

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday 29 March 2018

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Executive Meeting

29 March 2018

Questions and Answers



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

(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment by Mr Simon Bowes:

“Why can't we recycle plastic food tubs, flora tubs etc? In W Berks we can only recycle plastic bottles which is a fraction of household plastics?”.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment answered:

You made reference to plastic bottles being a fraction of household plastics but actually two thirds of collections are plastic bottles.

We work continually with Veolia, our waste contractor to collect more materials for recycling. The type of recyclable materials that any local authority can collect is determined by the demand from within the reprocessing industry. Currently within the UK there is very little demand from reprocessors for plastic tubs and trays, as such we are not able to guarantee that if collected we would be able to send such items for recycling.

The lack of demand from reprocessors has recently been amplified by China increasing quality controls for the recycling that it accepts, as China has long been the biggest single market for secondary plastic exported from the UK. The impact of the change in quality controls has put the UK recycling industry under huge pressure and the impact of this change is still being assessed but ultimately could see local authorities reducing collections because they are no longer economically viable.

We will not collect materials for recycling unless we can guarantee that it will be recycled. So we ask that that all non-bottle shaped plastic is disposed of with the general rubbish. Any plastic disposed of in the black bins will be sent to an Energy from Waste Facility where it will be turned into power for the National Grid, so it isn't completely wasted.

We are also working with industry groups such as Waste and Resources Action Programme, the National Association of Waste Disposal Officers and the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee to find ways to increase the amount of waste we can collect as recycling and to encourage manufactures to make it easier for products to be recycled.

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?”*

Mr Simon Bowes asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you for your answer/ 76% of unitary authorities do collect other household plastics, China notwithstanding. In Sweden they collect and recycle 100% of household plastic. How do I go forward with this beyond the Council? Should I write to the MP about building our own recycling plants?”.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Environment answered:

I can't advise whether you should write to your MP but in my experience they are especially responsive. As I have said, as an authority we are working hard to extend the scope of our recycling capacity.

(b) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Mr Tony Vickers:

"Will the Leader accept some responsibility lies with his Party for allowing Nick Goodes to take some £20,000 of local taxpayers' money during his three years of so-called representation of Thatcham West residents, which belatedly has led to his disqualification".

The Leader of the Council answered:

Thank you for your question. I observe that on the opposition benches Councillor Dillon is by himself yet again.

The parameters you define can be a very misleading measure and is being used hypocritically by the Lib Dems in the Thatcham West by election.

Why do I say this?

The deputy leader of the Lib Dems is absent again tonight – he has not attended a meeting since 20/12/2017! Previously he missed attending any meetings from 16/12/16 through to 2/5/17, almost five months. I believe he was on an extended holiday. That he, if elected, was going to be absent for almost half the year was not mentioned in his election campaign in 2015! His latest absence is at a critical time when he, as local member, could have been helping secure the much needed new Theale school – as it is Councillors Doherty and Boeck, Alok Sharma MP, myself and others have had to fill in during his absence.

So don't worry. We have done Councillor Macro's job for him and no doubt he will be back before the six month rule cuts in.

Turning to Thatcham West, Nick Goodes was elected with the best of intentions but his work ultimately stopped him being able to attend meetings in the manner that was required. Circumstances change and he needed to prioritise his work, which often takes him overseas, as well as his family, ahead of the Council. In his absence, Thatcham West has been ably represented by Nick Goodes' co-ward member, Steve Ardagh-Walter, so constituents have not suffered, as they have in Theale.

It is quite right that people in Thatcham West will expect their new member to attend council meetings on their behalf. Which is why we have selected Ellen Crumly as our candidate. Her attendance record at Thatcham Town Council is exemplary. Interestingly, the Lib Dems are fielding a candidate with an abysmal attendance record at Thatcham Town Council. In 16/17, your candidate's attendance record was 25% and in 2018 he has only attended 16% of meetings. Why did the Lib Dems select someone with such an appalling record of attendance then seek to make meeting attendance a central issue of the campaign?

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?"*

Mr Tony Vickers asked the following supplementary question:

“You didn’t actually answer my question. I would say yes you do have the blame for causing a by election. Are you seriously saying that no one in your group, your full time support officer or the Democratic Services Team, were able to spot that his absence went over six months and he was liable for disqualification? Are you saying that you are so incompetent?”.

The Leader of the Council answered:

To quote some comments shared by someone on Facebook “There is more to being a Councillor than attending meetings...”. Meetings are just the tip of the iceberg.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Mrs Martha Vickers:

“Council the Council consider letting rough sleepers use the staff showers on the ground floor of the Market Street Offices at a time when they are not needed by the staff?”.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:

We do acknowledge the need for rough sleepers to have access to showers which is why we have a contract with Two Saints to provide those facilities. There would be a resource implication to using the Market Street showers because they are in a designated secure area. Newbury Town Council could consider providing showers in the Wharf, which is already open to the public.

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?”*

Mrs Vickers asked the following supplementary question:

“I have already approached Newbury Town Council but it would be some way off and we would need to cost it. Thank you for considering it. Do you accept that it’s important for health and wellbeing, and self esteem? Would you agree that the current provision is not sufficient or convenient? People are required to book, not everyone had credit on their phones. Two Saints prefer you to book through their outreach worker but they have had their hours cut”.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:

I wouldn’t agree, there is a good uptake and yes people can book. It doesn’t prevent people walking up if they need to.
