

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday, 9th February, 2023

West Berkshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.

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



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(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation by Susan Millington:

“While congratulating WBC on its environmental improvements by allowing wildflower verges to develop and reducing the frequency of hedge cutting, I would like to know what other progress is being made to develop a nature recovery plan, including any rewilding opportunities being developed, as mentioned in your Environmental Delivery Plan 2021 (RC010).”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation answered:

Thank you for your question and your appreciation of the good work the Council has done in this field.

The Nature Recovery Network and the development of a Nature Recovery Strategy is something that is being developed at a Berkshire level. The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead are the lead authority on this project and they have just appointed a Nature Recovery Officer to lead on this work for Berkshire. The work will link in with the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership. Government are producing further guidance on the delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies which will potentially be accompanied by funding. We await this eagerly.

In order to coordinate natural solutions within our District, the informal Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership (NSDP) was established in the autumn of 2021. This Partnership is looking to develop the District’s capacity to make the best decisions as to ‘what to do and where’, providing a framework for prioritisation and guidance for local decision-making. The Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership comprises the agencies and authorities that are stakeholders in the ongoing management of land in West Berkshire. West Berkshire Council are a lead authority and funder within the partnership and link the work with our Environment Strategy Delivery Plan. With the support of organisations in the Partnership, a number of strands of work are taking place including an exciting pilot project with Sulham Estates looking at a range of habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement work on their land. There will be more to report on these strands of work in the summer of this year.

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?”*

Susan Millington asked the following supplementary question:

“Would you consider that progress is in line with the Environment Strategy and the subsequent Strategy update? It seems very slow to me”.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transformation answered:

Yes I do. I do understand that initial progress, as with any complex project will ebb and flow a bit, but we have worked through the hardest bit and we have an initial project

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underway now. Moreover I am excited to see a likely acceleration ahead in particular when the emerging marketplace for biodiversity net gain starts coming into force. In the life cycle of our overall strategy yes, of course, everything could have happened more quickly, but I am happy that things are on track.

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Item (B)

Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023

(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Deputy Leader by John Gotelee:

“When interviewed on BBC South Today programme regarding the replacement of the Faraday road football pitch Councillor Bridgeman stated " We want to get on and Build... This fantastic Football pitch on the site of Newbury Rugby Club" Could he please explain why he did not say that the pitch at Monks lane was not a replacement for Faraday Rd and that he had voted at the district planning meeting to that effect?”

The Portfolio Holder for Deputy Leader answered:

Thank you for your question, but what it fails to reflect is that in any TV interview that isn't aired live you are entirely in the hands of the journalist or editor as to what makes it into the programme.

Your question contains an extract from what was aired. What I said – that was used in the BBC piece - was:

“We want to get on and build this fantastic football pitch on the site of Newbury Rugby Club, but we just can't get on and do that because of the court case.

“But once we get the judgment then, if the judgment goes in the way of the council – and I very much trust it will – we will get on and build that facility.”

That lasted about 20 seconds on air, but it formed part of roughly ten minutes of interview questions and answers about the court case that had been heard the same day.

So, if you want to know why I didn't address the fact that the advice given to the District Planning Committee was that there was no formal link between the Monk's Lane application and any separate development plans or planning application that may emerge in the future in relation to the London Road Industrial Estate, you need to ask the BBC.

Of course, since you asked the question, the judgment in that court case has been handed down and Honour Judge Jarman has determined that the Council acted lawfully in granting the planning permission, and has ordered Mr Pearce to pay the Council's costs. So, as I said in the interview, we can now get on and build this fantastic facility.

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Item (C)

Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023

(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by Alan Pearce:

“The non inclusion of the LRIE in the new Section 19 Consultation of the Local Plan Review is causing confusion so please can the Council explain why it has not been included?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

Thank you for your question.

The Regulation 19 Consultation of the Local Plan Review does include LRIE. Paragraph 7.10 on page 74 states:

“The ELR is clear that the industrial requirement of 91,109sqm is a minimum and therefore the regeneration of the London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE) will provide flexibility to the figures in the later part of the plan period”.

It goes on to say:

“Due to the timing of this strategy and the site’s location within the settlement boundary of Newbury, the site has not been identified as a site allocation, however it does need to be recognised as an area of regeneration for its potential to deliver flexibility to the employment figures over the plan 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?”*

Alan Pearce asked the following supplementary question:

“Why wouldn’t you take the opportunity to really strengthen what you are doing with the LRIE. I can’t see an SPD, so my question is why didn’t you include it?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

I don’t think I can tell you any more than I have already read out. It is included, and the statement in there that I have just referred to explains why it is not identified as a site allocation. Clearly this is relevant in planning terms, so it is in there and is in there as it should be.

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Item (D)

Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023

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

“It is confusing to simple residents like me not to see an RSA or ESA Policy for the London Road Industrial Estate and its exclusion from the LPR as articulated on Page 84 para 7.10, and as the web site is not clear on how the Re-development Project is progressing to the next Checkpoint, I would like to see an update which includes a picture of the Timeline and a Gantt Chart showing the Critical Path through to the end of the current phase, and what the deliverables will be at the End of Phase Checkpoint and a high-level plan for the next phase so is an update possible please?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Thank you for the question.

We have just updated our Business West Berkshire website with an update on progress on the LRIE programme, which we will be providing monthly going forward. We appreciate the feedback around how we communicate on the programme, and moving forward we'll consider how this is presented on our website.

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Item (E)

Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023

(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Mark Hayes-Newington:

“The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average of its investment portfolio, and states its target is A or 6.0 and in calculating this Unrated Investments are assigned a score based on perceived risks. Could the Council confirm how does its investment portfolio currently compare with the stated target, and what is the proportion of the unrated investments within the portfolio?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The average credit score was 4.6 or A+ (smaller score is better) and the proportion of unrated investments is 18.1% of the portfolio and all of these investments are with other local authorities.

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?”*

Mark Hayes-Newington asked the following supplementary question:

“Have you done a full credit risk on those other local authorities given the number that are currently in some degree of financial jeopardy?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

We consider individual local authorities on a case by case basis, so the answer to your question is yes.

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Item (F)

Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023

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

“Could the executive explain why they have passed a stand alone shared football / rugby pitch (with a second clubhouse and stands) at Monks lane on what is currently and will still be only large enough to be a training pitch for rugby?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

Yes – the data in the West Berkshire Playing Pitch Strategy has clearly shown that there is a significant excess of demand for sports pitches that cannot currently be met by the supply of existing sports pitches.

The grass pitch referred to in the question has only ever been used for rugby training and has never been of a sufficient size for rugby matches. It is also the poorest quality grass pitch at Newbury Rugby Club.

The creation of a new Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) at this location will provide far greater capacity than the current grass pitch. To compare, a grass pitch typically has usage capacity of around 6 hours per week, whereas the new AGP can be used for up to 80 hours per week, thereby increasing the capacity for rugby training, football training and football league matches.

The new pitch Artificial Grass Pitch will be of the highest quality and will meet FIFA certification for football league matches and World Rugby 22 certification to allow rugby training to take place.

WBC did examine the option to create a full-size rugby pitch at the request of the RFU, however from the plan it was evident that this could not be accommodated without impacting on the proposed location of the pavilion and would require adjustment in size and possibly reduction in number of grass rugby pitches that were adjacent (both adult and junior pitches). Newbury Rugby club were strongly opposed to this potential loss of amenity.

The development of the Newbury Sports Hub has been undertaken in close consultation with Newbury Rugby Club, who felt that the separation of these facilities worked well.

The Sports Hub will be managed by a specialist leisure operator, appointed by West Berkshire Council, who have extensive experience in managing artificial grass pitches and football development programmes.

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Separating the facilities in this way via both a lease agreement and Joint User Agreement, enables clear lines of management and budgetary responsibility for the leisure company and Newbury Rugby Club, with football players using the new pavilion for changing and showers and rugby players using the existing rugby club changing facilities. This enable the costs and responsibilities for energy, cleaning and maintenance to be clearly separated.

Football teams will play their home matches at the sports hub will host the away clubs. The separate catering and social area provides football teams with a distinct social area and opportunity to capture secondary income from sales, which enables the local football teams to be sustainable. Newbury Rugby Club already have these facilities and so this was not a requirement from the rugby club's perspective.

I am pleased that now the High Court has found the allegations repeatedly made by yourself and others to be totally baseless, we can crack on with building this fantastic facility

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Item (G)

Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023

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

“Following the recent judicial review could the Council now please identify with regard to the Medium Term Financial Strategy for Monks Lane Sport Hub, what they now expect the capital cost to be as it will fall in the capital budget 2023/24 and what funding rate will apply to the borrowings used for the capital part of the project?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Within the published budget papers £3.7 million of capital funding has been allocated to provision of the Monks Lane Sports Hub. The applicable rate of funding will be dependent on the prevailing rates at the time of borrowing, however rates are budgeted on the basis of 4 – 5%. The cost of £3.7 million is substantially higher than it would have been had it not been for the cost of the delays arising from the judicial review case which was brought against the Council. That case which was encouraged and supported by our Opposition, the Liberal Democrats and in fact part funded by the Liberal Democrats as can be seen from your ‘GoFund’ me appeal.

I would also like to stress that the figure of £10-£15m which is sometimes bandied about is a very misleading number. The upfront capital cost is £3.7m, and I can only assume that the £10-15m is a cumulative total of all of the future revenue costs lumped in with the original capital costs over forty years which is the period covered by the lease. It is extremely misleading, bordering on dishonest to refer to that figure. For context the Council's revenue budget over forty years is £7 billion. £3.5 billion will be spent on providing Adult Social Care over the next 40 years. I would urge you to take care as I am sure that you wouldn't want to mislead the public and state again that £3.7m is the capital budget allocated.

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'd like to make it clear that I didn't receive any funds from the Liberal Democrats. Where is the extra money that you need going to go in the budget?”

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The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

It will be in the budget as a result of the increased capital funding requirement which we now need to allocate to it. Building costs have been rising, very rapidly over the last couple of years. This could have been built last year if it hadn't been for the court case. My heart sinks when I think about the thousands of hours of football that could have already been played on that pitch by now.

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Item (H)

Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023

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

“Thankfully the LPR Policies under Section 19 in relation to most of the Environmental Issues have been much strengthened from the Section 18 versions, and the Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessments are very useful, so if the LRIE is excluded from the LPR Section 19 Consultation how will WBC LPA & LLFA ensure that the recommendations in the SFRA Level 2 Site Specific Analysis in relation to Local Plan Policy are complied with?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

Thank you for your question.

Any planning application has to comply with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the Local Plan that are relevant when the application is determined.

When the Local Plan Review that is currently at Regulation 19 Consultation is adopted then Policy SP5 Responding to Climate Change, Policy SP6 Flood Risk and Policy DM32 would all apply.

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:

“I’m glad to hear that the London Road Industrial Estate is in the Local Plan review despite page 84, paragraph 7.10 indicating that it isn’t. In that respect it will need to comply with the NPPF, Chapter 14, paragraph 160. Your strategic flood risk assessment level one, addendum one, and your strategic flood risk assessment level two, site specific analysis for new one which indicates that you must prepare a holistic flood risk assessment for the whole of the area within the red line and a drainage and waste water management plan. That’s also indicated in the other policies. How are you going to do that please?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

I’ll refer to Officers and come back to you in writing.

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Item (I)	Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023
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(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development by Mark Hayes-Newington:

“The Council has published various financial statements for consideration at the Executive meeting of 9 February 2023. However, thus far there are no Audited Financial Statements for 2021/22 even in draft form, which means Neither the public of the Executive to properly consider and scrutinise the these statements and plans upon which the budget for 2023/24 is set. When will the Council produce audited figures for comparative purposes?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

We haven't actually published financial statements for tonight, we have published the budget papers. The context of your question is financial statements which are subject to audit and these are not. Financial statements like the income statement, the balance sheet and the cash flow statement are produced and published on the Council's website subject to statutory timescales. The Executive does not consider and scrutinise those financial statements. The Council's constitution provides that the Governance and Ethics committee does so.

But to answer your question we have produced draft financial statements and published those for 2021-22 on our website in line with statutory timescales. They will remain draft until the Council's external auditors provide their final audit opinion. The Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, have only just commenced their audit for 2021-22 last month. In common with all local authorities we are subject to the public sector audit performance of those external auditors and that is not within our control. So to answer your question 'When will the Council produce audited figures?', we produce draft figures, it is the auditors who provide the opinion which makes them audited and I cannot give you an exact answer for that.

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?”*

Mark Hayes-Newington asked the following supplementary question:

“I notice that according to the records the accounts for the previous year are also unaudited at the moment, and not published, so you are running at two years unaudited which in commercial space would be regarded as somewhat risky, if not downright illegal. I realise that in the public sector you don't have the same obligations that the private sector is covered by. Nonetheless I would also add that the documents that you have presented on the website are in fact actually signed by the Council Leader, Lynne Doherty, and signed as correct by Joseph Holmes, the S151 Officer and they are signed as correct and audited as such. Sticking draft all over them does not make any difference, they should not be signed. Are you prepared to make sure

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that the signature blocks are taken off them which infer that they are actually audited accounts?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

I have reviewed those financial statements just this week and have not seen any signature implying that they are audited.

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Item (J)

Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023

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

“Was any viability study for that change from residential to commercial on the LRIE completed? If so has it been published and what was the cost?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

No.

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:

“Why not?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

The viability of the regeneration is based on the land values for the different uses that the land can be used for, for example, commercial, industrial, residential etc. That analysis is, and continues to be, carried out by the Council and it has been clear for some period that from 2016 onwards, that commercial and industrial land values have overtaken residential and markedly so, post pandemic. We don't need consultants to carry out a viability study for what we observe in the market and what we already know, and I'm sure you wouldn't want us wasting council tax payers' money on appointing consultants to do that.

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Item (K)

Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023

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

“Could the Council outline what new public Sports Facilities, and their associated costs, have been provided for in the capital budget. and Medium Term Financial Strategy?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

I've already mentioned the £3.7m in the capital programme for the Monks Lane Sports Hub. In the capital budget and MTFs we have an additional £0.5m for sports facilities and the playing pitch strategy. We have a new modular exercise studio at Hungerford Leisure Centre which is £0.5m, and further funding of £7.4 million of investment is being made to modernise existing leisure provision across the Council's estate including Henwick, the Northcroft Leisure Centre and the Lido which will re-open in the summer. I am really grateful for the opportunity to showcase the investment that this Council is making in facilities so that our residents can enjoy top notch leisure and sports facilities for the future.

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:

“Where is the money in the budget for the replacement for Faraday Road?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development answered:

Any planning application that comes forward for Faraday Road will be assessed on its own merits. Sport England will look to see whether the facility at Faraday Road, which involved the loss of a playing field, has been adequately replaced. You will be aware that we are consulting on a new football pitch at Manor Park and there may well be other football pitches that are bought forward.

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Item (L)	Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023
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(L) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside by Paula Saunderson:

“Which part of the Freehold of the Newbury Gateway Plaza Development as shown in this video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCa_C7DGfR8 does West Berks Council own, and why is this Development not included in the Local Plan Review Section 19 Consultation please?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

Thank you for your question.

The proposals as depicted in the YouTube video are within the Designated Employment Area known as London Road Industrial Estate. Any future development proposal within this area would be covered by Policy SP20 and the wider policies of the Local Plan.

Council ownership of LRIE is shown on the Council website WestBerks.gov.uk/LRIE.

(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture by Councillor Tony Vickers:

“Nearly two years after the Housing Strategy Action Plan committed the Council to funding a specialist contractor to carry out a private sector housing stock condition survey and over a year after it was supposed to be completed, what can the Executive Member tell us about the sector and the work that will be needed to keep private renters in particular in healthy warm homes?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

Following a procurement exercise to undertake the Private Sector Housing Stock Survey, a contract has been awarded to BRE to complete this exercise. This is due to be completed shortly and the findings will inform further activity in this area.

Environmental Health Officers continue to deliver a proactive and reactive approach to supporting residents to ensure they are living in healthy, warm homes.

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Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023
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(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships by Councillor Alan Macro:

“The government has announced that voters will be required to show a photo ID when they attend a polling station to vote in the local elections on 4th May. Many residents will not have one of the approved forms of photo ID. Such residents may apply for a “Voter Authority Certificate”, however, the application process for this must be initiated online. Many of these residents will either not have the IT equipment or the confidence to do this. Will the council therefore do the following to minimise the risk of residents being disenfranchised: 1. Train public library staff on the Voter Authority Certificate application process, 2. Equip public libraries with digital cameras or smartphones to enable library staff to take the required photo, 3. Encourage residents to attend public libraries to apply for the Voter Authority Certificate?”

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships answered:

I am sure that we all agree that a secure electoral system is a vital component of a healthy democracy. The public must have complete confidence that our elections are secure and fit for the 21st century. Asking voters to bring photographic ID with them to a polling station is an important way of achieving this and I am pleased that the Elections Act has brought such a requirement into law to bring us in line not only with Northern Ireland where ID has been required for almost forty years and also with most European countries.

I have to take exception to your assertion that many residents will not have one of the approved forms of photo ID. Extensive data published by the Cabinet Office in 2021 shows that 98% of the electors already own one of the documents specified in the Elections Act. 99% from an ethnic minority background have a form of identification that would be accepted, as do 98% of people who identify as white, and 99% of 18-29 year olds hold relevant ID, as do 98% of those aged over 70 as well. Expired forms of ID will also be accepted as long as the photograph is of sufficient likeness.

With regards to Voter Authority Certificate applications can be made either online www.gov.uk, by completing a paper form or in person with the elections team. The Council would remind all residents that applications can be made online using public access computers at any of our West Berkshire Libraries, and also that we have free wi-fi at all sites. Library staff will be able to assist with initial queries about this, and if necessary a one to one appointment can be booked with our Digital Services Officer to go through the process in more detail. All our libraries have a wi-fi enabled tablet for use by staff and volunteers, and these devices can be used to take photos as long as GDPR guidelines are followed. Residents should contact their local library if they require assistance.

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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?”*

Councillor Alan Macro asked the following supplementary question:

“98% are reputed to have identification, which means that 2% haven't. 2% of the West Berkshire electorate is 2,400 people which is a large number of people for the electoral staff to process. I think we should be doing everything that we can to encourage people to get these documents and I'm rather disappointed that we are not doing more, in line with my question.”

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships answered:

In conjunction with the campaign being undertaken by the government nationally to increase awareness about voter ID, I am confident that we are doing more than enough and have no qualms about anyone being disenfranchised.

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Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023
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(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care by Councillor Martha Vickers:

“The Phoenix Centre in Newtown Rd. Newbury has a sizeable performance space which is under used because of the restrictions on hours and the planning condition which limits its use to a Day Centre as this is such a valuable resource. Could the Council consider reviewing its hours of use, particularly in the evening, so that it can be used by local performing arts groups?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care answered:

The Phoenix Centre does have restrictions on its license. These restrictions are due to complaints from the neighbouring residents on noise pollution, including an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) when the license was granted. Discussions have taken place with planning over the last six months to look at the options to extend the license from 9pm to 10pm and these discussions are ongoing.

However, we are permitted to apply for a Temporary Events Notice, under the license, ten times in a year for one-off events. The centre recently hosted a wedding reception, with no reported concerns and these types of one-off events will continue to be reviewed and supported where possible.

The Phoenix Centre does have one long term rental for a trampoline fitness class, which finishes at 8pm but we do not tend to get requests for the use of the centre after 9pm.

If we were permitted to extend the license beyond 9pm the Council would also need to consider the benefits of doing this due to costs associated with utilities, caretaker etc.

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Item (D)

Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023

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

“If the Executive had taken account of the economic impact of a prolonged planned closure of the Kings Road / Boundary Road / Hambridge Road intersection being necessary in order to connect utility services to the new Sterling Gardens development, would you not agree that the planning of the works should have made a much stronger attempt to insist that the Construction Management Plan Planning Condition included provisions for keeping traffic flowing, or building the Hector's Way before the utility connection works were done, or negotiating with the Racecourse to have their private road used – for a substantial fee – while the works took place?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

Thank you for your question. May I remind you that the recent full closure was due to a gas leak unrelated to the Sterling Cables site and nothing to do with connecting utilities to the development. This was an emergency situation needing immediate action. I think that we would all agree that public safety was appropriately prioritised.

Following the congestion experienced last August, Council Officers have worked closely with the developer to minimise and avoid full closures of Boundary Road and Kings Road for works related to the development, as can be seen in the latest traffic management layouts.

There are a couple of issues with the suggested mitigation in your question. Having the new Hectors Way open for the recent emergency closure would have had no benefit as traffic would not be able to reach Hectors Way due to the closure.

Also the private route through the Racecourse is not designed to take the volume of traffic that would divert to this route if used as an alternative to Hambridge Road. Doing so would create a significant amount of congestion in the Stroud Green and Greenham Road areas regardless of how much the Council pays for the privilege, even if the Racecourse were amenable to the idea.

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:

“Researching and planning for how you are going to connect your development to the essential public services that it is going to need and weaving that into a construction management plan is nowadays quite normal to require when seeking planning consent for your development. As the planning authority we should have foreseen that where we are looking at a bigger road that is the main supply road out of, and potentially into, our main employment area, the economic impact of not having a really well thought

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through construction management plan on this development is visible right now. Wouldn't you agree that either through internal consultees or through oversight of the actual rollout and monitoring of the construction management plan, we could have done better to make sure we weren't faced as a community with what is happening now."

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside answered:

Officers do spend a lot of time having conversations and looking at plans, looking at where communications can be put out well, and there is only so much that we can do to make sure that people follow the directions that are installed.

We do need to separate the full closure gas leak with the rest of the work, but I'm not seeing the same amount of conversation, communication and chaos being reported with the planned works that are going on now as was taking place when the closure was full due to the gas leak. I think you need to balance two different situations. There is always going to be some discomfort in having to do works as they have been planned at the moment but you can't get away from that.



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Item (E)	Executive Meeting on 9 February 2023
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(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture by Councillor Martha Vickers:

“Following the tragic death of a two year old due to mould in the family home Michael Gove has written to Council Leaders and Chief Executives highlighting the need to ensure rented properties in all sectors are of a decent standard. What is this Council's response to this letter?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Culture answered:

Officers wrote all Registered Providers to obtain an update on their position with regards to how they are tackling damp and mould in their stock on 29 November 2021. Providers have provided responses which set out their strategies for managing damp and mould and which have also been provided to the Regulator for Social Housing on this matter.

All Council owned properties are regularly inspected, and incidences of dampness and mould have been addressed immediately.

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