

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING 8 May 2012

Answers to Questions (Standing Order 16.11.3)

Agenda Item 19(b)	
Written Questions (Standing Order 16.11.3)	
1.	<p>By Councillor B Aspinell and Councillor J Roberts of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation</p> <p>'Would the Cabinet Member inform the Council of any discussions that have taken place between Crossrail and Officers of Essex County Council regarding their proposed works to Shenfield Station in Brentwood?</p> <p>We have particular concern as to the lack of arrangements in place for alternative car parking for commuters and for local shoppers during the proposed 18 months' construction period. We would like to know what discussions have taken place, if any, regarding construction traffic routes, together with confirmation that the figure of 120 heavy lorry movements per day in narrow residential roads is the Crossrail proposal. The local Members are concerned over the lack of investment by Crossrail in any improvements to the station and its operation. An alternative entrance to the station from the main station car park in Mount Avenue is urgently needed, either via a foot tunnel to the existing tunnel complex or by way of a bridge to the platforms. Also, no discussions have taken place with the local Councillors regarding proposed decked car parking to be erected on the existing railway car park, which would have significant impact on local residents.</p> <p>The closure of the car park for the 18 month period would also have significant impact on the local businesses and could threaten their very existence. What, if anything, is being done to allay their fears?</p>

Reply

Members will be aware of the Crossrail proposals creating a new standard gauge east-west railway line across London linking Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east to Maidenhead and Heathrow in the west. A new Crossrail service will be provided generally running all stations from Shenfield to terminate at Paddington, Heathrow Airport or Maidenhead. Some “all stations” trains will continue to run between Shenfield and London Liverpool Street in the peak hours. These arrangements will see a small increase in the number of trains from Brentwood and Shenfield station but the detailed timetable will be prepared nearer the time when Crossrail services commence operation from late 2018.

County Council officers have maintained a watching brief as the project has developed with most of the major work taking place in central London. Crossrail held a public exhibition of their proposals in Shenfield last year and issues have been raised with a view to enhancing the proposed works at both stations. County Councillors Roberts and Aspinell are aware that the County Council has been approached by Crossrail as they start to consider the implementation of the works in Essex. The main concerns that were raised when I met the County Councillors have been passed to Crossrail and a meeting is being organised to consider the issues. Crossrail are currently reviewing and revising their work programme and have indicated their preference for a meeting once this new information is available. It is envisaged that Crossrail, Network Rail and Greater Anglia will all be present at the meeting which I envisage will be chaired by my successor.

My understanding is that the revised proposals now being prepared will be more detailed and specific and the views already put forward by the local Members will also be considered. At Shenfield this will include both the impact and duration of the works, traffic routes proposed for construction traffic, and also the Greater Anglia proposal for decking the existing car park and access improvements. As soon as further information is available the meeting will be convened and the local Members will be invited.

2.	<p>By Councillor M Mackrory of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation</p> <p>'In the light of continuing serious road traffic accidents on the Army and Navy flyover, will the Cabinet Member consider the installation of Lane Control Signs and Traffic Barriers as used in many places worldwide including Sydney Harbour Bridge? These signs comply with the Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals, para 11 of Article 23.'</p>
	<p>Reply</p> <p>There have been two accidents on the Army and Navy flyover recently, one resulted no injury the other resulted in a passenger being injured. The flyover doesn't have a history of serious accidents.</p> <p>The fatal crash on 4th March 2012 reported by the Essex Chronicle did not occur on the flyover. This collision occurred on the A1114 Baddow Bypass ½ mile from the flyover. I would like to offer my condolences again for this tragic event.</p> <p>Keeping the above in mind we are currently developing options which we will discuss with local members as soon as we can. We are currently looking into the costs and funding possibilities, which will need to be considered along with the options.</p>
3.	<p>By Councillor D Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Education and the 2012 Games</p> <p>'Now that the Connexions Youth Service is no longer operating, would the Cabinet Member please clarify what specific support Essex County Council is giving to the young people of Essex in terms of help and advice to find a job?</p> <p>Would he also clarify how much is now being spent by the County Council on this area compared with previous years?'</p>

Reply

Following the closure of the Connexions service last summer, the County Council is investing £1.5m per annum to support:

- the delivery of 1-1 information, advice and guidance (IAG) to job ready young people, between the ages of 16-19, who are looking for employment, education or training and are currently NEET (not in employment, education or training). This year we expect to be supporting up to 1500 young people into training or employment through this service.
- schools in taking on their new responsibilities of offering IAG to their students from this September, including investment in a new i-Essex website to help them identify routes into employment and to prepare for them, and the roll out of the Employability for Life Charter across schools in Essex
- the delivery of 1-1 IAG to young people with special educational needs.

Through the successful Essex Apprenticeship Programme we are investing a further £2.5m in this financial year, almost entirely externally sourced funding, to support approximately 600 new and additional Apprenticeship opportunities for young people across Essex, and to support a further 100 with paid work experience placements where those young people are not ready for the challenges of an Apprenticeship. This will bring the number of young people supported by the Essex Apprenticeship Programme to 2500 since its inception. ECC's apprenticeship scheme has had a real impact on the number of apprenticeships being undertaken across Essex and stimulated above 'natural' growth - the number of apprenticeships undertaken across Essex has increased by 83% in 2 years and this is significantly higher than increases in the region (41%) or nationally (32%).

We are additionally working hard to ensure that the various externally funded programmes aimed at 16-19 year olds in the county are effective as possible. An example of this is the ESF funded Youth East programme which aims to support close to 1000 young people who are currently NEET or likely to be so, through training, pre-Apprenticeship programmes and IAG.

Our work continues in ensuring that Essex has first class vocational facilities that offer young people the right kind of practical training that put them well placed to then secure employment. This includes our £7.75m investment in the Canvey Skills Campus which opens in January 2013, and our support for Colchester Institute's joint venture

	<p>with Harwich International Port that will see the opening of the Harwich Skills Centre this summer that will train young people in engineering and related skills ahead of the expansion of the off-shore wind energy sector off the coast.</p> <p>In 2009/10 the budget for the Youth Service and Connexions was integrated (on the same budget line) and totalled £10.7 million. To give an idea of the Connexions/Youth Service split, £5.2 million was spent on Connexions staff. In 2010/11 the intergrated spend was £9.39 million and 2011/12 £9.95 million.</p> <p>In December 2010, Cabinet agreed to reconfigure the Integrated Youth Service achieving £7 million of savings following the reduction in the Area Based Grant. Of this £7million, £5.2 million was a reduction in Connexions staff costs.</p>
4.	<p>By Councillor D Kendall of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.</p> <p>'I understand that a number of charities in Brentwood were unsuccessful with their recent bids to Essex County Council's Early Intervention Fund. These charities include Home-Start Brentwood, SNAP, Crossroads and Extended Schools Services. This decision could threaten the future viability of these organisations as the money they have received from the County Council in the past has allowed them to obtain additional funding from various trusts, grants, donations and lotteries.</p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member please confirm the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are the above named organisations going to get any funding from the County Council over the next financial year? 2. If these organisations are unable to secure funding from elsewhere, is the County Council prepared to listen to new bids to enable them to continue operating? 3. Would you please tell me how children's services and early intervention in Brentwood is being funded? 4. Has any legal challenge been mounted against the County Council regarding the handling of the Early Intervention Fund?

	<p>Reply <i>(to each of the four points respectively)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Bids from the named organisations are welcome to any procurement or grant award process that may be applicable to them in the forthcoming year. Each will be alerted to relevant ECC tenders as and when they become public. All organisations are subject to the terms of the competitive tender processes and as such there is no guarantee of funding to any one organisation.2. As stated above, bids are welcome from the organisations concerned to any competitive or grant awarded process the County Council may offer and each bid, if meeting the required threshold criteria, will be considered on its own merit against robust procurement methodology.3. The Early Intervention Fund is allocated from the Early Intervention Grant devolved from central government and is allocated to each locality based on a standard formula that takes into account population and socio-economic factors.4. A legal challenge has been mounted which the County Council is defending.
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