

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday 25 July 2019

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Executive Meeting

25 July 2019

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 Environment by Mrs Jackie Paynter:

“What plans does West Berkshire Council have to increase its recycling rate to emulate that of neighbouring South Oxfordshire Council’s 63 per cent?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment answered:

The first point I would like to make is that you cannot directly compare South Oxfordshire figures with ours. So South Oxfordshire are a collection authority, they run bin collections from households and run recycling centres, but they don't process. Whereas we, like the other Berkshire authorities, do both collection and processing. So their rate is not directly the same, having said which the whole of Oxfordshire figure is higher than ours and we aspire to get there. Now I should point out further, that we are the best performing authority of the Berkshire Councils with around 50% of waste recycled in the last four years.

The Government is consulting on a new waste strategy and we look forward, on publication of that, to taking advantage of many of the measures we expect. For example, standardised messages to households on what can be collected and so better communications and simpler messages to households will be one of the main streams for driving our recycling rate forward. We absolutely do aspire to be in that sort of figure in the mid to high 60 percent.

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?”*

Mrs Jackie Paynter asked:

“How does that apply to businesses, builders, offices and shops, as well as residents, so that they might consider it as well?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment answered:

So as you may be aware businesses have to make their own arrangements. So our service, which the Council provides via Veolia, is for households. Businesses will contract directly with either Veolia or other providers.

So we have no information of what businesses are recycling. I would suggest the economics are broadly similar, it costs money for them not be efficient with their recycling. I would encourage all local Berkshire based businesses to recycle more.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder Economic Development and Planning by Mr Lee McDougall:

“In the event that the Council does eventually obtain planning permission to build flats on the Newbury Football Ground at Faraday Road can the Council confirm how much budget it thinks it will need to provide a replacement facility that is of equivalent or better quality (FA ground grading F – step 5 of the FA National League System)?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning answered:

Should one day a club emerge that is offered promotion and sponsored through to Tier 5, the budget allowance, excluding land, would need to be approximately £1M for all required elements based on a grass surface pitch. It should be borne in mind however that this amount is an estimate and has not been checked by a quantity surveyor. It is based on Council experience of other construction projects.

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?”*

Mr Lee McDougall asked:

“Given therefore that at the Operations Board meeting that you held on the 4th October, which you attended, and at which a report on the future use of Faraday Road Sports Pitch was presented and this clarified that the clubhouse alone would cost a million pound, are you absolutely sure you’ve got your sums correct?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning answered:

Those are the figures I have been provided with. As far as I am aware yes it is correct, because it covers levelling, seeding of the new pitch, clubhouse, changing rooms, showers, stand seating and flood lighting.

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Mrs Jackie Paynter:

“What plans does West Berkshire Council have to encourage residents to produce less waste per household as councils like Stroud have done?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment answered:

So I touched on a couple of these points in my last answer, but principally, and we will work further towards this with our overall environment strategy, communication with residents is going to be key and enabled by simpler messages enabled by the government.

I would point out, and I would gratefully welcome assistance in spreading the word to the residents of the district, that currently far too much recyclable material is being put into black bins. In particular food waste is really bad for the environment if it is not disposed of properly, too many people are not taking advantage of the free food waste collections and instead putting them in the black bin.

So again communications, asking people to do the right thing and making it simple for them are the ways we are going to do 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?”*

Mrs Jackie Paynter asked:

“I think that the mixed waste plastic that can’t be taken to the tip, people are taking it over to Tadley and all sorts of places, is there any option that these plastics can be taken and recycled properly?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment answered:

I can’t comment on what Tadley, which is in Hampshire, actually do with their waste when it is received. Certainly our system of only recycling plastic bottles, this keeps the material in a very high quality condition which is economically and environmentally better than recycling margarine pots and the like with it.

We certainly do have aspirations to move towards a more comprehensive service in the future, but that depends on markets developing, technology and costs and again we do aspire to do that in the next few years. But currently non bottle plastic waste needs to be converted into energy which is a respectable use for this via the black bins.

(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning by Mr Lee McDougall:

“Please could you confirm what representatives of the children and women users of the Community Football Ground have been invited to join the Membership of the London Road Steering Group /Project Board?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning answered:

The London Road Project Board is an internal group comprising Members and Officers of the Council. All stakeholders will be consulted on plans that are yet to be prepared and that will take place either later this year or the early part of next year.

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?”*

Mr Lee McDougall asked:

“Are you able confirm who is on the steering group?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning answered:

I will send you a written response to confirm that point.

(e) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning by Mr Lee McDougall:

“Could you please confirm how the London Road Steering Group /Project Board intends to consult with the public about the potential impact to the community football ground to ensure all views are captured?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning answered:

The Council will shortly commission consultants to prepare a new development brief for the regeneration of the London Road site. That draft brief will be subject to local consultation. We have yet to decide how this is best done but all those wishing to comment will be invited to do so. As stated in response to the earlier question this is likely to take place towards the end of this year or the early part of next year.

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?”*

Mr Lee McDougall asked:

“Given that by the Council’s prior admissions the consultation in relation to the LRIE objectives were insufficient during the period which led up to the unlawful agreement with St Modwen, could you give me your personal assurance that you will consult all service users of the community football ground, which includes the children’s football teams?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning answered:

It will be a consultation which the community will be able to respond to. It will be in line with all the Council’s consultations, it will be online for people to look at and respond and it will be the usual six week consultation period.

(f) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning by Mr Lee McDougall:

“Can you please confirm the terms of reference of the recently set up London Road Steering Group /Project Board which met on the 12 July 2019?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning answered:

The Project Board will essentially oversee the regeneration of the London Road site given the Council’s role as landlord for much of the area. The Project Board will report to the Executive as necessary.

The first part of the regeneration project is to prepare a development brief which will seek to assess the options open to the Council for the redevelopment of the site both in terms of what is delivered and how. It is expected that this will be completed early next year following public consultation.

Future activity will be determined by what the Executive decides to do following consideration of the brief. It is likely that the Project Board will oversee whatever programme of work is agreed.

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?”*

Mr Lee McDougall asked:

“So given this is the second time round and the previous steering group’s work resulted in an unlawful agreement with St Modwen, what can you do to ensure you won’t make the same mistakes this time?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning answered:

All I can say Mr McDougall is that lessons have been learnt. The group is a cross party group with the Liberal Democrats sitting on it and we will ensure that we will get it right this time. Although I have to say that we were not in breach of anything because there was no (construction*) agreement signed.

* post the meeting, clarification has been sought on the type of agreement referred to. The above note therefore confirms, for completeness, that the reference made by Councillor Cole was to a construction agreement.

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

(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

"Is the Council considering becoming involved in the 5G testbeds and trials projects on logistics that have recently been announced by Department of Culture, Media and Sport?"

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance answered:

This Council believes strongly in economic growth in West Berkshire and as such the answer to your question is yes.

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 asked:

"Would I see it in your economic development policy, as a major part of the extension of broadband?"

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance answered:

Yes you would.

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Martha Vickers asked on her behalf by Councillor Andy Moore:

“What is the Council intending to do to mitigate the issue of disruption in Newbury Town Centre due to poorly managed building works and uncoordinated utility works?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside answered:

I shall open by refuting the allegations made against the service of uncoordinated works.

The Council has duties under the New Road and Streetworks Act and the Traffic Management Act to ensure that all works that could affect traffic flow on the public highway are co-ordinated. This includes works carried out by the Council, for example maintenance, resurfacing and improvement projects and by third parties, usually utility companies who are repairing or replacing their pipes and cables.

The Streetworks team in the Transport & Countryside Service is responsible for issuing permits to occupy the highway to contractors, whether they are working for the Council or for utility companies. Permits will not be granted where different works clash with each other unless the applicants work together to reduce the disruption. We can also impose conditions on permits where we are concerned about potential disruption, for example by placing restrictions on working hours to avoid peak periods or by insisting that temporary traffic lights are manually controlled.

Our team of inspectors regularly visit sites while work is in progress to check compliance with permit conditions and to monitor the level of disruption on the network. If works are poorly managed, i.e. don't have a permit or are not complying with the permit conditions, fixed penalty notices may be issued or prosecutions brought against the company responsible.

Despite all this, roadworks can't always be planned. Emergencies such as burst water mains or gas leaks need to be made safe as soon as possible and we often need to work with contractors at short notice to keep disruption to a minimum.

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 Andy Moore asked:

“What resource does the Council devote to the activities that you have just described and how has that changed in recent years?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside answered:

I don't have that information or detail, it is a team approach, I am happy to provide that in a written response as a follow up.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Councillor Adrian Abbs:

“What data are available to the Council showing usage of Electric Vehicle points in West Berkshire to help it plan for locations and quantity?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment answered:

The great majority of electric vehicle charging points are private points in people’s homes. In addition to those, which is the great majority of the market, there are a number of public charging points, to which we have data (which I will come on to), as well as private non-residential locations such as, for example, petrol garages and other businesses which enable on premise charging.

So of the data which we have information for there are three groups of these:

First is the new group of 28 residential on-street charging points within Newbury plus a further eight in Hungerford, which are literally this week entering the final steps of installation. Those are aimed, and the further roll-out will be aimed, at people who wish to purchase an electric car, but do not have access to off-street parking, in other words a driveway, where they can charge from their houses.

So that will be an important element going forward. Clearly, as they are just being installed and they are not yet open, we do not yet have data on those but we will do as and when usage of them starts developing.

The second and third groups are the public charge points in the Kennet Centre car park and the car club charging points for electric vehicles which can be accessed by the public. The car club has been running since 2016 and data on the usage of those, obviously a very small sample, has been very encouragingly growing over the past four years.

However, this area is changing. For example, as vehicle batteries get bigger, day time charging becomes less necessary, so we wouldn’t necessarily see that rate of usage continue. But early indications for both the car club and electric charging points in particular is that, while this amounts to a very small proportion of the overall vehicle fleet in West Berkshire right now, there is a definite need, which again we will address in our environmental strategy to invest in further charging points in conjunction with partners, such as businesses, over the coming years.

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 Adrian Abbs asked:

“Would Officers have made that data available to Members of the Shadow Executive or any Member of the Council? I ask because I did ask for data and I received data for one charge point and told that there was no further data available, so I am unclear where additional data has come from in the past six weeks. Although I am pleased to note it.”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment answered:

As I said at the start of my answer we do not yet have data for the charging points which are being installed this week, I am confident that this data will become available and of course we will sharing it.

The car club data has some commercial sensitivity around it so we cannot release that other than under Part II circumstances. If there is a specific need for a Part II release of information then I'm sure the relevant Officers will be able to arrange that.

(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Erik Pattenden:

“What is the environmental and economic impact of primary and secondary school pupils not being given places at their nearest school?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education answered:

The Council supports parental choice, including where parents do not choose their nearest school. We also encourage environmentally friendly modes of transport, such as walking, cycling and scootering. For longer distances we promote public transport and encourage car sharing. West Berkshire has an extremely high percentage of ‘preference’ allocations and we are proud of this. We have seen again the results this year where, in primary schools, 99% of children got one of their choices of school, and in secondary it’s 94%. This is a fantastic achievement.

Where the Council is responsible for transporting pupils, we always do so in the most economic and environmentally friendly way possible, constantly reviewing the routes and vehicles used.

The key point here is that it’s parental choice as to which school their children go and that choice broadly speaking is almost completely satisfied. There is an added benefit in terms of home to school transport insofar as parents make their choice of school based on different criteria and one of those important factors in their decision is they want to send their children to a school that fits into their own home to work transport, making it a win win.

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 Erik Pattenden asked:

“So for those people who do not get the school of their choice, they are going to need to travel some distance, there must be a way of measuring the environmental and economical impact?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education answered:

I think you are making an assumption there, which I am not sure can be borne out. Parents choose schools for different reasons, they may end up with a school that is closer to them, than the school of their choice.

Councillor Boeck suggested that Councillor Pattenden could explore with Officers an alternative question – what is the environmental impact of home to school transport across the District.

(i) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Owen Jeffery:

“Will the Executive explain how it intends to reduce the ten year life expectancy gap between the better-off and least well-off parts of the district?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

As we all know, our health is determined by a complex mix of factors including income, housing, employment, lifestyles and access to healthcare and other services. Generally, but not in all cases, lower life expectancy is associated with lower income, poorer housing, lifestyle choices, unemployment etc, many different factors. This is similarly the case within West Berkshire, where we have identified and we have widely and publicly stated the issue, that some areas of relative deprivation show a lower life expectancy.

Action to effectively reduce these inequalities is needed at both the national, regional and local level and requires focus across all of these determinants. Given that the cause of health inequalities are far reaching and complex, the greatest chance of reducing inequalities is for organisations, communities and individuals to work together in supporting those who have the greatest need.

Our own West Berkshire Vision for 2036 and the recently published West Berkshire Council Strategy make a firm commitment by the Council and our partners that ‘we will reduce health inequalities by delivering interventions for everybody, but focussing on those who need more help’. Tackling inequalities in health is also a cross cutting theme within West Berkshire’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and will be even more prioritised in the upcoming refresh of that programme.

For West Berkshire Council, the lead role to reduce health inequalities and influence the wider determinants of health is undertaken by the Health and Wellbeing Board and its associated subgroups which focus on a range of issues such as reducing homelessness, supported employment, healthy ageing, closing the educational attainment gap, improving mental health and reducing harm caused by substance misuse.

I was surprised Council Jeffery, as a Member of the Health and Wellbeing Board, that you didn’t already know some of the answer to your own question. It is necessary to work with all partners on that Board so that we can work out what solutions are required.

However, Councillor Jones has offered you an invite and said to you that perhaps you can join him, because one of the steps that he wants to take very soon is to form a project group of Ward Members, particularly of those wards most affected, for them to support more specific and detailed investigation into the particular detriments for their particular wards, with data and help from Public Health where needed.

This will not only indicate actions, but provide input to the development of a new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy that will set out how the Council, its wider partners and communities will all play a vital role in reducing the life expectancy gap between the better-off and the least well-off parts of the district. The action plan should be complete towards the end of 2020, though of course we will continue now to take the actions mentioned before to improve the health of the most vulnerable and at risk.

The Council will continue to play an important role in supporting those most vulnerable within our society, whether that is supporting children in care or helping older people with social care needs.

We do recognise that reducing health inequalities is challenging, but we are committed to ensuring that everyone has the same opportunity to lead a healthy life, no matter where they live or who they are.

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 Owen Jeffrey asked:

“I am very grateful for the very full answer. I have spoken to Councillor Jones separately and I am reassured that he is possibly as equally concerned as I am on this point.

What I would say is that listening to your response, you are saying the Health and Wellbeing Board and Council will be working on his, but do you feel that we are driving hard enough as the responsibility rests with the local authority?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

That is an interesting question that I have often asked myself. I think we have been quite clear on prioritising this within our Council Strategy to say that we want to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to reach their full potential and to help those most vulnerable.

We have made it a priority for this Council, so I am quite clear on that, and I think we have been quite clear as a Council on that.

I think there is also a real need to recognise that the local authority alone cannot do this. I know you are saying we should drive, but we cannot do this alone, this is far more across our partners and with individuals, and certainly from an ambitious point of view and from a driving point of view, this local authority is entirely committed to it and has highlighted that both within our Vision to 2036 and our current Council Strategy and I hope this gives you the reassurance you are looking for.

Councillor Owen Jeffrey commented:

I will happily join the group that Councillor Jones has invited me to.

(e) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Erik Pattenden:

“How many schools in West Berks are continuing to buy the school meals service from the central contract?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education answered:

Thank you for your question Councillor. The answer is 44.

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 Erik Pattenden asked:

“So there has obviously been, as we have been hearing at the Schools’ Forum, quite a major issue with the central schools catering contract, so how many schools have decided to not continue as a result of the commissioning issues that have occurred over the last couple of months and has caused schools a lot of extra time and effort to work through?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education answered:

When this contract was last tendered there were 69 schools participating in that undertaking so it has reduced to 44. It is an unfortunate situation, the 44 schools that have committed to buying into the central contract have done so on the understanding that there has been an extension made to the current contract so they will continue on the same terms as the existing contract. That extension has been granted to allow time to explore the market capacity and prices so that next year we hope that there will be a much greater take up.

(j) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care by Councillor Owen Jeffery:

“If the UK leaves the European Union on 31st October 2019, what steps has the Executive taken to ensure on-going domiciliary care across our District as increasing numbers of EU citizens leave the Country?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care answered:

Let me start by pointing out that the most recent ONS population statistics show that net migration from the EU to the UK was 74,000 in the year to December 2018, so even if it is true that more EU citizens are leaving the country there is still a net influx.

Further, this afternoon, the Prime Minister made it clear that the 3.2 million EU nationals living and working in the UK will have the absolute certainty of the right to live and remain post Brexit.

Turning to the question, so far as steps that the Executive has taken to ensure ongoing domiciliary care is not affected by Brexit, the answer is that as Portfolio Holder I have left this in the capable hands of Officers and have been reported to upon this and a host of other topics at my monthly briefings.

If however the question is asking what steps the Council has taken, then I can give more details.

We spoke about and discussed the Community Home Care Services Framework earlier in the meeting and the point there is that domiciliary care is principally provided across the district by the services we commission from external providers. Over and above this there is some domiciliary care that we provide direct as part of the in-house Reablement Service.

To give you some idea of the ratio, the report about the Home Care Service refers to about 10,000 hours commissioned through that service per week, and well over 95% of the domiciliary care that was provided in June, and generally, was provided via the external providers.

So the only direct steps we could take, and indeed have taken, in relation to any EU nationals employed by the Council as domiciliary staff within the Reablement Service, is to approach the single EU national who is employed and that individual is expected to remain in our employment post Brexit.

So far as external providers are concerned, the fundamental point is that the way we control that is through the contracts. So the contract makes it clear what the provider has to do to comply and the underlying question of care provision, who is employed, and how any external factors might affect this, is for that provider – subject to our overview as to safeguarding, the quality of provision and the external investigation that might take place by the CQC into the standard of care.

As part of the qualitative overview of current contracts, providers have been asked to supply their business continuity plans detailing specific actions to be taken in the light of Brexit, and providers have not reported any forecast of reduced or suspended care provision due to staffing.

This will all be followed up in September when we will hold a Provider Forum for all Adult Social Care providers, not just domiciliary care, and that will be concentrating on workforce. So we are following up those issues later.

Turning to the future, we have discussed the new Framework at this meeting, and the tender included a specific question about the impact of Brexit and those providers who tendered did not express any concerns that this would have a significant impact on their operations.

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 Jeffery did not ask a supplementary question.

(k) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Councillor Adrian Abbs:

“Will the Executive confirm that, as recycling is a crucial element of reducing society’s carbon footprint, it will include ending the highly unpopular green bin tax as a part of the cross-party working that was promised at the Council meeting on 2nd July when a Climate Emergency was declared?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment answered:

Firstly, you have used the term green bin tax in your question and I would point out there is no such thing, this is a discretionary charge. This is a service which, along with the majority of councils in England and Wales, we are now forced to make a charge for. Again it is discretionary and is not a tax.

That having been said the reason, as you very well know, for having to make this decision was to raise money and I would ask you perhaps to reflect on how, if you were sitting here and revoking this charge, how you would cut other services to the tune of now well over one million pounds to compensate for that giveaway.

That being said, again we are not considering removing the charge, we are very grateful to local residents for responding to the need to recycle more and this is definitely helping the district to continue its strong record in recycling as I referred to in my answer to Mrs Paynter’s questions earlier.

It actually it is the case that right now there is a very small amount of green waste that goes into black bins, and that proportion has dropped since the start of the service. While it is very difficult to compare year on year, because rainfall which varies has a huge effect on green waste recycling, we have only seen a very marginal decrease in the amount of green waste recycling.

So in summary we don’t plan and could not plan, without making unacceptable cuts to vital services, to reverse direction on this. We are confident that recycling will maintain its upward trajectory and we would encourage residents not only to use the service, but if that is financially difficulty for them, to do the best thing for the environment which is to compost waste, both food and garden waste, at home.

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 Adrian Abbs asked:

“In terms of how people would call this a tax; mainly because having campaigned for four months on the doorstep and having, with the team I was with, met with nearly 3000 individuals during that time, they perceive it as a tax. My question to you now is given that people are against the tax, why do you continue it?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment answered:

I think you are repeating your earlier question, you are saying would you withdraw it, then you give a bit more information and then ask why are you continuing. Is there any difference between what I have just responded to and your supplementary?

(g) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Erik Pattenden:

“From the recently reported Key Stage 2 results showing that teacher assessments of reading, writing and mathematics for pupils aged 7 are down this year, can the Council explain how and when will these be improved?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education answered:

Firstly I'd like to correct your assumption that pupil results at age 7 are Key Stage 2, they are not. The children of that age are at the end of Key Stage 1. So I will be talking about Key Stage 1 results.

At KS1, disadvantaged numbers make up 11.9% of the total number of pupils. Data for disadvantaged pupils took a drop of around 8 percentage points this year. Some of these pupils also cross over into the SEND group and this combination contributes to the KS1 results being lower in each area of reading, writing and maths.

We know that SEND groups differ hugely from year to year due to their specific SEND need. Some SEND pupils whose disability still enables them to meet challenging assessment requirements can still reach what the government expects at age 7 in reading, writing and maths. However, we must be mindful that SEND children do make progress against their own targets. These are not measured as test result outcomes, but rather in their individual Education Health and Care Plans and through a school's target setting and review process.

In 2019, the progress for SEND pupils in reading improved by 0.9 percentage points and in writing by 0.8 percentage points. In maths, progress stayed broadly the same. For disadvantaged pupils aged 11 (end of key stage 2), progress in reading has improved by 1.2 percentage points, for writing 1.5 percentage points improvement and in maths improved by 0.5 percentage points.

Your question goes on to ask when the results will be improved. Results for the seven year olds in KS1, rely on a very good start at nursery and pre-school. The focus on these pupils has been relentless and we are beginning to see the recovery in reading results by the end of year 1. This is very important, the importance of a good starting point at early years ahead of entering mainstream education.

The phonics screen check results for our 6 year olds in 2019 show us that boys in receipt of free school meals improved by 8 percentage points. This is a good platform on which to build improved reading and writing results for 2020.

The targeted approach through specific projects, funded by the Department for Education and driven by West Berkshire, has had a good impact on schools and outcomes. If you would like to know more about the specific projects, I am happy to talk to you about them offline.

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 Pattenden did not ask a supplementary question asked.

(f) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Erik Pattenden:

“Is Department of Education grant funding for improvement activities that led to improvements in phonic and maths at a group of schools in West Berks going to be renewed?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education answered:

We are delighted to have won Strategic School Improvement Grant funding to support new initiatives in phonics and maths teaching. We were one of only a very small number of local authorities to have made successful bids in a very competitive process. The DfE have indicated that they will not be running any further bidding rounds. However, we have already been planning how the very important lessons learnt through this funding can be incorporated into our 2019/20 school improvement strategy and delivery.

That strategy of course will need to be funded, so we need to make sure that the lessons learnt and the improvement we have gained will be funded in the future.

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 Erik Pattenden asked:

“Have you got a view at this stage of how much funding is going to be required to sustain or even improve on the improvements achieved from the DfE grant?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education answered:

In absolute terms, I do not have that at the moment. If it is important to you I am sure I can give that to you in a written reply.

If there is value in the funding that we have gained from the DfE, then we will need to replace that. We can do that either through the normal funding processes within the Council, but there may be other grants that unfold from the DfE and that will be supplemented by our healthy trading activity with schools. The money will be there.

(h) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Erik Pattenden:

“What is the price per meal for a school meal provided under the current school meals service from the central contract?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education answered:

The free school meal price is the same as the universal infant free school meal price - £2.30
Primary school retail price is £2.35
Secondary school retail price is £2.40

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 Pattenden did not ask a supplementary question.