

QUESTIONS FROM ELECTED MEMBERS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10

1-16 TO COUNCILLOR MUNAWAR, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, FROM COUNCILLOR WRIGHT (RECEIVED 11.10.16)

“On 30th November 2010, this Council resolved to utilise ‘GRANTfinder’ software by increasing the number of user licences and requiring all departments to fully exploit any grant funding it may qualify for. How many EU grants has the Council apply for since this motion was passed and how many has it received?”

Reply

The GRANT finder software referred to in the Member’s Motion and Resolution of 30th November 2010 is a website provided by a private company, and simply groups a range of funding bid possibilities together in one place. As such, it is merely one means amongst many of locating possible bidding opportunities. Access to the website is provided at cost through purchasing licences. At the time of the question, it was used in Slough Borough Council by one member of staff with a single access licence. Any opportunities found whilst using this resource were publicised across the council and with relevant partners. The cost of additional licences was felt at the time to represent poor value for money, especially given the number of other alternatives that were already available for accessing European Union and other sources of external funding.

The vast majority of grant applications are intended for community and voluntary groups, but Slough Borough Council, as a public body in the relatively affluent south east of England, would not in most cases be directly eligible for EU funding as it would not meet the criteria for EU objective area status.

However, the council certainly does work with partners – notably Slough Council for Voluntary Services (‘SCVS’) – to ensure we are aware of, and either bid for or support local groups to bid for – grant funding opportunities. SCVS themselves utilise the GrantFinder website amongst other vehicles, and distribute a weekly email of opportunities to a range of groups and individuals (including staff within the council); the council therefore derives access to the initiatives hosted on this specific tool at no additional cost. There are also a range of other routes and organisations used which serve to publicise grant funding opportunities.

However, examples of grant funding secured by groups and bodies operating within Slough include £30,884,632 received from National Lottery Grants (details listed here: <http://www.lottery.culture.gov.uk/SearchResults.aspx?LA=Slough>) as well as the £42,000 the council directly received from the Air Quality Grant Programme in 2014/15 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/24-projects-to-improve-air-quality-to-recieve-1-million-fund>).

2-16 TO COUNCILLOR SHARIF, COMMISSIONER DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND CUSTOMER CARE, FROM COUNCILLOR PLENTY (RECEIVED 11.11.16)

Of all council management roles At Assistant Director level and above, how many are populated by substantive post holders as opposed to temporary, interim or other non permanent position holders?

Reply

Position	Post holder status
CEO	Permanent post holder - absence being covered on interim basis
Director CCS	Permanent post holder
Director RHR	Interim post holder
Director Wellbeing	Interim post holder
Director Children' Services	Interim post holder
Assistant Director Strategy & Engagement	Permanent post holder
Assistant Director ODHR	Vacant
Assistant Director Finance & Audit	Permanent post holder
Assistant Director Assets, Infrastructure & Regeneration	Permanent post holder
Assistant Director Housing & Environment	Vacant
Assistant Director Adult Social Care	Permanent post holder
Assistant Director & Consultant Public Health	Permanent post holder
Assistant Director Procurement and Commercial Services	Permanent post holder

Total substantive post holders = 8

Total interim post holders = 4

3-16 TO COUNCILLOR MATLOOB, COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS FROM COUNCILLOR STRUTTON (RECEIVED 15.11.16)

When is Slough Borough Council going issue invitations to tender for transport services, specifically bus services, due to the high volume of complaints from residents about poor service provision?

Reply

I am very aware of the complaints made by residents about recent changes to bus services. The council has been subsidising routes deemed commercially unviable since 2014. I am currently working with officers on our options for the future support of supported buses services. These will not be limited to tendering for services, but also include using De-minimus contracts, and running our own services.

Unfortunately, as you will no doubt be aware as a Conservative member, the government through its Bus Services Bill is seeking to ban local authorities from running local bus services. Given the aim of the Bill is to increase passenger numbers and improve service level it makes little sense that the same Bill is seeking to stop councils like us from giving residents opportunities to access high quality, low cost bus travel which are currently deemed not commercially viable. Publically run bus services have won the service of the year award for 4 out of the last 5 years, so it does seem rather strange the government would seek to stop councils running services given the success they have achieved and popularity with the general public.

De-regulation of our buses services was heralded as a success by the government of the day has led to increased fares (35% rises outside London), declining user numbers and allowed commercial operates to pull routes deemed not commercially viable and leave over stretched local authorities to deal with the consequences. I think you would agree that no option should be taken from us as we seek to improve our local transport network to make Slough a better place to live, work and enjoy.