

Supplemental Items for Executive

Thursday 6th July, 2023 at 5.00 pm
in the Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

Part I

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11. **Members' Questions**

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Members of the Executive to answer questions submitted by Councillors in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution.

Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke
Service Director (Strategy & Governance)

For further information about this/these item(s), or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Sadie Owen (Principal Democratic Services Officer) on 01635 519052 e-mail: sadie.owen1@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk

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Item 11:

Member Questions to be answered at the Executive meeting on 6 July 2023.

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A. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement:

"On 24 November, you, Cllr Vickers, stated "The Liberal Democrats are broadly content with the district-wide policies in the Local Plan that we'll be asked to vote on next Thursday. We certainly won't be voting against the motion to publish it for the Regulation 19 consultation." Why then, one week later, did your group vote against publishing the Local Plan for the Regulation 19 consultation?"

B. Question submitted by Councillor Dominic Boeck to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement:

"In the Liberal manifesto you promised to "fix the local plan". Given that the plan has already been approved by expert senior officers and submitted to the Inspector, how do you propose to fix it?"

C. Question submitted by Councillor Howard Woollaston to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel:

"At the Executive meeting on 8th June, you stated that "empty homes should not be allowed in this day and age". How many properties in West Berkshire meet your definition of empty homes?"

D. Question submitted by Councillor Paul Kander to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside:

"How much will it cost the council taxpayers of West Berkshire if you withdraw the Local Plan and start again from scratch?"

E. Question submitted by Councillor Carlyne Culver to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity:

"Is West Berkshire Council ready to fulfil its impending obligation from the Environment Act to create a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?"

F. Question submitted by Councillor David Marsh to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel:

"Further to her comments at the last Executive meeting about the problem of long-term empty properties, will the portfolio holder undertake that the council will:

1 Take rigorous action under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to ensure that owners of buildings left empty, and which pose an environmental hazard to neighbours as well as "adversely affecting the amenity of the area", are held responsible for restoring them to an acceptable level?

2 Where the owner refuses to do this, and where a property has been left empty for at least two years, take out an EDMO (empty dwelling management order) under the Housing Act 2004 on the property?

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3 Where both these approaches are unsuccessful, serve a CPO (compulsory purchase order) so that suitable properties can be brought back into use as much-needed homes?"

G. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel:

"The Liberal manifesto promised to fix all potholes "first time", and dangerous potholes within 72 hours of notification. What specific changes to the Council's highway maintenance processes will you make to keep this promise, and how much will they cost?"

H. Question submitted by Councillor Dominic Boeck to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement:

"If you are successful in removing housing from the North East Thatcham strategic site in the Local Plan, will the housing be placed instead in our rural villages without the infrastructure to support it?"

I. Question submitted by Councillor Howard Woollaston to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"On 24 May the Council announced on its social media channels that work had begun to get the former football pitch at Faraday Road ready for organised football, along with photographs of Cllrs Dillon, Lewis and Colston. At that time, the new Executive had not been appointed. Lynne Doherty remained Leader of the Council. On 21 June more announcements were made presenting the decision to cancel commercial development and use the site for football as a fait accompli. The commercial development of the site was agreed by the Executive on 9 June 2022 as part of the London Road Industrial Estate Refresh (EX4219).

How can an Executive decision be set aside, with significant economic and financial implications for the District and the Council, before the new Leader and Executive were appointed, and without due consideration and publication on the Forward Plan?"

J. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services:

"The Liberal Democrat manifesto promised to remove the Garden Waste charge. How much income did this charge generate in 2022-23?"

K. Question submitted by Councillor Dominic Boeck to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development:

"Cllr Colston, commenting on a possible extension of pedestrianisation hours in Newbury town centre, you were quoted in the Newbury Weekly News recently as follows: "We made a commitment in our manifesto to trial extended hours of pedestrianisation in Newbury town centre from 10am through to midnight. The idea is to support the night-time economy and enhance the town centre for pedestrians and those eating/drinking outside in the evening. Deliveries to

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businesses can take place between midnight and 10am, and those who shop by car, including the disabled, will still be able to do this up to 10am as they do now."

Will you commit to consulting with local residents and businesses before making any changes to pedestrianisation hours, and how extensive will that consultation be?"

L. Question submitted by Councillor Howard Woollaston to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"The outstanding, state-of-the-art new Sports Hub facility was eagerly anticipated by both Newbury Football Club and Newbury Rugby Club. How will you provide a home for high level football in West Berkshire with the same FA Step Level as the Sports Hub given your election promise to cancel the development?"

M. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services:

"At the Budget Council meeting on 2 March, where the Liberals failed to suggest any amendments to the Conservative administration's budget, Cllr Abbs promised that if the Liberals won control of the Council at the election, they would present an emergency budget detailing what their amendments would have been. Will there in fact be an emergency budget, or is this the first broken promise of the new Liberal administration?"

N. Question submitted by Councillor Dominic Boeck to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel:

"Since GWR introduced charges in both their car parks at Aldermaston Station, rail travellers have been parking in every available space in Station Road, Aldermaston Wharf, causing considerable inconvenience to nearby residents. For example, one young family with small children are consistently unable to park within a reasonable distance from their home, which severely affects their wellbeing and the quality of their lives. Residents, Beenham and Aldermaston Parish Councils and I have persistently asked Highways to address this problem, without success. What commitment will the Portfolio Holder make to consider the problem of parking at Aldermaston Wharf?"

O. Question submitted by Councillor Howard Woollaston to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development:

"How many hours of football will the pitch at Faraday Road be capable of hosting, compared to what would have been available at the proposed 3G pitch at the Sports Hub?"

P. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development:

"The Council has announced that it will not commercially develop the former pitch at Faraday Road and instead use it for football matches, despite a superb alternative facility being shortly available at the Sports Hub. Leaving aside the

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constitutional propriety of that decision, approximately how many jobs would have been created on the Faraday Road site if it were commercially developed by 2026 as planned by the previous administration?"