

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday 28 July 2016

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Executive Meeting

28 July 2016

Questions and Answers



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

There were no questions submitted by members of the public.

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

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

"How many vehicles have been turned away from the Smallmead waste site in Reading since the re3 consortium stopped West Berkshire residents from using it?"

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Public Protection answered:

As you know it was a disappointment, the current situation for West Berkshire residents to be excluded from the Smallmead site after several months of discussions with re3. As you know at the last Executive, when the paper came forward with our proposals, I said I would write to the Secretary of State because this is a matter beyond the Councils that neighbour us. We are all under budget pressures and I wrote to the Secretary of State asking her to act to stop cross border charging and restrictions.

The number of vehicles that have been turned away include commercial waste carriers and other vehicles types not permitted to use the Smallmead site and residents from other local authority areas. Between the 1st and 15th July, which are the last figures we've got available, 2010 vehicles were turned away from Smallmead.

The Chairman 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 Alan Macro asked the following supplementary question:

"If you remember at the last Executive I asked about publicity for the change and the large number would suggest we haven't done enough to publicise the restriction. Can I ask again that we do a bit more, perhaps by putting the information on bin hangers and do that fairly soon?"

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Public Protection answered:

That's already ongoing. I read out the list of publicity last time including social media, parish councils, information in libraries and working with the Smallmead site in the run up to the ban. I saw the design for the bin hangers for August and that was including promoting what is available and what can be sent to Padworth by residents so it will be on bin hangers ready for the August Bank Holiday collection changes.

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

"How many people have attended the Library Needs Assessment drop-in sessions?"

The Portfolio Holder for Adults, Care and Culture answered:

No count has been taken of the exact numbers, largely because the purpose was to elicit quality information from customers in the communities rather than a race for numbers. Nevertheless the drop-in sessions have attracted large numbers of people and the sessions at most libraries have been extended beyond their allocated time to accommodate the levels of interest. I think I should, with the Leader's indulgence, explain to Executive Members and the Opposition the process following the needs assessment.

A report will be written by RedQuadrant and presented to me and that report will be in the public domain; it will be published on our website. The report will also contain recommendations which will go forward to the Executive and just as we have done now in regard to policies going out for consultation, the request to the Executive will be that the recommendations in the report go out for a further six-week consultation period. Once that consultation period is closed we will look at the outcome of that and the report will then go forward to Council for deliberation and determination.

The Chairman 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 Alan Macro asked the following supplementary question:

“I welcome the fact it will be open to another consultation as I suspect whatever the report says there will be things of public interest in it. One of the reasons for asking this question is that I was at the first drop-in session and they were so busy that there were some people the consultant didn't manage to see. I'm wondering if you're satisfied that everybody that has been able to get there has been consulted, bearing in mind how busy she was at that time and I suspect in subsequent sessions as well.”

The Portfolio Holder for Adults, Care and Culture answered:

I also attended Lambourn Library, Councillor James Cole went to Hungerford and again they were all extremely busy. Interestingly the one that didn't have so much of an input was Newbury library, however you may have noted at Theale there was a generic email address that was handed out to all of the people who attended and it had been provided to members of the community by RedQuadrant as both an alternative to face-to-face attendance at the branch if they couldn't make it for whatever reason or if people who turned up at the drop-in sessions couldn't wait or if there was too long a queue. All bases have been covered by this generic email address and I have understood from RedQuadrant that that email address has been used quite a lot.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Corporate Infrastructure by Councillor Lee Dillon:

“How many primary and secondary schools are forecasting deficit budgets?”

The Leader of the Council, on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Education and Corporate Infrastructure, answered:

Eight maintained schools have forecasted or set a deficit budget for 2016/17. Information is not available for West Berkshire's eight academies. Finance Officers are working with maintained schools who have set a deficit, to develop financial recovery plans.

In 2015/16 six maintained schools ended the financial year with deficits, although the overall position across all of West Berkshire's maintained schools was a small underspend.

The Chairman 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 the following supplementary question:

“I'm happy to hear we have financial recovery plans in place. In terms of the review process of those plans whether they are on track to remove their deficit, how regularly are they reviewed with the schools?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

I will get you a written response to that.

(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Corporate Infrastructure by Councillor Lee Dillon:

“Following the recent inspection of Thatcham Park Church of England Primary School, can the Portfolio Holder outline what support and resources this Council will provide to improve the overall effectiveness rating?”

The Leader of the Council, on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Education and Corporate Infrastructure, answered:

First of all I acknowledge that Thatcham Park Church of England Primary School is in your ward along with Councillor Ellison and I thank you for your interest in schools in your ward; I think it's important that all Councillors are heavily involved with the schools in their ward.

As a school which has two subsequent Requires Improvement (RI) judgements, the school is a designated Support Category CD. This means the school is entitled to up to 20 days additional school improvement support as well as additional governance support and access to a comprehensive local authority training programme for teachers and leaders.

The School Improvement Adviser assigned to Thatcham Park is already working closely with their Leadership Team and Governors on an intensive support programme, aimed at improving three key areas of leadership management training.

I have a two and a half page review of exactly what we will do. Rather than wearing my voice out and taxing the media's shorthand skills, can I suggest that I have your agreement to get Councillor Boeck to write to you and Councillor Ellison to advise exactly what the school improvement activities are that are planned?

The Chairman 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 the following supplementary question:

“No, I was asking the question so that when I am speaking to parents in the Ward we can give them reassurance of what actions the Council are taking.”

(e) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Education and Corporate Infrastructure by Councillor Mollie Lock:

“What percentage and number of children, by school, were offered their first choice of secondary school for this September’s intake?”

The Leader of the Council, on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Education and Corporate Infrastructure, answered:

Thank you for highlighting the success of the first choice of secondary schools for September’s intake.

All of the information requested in detail basis is on the Council’s web page:
www.westberks.gov.uk/admissionsdata

In summary, 91.75% were offered their first choice of secondary schools, with 97.63% being offered one of their preferences.

The Chairman 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 Alan Macro, on behalf of Councillor Mollie Lock, asked the following supplementary question:

“The only thing really is the forecast in primary school admissions over the next few years, do you think we will be able to maintain these percentages?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

Yes I do, we are doing much better than the national average of 81.4% of children being offered their first preference so actually we’ve gone one of the highest in England school preferences take ups. I would like to congratulate the team involved who have done an excellent job. I’m very confident therefore that as primary school admissions increase we will continue to work very hard to at least be the national average.