

Questions and Answers

Executive

Thursday 21st September 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 Governance and Transformation by Ian Hall:

“When the petition on charging was presented a number of signatures were moved as being non-local. Why was a complaint allowed against councillors when it too came from outside the area?”

The Portfolio Holder for Governance and Transformation answered:

The rules around submitting a petition to WBC are set out in the constitution (Part 3.3 Petitions Appendix). Within the rules there is a criterion that the petition must be signed by **valid** petitioners which in most cases will mean that they live, work or study in West Berkshire. The rationale behind this is that the subject matter of the petition must relate to the District or something which the Council has responsibility for or over which it has influence. Other petitioners may be considered if they are relevant to the issue in the petition subject (whilst the Council is keen to hear from people who live, study or work in West Berkshire, this is not always a requirement - for example, a petition from 50 visitors about the quality of tourism facilities in the district would qualify).

We have a duty to verify the signatories to all petitions, using publicly available data bases and by contacting those named. Any false signatories (such as using Disney Character names) or details of alleged signatories who have not given their permission for their details to be used will be omitted from the overall number of petitioners. The petition organiser is advised of the outcome of number of petitioners once considered and the reasons behind any names not being considered.

Standards complaints on the other hand relate to the conduct of an individual Member who is elected to office. It is vital that the public has confidence in the high standards of Local Government and that there is transparency around the conduct of Councillors. It should be noted that most Councillors conduct themselves with the very best motives and in a way that is beyond reproach. Reference to the Code of Conduct and a formal complaint should be very much the last resort should issues remain unresolved through other routes (such as a simple apology). West Berkshire Council’s Code of Conduct again is referenced within our Constitution- Part 13 that reflects the law (Localism Act 2011). The Code of Conduct applies to all members when acting in their capacity as a Councillor. This can be when acting as a representative of the Council, participating in a meeting, briefing with officers or members of the public or corresponding with the authority other than in their private capacity. It is therefore quite proper that should an individual Member not act within the Code of Conduct, the complainant does not need to live study or work in West Berkshire.

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

Item (B)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration Growth and Strategy Development by John Gotelee:

“7.24. Avison Young Environmental study for the LRIE states: Pre-application consultation undertaken with WBDC as part of this study confirms that a surface water drainage strategy for the Site should be designed to accommodate the 1% annual probability storm event plus a 40% allowance for climate change. Where can one see this Surface water Drainage Strategy? Has one even been completed?”

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration Growth and Strategy Development answered:

The purpose of the Avison Young Environmental Appraisal Report (2021) is to examine the environmental issues on the site and identify what work would need to be done if, in line with the 2020 development brief, wholesale redevelopment of the site was brought forward. As confirmed in the June 2022 executive report the Council is no longer considering a site-wide wholesale redevelopment. Instead the surface water drainage and flooding of individual plots will be assessed at the point that a planning application is submitted for the redevelopment of each plot.

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:

“As somebody whose house was flooded last night, the second time since Cinch finished their tarmacking, obviously drainage is quite important to me. I'm afraid that you can't meet legal requirements by doing it plot by plot. Can you re-look at that, even if the officers don't understand drainage, I do”.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration Growth and Strategy Development answered:

We have looked at it and that is the position that officers are giving.

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

Item (C)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Annar Karim:

"I would like to ask if the Council will consider the impact of refusing renewable energy projects or refusing planning on improved buildings with better insulation on Global temperatures.

Background: West Berkshire Council declared a Climate Emergency on the 2nd July 2019. The planning department has recently refused renewable energy applications and applications that upgrade old uninsulated buildings (with fossil fuel heating systems) that would have significantly reduced residents' carbon emissions. I am petitioning the council to add a climate consultation step to the planning process. I would ask that the Council's Environmental Specialist or a member of the Planning department review all applications which are going to be refused to see if the application can be made acceptable to be passed on the grounds that the application has significant climate change mitigation impact.

Why now? We have seen significant flooding in the Pang Valley and forest fires in Sulham and Tidmarsh woods. Our farmers are having to deal with alternating periods of heavy rain and extreme drought and this is in the UK which is less affected than Southern and Central Europe."

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Thank-you for your question, Mr Karim.

Planning applications are assessed against national and local planning policies, which include the impact of proposed development on the environment. However, they also include the impact of proposed development on the surrounding landscape and on the amenities of neighbouring properties. In this particular case, the negative impact on the landscape and neighbour amenity was judged to outweigh the potential for positive impact on climate change. The planning appeal system provides a route for the applicant to seek to overturn this decision.

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

Item (D)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Graham Storey:

“Will the council change current policy, and invest directly in new social housing for West Berkshire rather than relying on contributions from private developers?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:

Mr Storey. Thank you for your question.

The Council has no plans to change its current policy to rely on contributions from private developers to deliver social housing. That said it will make the most of opportunities that arise from time to time to increase the supply of social housing.

A really good example of this is the Local Authority Housing Fund project, where the Council is investing £5.4m and partnering with the Department of Housing Levelling Up and Communities to lever £3.8m of government funding to provide 27 units of accommodation for Afghan and Ukrainian families and becoming available for general housing needs in the medium to longer term.

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?”*

Graham Storey asked the following supplementary question:

“Given that we have a real deficit of social housing in the district do you not think that it is very shortsighted not to at least consider direct investment in social housing?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:

At the moment Mr Storey, we actually have some problems with our finances, as do most councils across the country and most councils do not have their own housing stock. Most councils do rely on developer contributions and social housing providers such as Sovereign and Aster. We will take every opportunity to make use of Government funding but we cannot at this time have our own housing stock, except for those that we have as part of the emergency and temporary accommodation.

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

Item (E)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Anthony Pick:

“Why have no decisions yet been made by the Council’s Head of Planning on the recommendations to locally list eight heritage assets made by the West Berkshire Heritage Forum at its Selection Panel meeting on 27th October 2022, in accordance with the local listing process approved by Full Council on 27th September 2012 and jointly signed by the Council and the West Berkshire Heritage Forum on 26th October 2012; when will those decisions be made and when will entries for those listings which are approved be made on the Council’s web site?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Thank you for your question.

We have been experiencing staffing shortages recently in Conservation due to an internal secondment. However, the Council has just recruited a new conservation officer who will start in October and will look at the eight heritage assets that have been proposed for listing.

The decisions will be made as soon as practicable.

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?”*

Anthony Pick asked the following supplementary question:

“Can I be re-assured that the local listing process for which the West Berkshire Heritage Forum is responsible will continue to be supported by the Council in a consistent manner and that decisions are dealt with in a considerably more expeditious manner than these decisions have?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

We will certainly give every support we can to your Forum, but I can't promise a timescale. It will have to fit in with everything else given the financial situation. But we hope to do better than has been the case in the past.

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

Item (F)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Paula Saunderson:

"For completeness of records please may I ask this Question which appeared as a Supplementary Question from me to question H in the Public Questions answered in the Executive Minutes of the Meeting held on the 9th February 2023, and to which I have not had a reply. "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 (NEW 1) 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."

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Please note that it was under a previous administration that the promise was made and we know that planning officers were re-deployed to get the Local Plan through in the following weeks to that meeting. I can only apologise that you did not receive a written response as promised.

The London Road Industrial Estate is in the LPR as a Designated Employment Area (DEA), it is not intended to extend the London Road Industrial Estate as paragraph 7.10 clearly states. As an existing designation it does not need to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework Chapter 14, paragraph 160 especially as there is no change to the strategic policy proposed in the submitted Local Plan Review.

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 think that you are wrong. I would like to invite Councillor Colston to present the current work that Ardent are doing to the Newbury Flood and Drainage Forum on 26 October."

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

I will put that question to Councillor Colston.

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

Item (G)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paul Morgan:

“At the Executive Meeting on 6 July 2023 the leader of the Opposition claimed in his question that “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. Can the council please confirm (or refute) Councillor MacKinnon’s statement that an “alternative facility will shortly be available at Newbury Rugby Club”?”

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside answered:

Work is underway to re-instate the grass football pitch at Faraday Stadium including provision of changing areas. The re-instated grass sports pitch will be available for bookings for local teams from early November 2023. The decision relating to the proposed Newbury Sport Hub is being considered by Executive Committee in November 2023.

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:

“I find it quite strange that after a long period of time we are still debating Newbury Sports Hub. Why can you not just take a decision that the Sports Hub as it currently is, is just not a viable project. So, the decision in November is that the Sports Hub will either be approved or not?”

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside answered:

Yes, that is correct.

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

Item (H)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Alan Pearce:

“A new car park at the back of the Cinch storage unit on the London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE) has been completed on the 25th of July 2023. Please would the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement confirm if any of the additional Urban runoff is leaving the site underground via a Sewer that is connected to the main Thames Water Surface Water Sewer that services the LRIE?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Thank-you for your question, Mr Pearce. The answer is yes, the existing site drains via a network of surface water pipes into the existing Public Thames Water sewers.

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:

“That work was done on permitted development. Can you tell me were the conditions for permitted development complied with?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

As you know Mr Pearce there is a live enforcement investigation taking place at the moment, and that is one of the things that we will be looking at – did it actually have consent for what was done? We will contact you once the investigation is complete.

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

Item (I)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(I) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Tom Marino:

“Is it acceptable for Councillors to publicly mock people who do not speak or pronounce English words correctly, particularly when English is not their first language?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

I've spoken to Councillor Lewis regarding your question to be clear of the context in which the tweet was sent. However, the substantive answer to your question as to 'whether it is acceptable?' is clearly no. However, the context of the tweet that was sent out is important and I know members of the opposition have fallen foul of sending tweets in the past as well and that the context is ever so important. The photo was of a set of instructions with a pet grooming brush sold on Amazon by a professional business. The reference with the hashtag was based on a translation from a different language, presumed to be Chinese as the item had been made in China. The tweet was to highlight that the company had not done due diligence on its literal translation so there was an alternative meaning to the instruction. The hashtag 'Chinglish' was used and the Councillor is sorry that they put the tweet out and they did remove it, but thank you for bringing it to our attention.

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?”*

Tom Marino asked the following supplementary question:

“I appreciate the comprehensive answer and it wasn't about Councillor Lewis personally. Given recent inappropriate comments and behaviour made by Liberal Democrat councillors will you be doing more within your group in the future to stop things like that from happening?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

I am happy with the behaviour of my members on social media.

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

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| Item (J) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(J) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Governance and Transformation by Ian Hall:

“Is it right that complaints from people outside the area (and with no connection to our area) are allowed, and should the system be amended to prevent this type of incident?”

The Portfolio Holder for Governance and Transformation answered:

Complaints: any complaint received by WBC must relate to something that the Council has responsibility for or over which it has influence.

Standards Complaints deal with the conduct of an Individual member when acting in their capacity as a Councillor. Therefore, should an individual Member not act within the Code of Conduct, it is correct that the person complaining does not need to live, study or work in West Berkshire. This enables the public to retain its confidence in the high standards of Local Government and there is transparency around the conduct of Councillors.

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

Item (K)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(K) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development by John Gotelee:

“Avison Young Environmental study section 7.24 also states: WBDC has also commented that “infiltration Sustainable Drainage Systems and below ground attenuation storage will not be acceptable” and that “significant space will be needed for at-ground level Sustainable Drainage Systems. Could the Executive please explain the apparent incongruence of small SUDs under the road that we are told are planned by Ardent.”

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development answered:

The environmental improvements and greening of the site that are being designed by Ardent are at ground level only and therefore congruent with this statement in the Avison Young Environmental Appraisal.

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’m a bit concerned about that because anything under the ground at Faraday Road is basically in water and so drainage systems won’t work. Who has actually read the Ardent report, who has read the Water Cycle and who has read the Government’s SUDs manual? We know certain officers have not and these are the people advising you. Are you not worried by this?”

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development answered:

That is a separate question to the proposed greening of the site that we are undertaking in the next few months.

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

Item (L)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(L) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Anthony Pick:

“Why has no response yet been given by the Planning Service to the update to the Historic Environment Action Plan prepared by the West Berkshire Heritage Forum and submitted with a request for advice on the planning section in April 2022; when will that response be forthcoming, so that the revised document can be issued for consultation to Heritage Forum members?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

We have been experiencing staffing shortages recently in Conservation due to an internal secondment. However, the Council has just recruited a new conservation officer who will start in October and will review the Historic Environment Action Plan prepared by the West Berkshire Heritage Forum.

A response will be prepared as soon as practicable so that the document can be issued for consultation.

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?”*

Anthony Pick asked the following supplementary question:

“Given that this is entirely a planning matter not a heritage matter and could be answered by any planning officer, all we are looking for is planning observations on this document. Can it please be expedited as we have been waiting since April last year?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

You can have it as soon as possible. April last year this Administration was not in place. The delay is largely caused by problems under the previous Administration and given the financial situation that we have inherited we have not been able to recruit an officer, as it needs to be done by a conservation officer.

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

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| Item (M) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(M) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paula Saunderson:

“Re Agenda Item 9: After the decision on the future of Manor Park FIELD has been taken please can you confirm that you will allow this piece of Public Open Space to be included in the scope of the WBC/EA Funding Application titled “Clay Hill, Newbury, Flood Risk Study” submitted by Ardent in April 2022 – doc no. 2201740-01 in recognition of its role as an integral part of the Surface Water Drainage systems for this hillside?”

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside answered:

Dear Ms Saunderson, thank you for your question. I can confirm Manor Park will be included in the flood risk study regardless of the decision today.

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

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| Item (N) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(N) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development by Paul Morgan:

“In late July 2023, the Newbury Weekly news reported that “West Berkshire Council wants to spend £5.3m to remodel Newbury Wharf”. Can the Council please confirm if there is any substance in this report and if yes, who is behind this idea (i.e., is it an old Conservative administration proposal; is it a new Liberal Democrats administration proposal, is it being driven by officers or members etc.) Thank you”

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development answered:

The Wharf project was one of the major proposals of the Newbury Masterplan, which was developed in 2021 and received over 4,000 public consultation responses, which is a really high rate – where turning the Wharf into a public shared space ranked as one of the most popular proposals.

The £5.3m figure was a cost estimate provided by the consultants for what the entire Wharf project would cost if the Council undertook it in its entirety. =That is not what we are planning. The Council has therefore not made this budget available for the project and there are no current plans to do so. Instead, we have secured £795,000 of grant funding for the project from external sources: the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Thames Valley LEP. This is the only money currently allocated to the project and our intention is to deliver it in stages as further external funding becomes available.

Officers will keep bidding for external funding to support the Wharf and other great projects to improve our town centres.

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:

“Are you saying you are not going to spend more than £795,000 on the Wharf?”

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development answered:

No. I am saying that so far, we have secured that money. If and when we are able to secure more external funding it is our intention to do more of the project.

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

Item (O)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(O) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Alan Pearce:

"In an email from the Leader of the Council to me on the 9th of August 2023 on the overall long-term approach of the London Road Industrial Estate it was stated "Officers and members will meet but not with legal representatives" was this decision made by the Leader or by which officer and what was the reason for the decision?"

The Leader of the Council answered:

I can confirm that it was my decision. The reason for that decision is that I did not see any value in having lawyers attend a meeting to discuss the Council's overall long-term approach to the London Road Industrial Estate.

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:

"Would you consider having a meeting with my legal counsel, yourself and the CEO?"

The Leader of the Council answered:

It would depend upon the purpose of the meeting. If the purpose was to have an open discussion on the long-term approach to London Road then it is my belief that legal representatives would potentially inhibit rather than assist an open conversation.

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

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| Item (P) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(P) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by John Gotelee:

“Having opposed the Conservatives plans for a sports hub at Monks Lane isn't the refusal to quosh the planning application a case of political hypocrisy?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

The Liberal Democrat's manifesto commitment to return football to Faraday Stadium will be delivered this Autumn. This has changed the context for the development of Newbury Sports Hub and this matter will now be further reconsidered by Executive Committee in November 2023.

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

Item (Q)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(Q) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Anthony Pick:

“In view of the recent applications to redevelop the Kennet Centre, and the new applications from the developers, what actions are the council taking to make sure that the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (draft dated December 2021) is in place before a decision is taken on these plans?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

The Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal will need to be reconsulted on following the publication of the draft document. We believe that draft was poorly researched and the Newbury Society agreed with us on that.

With the appointment of a new Conservation Officer starting in October they will have responsibility for reviewing the draft and taking forward the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal which will when ready result in a further consultation before it can be adopted. However, the Appraisal of the revised draft and of any new town centre planning applications – including for the Kennet Centre - will proceed along separate timescales.

The adoption of the Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal will be influenced by the responses received to the next consultation so no it cannot be said with confidence that the appraisal will be in place before a decision is made on the redevelopment of the Kennet Centre.

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?”*

Anthony Pick asked the following supplementary question:

“Can I be re-assured that consultation take place as soon as is appropriate because the fact that consultation did not take place on the first draft is the cause of all of the problems that we had”.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

You can be re-assured and we are going to use the experienced officer that we have who is very familiar with the Newbury Town Centre area to deal with any new planning application that comes forward on the Kennet Centre.

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

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| Item (R) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(R) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paula Saunderson:

“Re Agenda Item 9: If the decision is made not to go ahead with the Football Pitch proposals please can you confirm you will look to Categorise this Public Open Space under a new WBC Green/Blue Infrastructure Plan and possibly give it the Typologies of ‘Accessible NATURAL Green Space’ & ‘ Small Childrens Play Area’ - with no Buildings?”

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside answered:

Dear Ms Saunderson thank you for your question. Should the decision be taken not to progress with the football pitch, there is currently no other plan for changing the designation of the Manor Park open space. However, I am more than happy to ask officers to give due consideration to your request as part of the development of the Council's Blue/Green Infrastructure strategy.

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

Item (S)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(S) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services by Paul Morgan:

"My question relates to Agenda Item 6: Capital Financing Report Financial Year 2023/24 Quarter One (EX4361).

Appendix D shows that:

- a) The Newbury Sports Hub (PPS) has a total Capital Budget / Forecast of £4.961 Million, £1,800,000 Outturn at Q1 (2023/24) and a further £3,161,575 Capital in the 2024/25 Budget (including reprofiling)*
- b) The Playing Pitch Action Plan has a total Capital / Budget Forecast of £1.571 Million, £426,000 Outturn at Q1 (2023/24) and a further £1,145,240 Capital in the 2024/25 Budget (including reprofiling)*

Please can you provide a full and detailed breakdown of what these costs cover / provide?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services answered:

The forecast expenditure for both projects focuses on construction and project management costs with a view to bringing the assets into operational use in subsequent financial years. The playing pitch action plan budgeted costs in particular are focused on identifying and constructing new sports pitches across the district. All forecast expenditure at quarter one is estimated and final outturn figures will be dependent on the progress of the projects during the current financial 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?"*

Paul Morgan asked the following supplementary question:

"It's a shame that you haven't answered my question which was to provide a breakdown of where the figures have come from. On EX4332 you have a total of £4.128m. On the latest figures in your capital budget it has now gone up to £4.9m, a difference of £833. Where are the figures coming from?"

The Leader of the Council answered:

The answer is that they can't be provided until the final outturn figures are at the end of the financial year.

Paul Morgan asked a further supplementary question:

Will the Portfolio Holder provide me with a breakdown of the figures?

The Portfolio Holder answered:

I will provide a written response.

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

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| Item (T) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(T) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development by Alan Pearce:

“Please will the portfolio holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development answer my supplementary question from the 6th July 2023 Executive meeting, Public Question (G) “going from your previous answer it looks to me as if you think you can develop the London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE) purely on the free hold land that the Council owns, and meet drainage law, have you done any risk assessment of the risk of legal challenges on any planning permission on the LRIE that could hold it up because you can't meet drainage law without third-party land downstream”?”

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development answered:

Thank you for your patience and apologies for the time taken to provide you with a response.

A risk assessment of the risk of a legal challenge for a planning application would need to be undertaken when that planning application was submitted – as it would depend on the nature of the proposal. We have however reviewed the general risk to the programme of there being opposition against any proposals that come forward, and that risk would need to be mitigated by the applicant party engaging and seeking the endorsement of all relevant statutory consultees.

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

Item (U)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(U) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Anthony Pick:

“Given that west Berkshire has 53 Conservation Areas, of which only two have approved Conservation Area Appraisals; given the central role of such Appraisals in defining the heritage character of each Conservation Area; given that over half the 53 Conservation Areas were approved in 1970-73; and given the promises made in successive approved Local Plans that such Appraisals would be produced, so far with minimal result, when will the Council at last take this task seriously, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework, and put actions in place to develop those Appraisals, a task in which the West Berkshire Heritage Forum would be glad to assist where possible?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Thank you for your question and I am grateful for the offer of assistance from the West Berkshire Heritage Forum.

The Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal is already in progress and we have just recruited a new conservation officer who will start in October. The team will continue to work with the local community to progress work on the remaining Conservation Area Appraisals, assisted by national and local planning policies which recognise the importance of our local heritage.

A response will be prepared as soon as practicable so that the document can be issued for consultation.

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?”*

Anthony Pick asked the following supplementary question:

“My question did not relate to the Newbury Conservation Area Appraisal, it referred to Conservation Area appraisals in general. They are forty years out of date. In 2020 a working group was set up by me with officers of the Council to progress Conservation Area appraisals. Can that be resurrected, and those processes started up again please?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

I would hope so. We have been left with a difficult financial situation but we will try our best as we feel very strongly about this.

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

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| Item (V) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(V) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services by Paul Morgan:

“My question relates to Agenda Item 6: Capital Financing Report Financial Year 2023/24 Quarter One (EX4361) In the EX4361 report there is no reference or mention regarding the capital requirement for the recently completed Lido at Northcroft – what is the final capital requirement for the Lido, and will this be financed by borrowing from the PWLB (Public Works and Loans Board)?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services answered:

The final capital requirement for the Lido was £5.7 million and this was financed through the use of the Community Infrastructure levy.

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:

“The Council does not seem able to provide a fully costed business case. The original costs of the Lido mentioned having to repay £180,000 per annum. We now know the Public Works and Loans board is well over that so are you prepared to loan that from the Public Works and Loans board and if you are, have you taken into consideration that interest rates have increased drastically, and can I please have a copy of that?”

The Executive Director for Resources answered:

As it was Community Infrastructure Levy funded, we did not undertake any borrowing for this scheme.

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

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| Item (W) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(W) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Alan Pearce:

“Question in relation to agenda item 9. at the Executive meeting 21st September 2023. Please will the leader of the Council confirm my understanding is correct that the sole reason for the new Sports Pitch at Manor Park is for the loss of a pitch at Monks Lane because the new Sports Hub is a replacement for the Faraday Road Football Stadium. Bearing in mind the Nolan principles of transparency”

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside answered:

The development of a sports pitch at Manor Park was explored as a potential mitigation for the loss of a grass pitch at Newbury Rugby club if the Newbury sports hub was developed. However, there is a requirement in the Playing Pitch Strategy to increase the number of sports pitches, so consideration of this proposal was also relevant in the wider context of the Playing Pitch Strategy.

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:

“The number one priority of the pitch playing strategy was for a replacement for Faraday Road, so that would make Monks Lane a replacement for Faraday Road. Is that right?”

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside answered:

Faraday Road is being returned to football. Anything else is being reviewed at the moment. I will put it in writing to you so that you can read the answer that I read out.

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

Item (X)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(X) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paul Morgan:

*"My question relates to Agenda Item 9: Results of Public Consultation – Potential Sports Pitch at Manor Park (EX4434) The Stage E review of the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), referenced in the EX4434 report (and published in June 2022) definitively and specifically links the potential sports pitch at Manor Park with the No 1 Priority of the PPS and the need to mitigate for the likely loss of the Faraday Road (Ground) "as the new 3G at the Newbury Sports Hub is only considered partial mitigation with additional grass pitch being the other part". Can the Council please confirm that the need for an additional grass pitch at Manor Park / Linear Park / or any other location will no longer be required as the Faraday Football Ground, in its current established location and footprint, will no longer be "lost" and will now be retained and protected?
Thank-you"*

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside answered:

The decision to re-instate the grass pitch at Faraday Road Stadium, means that the planning context and advice given by Sport England in relation to the development of Newbury Sports hub has changed. Executive Committee will shortly also be taking decisions relating to a planning application for a sports pitch at Manor Park and the future of Newbury Sports Hub. Once these decisions are made, Sport England will be informed and the revised planning context will be clarified.

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:

"You state that Sport England's policy advice has changed, can you explain that?"

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside answered:

There have been some changes within the sports pitch strategy due to legislation issued by the Government. We can get more details to you in writing once we are aware of them, and once we have looked at the review of the playing pitch strategy priorities for ourselves.

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

Item (Y)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(Y) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services by Paul Morgan:

“My question relates to Agenda Item 7: 2023/24 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter One (EX4360) In Appendix A “Transformation” has listed an Expenditure of £102,620 and an income of £0. Why was there no Budget allocated for 2023/24 Expenditure? and why is there no reference to or explanation of what this Expenditure is required for in EX4448?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services answered:

This post will be funded 100% from the transformation fund via the flexible use of capital receipts. The post will be generating cost savings The approval for this post took place on the 16 March Full Council *after* the Budget was set for 2023-24.

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:

“We are talking about a post which has a salary of between £126,000-£135,000 for an internal position. The decision was made in March. Would the current Administration have done the sensible thing and gone out to external recruitment rather than internal recruitment for this important position?”

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Governance and Transformation:

The amount quoted was total cost and not salary. It is a matter of record that I pressed the then Administration to recruit externally at the time. I am happy to add that I am extremely happy with the post holder who was appointed.

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(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“The roads and pavements in the Three Firs Way area of Burghfield Common are in a state of disrepair, with widespread degradation of surfaces and unkempt weeds along many kerbs. After raising the issue with officers before the election, I was told that individually there are no potholes deep enough to tick the box for repair – which may be true, but the cumulative effect across the development makes residents feel neglected by the council. Before I could follow up, the voters inexplicably decided that I should no longer be part of the Executive – so will the portfolio holder agree to meet with me on site so I can show her the situation, and push for officers to prioritise remedial works?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:

Yes, I am happy to meet you on site, but I cannot promise an immediate resolution as I understand that Three Firs Way, Burghfield does not form part of the current Highway Improvement Programme (2023/24 – 2025/26). From the photographs supplied the main issue would seem to be surface lamination of an old slurry material which would not normally meet the Council’s current investigatory levels. The underlying concrete appears to be structurally sound. Nonetheless I will ask officers to consider including the whole estate, Three Firs Way, Brocas and Normoor, for surface treatment (including the footways), as part of the review of the next three-year Highway Improvement Programme.

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 Ross Mackinnon asked the following supplementary question:

“Yes. I’m glad to hear that you will come out to see it with me. The photographs really don’t do it justice, and if you have a wander around there is just a bit of an air of shabbiness and neglect to it. So, thank you for that answer and I look forward to welcoming you to sunny Bradfield Ward in the future”.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:

Thank you. I am actually very keen to get out to all areas within West Berkshire because Highways is all new to me and so this will be a good first attempt.

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

Item (C)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(C) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Jo Stewart:

“On World Suicide Prevention Awareness Day – Sunday 10th September – there appeared to be nothing on the council’s website or on social media pages regarding this important awareness day. Wouldn’t it have been an ideal opportunity to share with residents vital and practical information about how to speak to friends and loved ones who may be having suicidal thoughts?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

Thank you for the question, Councillor Stewart. I have a prepared answer here regarding what we do around Suicide Prevention but actually getting to the nuts and bolts of it, yes, we could have done to be honest with you. What we are going to do, going forward is to bring a paper to Executive with all the awareness days that we think we will celebrate over the year and then Members of the Executive and Members of the Opposition will be able to feed into that as well. So, thanks for flagging it.

What I will say just around suicide prevention is that clearly, we do provide hundreds of services to residents which are all important in their own way and many of these overlap with those awareness days, weeks and months. Whilst we do support them, we don’t use them to drive how we deliver our services. But suicide prevention is an issue that we are working on throughout the year and we have information on our website which includes World Suicide Prevention awareness day. I would encourage residents to take a look at the page which can be found at www.westberks.gov.uk/suicide-prevention.

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 Jo Stewart asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you for that. I know that you can’t possibly cover all awareness days but this was just one that I thought was particularly important”.

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

Item (D)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Councillor Richard Somner:

"In your 100-day plan, the Liberal Democrat administration said you would re-introduce neighbour notification letters for planning applications. It has now been 139 days. Have you done so and accepted the increased cost to the council?"

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Councillor Somner, thank you for your question. An options appraisal has recently been completed to consider the most appropriate approach to introducing neighbour notification letters. A trial across the district is proposed to start in November, subject to budget approval by the Financial Resources Panel. We estimate that the cost of this will be no more than about half of what was saved by cutting those letters in 2018. That will be through the method that we are developing which is very efficient and employing digital technology but will ultimately end up with a letter going through the relevant letterboxes.

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 Richard Somner asked the following supplementary question:

"Thank you. I would still urge you to be very careful to keep a watch on that cost pressure because it is still a cost pressure, and the changes were made not only to improve the service but with costs in mind. I am concerned that there has been a public statement about officers driving around the district delivering letters and we really, really must not stoop to that."

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

In the options appraisal as the officers called it, to get people thinking outside the box I said that 'if all else fails get an officer to post the letters around'. Clearly that was going to be more expensive but unfortunately that got out as though that was going to be the answer. That's why we employ officers, they look into this properly and they came up with a more sensible answer. But we are going to tighten the buffer around the area so that it will be only a 50 metre rather than 100 metre radius and will also be more careful of considering where it is appropriate to send neighbour notification letters, and where not, as for some of the more technical applications like dischargeable conditions.

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

Item (E)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Howard Woollaston:

“Will the portfolio holder honour the commitment she gave to me at the Council Meeting on 20 July, and consult local residents and businesses before implementing any scheme to extend pedestrianisation in Newbury town centre?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:

Councillor Woollaston, thank you for your question. As I clearly responded to your question on 20th July, the Administration is committed to trialling the extension of the pedestrianisation timings and will consult with all affected stakeholders as part of that trial.



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

Item (F)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People's Services by Councillor Dominic Boeck:

“Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote cooperation between ‘relevant partners’, including the police, the NHS and education providers, while those partners have a duty to cooperate with the local authority in turn. Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do and when a child, for whatever reason, can’t safely stay at home, it is up to us as the local authority to step in and give them the care, support and stability that they deserve. We use the Corporate Parenting Panel to hear the voices of children and young people in our care and to explore, with our partners, how we are doing the best for them. Will the Lead Member for Children and Young People, explain how postponing the Corporate Parenting Panel scheduled for 19 September at short notice, for reasons of “member availability”, puts our children and young people first?”

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

The Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) meeting was moved to accommodate a Scrutiny Planning session between the Executive Members, the Scrutiny Members and Corporate Board. Members and Officers met to discuss the scrutiny session and were offered two dates, however one would have run immediately on from an all-day budget session, so it was agreed that the 19 September would be the preferred option. It was only later that the clash with the CPP came to light, however, by that time officers had already contacted all parties to get the scrutiny session in the diary. Once the clash was identified officers contacted others involved in CPP, the chair and designated officers to determine whether CPP should remain in place or look at an alternative date that did not clash with other commitments or leave. The main reason for the clash was a lack of visibility of the CPP meetings as they were not in the corporate diary on the website because they are not public meetings, however this has been rectified and they are visible for those who organise corporate meetings thus avoiding future clashes. It is regrettable that the CPP meeting had to be moved and we would not have settled for this date for the scrutiny session if officers had been aware that CPP was already booked. We continue to put the children in our care front and centre and do not think the change of date sends the opposite message, just that we are being flexible in our approach to what is a very busy 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?”*

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

Councillor Dominic Boeck asked the following supplementary question:

"I pointed out to you Councillor Codling and to the Leader that there was a clash before the date was confirmed, so I am disappointed to hear that as the explanation. I think I set out in my question the importance of attendance in the CPP and shifting the date at short notice in my opinion does not put children first. My plea to you, rather than a question is that at every opportunity think about how our decisions in Council affect our children and young people"

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

Absolutely Councillor Boeck. My experience of CPP is that it has been an effective meeting. It is an energetic forum and we have had some good exchanges. I'm confident that we will continue to build on that and put children front and centre.

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

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| Item (G) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“In their period of opposition during the last Conservative administration, the Liberal Democrats proposed budget amendments in 2020, 2021 and 2022 which cumulatively, if they had been accepted, would have reduced council reserves by a total of £5.5million by 2023. Given the challenging financial environment being faced by councils all over the country because of high inflation and demand, does the new administration agree that the then Conservative-controlled Council was correct to reject these Liberal Democrat amendments?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services answered:

Thank you for your question. The answer is no.



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

Item (H)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Governance and Transformation by Councillor Richard Somner:

"In your 100-day plan, the Liberal Democrat administration said you would cancel Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) demands made to homeowners who made a mistake in their planning application process. It has now been 139 days. Have you done so or were you simply overpromising to win an election?"

The Portfolio Holder for Governance and Transformation answered:

As you know and in this Chamber many times, I have berated the administration about the implementation of CIL charges to householders. I decided fairly early on that we had to have a pretty big root and branch look at all the cases going back to 2015, and what other cases might be captured by householders having got documentation incorrect. That work as you can imagine is highly detailed and takes time. So, I make no apologies for not achieving this 100 day target because we are doing that full review of all cases. I also promise that we will make it much easier for householders to achieve a zero rating. To that end we also promised a review of how we administer CIL charges. That review has been tendered, bids have come back, I have looked at the bids and they are appointable, but we need to do more evaluation on the scoring criteria. I expect that review to take place later in the year, potentially November until January. I am running them in tandem, but I do hope to have progress on the charges that we made that were inappropriate before then.

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 Richard Somner asked the following supplementary question:

"Thank you for the response. So, within that root and branch review that you are commissioning, will there be a clear requirement to define what a mistake is, and therefore who will ultimately make the decision to cancel the application because from what you have just said, it sounds like you are defining what a mistake is".

The Portfolio Holder for Governance and Transformation answered:

I don't think I am per se. The review helps me. I have done a huge amount of work on how we went about collection, assessment, chasing the debt. That, I am working up into my own paper that will ultimately come to Executive in some shape or form. I wouldn't agree that I am the arbiter, and what I have been disappointed with is that I haven't found any process flow standard operational procedure in the collection and assessment of CIL. All I have been sent is the legislation, and I can't see that an officer can read 250 pages of legislation every time they need to issue a CIL demand. I'm not happy with what I'm finding and there's more work that needs to be done to get it right.

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

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| Item (I) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Councillor Howard Woollaston:

“In your 100-day plan, the Liberal Democrat administration said you would cancel the plans to deliver the clubhouse and stands at the Monks Lane Sports Hub. It has now been 139 days. Have you done so?”

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside answered:

This decision will be considered and taken by Executive Committee in November 2023.



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

Item (J)

Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023

(J) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Dominic Boeck:

“Aldermaston Wharf is a community represented by three Parish Councils, all of which have raised concerns about inconsiderate parking there. A particular problem is caused by users of the Kennet and Avon canal parking in Mallard Way and Heron Way. Will the Lead Member for Highways meet me on site so I can show her the extent of the problem and explain the impact on residents?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:

I'm flattered that Councillor Boeck thinks that I can achieve in five months what he failed to do in the preceding three years since the issue was brought to his attention by residents. The Network Management team is aware of parking issues on Mallard Way and Heron Way as a result of competition for space between residents, their visitors and the canal users. It is sometimes possible to address issues like this by introducing local parking restrictions to make best use of the available space and to ensure that parking practices do not become a hazard for road users. These particular streets are already on the programme to be investigated in detail. If, following these investigations, it is considered that some form of parking restrictions are necessary, they will be the subject of a formal proposal as part of the next parking review project later this financial year. In this instance I do not believe there is any necessity for me to meet with you on 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?”*

Councillor Dominic Boeck asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you for that answer. I am disappointed that you won't take up my offer of meeting on site as you said that you were so keen to get around the district. I have been trying to pursue this problem for the best part of three years and I look to you to help me solve it. I'm essentially talking to the same people as I have been for the past three years. I want officers to spend their time to look at this particular challenge. When I asked you the question about Station Road, you said it was going to be looked at some time in the future. Now you are saying that the neighbouring roads Mallard Way and Heron Way are in the plan. When is that review planned for?”

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:

I do not have an exact date for that I am afraid, not because it is not in the Plan but because I do not know the date, but we are looking at the Parking Strategy going forward anyway. I will find out and get back to you, and I will come and visit you another time Councillor Boeck.

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

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| Item (K) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(K) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“If the administration decides to move to 3 or even 4 weekly black bin collections, how much money will be saved from the revenue budget?”

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity answered:

Thank you for this question. It is important to state that no decisions or options have been taken or developed yet on potential service changes and so it is too early to say how much, if anything, could be saved if implemented.



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

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| Item (L) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(L) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Councillor Howard Woollaston:

“In your 100-day plan, the Liberal Democrat administration said you would immediately return the grass pitch at Faraday Road to bookable football space. Has the pitch been opened within your 100-day target?”

The Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside answered:

The new Administration has actually delivered on this promise and announced that football will return to Faraday Road on its very first day in office and work started very soon after. In terms of opening for football matches, there has been a small delay due to circumstance beyond our control. For example, some critical pitch preparation work had to be delayed due to the very hot weather experienced during the early part of the summer. The recent wetter weather has allowed swift progress to be made and the pitch condition is improving with each grass cut. Additionally, required infrastructure such as sports changing facilities, fencing and some utilities are due to be installed over the next few weeks. These improvements, together with the ongoing pitch preparation work, will allow league standard football to commence at the site before the end of this calendar year. An opening event is being planned and further details will be communicated soon.

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

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| Item (M) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(M) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Dominic Boeck:

"I have had many questions from residents and Parish Councils about the redevelopment of the Four Houses Corner site for the benefit of WBC's tenants. The Executive of the previous Conservative administration accepted fully our duty of care to provide safe and appropriate accommodation for our tenants. We made it clear to officers, though, that we expected the redevelopment to be carried out at costs the Council could afford. How should I reply when I am asked how Council is managing the cost of the Four Houses Corner redevelopment?"

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:

Thank you for a second question. This as we can acknowledge is a very sensitive site. The current budget allocated to the redevelopment is part of the Capital Programme approved in March this year. The costs budgeted for reflect the estimates to deliver the project, following cost appraisal exercises and reviews by an external quantity surveyor and taking account of all viable options alongside our statutory legal obligations. The most recent cost appraisal was in November 2022 as part of a bid to Capital Strategy Group. As a result of the significant costs confirmed in November 2022, a complete review of proposals and the Council's responsibilities was initiated in December 2022 to ensure the current scheme was as cost-effective as possible in light of the Council's legal obligations. That review confirmed current proposals were appropriate in order to meet all requirements.

As the project progresses costs are being closely monitored by the appointed external quantity surveyor working with the Council project officer. There has been one significant cost change since November last year which is the removal of Japanese Knotweed confirmed as being present on-site April this year.

The costs of redeveloping Four Houses Corner are significant, however the Council has done everything it reasonably can to ensure proposals are appropriate and for the benefit of the future residents of Four Houses Corner and the wider community.

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 Dominic Boeck asked the following supplementary question:

"Thanks for that comprehensive response and I understand perfectly the Council's duty of care towards the tenants of Four Houses Corner, and I support that approach. I notice that you don't mention the actual cost of the work, but you should know that one of your fellow Councillors has put the budgetary costs in the public domain, so a lot of my residents are perfectly aware of the scale of the cost of this project. Indeed, it is in the papers so anyone may look at it. I know perfectly well what the scale of the cost is and as a member of the Executive I saw the proposals that came forward in November 2022. We said at that time that we wanted a justification for the scale of the



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

expense, and I wonder whether you have had that justification yet and whether you have challenged that in your duty of providing best value of for the residents of West Berkshire?"

The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:

As you are aware we have certain statutory responsibilities for our residents in West Berkshire and those include the travelling community as well. The things that we have looked at so far in that project, and you are welcome to come to any of the briefings that I have on a regular basis where I receive an almost week by week appraisal of what is happening, when it is happening and what the issues are. I do feel that we are on top of those costs.

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

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| Item (N) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(N) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“If the administration decides to move to 3 or even 4 weekly black bin collections, what help will be available to families like mine who despite recycling all the waste that they can, still have a full black bin every 2 weeks?”

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity answered:

Thank you again Cllr Mackinnon. No option papers, decisions or consultations have been taken yet on potential service changes. Therefore, it is not possible to answer your question at this time as it would simply be guesswork. I can say that we will think any changes through carefully and of course then present whatever emerges for consultation and feedback.



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

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| Item (O) | Executive Meeting on 21 September 2023 |
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(O) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People's Services by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

"A Burghfield Common resident in my ward lives in a house which backs onto the playing field of the Willink School. In 2021, storms caused damage to the school's wire fence separating the playing field from the back alley of their and their neighbours' properties. The mangled remains of the fence still protrude as an eyesore from their back garden, and the resultant gap in the fence and easy access to the playing field attracts antisocial behaviour. I reported the issue to Education officers last summer, but to date the school have been unwilling to remove the fence and repair the gap. Will the portfolio holder please urge officers and the school to remedy what is now a long-running nuisance to my resident?"

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

I can report that education officers have spoken with the school and held discussions about the fencing. I understand a contractor has been out this week to price it up and work should start very shortly.

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 Ross Mackinnon asked the following supplementary question:

"Thank you I am sure my resident will be pleased. Will you keep me updated please?"

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

Yes, I will.
