

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday 16 July 2020

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Executive Meeting

16 July 2020

Questions and Answers



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

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

“Who got planning permission for the cycle lane on the A4 between Tesco and Mercedes garage and is it finished?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside provided the following written response:

“I can confirm that the provision of the cycle improvement falls within permitted development by a Highway Authority under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 and the Highways Act 1980. Planning permission is therefore not required.

There is a small section of this route that is not yet complete and is dependent on the outcome of the planning applications for the former Narrowboat Public House site. The cycle track will then continue to join the existing National Cycle Route 4 cycleway at Hambridge Road. Therefore once complete it will give a segregated traffic-free route between Newbury and Thatcham.”

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care by Ms Paula Saunderson:

“How many patients, and into which West Berkshire Care Settings, were Transfers of Care made from NHS Hospitals between 1st March and end of April without being tested as negative for Covid-19?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care provided the following written response:

ASC principally supports discharge from three acute hospitals – the Royal Berkshire, North Hampshire and Great Western Hospitals, and one community hospital – the West Berkshire Community Hospital.

Over the time period in question, practice varied - to some extent - in these different settings, in addition to which, and very importantly, there were key changes driven by the publication of national guidance.

Starting with those changes and the guidance:

- **1 to 19 March:** People were tested by each hospital if they were symptomatic (you will recall that in the early days the symptoms were a dry cough and high fever, but later further symptoms, such as a loss of taste and smell, were identified as additional symptoms).
- **19 March to 15 April:** On 19 March new hospital discharge arrangements came into place - see [‘COVID-19 Hospital Discharge Service Requirements’](#) - including “*acute and community hospitals must discharge all patients as soon as they are clinically safe to do so*”. The procedures in those service requirements were followed and people continued to be tested by each hospital if they were symptomatic.

- **16 to 30 April:** From 16 April, [new guidance](#) required hospitals to test all patients for Covid prior to discharge to a care home.

In terms of any variations in approach of the local acute hospitals, the North Hampshire Hospital did not discharge patients who tested Covid positive. For the other hospitals the discharge process continued, but with a recommendation to implement quarantine measures. For people being discharged from hospital into a care home with a Covid positive test, the guidance recommended isolation for two weeks and that staff wore appropriate PPE when dealing with the individual.

Now turning to the numbers, there were 29 discharges from hospitals into care homes during the period in question, comprising:

- 16 individuals who had no Covid-19 symptoms and were not tested prior to discharge;
- five individuals who showed symptoms or had been tested as positive for Covid-19 previously but were tested as negative for Covid-19 prior to discharge;
- seven individuals who showed symptoms and were tested as positive for Covid-19 prior to discharge to an isolated setting; and
- one individual had no Covid-19 symptoms and was not tested prior to discharge, but who had been on a ward where another patient tested positive the following day and (after the hospital notified the home) tested positive (and was thus placed in an isolated setting).

So far as the care/nursing settings into which the 29 were discharged are concerned, these were: Apple Hill, Basset House, Bayford House, Birchwood, Cherry Blossom, Donnington, Holly Grange, Hungerford, Notrees, Ridgeway Rise, Savernake, The Argyles, Walnut Close and Willows Edge.

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care by Ms Paula Saunderson:

“During this period were the usual Transfer of Care Procedures of the Joint Care Provider Service overturned, possibly leading to additional risk to patients and Care Settings?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care provided the following written response:

It depends upon what is meant by “usual”. As per my previous answer, procedures for hospital discharges were changed during the period, so these became the usual procedures – the documents hyperlinked above set out what those procedures were.

It also needs to be said that alongside the changes to the procedures for hospital discharge, there was of course additional funding given to local authorities to manage the cost of Covid-19 and to support providers – West Berkshire Council has been actively funding providers for the costs of Covid-19 (in addition to which we have had the more recent infection control grants to hand out).

As to whether the changes increased or reduced the level of risk for patients and care home residents, the question is a complex one and academic research on the issue has begun.

(d) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Mr Peter Carline:

“How prepared do you believe West Berkshire is for a no deal Brexit?”

The Leader of the Council provided the following written response:

“Since the UK formally left the EU on 31st January 2020 and entered the transition period, which is due to end on 31st December 2020, the Council and its partners have been monitoring the progress of the UK-EU trade talks. As you will know, 30th June was the deadline for requesting an extension to this transition period and this date passed with no such extension being requested. We must now, along with our partners including the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum, prepare for the end of this transition period.

Prior to Covid-19 we were working on a series of risk mitigation measures to minimise any potential impact on West Berkshire’s local economy. These actions will be reviewed and will also contribute to our Covid-19 Recovery Strategy, which is on the agenda this evening. These include our work with partners such as Newbury College to ensure that the skills of young people meets the needs of local businesses and our work with Thames Valley Berkshire LEP to lobby Government for financial support for the industries most likely to be impacted, such as agriculture, as well as the provision of support to individual businesses through the Berkshire Business Growth Hub.

In addition, the Council’s EU Exit Steering Group is being reformed in order to ensure the necessary preparations are in place, not only for a no deal situation but also to manage the implications of any agreed deal. This includes a review of the potential impact on our local economy as well as on the sustainability of our own services, particularly those on which our most vulnerable residents rely.

We are confident that the preparation undertaken previously and the work we are doing to facilitate post-Covid recovery stands us in good stead for the implications of a no deal outcome, if that is the outcome, at the end of this year.”

(e) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Mr Peter Carline:

“What advice are and will you be giving to residents who may be concerned about this seemingly inevitable and undesirable outcome?”

The Leader of the Council provided the following written response:

“Thank you for your question. As I mentioned in the answer to your previous question, the transition period will end on 31st December, at which point the UK will leave the EU. Your question assumes that the outcome of this will be undesirable, which I don’t necessarily accept, but I can understand that some local residents will be concerned about the changes that exiting the EU may bring.

We have, in the past, provided advice to the whole community in West Berkshire. In particular, we have focused on promoting the EU Settlement scheme therefore ensuring the valued EU citizens already living and working are able to continue to do so. Going forward, as the implications of any deal, or absence thereof, become clearer we shall of course provide relevant information and advice for the community.

The past few months have been very difficult for all of us and, again, the prospect of the end of the transition period will add these concerns for some residents and, indeed, our business community. We would like to reassure them that we are doing all we can to ensure that the district and its people have what they need to thrive and will continue to do so.”

(f) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Mr Graham Storey:

“Can the Executive explain why there is a discrepancy between the figure provided by Councillor Hilary Cole of an average of 127 units of social housing for rent being developed each year since 2015 and the figures available on the Council website?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response:

“All affordable houses in West Berkshire have an element of rent, some are 100% rented and others are part rent and part mortgage (shared ownership) so the answer provided was correct.

However, it is now clear that you wish to focus on just Social Rent and since 2015, 251 Social Rented properties have been added.

There is no discrepancy, the figures previously quoted came from Table 3.22 (all new build affordable housing) and not A.13 which refers to just Social Rent of the Annual Monitoring Statement that is available from the Planning Policy Web Pages of the Councils Web Site.

1st April 2015 to 31st March 2018 - 379 or 126 per annum of which 162 Social Rent and 217 shared ownership.

1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019 - an additional 85 units provided of which 33 Social Rent 52 Shared Ownership

The figures for 1st April to 31st March 2020 are still being fact checked but suggest an additional 101 affordable houses of which 56 Social Rent and 45 Shared Ownership.”

(g) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Mr Graham Storey:

“Please can the Executive confirm the actual number of homes for social rent that have been added in each year since 2015?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response:

“This information is provided in the Appendix 13 of the Annual Monitoring Report produced and published by Planning Policy it does of course only refer to new build properties.

In 2016/17 there was a change in definition. Therefore the figures below relate only to “Social Rent” and everything else is regarded as shared ownership (even if it is affordable rent or intermediate rent)

	Total AH	Social Rent	Shared Ownership
2015/16	158	65	93
2016/17	96	18	78
2017/18	125	79	46
2018/19	85	33	52
2019/20*	101	56	45

*data for 2019/2020
still provisional”

(h) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Mr Graham Storey:

“How can WBC say they are meeting the housing needs of local residents on low incomes when there are c1755 West Berkshire households on the housing waiting list and only one property is available on the latest Homechoice bidding list?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response:

“West Berkshire Council has an open waiting list that enables residents who qualify for social housing in the district to apply and those who live outside of the district to also apply known as non-qualifying. Of the c1755 West Berkshire households that you have referred to only 840 of these qualify and are placing bids each week when properties become available.

Homechoice West Berkshire is the Council’s bidding system and the amount of properties that become available for applicants on the housing register with a housing need changes each week. Due to this being a live system and the number of properties change each week we are able to meet the housing needs of these local residents on a low income who are bidding regularly. As the housing register is not a short term quick solution, and is for those who are on a low income, that is why we offer alternative housing options and make residents aware of the eligibility criteria and about supply and demand.”

(i) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Mr Graham Storey:

“Why have WBC not taken advantage of the ability to remove limits on investment in social housing (introduced in 2018) when so many other regions have seized this opportunity to help low income residents?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response:

“The Council has been proactive in terms of undertaking work to review investment opportunities in social housing by reviewing delivery vehicles and how we work with partners to help low income residents. For example, collaborative working with our Registered Providers to deliver affordable housing and this work is strengthened through our Registered Provider Forums. Exploring the development of a Local Housing company to provide more homes and the Joint Venture that is now set up to provide more homes and investment opportunities.”

(j) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Mr Graham Storey:

“Will the Council commit to any actual numbers for additional homes for social rent over the next 5 years?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response:

“The Council Policy is for affordable housing provision to be provided on all developments of more than 5 units in the rural area and 10 units or more in urban. However, developers have the right to seek to change that ratio for a variety of reasons; viability difficulty in getting a Registered Provider to agree to take ownership of the stock, and therefore I cannot commit to actual numbers because they could change.

However, adopted Sites with planning permission and Other planning permission = 846 permissions for affordable housing of which 571 are Social Rent.

Allocated not consented = 198 affordable housing units of which 140 would be Social Rent.”

(k) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Mr Graham Storey:

“When does the Council expect to publish a new planning strategy when the most recent version expired in 2015?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response:

“West Berkshire does not have an expired planning strategy.

The West Berkshire Core Strategy which was adopted in 2012 plans for the period up to 2026 and was supplemented by the Housing Sites Allocations Development Plan Document which covers the same period and was adopted in 2017.

The Councils Local Development Scheme which was published in April 2020, shows that the Local plan roll forward will go out to consultation this autumn and be subject to public examination in February 2022.”

(l) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Mr Graham Storey:

“Is the Council happy to operate without a planning strategy?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response:

“West Berkshire is not operating without a planning strategy.”

(m) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Mr John Gotelee:

“Please can the Portfolio Holder explain what percentage of the urban runoff is not attenuated on new development sites Travelodge on London Road and the Premier Inn on Park Way?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside provided the following written response:

“In accordance with the ‘Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems’, published by Defra, and the council’s Supplementary Planning Document (Dec 2018), the Council would insist on restricting off-site discharges to 1 in 1 year greenfield run-off rate where reasonably practicable or 1 in 2.3 year (Qbar). Both sites discharge into surface water sewers so the discharge rates would have had to be approved by Thames Water, who are responsible for surface water sewers.”

(n) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Mr John Gotelee:

“Please would it be possible for the council to give a brief update to the public on what their plans are to ensure the foul sewage infrastructure (pumping station, high pressure pipe and Thatcham treatment works) can accommodate the extra capacity needed by the London Road industrial estate redevelopment?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment provided the following written response:

“West Berkshire Council has no involvement with foul sewage infrastructure. This is the responsibility of Thames Water. Contact details for Thames Water can be found on their website.”

(o) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing by Mr Vaughan Miller:

“Why has the Council let down the women, men, girls, boys, coaches, parents, schools, teachers, aspiring England players and once a week recreational players of Newbury so badly by taking away the main football ground more than two years ago, and without providing a suitable alternative?”

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing provided the following written response:

“The Council have always worked hard to provide good quality pitches for football and other sports across the whole district, supporting thousands of players throughout the year to enjoy their leisure time.

The Council are actively seeking opportunities to progress the recommendations within the recently approved Playing Pitch Strategy that has the support of Sport England and the various sporting governing bodies. This work will seek to provide improved facilities and a wider range of pitches for the community sports clubs who need them. The solution must be to find financially sustainable sites that appeal to a range of sports clubs and finding ways for clubs to work together. Our Leisure Strategy is being developed with the intention of improving levels of physical activity across the district and we recognise the importance of local sport in that.”

(p) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Ms Miriam Lee:

“Could the Portfolio Holder for Finance please outline what local climate change mitigation projects the additional £6.5m Laura Farris has reported West Berkshire Council has received been invested in?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

“The funding referred to by Laura Farris is detailed in the Council’s published 3 year Capital Programme and includes (in rounded figures) £1.35m on natural carbon reduction measures, £3.5m on renewable energy projects and £1.65m on active travel and sustainable transport measures.

In addition to the above the Council has invested in additional resources to establish an Environment Delivery Team who will be actively involved in engaging with stakeholders and residents to drive forward the objectives of the Council Environment Strategy.”

(q) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Ms Miriam Lee:

“Could the Portfolio Holder for Finance comment on whether it will be emulating other Councils for example Cornwall Council who have set aside £20 million for their climate emergency action plan for this budget year in February 2020?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

“I can confirm that West Berkshire Council will be emulating other Councils and will be setting aside a significant proportion of its spend towards tackling the climate emergency.

£20m represents approximately 1.5% of Cornwall County Council’s approved 2020/21 Capital Programme.

This financial year West Berkshire Council will be spending almost 5% of its Capital Programme directly on projects to combat climate change and it is planned for this percentage to increase significantly in future years.

This demonstrates WBC’s commitment to making sure we achieve our ambitious target of carbon neutrality by 2030.”

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

“Please will the Council say if there are any significant infrastructure problems which are causing delays in redeveloping of the London Road Industrial Estate?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development provided the following written response:

“There are no known significant infrastructure problems that might delay redevelopment should it proceed.”

(s) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Mr Alan Pearce:

“Please will the council say if they have ever considered using the former football ground at Faraday Road as an overflow balancing pond to overcome any problems regarding sustainable drainage when redeveloping London Road Industrial Estate?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside provided the following written response:

“The detailed mitigation for the development of the London Road Industrial Estate would need to be considered by designers working on behalf of the developer of the site. The Council cannot stipulate how sustainable drainage should be designed, only that it should be in accordance with national and local policies and provide appropriate mitigation.”

(t) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Mr Simon Pike:

“As it appears that West Berkshire Council does not have any written documentation on guidance or standards for implementation of cycling infrastructure on its road network, would it consider adopting or following the guidance of Wokingham Borough Council in its Cycling Infrastructure Style Guide (2013)?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside provided the following written response:

“The DfT guidance for local authorities on designing good, safe infrastructure for cyclists is set out in Local Transport Note 2/08. In line with the commitment made in the Government’s Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, the DfT is in the process of updating this guidance to take account of developments in cycling infrastructure since its publication in 2008, and a revised version is due imminently (overdue; in fact the update was due in 2018). In lieu of this it is considered better to wait for the national standards to be updated rather than develop our own.”

(u) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Dr Chris Foster:

“What measures will the Executive propose to ensure that the proposed development of at least 3200 homes north west of Basingstoke (known as Manydown) won’t have an intolerable impact on traffic on the A339 through Newbury, on top of that from Sandford Park and other forthcoming developments?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside provided the following written response:

“West Berkshire Council Highways Officers have secured a condition whereby the developer must enter into a legal agreement to provide appropriate mitigation for the impact of traffic from the Manydown Development on our roads. Council Officers have identified a number of highway improvements along the A339 and will be discussing the details with the developer’s consultants over the coming weeks.

If you require further information please contact the Council’s trafficandroadsafety@westberks.gov.uk team.”

(v) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Mr Simon Pike:

“In its implementation of a Mandatory Cycle Lane through Thatcham, did the Council consider the impact on the passage of emergency vehicles (especially ambulances), given that it is not permitted for a vehicle to enter a mandatory cycle lane in order to allow emergency vehicles to overtake?”

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside provided the following written response:

“There is a degree of inconsistency in the legislation where this is concerned. Vehicles should not cross the solid white line of a mandatory cycle lane, however vehicles are obliged to “take appropriate action” and “if necessary, pull to the side of the road and stop” to let emergency and incident support vehicles. We have sought further advice from Thames Valley Police on this issue, who would have responsibility enforcement of any offence. They advised that paragraph 16.4 in the Traffic Signs Manual Chapter 3 is clear that you can pull over ‘in case of emergency’, they added with the caveat of ‘providing it was safe to do so’.

Therefore our view is that if a motorist pulls over for an Emergency vehicle but does so carelessly and without first checking for a cyclist using the cycle lane, resulting in a collision, in these circumstances a prosecution might be considered. Otherwise Thames Valley Police have advised that, in their interpretation, they would treat pulling over as an emergency case.

It should also be noted that the cycle scheme has been subject to a full independent professional safety audit which did not raise any concerns about emergency access. It is widely accepted that vehicles will pull into a mandatory cycle lane to allow emergency vehicles to pass as long as it is safe to do so.”

(w) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance by Ms Jane Gulliver:

“Please will the council confirm whether or not it will immediately supply a copy (redacted if necessary) of any legally binding contracts it has made, and are in place at this moment in time to build any housing, including for example affordable housing?”

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance provided the following written response:

“The Council has no legally binding contracts in place at this moment in time to build any housing. However we have a joint venture entity, Homes for West Berkshire LLP, which will be responsible for delivering affordable housing on selected sites with our partner Sovereign.”

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

(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Councillor Carolyne Culver:

“What can the portfolio holder say to reassure residents that the government’s proposal that ‘a wider range of commercial buildings will be allowed to change to residential use without the need for a planning application’ will not result in poor quality homes that do not meet local needs?”

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Councillor Carolyne Culver:

“What can the portfolio holder say to reassure residents that if ‘builders will no longer need a normal planning application to demolish and rebuild vacant and redundant residential and commercial buildings if they are rebuilt as homes’, the resulting homes will be of an appropriate scale and design for their setting?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response to both questions:

“The Government’s intention is to “Build back better, build back greener, build back faster”. I think it is difficult to fault that intention and I expect that once the regulatory process progresses beyond the general acceptance of this kind of development, the controls that are applied will be made with all of those intentions in mind.”

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Councillor Carolyne Culver:

“Can the portfolio holder reassure residents and parish/town councillors that the government’s proposal that ‘property owners will be able to build additional space above their properties via a fast track approval process, subject to neighbour consultation’ will not remove the ability of district ward councillors to call-in planning applications to planning committees?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response:

“Members are only restricted in the opportunity to request that an item is called to Committee, when the formal legislative process limits the time available for the Authority to make its decision. At the moment it appears that the same level of time constraint may not be applied to this kind of proposal, so the opportunity for call-in may still be available. As the legislation becomes clearer, I have asked officers to confirm the situation and to advise Members accordingly (potentially at the upcoming Member training session).”

(d) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Adrian Abbs:

“What efforts are being made to restore democracy by initiating hybrid meetings so the public can resume asking questions at planning and meetings such as this?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

(e) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Councillor Adrian Abbs:

“Does the portfolio holder for Planning think it is acceptable for a Committee decision to be refused in a public meeting, yet 13 weeks later for it not to have been implemented?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response:

“The authorisations that Committees give to the Head of Development and Planning to turn their resolutions into formally issued planning decisions, makes no specification about when that has to be done. Officers always seek to issue the decisions as rapidly as is reasonable, but need to take into account events that occur post Committee, or other actions that are necessary before they do so, such as dealing with instructions from the Committee which might not have been part of the Officer recommendation. I firmly believe that that has always been, and continues to be the correct approach.

If events, questions or challenges made after Committee create a need to examine an aspect of the process that has been followed, or to examine the guidance given to Members, Officers must take the necessary time to ensure that the resolution and its consequences are legal and appropriate. In those circumstances, and with that intention, yes I do think it is acceptable for Officers to take all the necessary time before issuing the decision notice.”

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

“Can the Council confirm the decreased take-up of green bins and explain why, given that everyone was at home during the COVID crisis?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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

“What support has been provided to children given laptops during the COVID crisis so that they have been able to use them as effectively as possible during lockdown?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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

“With five schools in West Berkshire reporting unlicensed deficits for 2019/20, two West Berkshire schools carrying forward licensed deficits for 2019/20, and with the significant additional costs to schools arising from COVID and measures to re-open schools in a COVID-safe manner, how will the Council ensure schools in deficit do not have to make cuts to school services that impact pupil attainment?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

(i) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Councillor Billy Drummond:

“Will the Executive please lobby the government to cover the cost of parking for the first two hour period for 6 months to help the many local shops and give them a fighting chance to get back on their feet and saving many from going under?”

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

(j) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

“Could the Portfolio Holder explain the processes in place to support developers with their CIL submissions and help them achieve a zero-assessed outcome where that is legitimately the case, or is the process to take every possible opportunity to charge developers if they make the mistake of getting something wrong or omitted on their CIL submissions?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided the following written response:

“The CIL team appreciates that the regime is inflexible and the administration rigid. In many cases there is no ability to waiver or relax the statutory requirements. Various articles have been written regarding the need for planning and other agents to develop a working knowledge of the requirements in order to ensure that their client complies.

Although the statutory framework places a clear onus on the developer, normally via their agent, to complete the necessary paperwork / notifications the Council takes every effort to ensure that the information provided by developers and their agents is correct and lawful. This can entail numerous emails and telephone calls requesting information to ensure that the legislation is complied with.

The Council has also sought to provide information on its website and opportunities to keep the website under review and updated. Information available includes:

- The CIL Process – which CIL form to submit and when.
- CIL Guidance – Help to complete CIL forms and supporting information.
- Appeals and Enforcement – when can an appeal be made?

An example of the CIL team's proactive approach is a recent case, when following the advice from the team, developers withdrew a planning application so that they did not incur an additional CIL liability.

However, CIL is a charge on development to support the provision of critical infrastructure and there is only so much we as the Council can do to check things, it must ultimately be the responsibility of the developer or their agent to provide the correct information in a timely manner."

(k) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Countryside by Councillor Jeff Brooks:

"Can the Portfolio Holder update me on his assurance at a Full Council meeting that he would fast track my motion to reduce the speed limit along the A4/Benham Hill in Thatcham, rather than let the matter wait for the Speed Limit Review Group later this year?"

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

(l) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment by Councillor Alan Macro:

"What action is this Council proposing to take, including the use of CCTV, to combat the sharp rise in litter and fly-tipping which is polluting our open spaces across the District?"

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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

"Once the new link road is completed between Hector's Way and Hambridge Road Newbury, can the Executive Member for Transport and Countryside identify if the majority (if not all) of the through traffic from Sainsbury's roundabout to the Hambridge industrial area (and reverse) will be directed to use the new road ?"

This question was responded to at the Executive meeting and the full transcription will be published in due course. The Executive meeting is available to view at <https://westberks.gov.uk/executivelive>

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