

# Questions and Answers

## Executive

Thursday, 24th March, 2022

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If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact Sadie Owen on telephone (01635) 519052.



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

<b>Item (A)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Paul Martindill/Jim Sweeting</b>

### **(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture by Vaughan Miller:**

*“This council is about to spend around £4Million to build a 'Sports Hub' which has approval only as a stand alone facility. Yet the Executive clearly intend it as a replacement or part of a replacement strategy for the Faraday Road Stadium (see answer to Q6 in Exec 16th December 2021). Could you please clarify what exactly is the replacement strategy being referred to?”*

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

The Council has publicly stated aims to improve leisure facilities through its Playing Pitch Strategy approved in February 2020 and its Leisure Strategy which I hope will be approved this evening. The development of the Newbury Sports Hub represents a part of the delivery to this commitment. Whilst the now approved Newbury Sports Hub is a stand-alone facility, it may in the future be considered as a partial replacement for the Faraday Road pitch if and when a planning application is submitted for that site.

To be clear the Sports Hub has been designed to accommodate Senior Football Clubs as well as meeting the needs for youth and other teams. It is a totally flexible facility which incorporates every requirement to meet a Step 4 pitch. It is intended to be a showpiece ground for West Berkshire with future pitches being more modest in terms of facilities.

**The Portfolio Holder asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

#### **Vaughan Miller asked the following supplementary question:**

*“I'm not really seeing what the replacement strategy is from your answer that would make it acceptable as a replacement for the Faraday Road football ground. The Sports Hub is either hoped to be an exact replacement, or something that fulfils the replacement according to the Sports England criteria (exception 4), and if it's not an exact replacement then I'm guessing that is what you are putting as a replacement*

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*strategy. It is a partial fulfilment of the requirement for it to be a better or equal facility. What else would be involved in that replacement strategy?"*

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

An additional grass pitch.

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<b>Item (B)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Paul Martindill/Jim Sweeting</b>

***(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture by Nigel Foot:***

*“What is West Berkshire Council's ambition for its senior football teams, in terms of progression up their respective football league pyramids?”*

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

The council is committed to improving facilities and sports pitches for both adult and junior football clubs alongside support for rugby, cricket, hockey and other field sports across the whole District. This is demonstrated through the Playing Pitch Strategy adopted by the Council and significant capital expenditure to create new grass and artificial pitches. The council is currently working closely with the FA and Football Foundation conducting a survey with West Berkshire football teams to ascertain their views on the standard of pitches. It is our aim to help facilitate local clubs to achieve the level of play to which they aspire.

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<b>Item (C)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Katharine Makant</b>

### **(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by John Gotelee:**

*“What information has been gained from the LRIE environmental study that wasn't already known?”*

#### **The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:**

The LRIE Environmental Appraisal Report concludes that no 'in principle' issues have been identified that would prevent development of the LRIE site and states that the significant issues of flood risk and drainage can be satisfactorily addressed at design stage during the planning process.

**The Portfolio Holder asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

#### **John Gotelee asked the following supplementary question:**

*“Could you give us a bit of information That report says that there is still further work to do, various things to be investigated, so when are we likely to see a full environmental impact assessment”.*

#### **The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:**

Any further environmental impact assessment work will be carried out at the appropriate point during the planning process.

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<b>Item (D)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Eric Owens</b>

**(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by Paula Saunderson:**

*“On the 7th December 2021 the Government released the new Natural England Green/Blue Infrastructure Framework with a new Web site, interactive Mapping tool, and Principles, and I do not see this specifically reflected in the new Leisure Strategy, so please may I ask that sufficient emphasis is placed on the new Framework when working up the more detailed Leisure Strategy Delivery Plan, especially Principle 2?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:**

The leisure strategy recognises the importance of accessing the natural environment for physical and mental well-being. The developing Green Infrastructure Framework is projected to be fully available from autumn 2022 and will be utilised to support the delivery plan and development of high quality networks of multi-functional green infrastructure.

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<b>Item (E)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Paul Martindill/Jim Sweeting</b>

### **(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture by Stuart Gourley:**

*“Agenda item 8, draft Leisure strategy refers, as part of the objectives, to 'delivering the playing pitch strategy'. The playing pitch strategy refers to a large deficit of rugby and football pitches across the district. This deficit will be hindered by the Monks Lane Sports Hub removing a grass rugby pitch as part of the construction; one of the planning recommendations for the Monks Lane Sports Hub lists the need to find a site for a replacement grass pitch for the rugby pitch that will be lost to the new sports Hub. What will be the public consultation process for replacement pitch locations?”*

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

A corporate officer team has examined locations for a new grass pitch and feasibility studies have been completed for two locations. A public consultation on this proposed development is planned before this summer.

**The Portfolio Holder asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

#### **Stuart Gourley asked the following supplementary question:**

*“Will there definitely be a public consultation?”*

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

Yes there will.

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<b>Item (F)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Katharine Makant</b>

### **(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Vaughan Miller:**

*“The London Road Industrial Estate: Development Brief (Final) produced by Avison Young in 2020 included the risk that a £10 per square foot increase in build costs and 10% decrease in sales values would produce a deficit on both Plot 2 and Plot 4 (Faraday Road Stadium) and they would therefore be considered unviable (point 9.48).*

*Build costs went up by over 12% in 2020 and over 23% in 2021 (according to the Department of Building, Energy and Industrial Strategy). With Energy costs going through the roof this will only increase costs significantly further. On top of this the changes in working practices post Covid will also have an impact on viability of any proposed commercial units in the scheme, thus possibly affecting Sales Values.*

*Would you agree that the fiscally responsible thing to do would be to review the brief to reconsider the viability of the development on Plot 4 ( the Faraday Road Stadium ) before signing off the £4Million to build and provision the Sports Hub, which this Executive body is gambling on being accepted as a full or partial replacement for the Faraday Road Stadium?”*

### **The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:**

No I wouldn't agree. The Council's aspirations for the regeneration of LRIE have been clearly articulated on many occasions. These focus on an economic development led approach that seeks to enhance economic activity, increase jobs and connect better with the town centre. These aspirations have never included the re-provision of a football stadium on the Faraday Road site, which is one of only two plots within the Council's control that are currently available for redevelopment, the other being the former depot site. The detail of which will be contained within a future planning application (or applications). We are confident that the new Sports Hub at Monks Lane will provide a fantastic facility for football and other sports for years to come, in line with the aspirations set out in our Playing Pitch Strategy.

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**The Portfolio Holder asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

**Vaughan Miller asked the following supplementary question:**

*“I am not sure that you really answered the risk element which is in the main part of the question. So you are gambling the money for the Sports Hub to be a replacement for the Faraday Road stadium on the basis that the redevelopment is viable. If you look at the numbers now the development would not be viable from a financial perspective and therefore there would be no need to spend the money that you are spending on the Sports Hub, when you could spend a fraction of that to re-develop the football ground there. Are you doing a revisit of the numbers for the LRIE regeneration based on the massive increasing costs that have been over the recent couple of years?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:**

I'm not much of a gambler Councillor Miller, which I'm sure you will be pleased to hear. The numbers that you specifically cite in your question, beyond the fact that build costs have gone up, I wouldn't accept what you have said about potential sales values, that seems to be speculative on the negative side, and flies in the face of the data that we are seeing coming through to our economic development team. No doubts about the viability from this end, but thank you for your question.

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<b>Item (G)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Eric Owens</b>

**(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by John Gotelee:**

*“How do the central governments plans for levelling up, affect the need to carry on the relentless planning to build new flats / homes in the area?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:**

The details of the government's plans for levelling up insofar as they relate to the reform of the planning system in England are due to be announced in the Spring of 2022. Until they are published we don't know about any potential changes that may be introduced to the targets for housing delivery in West Berkshire.

We do see however from the Levelling Up Paper and 'Mission 10', that by 2030 renters will have a secure path to ownership, with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50% with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas.

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<b>Item (H)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Paul Martindill/Jim Sweeting</b>

### **(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture by Paula Saunderson:**

*“Some Local Authorities have a combined Sports & Active Leisure Strategy which then produces a Combined Delivery Plan which ensures that there is no conflict of interest between the creation of Playing Pitches and good sized existing Open Green Spaces which have unique Active Leisure opportunities in their own right, so will this Council please consider amalgamating the Delivery Plans for the Playing Pitch Strategy and this new Leisure Strategy to ensure there are no conflicts of interest between the 2 Strategies, given that the Green/Blue Infrastructure Framework is now in the public domain, and the top level picture would be easier for residents to understand?”*

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

Yes we will give consideration to the amalgamation of the delivery plan for the leisure strategy and the playing pitch strategy. They are in any event controlled by the same officer team.

A contextual point is that Sport England requires data for the Playing Pitch Strategy to be updated with a minimum frequency of every three years in order for the PPS to remain valid. This is because the PPS is based on the number of teams and pitches within West Berkshire and this can be subject to frequent change, whereas the leisure strategy is based on longer term strategic developments, demographics and public need and preference.

The strategy proposed to be approved this evening is for 10 years.

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<b>Item (I)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Eric Owens</b>

**(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by Paula Sanderson:**

*“Under 5.4 , the new Leisure Strategy implies it will work with Parish & Town Councils when looking at greater accessibility to Open Green Spaces, so will the Service Director for Place please ensure the teams involved, including Estates Managers, work closely with Newbury Town Council when putting forward schemes which impact existing Open Green Spaces managed by WBC, yet are within the Town Parishes?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:**

I can confirm happily that the Executive Directorate for Place is fully committed to consulting with Newbury Town Council and Parish Councils and this will include the co-operation of Estates Managers when looking at greater accessibility to open green spaces.

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<b>Item (J)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Paul Martindill/Eric Owens</b>

**(J) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture by Paula Saunderson:**

*“Do the 2 new Residential Developments North of Newbury which straddle the A339—known locally as the Shaw 401 – include an area which would fall under the Leisure Strategy and possibly be sufficient to create a new pitch identified as being required by the Playing Pitch Strategy, and if no, why would that be please?”*

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

Potential sites have already been identified and feasibility studies completed at two locations for the new grass pitch (in relation to the lost grass pitch at Newbury rugby club), however further sites need to be identified to address the overall deficit of provision for both artificial and grass pitches identified in the PPS. The areas for the 2 new residential developments can be examined for their suitability for a grass or artificial pitch.

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<b>Item (K)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Paul Martindill/Jim Sweeting</b>

### **(K) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture by Paula Saunderson:**

*“If push comes to shove in the Hierarchy of Strategies will the Leisure Strategy take preference over the Playing Pitch Strategy as implied by the chart under 3.1 on Page 7 of the Leisure Strategy?”*

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

The two strategies are complementary to each other. The PPS is narrower in scope and deals exclusively with the management and development of sports pitches. In doing so the PPS delivers key objectives of the leisure strategy, namely to increase participation in physical activity, provide a modern network of outdoor sports facilities and enhance the quality of green space. As such there should not be a conflict between the two strategies.

**The Portfolio Holder asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

#### **Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:**

*“What would the position be if you want to put a playing pitch on what is currently an open green space enjoyed by dog walkers, walkers, runners etc. and close to nature, under which it would fit in under the green infrastructure framework. Where would the priority lie there? It is the green infrastructure that I am worried about.”*

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

To be honest, you will have to look at it on a case by case basis, but do bear in mind that a football pitch is only capable of being played on 6 times a week and so it is not a major imposition.

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<b>Item (A)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Janet Weekes</b>

**(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Transformation by Councillor Carlyne Culver:**

*“You mentioned at Full Council on 3 March that £694,000 in Household Support Funding had been given to WBC by the government, and more than 1,400 grants averaging £220 had already been distributed. Will these funds be distributed in full, and by what date please”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Transformation answered:**

These funds will be allocated by 31st March 2022 through a combination of household awards and Free School Meal vouchers.

Yesterday's Spring Statement from the Chancellor Rishi Sunak announcing the doubling of the Household Support Fund is welcomed, and we look forward to receiving the updated guidance. I'm pleased the Chancellor acknowledged that "local authorities are best placed to allocate this funding". Which will continue to support our most vulnerable households.

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<b>Item (B)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Janet Weekes</b>

***(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Transformation by Councillor Tony Vickers:***

*“The Action 1.13 in the 2020 Housing Strategy to deliver a private sector stock condition survey by December 2021 must have become even more vital since the huge increase in energy costs arose. Poor quality housing is generally occupied by poor people, so what conclusions have been drawn from the survey and what further actions are planned to deal with the resulting increase in fuel poverty?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Transformation answered:**

It is anticipated that the findings and any actions relating to improving the condition of homes that may include energy efficiency and savings on fuel, will be conducted over the next quarter. We have provided assistance to over 1400 local residents via the Household Support Fund to assist with essential household items such as, fuel and energy bills. Yesterday's spring statement from the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, announcing the doubling of the household support fund is welcomed. We look forward to receiving the updated guidance. I am pleased that the Chancellor acknowledged that local authorities are best placed to allocate this funding, which will continue to support our most vulnerable households.

**The Portfolio Holder asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

**Councillor Tony Vickers asked the following supplementary question:**

*“It is implied that the survey has been completed but that the report has not been written up and is not ready to present. Is it possible to give an indication of how extensive the poor condition is in the private sector, rough numbers to the nearest 100 or so?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Transformation answered:**

Perhaps I misled you, there has been a delay due to the impact of Covid 19 on the statutory services such as housing and public protection and therefore the actions

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have been re-prioritised and the delivery plan updated as a result. What we are doing with households who are experiencing financial difficulties due to energy costs is directing them to various services on our website as well as the government warm home discount scheme. Although the survey is delayed, we are helping people with regard to fuel and energy support.

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<b>Item (C)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Iain Bell</b>

### **(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Councillor Lee Dillon:**

*“Can the portfolio holder outline how residents will be able to access the government-backed Council Tax grant as well as West Berkshire Council’s own local grant?”*

#### **The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:**

In terms of the Government’s Council Tax Energy Rebate, the vast majority of properties in Council Tax Bands A to D will be eligible for a £150 rebate. At present it’s estimated that 46,000 households qualify in West Berkshire. For those customers who pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit the £150 payment will be made automatically and there is no need for an application to be made. For those customers in Bands A to D who do not pay by Direct Debit there will be a straightforward on line or phone application (via customer services) to complete. For these customers there must be an application process by Government design.

For those customers in Council Tax Band E to H there will be a Discretionary Scheme which is being developed at present.

In terms of our own local COVID Hardship Scheme a further grant of up to £150 will be applied for 2022/23 to those Council Tax Reduction scheme claimants who are of working age. No application form is required.

**The Portfolio Holder asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

#### **Councillor Lee Dillon asked the following supplementary question:**

*“With the greatest of respect, that’s pretty much what the government guidelines say and the guidelines go a little bit further and say that all payments should be made by September, but should be made as early as possible, especially those on direct debits. Could you give residents of West Berkshire a steer as to whether they should expect that payment to come in April or August? I think if residents are going to be given a £150 sum of money, to know when it is going to hit in the cycle will help with their budgeting”.*

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**The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:**

That is fine. I do not think they will have to wait until September. I would expect it to be a lot earlier than that.

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<b>Item (D)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Paul Coe</b>

### ***(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care by Councillor Alan Macro:***

*“It was reported at the Executive meeting on 16th December that all the Council's care homes had achieved a Care Quality Commission rating of "good". Is that still the case?”*

#### **The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care answered:**

Regrettably, Birchwood Care Home's CQC rating has now been down-graded to 'Requires Improvement' following a targeted inspection on 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> February. The report has now been published and a statement made to the Press and we have also been proactively communicating with service users, their families and staff within the service.

Our other care homes, and indeed our other regulated services (Reablement and Shared Lives) are all rated Good.

Returning to Birchwood, I want to provide reassurance that we have a robust action plan in place which is already showing good progress. I also want to be really clear that it was our own active communication with the CQC about concerns that we ourselves had which led to the inspection visit. I believe this reflects positively on our transparency and openness to challenge.

Birchwood is receiving a good deal of support and scrutiny from officers outside of the care home to give that external view, as well as focused attention from the newly appointed Service Manager, whose changed role will support and allow additional focus on all of our care homes. I have also instigated monthly meetings with the senior leadership team, focussed solely on our care home management and the recovery plan.

I can only function as the portfolio holder if I see myself as part of the team. I celebrate the highs and I feel the lows as do our officers. We have been working very hard to resolve this and also to ensure that our other two care homes; Notrees in Kintbury and Willows Edge in Newbury retain their 'Good' CQC grade, as do our other two regulated services that I mentioned earlier. These are personal commitments from me.

**The Portfolio Holder asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

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**Councillor Alan Macro asked the following supplementary question:**

*“Could you assure me that lessons will be learned so that we do not run into this kind of problem again?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care answered:**

I absolutely can, Councillor Macro. I've mentioned that we are now having monthly meetings, and these will be for as long as we need to about our care home management. One of the most disappointing things for me, and for the officers involved, is that we knew from the previous inspection visit that we had some issues but the overall rating was 'Good'. It feels as though we allowed ourselves to get lulled into a false sense of security. We have absolutely full pelt developed a recovery plan which we will be talking about every month and I will be accountable for that. There are some things that you can't guarantee in life. I'm learning pretty quickly that care home management is not an exact science, and that much like any regulated service you can be putting in 100% effort, 100% resources, but a bump along the road can just knock you off track. Apart from that, everything within our control will be done.

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<b>Item (E)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Viv Evans</b>

### **(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by Councillor Adrian Abbs:**

*“Given that fellow Conservative-run Basingstoke and Deane Council now has less than a 5 year housing supply, seemingly resulting in several speculative planning applications at Bishops Green and Wash Water, what steps has this administration taken in order to avoid or mitigate the potentially huge impact on Wash Common and Greenham wards that this type of uncontrolled development causes?”*

#### **The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:**

Thank you for your question. As a neighbouring authority the Council is consulted on such applications as Out of District Consultations and both the Highway Authority and the Planning Authority respond. In certain circumstances other parts of the Council will also respond such as the West Berkshire Lead Local Flood Authority.

These responses will cover the aspects of the application and provide a technical response. They will also suggest any mitigation that would be needed if the planning application was to be approved.

In the case of Wash Water if Basingstoke and Deane are minded to approve then West Berkshire Council would wish to see S278 agreements or monies required for all off-site works and services provided by West Berkshire and also planning obligations to transfer land to West Berkshire for Biodiversity enhancement to include a 30 year maintenance.

**The Portfolio Holder asked:** *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

#### **Councillor Adrian Abbs asked the following supplementary question:**

*“I’m sure that you have the same concern as I have. I am looking literally metres over the border. Given that it is a fellow Conservative run council I just wonder if we are dealing with them at a higher level to make sure that we have some kind of plan in place. Especially the Bishop’s Green application. Wash Water was bad enough but the Bishop’s Green application is citing all sorts of things within our purview, the Greenham business development area, and so on. It just seems like because they run into trouble, West Berkshire can take care of it for them. Though we are a statutory*



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*consultee on it, I'm just hoping we can do a little more at a senior level to try and head things off. If you can give me that surety, that is probably all we can do right now? "*

### **The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:**

What I can say is, irrespective of what colour tie they are wearing, if a neighbouring authority is taking such actions then we will do whatever we can to have conversations with them. There are regular Leader conversations, and I'm sure regular Chief Executive conversations, where I would think that anything major, if it can be tabled, it will be tabled. I can assure you that for officers to give the technical part on planning grounds is the key thing. You know that yourself from your involvement in planning applications and committees. We will do whatever we can, and have whatever conversations we can have.

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<b>Item (F)</b>	Executive Meeting on 24 March 2022
<b>Submitted to:</b>	<b>Ian Pearson</b>

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

*“How many children in West Berkshire are now being Electively Home Educated, how has this number changed over the last five years, and how are these children being supported by the Education Service?”*

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

The number of children receiving elective home education regularly changes; some children are de-registered from school and others return from EHE to school.

On 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 West Berkshire had 209 children who were being electively home educated. However, since the beginning of the academic year, 24 children who were EHE have returned to school.

The table below shows the total number of children who were EHE at some time during those academic years.

Academic Year	Total
2016/17	137
2017/18	142
2018/19	171
2019/20	173
2020/21	225
2021/22	233 as of 15 March 2022

#### How these children being supported by the Education Service

- West Berkshire has an Elective Home Education Officer 0.6fte
- When a parent indicates they wish to deregister their child to EHE they are invited to a meeting in school with the EHE Officer and school's Education Welfare Officer to see if any issues within school which have prompted this decision can be resolved
- An initial home visit is made to the families who subsequently choose to EHE to assess that the education is suitable. Parents do not have to agree to a visit, they can just send a report

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- The EHE Officer will offer useful contacts and websites to help the parents
- If the education is deemed suitable, annual visits are subsequently offered
- West Berkshire offers £200 per child towards GCSE costs
- We will send out immunisation information to parents through links with Health colleagues
- We will post relevant information which children in school have access to, for example "Bikeability"
- We offer Year 11 a link to West Berkshire's Careers and Participation Officer
- The EHE Officer will attend annual reviews for children with EHCP and Child Protection Conferences if appropriate/relevant

### Safeguarding

- If the child is not seen, the EHE Officer will notify CAAS
- If the education is not suitable or no education is being provided, the Education Welfare Service will issue a warning notice for a School Attendance Order.

West Berkshire was one of the 145 Local Authorities who responded to the Children's Commissioner's Attendance Audit.

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