



**QUESTIONS TO THE  
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CABINET MEMBERS  
AND/OR  
CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES**

Thursday 5 December 2019

**1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ACKLAND  
Re: Domiciliary Care Market**

We all recognise there are workforce challenges in the domiciliary care market. The DCC 'Proud to Care' campaign is not able to entice enough new carers into the market. DCC has taken back the responsibility for the management of personal care referrals in the area that includes Exeter. There are vulnerable people in the city who are not receiving their entitlement due to the shortage of professional care workers. It is clear, therefore, that new, different and innovative approaches are necessary to alleviate this problem. Could the Cabinet member for Adult Social Care inform members about plans being put in place to improve this situation?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER**

*The adult social care workforce in Devon is short of around 100 front line care workers and recruitment and retention is challenging, particularly in Exeter given some of the highest levels of employment in Europe. Despite this, the significant majority of people assessed as eligible for personal care receive the care they need in a timely way. For the small proportion of people the Council is unable to source personal care for at home immediately, there are a number of alternative arrangements that ensure they are receiving safe and timely care.*

*Skills for Care estimates that in Devon there was a turnover rate of 34% in 2017-18 with many of those leaving the sector. As we look to improve retention rates we continue to work with independent care providers helping them to offer a wide range of incentives to aid recruitment and retention including provision of vehicles, free accommodation and child care. The Council is also working to develop a better skill mix across the health and care workforce, the new role of Nursing Associates is an example of this.*

*Education continues to be a priority area, including through the work of Proud to Care. The Council work with schools, colleges and national agencies to develop vocational apprenticeships and encourage careers in health and care.*

**2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR AVES  
Re: School budget deficits**

Last year the DfE announced in July 2018 that 1 in 5 nurseries were in budget deficit and 1 in 10 schools. How many of our nurseries and schools in Devon are in budget deficit this year?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES**

*The Council can only supply data for its maintained schools. This is for balances at 31st March 2019.*

*Of the 2 maintained nursery schools, 1 is in deficit.*

*Of 179 maintained schools, 17 are in deficit.*

**3. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR AVES**  
**Re: Regional Schools Commissioner meetings**

At the last Full Council, you announced you will be meeting with the Regional Schools Commissioner regularly, on what date will that first meeting be and what is on the agenda?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES**

*The first meeting won't take place until new year because of purdah and it will focus on quality of schools and academies and the sharing of any concerns or good practice.*

**4. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR AVES**  
**Re: Inclusion in Schools**

With inclusion in schools being the best way to integrate children with disabilities into their community what are you doing in Devon to make sure more is done to realise this important aim in all our mainstream nurseries and schools, despite the lack of funding from government?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES**

*The [SEND strategy](#) sets out the Local Area's strategic vision and actions to support children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities. The support services commissioned by DCC, through Babcock LDP, deliver advice and support to schools that ensures inclusive practice is promoted and that good practice is shared. The graduated response provides a toolkit to support schools in delivering this.*

*An example of coordinated support is the Multi-Sensory Impairment service which aligns school support, assessment and provision for individuals across school and home.*

*A new '[no need to exclude](#)' toolkit is also helping to promote inclusion and reduce exclusions for all children including those with special educational needs. Part of this work also focussed on supporting children with medical conditions to attend school. The continual review of the Fair Access Admissions Policy, developed with schools, aims to reduce the amount of time children are out of education and encourages swift admissions to schools.*

*The [SEND review of special educational needs](#) provision sets out how we will deliver school places and ensure mainstream schools are best able to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Over the past 3 years 180 additional places have been created in our maintained special schools and a new special school (funded by DCC) opened in Tiverton this September. A new special free school will open in Newton Abbot in September 2020. In addition to this a business case has been put forward to the Council to provide up to 300 additional places over the next 4 years. Funding is also allocated annually to support physical accessibility to school buildings.*

**5. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR AVES**  
**Re: Free School provision**

Are you going to write to the DfE to ask for there not to be an increase in the number of Free Schools, which are not locally accountable, but to allow Local Authorities to be able to open new maintained schools in places the Local Authorities know they are needed?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR MCINNES**

*Devon works closely with all schools within the County, National Government Departments and OFSTED to ensure there are clear lines of accountability, no matter the schools designation, as*

*the Local Authority retains responsibility for every learner. Devon has worked closely with partners to bring a number of free schools forward to support the statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority, for example in Kingsteignton, West Clyst and Newton Abbot.*

*The previous Government policy was for all new schools to be Free schools, either through a direct bid to Government or through a presumption process run by the Local Authority. The Local Authority will need to consider the national education policy after the general election on 12 December 2019 before making any direct representation.*

**6. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON**  
**Re: Electrification of Railways in the South West**

As it is claimed there has been continuing positive engagement with Government in relation to Railways, why is it that the Government has failed to support electrification of railways in the South West beyond Bristol and failed to invest in the improvement to the Okehampton line and to link it up with Bere Alston, thereby seriously affecting our ability to reach our true economic potential increase or productivity and address the climate emergency but is prepared to invest vast sums in other regions?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR DAVIS**

*The electrification programme costs have tripled and many parts of the Country are set to miss out, not just the South West. I met with the Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris on 23rd October to express our concerns that the Peninsula rail network is currently entirely powered by diesel and that we want to be at the forefront of change, having declared a climate emergency. Specifically, I made the case for discrete electrification of the South Devon banks (between Plymouth and Newton Abbot) and to explore options for non-fossil fuel solutions for rail services in the future.*

*Regarding Okehampton, the Government tasked GWR with investigating how to reintroduce regular weekday services and we await the outcome of this work. The Rail Minister is due to meet with Councillor Ball to discuss this further.*

*We continue to support proposals for Tavistock to Bere Alston and considerable work has been undertaken. However, technical challenges have resulted in significant cost escalation, which has resulted in the deliverability and affordability of a heavy rail solution being questioned. The importance of a sustainable transport link connecting Tavistock to the national rail services at Bere Alston is recognised and remains an important aspect of enabling growth in Tavistock. Technology is rapidly changing and alternative solutions are in development elsewhere. Incorporating some of these onto the traffic-free historic rail alignment could offer a cost-effective solution which achieves similar outcomes for those living in Tavistock and travelling to Plymouth.*

*It is pleasing to see the funding commitment and progress being made on the 1st phase of the mainline between Teignmouth and Dawlish in difficult conditions.*

**7. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ATKINSON**  
**Re: International Women's Day**

What is the meaning and importance of International Women's Day (March 8th) and how will Devon County Council mark and celebrate that day?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR PARSONS**

*International Women's Day takes place on March 8 each year and is a celebration of the achievements of women. The day also raises awareness of the need for gender equality. International Women's Day has different themes each year.*

*There are many international and national events around equality and diversity including Purple Tuesday for disability, International Men's Day, Black History Month, LGBT History Month and we*

*will aim to acknowledge these key dates through social media, where possible. For events with annual themes, we will see what theme is running for that year and decide how to get involved.*

*From time to time we may broaden activity to an event or exhibition. For example, last year we celebrated Vote100, the centenary of the first women gaining a right to vote by welcoming the Suffrage Flag to County Hall, running an exhibition, conference and youth takeover. The Corporate Equality Officer is currently developing plans to celebrate Black History Month in 2020.*

**8. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE**

**Re: School Crossing Patrols**

At the last Council I successfully intervened to stop Officers going ahead with deleting school crossing patrols at Yeo Valley School and at Ashleigh Rd School as there had been no consultation carried out. Cllr Hughes promised consultation would take place but so far I have seen no sign of consultation happening. Can Cllr Hughes say whether consultation as started or if not when will this take place?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES**

*The Council are continuing to monitor the recruitment of school crossing patrols. Recruitment continues to be difficult and time consuming. With regard to Councillor Greenslade's concerns we have suspended the deletion of the school crossing patrols for Yeo Valley School and Ashleigh Rd School and will endeavour to recruit.*

**9. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE**

**Re: Barnstaple and Taw Estuary flood risk areas**

I have recently seen a flood risk map for 2050 which shows a large part of Barnstaple and the Taw Estuary as flood risk areas. Some time ago I asked the Portfolio Holder about progress with further flood alleviation measures for Barnstaple especially in the Pilton Park area. There did not appear to be any concrete steps in hand. Can the Portfolio Holder give me any hope of progress being made?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR CROAD**

*The flood risk mapping for 2050 that you refer to is likely to be the online interactive mapping of projected risk from future sea level rise and coastal flooding recently published by Climate Central [available at <https://coastal.climatecentral.org/> - viewable only using Chrome, Firefox or Safari web browsers]. Whilst based on the latest projections, the areas shown to be at future risk broadly coincide with those already illustrated by the Environment Agency's pre-existing flood maps.*

*In terms of the further flood alleviation measures for the Pilton Park area, these relate to an Environment Agency led project, where the current plan is to start work on the business case in 2023/24, with construction anticipated in 2025. On this basis, the present situation is no different from when I last reported on this issue in April this year. Defra's currently approved programme of flood and coastal risk investment runs through till 2021, with Barnstaple being on the next six-year programme (2021-2027). The business case preparation phase will include stakeholder and public consultation, and the gaining of planning permission. No significant progress in the planning for this scheme should be expected prior to these programmed dates.*

*The Environment Agency is also starting work this year (i.e. a two to three year project) on the Taw Torridge flood model covering the entire estuary, including Barnstaple. This will be used in the design of any upcoming schemes and will take account of the latest available projections for climate change, including anticipated sea level rise.*

**10. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE**  
**Re: Rail Services from Barnstaple to London**

At the last County Council Meeting I tried to add to a list of rail improvements that DCC was putting forward so that this included direct rail services from Barnstaple to London. This was dismissed by the Leader as its inclusion would mean every town would want the same.

I really am surprised by the Leaders stance and nearly every Northern Devon County Councillor supported him as there was a notice of motion previously agreed by the County Council to support direct rail services from Barnstaple to London and because nearly every largish towns in Devon already have a direct London rail service. Example towns between Plymouth and Axminster are all able to connect direct to London. The three larger towns not benefitting from direct rail connection to London being Barnstaple, Exmouth and Okehampton.

Does the Leaders stance indicate that he does not support direct rail services from Barnstaple to London as previously supported by the full County Council?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HART**

*The option to extend the existing Waterloo to Exeter rail services along the Tarka line is not currently possible due to significant single line constraints, which would create unacceptable reliability issues for the entire route. The County Council is actively working with the rail industry and other parties to secure improvements on the West of England mainline including a new passing loop near Cranbrook, which would enable a much more reliable route. Once these improvements have been delivered, which may not be for 10 years, there is an opportunity to review the situation, including specifying what rolling stock may be required on the route. Parallel to this, the Williams Review is considering a revised structure for the rail industry and the way services are delivered so we will need to see what reforms will follow and how this impacts on our Devon Metro aspirations.*

**11. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE**  
**Re: Recruitment of Health and Care Workers**

I attended the recent Health Scrutiny meeting to speak on the item dealing with the difficulty of retention and recruitment of health and care workers in the county. I did so because I felt the written report attached to the agenda did not show any sense of urgency over a clearly documented problem being made worse by the fallout from Brexit and the reduction in EU citizens coming to the UK to work.

I don't think the debate at the Scrutiny Committee did anything to allay my concern at an apparent lack of urgency in addressing this growing problem.

What therefore is the Portfolio Holder going to do to increase a proactive response from DCC to address this serious problem.

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER**

*Devon County Council is aware of the recruitment and retention challenges in adult social care and a great amount of working is currently taking place and has been for some time. Proud to Care Devon continues to run targeted campaigns, and has done since 2017, encouraging recruitment to and retention of the caring workforce; our learning was shared with the Department*

*of Health and Social Care for its national recruitment campaign. As part of the Devon STP we have bid for Health Education England funding for Proud to Care to run two further campaigns in Spring 2020 and also to host a number of joint health and social care recruitment events in Devon to attract people to jobs and careers in the health and social care sector.*

*Proud to Care engages with schools and colleges to encourage training and education opportunities such as health and care apprenticeships. There are now over 280 Proud to Care Ambassadors who have spread the message at 156 events across Devon.*

*The Devon STP has just submitted a £3.5 million bid to the European Social Fund for a variety of work to support our endeavours on recruitment and retention, this through helping people achieve qualifications and enabling career progression into registered roles such as Nursing Associates, Registered Nurses, Allied Health Professions, Registered Managers and Social Workers.*

*Our Business Relations Team lead our relationships and support of Devon's independent care providers, the quality of which is consistently better than all comparator groups as rated by the CQC.*

*We have been in constant contact with providers throughout our Brexit preparation including supporting their preparedness. Councillors will recall that DCC proactively waived the fee associated with applying for EU settled status ahead of that eventually becoming national policy.*

**12. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR GREENSLADE  
Re: Devon Pupil Funding**

On an election visit to Chulmleigh School the Education Secretary announced that Devon pupils would receive a 6.46 pc increase in funding I believe for next year.

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm that he believes this to be correct and if so where does this leave Devon pupils in the league table of funding per pupil?

**REPLY BY COUNCILLOR McINNES**

*The provisional settlement for Devon shows the authority receiving an increase to the Schools Block equivalent to 4.86% per pupil in 2020-21. This means that Devon sits 128 out of 149 in the league table of funding per pupil.*