

Executive Meeting

19 June 2014

Questions and Answers



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

There were no public questions submitted in relation to items that were not included on the agenda.

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

(a) **Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations), Emergency Planning, Newbury Vision by Councillor Keith Woodhams:**

“Can the Executive Member for Highways and Transport update me on what is causing the delay in dealing with the repeated flooding at the eastern corner of the pedestrian crossing, between the Post Office and Kennet Centre Shopping Centre in Newbury please?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations), Emergency Planning, Newbury Vision answered:

The flooding outside the Post Office which temporarily occurs after heavy rainfall is due to a broken pipe in the middle of the road below the pedestrian crossing.

In order to minimise the inconvenience to highway users, Officers are planning to repair the drainage when Bear Lane, including the junction with Cheap Street and the Market Place, is resurfaced later in the summer. I expect that to be in September and hopefully night working will further minimise the inconvenience.

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 Keith Woodhams asked the following supplementary question:

“What message do you have for the elderly, disabled and parents with young children who have been facing a flooded pedestrian crossing every time it rains year after year because really you just have not taken any action?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations), Emergency Planning, Newbury Vision answered:

I can't answer historically. I am telling you what we are planning to do now and the problem has been identified as a broken pipe.

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Strategy & Performance, Housing, ICT & Corporate Support, Legal and Strategic Support submitted by Councillor Alan Macro:

“How many purchasers have been helped by the Council's "First Step" mortgage deposit scheme?”

The Portfolio Holder for Strategy & Performance, Housing, ICT & Corporate Support, Legal and Strategic Support answered:

During the last three years, 28 households in West Berkshire have been helped by the ‘First Step, Next Step’ equity loan deposit scheme. All of these were first time home buyers. On behalf of the Members of this Executive, I can say that it was a great pleasure to help them make their first steps into home ownership.

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:

“That is only nine a year, which doesn't sound very many and I'm wondering whether perhaps you would consider reviewing whether the scheme is actually good when considering the amount of affordable housing money available. The money that's being allocated to this was initially provided to the Council for affordable housing and I'm wondering if you would review that in the light of the Government's own schemes to help people with their deposits?”

The Portfolio Holder for Strategy & Performance, Housing, ICT & Corporate Support, Legal and Strategic Support answered:

The original programme I believe was set at 20, so actually 28 is a significant improvement on the original programme. We still have reasonable amounts of money in the scheme and in fact later this month I will be extending it to cover home ownership for people with a long-term disability scheme. I certainly believe that's an appropriate use of the extension of the programme.

I am a big believer in balanced housing. This Council has been very supportive of affordable housing, as evidenced by the Core Strategy. It is part of our desire to help people. For some people Help to Buy is not appropriate whereas First Step is. However we will look at it further.

Councillor Alan Macro said: *“I do support the use of the money for the disabled.”*

The Portfolio Holder for Strategy & Performance, Housing, ICT & Corporate Support, Legal and Strategic Support said: The extension will come to an Individual Decision at the end of this month in order to extend it to support home ownership for people with long term disabilities.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations), Emergency Planning, Newbury Vision submitted by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

“Given that many businesses are closed and that many people visit Newbury for leisure purposes on bank holidays, will the Executive Member please consider reducing car parking charges on bank holidays to those imposed on Sundays?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations), Emergency Planning, Newbury Vision answered:

The Council's car park operating costs remain the same on Bank Holidays and the Council must still pay all the necessary rates, charges and so on irrespective of the day of the week and to offset these costs the parking charges are as set on those days.

The Council has adopted a view that users of discretionary services, such as car parks, should pay for the service used. Sunday parking charges and Bank Holiday parking charges are not new and they have been implemented in Council operated car parks and privately operated car parks in towns and cities throughout the country. The decision to make the Bank Holiday parking charge appropriate to the day of the week on which the Bank Holiday falls is fair and reasonable.

Although it's not a factor that informs or influences the Council's decision, it is worth noting that the privately owned car parks in Newbury also operate Bank Holiday parking charges and use the parking charge that prevails on the day on which the Bank Holiday falls. They don't offer free parking or a concessionary parking charge for Bank Holidays. Therefore, the Council's charges are in line with the practice used by private car park operators in Newbury and we are not currently considering any changes to this.

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 Jeff Brooks did not ask a supplementary question.
