

Questions and Answers

Council

Thursday, 2nd March, 2017

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Council Meeting

2nd March 2017

Questions and Answers



Public questions submitted in relation to items not included on the agenda

- (a) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport by Mr Nigel Whiston:**

Question:

“Can the Council confirm that the urgently needed Bear Lane roundabout improvements will be implemented in 2017?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport answered: (Written answer)

The A339/Bear Lane Improvement scheme is currently included for construction in the 2017/18 financial year.

The majority of the funding for this scheme is being contributed by Newbury Racecourse via a Section 106 agreement linked to their current development. In accordance with this agreement, this funding will only become available on completion of 527 residential properties which is currently anticipated to occur in late summer 2017. To date 420 units have been completed.

Officers are currently finalising details for this proposed highway improvement and it is intended to publicly consult on the proposals in Spring 2017. Clearly any implementation will be subject to the results of this public consultation.

Therefore, if the Racecourse development makes continued good progress and subject to the results of the public consultation, it is intended to construct this scheme during the 2017/18 financial year.

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and External Affairs by Mr Ian Waters:

Question:

“Can the Council confirm that West Berkshire District Council employs or has in the past employed temporary senior staff and if so what is the average remuneration per person per day (month) engaged in this capacity?”

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and External Affairs answered:

Thank you Mr Waters, I can confirm that West Berkshire does and has in the past employed senior staff on a casual or fixed term contract.

In order to respond to your question I have looked at a snapshot of information at three points in time namely February 2017, same month for 2016 and same month for 2015. The term ‘Senior Staff’ has been interpreted as staff on Grade K or above as this is the definition we use within the Council. Staff on a K Grade would be paid at a casual rate starting at £19.20 an hour. I understand that as part of a freedom of information request you have made you have been provided with a copy of the Council’s Pay Scales but if not I would be happy to resend this to you. Just to confirm casual staff are paid on an hourly rate whilst fixed term staff are paid on the Council’s salary scales.

In February 2015 the Council employed ten casual employees at a senior level who were paid on average £31.37 per hour and one fixed term employee who was paid £30.16 per hour. In February 2016 the Council employed nine casual employees at a senior level who were paid an average of £31.85 per hour. In February 2017 the Council employed seven casual employees at a senior level who were paid an average of £32.96 per hour and one fixed term employee who was paid £21.11 per hour. Just to clarify I can confirm that in 2017 the highest paid casual employee was paid a maximum of £255 per day which is significantly less than the figure of £950 that you mentioned in some of your correspondence with us.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport by Mr Ian Waters:

Question:

“In relation to the proposed £5.7million cycle path scheme to be built linking Newbury with Ascot, can the Council confirm how this scheme will be funded and can we be reassured that none of the costs of construction or maintenance will be borne by West Berkshire residents?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport answered:

Thank you Mr Waters for your question and for drawing attention to this fantastic pan-Berkshire Scheme, its a cycle route starting here in Newbury, linking Theale, Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell and ending at Legoland, and from there you can cycle to Windsor. Who wouldn't want to cycle that route?

We can see it being used for commuters and leisure seekers, taking people out of their cars and onto their bikes, getting fitter, happier and being good for the environment.

Something like this can't happen without investment, but we in West Berkshire are getting a very good deal.

You ask about the £5.7million, where's it coming from? Three quarters of it is coming from the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, the LEP. The partnership of Thames Valley local authorities and businesses, set up to lead economic growth and job creation.

The LEP rates this scheme as good value for money, it helps to deliver infrastructure goals and they have put their money where their mouth is and are paying for most of it.

The remainder is being contributed by the Berkshire Local authorities. Our share in West Berkshire is £100,000, about 2% of the total, but this bill is not going to be picked up by West Berkshire Council Tax payers, it will be covered by Department for Transport money delegated to us.

You're right that the route will have to be maintained but in West Berkshire the route largely follows the A4, so we will be maintaining that anyway. There will be extra lines and signs, but we'll be smart about how we maintain them, we are good at doing this efficiently.

People want to cycle, we want them to cycle, I assume you want to cycle and this route will make that easier and provide great value for West Berkshire.

(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment by Ms Susan Millington:

Question:

“Can you please assure me that there are no plans to introduce charges at the Household Waste Recycling Centre in Newtown Road for disposal of bulky household waste?”

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment answered:

Thank you Ms Millington for your question. There are specific regulations which set out exactly which waste services the Council can and cannot charge for. Although we are legally able to charge for the collection of bulky items we are not permitted to charge for the disposal of bulky items such as furniture or white goods at the Household Waste Recycling Centres.

(e) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment by Ms Susan Millington:

Question:

“Will the Council rigorously pursue fly tippers through the courts?”

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment answered:

Thank you for your question. In order to ensure that we carry out our duties in a fair, equitable and consistent manner the Council has an Enforcement Policy. Each fly tipping case is considered on its own facts. For a decision to whether a fly tipper should be prosecuted, a number of tests have to be met in line with the Code for Crown Prosecutions, which is issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions, under the relevant Act. These tests are evidential tests and the public interest test.

So, it really depends to a large extent on how strong our evidence is that the fly tipping has been instigated by a particular individual or organisation. Then how severe it is and what the likelihood of a successful prosecution would be. If the case doesn't meet those evidential tests and public interest tests then the case may not go to court.

We are very keen that cases do go to court and I am happy to say that we do pursue the investigation of fly tipping and subsequent prosecutions.

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?”*

Ms Millington asked the following supplementary question:

“As fly tipping is increasing, is the Council going to put any further resources into spotting fly tippers in action in order to provide evidence?”

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment answered:

The latest figures for Quarter Three don't show a significant increase in fly tipping and we haven't seen the increase in fly tipping that you refer to.

(f) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport by Mr Matthew Lowe, asked by Ms Susan Millington:

Question:

“After the new link road from Hectors Way to Boundary Road is built, exactly what infrastructure changes are planned for Kings Road and the surrounding roads to ensure that this area of Newbury is no longer used as a rat-run?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport answered:

It's too early to give an exact answer on this, our goal will be to eliminate 'rat-runs' that is important to us.

The current date for the completion of the Sterling Cables development and opening of the Kings Road Link Road is April 2019.

So that gives us some time to think about how we will manage the traffic.

For Kings Road, there'll be consideration given to physical barriers but that will have to go to public consultation and that work still needs to be done in detail.

For Mill Lane, we think at the moment there won't have to be any physical measures because the new route will be more sensible and there is already a weight limit on that road. However, we will be watching, in fact we watch all our roads and if there is a need for measures then they'll be planned.

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

(There were no questions submitted)