease term.

Completion of the lease is dependent upon agreeing the form of the lease with the tenant's solicitors but it is envisaged that the lease will be completed and the tenant should take possession of the building at the end of January 2014, to commence the fitting out works with the Asian Bazaar opening at the end of March 2014.

4. Councillor Karmani

Can the Leader clarify on the action that has been taken locally to address problem gambling in particular given that there has been a rise in the number of fixed odd betting machines nationally and locally and in particular what support services are available for people with gambling addiction locally and if this is being funded by the Council?

Answer

Under the Gambling Act 2005, once a betting premises licence is granted, the licence holder is entitled to site up to four fixed odd betting terminals on the premises. The Act specifies the grounds on which a premises licence can be refused or revoked. Unfortunately an excessive number of gambling establishments in any one area is not a valid ground for refusal or revocation. Furthermore, there have been recent successful appeals in other authorities against decisions to refuse licences, where those decisions were taken due to concerns regarding the number of betting premises in an area and availability and use of fixed odds betting terminals.

The trade meet the statutory obligations placed upon them regarding protection of vulnerable persons by adopting measures which include provisions such as the use of "self-exclusion schemes" and the display of information and helpline numbers for organisations who provide advice and support to people affected by gambling problems.

With regards to local support services available for gambling addiction, there are a number of organisations operating in the district, such as GamCare. These are external organisations, which are not funded by the Council.

As we made clear in the Council decision of January 2013, we want greater control over applications relating to gambling and that continues to be our position.

5. Councillor Naylor

Could the Leader confirm what steps are being taken to reduce the disproportionate effect on children in rural communities, such as Addingham, Silsden and Steeton, where there is no school provision provided within statutory walking distance of these communities should access to free school transport be removed?

Answer

The Council is under a statutory duty to provide travel assistance to all children whose nearest school is over the statutory walking distance. The distance is 2 miles for children under 8 years old and 3 miles for those over 8 years old. The Council provides travel assistance to all those eligible under this statutory criterion and will continue to do so unless the Government removes the duty.

6. Councillor Robinson

What arrangements have been made to ensure the repayment of the loan to Bradford Council is made by the previous owners of Bradford Bulls?

Answer

The loan is to the Company OK Bulls Limited and not the previous owners. There are currently negotiations taking place about the transfer of ownership of the shares of Bradford Bulls, which by their very nature are commercially confidential.

The Council has security in place in respect of the loan, by means of a separate guarantee signed by the owner who is now seeking to transfer ownership. The guarantee of the loan cannot be transferred to a new party without the Council's consent.

The loan agreement has a confidentiality clause which means that the Council cannot disclose the loan details without the permission of the other party. The Council is in contact with the Rugby Football League (RFL) who are leading the negotiations on the transfer of the shares.

The Council will continue to take action to ensure that tax payers' interests are protected through the repayment of the loan by the company or by invoking the guarantee.

Councillor Robinson

No supplementary Lord Mayor but I would like an update as and when the transfer of the shares is completed.

7. Councillor Jabar

Does the Leader agree that the Government's proposed introduction of "School Chancellors" is an admission that oversight of local schools cannot be carried out from Whitehall and, in relation to the issues at the Kings Science Academy, appears to be too little, too late?

Answer

It is understood the Education Secretary is planning to bring in School Chancellors who will supervise free schools and academies. There are plans emerging where officials intend to split the country into eight regions, with each one supervised by a Headteacher Board and led by a chancellor.

The actual detail is still not clear, particularly in relation to the links with Local Authorities and at this stage it cannot demonstrate how conflicts of interest between providers will be managed. However it does appear to be a response to emerging problems in the system which means that an intermediate tier of governance is required to protect the DfE from bad news.

It is not possible to discuss the situation at Kings Science Academy given that external investigations are in progress.

Supplementary Question

I would like to thank my colleague for the response to my question but despite Michael Gove trying to decide the Council's role what are we doing to support pupils and parents at Kings Science Academy?

Councillor Berry

We have been asked to provide support for the governance review of the school which I notice is up on their website. We offered support through the school at a time of recent difficulty which we cannot refer to but all the other services that any other child who has got special needs behaviour support or any other support are available to that school and others. We have to take the view that every child in that school is a Bradford child whatever the difficulties going on it does fall inevitably to the local authority to act in the best interests of all children in Bradford. It is a point that I keep making that the local authority has incredible amounts of resource and understanding about the education system in Bradford and it is interesting to note that we are the place that has been asked to provide support.

8. Councillor Dredge

It was recently reported that Kris Hopkins, the MP for Keighley and Housing Minister, had "handed over almost £20m to Bradford Council as a reward for its contribution to building new homes" and suggested that this could help to protect local services from Government spending cuts. Can the Leader clarify whether or not this is the case?

Answer

In the four years between the 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2015 the Council has been awarded a total of nearly £20m as a result of its priority investment in bringing long term empty properties back into use and new housing development.

Kris Hopkins has added together monies received over each year of the last 4 years and portrayed it as if it is all to be received in a lump sum in 2014-15 that is over and above the Council's forecasts of its income. This is emphatically not the case and previous years' allocations have already been invested in service delivery while the forecast allocation for 2014-15 has been factored into the Council's budget calculations and does not therefore constitute an additional resource to be called on. Mr Hopkins has therefore misled the public and, it is not the case that the Council will have £20m extra to help protect local services in 2014-15 as he knows full well.

The forecasted annual New Homes Bonus (NHB) allocation the Council will receive in 2014-15 is not £20m but £7.5m, an increase of £1.863m compared to 2013-14. The comparable reduction in the Council's Revenue Support Grant in that year is almost £34m.

Whilst the Council has done extremely well in securing NHB the distributional impact of the New Homes Bonus Scheme should not be ignored. By continuing to top slice in 2014-15 £700m of funding from local authorities' general funding to pay for New Homes Bonus Allocations, the Government is taking away funding that would have flowed to authorities such as Bradford with high needs and low tax bases.

The Special Interest Group of Metropolitan Authorities (SIGOMA) has calculated that if the money taken for New Homes Bonus had been distributed according to need rather than the numbers of new homes then Bradford would have received an additional £1.3m between 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Supplementary Question

I am very concerned that all of the answers given as the facts about our MP in Keighley giving £20m as a grant to us that we have received £7.5m and even with my limited mathematical skills I can see that there is some difference there. The answer also says that our highly esteemed MP has misled the public and I would like to know what we are doing to resolve this massive discrepancy in finance and also the credibility of Keighley's MP in dealing with this. Have we got an answer to this to find out what the public are going to say, they are going to think it is Alice in Wonderland where the Government or the MP saying one thing and we are saying we have got something else. So what is being done about this?

Councillor Green

I do not feel that I am answerable for the credibility of Kris Hopkins because basically the impossible sometimes takes a little longer than we have got but I do think that there is an important point here is what we are hearing more and more is "oh you do not need to make these cuts because we have given you this money or that money". The time limited and at the same time as you get money for things like the New Homes Bonus you get incredible pressure to bring empty houses back into use which we would all support. You also get money to build new houses which we would all support in the right places and this is what this money is supposed to be there. So if you turn round and put this money into another service or used it directly for another service you then get criticised by the Minister for Planning, Housing and Transportation for not building enough houses or not bringing enough houses into use. It is a very unsubtle slight of hand and one I think most people will see through.

9. Councillor Davies

Please can the Portfolio holder for Children's Services provide the overall result for each Children's Centre in the Bradford Metropolitan District from the most recent Ofsted inspections?

Answer

There are currently 41 Children's Centres within the Bradford District of which 28 have received an Ofsted inspection. 79% of those inspected were good or outstanding (22) with 5 receiving a judgement of Requires Improvement and 1 Inadequate.

Centre	Locality	Inspection Date	Outcome
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Abbey Green Nursery School and Children's Centre	Bradford West	19/05/2011	Good
Allerton Children's Centre	Bradford West	13/01/2011	Good
Baildon Children's Centre	Shipley		
Barkerend Children's Centre	Bradford East	16/09/2010	Good
Bierley Children's Centre	Bradford South	11/04/2011	Good
Bingley Rural Children's Centre	Shipley		
Burnett Fields Family and Children's Centre	Bradford East	22/08/2012	Good
Canterbury Nursery School & Centre for Families and Children	Bradford East	12/06/2013	Satisfactory
Communityworks Children's Centre	Bradford East	11/04/2011	Good
Crossley Hall Primary School and Children's Centre	Bradford West	19/01/2011	Satisfactory
Daisy Chain Children's Centre	Keighley		
Fagley Primary School and Children's Centre	Bradford East	08/02/2012	Good
Farcliffe and Lilycroft Children and Family Centre	Bradford West	26/11/2013	Good
Farnham Road Children's Centre	Bradford West	03/10/2012	Satisfactory
Frizinghall and Heaton Village Children's Centre	Bradford West		
Gateway Centre	Bradford East	17/11/2010	Satisfactory
Heaton Primary School and Children's Centre	Bradford West	14/12/2010	Good
Highfield Children's Centre	Keighley	23/09/2010	Good
Hirst Wood Nursery School and Children's Centre	Shipley	14/03/2012	Good
Holme Wood Children's Centre	Bradford South	08/02/2012	Good
Lidget Green Primary School and Children's Centre	Bradford West	23/11/2013	Good
Little Lane Children's Centre	Keighley		
Low Fold Children and Family Centre	Keighley		
Menston and Burley Children's Centre	Shipley		
Midland Road Nursery School and Children's Centre	Bradford West		
Mortimer House Children's Centre	Bradford East	06/02/2013	Good
Owlet Children and Family Centre	Shipley	30/03/2011	Good
Parkland Primary School and Children's Centre	Bradford East	26/04/2012	Good
Princeville Primary School and Children's Centre	Bradford West		
Rainbow Children's Centre	Keighley	21/09/2010	Good
Reevy Hill Children's Centre	Bradford South	12/06/2013	Satisfactory
St Edmund's Nursery School & Children's Centre	Bradford West	09/11/2011	Outstanding
Strong Close Children's Centre and Nursery School	Keighley	07/03/2011	Good
Thornton Primary School and Children's Centre	Bradford West	09/02/2012	Good
Treetops Children's Centre	Keighley		
Trinity 5-Rise Children's Centre	Shipley		
Tyersal Children's Centre	Bradford South	19/01/2011	Good
Victoria Hall Children's Centre	Bradford South		
Woodroyd Children's Centre Plus	Bradford East	01/07/2010	Outstanding
Woodside Children's Centre	Bradford South	24/09/2013	Good
Wyke Community and Children's Centre	Bradford South		

10. Councillor Swallow

What will be the likely financial and social impact on Bradford of the Government's decision to scrap funding for local welfare provision schemes supporting people facing severe hardship?

Answer

In response to the Government passing funding to Local Authorities for Local Welfare Provision, the Council established the Discretionary Support Payment scheme in April 2013. The scheme offers support to those suffering financial hardship as a consequence of an emergency or a disaster; and to help individuals and families re-establish themselves in the Community, for example as a consequence of having been made homeless or fleeing domestic violence. In the first 9 months of the scheme (April to December) the Council has made 3,800 awards to families and individuals across the Bradford District, paying out around £850,000. It is anticipated that around 5,000 awards will have been made by the end of this financial year, with some £1.2m being paid out. The Government's funding for Local Welfare Provision for 2014/15, including administration, is £2.3M. The Department for Work and Pensions, which provides the funding, has announced that funding will not continue beyond this.

Removal of this short term-support beyond 2014/15 will create financial difficulties for many of the District's residents and their families at times in their life where they are at their most vulnerable. Likely consequences include increased risks to health and well-being, increased indebtedness, difficulty for some in maintaining tenancies, and the meeting of short-term financial need through high street borrowing and illegal money lenders. This will impact on Council and other public services, and it is also likely that there will be increasing pressure on Voluntary and Charitable organisations such as Food Banks and advice services.

Supplementary Question

Although I appreciate the Leader's answer, and with all due respect, the words on the paper are going to be meaningless to people right across this district who need help and support to transition out of times of utter disaster and I would urge the Leader perhaps to work with the other groups to seek clarity from the Government about how they expect people in these times of disaster that we have been helping them through, how they are expected to manage and also how the local charities and voluntary organisations are expected to cope? They are already under pressure.

Councillor Green

Can I thank you for the supplementary. We will be looking very closely at the effects of this and looking at ways to mitigate it in part of next year's budget process when some of the hardest are hit again so we have some time to do some analysis and partnership working. I would welcome cross-party support. I think that it is a very clever trick, or sorry let me rephrase that because I would not want to accuse the Government of playing tricks, but it is a very clever tactic to devolve a responsibility and the money to local authorities and then two years later take away the money and say but of course you can carry on and do it. It is not the first time that it has happened. Certainly not in the last four years although I am sure there have been examples in previous administration but in this one it is hitting the most vulnerable hardest and we have seen it with Council Tax Benefit, we are now seeing it with this. The danger is we are going to return to the Elizabethan Poor Laws where if you like the poor and most vulnerable have to throw themselves on the local rate. If we are going to start returning to that then let's have a Government policy that makes that clear and then people can make their judgement rather than hiding behind these sort of tactics.

11. Councillor Hassan Khan

Can the Leader reassure people that the Council is taking steps to protect the integrity of this year's local elections?

Answer

Yes - integrity planning for elections continues to be a well established practice for this Council.

Recommendations that the Electoral Commission have recently suggested Councils have in place, ahead of the May 2014 elections, to counter the potential for malpractice, have been in place as standard practice in Bradford for some years, for example:

- 100% electronic checking of postal vote identifiers
- Scrutiny and monitoring of records and applications received
- Replacement postal vote pack facility
- Analysis of data and historic patterns informing operational plans for elections
- Operational planning with the West Yorkshire Police

Any allegations of electoral fraud are always dealt with robustly and reported to the West Yorkshire Police. We will also continue to work very closely with the West Yorkshire Police and the Electoral Commission, in partnership, to support democracy

12. Councillor Shaw

Can the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sport provide details of "before and after costs", since the introduction of permits at Waste Transfer Sites, regarding any additional staffing to check permits, any increase in removing fly tips and any reduction in the cost of processing waste at the Transfer Sites, due to a reduction in throughput since permit introduction?

Answer

It is not possible to provide simple "before and after costs" due to changes in the cost of treatment/disposal. For example, in April 2013 Government increased the cost of landfill tax by 12.5%. Disposal/processing costs generally increase each year whilst revenue from recycled materials varies from year-to-year. In addition, the type of material in the waste stream may also vary.

The budgeted saving from the introduction of the permit scheme was based on an estimate (from visitor surveys) that 12.5% of those accessing our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) were from outside of the Bradford district.

Currently, data is only available for the first-quarter of operation of the permit scheme. For the period July 1, 2013, to September 30, 2013, compared to the previous year the amount (tonnes) of material passing through the HWRCs decreased by 13%. This is slightly ahead of expectations but shows a very close correlation with the estimate of 12.5% of visitors from outside of the district.

Whilst the information covers only a limited timeframe, it does indicate that the permit scheme is having the desired effect of a saving in disposal/processing costs compared to what the cost to Bradford's Council Tax payers would have been otherwise.

By way of illustration only, in 2012/13 the total amount of material passing through our HWRCs was 34,602 tonnes. The net cost of dealing with this material was £895K - a saving of 13% pa would be £116K.

Savings are also expected on the cost of handling and moving a lower amount of material from sites to end treatment and disposal points.

Full data for 2013/14 will not be available until after the end of the financial year.

The introduction of the permit scheme required non-recurring start up costs of £34,121 on staffing and materials during the period April 1 to June 30, 2013.

Since July 1, 2013, to present day additional staffing costs totalling £4,300 has been incurred to supplement normal staffing levels only at the busy weekend periods following Christmas. Otherwise, the monitoring of permits has been delivered at no additional cost through normal staffing levels and resources.

The recent report to the Environment & Waste Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee (14/01/2014) demonstrated that there was no link between the introduction of permits and an increase in reports of fly tipping. It further showed that for the period April – September 2013 compared to the previous year there has been a 17.9% decrease in the overall amount of material collected by the cleansing teams who deal with fly tipping. There has been no increase in cost.

Supplementary Question

Thank you for the sparse but long response. £4,300 to supplement normal staffing levels only at busy weekends following Christmas. This is only four weeks, how many extra staff per day does that cover? Over £1,000 per weekend and when it comes to summer how much extra is this scheme going to cost us then? If it costs £4,300 for only four weeks, when you say otherwise the monitoring of permits has been delivered at no extra cost. If this is the case a person at every tip in the district with one member of staff just gazing at car window windscreen

Lord Mayor

Councillor Shaw – what is your question.

Councillor Shaw

Two questions. When you say otherwise the monitoring permits has been delivered at no extra cost, if this is the case a person at every tip in the district with one member of staff just gazing at car windows each day.

Lord Mayor

Councillor Shaw. I am sorry to interrupt.

Councillor Shaw

Can have cuts in major services, isn't this one that

Lord Mayor

Can I say? There is one question. You are allowed one supplementary question.

Councillor Shaw

It is a one question that I am replying to.

Lord Mayor

How much the cost is? We will answer that. Councillor Andrew Thornton

Councillor Andrew Thornton

I think Councillor Shaw has misunderstood the answer to the question. The only additional cost that we have had in staffing for the monitoring of permits for the household waste sites is £4,300 that was spent on staff just after Christmas at a particularly busy period and that is the only additional cost for monitoring permits. During the rest of the time it has been done through the existing staff on site and it is intended to be that way in a very minimalist way. I go on to say that what we have heard opposite is that they said it would cost more to monitor and police the permits than we were going to save. And the answer here and the answers that have come through to the Scrutiny Committee as well also on the issue of flytipping because they said flytipping was going to cost us more to clear up than we were going to save on the permits. The reality is that none of that has come to pass and they do not like the answer and they do not know what to say about it.

13. Councillor Warburton

What is the impact of the recent Education Funding Agency decision to reduce the funding for 18-19 year olds in Schools and FE institutions and what steps are being taken to raise and mitigate the impacts?

Answer

As the EFA are yet to confirm the answers to some technical questions raised by officers, it makes precise modelling of the impact on post-16 funding extremely challenging. We do not believe that any sixth form will lose more than 5% of its funding as a result of this change, but we cannot categorically state that this is the case. As most of the young people this will impact tend to be in Further Education Colleges the funding impact will likely be greater to the District's colleges. In 2013/14 there are 2,400 academic age 18 year olds in school or college in the District and we anticipate when this change is introduced 2014/15 the number would be broadly the same.

This change does present a risk to the post-16 learning experience of a significant number of our young people. We are aware from our Connexions database that numbers of young people in Bradford start Year 12 in a school sixth form and then move to College, or elsewhere. More than one quarter of those who started sixth form in September 2012 were not there in September 2013. Clearly should these young people then move onto a two year course with a new provider this change has significant financial implications for the second institution they attend.

The EFA letter outlining the changes describes the rationale for these changes. In summary it is:

As these young people have already had 2 years in the system they will require mainly direct teaching time to gain a qualification in the third year and not other additional activities that currently contribute to their learning such as work placements, enterprise education etc..

This does not recognise that these young people will still be making the transition to work, Higher Education or an Apprenticeship and may not have been ready to undertake a work placement or other work related activity until this final year. Unless schools and colleges can continue to offer this with the reduced funding, the impact will be to diminish the value and depth of these learners' programmes and potentially impact how successfully they progress into employment or other education after leaving their course.

Officers will continue to work with partners to understand the impact of this change and engage the EFA to mitigate the impact of this. The next seminar of the District's 14-19 Partnership will also consider the ramifications of this change and identify ways to ensure young people have the same access to provision as is currently available.

14. Councillor Geoff Reid

What is Bradford Council's attitude to the distraction to drivers caused by vehicles or trailers parked on major roads or road junctions purely for advertising purposes?

Answer

Advertisements displayed on static vehicles and trailers parked on the highway will be the subject of enforcement action to remove them under the Highways Act. In addition, those vehicles and trailers that display advertisements that are parked on land adjacent to the highway will be similarly enforced under the Planning Acts. The Council has for many years sought to remove such advertisements from around the district which compromises the safety of all users of the highway.

15. Councillor Lynne Smith

What impact will the introduction of a new, national, Single Fraud Investigation Service have on existing Bradford Council services?

Answer

Fraud is committed locally and is best dealt with locally. The Council supports a more joined up approach to fraud investigations across the public sector. The approach recommended by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), a single welfare benefit fraud service, will reduce the Council's ability to determine priorities locally.

The Council created its Corporate Fraud Unit (CFU) within the Department of Finance in 2012 as it recognised the importance of tackling all types of fraud in a holistic and joined up way and the CFU is currently responsible for investigating all fraud and/or irregularity committed against the Council by either citizens or employees e.g. Theft, Social Housing, Discount/Grant/Exemption/Concessions/Allowance, Disabled Parking Blue Badge etc. The recent work with registered social landlords in looking at Housing Tenancy fraud and the successes with disabled parking blue badge misuse show how this approach is starting to pay off for the Council.

This corporate approach will be impacted by the introduction of the Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) as the CFU is responsible for investigating Housing Benefit fraud and this currently makes up 55% of the investigation workload and it is likely that up to 3 Investigators will be TUPE'd (Transfer of Undertakings) to the Department for Work and Pensions to work in SFIS, with current plans to do this sometime between October 2014 and March 2016 - the roll out schedule is awaited.

Since being established the Corporate Fraud Unit has intervened and stopped fraudulent activity that had it continued would have amounted to an estimated £3.2m. The Unit has prosecuted in 121 cases, applied fines and cautions and penalties as an alternative to prosecution in 314 cases and been involved in complex major fraud investigations.

Currently, DWP funding for housing benefit fraud activity is embedded in the overall Housing Benefit Administration Grant. Once the roll out of SFIS is confirmed, the grant will be reduced and at this point, the Council will need to consider the future funding of the Corporate Fraud Unit for investigation into allegations of all other fraud and/or irregularity committed against the Council by Citizens or employees, ensuring that the risk of loss due to fraud is kept to a minimum.

Having a fully functional Corporate Fraud Unit acts as a major deterrent to those who may be intending to commit fraud and the impact of not having such a unit in future would increase substantially the losses to the Council's income due to fraud.

Councillor Lynne Smith

Thank you for the answer and I just want to give a point of information that we are going to be taking this matter before the Governance Committee who monitor the work of our Corporate Fraud Unit.

16. Councillor L'Amie

Given the importance of robust governance in raising standards in schools, can the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services advise colleagues of what is being done to encourage more people with a range of skills and a diversity of backgrounds to become school governors?

Answer

The School Governor Service (SGS) devotes significant resources to governor recruitment including advice and help to individual governing bodies in filling vacancies. The SGS monitors vacancies and subscribing schools are assisted in recruitment processes and in filling problematic vacancies.

Recruitment initiatives include joint projects with School Governors' One-Stop-Shop (SGOSS) targeted at particular neighbourhoods and projects with specific public, private and mutual sector employers e.g. HMRC, Yorkshire Water, Morrisons. Since 1999, 201 governors have been placed in Bradford schools in conjunction with SGOSS.

The SGS is also engaged in a number of recruitment initiatives with the Chamber of Commerce, Bradford Matters, and the Council of Mosques.

The SGS assists schools in progressing Local Authority governor appointments by the district's main political parties. Additionally, the SGS recruits prospective governors via existing contacts with governors, ex and retired LA staff, and the Bradford Council website, and attendance at governor recruitment events in school and elsewhere e.g. Black History Month.

Supplementary Question

Are individual governing bodies being encouraged to set up, even if informally, search committees to go out and headhunt in their locality prospective governors?

Councillor Berry

I have got one of these at home. It is made of pewter. It is quite large and it has got a glass at the bottom. I think sending the press gang out to governors, joking apart, yes there has been a programme of review going on with Government and there is a problem across the country. It is in the Shire Counties and everywhere that with the responsibilities that are now placed on school governors some people are finding it difficult to commit the amount of time. We have been in discussion with the employers, other organisations, because what you really want is for organisations to recognise that the time that their employee can contribute as a school governor to a school in the community develops that individual, gives them a broader insight into the world and is of benefit to their organisation. Because many of the key people I think you are talking about are people with particular business and professional skills and it is in those areas nationally that we seem to have an issue so whatever mechanism we can come up with to try and encourage more people to come forward and be school governors it is always good to know who your chair of governors is. It is a particularly interesting point in one part of Bradford South but I think we now know who the chair of governors is.

17. Councillor Karmani

What strategy do we have in place to reduce the number of NEETs (not in education, employment or training) in Bradford both in terms of current NEETS and future NEETS given that regionally we have one of the highest proportions of NEETS in the UK and what assurances do we have that we are providing long term employment and education opportunities for these young people and not just short term measures that enable us to present more favourable statistics. Can you also clarify that this activity is taking place in those wards that have the highest youth unemployment and levels of NEETS?

Answer

The local authority is directly responsible for tracking local young people aged 16 to 19 and supporting them into education, employment or training (EET) via our Connexions Service. Within that we are also responsible for the local implementation of raising the participation age (RPA) legislation, maintaining low NEET rates 16 to 18 and targeting specific support to vulnerable young people.

Looking at year-on-year figures and comparing our figures with the England-wide averages it is clear that there has been significant progress in recent years. In November 2002, for example, 15.3% of 16-18 year olds were NEET; in November 2013 it was 5.3% which is in line with national rate. This has given us an excellent springboard to implement RPA successfully in the district. At the end of December 2013 the first RPA group (i.e. those residents of academic age 16) had an 'in learning' rate of 95.7%.

Bradford delivers the Youth Contract programme for NEET 16 and 17 years old as part of the government's city deals. SatNav (Bradford's European Social Fund-supported programme of learning and support for NEET young people aged 16 – 19) has supported learners for whom weakness in basic skills (reading, writing and basic arithmetic) is the key barrier to further progression. Both programmes have developed a local approach focusing on providing support to those young people identified as vulnerable and those residing in highest NEET hotspot areas across the district.

It is a different picture post 18. In November 2013 there were 4,660 18-24 year olds claiming Job Seekers Allowance in Bradford, a youth claimant rate of 9.6%. This shows a decrease from the figures published in December 2012, at which time the youth claimant

rate was 10.6%. However Bradford still compares unfavourably to the national rate which is 5.2%.

Post-19, the Council working in partnership with Incommunities, Job centre Plus, Leeds City Region and other partners are working to sustain and extend the opportunities provided via the Get Bradford Working initiative:

- Up to 12 months paid and supported work through the Employment Opportunities Fund
- Increased Apprenticeship vacancies through the Apprenticeship Training Agency and the Apprenticeship Hub
(These schemes will create over 500 new apprenticeships places over two years)
- Support for those individuals who have complex barriers to employment, such as addiction and mental ill-health to find work and gain work experience through the Routes into Work scheme
- New jobs and skills training linked to some of the District's key employers through the Advanced Skills Fund.

Get Bradford Working also includes:

- Working closely with employers to develop new curriculum and work related learning opportunities within schools to enable young people to leave school with the attributes employers require
- Seek to address shortages in priority sector skills by putting in place five Industrial Centres of Excellence.

This activity takes places across the District as a whole, so will be delivered in the wards with highest NEET.

18. **Councillor L'Amie**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services advise members of what programmes are in place to encourage closer working between local schools and business, are any new schemes being developed?

Answer

Closer working between education providers and businesses is a key strand of the 14- to 19 Strategy '*Skills for Lifelong Learning, Decent Work and Fulfilling lives*'. To build closer relationships there are two key programmes of delivery:

- *E3 Bradford Partnership*. E3 Bradford is a partnership between business, education providers, Bradford Chamber and Bradford Council. The Partnership's objective is to inspire young people to make a positive contribution to Bradford's economic success. Currently there are over 400 businesses engaged through the partnership. Businesses support the delivery of keynote enterprise programmes such as 'Market Challenge', 'Cygneture', and 'Classroom in Construction', as well as delivering careers talks, acting as mentors, and work place visits.
- *Industrial Centres of Excellence*. These aim to address the future strategic workforce needs of local businesses through learning and training that provides outstanding preparation for entry into employment in our priority economic sectors, either directly through Apprenticeships or indirectly via higher education. The curriculum integrates business-led project activities that foster team working,

problem-solving and creative skills as part and parcel of developing technical knowledge and expertise. Get Bradford Working includes the investment £1.5million to kick-start this programme and is being used to develop 5 ICEs. Currently, there are 74 businesses engaged as lead or associate partners and 13 educational partners over five sector areas:

- Centre of Excellence for Business
- Centre of Excellence for Environmental Technologies
- Centre of Excellence for Design, Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology
- Centre of Excellence for Retail
- Centre of Excellence for Construction.

19. Councillor Middleton

To Councillor Green, Leader of Council - How many international trips did members of the Bradford Council Executive take in 2013 in their capacity as Portfolio Holders and members of the Executive, when some or all of the cost was met by Bradford MDC?

Answer

The Council made no contribution to any trips abroad made by Executive members in 2013.

20. Councillor Cooke

In light of the ongoing concerns regarding the financial stability of Keighley Town Council, can the Leader of the Council confirm that Bradford Council would have no liabilities for the debts of Keighley Town Council?

Answer

Bradford Council has no liability for the debts of local Town or Parish Councils.

Supplementary Question

Very briefly. Perhaps the Leader might like to tell Keighley Town Council because they seem to think otherwise.

Councillor Green

I am always delighted when I see organisations living in hope.

21. Councillor Cooke

Can the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Transport advise Members of how much unspent Section 106 money the Council currently holds and how much of this falls into the categories of allocated and unallocated?

Answer

I can confirm that the Council holds a total of £3,453,937 in payments made by developers in respect of affordable housing, £76,000 which has been firmly committed.

The Council operates a rolling programme allocating 106 monies to registered providers on an ongoing basis. It is inevitable that at any one time there will be funds unallocated as there is a necessary lag between money being paid by a developer and a suitable

development for receipt of this money being identified. The Council is assessing a number of projects with a view to allocating 106 funds that are currently unallocated.

Supplementary Question

In part I am happy with the answer and in another part disappointed that we are unable to provide a more substantive answer. I suspect this is because to a certain extent we have not managed the figures properly. I do think it would be very useful for us to begin, for all of us and I suspect for the bodies concerned, to have an idea of the way the amount of money that has been allocated for education, for recreation, across through with Section 106 so at least we have got some grip on that. I think it would help some of the planning that goes into that. I do not know whether the portfolio holder agrees but perhaps we can look towards trying to further improve the quality of management information we get in this area?

Councillor Val Slater

Yes thank you. You have extended the question somewhat Councillor Cooke. You talked about housing, affordable housing but we have got a system in planning. I remember two/three years ago was quite clear that any ward Councillor at any time can ask for an update for a list. Councillor Robinson is nodding because I know Wyke spent a lot of time working with the 106 officer to look at what was due in their particular ward to work with people to say how should we spend this. If you want, so I am not quite clear whether you want it on a ward basis or you want it on an overall basis. I do not think you have got the chance to come back, write to me.

22. Councillor Townend

In view of the Council proposing to build 110 houses on Cliffe Lane West, Baildon, can the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Transport inform colleagues what would be the cost to signalise the Green Lane junction, and are there any proposals to do so?

Answer

The signalisation of the Green Lane junction involves significant and expensive capital works, including land purchase and diversion of a major fibre optic cable route in the footway. A conservative estimate of the costs of the project was £1.5m a number of years ago and it is unlikely that costs will have reduced in the intervening period, although a more recent estimate has not been prepared to assess this.

The Council has explored various funding opportunities for undertaking the signalisation scheme but to date it has not been possible to secure the necessary funding from mainstream sources. Despite this, bringing forward the signalisation of this junction remains an aspiration of the Council.

As to the whether any planning led development could be required to provide this junction, for example a development on Cliffe Lane West, it should be borne in mind that the impact of any development on the surrounding highway network will be assessed by the Council's Highway Development Control. This assessment will look at the *additional* impact of any development only – not the existing problem – and place requirements on the development that are both appropriate and proportionate to its impact.

The significant capital costs associated with the delivery of the signalisation scheme mean that it is highly unlikely that one single development will be sufficient to fund the

improvement alone and it is more likely that a combination of developments will be necessary to secure the delivery of the scheme.

Supplementary Question

It has been mentioned that if Green Lane was signalised it would have to come from combination developments. Could you let me know if any money has been allocated from previous developments for the signalisation of Green Lane?

Councillor Val Slater

I think as we said before and we have had this issue raised the Council does not have funding for this junction. The only way that we can do major traffic is by putting together a patchwork of funding, very often from developers out of the 106. A single developer is not going to come up with the money to do something of this magnitude. It is about putting the patchwork together. The problem is as I have said to you before Councillor Townend, you keep opposing the developments in your area so if you oppose them how are we going to get the money together to deal with the problem. It is a bit of a Catch 22.

23. Councillor Leeming

When will it be decided if a School Crossing Patrol will be in place on Otley Road for the safety of children and pedestrians crossing this busy main road to access Peel Park Primary School?

Answer

It is anticipated that following completion of a survey of the site and the establishment of whether a school crossing is viable a decision will be available by the end of January.

Supplementary Question

Can I just ask a very quick question? Would that be January 2014?

Councillor Berry

Yes. It just gives me an opportunity to say do you know anybody who wants to do a working crossing patrol because aside from the technicalities here we do struggle to recruit but any way we can get more people.

24. Councillor Shabbir

Can the Deputy Leader inform me the outcome of the discussions that he has held with the road works team? Specifically he will recall the work on Scotchman Road and the fiasco of the coinciding the road works with three schools. Can we ensure that this won't happen again in any part in Bradford and that road works need to be coordinated with schools properly? Road works such as this put lives at risk.

Answer

I am happy to report that the works on Scotchman Road were completed satisfactorily and on time. Highways staff liaised closely with the schools whilst works were ongoing regarding section closures etc. and this allowed works to progress well, with disruption minimised.

All resurfacing sites are planned in advance with much consideration of the logistics relating to that particular location and decisions to close a road of this type are not taken lightly. The health and safety of all road users, pedestrians and site staff are at the

forefront of any decision. Health and safety guidelines dictate how work is to be executed on site and how it is to be managed. I understand the Councillors concerns regarding the co-ordination with the schools and early consultation will continue to be a priority.

Councillor Shabbir

Just to say thank you very much.

25. Councillor Cooke

Some Bingley Rural residents were not informed that the 23 December 2013 recycling collection had been cancelled resulting in inconvenience and annoyance. What steps is the Portfolio Holder taking to ensure that residents are always informed about changes in collection times and dates in good time?

Answer

Just prior to Christmas there were only a few properties left on the original monthly rural recycling frequency. The properties in question had not as yet received the new fortnightly collection stickers and schedules, but the change-over was imminent. Unfortunately, the scheduled collection for Monday, December 23rd did not take place at a handful of properties and we apologise for this oversight and inconvenience. By January 19th 2014 all residents across the district, including rural locations, should be on the new fortnightly recycling service and should have received all the associated schedules and calendars.

26. Councillor Cooke

What measures are proposed to maintain pedestrian safety on the Leeds Liverpool Canal following its improvement for use by cyclists?

Answer

Improvements to the Canal Towpath are planned to take place as part of the Department for Transport (DfT) funded Cycle City Ambition Fund project, known as City Connect, which is being delivered by a partnership of Metro, Leeds and Bradford Council's and the Canal and Rivers Trust. The proposed works will provide an at least 2m wide towpath with 0.5m grass verges on either side, where possible the towpath will be wider to accommodate safe overtaking points. The possible conflict and safety implications associated with the interaction of cyclists and pedestrians has been highlighted through the consultation on the scheme so far and the partnership is working on a number of proposals to mitigate this possible issue. The towpath, is currently, and will remain a multi user facility with a code of conduct promoted and displayed by the Canal and Rivers Trust. As part of the scheme, following the construction period, there will be campaigns around the code of conduct, emphasising the shared nature of the route with users. This approach has worked well in other areas such as London under the banner of 'share the space drop the pace' as well as promoting keeping left and using bells. In addition, as the towpath surface will be significantly improved, there will be less need for cyclists and other users to 'swerve' to avoid potholes further reducing possible conflict points.

27. Councillor Cooke

Given persistent reports of the abuse of footpaths by cyclists at St Ives what actions is the Portfolio Holder taking to ensure that all residents can enjoy the country park?

Answer

The Council's general approach to all green space stakeholders is welcoming and based on constructive and positive engagement. I am sure Councillor Cooke will join me in expressing his support for the Council's approach to encouraging cycling as set out in Bradford's cycling strategy or through such events as the Skyride. I am equally sure that Councillor Cooke will join me in celebrating the role that the Council will play in hosting stages in the Grand Depart of the 2014 Tour de France - an event that will doubtless encourage many more people in the district to take up cycling.

I am aware that the Friends of St Ives perceive there to be an issue with mountain bikers at St Ives and they have raised concerns directly with me, and we are engaging with the Friends Group to work through this. I am, however, only aware of one complaint from a member of the public during 2013, received by the public rights of way team regarding a cyclist and none have been received through the Council contact centre or directly through the Tree and Woodland Manager or the Area Parks Manager. If Councillor Cooke is aware of any "persistent abuse" I would be more than happy to investigate specific incidents and review what action can be taken.

Currently, Council Byelaws that apply to Parks and Woodlands, including St Ives, state that: "No person shall, without reasonable excuse, ride a cycle, except in any part of the ground where there is a right of way for cycles, or along such routes as may be fixed by the Council and indicated by signs placed in conspicuous positions in the ground". At St Ives the majority of the permissive routes or trails within the estate are bridleways and, therefore, open to walkers, horse riders and cyclists. All signs that indicate the permitted and restricted uses, including a 'walkers only' area around coppice pond, were refreshed in 2011/12.

28. Councillor Middleton

What action is Bradford Council taking to ensure that the Brow Wood is protected as an 'area of high quality landscape and public open space' as envisaged in the New Bolton Woods Masterplan as endorsed by Executive Committee on 9 October 2012?

Answer

I am aware of recent fly tipping and am assured by the woods owner, CRUVL, the joint venture company established by the Council with Urbo Regeneration Ltd, that they will clear any remaining rubbish and seek to prevent further instances of fly tipping.

I can confirm that Brow wood has now transferred to CRUVL, who are developing the New Bolton Woods section of the Canal Road corridor. The council holds a 19% stake in CRUVL, and inputs appropriately to the activities of the company. The CRUVL board is aware of its responsibilities for maintaining this woodland in good condition and, as stated, is making plans to do so. The Council has representation on the CRUVL board and will ensure the matter is addressed through this route if necessary'.

29. Councillor Mallinson

Can the Leader of the Council inform members of the percentage of premises in Bradford District which are exempt from Council Tax along with a breakdown of the reasons behind the exemptions?

Answer

Council Tax exemptions are prescribed in legislation.

In the Bradford District there are currently 210,737 properties liable for Council Tax, of which 4,939 are exempt. This represents 2.34% of all property.

A list of the reasons for exemption and the numbers is shown below.

Brief summary of reason for exemption	Number of properties
Owned by charity, and empty for less than 6 months	843
Unoccupied & person liable detained in prison/hospital	34
Unoccupied & person liable in residential care/nursing home	287
Unoccupied, deceased person and less than 12 months since probate granted	716
Unoccupied & occupation prohibited by law	3
Unoccupied & held for religious minister	4
Unoccupied & person liable receiving personal care	32
Unoccupied & person liable living elsewhere to provide personal care	4
Unoccupied & previously occupied by students	2
Unoccupied and repossessed by mortgagor	109
Student halls of residence	758
Properties occupied by students during term	1281
A dwelling owned by MOD for use by armed forces	1
A dwelling used by armed forces of a foreign country	4
Unoccupied and person liable subject of bankruptcy	64
A mooring or pitch not occupied by boat or caravan	30
Dwelling occupied only by person under the age of 18	67
Unoccupied, forms part of another dwelling & can't be let separately	31
A dwelling only occupied by severely mentally impaired persons	633
Property occupied by person with diplomatic privileges	4
Annexe occupied by elderly or disabled relative	32

In addition to exemptions, some residents get a discount from their Council Tax.

The following Council Tax Discounts are currently applied:

Single Person 25% discount	72,447
100% discount for 1 month for properties under going structural change	37
100% discount for 1 month for empty properties	5,885
Variable discount for those on low income under new Council Tax Reduction scheme	53,843

30. Councillor Davies

Does the Council have an estimate of the number of electric cars used across the district and also where are charging points located or planned to be located?

Answer

As of August 2013 there were 6 electric cars and 1 electric van registered in Bradford District.

Subject to site investigations, the Council is planning to install electric vehicle charge points at 5 locations across Bradford during 2014-2015

- Bradford City Centre
- Baildon village
- Shipley town centre
- Bingley town centre
- Keighley Town centre

Recent electric vehicle charging points have been installed at ASDA Cemetery Rd and the Abundant Life Church Wapping Rd.

In addition, the Council's planning service now seek electric vehicle charging points in all new residential properties built as part of a scheme comprising 10 plus new residential units. Virtually all residential developers have agreed to this and a suitable condition is attached to the grant of planning approval. This came into effect in January 2013.

Supplementary Question

Can I just ask how much we are spending on these electric points for seven vehicles for the whole district? How much it is costing?

Councillor Val Slater

I have not got the figures to hand. It is in part of the LTP, the Local Transport Plan. The other part because as part of the local emission strategy we are now working with developers to provide these in all developments and I understand developers prefer to take that option than to look at some of the more expensive equipment to try and bring down carbon emissions and I understand that in a development you can put a charging point in for about a very low price of less than £100.

31. Councillor Shabbir

Can the Leader of the Council assure us that Bradford Royal Infirmary (BRI) has taken all the necessary steps to ensure that it complies with the inspection findings and that residents of Bradford will continue to receive appropriate care and treatment at BRI.

Answer

We have sought assurance from the Trust itself and the CCG (as commissioners) and their responses are:

From Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust (BTHFT)

The Trust has taken significant steps to immediately improve standards since the Care Quality Commission inspection in October, and robust plans are in place to ensure it continues to provide safe and effective care that meets patients' needs.

From the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

The Trust has been open with us about the issues the CQC has raised and about its immediate plans for improvement and we have met with them to discuss these. We will continue to monitor progress very closely and to play our role in holding the Trust to account. We will also be working closely with other relevant bodies such as Healthwatch, Monitor, NHS England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) itself.

At present we are confident that the Trust is taking the right actions to make improvements where they are required, and will continue to work constructively to support the Trust improvement actions over the coming months.

CCGs will be in attendance at the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 5th February 2014.

32. Councillor Townend

What proposals are there for improving play facilities in Baildon, particularly in areas that currently have no provision, i.e. from the village centre to Shipley Glen?

Answer

The Leisure Service has been actively working with local Ward Members and the local community in delivering play provision across the ward. Due to the shortage of suitable land available across the ward finding a suitable site has become problematic and has led to difficulties in providing play provision between the village and Shipley Glen.

Renewed efforts to find suitable land to build a play area, funded by 106 monies, is being led with officers from both Leisure Services and the Neighbourhood Service. A new trim trail is already being planned working with the Friends of Ferniehurst Dell and Baildon Town Council.

33. Councillor Townend

Does the Portfolio Holder for Social Care propose increasing the desperately needed support to Alzheimer sufferers and their carers in Baildon, as we currently only have the facility on one afternoon per month?

Answer

There are no immediate plans to increase the specific facilities in Baildon for people with dementia. There is as mentioned above the Well being Café funded by Adult Services and run by the HALE Project which provides support one afternoon a month at the Moravian Church Hall in Baildon. Adult Services funds a network of 21 Well-being Cafés located within communities and neighbourhoods across the Bradford & Airedale District through Well Being grants.

There is no move to decrease funding to the cafés over the next financial year as preventive services for older people such as well being cafes are a key priority for social care. The Council also funds the local Alzheimer's Society to provide information and support to people with dementia and their carers before and after diagnosis. This is a District Wide Service. Furthermore the Society has recently provided training to Council members due to the increase in the number of issues relating to dementia being

presented at Councillor surgeries. Details of this training and other support tools can be provided by Alzheimer's Society.

A Dementia Health Needs Assessment has been undertaken, led by Public Health which is due to be published next month and will identify the following;

- Patterns of the condition described across a defined geographical area, setting out the nature and extent of need.
- An analysis of existing local services in order to assess the capacity to meet the described need.
- Detailed review of published evidence on clinical and cost-effectiveness of interventions designed to tackle the health issue in order to indicate where and how improvement can be made to better address need and inequalities.

The information in the Health Needs Assessment and the priority given to low level preventative services will help us to ensure that the resources we have to tackle the challenge of dementia are put to best effect. In light of these factors we will be reviewing the Café model and where they are placed to ensure that services are delivered equitably based on need.

34. Councillor Shabbir

Can the Portfolio Holder provide me with an update on the drainage problem on Keighley road that I raised a number of Council of meetings prior?

Answer

This location was first attended back in October 2013 when leaves were cleared from the gully grates.

A further visit was made in early December with a specific Jetter team who cleared the 3 problem gullies at this site and in particular the storm gully which was full with debris from an adjacent footpath that washes down loose debris in heavy rain.

The 3 gullies are now clear and there should not be a problem with holding water. The site has been monitored for several weeks now and, generally, the drainage system now seems to be coping. The site has also been added to the hot-spot list and will be cleared every 3 months.

The gully cleaning team have also been asked to carry out inspections on Emm Lane to determine if blocked gullies here have compounded issues on Keighley Road and will carry out further clearance work as necessary.

Supplementary Question

First of all to say thank you and secondly if there was further flooding in that area or areas who is liable for injury or loss of property?

Councillor Val Slater

I think I would have to ask the City Solicitor about that one and this is Member Question Time so no doubt she will send you a written answer.

35. Councillor Townend

When do the Council propose re-opening the right of way at Baildon Green (opposite the Cricketers Pub), which has been closed for many years thereby denying access to the public?

Answer

Officers have been in negotiation with the person who has blocked this right of way for some time. Unfortunately he is suffering from ill-health, so this has inevitably delayed progress on opening up and led to a break in negotiations. Officers have made contact again with a view to resolving this matter by agreement. If this does not prove possible, litigation will be considered. I cannot therefore give you a definite timescale for the resolution of this issue.

36. Councillor Robinson

What advice did the City Solicitor receive in deciding that the images on the Reverend Paul Flowers' computer were indeed inappropriate and not illegal and pornographic?

Answer

The City Solicitor viewed the images on the Reverend Paul Flowers' computer and established that they were pornographic and therefore there was a breach of the Council's ICT policy and, if proven that they were downloaded by the Reverend Flowers himself, a breach of the Code of Conduct for Elected Members. The City Solicitor was also able to establish that the images on the machine were of adults and were not of a nature that would be regarded as suitable for prosecution under the Obscene Publications Act 1959. No further advice was required having regard to the nature of these images.