

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday, 9th June, 2022

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

Item (A)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Paul Martindill

(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture by Ian Hall:

“Can you confirm or deny that there is a twenty year break clause for the proposed Sport Pitch at Monks Lane , and if so is it at either parties discretion”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

There is a 20-year break clause that is only exercisable by the Council.
This information is already available on the Council's website.



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

Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

"Referring to the councils Environmental Appraisal 7.24 Quote "WDBC has also commented that an "infiltration Sustainable Drainage Systems and below ground attenuation storage will not be acceptable" and that significant space will needed for at ground level Sustainable Drainage Systems". What if any thought has been given to this?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The Council's drainage engineers have the skills and experience needed to advise on the technicalities of Sustainable Drainage Systems on LRIE and we are working with them to ensure that these issues are addressed as detailed proposals are brought forward.

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:

"It's not really much of an answer is it? You're trying to plan to do offices on the estate and yet your own drainage companies say that you are going to have to store 9,000 cubic metres of water at probably no better depth than 1 metre, so in other words 9,000 squared metres given up as a pond somewhere. Is the lack of planning due to lack of experience or due to lack of competence?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Thanks Mr Gotelee. I don't accept you accusation of a lack of planning, the opposite is indeed the case and I'll repeat that our highly trained council officers will deal with environmental and flooding aspects of the development at the appropriate time.

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

Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Eric Owens

(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation by Nigel Foot:

“When does WBC expect to have fulfilled its obligations to provide the documents needed to protect all 53 of its conservation areas, some of which have been outstanding for 50 years?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation answered:

The Council has reviewed all conservation areas as part of the local plan process over the years so that these areas remain protected. Following changes introduced by Historic England and in the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has introduced a program of undertaking all Conservation Area Appraisals in West Berkshire.

Given the number of conservation areas in West Berkshire additional resources were allocated in the 2022/23 budget to assist in the delivery so that the majority will be reviewed in the next 36 months. 6 Conservation Area Appraisals are currently underway.

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?”*

Nigel Foot asked the following supplementary question:

“Could you tell me exactly how much money has been allocated to the consultants that might be used to help carry out the conservation area appraisals, or indeed in council officers time for this mammoth task. Particularly bearing in mind there has been slippage of about 50 years in these conservation area appraisals?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation answered:

Sorry I cannot answer that question here and now Councillor Foot but I will make sure that we get an answer back to you in writing.

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

Item (D)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Jenny Graham

(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by Sam Coppinger:

“Demand for electricity regularly outstrips supply around Membury. In light of this continuing and increasing pressure on the local network, will the council recognise that infrastructure improvements are essential before any additional development is considered to ensure residents do not have to endure the increasing interruptions to their electrical supply?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

Thank you for your question.

The Council has recently developed a Local Area Energy Plan which included looking at the capacity of the electricity network. It is recognised that there are areas in West Berkshire where the demand headroom at substations is low. It is these areas where we need to work with SSE to address capacity issues so that there is increased reliability of supply. This is included in the action plan coming out of the Local Area Energy Plan.

Any proposals that are likely to have a significant impact on electricity demand will need to be carefully considered by this Council and SSE.

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?”*

Sam Coppinger asked the following supplementary question:

“How long do you think that is going to take. I am not sure if you have visited Membury at all but if you were to take a drive by there is some of the electrical infrastructure that looks like a third world country. Some of the poles have got ivy growing all over them. There is an issue right now.”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

I don't have dates in front of me right now. There are some of these issues that will be a case requirement clearly as proposals come forward. But with what you have

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mentioned, that is something I can pick up with officers and find out what their conversations are with SSE at the moment and how we move those forward and get some dates out in the public domain for you.

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Item (E)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Paul Martindill

(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture by Paul Morgan:

“Can WBC please provide the estimated costs (upfront and ongoing) associated with the proposal for a New Sports Pitch at Manor Park?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

Not at this stage. WBC is currently undertaking a public consultation in relation to Manor Park and will reflect on these results before considering commencing a procurement exercise to establish costs.

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Item (F)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Paul Martindill

(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture by John Stewart:

“When will WBC provide a publicly available business case & total cost of ownership model for Monks Lane Sports Hub that shows all the actual and estimated upfront and ongoing costs, (including subsidies and free pitch allocations) and the total forecasted revenues and incomes?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

The details of the business case and total costs are on the council website <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/newburysportshub> please click on the attachment titled: Questions and Answers.

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Item (G)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Paul Martindill

(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture by Lee McDougall:

“Why didn't WBC allow organised children's football to be played at the Faraday Road Football Pitch, in the Clay Hill Ward, (even temporarily) given the acknowledged playing pitch shortage highlighted in the Consultation for Manor Park Playing Pitch Proposal in Clay Hill Ward.”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

Given the Council's intentions for the future of the playing field at Faraday Rd, it would not be appropriate to fund the infrastructure and booking system necessary for the re-introduction of organised children's football on this site. The playing field has been available to the public since December 2021 for all kinds of informal sport and recreation, including dog walking, and will remain so until such time as it is redeveloped for employment use.

The council remains committed to the provision of playing pitches for the benefit of the local community, as set out in our Playing Pitch Strategy. This includes the proposal for a new sports pitch at Manor Park, Newbury and the proposed Sports Hub at Monks Lane, Newbury.

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Item (H)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Pete Campbell

(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, and Education by Andy Wallace on behalf of Newbury Constituency Labour Party:

“What actions have been taken to improve access to child and adolescent mental health services, and what results do you see, particularly in waiting times for referral and treatment?”

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

The CAMHS service is a service commissioned and delivered by Health and is not a Council service. However, we work closely together to try and get the best outcomes for children. This can sometimes be in the form of collaborative projects or indeed in providing scrutiny and challenge. The pandemic disrupted service delivery and has led to a 60% increase in demand, with more complex presentations. The government has responded to this by increasing investment in CAMHS with new money going into the core CAMHS teams, including specialist community teams. In Berkshire West programmes are being developed to reduce waiting lists and times as well as recruiting new staff. However there are significant national workforce challenges in the CAMHS sector and waiting lists will remain high until those roles are filled.

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?”*

Andy Wallace on behalf of Newbury Constituency Labour Party asked the following supplementary question:

“As the health watch report at the end of last year was so horrific and we have reports from Newbury Youth Service that the youth services have been cut 97% by the Council. When is there going to be a response, because I have seen nothing from the Health and Wellbeing Board, which you are representative on. When will we get some figures which will tell us what is actually happening?”

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

The NHS publish figures on waiting times and waiting lists. It is not published by the Council but by the NHS. We will email you the direct details.

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

Item (I)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

“Agenda item 12. 1. “the district’s ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030” and 5.27 “housing development on the playing field is no longer integral to the long term regeneration of the LRIE” Please would the Council confirm if any land on the LRIE or adjoining Football field has been earmarked for new Council Offices, as possibly the current offices could be converted or redeveloped into flats allowing both developments to help the district be carbon neutral by 2030?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

No land within LRIE has been ‘earmarked for new Council Offices’. This includes the playing field.

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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Item (J)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

(J) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Paula Saunderson:

“Please can the LRIE Redevelopment Project Manager advise under what Stage of the PRINCE 2 Project Management Methodology a ‘Refresh’ sits please?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The Project Management of the LRIE programme is being carried out within West Berkshire Council's Project Management Methodology (PMM). This allows for the refresh of strategic objectives and delivery strategy is Project Initiation which, if approved by Executive, will move swiftly through Project Planning to Project Execution. The LRIE Programme has been and will continue to be managed within the governance structure outlined in paragraphs 7.26 to 7.28 of Executive Report Reference EX4219 under consideration later this evening.

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:

“So we're not starting again are we, we are going through initiation and beyond, is that right?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The strategy has been refreshed in light of changing economic drivers.

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Item (K)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Paul Martindill

(K) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture by Ian Hall:

“Can you please confirm that there is an agreement that rugby and football matches will not be allowed at the same time at the Sports Pitch at Monks Lane?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

Yes there will be an agreement for joint use however the correct position is that home league football matches will not be scheduled to play home matches at the same time as Newbury Rugby First Team home matches. Home football matches for football will be scheduled with local leagues, so that football league home matches only take place when the Newbury Rugby Club First Team is playing away matches and vice versa.

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Item (L)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

“Is there any plot of council owned land on the LRIE of 2 to 4 acres in size that is currently available to create an attenuation pond and provide the drainage infrastructure so that the football pitch area can be developed?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The Council is the freehold owner of around 25 acres on the LRIE. Therefore, the answer to your question is that yes, land is available on LRIE to provide flood mitigation measures when and where these are required.

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

Item (M)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Carolyn Richardson

(M) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships by Sam Coppinger:

“The cumulative effects of uncontrolled development at Membury have created a melting pot of hazardous activities in very close proximity (grain store, fuel depot, motorway service areas and their petrol stations, chemical industry, timber merchants and mechanical engineering and operational airfield) alongside the M4. Does the council have a major incident plan in place to deal with such an eventuality?”

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships answered:

The Council has an Emergency Response Framework and a suite of other response and recovery plans to cover any type of emergency across the District. In addition the Council also has some specific response plans for specific sites and risks. It should also be noted that the Councils Emergency Planning unit also works with other emergency responders, including the emergency services in order to identify risk, develop plans as necessary and undertake training and testing on these plans.

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?”*

Sam Coppinger asked the following supplementary question:

“I spoke to Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue and they didn't know of any emergency plans specific to Membury. I would like to ask whether the council would do a risk assessment for a major incident involving an aircraft and put that in the public domain please? The issue is the cumulative development rather than individual site specific.”

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships answered:

As far as I am aware at the moment there are no premises on the site that are known to the Council that require a site specific plan as required under legislation. I am more than happy to consult with officers in relation to a risk assessment and revert in due course.

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Item (N)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

(N) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Paula Saunderson:

“1. 1.4 Hectares of Public Accessible Space in Clayhill Ward will be lost under the re-development, so what plans does the Council have to replace it please?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

It is not clear what the basis is for the statement that ‘1.4 Hectares of Public Accessible Space in Clayhill Ward will be lost under redevelopment’. Executive Report Reference EX4219 recognises the importance of green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain and sustainable drainage as part of place-making – this could include publicly accessible space.

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:

“The 1.4 hectares that I am referring to is the area at the bottom of Faraday Road. I understand there might be some fiddling around on that. I’m quite sure that Clayhill Ward is very short of public open space overall. It’s a dense ward and I’m really conscious that we can’t really afford to lose any so as long as that is taken into consideration in the redevelopment of London Road Industrial Estate, I’ll be happy”.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

We hope that you will be happy indeed as things progress.

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Item (O)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

(O) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Paula Saunderson:

“The thorny subject of Sustainable Drainage will be a fundamental feature in the Project as it moves forward, at what Project Stage/Phase will this be addressed to ensure maximum use of Nature-based Solutions?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Executive Report Reference EX4219 recognises the importance of Sustainable Drainage as part of place-making and this will be addressed at multiple stages of the LRIE programme on both a site-wide basis, as part of the Place-making Strategy leading to a Supplementary Planning Document, and as individual planning applications come forward in accordance with the statutory planning process. The Council will work with both existing and new leaseholders to ensure that Sustainable Drainage requirements are addressed.

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:

“So is the whole site going to be assessed together for sustainable drainage and sequential and exception testing, or will it be done in little bits?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

All I can say is that as the project progresses, sustainable drainage requirements will be addressed at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner.

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

Item (A)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Jenny Graham

(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation by Councillor Adrian Abbs:

“How does the administration intend to support on-shore wind farms in West Berkshire?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation answered:

Cllr Abbs, thank you for your question.

The Council is developing policies relating to all renewable energy generation in West Berkshire including solar and local wind farms as part of our Local Plan and will work with specific communities through the Neighbourhood Planning process.

Any proposal for energy generation from wind will therefore be supported if it accords with the Local Plan policies and any relevant Neighbourhood Plan.

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 glad to hear that because obviously wind is the cheapest and fastest to implement and of course it has a life time. I wonder if you could give me, not exactly locations but how many scenarios we are actually looking at in West Berkshire. Not farms necessarily, just wind turbines”.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation answered:

I’m not personally aware of any current application underway. You should bear in mind that the AONB, which of course forms a large part of our district, has a presumption against wind turbine insulation in prominent places, so the number of sites which are both economically attractive, sites with more wind and with a suitable connection to the grid are quite limited in this area. But again we are very open to enabling and encouraging developers should they wish to make an application.

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Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Bryan Lyttle

(B) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Lee Dillon:

“The ‘Give My View’ advert running on Facebook gives no indication that it is part of West Berkshire Council’s process to fulfil the new 30-year visions that are required for substantial developments. Why have you not asked for clearer communications?”

Councillor Lee Dillon withdrew the question at the meeting.

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Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Bryan Lyttle

(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by Councillor Tony Vickers:

“Noting that the Local Development Scheme on the public-facing Council website still has the next draft (Regulation 19) new Local Plan down for publication in December 2020, and that we Councillors know the date for publishing it has slipped 18 months already (to this July), how confident are you that the risks to the revised Local Plan timetable - for Adoption in late 2023 - will be met?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

The Local Plan Review is scheduled for adoption before the end of 2023 and that target remains achievable unless further changes are made to the planning system and or evidence base used to support the Local Plan Review. Furthermore, once the LPR has been submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination the timetable for the examination and then adoption is in the hands of the Planning Inspectorate.

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:

“I referred in my question to the Local Development Scheme so could we please have the Local Development Scheme updated because it is extremely misleading on the website at the moment. It is still saying December 2020, unless it's been changed in the last two days. I think we need to be realistic about what that document is saying”.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

I agree with that. The Local development Scheme is under review at the moment, going through the relevant meetings and conversations.

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Item (D)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Ian Pearson

(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Education by Councillor Martha Vickers:

“Having accepted that education is key to reducing the littering problem in our streets and countryside, does the Council know what is being taught in our schools regarding this issue.”

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

Many of our primary and secondary schools are involved in the scheme “Eco-Schools” that is run by Keep Britain Tidy.

- ✓ Recently one of their campaigns was “Join The Big School Clean” <https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/category/news/>
- ✓ Out of 10 topics that schools study, one is entitled Litter with a whole host of suggested activities that the school community can get involved in. <https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/ten-topics/litter/>. One of the criteria for being awarded the Eco-schools flag, is to ensure that your school and grounds is completely litter free!

If schools are not involved in the Eco-school award, there are still a number of campaigns run throughout the year that they are encouraged to get involved in.

- ✓ <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/get-involved/support-our-campaigns/great-big-school-clean>
 - ✓ A lot of schools have eco warriors and or eco committees, even if they are not actively working towards their green flag.
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Member Questions as specified in the Council's Procedure Rules of the Constitution

Item (E)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Paul Coe

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

“How much has been spent on upkeep and improvement at the NoTrees care home over the last four financial years?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care answered:

Over the last four financial years, we have spent £337,310.

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 Alan Macro asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you. That is rather a lot of money and wouldn't you agree that it is rather a shame that that kind of investment, if I may call it that, is likely to go to waste if the home is closed?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care answered:

I think that's a really interesting point and I actually think that what we need to consider is the fact that we have residents who are in NoTrees currently and would we actually want to cut back on what we are spending for people who actually rely on those services and live in that care home? I would argue that actually it is not wasted money, but that it's wisely spent and well spent on our residents.

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Item (F)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Jon Winstanley

(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by Councillor Billy Drummond:

“Can the Executive Member for Highways remind me and others of the size of potholes before they are repaired by West Berkshire Council?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

Cllr Drummond, thank you for your question.

As a rule they should be 300mm wide (or just under a foot in old money) and over 50mm (or 2 inches) deep with a vertical edge.

Further information is available on the Council's website.

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Item (G)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Jenny Graham

(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation by Councillor Adrian Abbs:

“Given that improving insulation is one of the cheapest and fastest ways to reduce people’s energy bills, will the Administration join the Lib Dems in urging a much greater focus from the Government on improving insulation in homes by lobbying our local MPs?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation answered:

Thank you Councillor Abbs for your question.

I’m delighted to hear that the Liberal Democrats now support insulating more homes. Back in February the Conservative government announced a £67m funding grant to upgrade insulation in homes. This comes on top of the previous Green Homes grant which in total spent £1.5 billion in upgrading homes, and the Green Homes grant will be superseded with the Home Upgrade grant which is due to run for the next 3 years which has allocated over 1 billion to further home insulation. As a result of these programmes great progress has already been made to increase the energy efficiency of UK homes and whereas in 2010 only 14% had an energy performance certificate of C or above, that figure is now 46%. In social housing those proportions have risen from 18% in 2008 to around 66% now.

Again, I trust that you are in agreement, energy efficiency improvement are one of the best ways to save money on energy bills at a time of rising heating costs. More locally this council is already very active in applying both government funding and the resources and energy of residents to play our part here. We are exploring both through the West Berkshire Parish Climate forum and applying direct grants from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to tackle high priority housing.

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:

“As we seem to be doing a history lesson, I am sure you can remember back to the time when we launched a climate emergency strategy and in my speech back then I called for faster movement on insulation, so I’m really glad that you are catching up.

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Thank you Cllr Ardagh-Walter. The actual question is about getting more grant and more progress faster and I was simply asking if you'd like to join us in a motion effectively to lobby our MPs to go even further because I totally agree with you, the fastest way to reduce carbon is to actually insulate what we've got".

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation answered:

Thank you Cllr Abbs. I regret I decline to join you in yet more lobbying. We are doing things.



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Item (H)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Jon Winstanley

(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by Councillor Tony Vickers:

“What lessons have been learned from the failure of one quarter of the cold-lay tarmac footway resurfacing works carried out by the Council’s sub-contractor in recent weeks across the District?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

Councillor Vickers, thank you for your question.

I’d like to set a bit of context on the issue you have raised. I publically said I was hugely disappointed to receive the sort of notifications that we did, concerns and complaints from our residents about the issues that you’ve mentioned.

Use of this footway surfacing material saved the council a significant amount of money and helped reduce our carbon emissions. This type of resurfacing material is commonly used nationally to prolong the life of footways, so it’s not a dig up and put down new one and I think that’s an important element of what we’re trying to achieve with this.

Of the 36,000m² laid, less than 10% had to be re-laid, which was in the main due to poor workmanship of the subcontractor. The majority of this was at one site. That is an element that I have asked questions and that we collectively are asking questions of our direct partners and the subcontractors that they use.

All remedial work was completed at the contractor’s expense and both Volker Highways and WBC Highway Officers are reviewing their supervision levels for this type of work going forward.

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:

“I thought this issue would be over by now. But I opened my Newbury Weekly News this week and we are still going on about it. It looks as though even the re-lay by the sub-contractor is apparently breaking up. I haven’t physically seen that but there’s a

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total loss of trust in this methodology sadly. To what extent is this being monitored by our officers, who are ultimately responsible for spending of taxpayers' money?"

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

That was the last part of my first answer in all honesty, in that the level of monitoring of review is increasing and it needs to clearly. Unfortunately I haven't been able to get to see any of the recent areas that have been noted. It is something that I will do if I possibly can. We are continuing to have conversations. This is work that, as I said, is nationally used and widely accepted. I think we need to understand what the expectations are against what's actually being delivered.

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Item (I)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Paul Coe

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

“The Local Government Ombudsman has upheld a complaint from a resident that the Council:

- Did not properly deal with a safeguarding matter involving her late mother;*
- Did not provide an advocate or social worker to help her mother make decisions about her care and medication in the last weeks of her life;*
- Did not inform the family what was happening; and*
- Did not have an advocate contact the family until six day's after her mother's death.*

What actions are the Council taking to avoid these problems in the future?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care answered:

Thank you for a really good question and for allowing me the opportunity to provide an answer to this very sad situation. I'm going to give you quite a long answer, I hope that's okay, because I think it warrants it.

There are multiple elements to this question so I want to set out a rounded response. For context I should add that the complaint referenced took place in August 2020, during a particularly challenging time for Adult Social Care services. That isn't to make excuses but I do think it is important to note that.

In the specific case referred to, one of the core issues was a staffing shortage at the time within one of the Locality teams and the failure to escalate the issue for resolution. Following investigation, a detailed review took place with the team in question, led by the Safeguarding Service Manager and the Principal Social Worker. It led to a change in the duty process within that team and management guidance was issued to key members of staff who are now following this and have been since that time.

Communication between service partners, agencies involved in the care provision and our own ASC staff is one that we constantly strive to improve and in this case there was learning for all parties involved.

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

The question, of course also asks how we can avoid these sorts of issues in the future. There can be no easy 'one solution fits all' answer given the complex nature of the work which front-door ASC teams undertake.

Firstly, ASC ensure they learn from any circumstance such as this. We write an Annual Complaints Report, which is circulated to all ASC staff; they also participate in a range of learning activities under the remit of the Safeguarding Adults Board. Learning is used to update procedures, practices and training whenever required, and I've attended some of those sessions.

Secondly, ASC is proactive in seeking to address the challenges which impact on the quality of their service. Many – such as the challenges in recruiting and retaining key roles (e.g. Social Workers), or the lack of advocates/ advocacy services – are national issues with complex drivers. ASC works collaboratively with other corporate and local authority colleagues on those challenges and seeks to use available best practice models.

Lastly, it is somewhat reassuring to me that our data shows a notable reduction in concerns/complaints submitted to ASC since 2018/19 and they have remained at this level since this complaint was raised. Clearly no complaints is what we all strive for, but as PHI continue to work with the Service Director and ASC Team to continuously review services and ensure we learn from any issues such as this to improve our practices.

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 Alan Macro asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you. You said that you and the team learn from the experience. I was wondering if you actually disseminate the kind of learning throughout the various locality teams. I just hope the experience is being explained across all of the locality teams”.

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care answered:

Absolutely I can reassure you that it has. It goes, in fact, in some cases wider than that so when I mentioned the safeguarding adults board and some cases come through as an example for the members of that board to actually listen to and learn from and take back to their own agencies and organisations, local authorities even. Absolutely, that learning would have been shared across all three of our locality teams.

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

Item (J)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Iain Bell

(J) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Councillor Martha Vickers:

“Access to Council Tax Reduction (CTR) is subject to a limit of £10 per week below which this Council does not pay it. Considering this amounts to over £500 a year, how can withholding this entitlement from working families be justified”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

On the 8th December 2016 the Council made a decision not to pay any awards of Council Tax Reduction under £10 with effect from the 1st April 2017. Other changes to this scheme were also made. The minutes and reasons for this are described in the minutes and are available here;

<http://decisionmaking.westberks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MId=3550&Ver=4>

Should the Council wish the scheme to be reviewed then a full consultation exercise would need to be carried to ensure that costs and fairness are considered.

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

Item (K)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Bryan Lyttle

(K) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by Councillor Tony Vickers:

“What progress is being made with the Newbury town centre Conservation Area Appraisals, which were supposed to be the first ones to be worked on by consultants appointed just before the pandemic struck?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

The Council has received a draft report into the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area and will be consulting on the draft proposals in the near future. This timetable is in the process of being reviewed.

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:

“That’s not really a very helpful answer. I know Covid has been an issue with a lot of things, but I know that a lot of other conservation areas that were lower down the priority list for work have been moving ahead. My question is why is it that Newbury (I know it’s a big area), but there are some very important and potentially damaging developments going to be taking place in Central Newbury. We need to have these conservation area appraisals for Newbury town centre in place before we are faced with decisions on those developments. So why is it particularly Newbury that seems to have suffered when for years we’ve put it on the back burner for being too difficult a conservation area and done Peasemore and Streatley, which happened to be of course an Executive member at the times area. I really think we are getting our priorities wrong. I want to know specifically why Newbury hasn’t kept being the top priority that it was supposed to be?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

I don’t have an answer to that. I ‘m happy to get some more detail around it and come back to you. I would just pick up on one thing I don’t think we’re prioritising members of one side or another of the room. I’ll take that as a fly comment. There has been a lot going on in Newbury and I’m hopeful that it’s a case of bringing things together more than anything else. Let me get some more detail on that and we’ll have a conversation.

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

Item (L)	Executive Meeting on 9 June 2022
Submitted to:	Iain Bell

(L) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Councillor Martha Vickers:

“The pandemic and now the massively increased cost of living have resulted in many working families becoming eligible for benefits who have never had to claim before. How well publicised is CTR on the Council’s website and elsewhere?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The pandemic certainly meant that the Council saw an increase in changes to claimant’s circumstances and the Council Tax section is still giving greater flexibility to customers who had difficulty in paying and are now doing so due to cost of living increases.

Generally speaking though the issue of whether somebody qualifies for Benefits relates to a reduction in their income and not necessarily an increase in their expenditure (except for rent).

Council Tax reduction is available to claimants who are on a low income and who meet the current qualifying criteria. Details of which are available on our website. Under the Tax & Benefits service details can be found about the scheme and how to apply.

Every March, each Council Tax payer will receive with their bill a ‘Your Council Tax Guide’. In this guide details are provided about the scheme, the qualifying criteria and how to apply. On the back of every Council Tax bill it suggests that the customer should contact the Council if they having difficulty in paying or they consider if the bill should be for a lower amount.

Also where a customer applies for Universal Credit they are signposted to apply for Council Tax Reduction. Council Tax is not currently included in any new claims for UC whereas the rent is.

Welfare Charities and organisations such as Citizens Advice are fully aware of the scheme when assisting customers with their debts/budgets.

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