

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday 7th July, 2022

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Agenda Item 13.

Item (A)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

“Regarding the lack of appropriate planning that has gone into the LRIE refresh/ plan B when can we expect to see Plan C?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The Council’s proposals for LRIE are set out in Executive Report EX4219, which was approved at the last meeting of Executive. Planning applications will be submitted and determined through the statutory planning process, and we expect to see a planning application for the depot site submitted within the next 12 months.

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:

“I did ask a similar question about 6 months ago when you said that there was no plan B, and then it suddenly appeared. Surely with economic drivers changing quickly, you need more flexibility than just one plan. Would you agree?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Thank you very much for that question. The ‘Refresh’ approach is in direct response to the economic drivers behind the values of residential and commercial property changing so I think our approach does demonstrate the flexibility that is required and that you request.

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

Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Sean Murphy

(B) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by William Beard:

“Could the council inform as to how many Ukraine citizens are currently being homed in the West Berkshire Area and what is being done to increase the number?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

At the time of writing there are 291 guests that have arrived under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The Council does not have access to the figures for arrivals under the family scheme but we do know from applications from school places and other contacts that a number of people from Ukraine are resident in West Berkshire under the terms of this scheme.

The Council has no role in original matching of hosts and guests which is done in a variety of ways led by hosts and organisations assisting with matching. The Council is working with hosts, guests and other statutory and voluntary services to ensure that guests and hosts have access to the services and support that they need.

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

Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

“Re LRIE Refresh: Under the NPPF Chpt 14 paras 159-169 the site will need to be assess for the Sequential & Exception Tests for Flood Risk as large parts of are within Flood Zones 3&2, so does the Council know, during the long and complex history of this site whether these have already been conducted, as para 5.8 of the report to Exec 09.06 states that no ‘in principle’ issues have been identified?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The London Road Industrial Estate has been in existence for decades and is a designated Protected Employment Area within the adopted Local Plan. During the course of the site’s history there have been numerous planning applications leading to development on this site.

Appropriate assessment of flood risk, which includes Sequential and Exception Tests where necessary, must be carried out as part of the statutory planning process. As freehold owner of LRIE, the Council commissioned an Environmental Appraisal Report in 2021 which concluded that there were no ‘in principle’ issues to prevent development on LRIE and that flood risk and drainage could be satisfactorily addressed at detailed 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?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“So does that mean that they have been conducted?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The Environmental Appraisal Report which was conducted last year concluded that there were no ‘in principle’ issues and sequential and exception testing will be part of planning applications as they arise and will be carried out at the appropriate time.

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

Item (D)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

“The Executive decision EX3978 on the 17th of Dec 2020 (2.1c) approved the commissioning of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the London Road Industrial Estate, and this was subsequently confirmed by the Executive decision EX4219 on the 9th of June 2022 (Page 14) ‘Place-making SPD adopted’ by the end of 2024. Please would the Council say why after a year and a half there is still no information available on the emerging Supplementary Planning Document?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The original commissioning of a Supplementary Planning Document for LRIE was put back in order to allow an Environmental Appraisal Report to be carried out during 2021.

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?”*

Alan Pearce asked the following supplementary question:

“I am trying to get a bit more understanding of the timeframe here. The Refresh report said that the SPD would be adopted in 2024, 4 years after you commissioned the SPD. Is it the officers not delivering to your aspirations or are your aspirations not deliverable by the officers, as the timeframe seems to be too long?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The timetable of the SPD is now linked into the timetable of the emerging Local Plan, and following the refresh is expected to be done by the end of 2024.

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

Item (E)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Paul Martindill

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

“Please can the Council confirm if the proposed “Provision for replacement grass pitch (at Manor Park) lost at Newbury Rugby Club” is for rugby or football?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

If the Council decides to proceed with Manor Park, and planning consent is achieved, the pitch will be used for football and will be marked out for that use.

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?”*

Paul Morgan asked the following supplementary question:

“It’s curious that you are replacing a rugby pitch with a football pitch. Please be honest with everybody and confirm that the intention for Manor Park, or its equivalent, is part of the playing pitch strategy which is to replace or provide an initial pitch for the replacement at Faraday Road. Why are you not being honest about that?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

I don’t think we are being dishonest – that is the case.

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

Item (F)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Janet Weekes

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

“How many of the 232 apartments in the Weavers Yard development will be available for a) social rent and b) affordable rent”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

There are no apartments for Social Rent and 13 for Affordable Rent.

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

Item (G)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Paul Martindill

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

“What is the logic behind the idea of forming a sports hub where everything is together then moving one of its pitches to the other side of town?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

The provision of the artificial 3G pitch will result in the loss of a grass pitch at Newbury Rugby Club. Although the new 3G pitch significantly increases the capacity for teams to play football and rugby, it is a requirement of Sport England, (who perform the role of statutory consultees in relation to any planning application that impacts on a playing fields), that the lost grass pitch is replaced.

Even with the new 3G pitch at Newbury Rugby Club, there remains a shortage in supply of sports pitches to meet demand, particularly for playing matches, so further pitches are required in the Newbury and Thatcham area. In any event there is no suitable Council owned land near the Sports Hub.

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:

“This pitch is not making extra pitches it is just replacing pitches, so you are spending a minor fortune ending up with exactly the same number of pitches as you started with, except that you now have some in the hub, and one on the other side of town. So what you effectively have is a bicycle wheel with one spoke. It's not going to work is it?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

The difference is that we will have a 3G pitch which is capable of 80 hours of play, compared to 6 hours for a grass pitch, so it will significantly improve the ability of the teams to play football in the Newbury area.

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

Item (H)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Jenny Graham

(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation by William Beard:

“What assistance can the council offer to residents to improve the insulation in their homes in the West Berks Area.”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation answered:

Mr Beard, Thank you for your question.

We are already working with BEIS (the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) to tackle insulation in housing with the worst efficiency ratings and are liaising over the targeted use of funding from BEIS to be spent in West Berkshire.

This Council is also keen to explore what more we could do locally to support residents in improving their energy efficiency and I know that this is a subject that is being looked at by the West Berkshire Parish Climate Forum.

I am also seeking to gather interest and support for a local West Berkshire Draughtbusters group. This would be an opportunity for local people to volunteer to help others to identify and address issues of draughts and poor insulation in their homes. I would welcome anyone getting in touch with me if they are interested in such an initiative.

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

Item (I)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

“Re LRIE Refresh: Re the Sequential & Exceptions Tests: If they have not been conducted to date when are they scheduled for please, who will conduct them, and who will pay for them?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

I refer you to my earlier response to Question C in which I explained that appropriate assessment of flood risk is carried out as part of the statutory planning process. Such assessments must be submitted by the applicant as part of the planning application so it would be for the developer to commission them. The Council has no plans to submit an outline planning application for the LRIE site.

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

Item (J)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

"The Executive decision EX4219 on the 9th of June 2022 (Page 14).

- *Work underway on place-making including green and blue digital and EV infrastructure by mid 2023.*
- *Planning application for depot site submitted - by mid 2023.*
- *Depot site redeveloped for employment use - by end 2024.*
- *Place-making SPD adopted - by end 2024.*

Please would the Council say why it is planning to submit a large planning application on the London Road Industrial Estate a year and a half before their place making Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that includes green and blue infrastructure has been adopted?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The Council is not planning to submit a large planning application for the depot site. Executive Report EX4219 paragraphs 8.8 and 8.9 make it clear that the option to submit an outline planning application for the LRIE site is not now being pursued. Instead, the Council expects a planning application for part or the whole of the depot site to be submitted by a potential new occupier by mid-2023.

The timescale for adopting an SPD is linked to the Local Plan Review which has not yet been submitted for Examination. In the interim, the Council will work up a Place-making Strategy to inform negotiations with existing and potential new leaseholders until such time as it can be adopted as an SPD, subject to the statutory planning framework.

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?"*

Alan Pearce asked the following supplementary question:

"I still can't understand why you are developing one site there. It is known that there are problems on the LRIE for blue infrastructure, green infrastructure and place making. Why are you going ahead with a development that will fix you on certain aspects of London Road until you've got an SPD in place. Surely that should come first before you submit any large planning application?"

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

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

All I can do is repeat my answer that the timescale for adopting an SPD is linked to the Local Plan Review. I've got nothing further to add.

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

Item (K)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Janet Weekes

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

“Why does West Berkshire’s proportion of social housing(13.4 %) lag the national average (17.4%)* by so much? * figures from West Berkshire's Housing Strategy 2020-2036 p6”*

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

I don't believe that you are comparing on a like for like basis. West Berkshire is not a housing stock holding authority so we will inevitably be below average as we are not building social housing but rely on developer contributions.

Central government set a target to deliver 300,000 homes by mid-2020. West Berkshire Council is continuing to work with Registered Providers to achieve our delivery target of 175 units of accommodation per annum for affordable housing. However, mitigating factors such as, Brexit and Covid that has had an impact on the supply of materials and labour will have had an impact on delivery dates and on our average percentage of social housing. This will continue to fluctuate and should not be looked at in isolation. It is worth pointing out that our Affordable Housing requirement of 30% for brownfield sites and 40% for greenfield is one of the highest in the Country and we regularly achieve that. We also challenged the Government and won to make Affordable Housing requirements apply from developments of over 5 units rather than 10.

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

Item (L)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

“Re LRIE Refresh: Para 5.2 of the Refresh report to Exec 09.06 lists other sites nearby but fails to mention the Gateway Plaza which in residents eyes is within the LRIE, and a Video of that significant development is visible to the public, so why was that development not mentioned in the report please?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The Gateway Plaza development was not mentioned in Executive Report EX4219 because the report was focussed on the Council's strategic objectives and delivery strategy for the LRIE site as landowner. Details of developments proposed by third parties on the LRIE site are publicly available through the Planning Portal.

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:

“There were other things mentioned in the report that are not directly owned by West Berkshire Council, so I just wondered if there was a problem with this, is it going ahead, because it is quite a chunk of the corner. At the moment it is like having a jigsaw box with no lid and the corner and side pieces missing.”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

I'm afraid it's not appropriate for me to comment on sites which are owned by third parties and any applications that they may be bringing forward.

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

Item (M)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

“The Executive decision EX4219 on the 9th of June 2022 (Page 14). - Place making SPD adopted by end 2024. Please would the Council give the exact area the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will cover?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Work has not yet begun on developing the Supplementary Planning Document so it is not possible to give the exact area that it will cover at this time.

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?”*

Alan Pearce asked the following supplementary question:

“I’m struggling to understand what is going on in London Road Industrial Estate. Surely after 2 years you would have had the outline of an SPD in your sights?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

I have nothing further to add to my previous answer.

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

Item (N)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

“Re LRIE Refresh: Given the scale of the information available in the Gateway Plaza development how will WBC ensure the Cumulative Impact of Development On Flood Risk in Catchment Area (CIOD OFRICA- Pluvial & Fluvial) is achieved, as the Council has no published methodology for this requirement under its Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1, new Addendum 1?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

I refer you to my earlier responses to Questions C and I in which I explained that appropriate assessment of flood risk is carried out as part of the statutory planning process. The Council has no plans to submit an outline planning application for the LRIE site.

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:

“That’s not the right answer to this question, but I’ve actually been in discussion with Place executives this week and they are going to look at having a methodology for conducting cumulative impact of development of flood risk in a catchment area, which means more than one plot. So that’s good news, thank you very much.”

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

Item (O)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Shiraz Sheikh

(O) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships by Paula Saunderson:

“With the significant changes proposed for Clayhill Ward how will WBC Directors & Executive ensure that Clayhill Ward has full strength Ward representation from now until the next Elections in May 2023?”

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships answered:

Clayhill Ward currently has two elected representatives who are fully committed to the ward and their duties as councillors.

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:

“Until this week the telephone number of one of them was not operative and it hasn't been for about a year. One of them doesn't answer emails, I've had emails returned unread. Councillor Beck is effectively trying to cover 6,000 residents. I do always involve him about what I'm doing as a flood warden to ensure he is fully up to speed, but I do worry about the ability to pick up cases of individual residents with only one fully active Member.”

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships answered:

As I'm sure you will appreciate I can't speak on behalf of other Members who are not present at this meeting. However I have noted your concerns and I will discuss them with the Conservative Group Leader.

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

Item (P)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Katharine Makant

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

“Will the Director – Place invite residents to suggest new names for the LRIE, or at least allow us to have a choice from a predetermined range?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Executive Report EX4219 makes it clear that the proposal is for a competition among local schools to find a new name for LRIE which reflects the district's carbon neutrality ambitions. Suggestions would be shortlisted by a panel including members, business representatives and commercial property agents. The Executive Director Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development has been given delegated authority to make the final decision on a new name for LRIE.

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:

“Please can you not include ‘Riverside’ or ‘River Walk’ as there are two ‘Riverside’ Industrial Estates and many ‘Riverside Lanes’, and lots of post goes missing as a result. I’m on River Walk, so no ‘Rivers’ please.”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Thanks for that Ms Saunderson, we shall see what the children come up with.

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Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Peter Walker

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

“Will this Executive adopt a policy that all WBC parking machines should allow cash and card payments and not be solely accessible via a mobile phone app?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

Cllr Brooks, thank you for your question.

All pay and display machines in the majority of Council car parks will shortly be able to accept card payments, making the process of paying for parking easier for many. It is also possible to pay using cash in most locations, although its use as a payment method has declined sharply in recent years. Each location is assessed on an individual basis, and therefore in some locations, such as Thatcham Station, where there has been no demand for alternative payment options, customers have been happily paying by mobile phone app only for some time.

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

Item (D)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Ian Pearson

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

“Which school holidays does the £220K from the Household Support Fund cover for free school meals?”

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

The provision of free school meal vouchers has been prioritised to assist and support children over the six-week summer holidays and will be made available via early-years settings and schools. The vouchers sit alongside the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme which is also available to children eligible for free school meals. The HAF will be running for four days a week for four weeks of the summer holiday period.

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 Erik Pattenden asked the following supplementary question:

“So what do you envisage happening for holidays after the summer?”

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

What's happened historically, if we go back to last year and before, is that we didn't provide free school meal vouchers for all of the half term holidays. We have no plans at the moment to go beyond the summer holiday but we know that the Household Support Fund has been extended, and we are looking to see how we can use that extension and it may well be that we provide free school meal vouchers for the half term.

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

Item (E)	Executive Meeting on 7 July 2022
Submitted to:	Viv Evans

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

“Can you explain how it is proposed to now only allow three months between Full Council approving the publication of the new Regulation 19 draft Local Plan in December and approving for it to be sent to the Planning Inspectorate in March, when previously there were five months allowed for this to happen?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

The extension of the Regulation 18 consultation allows the authority to thoroughly respond to the comments received, and more work is being done to address the issues raised, meaning that the Council does not at this time anticipate significant new issues to arise during the Regulation 19 consultation and reduces the time required at that stage.

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:

“The target time of March next year is now quite significant in that if it is not met we will go into Purdah. Has the Council considered extending the contract to the key person, who I was very impressed when I met, who is going to help with public and stakeholder participation in the process. He believes that's one of the reasons having him in post that you may be able to shorten the timeframe”.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

I think Purdah has been on everyone's lips recently, particularly given the last 48 hours. I mentioned earlier on about the structure of the planning service generally and the resourcing within it, and we are constantly having conversations about how we resource, and how we meet the deadlines that we are setting ourselves. You will be included within those conversations in our meetings and I am happy to have conversations with you about it.

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