

Councillors Written Questions to Cabinet Members and the Responses

Full Council – 16 October 2019

1. Question from Councillor Lanzer to the Leader of the Council

"Referring to the Cabinet meeting of 26th June 2019, there was a Part B Item 16 - Occupational Sick Pay for Crawley Homes' Contractor - listed on the agenda front sheet.

Given the great interest that this decision will generate, can you please advise what parts of this matter will be made public (Part A) and when?

Can you please provide an update on the status of the decision?"

Response –

The Decision of the Cabinet of 26th June 2019 on the matter of Occupational Sick pay for Crawley Homes' Contractor staff is in the public domain it is a detailed minute which states what decision was made, names the contractors and that the decision was specific to this contract and that for future procured major contracts the principle of full occupational sick pay would be subject to an assessment on a case by case basis. The Council is being open and transparent in recording what decision was being made. The Council minute 20, Recommendation 4 of the Council meeting on 17th July 2019 approves the £ to enable this decision to be implemented. To that extent there is already the key information relevant to what decision was being made on this matter publically available.

The question on the status of the decision was raised at the OSC on 3rd September, which is an action from that meeting. The latest position with regards to the introduction of occupational sick pay is as follows:

This is being introduced via a Deed of Variation within existing contracts. Liberty Group have received theirs and we are expecting a response shortly. There has been a slight delay with MPS Ltd and Mears Ltd but this is underway and we are hoping this is complete within 2 months.

2. From Councillor Crow to the Leader of the Council

The Labour Party has announced a policy to introduce a 32 hour maximum working week, sometimes referred to as a 4-day working week, should it come to power at the next general election.

- 1) Please state the number of FTEs on a 37-hour working week currently directly employed by the Council.*

- 2) *As best as possible, please state the number of FTEs employed by contractors who work on behalf of the Council and what their average working week is.*
- 3) *In order to maintain current staffing levels and services for the Council, how many additional FTE employees would need to be employed by the Council if the working week became 32 hours?*
- 4) *In relation to question 3, what would be the estimated cost to the Council, and if this was funded entirely by Council Tax, what percentage rise would be needed to meet this cost?*
- 5) *As best as possible, in order to maintain current staffing levels and services for the contractors who work for the Council, how many additional FTE employees would need to be employed if the working week became 32 hours?*
- 6) *In relation to question 5, what would be the estimated cost to the Council, and if this was funded entirely by Council Tax, what percentage rise would be needed to meet that cost?*
- 7) *In relation to questions 4 and 6, what would be the total estimated combined cost to the Council of a 32 hour working week, and if this was funded entirely by Council Tax, what percentage rise would be needed to meet this cost?*

Response –

The number of full time equivalents (FTE) employed by the Council is currently 575. If a 32 hour working week was to be introduced with immediate effect, and a decision taken that the shortfall was to be made up exclusively of additional FTE employees, then the workforce would need to increase by 90 to 665. The cost of increasing the workforce by this margin would be £3.1m, based upon a simple % increase of the total labour cost within the Council at today's prices.

It needs to be stated however that the Council could not and would not respond in this manner. Bound as we are by statutory financial rules the Council would consider a much wider range of its options in order to adapt prior to implementation, which would be over a period of up to 10 years. During this time there would also be other financial pressures, changes in the outlook for local government finances, and new statutory expectations of local authorities. It is therefore not possible to predict the impact upon Council Tax. In any case, the limitations around increases in Council Tax increases means that fully funding through that route would not be possible.

We do not hold employment information for our contractors and cannot provide the information requested. Contracts are awarded on the basis of how tenders respond to the specification set, both in terms of quality and price. Employment levels are not generally specified. It would be for the contractors to respond to any such change, and similar to the Council approach set out above, they would likely consider the full range of options in order to remain competitive.