

Questions and Answers

Council

Thursday, 17th March, 2022

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

Public Questions to the Council

17 March 2022

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

Item (a)	Council Meeting on 17 March 2022
Submitted to:	Jon Winstanley

(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport by John Bibbings:

“Does anyone know that at rush hour, the traffic is grid locked from the A339 via Cheap Street and Market Street to the Sainsbury's round-a-bout? The 5 sets of Traffic Lights are creating the grid lock.”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

Traffic flow in the town centre is clearly returning to pre-covid levels. It may be that some motorists are used to it not being busy in the town centre at peak times and choose to continue to use it as a through route. Clearly that is going to result in delay as it did before the pandemic. The traffic signals at the A339 (Sainsburys Roundabout) are configured to minimise overall delay. This can cause queuing on Bear Lane which in turn can lead to short periods of congestion on the roads that feed in to that approach. The signals are regularly monitored with regard to possible timings improvements and to minimise any faults developing that may cause further delay.

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

Item (b)	Council Meeting on 17 March 2022
Submitted to:	Eric Owens

(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Transformation by Dave Allen:

“Is the council enlisting residents to help support the crisis in Ukraine eg donations in money or goods and in particular requesting residents if they can provide temporary accommodation?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

West Berkshire Council would encourage residents that wish to offer assistance to do so by donating through the Disasters Emergency Committee or the British Red Cross where the donations will support the charities and their local partners are in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries providing food, water, shelter and medical assistance.

In addition to this we have along with [Greenham Trust](#) set up an appeal on The Good Exchange to provide local funding to support those families arriving in West Berkshire. Greenham Trust and West Berkshire Council have committed to each contributing £25,000 in match funding, ensuring public, corporate and trust/foundation donations to this appeal are matched £1 for £1 for the first £50,000 raised. You can donate funds here: <https://app.thegoodexchange.com/project/19509/greenham-trust/help-welcome-ukrainians-to-west-berkshire>

As we have done before with Syrian refugees in 2015 and more recently with Afghan refugees West Berkshire Council will welcome Ukrainian Refugees. We have set up a Ukraine Support Hub to assist with this process as we start to see new arrivals in West Berkshire through the differing resettlement schemes.

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

Item (c)	Council Meeting on 17 March 2022
Submitted to:	Jon Winstanley

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport by Joan Stacey:

"In view of the Council's commitment to green issues etc I would like to raise a question on the problems older people have in accessing information on bus services. The recent handout from Newbury Library had 'maps' on the front of it but there were no maps in it at all. This makes it very difficult for people to know where bus stops are, especially newcomers to the area who are unfamiliar with Newbury. This means that people who don't have access to the internet will not be able to use the buses because of this lack of information. What can the Council do to improve this situation?"

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

The Transport Services Team have not produced any printed timetable guides since the start of the pandemic. The Team is looking to print the next edition of the Travel Guide during the summer which will be available at the Library. There is little point in re-printing the current edition of the guide as we know there are changes coming shortly to some of the timetables.

In the mean-time, we are asking Newbury Library to display a larger version of the map in the current guide which shows the location of the bus stops in the town.

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?"*

Joan Stacey asked the following supplementary question:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity of raising this issue at this meeting as I feel it is very important for older people and their wellbeing and for green issues around the town. I was very pleased when I went to the library and I saw this. I thought the Council had done the right thing and sent out this document which said maps etc. It is not easy reading when at a bus stop in the wind and rain though. Pleased as I was to see it, when you are making information available to people you need to consider looking at the group of people you are helping, and seek some information from them to find out the things that they would find useful.

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The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

I am happy to take those points on board, and I will discuss how best to achieve that with officers in a timely fashion.



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Members Questions to the Council

2 December 2021

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

Item (a)	Council Meeting on 17 March 2022
Submitted to:	Jon Winstanley

(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport by Martha Vickers:

“As one of the Council’s aims is to increase active travel what changes are planned as regards the proportion of the highways budget which goes in to maintaining and improving footways (ie. Pavements)?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

Through the recently approved capital programme, the Council is investing significantly in improving and maintaining both footways and cycleways.

In total we will be spending approximately £5m over the next 5 years which represents 13% of the Highway Asset Capital programme.

In previous years we have traditionally spent less than 10% demonstrating a commitment to active travel.

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 Vickers asked the following supplementary question:

I know that government grants have been given for increasing active travel, but it sounds as though the Council is allocating more of its own budget to pavements and footways rather than concentrating on roads which is good to hear. I hope included in that, and could I have reassurance that existing pavements are being improved and it's not just additional. And included in that is the removal of encroaching vegetation and overhanging hedges which makes some pavements almost unpassable. And if the Council would like some guidance on where the priorities for improvements lie, maybe it could ask Members to give priorities in their Wards. Is this something the Council could consider?

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport answered:

We do bolster and contribute to the overall budget. We would look to vegetation being a countryside issue rather than specifically a highways issue and certainly an active

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travel issue. And if there are specific areas that are in need, any Member or member of the public is able to report a problem via our website which will bring the issue straight into the heart of the relevant teams.

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

Item (b)	Council Meeting on 17 March 2022
Submitted to:	Jon Winstanley

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

Councillr Jeffery withdrew his question prior to the meeting.

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

Item (c)	Council Meeting on 17 March 2022
Submitted to:	Paul Hendry

(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste by Martha Vickers:

“What is the Council doing to manage the problems created by the increase in dog ownership, often by people who have never owned a dog before?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste answered:

I would sincerely hope that all our residents will act responsibly when choosing to own any new pet, especially a dog.

Good advice on responsible dog ownership can be found on the Council's Public Protection Partnership Facebook page, or on the RSPCA website.

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 Vickers asked the following supplementary question:

I'm sure you and other Members have seen the problems I have mentioned here. I'm just wondering if there is still a Dog Warden employed by the Council, what their duties are, and could they not assist where there are problems. Has the council considered approaching volunteers like the Dog Trust to assist in training new dog owners as a priority so they know how to properly manage their dogs and the public can be properly protected.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste answered:

Yes the Council does still employ a Dog Warden. I am happy to pick up the other points Councillor Vickers mentions with her outside of the meeting.

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