

Council Meeting

9 January 2020

Questions and Answers

(Please note that the order in which the questions were taken at the meeting varied from the order set out on the agenda)



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

(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Mr Brian Withers:

“Will the Council consider removing the ban on private cars crossing the Wharf Bridge in light of the changes that have been made to the Bear lane/A339 junction?”

Written Response

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning by Mr Simon Gardner:

“What agreement was made with Vodafone regarding the planning permission for the HQ and restrictions upon the employee parking in the local streets within 2 miles of said buildings?”

Written Response

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning by Mr Simon Gardner:

“Is parking in the local streets within a 2 mile radius of the Vodafone HQ lawful given that an individual pays a vehicle road tax that has no restrictions with respect to parking within the Highway Code?”

Written Response

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

(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Keith Woodhams:

“Can the Executive Member for Transport and Countryside tell me why on one hand he is promoting getting out of the car to walk and cycle when cycle ways are not being swept leading to tyre punctures, and when London Road & Hambridge Road flood when it rains leading to pedestrians and cyclists being drenched in water by passing cars, vans and heavy lorries?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside answered:

Currently, the Council undertakes cyclic maintenance including gully cleansing and carriageway sweeping on a risk based approach in accordance with current guidance. The roadside gullies along Hambridge Road and London Road are cleansed annually and the carriageway is mechanically swept every three weeks (Note: as part of the Council's street cleansing savings programme this may vary if it doesn't fall below the agreed standard in line with the Local Environment Quality Survey criteria).

We also rely on reports from members of the public to alert us to potential hazards.

I believe you are referring to conditions during the recent heavy and prolonged rainfall. I am afraid it is inevitable that there will be some standing water on the highway as highway drainage systems are simply not designed to cope with the volume of water that fell at that particular time. This is clearly a national issue rather than one particular to West Berkshire.

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:

“ Will the Executive Member for transport and countryside, firstly ride in the stone chipped dedicated cycle lanes on the A4 through Thatcham. Hopefully avoiding an expensive tyre puncture or two, as many cyclist have told me they have experienced.

*And secondly , will he stand on the pavement on the A4 opposite **dawny woodway** and on the pavement on Hambridge road opposite the two rivers estate after there has been a heavy rain fall with a certain risk of him being total drenched by passing vehicles*

Will he now take the appropriate action on both counts?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside answered:

I am happy to bring up the fact that I cycled for many years up and down that road.

With regard to standing on the road, if I need to specifically pick the time and date that I do it and I am able to record anybody breaking the law by blatantly driving through a puddle and soaking pedestrians then I happy to accept that challenge.

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Keith Woodhams:

“Given that it was recently reported that a passing HGV knocked off a branch from an overhanging tree in Bowling Green Road, which then fell onto the bonnet of a car travelling in the opposite direction can the Executive Member for Highways and Transport tell me if the highways authority has a duty to maintain public roads to a standard that ensures they are safe and passable?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside answered:

In West Berkshire we are blessed with many tree lined avenues and roads which come with a number of benefits. Aside from the obvious aesthetic qualities, they provide protection from the elements – rain, sun and heat; they also help clean the air which is especially important adjacent to roads where they filter car exhaust and emissions.

Sadly, these benefits inevitably come with the high risk of falling debris. Clearly the only way to completely eliminate such a risk would be to remove all trees from the side of the road, however as a Council we are aiming to introduce more tree to improve our environment, not to remove them.

Under the Highways Act 1980, West Berkshire Council, as the highway authority, has a responsibility to maintain trees within its ownership to ensure they are in a safe condition and not causing an unreasonable danger or nuisance. We work to a risk-based approach to tree management, by undertaking a programme of inspections identifying and prioritising potential hazards. As part of this we also serve notice on landowners who own trees that overhang the highway to ensure they are safe. In this occasion, we are doing just that.

Thankfully unfortunate incidents such as this in West Berkshire are very rare. Not knowing the exact prevailing conditions when this incident took place I cannot comment on any extenuating weather conditions that may have contributed to this particular incident.

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?”*

“ What explanation can the executive member for transport and countryside give when some high sided HGVs ignored the signed diversion route via Heath lane.

But instead turned right out of Bowling green road into the rather narrow north field road with parked vehicle on either side calling traffic chaos?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside answered:

What I can't identify is the relationship to the original question that was asked. This appears to be about traffic control and diversions thereof. Rather than tree maintenance.

Full written response.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Phil Barnett:

“Can the Executive Member for Highways identify what official powers private security guards controlling traffic movements on certain public roads have to undertake these activities?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside answered:

Under The Police Reform Act of 2002 the local police force can approve private companies to carry out certain public function which are traditionally carried out by the Thames Valley police, this is known as the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS). Thames Valley Police has accredited a traffic management company called CSP to carry out traffic management on the public highways for event management.

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 Phil Barnett asked:

“ In the case of directly traffic away from Newbury racecourse on race days the normal race users of the racecourse and new road, are regularly inconvenienced by having to stop at short notice when confronted by these security guards, unaware if they should slow down or stop when one of these guards are in the highway. An accident is in the waiting.

Can I suggest appropriate signage, for road users making them aware of what the guards' powers are provided making the highway safer for all concerned?

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside answered:

My initial thought that anybody standing in the road with a high-vis on, you would follow the actions that they are directing at you. I am happy to pick up that point and discuss where we can.

The practise of CSP is concerned they approach with the traffic management scheme, that is giving joint approval by the traffic management team and the Thames Valley Police.

If there is some way of bringing in what you have suggested, I am sure we can take that forward and ask it to be a part of the scheme.

(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Phil Barnett:

“Can the Executive Member for Highways identify when the highly valued speed indicator devices [SIDS] that the West Berks Council own are likely to be upgraded or replaced?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside answered:

We offer an excellence service in West Berkshire and I am pleased to let you know they will be updated in the 2020/21 financial year.

Demand will be manageable in that time, and training will be available for the new devices when they come online and the existing.

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?”*

(Comment noted, not sure whether to put it down)