

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday 15 June 2017

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Executive Meeting

15 June 2017

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 Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure by Councillor Mollie Lock:**

Question:

"How is the process of decanting the residents of Four Houses Corner progressing?"

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure answered:

Yes, thank you Councillor Lock for your question.

The Decant Policy is progressing well and is following the adopted Decant Policy process. I am unable to talk about individual households but can assure you that a personalised approach is being taken to try and meet the needs of each household, as set out in the Decant Policy.

The decant will take a number of months to complete and will be carried out in as sensitive a way as possible, having regards to the needs of the households and the Council's need to progress the project without undue delay.

It is the intention that residents will have the opportunity to return to the site once the refurbishment is complete.

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 Mollie Lock asked the following supplementary question:

"Yes, I understand, I am not talking about individuals, but some residents are going to actually meet with Housing on the 26th because they want their voice heard. Is that correct?"

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure answered:

If you say they are meeting on the 26th, I have not been told this, but yes I would expect they will be. As I've said we are meeting with the households on a regular basis and we are taking into account the availability of the accommodation within the district and trying to meet the preferences of those people who are being decanted on the site as far as we can.

One household has already been decanted, one household has chosen to leave voluntarily and further households are due to be decanted in the next couple of weeks and only two of the households on the site have yet to complete the decant form.

(b) Question submitted to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure by Councillor Mollie Lock:

Question:

“What is the procedure for the residents of Four Houses Corner who own their homes?”

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure answered:

I would refer you, Councillor Lock, to the Decant Policy which was adopted on 20th October 2016 by Executive and sets out the procedure for decanting tenants or licensees when major works or redevelopment of their home is required. The Policy was published for consultation prior to adoption, including consultation with all tenants or licensees who could be directly impacted.

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 Mollie Lock asked the following supplementary question:

“What will the procedure be for residents of Four Houses Corner who own their own houses. Will the Council help in storage and restoring them back to the site because not all of them rent. I believe there are seven people who actually own their own mobile homes and they are very concerned. Will they have to get their mobile homes off the site, or will the Council get them off the site and store them for the twelve to seventeen months that they are likely to be away?”

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure answered:

Well Councillor Lock, we believe that there are only two of the fifteen houses on the site to whom ownership rather than rent may apply. The Decant Policy, have you read the Decant Policy?

Councillor Mollie Lock commented:

Yes I have.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure continued:

So you know that it does allow for discretion to be exercised into paid storage for touring caravans for residents of Council managed gypsy and traveller sites while temporarily decanted. The residents will be responsible for ensuring that they have the appropriate insurance cover to limit any damage, theft or losses arising from the storage and the payment will be made directly to the storage company.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People by Councillor Mollie Lock:

Question:

“What arrangements are in place so that the children of Four Houses Corner can continue in their current place of education?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People answered:

As previously outlined, the Council is following the adopted Decant Policy, and I am unable to talk about individual households but can assure you that a personalised approach is taking place and one of those considerations within that approach would certainly be schooling.

As far as possible, we will seek to enable children to continue in their current school but this will be dependent upon a range of factors, including the needs of the wider family and their wishes, availability of school places close to the temporary addresses, and whether the child is in a key year of schooling, for example if they are about to do their GCSE's or exams.

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 Mollie Lock asked the following supplementary question:

“I understood at the beginning that they were being offered free to home to school transport?, I know one family has four children, in year one, year three, year five and year nine.”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People answered:

The Decant Policy grants discretion to pay for the home to school transport in order to minimise disruption to the education of children who are temporarily decanted. The payment will be made direct to the travel provider, such decisions will depend upon the length of the decant, availability of school places in schools close to the temporary address and other key factors.

(d) Question submitted to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Leisure by Councillor Alan Macro:

Question:

“How much Section 106 for off site affordable housing has not yet been allocated?”

The Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience and Partnerships answered:

Yes, thank you Councillor Macro.

There is currently £1,942,337 in S106 monies held for affordable housing. 74% of the held monies have been allocated in principal, to named schemes. Which leaves 26% unallocated, which equates to £507,485.

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:

“Given that we have fallen behind our target for building affordable homes. What is being done to use that £500,000 to provide some more affordable homes to help with that target and to help the people and families who really need it?”

The Portfolio Holder for Community Resilience and Partnerships answered:

Thank you, as you know Councillor Macro, we are constantly looking for affordable home opportunities and we have one scheme at Bath Road in Calcot, which has been allocated £530,000 but we feel that we may need to allocate more money which will reduce some of the balance.

But we aim, as you know with affordable housing, to accumulate Section 106 contributions into a pot for affordable housing so that when we have a significant sum of money we are then able to purchase or find more affordable housing accommodation.

But we have had some very good success stories. In particular in the centre of Newbury, the Mabel Luke charity has benefited from Section 106 contributions which will make replacement housing (eleven flats) in place of the outdated accommodation that was on the site in Mill Lane.

So we are using the money sensibly and we are always looking for opportunities for affordable homes.

(e) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment by Councillor Alan Macro:

Question:

“How many volunteers have been recruited to help man public libraries this year?”

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment answered:

Thank you for your question Councillor, I am happy to say that we have recruited 95 new volunteers.

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:

“Are those 95 equally spread across the libraries or do we have particular ‘not-spots’, do we have some libraries where we are have difficulty recruiting?”

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment answered:

I would say they are not spread uniformly across the libraries; obviously some have more than others. We are continuing to recruit volunteers though Councillor, and you may know the Council has appointed an individual, a specific volunteer coordinator, to work with the communities, parishes and local library groups. So we are continuing to recruit.

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