

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday 15 October 2020

West Berkshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Moira Fraser on telephone (01635) 519045.



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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

Item (g)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(g) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Stuart Gourley:

“Can the portfolio holder for children, young people and education assure me that there is enough PPE in our schools for pupils that they need not purchase individual masks from schools?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (l)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(l) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Alan Pearce:

“Please would the council say what is the make and model number of the devices installed in the drainage system to attenuate the flow and stop the urban runoff flowing into the Thames water surface water sewer, when constructing the new A339 Road junction into the London Road Industrial Estate?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>



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

Item (o)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(o) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Vaughan Miller:

“Can the council provide the projected total costs of closure of Faraday Road Football Ground?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (p)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(p) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Peter Gower:

“What is the number of households currently threatened with homelessness and eligible for assessment and a personalised housing plan as required under the Homelessness Reduction Act?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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

Item (m)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(m) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Alan Pearce:

“Please would the council say what are the preset flow rates or if adjustable units have been used are set to for the devices installed to attenuate the flow and stop the urban runoff flowing into the Thames water surface water sewer, when constructing the drainage system for the new A339 Road junction into the London Road Industrial Estate?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (q)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(q) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Peter Gower:

“How many employees at the Council (expressed as full time equivalent employees) are currently working with a household threatened with homelessness?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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

Item (n)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(n) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Alan Pearce:

"Please would the council say who was the author and what qualifications they have for the Flood Risk Assessment A339/ London Road Industrial Estate Access, Newbury. (FRA) for the new A339 Road junction into the London Road Industrial Estate?"

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (a)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Ian Hall:

"What is the estimated cost of CPOs on the LRIE?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

The Council is currently not considering CPO.

The cost of CPO would include compensation and the market value of the asset being acquired by compulsory purchase. It is therefore not possible to make any reasonable cost assumptions at this stage. It is also too early to be considering this cost liability when any CPO action, which is the option of absolute last resort, is several years away. CPO action can only be contemplated when all negotiations are exhausted, the land in question has a consent on it and proposals demonstrate clear public, social and economic benefit and where such benefits wholly outweigh the loss of existing uses being removed.

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

Item (b)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Ian Hall:

“Do you know how many jobs will be affected by the closure of businesses if the LRIE project goes ahead?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

The LRIE is protected employment land and where the planning process will require development proposals to maintain or improve upon existing job numbers and opportunities and this in the context of a development which will need to deliver residential.

The Council will do what it reasonably can to help relocate any businesses that wish or need to relocate from LRIE.

Item (c)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Ian Hall:

“Do WBC have plans to extend the scope of the LRIE project to adjoining properties by means of CPO?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

No.

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

Item (d)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Ian Hall:

“Was there a non-fulfillment clause with St Modwen?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

The Development Agreement entered into by West Berkshire Council and St Modwen was Conditional and there was no obligation on St Modwen's part to build out any element of development where proposals were no longer economically viable.

Item (e)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(e) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by John Gotelee:

“Why was infrastructure and utilities left out of the Avison Young brief?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

The cost of detailed surveys covering utilities, ground and general site conditions would be equal to or exceed the cost of the development brief itself. The first thing the Council needs to understand as a landowner is whether any redevelopment can be viably delivered within the circumstances of market forces and current planning policy. Once that is positively confirmed the Council can consider as a next step the commissioning of general site surveys. The cost burden of those surveys, possibly born by a development partner, would serve no purpose if market conditions and planning policy alone prevented viable redevelopment.

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

Item (f)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(f) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by John Gotelee:

“If the piecemeal option for development of LRIE is chosen how much land will be put aside for future need of infrastructure (SUDS sewage water roads etc) as plots become available?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

For larger sites, such as LRIE, where the development is completed in phases, a strategic surface water management system is developed at the master planning stage that allows for different parts of the site to be developed at different times, whilst ensuring that each of the design criteria can continue to be met.

The strategic system for the LRIE will be designed to manage flows from the final development site, and specific conditions set for each development plot so that the overall design is not invalidated.

The final adoption and future maintenance arrangements are also to be carefully considered at this stage.

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

Item (h)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(h) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Ian Hall:

“Can the council do an on-line video showing WBC’s waste recycling and where the waste products go?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment provided the following written response:

Thank you for your helpful suggestion. The Council is currently working on additional waste and recycling communication materials and we will use your feedback to improve some of our future education campaigns.

In the meantime, we have attached an illustrative diagram which shows where the various materials currently collected in West Berkshire are sent for either recycling or treatment/disposal. The Council and its waste contractor make every reasonable effort to ensure that the recyclable materials collected from households are recycled within the UK.

Please continue to monitor the Council's social media channels and [subscribe](#) to our Waste and Recycling e-newsletter for regular updates about our latest recycling and waste minimisation initiatives.

Thanks again for your interest in achieving greater environmental stewardship within West Berkshire.

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

Item (i)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(i) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Ian Hall:

“Why are clear transparent plastics (clean) which are marked non-recyclable not recycled?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment provided the following written response:

Thank you for your query and for sharing the photograph of the plastic containers with us.

If the plastics are marked as non-recyclable then it usually means that the technology for sorting and recycling them at a reasonable cost is not widely available. Some plastics are also of a lower quality or may have been manufactured with additives which means they can contaminate target plastic materials. Whilst the different types of plastics shown in your photograph may look very similar, it is not possible to conclusively determine their recyclability from a picture.

The Council's current approach is driven by a determination to collect only plastic materials for which we have proven recycling outlets and markets. This lowers the risk of materials collected for recycling subsequently being shipped overseas to countries with inadequate recycling infrastructure and sub-optimal regulatory standards. More often than not, it is lower quality plastic materials with limited market demand that gets exported and may result in pollution of the natural environment and the oceans.

We continue to provide our residents with more opportunities to recycle a wider range of materials locally. For example, we have recently upgraded our [mini-recycling centres](#) to add new banks for drinks cartons and small waste electronic equipment. This is in addition to the range of materials we currently collect at the kerbside and our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). We will continue to keep the situation under active review and should the opportunity arise, we will provide a collection solution for other plastic waste materials not currently collected at the kerbside.

Thanks again for your interest in achieving better recycling within West Berkshire.

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

Item (j)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(j) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Ian Hall:

“Does the press release appearing on Newbury Today, relating to the public engagement session on the London Road Industrial Estate, indicate that the council have pre-determined their mind, contrary to the Localism Act?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

No it does not.

Current consultation is informal and not related to any planning action. This consultation is an opportunity for the Council as a landowner to inform the public of what it has been advised might be economically delivered on the LRIE and in the context of market forces and current planning policy. As a result public engagement will allow people to hear and question what Avison Young (AY) have said and where proposals have been put forward by AY and to a landowner who has given no guidance to consultants as to what it wants delivered. Any future planning application will only be submitted after formal public consultation.

Item (k)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(k) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Ian Hall:

“Given the statement by Cllr Rick Jones in the NWN of 20th February of the shortage of playing fields why does the council think building flats in a flood plain is a good idea?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

Use of the old football ground for appropriate redevelopment is integral to the LRIE regeneration project and where re-provision measures elsewhere are supported by Sport England. Flood zone land can achieve consent for residential development. Such consent may be granted if, amongst other factors, the Environment Agency are fully satisfied that flood mitigation measures are appropriate and fully detailed out at design stage.

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

Item (r)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(r) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by John Gotelee:

“Given the lack of experience and qualifications in planning and housing of the portfolio holder plus the complexity of regenerating the LRIE does the executive feel that the portfolio holder is the best person for the job?”

The Leader of the Council provided the following written response:

Your question is strikingly similar to the question you asked of the portfolio holder at last month's Executive. I trust you saw the written answer that was provided, however, for the avoidance of doubt I shall repeat part.

“Executive Members are not required to hold any professional qualification in the area of their Portfolio responsibility.

The role of a Portfolio Holder is political and strategic and it is their responsibility to ensure that the Council's strategy is exercised conscientiously to achieve its aims. All Portfolio Holders understand the function of the service to which they are assigned, and importantly recognise the separation between politics and proper administration.”

Elected members are democratically voted for by their residents for the representation they will deliver to their community. Indeed qualifications of any sort are not a prerequisite of anyone standing for public office.

The reply then went on to say:

“It is the role of the professional officers to conduct the day to day business of the Council. These officers have certain delegated decision making powers where it comes to applying the regulations and policy.”

Furthermore I would add that the Council engages the services of specialist consultants where the nature of the project so requires. It is the role of these officers and consultants to have the necessary experience and qualifications in the subject matter.

In the development of the London Road Industrial Estate there will be many overlaps between portfolios covering the complexities and interdependence of finance, planning, infrastructure, environment, business development to name a but a few. The Executive (whomever it comprises) will work jointly on this project in the years to come guided by those qualified and experienced officers and consultants for the vision of regeneration for West Berkshire.

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

Item (s)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(s) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Paul Morgan:

“Can the Council provide an explanation why the land use class definition of “Sui Generis” has been applied to the Newbury Football Ground (Faraday Road) in the recently published Avison Young London Road Industrial Estate: Development Brief Newbury, West Berkshire draft report rather than “Use Class F2 – Local community?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

The F2 Use Class was only recently brought into effect 1st September 2020 as part of updates to the Use Classes Order. Avison Young will review the stated Sui Generis use class designation prior to issuing the final development brief and update as necessary.

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

Item (a)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Leader of the Council by Councillor Dennis Benneyworth:

“Can the Leader please provide assurance that with the ending of the furlough scheme, and possibility of greater redundancies to come as a result, that the Council is ready to support those in economic hardship?”

The Portfolio Holder for Leader of the Council provided the following written response:

The Council has a range of schemes in place to support those in economic hardship across the district. The Council has already provided a reduction of up to £150 to over 1,400 working age individuals and households and the Council is looking to increase this amount to up to £250. The Council has also created an exceptional hardship fund of £50k to alleviate some Council Tax pressures. The Council has provided funding into the emergency food grant which is subject to another question on the Executive agenda.

The Council is acting as a Kickstart gateway in order to address youth unemployment. We are working with local businesses to create fully-funded 6 month job placements that will provide wraparound employability support for young people. We aim to facilitate at least 30 of these roles locally, but will push to create as many as possible. We also aim to ring-fence the admin funding we will receive from DWP for these roles to provide any support necessary for the young people to complete their placements. We are also setting up the Community Apprenticeship Levy to provide full funding for apprenticeship training costs for our SME's, which we hope will reduce a barrier for apprenticeship creation.

There is also support through the Local Enterprise Partnership (Thames Valley LEP) where the Regional Redeployment Service set up as a response to Covid-19 is working in Berkshire to help people segue from redundancy to employment in growing industries: <http://www.adviza.org.uk/services/national-careers-service/regional-redeployment-service>

West Berkshire businesses who need advice or support are able to access the Berkshire Business Growth Hub. Our membership means West Berkshire businesses can access their expertise at no cost, and they also have some grants and financial support available. <https://www.berkshirebusinesshub.co.uk/>

Finally, the government's Job Support Scheme will run from the 1st of November for 6 months. It will allow employers to place viable employees on reduced working hours, but with a wage top up from government so that the employee earns at least 77% of

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

their normal wage – while working only 1/3rd of their normal hours. These employments will then also be eligible for the job retention bonus next year.

For self-employed people the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme has been extended to cover November until April 2021. Eligible people will be able to apply for a grant of 20% of average monthly trading profits for the period, paid in 2 installments.

Item (b)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance by Councillor Tom Marino:

“Will West Berkshire Council be signing up to the government’s £2bn Kickstart scheme to help young people between the ages of 16 – 24 on Universal credit into the work place?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (c)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Peter Argyle:

“What is the Council’s role in helping young people in to employment?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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

Item (d)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture by Councillor Rick Jones:

“Why is the Culture Strategy and the Leisure Strategy, which is also due out shortly for consultation, being developed in the midst of Covid-19?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (e)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(e) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Leader of the Council by Councillor Garth Simpson:

“What provision is still in place in the district, after the ending of government food parcels, for those in our communities who are in clinical need of further support or experiencing food poverty?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (j)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(j) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Phil Barnett:

“In view of recent animal injuries along Burys Bank road, can the Executive member for Highways and the Environment identify what measures are proposed to ensure the animals on Greenham Common are safe from vehicles along the perimeter roads?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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

Item (k)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(k) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Councillor Carolyne Culver:

“Does the Executive support the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (l)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(l) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Steve Masters:

“Does the portfolio holder agree that we should reject approaches by private security companies to be covid wardens on the streets of West Berkshire?”

The Leader of the Council provided the following written response:

The Council has had guidance from Government on the implementation of Covid Marshals/Wardens/Ambassadors Scheme. That guidance is very clear that it is down to each local area to decide the best use of the additional funding to meet the needs of their area. The Council therefore has no plans to employ private security companies at this stage.

The Council has considered the most appropriate means of carrying out the function, mindful of what is required, and has decided that it will look to extend its current offer through our Public Protection Partnership to give out the guidance and advice to our businesses and organisations to enable them to apply appropriate Covid guidance in their settings.

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

Item (m)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(m) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Leader of the Council by Councillor David Marsh:

"In what ways do businesses in Newbury town centre benefit from "people driving past their shops and restaurants"?"

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (q)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(q) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care/Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Lee Dillon:

"What steps has WBC taken to ensure the impact of the withdrawal of services for clients and their carers (introduced in the March Coronavirus Act) has been understood and mitigated against?"

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (r)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(r) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture by Councillor Alan Macro:

"Following the Council's commitment to a local mental health concordat, what actions will it be taking with its partners to protect the mental health and wellbeing of its health and social care staff?"

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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

Item (t)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(t) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Councillor Adrian Abbs:

“What can be done to ensure that we don’t see other developers follow the precedent set by Newbury Racecourse and North Newbury and Sandford Park building out large housing schemes with their ‘local centre’ delivered long after almost homes are occupied?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (x)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(x) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Erik Pattenden:

“What support are children in West Berkshire getting if self-isolating at home?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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

Item (f)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(f) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Dennis Benneyworth:

“Can the Leader advise what preparation the Council has made in order to deliver the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment announced by the Government as part of the more recent response measures to Covid-19?”

The Leader of the Council provided the following written response:

The Council has made good preparations in the delivery of the £500 support payment announced as part of the Covid-19 response measures. The Council had a deadline of the 12th October for the application scheme. West Berkshire Council launched this scheme on the 6th October for residents to start their application process with the Council commencing the processing of applications from the 9th October once the Government has put in place data sharing arrangements for the Council to begin processing claims. The Council expects to pay successful claims within 3 working days of a fully completed application being received.

Item (g)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(g) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Councillor Tom Marino:

“Can the portfolio holder advise how its commercial property portfolio has been performing over the sixth months or so since the Covid pandemic emerged?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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

Item (h)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(h) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Peter Argyle:

“Can the portfolio holder tell us how the Council is supporting young unaccompanied asylum seekers?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (i)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(i) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture by Councillor Rick Jones:

“What reassurance can the portfolio holder give following recent shortages in Covid testing capacity in the district that this provision for West Berkshire residents will be restored?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (n)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(n) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor David Marsh:

“The council’s Speed Limit Review on 9 October 2019 (more than a year ago) agreed to reduce the speed limit along Andover Road, between Gorselands and Conifer Crest, from 40mph to 30mph. How much longer will it be before this is put into effect?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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Item (s)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(s) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Councillor Lee Dillon:

“Will this Council be submitting a response to the Government consultation paper on Transparency and Competition (a call for evidence on data on land control)?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (u)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(u) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Alan Macro:

“How does the Council propose to ensure that the proposal to create wildflower verges on our rural roads doesn't threaten the safety of pedestrians and horse-riders who often need to use verges to avoid traffic?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

Item (z)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(z) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Councillor Adrian Abbs:

“What additional solar capacity has been installed by the council since declaring a climate emergency that was not already planned?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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Item (y)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(y) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Erik Pattenden:

“Can the executive please tell us how many early years providers in West Berkshire are at risk of closure due to financial difficulties?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education provided the following written response:

The current funding arrangements ensure that all providers are being paid at least the same as they were at this time last year. Where a provider has more children claiming entitlement hours than in the previous year they are being given a “top up” to cover these additional hours. Thus protecting them during the autumn term round of funding. This alongside the furlough scheme is protecting providers at this time. So there is no clear picture currently of the impact that the ending of the furlough scheme and the change back to funding being based on actual hours is likely to have.

Item (o)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(o) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor David Marsh:

“The 24-hour traffic-free zone in parts of Newbury town centre was introduced to “support the local economy”, to “support outdoor eating space”, and to “allow social distancing in a safe, traffic-free environment”. Which of these targets have been achieved?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside provided the following written response:

My comment on this would be that all of these were facilitated during lockdown and the summer period when non-essential retail and hospitality businesses first re-opened.

In terms of safe social distancing, we introduced temporary pedestrianisation when shops were still significantly limiting capacity and regularly had queues outside. Providing extra space for queuing was very effective and contributed to enhanced confidence among our residents when using essential businesses.

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As an Authority, alongside our partners in the town centre including Newbury Town Council and Newbury BID, we have been meeting fortnightly to review the situation, particularly on Northbrook Street. We have observed that the queuing and capacity issues experienced earlier in the year have subsided and that additional pavement space is no longer regularly required for this purpose. New guidance around mask wearing has also led to increased capacity in many stores, which may have also had an impact on this.

In terms of outdoor seating, many pavement café licences have been applied for and issued. Details of this can be found on our website under the Roads section.

here:

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/article/37376>

The licences are valid for a year and have been assessed against stringent road safety criteria, with many of them allowing furniture to be out even before 10 am and after 5pm when cars are passing. They will also run into next year when the weather is once again conducive to sitting outside to eat and drink.

Item (v)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(v) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Alan Macro:

“What does the executive think about covid marshals?”

The Leader of the Council provided the following written response:

The Council has had guidance from Government on the implementation of Covid Marshals/Wardens/Ambassadors Scheme. That guidance is very clear that it is down to each local area to decide the best use of the additional funding to meet the needs of their area. The Council therefore has no plans to employ private security companies at this stage.

The Council has considered the most appropriate means of carrying out the function, mindful of what is required, and has decided that it will look to extend its current offer through our Public Protection Partnership to give out the guidance and advice to our businesses and organisations to enable them to apply appropriate Covid guidance in their settings.

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

Item (p)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(p) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor David Marsh:

"If the Transport Advisory Group at its meeting this month recommends reintroducing the 24-hour traffic-free zone in parts of Newbury town centre, will this be put into effect as a matter of urgency, bearing in mind the continuing and indeed escalating Covid-19 crisis?"

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside provided the following written response:

The Transport and Advisory Group exists to inform the portfolio holder, and so I will most certainly take on board the advice from the Transport Advisory Group. Decisions can only be taken when the decision maker is in possession of all the relevant information, until such a time it would not be appropriate to speculate about what decision will be made, or to enter into debate which will be held under part 2 conditions.

However to remind for absolute clarity and the avoidance of doubt - any changes to the pedestrianised timing can only be introduced temporarily for safety reasons, as they were previously. Any permanent changes would require full consultation and a Decision by the Executive.

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

Item (w)	Executive Meeting on 15/10/2020
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(w) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care by Councillor Alan Macro:

“How did the Council allow Walnut Close care home to deteriorate to such an extent that 20% of the rooms are unusable and it now faces closure?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care provided the following written response:

Thanks for the question, but I reject the premise contained in it.

It is simply untrue that we have somehow *allowed* this care home to deteriorate and, whilst the debate about closing Walnut Close has everything to do with occupancy, it has nothing to do with these rooms not being currently in use – we would be having that debate even if every bedroom in the care home was available for use.

At present seven of the bedrooms at Walnut Close are not in use – six (so 17.14% not 20%) because they would need refurbishment and one because it has no equipment (because it isn't occupied), but a further 11 rooms are not in use because there are no residents to occupy them.

At the outset of the pandemic only one room was out of action – and that was because it had been damaged by some external removal personnel and needed repair. The other five rooms that subsequently needed refurbishment are out of action due to a water leak in a corridor that happened in the midst of the pandemic.

Even more to the point, all six of the rooms that require refurbishment are in a refurbishment plan, along with all of the rooms in the care home, for which there is budget set aside – the reason the work hasn't been done isn't because we had no plans or funds to do it – it was initially Covid and the impossibility of allowing workpeople on site, but subsequently the fact that we had all the accommodation needed without them. At present we have 17 residents in Walnut Close, so 18 of the rooms aren't in use – not just the six that needed work doing or the one that needed equipment installed.

Walnut Close doesn't face closure because seven rooms are out of action. It faces closure because we can accommodate the current residents with far greater dignity and in better surroundings, with ensuite bathrooms, in a care home less than two miles away.

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