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

Public Questions for the Executive

14th October 2021

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Item (a)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Eric Owens/Jon Winstanley/ Jenny Graham

(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste by Alison May:

“The Environment Strategy commits to achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2030. Can you provide a Carbon Neutrality 2030 progress update report on actions achieved to date and the forward plan for the next 12 months?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste answered:

The Council is currently working on its first Annual Progress Report that will include actions achieved to date and the latest data with regards the Council's and District's Carbon footprint. This will be reported to the Executive at its meeting on 18th November as set out in the Council's published Forward Plan. The Annual Progress Report will then be available via our website and publicised through our Environment Newsletter.

With regards to a 'Forward Plan' for the Environment Strategy for the next 12 months, we have produced a Delivery Plan that outlines the actions and initiatives that we are planning to undertake, either on our own or in partnership with others, in order to work towards the 2030 commitment. This is very much a live plan, with projects being updated and added as our understanding and knowledge improves. The Delivery Plan is available via the Council's website and is being updated monthly.

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Item (b)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Adrian Slaughter

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste by Gareth Beard:

“There appears to be a delay in being able to use the new EV chargepoints around the district. Could the executive give an update on the roll out programme please?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste answered:

Thank you Mr Beard for your question. This pilot scheme has been started (as you know) and most of the chosen locations have the points physically in the ground. Due to changes in the project's scope and the funding model, it's now not possible to connect and start charging cars until a meeting of the full council to confirm the charge scale; this is according to the council's constitution. The next opportunity for this meeting is the 2nd December and after that I anticipate charging being open and available at these charging points. I appreciate that this is not as quickly as you wanted to hear and I apologise that we've had to go to some detail, but this is a pilot and we will move rather more quickly in future charge point roll-outs.

The Portfolio Holder 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?”*

Gareth Beard asked the following supplementary question:

“Could you say how soon after a positive decision by the full council would the existing EV charge points be available for use?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste answered:

I'm afraid I can't confirm that here and now. I'm optimistic but there's a lot of detail behind the scenes so I can't answer that here and now, I'm sorry.

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Item (c)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Jon Winstanley/Paul Hendry

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste by Nigel Foot:

“West Berkshire Council is the riparian owner of the land through which the River Kennet flows in Newbury, from Northcroft Park in the west, to the area on the north bank of the river in the east, opposite Newbury Marina and Chandlery. Can West Berkshire Council contact the Environment Agency, as a matter of urgency, about the obstructions (branches, dead trees and other debris) along this stretch of river?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste answered:

The responsibility for blocked river channels falls to the riparian landowners rather than the environment agency. It is not correct however that WBC are the riparian landowners along this complete stretch of the River Kennet. Other private landowners will have some responsibility. Nevertheless, the Countryside Service has recently cleared a significant stretch of the Kennet below the sluice near Dairy Farm and the Marina and have a walking survey planned this week to look at a number of other locations along the riverside identified by Mr Foot. We will work with Environment Agency to identify the other riparian landowners of the findings of this survey in order that appropriate action can be taken.

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Item (d)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Bill Bagnell

(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture by John Gotelee:

“Who is responsible for the decision not to insure the football club house building? Put simply where does the buck stop?”

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture answered:

The decision to insure council properties is made according to our insurances processes. It is the responsibility of the project officer to confirm to the project sponsor that the agreed insurance cover has been put in place by the WBC Insurance Team.

The Portfolio Holder 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?”*

John Gotelee asked the following supplementary question:

“That decision not to insure the football clubhouse effectively cost the taxpayer £1million, by your figures. So, I'm just wondering, what other buildings have you left uninsured and open for target by the arsonist?”

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture answered:

I'm not able to answer the second part of your question Mr Gotelee but I will find out and let you know with a written answer. In terms of the £1million, it does not represent what the council would have received had it fully insured the building. No insurance company would have underwritten such a payout for an effectively derelict building. In any event, the council did not intend to rebuild the structure so there was no loss as such. Had the council attempted to find a higher level of cover, the council would also have had to demonstrate the highest level of asset protection, which would have meant on-site physical security at a cost of approximately £200,000 a year since June 2018. The cost of this, coupled with a higher premium does not represent value for money. It should also be noted that the council's insurance arrangements require the Council to cover the first £250,000 of repairs.

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Item (e)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Bill Bagnell/Matt Pearce

(e) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Paul Morgan:

“Can the Council please confirm what contracts have been placed with Alliance Leisure and / or Alliance Building Services, when these contracts were placed, the value of these contracts and the scope.”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Alliance Leisure Services were appointed on June 15th 2021, to find a solution for the delivery of a 3G pitch, pavilion, spectator stand and car parking to achieve the FA Step 4 ground grading standard. Further, to complete design and tendering for these works utilising the UK Leisure Framework Agreement and progress the scheme to cost certainty. And finally, to act as agent in the submission of the planning application. The value of this work is £126 565.

The Portfolio Holder 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?”*

Paul Morgan asked the following supplementary question:

“So what you’re saying is that so far the only contract is for the planning application for £126,565 and no other contract has been released whatsoever with Alliance Leisure, is that what you are telling me?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

I stand by my original answer, which I think answered that point very clearly.

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Item (f)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Bill Bagnell

(f) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Alan Pearce:

“Please would the Council list the present members of the LRIE steering group?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Interim Chief Executive and Executive Director - Place (Sue Halliwell)
Portfolio Holder Finance & Economic Development (Cllr Ross Mackinnon)
Portfolio Holder Internal Governance, Leisure & Culture (Cllr Howard Woollaston)
Portfolio Holder Housing, Strategic Partnerships & Transformation (Cllr Hilary Cole)
Executive Director - Resources (Joseph Holmes)
Service Director - Development & Regulation (Eric Owens)
Service Lead – Customer Engagement & Transformation (Gabrielle Mancini)
Service Lead – Legal & Democratic (Shiraz Sheikh)
Economy Manager (Katharine Makant)
Finance Manager (Ian Wigginton)
Manager - Special Projects (Bill Bagnell)

The Portfolio Holder 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?”*

Alan Pearce asked the following supplementary question:

“That’s more than I expected. The London Road Industrial Estate is going to be challenging in the way of drainage for developing; there’s nobody on there from the local drainage authority representing. Is it possible to have someone on there?”

Councillor Mackinnon: This isn’t my answer to the supplementary, but who do you mean by the local drainage authority?

Mr Pearce: The council is the local planning and drainage.

Councillor Mackinnon: Well we do have the service director for planning and regulation, which I think would encompass that.

Mr Pearce: I was looking for someone like Stuart Clarke to be on the steering group.



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The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

I'll just say that we're happy with the attendees at present, but thanks for your question.

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Item (g)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Jon Winstanley/Paul Hendry

(g) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport by Paula Saunderson:

“Would the Council kindly advise the target date for the draft Local Flood Risk Management Delivery Plan, assuming the LFRM Strategy 2021-2026 is adopted by the Executive at their December 2021 meeting?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

The Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy includes a Strategic Flood Action Plan with measures that are ongoing and long-term in nature. The measures therefore do not have specified timescales but are reviewed at regular intervals. These reviews often form part of local Flood Forum activities. With regards to flood alleviation projects, all proposed schemes rely on grant applications that are submitted to the Environment Agency. The applications are then judged against others on a regional basis so there can be no guarantee as to whether our applications will be successful and, even if successful, of the timescales for when the grants will be awarded.

The Portfolio Holder 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?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“I think you're saying that the action plan is in the strategy. But a plan normally has dates and resources attached to it. In the interim could we have some information to local residents about preparing for Winter and possibilities of floods?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

I'm sure that we can put something together that can be shared with residents to add to their knowledge of what to do, yes. I'm happy to pick that up with officers.

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Item (h)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Bill Bagnell / Katherine Makant / Stuart Clark

(h) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport by John Gotelee:

“Since the councils own design guidance documents advise that drainage and similar infrastructure underpins good design and should be considered at the start of planning. What consultations with the councils drainage engineers have taken place in respect of the LRIE regeneration?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

High level investigations are being under taken now and external consultants, engaged by the Council, liaised with WBC Principal Engineer Drainage & Flood Risk Management in the week commencing 27th September. This will be an on-going process at different stages as the Council and its partners build up towards submitting an outline application.

The Portfolio Holder 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?”*

John Gotelee asked the following supplementary question:

“I spoke to Stuart Clark a couple of weeks ago at the flood forum and he said there had been no approach to him whatsoever about floods on the London Road Industrial Estate. These are the basis of planning so what’s going on? You’ve been playing with the plans for years now but it doesn’t seem to go anywhere. How long do you need to plan this London Road regeneration?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

I’ll take the first part of that, which I referred to in my response. There has been external consultation engagement. Yes, obviously you are fully aware of Stuart and what Stuart does, but he’s not the only person with whom we can engage when having these conversations.

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Item (i)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Bill Bagnell

(i) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Alan Pearce:

“Regarding the public question answer (h) at the Full Council meeting 9th of September 2021.

“Only properties within the Councils red line freehold ownership form this pacific part of the contract which you refer, the properties you refer to fall outside the red line”

Please would the Council confirm if the two residential properties Braunton and Nonesuch RG14 2BA were included in any other part of the LRIE development contract they signed with St. Modwen Developments Ltd?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

These properties to which you refer, which, as said previously, fall outside of the Council's freehold ownership, were not included within the development agreement between West Berkshire Council and St.Modwen.

The Portfolio Holder 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?”*

Alan Pearce asked the following supplementary question:

“No, I don't. Thank you”.

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Item (j)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Jon Winstanley/Paul Hendry

(j) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport by Paula Saunderson:

“Please will the LLFA agree to issue Scoping details for an existing LLFA Project for the Northbrook Stream as visibility of the Delivery Plan is someway off and its existence was identified in a recent public meeting attended by a representative for the Lead Local Flood Authority?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

The council is currently working on a Feasibility Study and Business Case to address flooding to properties in the vicinity of London Road adjacent to the Northbrook Stream. A previous catchment study of the Northbrook Stream was undertaken to determine the cause and consider possible options for reducing the risk of flooding to the properties and recommended further investigatory work to determine the best way forward. The council is happy to share its information as well as the final Business Case once completed in January 2022. In the meantime, the council would be happy to share information regarding the consultant's brief.

The Portfolio Holder 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?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“I know residents are concerned that the Lidl store has broken ground and the SuDS conditions haven't yet been approved. So it would be good to see the consultant's brief, thank you.”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

Happy to get that arranged.

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Item (k)	Executive Meeting on 14 October 2021
Submitted to:	Jon Winstanley/Paul Hendry

(k) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport by Paula Saunderson:

“Will the LLFA consider undertaking briefing sessions to Planning Officers & Planning Committee members on the importance of considering and including Nature-Based Sustainable Drainage solutions and Principle 8 in Applications which come before the Officers and Committees. (This relates to the promulgating the wider use of the excellent SuDS SPD (2018) introduced in November 2018)?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

The council is about to undertake a review of its SuDS Supplementary Planning Document in order to bring it in line with the council's Environment Strategy. Once the update has been completed it would be an ideal time to brief planning officers and Planning Committee Members. The SuDS approval team would be more than happy to undertake these briefing sessions.

The Portfolio Holder 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?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“That's really great news, thank you very much, because there are at the moment a few anomalies which, if anyone is interested and wants to phone me, I can point out where some of the processes / the dots might not be joined.”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

I'm happy to have officers get in touch and have that conversation with you, no problem at all.
