

Executive Meeting

19 November 2015

Questions and Answers



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

No public questions were submitted in relation to items not included on the agenda.

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

(a) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Lee Dillon:

"Has the Executive considered co-operating with other, neighbouring, authorities on all major procurements in order to reduce costs?"

The Leader of the Council answered:

In order to not set a precedent it would be customary for a question asked when a Member is absent to be replied to in a written way. However, I think it is a fair and reasonable question, so I would like to answer it if I may.

As has been shown in the consultation document, the Council has seen an enormous requirement for savings, both in the past and in the future. One of the ways in which those savings can be delivered is through effective procurement and delivery of services and as such procurement delivery has been a major area of focus over the last few years.

West Berkshire Council accesses a number of different purchasing frameworks developed by organisations such as Crown Commercial Services, Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation and other frameworks which are more specific where it is established that the Council may achieve better value for money than attempting to procure services on its own.

As an example, in the case of public health services, the Council uses Bracknell Forest Borough Council to procure a range of public health services under a joint procurement agreement.

This area will continue and is one that we actively wish to encourage and of course is consistent also with our shared services approach where we are sharing operational services to deliver effective savings.

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services by Councillor Alan Macro:

"The Executive agreed to recruit a "Social Media Executive" at its meeting on 8 May 2014 to help reduce external foster care placements. How successful has this been?"

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services answered:

You will be pleased to hear that in this financial year we have actually successfully recruited eight new foster carers to support the internal placement of children within the Authority.

We did not, however, recruit a Social Media Executive as, following the recent Ofsted report, it was deemed more appropriate to widen out this role and we have actually recruited an HR professional who can assist in our recruitment campaigns for both social workers and foster carers, and actually in addition to this we have found that word-of-mouth is actually a more successful route for recruitment of foster carers.

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:

“So are we actually using social media to try and recruit foster carers?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services answered:

We are, because we are tweeting all the time these days. So, yes, we do use it, we just do not have a specific person sat within Children’s Services doing it, but we have a very good communications team.

Councillor Alan Macro said: I did have some concerns about this role when it was first mentioned and I think perhaps we have taken a better option.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Property by Councillor Alan Macro:

“What progress has there been in selling the depot site in Pound Lane, Thatcham?”

The Portfolio Holder for Property answered:

I’m pleased to tell you that a lot of progress has been made recently in the selling of the Pound Lane Depot. The final wording of the contract for sale of Pound Lane to Persimmon is close to being agreed between the Council and the Persimmon Board, so we expect to see it wrapped up fairly soon.

Councillor Alan Macro said:

Thank you, the last time I asked this question I was given a similar answer except that the sale was then thought to be very close, so I am glad that some progress has been made.
