

**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

**AGENDA ITEM 8**

**QUESTION 1**

**MR DAVID ROBERTS** will ask the following question:

When Wattlesborough and Yockleton schools closed the children from those catchment areas were all sent to Trinity School, Ford. The catchment area was altered to reflect the new area, but the nearest school to those villages which is Westbury wasn't included because at the time it was full. Things have changed and it would make sense for the catchment areas for both schools to be reviewed to ensure an efficient and cost effective use of school transport. Could I ask the portfolio holder to ask the officers to do this with utmost urgency?

**MRS CECILIA MOTLEY**, the Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills will reply:

Thank you for raising this issue with us. The Council will consider undertaking a full review of catchment areas for schools in 2013.

We appreciate that the situation has changed since the catchment areas were agreed and we will make this a priority as part of the review in 2013.

**QUESTION 2**

**MR NIGEL HARTIN** will ask the following question:

Given the Coalition Governments changes to Working Tax Credit removing this benefit from families working between 16 to 24 hours a week, can the portfolio holder give any indication of what work is going on to assess the impact of the change and, assuming it is likely to result in a significant increase in those families affected being in difficulties with rent & Council tax payments, can the portfolio holder agree to this issue being referred to the relevant scrutiny committee once we have clearer figures on the impact of this change.

**MR MALCOLM PRICE**, the Portfolio Holder for Housing Options will reply:

Working Tax Credit is a national not local benefit scheme. The Government department responsible, in this case HMRC, will do the impact needs assessment on changes to the scheme and local councils cannot obtain information relating to the families affected by this change.

However, we do have changes in monetary entitlement reported to us and, if income from benefits reduces for families, this can result in an increased entitlement to

Council Tax and Housing Benefit, which we can monitor from the point when changes in national benefits are implemented.

It is this local impact that can be reported to and monitored by the relevant Scrutiny Committee, if Members so wish, but an increase in applications to the Council for local benefits are likely to be the results of wider benefit changes, and of changes to individual family circumstances, rather than just to changes in Working Tax Credit.

### **QUESTION 3**

**MR ALAN MOSLEY** will ask the following question:

Last year it was disclosed that some 529 posts have been deleted from the County's establishment with more in the pipeline.

Would the portfolio holder now bring us up to date regarding:

The total number of posts deleted from the staffing establishment in the 36 months to 1 April 2012 and the number projected to 1 April 2013. These to be distinguished between school based and all others, part-time and full time and the grade of post.

Also, could you provide details of the gender and age of the previous incumbent of the posts and how many of these were subject to a redundancy package and whether that was voluntary or compulsory up to 1 April 2012. I would also like to know how many further redundancies, voluntary or compulsory are projected for the period to 1 April 2013.

**MR KEITH BARROW**, the Leader of the Council will reply:

- 1. The total number of posts deleted from the staffing establishment in the 36 months to 1 April 2012 and the number projected to 1 April 2013. These to be distinguished between school based and all others, part-time and full time and the grade of post.**

Despite having to reduce our spending by £85 million over the period from 2010 to 2014, the commitment I gave was to protect essential frontline services and the jobs of the key staff who provide them. At the same time, our goal is to boost growth in Shropshire's economy, and to create more jobs for local people. We are delivering on those promises.

The figure of 529 posts referred to a reduction in the Council's headcount of 529 between March 2010 and November 2011.

Below is a table which shows the staffing headcount according to the figures provided by the Council to the Office for National Statistics, for a number of periods between June 2009 (when the new unitary council was established) and March 2012. This shows the net picture, where the overall reduction in staff is much smaller. This is because, as well as deleting posts, the Council has also created a significant number of new posts, as our requirements have changed, in order to ensure that the Council is correctly structured to meet the changing needs of local people.

<b>Shropshire Council (inc schools)</b>	<b>Total Headcount</b>
Jun-09	11065
Mar-10	11293
Mar-11	11348
Jun-11	11142
Sep-11	10853
Dec-11	10856
Mar-12	10837
Difference Between 2009 to 2012	-228

The most recent analysis of the national picture, done by the trade union GMB, was based on the change in headcount between Quarter 1 2010/11 and Quarter 3 2011/12. That survey showed an overall 9.3% reduction in the headcount of the Local Government workforce in England and Wales, and a 10.1% reduction in the West Midlands. Shropshire's reduction in headcount during this period was only 3.9%. This is one of the lowest figures for a council in the country.

We do not track the posts deleted from the staffing establishment, so I cannot provide grade or the part-time/full-time information on deleted posts.

- 2. Also, could you provide details of the gender and age of the previous incumbent of the posts and how many of these were subject to a redundancy package and whether that was voluntary or compulsory up to 1 April 2012. I would also like to know how many further redundancies, voluntary or compulsory are projected for the period to 1 April 2013.**

In accordance with our commitment to provide relative job security for our current staff, we have made few compulsory redundancies compared to most other councils. I cannot provide the gender and age of the previous incumbent of (deleted) posts, as we do not track deleted posts in this way. The number of redundancies during this period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 was:

	<b>Total Redundancies</b>	<b>Voluntary</b>	<b>Compulsory</b>
Schools	64	45	19
Non-Schools	286	149	137
Totals	350	194	156

In fact, we have acted successfully to avoid compulsory redundancies in many cases, and 205 staff were redeployed into alternative jobs in the first 9 months of 2011/12. The year-end figure is not yet ready, but it will be more than this, and I will get this figure to you as soon as it is ready.

We have served notice to 65 staff who will leave during 2012/13 – these are a mixture of voluntary and compulsory redundancies.

I am proud of this excellent track record in these difficult times, which shows how much we value our staff and the good work they do to benefit local people.

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