

Questions and Answers

Council
Tuesday 5 March 2019

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Council Meeting

5 March 2019

Questions and Answers



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

(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside by Mr Peter Norman:

"I am sure the Council will want to join me in congratulating West Berkshire students who took time off school to demand action on climate change on 15th February, however could the Council explain why no one from the Executive was there to listen to the demands of their demonstration and to support our youth in taking an active interest in getting involved in our democratic processes?"

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

There are three parts to your question:

Firstly, you ask me to congratulate the students of West Berkshire. With pleasure. We are very proud of the young people here who are campaigning for action on climate change, there is no more important issue.

I should mention that, like you Mr Norman, I have been a governor at St Bartholomew's School for many years (and still am) and I wasn't surprised to read in the papers that many of the protestors came from St Bartholomew's, which is a school that encourages its students to make a difference. I have recently heard the head teacher describe the superb work the students are doing in school, for example in eliminating single-use plastics, we know that it's more than protest, they are taking action and we are really proud of them.

You then go on to ask me to endorse the students' decision to take time off school. You and I, Mr Norman, as governors, are well aware of the direct relationship between attendance and attainment. To quote, 'every day missed is associated with a lower attainment outcome.'

I regret that the young people chose to take time off school. I understand the precedent of Greta Thunberg, I don't think that learning only happens in the classroom, but I still regret their decision.

Perhaps we should remember that today about 260 million children didn't have a school place. Education is, of course, a right, but it should also be prized.

Now, most of the students we know are bright, resilient, hard working and they will be fine. But is it not possible that among the protestors, there was at least one who was vulnerable, one who was unsafe, one who was missing a critical lesson that no matter how hard working their teachers, they'll find it impossible to catch up.

That brings me to your third point. I listen to anyone: young, old or in-between. But I will not incite young people to miss school, and I certainly won't be contacting them directly through social media to encourage them to miss school. As a long serving safeguarding governor, I just don't think that is right. But your question ends with a really good point. How are we going to support our youth who are taking this active interest? Well I have been speaking to the Leader about this and you are right, there is a lot of knowledge and experience and ideas among our

young people and we'll find a way, a safe way, to work with them, to make sure they are involved with what we do 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?”*

Mr Norman asked:

“I welcome Councillor Clifford’s comments about wanting to work with young people. I also commend her motion later on in the meeting where I notice she is determined to act on the issue of climate change.

One of the demands the students made was that they want zero carbon on things like housing, energy and other areas, can you tell me when you’re going to implement the Core Strategy aim of getting zero carbon, for all new housing in this area?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

I did come out to speak to the students, but it was impossible to have a conversation, certainly wasn't a lack of willingness as you know.

We are moving forward on that, I can't give you a precise date, this isn't my portfolio. We have recently declared the intention that all public buildings will be carbon neutral, but I will have to come back to you on the housing side Peter.

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Property by Ms Joanne Stewart:

“What measures have been put in place to support the good causes who have been approved for the new West Berkshire Lottery?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Property answered:

The local society lottery model is a proven, tested commercial route to raising funds for local good causes. West Berkshire will operate our lottery using an External Licence Manager (ELM) and that will be Gatherwell who have a lot of experience in working with local authorities.

The ELM are supporting all good causes joining West Berkshire’s Lottery to make sure they maximise this new opportunity to raise funds. Through the website hosted by the ELM they are provided with tools and advice to help promote their individual lottery page. Each cause gets their own dashboard which helps keep track of how their page is performing. Also provided are marketing hints and tips, downloadable promotional materials that are automatically customised to include their good cause logo and come in both printable and digital options. These are updated quarterly with new materials to help keep things fresh for them. There is the option for them to customise the content in the leaflets to include their own messages.

There is a dedicated helpline provided by the ELM and email address, so if a good cause or any of their supporters have questions about how it works or need support, there is a team member ready to help. If supporters don't have access to the internet or would like some help registering, they can join by calling the support number.

The financial side of things are all taken care of too. Good causes just need to provide bank details via the dashboard and any money raised via their page will be paid automatically to them on a monthly basis accompanied by a report detailing the transaction.

The causes will receive a weekly update via email on the progress of their lottery and the players who've chosen to direct their support to them. All this support is available almost as soon as the good causes are approved.

To make sure those good causes that have joined in on this exciting new initiative for raising funds are getting off to the best possible start, the dedicated officer in the Council for marketing will be making contact over the next couple of weeks with those causes who, to date, have not yet sold any tickets to see if there is anything we can do to help them.

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?”*

Ms Stewart asked:

“Could you tell us how many good causes have signed up?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Property by answered:

I can, at the moment there are 66 signed up, with over 800 tickets already reserved and we are expecting annualised £25,000 worth of funding going to good causes. The draw starts at the end of the month.

(c) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Mr Steve Masters:

“Will the Leader of the Council reassure the students that the Council will do everything it can to plan and execute a credible, science based solution to the looming climate catastrophe and ensure that they have a sustainable future?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

Let me start with a quote:

"For generations, we have assumed that the efforts of mankind would leave the fundamental equilibrium of the world's systems and atmosphere stable. But it is possible that with all these enormous changes (population, agriculture, use of fossil fuels) concentrated into a short period of time, we have unwittingly begun a massive experiment with the system of the planet itself."

For those of you who don't know that is a quote from Margaret Thatcher in a speech to the Royal Society in September 1988. Green issues are at the heart of Conservatism.

You may have watched a BBC programme – “Icons of the 20th Century”

Chris Packham, tv presenter and naturalist with a passionate concern for conservation and the environment, gave a compelling case to support the winner, Alan Turing. Not only did Turing's work shorten World War 2 and save many lives but in doing so he did become the “Father of Computers”.

Chris Packham got everyone in his audience to hold up their mobile phones – the familiar but amazing devices that are a direct result of his work.

Chris Packham made the case that solving our future problems, solving climate change rests with science and scientists.

I agree.

I would add though that whilst it is scientists who can do the analysis and work on the solutions, it is society and our communities who need to embrace the changes necessary and it is their elected representatives who need to be listening to scientists and implementing solutions.

I am sure West Berkshire's achievements and work will be highlighted later this evening.

By nature I am an optimist and, irrespective of the nonsense talked by Donald Trump, I believe as a world, we will embrace the solutions necessary at a local, national and international level to combat and control global warming.

Please don't confuse that with any form of complacency. There is a lot of very difficult work to do and there are many huge problems to overcome –such as plastics in our oceans- that requires action now.

Communities need strong leadership. We need to change habits and accept individual responsibility. That involves our day to day lives: shopping, travel, packaging and so many different aspects.

West Berkshire Council will continue to work with all, including yourself and particularly the younger generation, to be in the forefront of implementing practical science based solutions.

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 Masters asked:

“If we knew about it when Mrs Thatcher was making that quote, as eloquent as it was Councillor, why are we still waiting for actual definitive action.

Your party, Mrs Thatcher’s party, still continues to back fracking and the third runway at Heathrow, these are incompatible.

Would you agree?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

I wouldn’t agree with you and I think we ought to be looking at where we agree to take this agenda forward. Not trying to look for divisions between us.

I think all in this chamber would agree, there is a fundamental, very difficult task ahead of us and we all need to be engaging with it.

(e) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside by Ms Carlyne Culver:

“Will West Berkshire Council commit to return salt bins to parishes whence they were removed, so that parish councils and/or local residents can make arrangements to fill and maintain them?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

Thank you for your question, Ms Culver.

This Council's Winter Service Plan provides, when required, the gritting of hundreds of miles of our highway network, snow clearance, footway treatments and the provision of some salt bins. It is tried and tested and we think it works well.

West Berkshire is a rural district and we think it's very important to clear more than just our A and B roads, which is what happens in many other areas. In West Berkshire, although we can't treat everywhere, we have made the decision to treat our A roads, our B roads and also strategically important C roads and some unclassified roads.

So it's good, it's fair on our rural communities, it's value for money – but there's no doubt it's also expensive.

And that's why we are delighted that many of our parishes have stepped forward to fund and manage extra salt bins for their local communities. I am very grateful to them, and I am sure their residents are too. We have some extraordinary parish councils in West Berkshire that don't always get the credit for the great work that they do. Cllr Cole's parish council, for example, funds additional gritting and that's fantastic.

I know Ms Culver that you are particularly interested in Compton Parish, as we have been in correspondence. Compton Parish has not asked us to provide a service, although we in West Berkshire stand ready to respond to any request it might make. As you are aware, I copied the parish into our exchange, so it knows of your views too.

But I am afraid it is not for me to answer on behalf of Compton Parish.

My parish, under its excellent leader Councillor Adrian Edwards, has set aside £7,500 for salt bins in the next financial year. An example of a parish fulfilling its responsibilities. I would like to thank it and all the other parishes who provide these extra bins. It's very welcome to see District and Parish Councils working together for the good of their residents.

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?”*

Ms Culver asked:

“So if Mr David Aldis, who is the Chairman of Compton Parish Council, was to contact you later this week Councillor Clifford, would West Berkshire Council agree to fill all of the salt bins in Compton?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

At a cost.

Ms Culver asked:

“What would the cost be?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

I think I gave you the figure in our correspondence. I think from memory it is £250 per bag, but I am not sure about that. However you do have the figure and Compton Parish Council of course have the figure as we have spoken to them, as we have to all parishes. They know the cost of this service and many have taken it up. But if Compton want the service we will arrange it.

(g) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Property by Dr Julie Wintrup

“Can we look forward to this being the final year of destabilising cuts and threats of cuts to local public health, drug and alcohol, and mental health services, now that the government has announced that austerity has ended?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Property answered:

West Berkshire Council prides itself on providing financially sound budgets. As we will be seeing later this evening, once again we will increase the total spend this Council makes.

In Adult Social Care alone we are spending 9 million pounds more next year, than we did three years ago. To do this we have prioritised our funding, and identified new ways of making sure the money used from council tax payers is being put to its best use. The Council continually reviews how the public health fund is used to ensure that we achieve the best outcomes for our local population.

Mental health services are commissioned from a range of organisations, including both the Council and the NHS. We will continue to work closely with our partners through the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure that resources are used effectively.

Indeed it has recently been reported nationally that local authorities are using public health money more strategically to provide improved results.

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?”*

Dr Wintrup asked:

“So can we say that austerity is over in West Berkshire for the poorest people?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Property answered:

I would say that we are always looking at ways to fund our Council better and we are always pressuring central government to make sure that we are getting sufficient funding.

(h) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services by Mr Thomas Tunney:

“Given that public sector retail jobs are offering better pay, what is the council doing in ways of attracting job applicants and retaining staff?”

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services answered:

The Council does not have difficulty attracting candidates for the majority of its vacancies. However, the recruitment of Children’s Social Workers; Social Workers in Adult Social Care; and Occupational Therapists is challenging because of a regional shortage of qualified candidates.

The Council tracks pay for posts using a benchmarking system provided by South East Employers.

The Council takes a variety of actions to improve recruitment and retention for hard to fill posts including looking at the job content and design; the recruitment process; and the approach to advertising. The Council wants to improve recruitment by increasing the use of social media channels when recruiting for hard to fill posts.

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 Tunney asked:

“So what is to keep staff coming back into a high pressured job like the Council, when they could go to Ikea and serve hot dogs for more money?”

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services answered:

I am happy to say that the Council’s voluntary turnover in 2017/18 was just 12%, down from 12.26% in 16/17. 86% of employees have been with the Council for over a year. The average length of service is 8 years and 5 months.

In the Council’s employee attitude survey (which was completed by 69% of employees in summer 2018), 62% of employees agreed with the statement “I would recommend the Council as a good place to work” which is 8% higher than the local government benchmark score.

(n) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside by Mrs Miriam Lee (asked on her behalf by Mr Steve Masters):

“In the light of the IPCC report saying we have 12 years to reduce carbon emissions by 50%, can the council confirm if they are using a 100% renewable energy supplier for the electricity used in all their services? “

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

Where it is the right thing to do, we work with other councils to secure goods and services at best value for our residents. They expect it of us. When it comes to buying energy, that’s precisely our approach.

As a well-run council, we buy our energy collectively. West Berkshire Council is signed up to a collective energy purchasing agreement run by the Crown Commercial Service.

This means we benefit from expert market analysis, risk management and strategic purchasing - all good – but it does mean I cannot confirm how much of the energy we use is from renewable sources.

What I will say is that according to Friends of the Earth, the share of the energy market occupied by low-carbon generation in this country rose from 20% to 52%, equivalent to a fall in emissions of 59%, between 2008 and 2017. It’s possible, it might even be probable, that there’s the same profile in the energy we purchase.

We are aware of the importance of getting this right and when the time comes we will speak to Crown Commercial Service about the structure of the energy we buy.

In the Capital Strategy and Programme tonight, we will be talking about our plans to invest in solar energy which will supply the energy this Council needs, generated by ourselves and I think that will be a more satisfactory answer.

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?”*

No supplementary question.

(p) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture and Countryside by Mr Paul Morgan:

“Would the Council agree that the adoption of the Playing Pitch Strategy, when finalised, would be a good example of how the Council is adhering to the objectives and spirit of their own Consultation Policy, which states that West Berkshire Council (WBC) is committed to making sure decisions are evidence-based, taking into account the views and experiences of residents and service users?”

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture answered:

Thank you for your question and comments which are kindly complimentary to the Council’s work. However, I should point out that the process followed for the Playing Pitch Strategy development was not that of the Council per se, but was the approved methodology of Sport England for the development of a Playing Pitch Strategy.

You are right, the Sport England recommendations do tally well with the Council’s own standards and the Playing Pitch Strategy will, when completed, guide the Council into providing, as far as available resources allow, the right quantity and the right quality of playing surfaces and in the right places.

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 Morgan asked:

“So are you following your own consultation strategy? The consultation strategy says and I’ll read it to you: West Berkshire Council is committed to making sure decisions are evidence-based, taking into account the views and experiences of residents and service users.

Now the Playing Pitch Strategy consultation is with all of the users of the various pitches throughout the area, plus Sport England, plus the FA which to my mind is a very broad consultation policy. So my question is, bearing in mind your own policy, will you follow the recommendations of that Playing Pitch Strategy?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

The Council is a signatory to that Playing Pitch Strategy and we have worked, as you say, and consulted with a wide number of people. I said in my answer, in as far as available resources allow, the right quantity and the right quality of playing surfaces will be sought. However, the Council will not sign up to something that it is not committed to deliver.

(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside by Mr Steve Masters:

“Should environmental impact be an integral part of all council planning and decision making in the same way financial impacts are assessed?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

Environmental impact assessment is already an integral part of council planning and decision making.

Under the law of the land, environmental impact assessments must be undertaken for many planning applications when we’re developing the local plan, and that includes the local transport plan, highways projects, land drainage and more.

The explicit goal of the planning system in this country is sustainable development:

Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

So the planning system has three objectives: economic, social and environmental – it’s there, and the latter is spelt out as follows:

Helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

What this means is some options that come before us at this Council fail on environmental grounds, which is bad news for the landowner, the developer etc, but good news for the environment and here’s a great example:

We’re working on our new local plan at the moment and of the sites that have come forward, a fifth of them have already been discounted on the grounds of biodiversity alone. Others will fall, perhaps for example, the developer can’t get the transport right. If a site can’t accommodate adequate walking and cycling facilities, then the site will be rejected by this Council.

On the other hand, we have the know-how to reduce the environmental impact of schemes so that they can go ahead and we can enjoy the economic and social benefits they offer, and for that we might think to thank the landowners and developers and the entrepreneurs.

So we look at planting trees, our car club, our transport.

Another area I’m involved with is procurement, I could talk about that for some time. We are required by law to have sustainable commissioning. Now you’re going to say to me we should do more and you are right.

The draft Council Strategy is out for consultation until the 23 March. It makes clear our ambition to protect the environment, I suggest you respond to it and give us some firm ideas.

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 Masters asked:

“Bearing in mind what you said about the assessments taking place now, can you tell me how the support for the runway at Heathrow passed such an assessment and clarify its environmental benefit?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

The question is about environmental impact, and I am sure you have read the environmental impact of Heathrow. We were very happy to support and I believe it was almost unanimous to support the third runway at Heathrow because of the benefits it will bring to West Berkshire.

(f) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside by Ms Carlyne Culver:

“Would the Council consider allowing residents who, for example, simply want to visit the bank or drop their library books off, to park for free for 30 minutes in car parks in central Newbury?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

Thank you for your question. 30 minutes free parking is available in Newbury. Residents and visitors have free 30 minute parking in Northbrook Street; Broadway; Cheap Street; Kings Road West; Bartholomew Street; Newtown Road (northern section); West Mills and Pelican Lane.

Handy for the banks, handy for the shops, and handy for the library. People like this option, businesses like it and so do we.

Of course, for many of us (though I know not all), there are other ways than driving to get to Newbury that are better for our health and better for the environment. Our elegant new bus station is right next to the library, we've invested in cycling, parking and routes, and we're very pleased to have additional funding for footways this year, we will be spending five times as much as we did last year.

It's not all about the car for this Council.

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?”*

Ms Culver asked:

“When I looked on the website, for every car park I looked at it didn't say about a free 30 minute period of time, it just talked about how much it cost per hour. So what will the Council do to better publicise this?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside answered:

I am glad you looked on the website, the information is there and of course there are posts around all of the streets of Newbury explaining this. But thank you for bringing attention to it, this is free 30 minute parking to keep our town centre vibrant and support people who just want to nip in to town.

(i) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Property by Mr Thomas Tunney:

“What is the point of raising council tax by 2.99% if it is still not going to fill the hole left by central government cuts?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Property provided the following written answer:

Your question implies that there is no point in raising Council Tax. I dispute this as without the increase the Council would have to find nearly £3m extra savings next year to deliver a balanced budget.

That is because the proposed council tax increase of 2.99% delivers an additional income stream of £2.84m for the Council in 2019/20 as detailed in the Budget Papers presented at the Council meeting on the 05 March 2019.

I, and my fellow Conservative Councillors, along with our local Members of Parliament, will continue to lobby central government to provide a better funding formula. Our lobbying so far has provided us with two successive years of Business Rate retention and the removal of the so-called Negative Revenue Support Grant. The removal of negative RSG benefited West Berkshire by £1.8m and being awarded the new Business Rate Retention scheme resulted in an additional £1.75m of the taxes collected in West Berkshire actually staying in West Berkshire.

(o) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside by Mrs Miriam Lee:

“If the Council does not use a 100% renewable energy supplier for its electricity when do they intend to switch?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside gave the following written answer:

The Council have reviewed their estate and have data available to understand their consumption trends. Combining this data with the improvements in solar technology the time is right to begin more projects which allow the Council to generate more of its own, green, energy. The pilot projects being evaluated now will reduce the Council’s use of energy bought through the Crown Commercial Service (CCS).

If the pilot projects are deemed successful, against their business planning assumptions, more sites will sought leading to further reductions in CCS purchasing. The timeframes for the pilot is completion by the end of March 2020.

The Council will make enquiries, in advance of the next purchasing round, with CCS to identify any opportunities to specifically purchase green energy and balance it against the benefits of the local production projects.

The Council’s ability to purchase energy from 100% green sources does vary depending on our suppliers being able to purchase it. Our contractual relationship with CCS means that we can evaluate the cost implications of a switch to 100% in the summer and establish whether this is possible within our energy budgets.

The Council remains optimistic that the green energy market is becoming increasingly competitive and will seek to take advantage of improved pricing strategies from those suppliers.

You had also asked “In the light of the IPCC report saying we have 12 years to reduce carbon emissions by 50%, can the council confirm if they are using a 100% renewable energy supplier for the electricity used in all their services? “

I can confirm, as you were unable to attend the meeting that this question was answered at the meeting and the Council will produce a verbatim record of answers given as soon as is practicably possible. You will of course be notified when these responses are published.

(j) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People by Mr Thomas Tunney:

Question:

“At current funding rates, which schools will be in budget deficit in the upcoming financial year?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People gave the following written answer:

The Council will not know the schools budget position for next year until budgets have been submitted to the Council by the end of May 2019.

(m) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside by Mr Steve Masters:

“How many times is climate change mentioned in the proposed budget?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside provided the following written answer:

Climate change is referenced in many key documents, *among them*: -

- the **West Berkshire 2036 Vision** endorsed by Council on Tuesday night, which commits the Council to ‘do all within our power to mitigate the impact of climate change on our natural Environment’
- the new **Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Five Year Management Plan** which is coming forward to the Council for adoption shortly, it includes forty references to climate change. (West Berkshire Council is represented by Cllr Clifford on the AONB Council of Partners. 74% of West Berkshire is in the AONB)
- The **Local Plan** and the **Local Transport Plan**
- The new **West Berkshire Strategy**, which commits the Council to ‘Minimise the impact on the environment in delivering services’

Residents of West Berkshire expect this Council to manage its finances well – as it does – and will understand the technical nature of the budget papers.

The other questions that you submitted were responded to at the meeting and as is always the case we will produce a verbatim record of those questions and answers as soon as is practicably possible.

(k) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside by Mr Thomas Tunney:

“What has been the uptake of the Get your coat app?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport, Environment and Countryside gave the following written answer:

The new free ‘Get Your Coat’ app had a soft launch last summer. We are pleased it’s been downloaded by 365 early adopters at the last count, and are looking forward to its full launch this coming summer, in partnership with other Berkshire Authorities and Thames Valley Police. It has already attracted the attention of the Fire & Rescue Service, Reading Festival, Great Western Railways, alcohol charities, other local authorities and more.

The goal of the app, developed with the support of the police, is to keep people, and perhaps especially young people, safe on a day or night out. It does this, for example, by motivating them to leave the car at home, make other plans to get back safely, keep an eye on how much they’ve had to drink and reuniting friends who’ve become separated. Family members at home, such as parents of young people, will find the app reassuring too.

As a highway authority, this Council has a statutory duty to promote road safety. We have an award-winning programme that aims to change behaviour: evidence-based, fully evaluated and with the overall aim of reducing casualties. Some of its activities are,

- the speed intervention programme,
- DriveStart, a very successful young driver programme that has been awarded the Chartered Institute of Highways & Transportation’s John Smart Road Safety Award, the Best Partnership Scheme at the FirstCar Young Driver Road Safety Awards and the prestigious Prince Michael International Road Safety Award,
- Our cycling safety programme, Bikes, Big Trucks & YOU which has seen more than 8000 children trained.
- Our Bikeability scheme.

We’re delighted to add ‘Get Your Coat’ to our programme.

(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture by Mr Thomas Tunney:

“How will the upcoming budget affect the ability of the Health and Wellbeing Board’s 2 main goals of Mental Health and helping vulnerable people back in to meaningful activities?”

Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture answered:

Mental health and helping vulnerable people into work are current priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board and we do not anticipate that the upcoming budget will affect the ability of the health and wellbeing board to deliver against these priorities. Whilst some of the savings proposals previously recommended reductions to activities that might have impacted on individuals with poor mental health or helping vulnerable people into work, we have since listened to the concerns of our residents and are recommending that some of these savings are now not taken e.g. supported employment for disabled people, voluntary sector prospectus.

The Council will continue to support the two priority areas and have allocated £55,000 through the Health and Wellbeing Priority Fund to support the delivery of actions identified by the Mental Health Action Group and the Skills and Enterprise Partnership.

We recognise that the council are unable address these priorities on their own and that action is required across all our partners including the statutory, private, community and voluntary sector.

Member Questions for Council Meeting

5 March 2019

No Member questions.