

# **Questions and Answers**

**Executive  
Thursday, 24th March, 2016**

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**WestBerkshire**  
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# **Executive Meeting**

## **24 March 2016**

Questions and Answers



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# Public Questions as specified in the Council's Procedure Rules of the Constitution

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**(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services by Mrs Martha Vickers:**

*"In the light of the proposed closure of all but the main Newbury Library, what is West Berkshire Council doing to enable communities to keep their Library open?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services answered:**

"We have met initially with those Parish Council's within whose area libraries are currently physically located and will continue to work with them and other parishes and community groups."

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Mrs Martha Vickers asked the following supplementary question:**

*"I would like to ask if you've considered working with volunteers, so directly not just with the parishes, and if so, if you do consider using volunteers to help keep the libraries open, would they be adequately trained by qualified librarians and following this, would they have ongoing support?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services answered:**

"We do actually have a volunteer coordinator working in the library service at the moment who coordinates volunteers for the at home service. We also have volunteer work done in our museum service and the intention is to combine the whole of the voluntary organisation of volunteers within the authority and, yes, people do have an interview process, they do have induction and they do have training. So that would be rolled out and extended to those volunteer organisations if we took more on for the library service."

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**(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions by Mr Simon Clayton (asked by Councillor Lee Dillon):**

*"Would the Council be willing to build a solar farm, funded by selling bonds, to generate additional income which could be used to protect front line services such as our very valuable libraries?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions answered:**

"Solar farms are a long term commitment and at this point in time there are no intentions to explore a Council-led scheme. If, however, the Council is approached with a specific project in mind we're willing to listen."

As for funding any such project with bonds, every time we've looked at this it always seems to be cheaper to borrow from the Public Works Loans Board"

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**(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions by Ms Lilian El-Doufani:**

*"Will the Councillors be looking into whether European monies for regeneration and suchlike are available to West Berkshire Council to help stall or even stop local cuts?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions answered:**

"The Council already receives European money via the LEP (the Local Enterprise Partnership) and seeks further European funding where appropriate. European funding, however, has to be targeted to very specific activities often focused around employment generation. The scale and nature of such funding is merely capital finance and as such it would not be able to mitigate the loss of revenue that we have experienced from the local support grant from the Government.

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Ms Lilian El-Douyfani asked the following supplementary question:**

*"Could that European money not be sought to save some of the jobs that you are currently cutting from your staff?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions answered:**

"Well I think the second part of my answer formally addressed that. Most European monies that we apply for are for capital projects and capital cannot be used to fulfil revenue. "

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**(e) Question submitted to the Leader of Council by Ms Karen Swaffield:**

**Question:**

*"What has the Council done already to consider the ideas put forward through the Save Our Services group and what will it do in the future to engage with the energy generated?"*

**Councillor Graham Jones, the Deputy Leader of Council, answered in the absence of the Leader of Council:**

"The Council wants to engage with all groups, SOS, but also many other groups and I know that many colleagues around the table have been talking to many local based groups about services and particularly with town and parish councils.

To pick up on some of the specific points that have been put forward, and I'll pick a few at random, but I will send you a more comprehensive list, but I don't want to go on for too long.

One suggestion was to use some of the Council's reserves in the short term to maintain services to the most vulnerable. In this particular case there aren't actually any reserves to use. Council is now currently at 5% of its net revenue budget as far as reserves are concerned, so we have no more reserves to touch.

Another one is ask the Government, or persuade the local MP to ask the Government, to do more to help and indeed it is something which we have been lobbying very hard and indeed our local MPs have been working very hard on West Berkshire's behalf and we have secured £1.4m of transitional funding, which we'll obviously be talking about later this evening, but there is a fundamental issue that the financial envelope for the Council has gone down significantly and will continue to do so.

Another one: work with neighbouring authorities on cross border services. That's something we already do. But I think it's something which local authorities want to do more and it's not just working with local authorities, it's working across many other different organisations as well.

Sell gas and electricity to make profits: that's a suggestion and it's one we can consider but we haven't done so to date, but we would require partners to work with there.

I think at that point, rather than go through this list I'll leave it there, but I will find you a full written answer but feel free to ask me a supplementary."

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Ms Karen Swaffield asked the following supplementary question:**

*"I would have hoped that the Council would of convened a meeting of interested parties. There seems to be a lot of energy there and I would of hoped that the Council would of been the instigator of getting people together to look forward rather than to look back. Is that a possibility?"*

**The Deputy Leader of Council answered:**

"I believe it is something which we are doing, but if we can pick up outside the meeting and we can work with you on that. I would be very pleased to do so."

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**(i) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council, to be answered by the Deputy Leader of the Council by Mr Peter Norman:**

*"The announcement of transition relief to keep the majority of libraries open, to revisit some of the rural buses, and provide further support to The Corn Exchange is welcome. However it is noted that this is a temporary reprieve to give communities time to find ways to put these services on a sustainable financial footing without Council funding.*

*In what ways will the Council help appropriate communities to develop a business plan and will that help include things such as:*

- (i) providing library buildings to communities at a peppercorn rent,*
- (ii) provide communications to all West Berkshire residents on behalf of those communities if a call is made to raise additional finance,*

- (iii) *provide assistance with the setting up of a task group, to include community members, in order to consider ways of moving forward?"*

**The Deputy Leader of the Council answered:**

"Obviously as yet we have not formally taken any decisions, but we have been in discussions with Parish Councils, Town Councils and other interested community groups about the support that we might be able to give to those wishing to step in to support local services. Looking in particular, you mentioned libraries at a peppercorn rent. Again we will be holding talks with Town and Parish Councils on that and indeed any other interested community groups, if that is a way of continuing to provide those services, but those talks are something to continue.

You mention providing assistance with the setting up of a task group to include community members as a way of moving forward. Again this relates to the previous question and certainly we can provide plenty of advice to community groups how to set up a task group and we would want to work with people on that. What I think is one of the essential building blocks there are the Town/Parish Councils to establish support and an infrastructure for those particular groups.

Sorry, I did miss one item out. The suggestion was to provide communications to all West Berkshire residents on behalf of those communities if a call is made to raise additional finance. As well as community groups we'd consider, we want to raise awareness of the initiatives for us to do so, so we use a number of channels of communication, including website and social media platforms and certainly want to do that to raise awareness as much as possible. That might be for advice or sharing information for our own channels in deciding how best we could help to consider factors, such as the target audience objectives and the budget and the resources available. "

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Mr Peter Norman asked the following supplementary question:**

*"I notice with regret that the closure of the Wash Common and Theale libraries are to go ahead. Can the Council confirm that before either library is closed they will conduct a needs assessment, and if that still allows the closure to go ahead, would it be possible to look at mothballing these libraries for a limited period of time, maybe three months or something like that, whilst schemes for the other libraries are explored to see whether or not those schemes could be relevant to keeping those two libraries open?"*

**The Deputy Leader of the Council answered:**

"Yes, I can confirm that a needs assessment will be done prior to any closures, but I think we've got to have an ongoing discussion as quickly as possible regarding the future use of those buildings, but if they can be kept we'd like to see them kept as libraries, but this will depend on those discussions."

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**(m) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services by Mrs Antoinette Solera:**

*"Last week it was revealed that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has intervened and that this Council must commission an independent Needs Assessment regarding the*

*proposal to cut the library service. A Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment says the Council will breach it's equality and statutory duty if it proceeds with a major reduction to the Libraries service without due process. However, a press release issued by this Council on 16th March said: 'Libraries will move to a self-service model' and that Theale and Wash Common libraries will close.*

*Will the Portfolio Holder for Community Culture and Leisure tell us why this strategy has been announced prior to the completion of an independent needs assessment, and fully explain the steps she will take to ensure that due process is not abused a second time?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services answered:**

*"The strategy has been announced and the changes will be implemented once the needs assessment is completed and we have considered its content. This is one of the reasons why we have allocated transitional money to libraries.*

*We have listened to the responses to our public consultation and we are now proposing to retain seven libraries and one mobile and we are conducting a needs assessment in order to assist in the detailed configuration of our revised proposals."*

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Mrs Antoinette Solera asked the following supplementary question:**

*"In the public interest will you release the text of the advice from Counsel into the public domain in order that the Council Tax payers of West Berkshire can fully understand why this Council believes that its original proposal to close eight of nine libraries was legal?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services answered:**

*"I don't propose to release that information into the public domain at the moment and I challenge your statement about the legality of what we are doing. We certainly took a risk when we were proposing to operate only one library, but at that time we had no choice. We had just been given notice of a 44% cut in revenue support grant and we had absolutely very little time and room for any movement. We have made all the cuts and savings and efficiencies we could possibly do over the years and we had, in a very very short space of time, to build a balanced budget and we did build a balanced budget which we then put forward to Council which was accepted at the Council meeting at the beginning of March, so I don't accept and will not be doing as you are requesting."*

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**(n) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services by Mr Gary Puffett (asked by Karen Swaffield):**

*"Why was the consultation paper on the future of the library service based on a preferred option namely the closure of 8 out of 9 libraries when the Council had legal advice from the DCMS and Counsel's Opinion that the implementation of such a proposal could be subject to a successful legal challenge?"*



**The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services answered:**

“Proposals for savings had to be put together in a very short timescale, I’ve just covered that. There was insufficient time to fully investigate all aspects of the option. The work that we commenced at that stage included a consideration of practical and legal issues.”

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**(f) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Communications, Democratic & Electoral Services, Finance Assurance, Legal, Human Resources, ICT by Ms Lilian El-Doufani:**

*“Why cannot the Councillors forgo their expenses and pay rises in order to save money that could be spent on saving the libraries from closure?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Communications, Democratic & Electoral Services, Finance Assurance, Legal, Human Resources, ICT answered:**

“As you will know, last year Councillors supported the removal of Councillors from the Local Government Pension Scheme which significantly reduced the long term cost of Councillors to the Authority. However, in making changes such as these the Council is obliged to approach the Independent Remunerations Panel, and this is an independent body made up of officers, local employers, community groups and cross-party members to make recommendations regarding Councillors’ allowances.

The finding of the report was that the removal of the pension programme and the previous allowance was at a level that restricted access to the democratic process. This recommendation was then to increase the basic allowance in the wider context to removing Councillors’ pensions and multiple other allowances, including ICT and printing allowances. All together these changes have reduced the long term cost of Councillors to the Council allowing further funding to go to support services, such as libraries.

I would also like to take this opportunity, if I may, to say that we are still working with Central Government and intend to conduct a boundary review and this will assess the distribution of Councillors across West Berkshire.”

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

**Ms Lilian El-Doufani asked the following supplementary question:**

*“In the context that there have been Local Government officers and other public sector workers to have been told that no rise is appropriate, there may be some who to have been told by independent panels that they are worthy of more but that’s been withheld. Do the Councillors honestly not see the irony; do they not feel any shame to take this at this particular time when there are cuts in force?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Communications, Democratic & Electoral Services, Finance Assurance, Legal, Human Resources, ICT answered:**

"I draw attention to my previous answer. If we look at all of the changes, Councillors haven't had any kind of increase in their basic allowance since 2007 and then the position was to move away from having a pension. To do that, we are legally obliged to call an Independent Remunerations Panel and in that process it is not just politicians, it's local groups, it's Central Government, it's officers and they discuss together what the relevant allowance should be to enable access to the democratic process. So even with the basic allowance increase, if you look at the reduction in other allowances and the removal of the pension, the actual cost of Councillors to the Council is lower. I hope that answers your question."

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**(g) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions by Ms Karen Swaffield:**

*"I understand that the Council is too small to be able to start up, for example, an Energy Company. How and when will the Council look into joining with other small Authorities to make this, and other small company initiatives possible and will it report back to the electorate?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions answered:**

"The size of the Council is a factor but that there are other considerations that also need to be taken into account. The fact that the district is also largely rural can also create issues as it is generally considered that such initiatives such as energy companies have more opportunity for return on investment in large densely populated urban areas.

The Council remains open to investigating any measures which might result in saving money. We have investigated Local Authority Trading Companies and will continue to do so where they are seen to be appropriate as a solution to the issues we need to address."

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Ms Karen Swaffield asked the following supplementary question:**

*"I understand that the Gurkhas in Alton, which is just down the road and a small Council, have successfully run an energy company which has been so successful it has now been pushed out to the rest of the community. Would it not be worth investigating?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions answered:**

"Yes. I didn't know that, so we'll have a look at that. As I said in my answer to the first question, if there are any opportunities, there's no dogma to say 'yes' or 'no' to it. We'll have a look at anything that will help us raise money."

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**(h) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Equality, Community Safety, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Waste, Customer Services by Ms Lilian El-Doufani:**

*"Does the council plan to implement dog-fouling fines, for example or is that a revenue stream to be also discarded and issue to be de-regulated?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Equality, Community Safety, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Waste, Customer Services answered:**

"The Council does use fixed penalty notices as part of the overall approach to enforcement for dog fouling. Dog fouling is considered an enforcement issue by the Council and officers do investigate complaints when they are made. The Council does not, however, see the issue of fixed penalty notices for dog fouling as a way to generate income and I think it would be wrong to do so. They are used only in circumstances that are appropriate and in line with the overall enforcement policy, which includes educating dog owners."

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Ms Lilian El-Doufani asked the following supplementary question:**

*"In the context that Environmental Health are now under some pressure with their budget, I would like to know whether this issue of public health, along with many others, is going to become assigned to the dustbin of history as an unrealistic enforcement issue?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Equality, Community Safety, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Waste, Customer Services answered:**

"We don't have any plans to stop that enforcement or the education around dog fouling."

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**(j) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Emergency Planning by Mr Peter Norman:**

*"Given the extent of local and national budget cuts many residents are puzzled as to why the Council is using public money to finance the new Fleming Road junction on the A339, when private finance was/is available to do the same work. How does the Council justify this?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Emergency Planning answered:**

"There was no private money available at that time to do the work. A planning permission had been granted which if built out would require the Developer to provide an access road. That access road was not sufficient to meet the needs of a fully regenerated estate based on a substantial amount of traffic modelling. If built that junction would create additional congestion on the A339 which we can't afford as it's so important.

In addition there was no guarantee that the permission would ever be built out. Permission was originally granted in December 2014 and no activity has taken place to date.

The regeneration of the London Road Industrial Estate is an important part of the Newbury 2026 Vision. The Local Enterprise Partnership has agreed and has allocated Government money to ensure that it happens and that an effective junction is built with sophisticated computer-controlled traffic lights, providing an effective traffic management solution. I have to say that Newbury Town Council is very happy with the extra connectivity which will be afforded by the scheme."

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Mr Peter Norman asked the following supplementary question:**

*“Is the Council complying with all the relevant planning, highways and public law by commencing works on this junction, before having secured by private agreement, all the land necessary to complete it with the resultant risk of prolonged interference to the highway?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Emergency Planning answered:**

“Yes, it has sought the correct permissions and the approach it’s taking to minimise the duration of the disruption.”

**Mr Norman asked:** *“You don’t have all the land necessary to do the works currently?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Emergency Planning answered:**

“Yes, there’s currently a CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) under process.”

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**(k) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions by Mr Peter Norman:**

*“Given the state of Council finances requiring draconian cuts in public services what is the economic case for giving away Market Street to Grainger for development when independent sources suggest that it could be worth £4m or more on the open market?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions answered:**

“I really appreciate this opportunity in public to kill off the fallacy that the Council gave this land away. I know that this appears from various sources in the press that has been going on for three or four months. It’s a total fallacy. The Council is not giving away the land at Market Street. Grainger, the developer, is funding a replacement bus station and a new multi-storey car park for both the Council and Network Rail. They are also providing the Council with funding to re-provide the temporary housing that is currently provided on site.

The total cost of providing these items alone is in excess of £6m, far above the open market valuation which you quote, £4m, it’s actually £3.94m, which we would have got if we had sold it on the open market. If we had sold it on the open market there was absolutely no guarantee we’d be able to negotiate that we could have a new car park, a replacement bus station, or replacement temporary housing accommodation. That’s the financial side. Don’t forget, it’s not the Council. The Council is simply representatives of the tax payers of West Berkshire and Market Street represents an important regeneration project for Newbury and has been welcomed by the vast majority of the local community.

The emphasis is on providing Newbury with an asset which can then in turn enhance the economic viability of the area from which many will benefit. The scheme will provide a modern 21st century attractive gateway to the town centre and will provide over 200 private rented units alongside more traditional affordable housing. It will also provide employment opportunities and importantly much better links to the town centre.”

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

**Mr Peter Norman asked the following supplementary question:**

*“I appreciate what you’re saying, but given the current financial situation that the Council finds itself in would it not be wise to look at both this and the St. Modwen deal to see whether or not that value could be obtained”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Emergency Planning answered:**

“I don’t think so because, I’ve referred to this many times, the Council does not have a capital funding problem, the Council has got a revenue funding problem. Buying and selling land is capital. I think I’ll just refer back to the fact that on the open market for this we’d have got £3.94m, but we’re already getting at least £6m worth of additional benefit.”

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**(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Education, Property, Broadband by Mr Peter Norman:**

*“Has the Council evaluated the business case for moving the Market Street Council offices to LRIE (London Road Industrial Estate) in terms of reducing maintenance and running costs of the Council offices, and freeing more land to be incorporated into the redevelopment of the southern part of Newbury town centre?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Education, Property, Broadband answered:**

“We looked at this a number of years ago and while new offices would bring environmental and running cost benefits, the cost of construction and the likely receipts from the existing offices made it unviable. The Council’s current financial position makes such a move even less likely in the short to medium term.”

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

**Mr Peter Norman asked the following supplementary question:**

*“Would it be possible to make that evaluation public?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Emergency Planning answered:**

“We can consider that.”

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## Members' Questions as specified in the Council's Procedure Rules of the Constitution

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**(a) Question to be answered by Portfolio Holder for Education, Broadband submitted by Councillor Mollie Lock:**

*"Can the Portfolio Holder for Education assure residents that the Home to School Bus in Mortimer will not be cancelled until all the signage on footpaths and Goring Lane are in place?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Education, Broadband answered:**

"I am pleased to assure you that the additional signage will be in place by the 18 April.

Of course your question suggests that we're cancelling the school bus in Mortimer, which is not actually the case. Along with two other services we studied the consultation responses very closely and many parents said that they would be prepared to pay for seats if they were available. So we listened to those consultation responses and we offered the Fare Payer scheme to all parents affected by the proposals and I'm pleased to tell you that a number of parents have applied for Fare Payer seats on the Mortimer to Willink bus, so there will be a service continuing to run in the new school year."

**Councillor Mollie Lock commented:** *"I understand that those who are paying the £76 something for these two end terms, they have a guaranteed seat, but I understand there is not a guaranteed seat after, but that's not my question."*

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Councillor Mollie Lock asked the following supplementary question:**

*"I do know that some of the signage is already going up in the woodland area. I haven't yet seen any sign of it on Goring Lane, but are you aware that there's going to be cable laying? It's due for the cables to go to AWE Burghfield. There will be traffic directed along Goring Lane, turning right into Hollybush Lane where the children are going to walk after April 18th and this starts about April 21st."*

**The Portfolio Holder for Education, Broadband answered:**

"The cable laying has been going on..."

**Councillor Mollie Lock said:** *"No, this is new – it hasn't started yet."*

**The Portfolio Holder for Education, Broadband answered:**

"The AWE cable laying has been going on in that area of our district for a long time – since last year."

**Councillor Mollie Lock said:** *"I beg your pardon - I'm arguing with you. I live there – I know. I have spoken to Network Rail. Will you please look into it?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Education, Broadband answered:**

“Yes, certainly.”

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**(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon:**

*“How many roundabouts are currently sponsored (both unit numbers and percentage) and how much income does this generate?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions answered:**

“We have 45 roundabouts in West Berkshire of varying degrees of size and attractiveness to sponsors, so we current have 29 that are sponsored. That’s 64%. The total income from this for the current fiscal year will be just short of £45,500.”

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

**Councillor Lee Dillon the following supplementary question:**

*“The detailed working of that sponsorship plan, having spoken to a local business owner – he was approached about sponsoring a roundabout – but then had to call the company back and chase them rather than the other way round. I just wanted to make sure that we’re maximizing our income through following the processes properly and good contract management if its outsourced”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Regeneration, Pensions answered:**

“Yes – we don’t want to miss any opportunities, so if you’ve got details of that just send me an email and I will look into it.”

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**(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Equality, Community Safety, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Waste, Customer Services to be answered by the Portfolio for Adult Social Care, Housing, Culture and Leisure Services submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon:**

*“Can we have an update on how the discussions with Parish Councils about the future of the Neighbourhood Wardens are going?”*

**The Portfolio for Adult Social Care, Housing, Culture and Leisure Services answered (on behalf of Councillor Marcus Franks):**

“All Town and Parish Councils that contribute financially to the Neighbourhood Warden Scheme were invited to a meeting on Monday 22 February 2016.

West Berkshire Council and Sovereign have provided the Town and Parish Councils with information on the budget for the Warden Scheme, including information on TUPE costs and

terms and conditions of the Wardens. The Town and Parish Councils have also been provided with copies of Service Standards and Service Level Agreements.

West Berkshire and Sovereign offered assistance to Town and Parish Councils in convening a meeting to continue discussions which started on 22 March 2016. A meeting of a number of Town and Parish Councils took place on 16 March 2016."

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Councillor Lee Dillon the following supplementary question:**

*"You said there was a meeting on 16 March as well, so what happened on 16 March?"*

**The Portfolio for Adult Social Care, Housing, Culture and Leisure Services answered:**

*"I will get you a written answer."*

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**(d) Question to be answered by Leader of the Council submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon:**

*"Can the Executive Member for Finance confirm how the Care Act funding will be used if we are successful in securing money back from the government?"*

**The Deputy Leader of the Council answered:**

*"As you are aware, the Council has made a significant call on reserves in the current financial year, the big factor in that being the Department of Health not fully funding the new burden placed on us by the Care Act and eligibility criteria imposed through that. We have had to make financial provision to cover for those additional costs within this year's budget which we passed a few weeks ago. Therefore, if we are successful in getting any money back from the government, the money will be set aside for protecting adult social care services."*

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *"Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?"*

**Councillor Lee Dillon the following supplementary question:**

*"The budget has been passed with reserves at a low level and have been signed off by the Section 151 Officer as being deemed to be an acceptable level of risk, so I would ask for the Council to consider if they can split the money from going into protecting Adult Social Services, but also trying to reduce some of the cuts that are being put onto the residents of the district."*

**The Deputy Leader of the Council answered:**

*"We can't spend money twice. As you've acknowledged the reserves are at a minimum level and certainly the advice we've had from the Section 151 Officer is to put that money back into that reserve and the risks that we're carrying."*

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**(e) Question to be answered by Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Equality, Community Safety, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Waste, Customer Services submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon:**

*“Can the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety please give us an update on discussions with partners about the future provision of CCTV in the District.”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, Equality, Community Safety, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Waste, Customer Services answered:**

“West Berkshire Council has facilitated discussions with Newbury Town Centre, but also a meeting was held with all Parish and Town Councils who had CCTV in their areas, myself and relevant officers and Thames Valley Police.

In terms of Newbury Town Centre, early on, as I said, we had a meeting which included the Business Improvement District officers and Business Watch, as well as Thames Valley Police and those planned Newbury Town Centre in an advanced stage providing an alternative service that suits that local need. I am also aware that Hungerford are well down the line in taking on some of their cameras on a recorded basis, but in addition we have continued to provide information on the cameras’ contracts and options to Hungerford, Thatcham and Theale as well as Newbury.

Future funding for CCTV will need to be considered by the individual Parish and Town Councils, but Thames Valley Police have also put forward a limited annual revenue fund that can be applied for and allocated on a scheme by scheme basis.”

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**(f) Question to be answered by the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services submitted by Councillor Lee Dillon:**

*“Does the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Libraries believe that the Council is at risk of failing in its statutory duty if the current Library proposals out to consultation are implemented?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services answered:**

“The Council is fully aware of its statutory obligations and accepts that the proposal we have been forced to make will be unpalatable for many. The Council has had to take a view as to how it can maintain some level of services within this financial situation.”

**The Deputy Leader asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

**Councillor Lee Dillon the following supplementary question:**

*“I think my supplementary is in effect to ask the question again as that didn’t feel like an answer Councillor Cole. My question was quite specific – did you as a Portfolio Holder believe that the Council was at risk of failing in its statutory duty when it put forward the proposals?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Housing, Countryside, Community Culture & Leisure Services answered:**

“I believed that we would work under the financial constraints that we had and therefore the decision to put forward the proposals that we did for the initial consultation were made within those financial constraints. “