

COUNCIL, 26 OCTOBER 2017 : WRITTEN QUESTIONS

CHAIR OF PLANNING COMMITTEE **(COUNCILLOR KEITH JONES)**

W1	<p data-bbox="277 349 1374 389"><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR TAYLOR</u></p> <p data-bbox="277 439 1437 562">What consideration can be given to student numbers and student population growth when determining planning applications for large purpose-built student accommodation?</p> <p data-bbox="277 611 384 651"><u>Reply</u></p> <p data-bbox="277 701 1437 779">National planning guidance states that it is the duty of local planning authorities to decide planning applications on their planning merits.</p> <p data-bbox="277 828 1437 1205">Material planning considerations must be fairly and reasonably related to the development concerned. The Courts are ultimately the final arbiters of what may be regarded as material considerations in relation to any particular application, but they include the number, size, layout, design and appearance of buildings, the means of access, landscaping, service availability and the impact on the neighbourhood and on the environment. The guidance further states that the weight attached to material considerations is a matter of judgement.</p> <p data-bbox="277 1254 1437 1462">In this respect, the Council – as the Local Planning Authority – has a duty to carefully consider all submitted proposals in line with this guidance. The weight afforded to considerations regarding student numbers would need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis along with other material considerations.</p>
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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
(COUNCILLOR GRAHAM HINCHEY)

W2	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR DE'ATH</u></p> <p>A recently published research report authored by Manchester University's Dr Patricio Troncoso has found that 50% of children referred to UK children's services in the 2010-11 financial year were re-referred by the end of 2014-15. The report was based on a study of 498,867 children referred in 2010-11, within 145 local authorities and more detailed modelling based on a subset of 90,209 children within 144 local authorities.</p> <p>Did Cardiff Council participate in this research and what percentage of children referred to Cardiff children's services in the 2010-11 financial year were re-referred by the end of 2014-15?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>To the best of our knowledge, Cardiff Children's Services did not participate in this research. 47.7% of individual children referred to Children's Services in Cardiff in 2010-11 were re-referred by the end of 2014-15. However, this figure should be treated with caution and does not necessarily indicate, in any given case, that the initial referral or any subsequent re-referral related to a substantive concern. In very many cases, initial or subsequent referrals would have, in effect, been an 'information only' referral leading to no further action being taken.</p>
W3	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR DE'ATH</u></p> <p>Cabinet has approved proposals to establish a regional Social Care Workforce Development Training Unit serving Cardiff and the Vale Councils to ensure high-quality training provision across the social care sector in the two local authority areas, which is a very welcome development. However, as the proposals afford no direct Member involvement from Cardiff Council and/or the Vale of Glamorgan Council in the proposed governance arrangements and it is not proposed to create a formal joint committee, will this authority agree to sharing the annual reports and work plans of the collaboration with the Children and Young People and/or Community and Adult Services scrutiny committee(s) for them to examine?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>It is intended that both Councils will conclude a formal "Partnership</p>

Agreement” that is being developed by Legal Services and Social Services. The agreement will, amongst other things, include the terms of reference and membership of the Management and Governance Boards that will receive performance reports at agreed intervals.

The Chair of the Regional Workforce Partnership Board agrees that it would be appropriate for any annual or other significant reports relating to the work of the Board to be shared with relevant Scrutiny or other Council Committees in each of the local authorities, subject to the agreement of the relevant Committee Chairperson.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS
(COUNCILLOR SARAH MERRY)

W4	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR DE'ATH</u></p> <p>A number of parents from across South Wales have expressed concerns around the controversial creationist evangelical group OAC Ministries visiting primary schools in the region, with some parents withdrawing their children from lessons involving the group, and others expressing alarm that the group has apparently performed assemblies and other activities involving their children without their prior knowledge. What is Cardiff Council doing to ensure that schools and governing bodies make sure that acts of collective worship etc. are appropriate and non-discriminatory, and that parents are given advanced notice that OAC Ministries will be visiting their children's school?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>I am aware that some parents have raised concerns about this particular group's visits to schools in Cardiff. I have therefore asked officers to remind all schools and Governing Bodies that they should have in place a visitor policy to ensure that the views and values of visitors are appropriate for the context of the school and to the age of the children they are speaking to.</p> <p>I have also asked officers to remind all schools that they should also ensure that parents should be informed in advance of any external visitors who will be involved in activities with their children or performing assemblies at the school. Officers will continue to work with schools and governors to make sure that this is the case.</p>
W5	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR BALE</u></p> <p>How many schools were used as polling stations for the Local Authority Elections in May 2017 and the UK General Election in June?</p> <p>How many of these schools were closed or partially closed to pupils and how many pupils were unable to attend school on these days?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>In both the County Council Elections that were held on 4 May 2017 and the UK Parliamentary Election that was held on 8 June 2017, the Council used 28 schools as polling stations; of which 14 schools</p>

were open and 14 were closed or partially closed to pupils. The number of pupils who were unable to attend school on each of these days was 2,962.

All Council premises are usually given at least 11 months' notice that the Electoral Services team will require use of their premise as a polling station, unless a snap Parliamentary Election is called as happened earlier this year.

The Electoral Services team tries to avoid using schools, colleges and community centres as much as possible and seeks to use alternative venues but, on many occasions, there is no other suitable venue within the polling district.

W6

WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR BALE

What is the number and percentage of pupils in Y11 in:

- a) English Medium;
- b) Welsh Medium;
- c) Faith Schools;
- d) All Cardiff Schools

who obtained an A*-C qualification in GCSE Welsh 1st or 2nd Language (excluding Welsh Short Course GCSE) as a total and percentage of all pupils on school rolls in Y11?

Reply

2017 Results – Provisional Data			
	Year 11 Cohort	Number of Year 11 Pupils Achieving A*-C in GCSE Welsh 1st or 2nd Language	Percentage of Year 11 Pupils Achieving A*-C in GCSE Welsh 1st or 2nd Language
English Medium*	1897	710**	37.43%
Faith Schools	887	440	49.61%
Welsh Medium	381	315	82.68%
All Cardiff Schools***	3283	1465	44.62%

	<p><i>* English medium is mainstream excluding faith schools</i></p> <p><i>** Includes 2 pupils who achieved an AS level but are in Year 11.</i></p> <p><i>*** Includes special schools, Pupil Referral Unit and Education Other Than at School (EOTAS)</i></p>
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FINANCE, MODERNISATION AND PERFORMANCE
(COUNCILLOR CHRIS WEAVER)

W7	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR SANDREY</u></p> <p>What has been the take up on the council's Voluntary Redundancy Scheme and has there been any assessment of the potential impact in terms of operational capacity?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>The take up of the scheme varies from year to year based on the number of corporate posts that require deletion due to savings proposals and changes to services.</p> <p>In the 2016/17 financial year, 40 corporate employees (excluding schools) took up the scheme and, up to the end of September 2017 in the current financial year, the respective number is 15.</p> <p>As part of the process for voluntary redundancy, corporate service areas have to provide details of any effects on operational capacity and this information is provided on the business case and signed off by the Director of that service.</p>
W8	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR HOWELLS</u></p> <p>A range of local authorities across the UK have introduced measures to exempt care leavers from council tax. Is this something that Cardiff Council has considered?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>I can confirm that there is currently no statutory exemption within the Council Tax legislation for care leavers. The Council does have discretionary powers provided under Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 whereby it can consider writing off some or all of the Council Tax charges for certain individuals or groups of individuals and I suspect that it may be under this legislation that other authorities have been minded to grant relief.</p> <p>The Council's Discretionary Relief Policy stipulates that the individual concerned or their advocate/appointee must make an application, which will be treated on its own merits. To qualify for the reduction, there must be clear evidence of exceptional circumstances given that</p>

	<p>the cost of awarding the reduction has to be funded from within the total income generated by Council Tax. Therefore, the current practice is that any applications for this reduction will be considered on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>With regard to a category of exemption for all care leavers, the Council will contact the Welsh Government in order to discuss the Children's Society campaign and to find out if there are any plans to introduce such an exemption nationally. However, the current Welsh Government position indicates that local authorities have discretion to use their powers to grant this exemption.</p> <p>The Council is currently seeking to identify the potential numbers of care leavers that would be affected in the event of any decision being taken.</p>
W9	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR HOWELLS</u></p> <p>How many people with dementia are 'disregarded' for council tax purposes in Cardiff and how is this council tax exemption communicated to residents?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>There are two different types of reduction that can be applicable to persons who are described and more widely defined in Council Tax legislation as 'severely mentally impaired'.</p> <p>Firstly, where a property is solely occupied by persons who are severely mentally impaired, who would otherwise be liable to the charge, then there is a full exemption from the charge.</p> <p>Secondly, persons who are severely mentally impaired are also prescribed within the Council Tax legislation as one of the categories of people who are disregarded (or not counted) for the purposes of calculating a discount from the charge.</p> <p>The Council Tax bill for a property where one of two residents is not counted will be the same as that for a property with only one resident. That is, you will get a 25% discount. If someone who is not counted lives alone, or only with others who are not counted, a 50% discount applies. If there are two or more residents who are counted, no discount can be applicable irrespective of who else lives at the property.</p>

There are currently 375 properties that are exempt from the charge on the grounds that they are solely occupied by severely mentally impaired persons and there are 551 properties where a disregarded discount is currently being awarded. Therefore, in total, we are currently awarding reductions on 926 properties in Cardiff.

Both of these types of reduction are detailed and explained on the Council's website and within the explanatory notes which supplement each Council Tax bill that is issued (a hard copy of the explanatory notes is now only provided on request as each bill contains details of where they are situated on the Council's website).

The Council Tax Enquiry Form, which is often issued when there is a change in occupants of a property, also gives details of the discounts/exemptions that can be claimed and contains an invitation to apply for them.

In addition to this, all Council Tax, Contact Centre and Hub staff who deal with Council Tax enquiries are trained to both identify these types of discount/exemption and to actively promote them. This includes situations where a carer discount may be granted, in addition to a discount on the grounds of severe mental impairment.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES
(COUNCILLOR LYNDA THORNE)

W10	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR NAUGHTON</u></p> <p>What is the council's progress with implementing the Housing First model?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>The Council has entered into a partnership with the Salvation Army to develop a Housing First pilot scheme of up to 10 units. This will house rough sleepers and other vulnerable individuals in self-contained accommodation without going down the normal pathway through hostels and supported provision.</p> <p>A service specification has been developed, along with referral and assessment processes, and a multi-disciplinary team has been established. In addition, a Housing First Steering Group has been set up to help transition rough sleepers effectively into the Housing First project.</p> <p>The Council and three Registered Social Landlords (Wales and West Housing Association, Taff Housing Association and Linc Housing Association) have committed properties to the scheme. The first referrals of suitable clients have been made and the first two placements will be made in early November 2017.</p> <p>The Housing First project is just one of the many initiatives that the Council and third sector partners are taking forward to try to address the issue of rough sleeping in Cardiff in line with our Rough Sleeper Strategy 2017-20.</p>
W11	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR DE'ATH</u></p> <p>The Bristol Post recently reported (06/09/17) on the use of the synthetic drug Spice in the city, claiming the 'police admit there is little they can do to stop what is fast becoming an epidemic.' The report stated that a huge influx of stronger versions of the drug are causing a sharp increase of casualties in Bristol city centre – and local police reportedly admitted the support services to help people get off the drug were 'not particularly great'. Could the Cabinet Member comment on the known extent of Spice use in Cardiff, what support partner agencies are offering to users, and the sustainability of these services going forward?</p>

Reply

Cardiff Council is a constituent member of Cardiff and Vale Substance Misuse Area Planning Board (APB). The APB is responsible for delivering and performance managing all substance misuse services across Cardiff from prevention, education and early intervention, through harm reduction and treatment and aftercare.

There have been anecdotal reports of increased levels of Spice use in the city, particularly among the homeless population but, as yet, there is no quantitative evidence to support these claims.

All preventative, education, treatment and support work in Cardiff has been developed in response to a potential increase in Spice use in the city. The 'Taith' open access, engagement and outreach service is fully qualified to respond to presentations of Spice use; although, again, the numbers are not showing up as being significant at the present time.

The APB has been proactive in developing the content of schools based education programmes and all prevention work to include the risks posed by Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS). It has also implemented a staff training programme for the substance misuse sector on identifying and responding to NPS in treatment, so that all key workers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to address the needs of service users who disclose use of Spice.

The APB continues to monitor trends by analysing the rates of different substances used by those accessing treatment and support, and by maintaining oversight of appropriate data in case there is an increasing in emergency presentations that are related to use of NPS in Cardiff.

W12

WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR DE'ATH

Ealing Council has made a landmark decision committing to find ways to create 'buffer zones' around abortion clinics to prevent pro-life campaigners from harassing women using these services and stopping prayer groups congregating nearby holding 'vigils'. The Council will now examine options, before holding a consultation period. One option would be to enforce a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), which would ban such groups from standing outside of clinics in the borough. Richard Bentley, managing director at Marie Stopes UK, has claimed that the decision could have a knock-on effect with clinics across the country:

	<p>“This groundbreaking move by Ealing Council sets a national precedent for ending the harassment of women using legal healthcare services. We hope that other local authorities will follow this example and act to increase protection for women in their area.”</p> <p>Will Cardiff Council commit to considering options to safeguard women using these healthcare facilities in the city and put the options out to public consultation?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>The Safer & Cohesive Communities Programme Board is currently working with the Police, Neighbourhood Services and Shared Regulatory Services to prepare policy statements on a number of different applications of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) in the city; all of which will be consulted on and piloted once developed.</p> <p>A steering group has been established to co-ordinate this activity. It is proposed that consideration will be given over the coming months to the progress that Ealing Council makes regarding the decision to create a buffer zone around clinics, including using a PSPO to ban groups from holding vigils and prayer groups within an identified area.</p> <p>We are committed to developing good practice in the application of Public Space Protection Orders here in Cardiff and will consider appropriate options for their application in order to address any safeguarding concerns that may arise locally.</p>
W13	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR BALE</u></p> <p>Will the Council provide an update on progress with the relocation of Llanishen Library into Llanishen Police Station to create a new Community Hub for Llanishen and Thornhill?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>I can report that the building works being undertaken by Knox & Wells are progressing well and are due to be completed in early November 2017. This will be followed by a period of fitting-out and IT installation and it is anticipated that the new Hub will open to the public on Monday 27th November 2017.</p>

INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
(COUNCILLOR RUSSELL GOODWAY)

W14	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR COWAN</u></p> <p>Are there any ongoing or residual costs to the Council arising from the Christmas Tree Contract entered into in 2016?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>The Councillor will be aware that the contract with MK Illuminations was for a package of illuminated attractions, which included the artificial tree, and was for three years and, therefore, has two years left to run.</p> <p>The Councillor will also be aware that, as a result of the late delivery of the artificial tree last Christmas, MK Illuminations made five illuminated reindeer available, free of charge, and which proved to be extremely popular.</p> <p>The Council remains committed to the original contract but, in order to address the issues associated with the artificial tree, council officers have worked with MK Illuminations to find a different location for the tree outside Cardiff and for Cardiff to retain the reindeer for this year and next. There has been no reduction in the contract price as a result of the change.</p> <p>The Councillor will no doubt welcome the fact that, this year, the city will be provided with a real Christmas tree outside the main entrance to Cardiff Castle, which will be sponsored by Sayers Amusements, the operator of Winter Wonderland. I understand that Rightacres, the developer of Central Square, is also exploring the possibility of providing a real tree within the development.</p> <p>Furthermore, taxpayers will be pleased that council officers have secured additional sponsorship for the city's Christmas offer which, taken together, means that the attractions this year will be delivered at a total cost to the Council of £8,000 compared to some £220,000 before 2012.</p>
W15	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR BALE</u></p> <p>Will the Council provide a list of the furniture which was removed from City Hall and placed in storage ahead of the 1998 European Summit held in Cardiff City Hall?</p>

How much has the Council spent in storage costs for the original items of furniture and what items, if any, have since been disposed of by the Council?

Reply

The Councillor may not be aware that, in order to accommodate the 1998 meeting of the European Council, City Hall was completely vacated to provide the organisers with a “clean” building.

Some items of furniture, fixtures and fittings were disposed of at that time due to their poor condition or because the decision was taken that they were surplus to requirements. The bulk of the items were, however, placed in storage with a significant amount being returned to the building following the event. Other items were kept in storage, in a private facility, until they were disposed of in 2010 following an independent valuation which concluded that the remaining items were in poor condition, of little or no interest in historical terms and of little or no value. The cost of storage over the thirteen year period is estimated to have amounted to some £400,000.

I am advised that a detailed inventory of the items disposed of is no longer available, but they did include:

- 37 x Oak Chairs
- 13 x Oak Chairs (broken)
- 40 x Carver Oak Chairs
- 18 x Carver Oak Chairs (broken)
- 5 x Blue/turquoise Chairs
- 2 x Curved Office Chairs (made of wood & leather but different to the oak chairs listed above)
- Various tables (large and very large sizes)
- 2 x Fire guards
- 4 x Book Cases

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
(COUNCILLOR CARO WILD)

W16	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR TAYLOR</u></p> <p>What analysis has the Council conducted of student numbers and estimated student population growth in relation to the number of student rooms currently available in order to inform planning decisions in relation to large purpose-built student accommodation?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>Student numbers across the city are published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Student numbers at Cardiff University and Cardiff Metropolitan University collectively increased from 28,295 in 2000/01 to 43,260 in 2015/16, which is a growth rate of more than 50% over 15 years. This growth has stabilised in recent years.</p> <p>In addition, the city is home to students from the University of South Wales, which incorporates the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and has its Atrium campus in Cardiff. Students attending Further Education colleges or language schools also contribute to overall student numbers in Cardiff.</p> <p>There is no statutory requirement for the Local Planning Authority to monitor student rooms/developments. The Council must determine a planning application, having regard to the Local Development Plan and all relevant material planning considerations.</p>
W17	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR TAYLOR</u></p> <p>Is it within the scope of the Council to introduce planning guidance which would make student population numbers a consideration as part of the planning approval process?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>The Council is currently preparing draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Student Accommodation. This document will build upon policies in the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) and introduce more detailed guidance describing the material planning considerations upon which developments for new student accommodation will be assessed. However, our SPG cannot introduce new policy or attempt to rewrite national guidance.</p>

W18	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR SANDREY</u></p> <p>Has the administration considered applying to the LGA for access to their behavioural insights funding, with a view to establishing how best to promote and embed behaviour change in regards to transport modes in Cardiff? The deadline is November 10th.</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>No, as I understand that this funding is only available to LGA member councils in England.</p>
W19	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR WOOD</u></p> <p>The recent Client Earth report on air quality raised concerns that 9 schools in Cardiff, including 3 in Gabalfa, are exposed to Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels above the recommended limit. Whilst these figures are estimates based on a computer model, this is obviously concerning to pupils and their families in the affected schools. To provide peace of mind, can the council commit to real time air quality monitoring at these locations to provide reassurance to local residents?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>I am aware that Client Earth has identified 9 schools in Cardiff, which are indicated to be exceeding levels of the annual mean air quality standard for NO₂ (40µg/m³); however, these reported values need to be taken with caution.</p> <p>As you highlight, these results have been produced using predictive computer modelling and are not from actual monitoring results from the schools, but from roads some distance away from the schools. The reported values do not take account for fall off of pollution levels away from the source and calculations can be made to estimate the levels of NO₂ which may be experienced at the school sites. Taking the highest and, therefore, worst case reported figures presented by Client Earth, the levels at these schools would therefore fall well below the legal level of 40µg/m³. I would hope that this would help to alleviate any immediate concerns for staff, pupils and families in terms of the air quality at the 9 schools in question.</p> <p>Nevertheless, as you will be aware, this administration has committed to developing a Clean Air Strategy with the aim of improving air quality across Cardiff in order to protect public health.</p>

	<p>One aspect of this strategy will be to improve the Council's real-time monitoring capabilities and officers from Shared Regulatory Services are currently assessing appropriate options in terms of suitable equipment and likely costs, for which the Council will need to consider. However, the choice of monitoring locations is made on a risk based approach and thus the location of any future real time monitoring will need to consider locations which are likely to have high levels of exposure such as residential facades.</p>
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