

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday, 26th May, 2016

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Executive Meeting

26 May 2016

Questions and Answers



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

(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Emergency Planning by Mrs Martha Vickers:

"How does what is proposed about more adequate consultation with residents effected by new parking schemes square with what has recently been proposed for Leys Gardens, Goldwell Drive and Jesmond Dene in Newbury regarding doing away with a successful residents parking scheme?"

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Emergency Planning answered:

In the majority of circumstances our parking proposals are made in response to a request from residents or as a result of regular obstruction observed by our officers. In the case of Leys Gardens and the adjacent roads (Jesmond Dene and Goldwell Drive) the proposed change has been prompted by the fact that the current parking restriction does not comply with traffic regulations. A change is required so that the restrictions are made legal and the area can again be enforced by our Civil Enforcement Officers.

The residents may consider the permit parking scheme in the Leys Gardens area to be successful, but there is no provision in the Traffic Signs Regulations & General Directions 2016, which came into force on 22 April this year, that allows permit holders to be exempt from yellow line restrictions, hence the need for it to be changed. In this circumstance, as all properties would be directly affected, it was appropriate to distribute an explanatory letter to each household highlighting the reason for the proposed change and where they could obtain further information on the proposal. This letter was sent to all residents on 15 April 2016 and was therefore a measured and adequate consultation. With our current resources following budget savings and for the reasons explained in the Service response to recommendation four of the Scrutiny Review into Car Parking agenda item, it is not always possible or appropriate to consult wider in every location where parking restrictions are to be introduced or changed.

There never will be a one rule fits all solution for consultation on residential parking schemes but we will continue to treat each case on its specific merits.

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?"*

Martha Vickers asked a supplementary question:

"I am a little confused why you sent the letters in the first place if it wasn't considered to be legal, but having consulted with the residents over the changes that were proposed, I would hope that you will be seriously looking at their responses and trying to reach some compromise and not just going ahead with your plan. Can you reassure me that you will be looking at their responses and trying to reach a compromise?"

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Emergency Planning answered:

Yes of course, I just wish to reiterate my response. This traffic order regulation came in for this new financial year, we have had to step forward therefore and look at the situation in the area. We are consulting on it and we will be meeting with residents to debate a couple of options.

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

- (a) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adults, Care and Culture by Councillor Alan Macro:**

Question:

"What is the status with regard to the required branch library needs assessments?"

The Portfolio Holder for Adults, Care and Culture answered:

Red Quadrant Ltd, a company with strong experience in the library sector, have been commissioned to conduct the Needs Assessment. An initial meeting was held on 12th May and the work is expected to take two to three months.

Red Quadrant will examine performance data for all West Berkshire's libraries and demographic data for the district. It is expected that they will meet with some library staff and with representatives of Parish Councils, Friends of Libraries Groups and other appropriate organisations.

You may also be aware that I sent an email updating all Members on Tuesday this week.

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 asked a supplementary question:

"Did you say it was hoped to be able to meet with the Parish Councils and Friends of Libraries Groups?"

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Emergency Planning commented:

I said it is expected and they will. We are having a meeting on the 2nd June with these groups and Red Quadrant will be present there. So that will be the first time they will be meeting these groups and it will break down as the assessment goes on to meeting with interest groups.

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Protection by Councillor Alan Macro:

Question:

“What is West Berkshire Council doing to improve its relationships with parish councils?”

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Protection answered:

West Berkshire Council has a good relationship with its Parish Councils and this was bourn out by the good feedback we received at the District Parish Conference held on 22nd March 2016. That meeting discussed several things including local Devolution and since that event the Chief Executive has written to the Chairman of each Parish and Town Council in West Berkshire inviting them to sit down with this Council to discuss how we might better work with them going forward. A number of meetings have already been arranged.

Whilst the meetings will be used to explore devolution, the opportunity will also be taken to discuss existing working relationships and how these might be further improved. Further discussions are also taking place with Parish Councils as part of the current Ward visits, which I know you have taken up Councillor Dillon, that the Chief Executive is undertaking across the District.

If Members consider that the working relationship with Parish Councils in their Ward needs improving, I would urge them to contact the Chief Executive directly.

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?”*

No supplementary question was asked.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and External Affairs by Councillor Richard Somner:

Question:

“I welcome the news of Building Control Shared Services with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, and Wokingham Borough Council. Given the benefits of sharing Council services, has the Council any other shared service arrangements?”

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and External Affairs answered:

Thank you Councillor Somner. You're right, the Council has a significant number of shared services in place and it's now more so than ever before. They cover a wide range of activities, so in some cases that's Trading Standards and Environmental Health, they also cover entire services and in other areas, some people are a bit more specific such as child care lawyers and Berkshire Equipment Store.

Further examples in the future and what we have at the moment and looking to expand on are the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and the committee service that delivers.

Possibly pre-empting your supplementary, going forward we are looking to add a couple more as well and so we are looking at shared opportunities at various stages and are being explored as time goes on. In particular we are looking at Audit at the moment and what we can share there, and also how we can take advantage of some of the wider relationships that we have at the leadership level and the Chief Executive level going forward.

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?”*

No supplementary question was asked.

(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Emergency Planning by Councillor Jeanette Clifford:

Question:

"I notice in the service response to recommendation (3) of Agenda Item 6 that it was intended to purchase an extra module for the 'Ticketer' smart ticketing system to allow live tracking to identify delay hotspots by the end of April 2016. Can you advise on the progress of this?"

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Emergency Planning answered:

Yes the module was obtained in April and is operational. It enables the bus company and WBC to observe in near to real time the status of it and delays to the local bus services and therefore seek to address customer concerns. It can also be used to interrogate previous bus journeys in order to respond to customer enquiries.

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 Jeanette Clifford asked a supplementary question:

"Yes I do. Car parking is very important to our residents, do you have any concerns following the review into car parking?"

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Emergency Planning answered:

No I am happy that in carrying out its review the OSMC came to the view that overall, in each aspect of the Council involving car parking we managed adequately, in fact my personal view is that we consistently cover the Council's involvement with car parking beyond that and that the service covers all bases as a matter of course. We must not be complacent however and I welcome the recommendations and we will endeavour to make the service better for our customers.

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