

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday 2nd November 2023

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

Item (A)	Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023
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(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development by John Gotelee:

“The LRIE regeneration has been at a standstill for 18 years. Apart from football what is different from a planning perspective about the Lib Dems proposals from the previous administration?”

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

Mr Gotelee, thank you for question.

The regeneration programme for the site falls under the remit of the Council as a landowner, as it concerns strategic plans for Council-owned assets. The new administration is reviewing the goals of the programme with officers, and we are aiming to have these finalised in a report to Executive by the end of the 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?”*

John Gotelee asked the following supplementary question:

“Not really as you have not outlined any changes, have you?”

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

You will see the differences when we publish the report.

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

Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023
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(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development by Alan Pearce:

“The Bond Riverside Regeneration Programme Review was scheduled on the forward plan for a decision by the Executive on the 2nd of November 2023 and was subsequently deferred. Please would the Council explain why it was deferred, and when the decision is now likely to be taken?”

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

Mr Pearce, thank you for your question,

The report was postponed to allow time for Members to consider the programme review, and we are now aiming to have a decision made in the next few months.

The Portfolio Holder asked: *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

Alan Pearce asked the following supplementary question:

“You have obviously been involved in meetings regarding where this review will go. Are you looking at developing a more holistic approach going forward?”

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

That is part of our review now. I will be able to answer that when it is published.

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

Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023
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(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paul Morgan:

“Agenda item 8. The Leisure Management contract is mentioned at least 20 times in the report, but no detail is provided with respect to the Sports Hub “Impact on the Leisure Centre (contract)”. In answer to a public question (item N), specifically regarding the Sports Hub inclusion within the new Leisure Management Contract, at the Executive Meeting on 23 March 2023 Councillor Woollaston confirmed that visibility of the ongoing costs would be provided but not until the contract is awarded. When was the Leisure Contract with Everyone Active (EA) signed?”

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

The leisure contract was signed on the 30th June 2023.

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

Item (D)

Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023

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

“Are the councils plans for the LRIE ambitious enough to attract modern businesses and investment?”

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

Mr Gotelee, thank you for question.

Yes. Our plans are being refined through the programme review that is currently underway. Bond Riverside has a number of intrinsic locational advantages, being edge of town centre and well connected to pedestrian, cycle and public transport links. These factors, along with careful investment in the place-making of the site and a clear strategic commitment from the Council for a commercial-led regeneration, will make it a very attractive location for private investment.

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:

“Would you agree though that it has a massive Achilles heel, in that drainage will fall foul of every plan that you put forward unless it is holistic and sorted out properly. It scuppered the previous administration, and it will scupper yours if it is not looked at?”

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

I do not think that it will scupper the plans. We are reviewing our proposals and you will see what they are and how we are planning to move that item forward when they are published.

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

Item (E)

Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023

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

“Any redevelopment of the Faraday Road Football Ground will require planning permission where the drainage strategy does not include man-made property flooding downstream to comply with drainage law. The town does not have a surface water management plan which can take up to 15 years or more to put in place and to provide any critical drainage infrastructure that has been identified by the plan. Is the Council being transparent by not explaining to the public how any delay in providing new facilities at Faraday Road will alter the planning balance regarding the planning policies that protected the site when it was a fully functioning Football stadium?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Thank you for your question.

Yes, the Council is being fully transparent with regards planning for the new facilities at Faraday Road. The recreational land use at Faraday Road has remained unchanged since its use for football.

The planning balance, however, potentially changes every time the National Planning Policy Framework changes or there is a new ministerial statement. This will be tested at the point a proposal for planning permission coming forward and being determined.

It will of course also depend on what the Local Development Plan says at that time. The new Liberal Democrat Administration is looking closely at whether – and if so how – it might wish to change what the submitted new Local Plan says about LRIE and other district-wide thematic policies. As you know, we are largely in the hands of the Independent Planning Inspector now, although as Opposition our position on this was quite clear earlier this year and is in the public domain.

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

Item (F)

Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023

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

“Agenda item 8. Not all the elements / costs associated with the Sports Hub project have been covered in this report. Please can the Council provide the details / information with respect to the following specific costs / items and confirm when these costs would be payable (one off and ongoing), for example:

- a) "Lease Premium" payable to Newbury Rugby Club*
- b) Annual Sinking fund for (3G) pitch replacement*
- c) Building Insurance*
- d) Equipment costs*
- e) Cost of the Interim Consultant*
- f) Cost of Officer's time*
- g) Capital required for a grass mitigation pitch - Manor Park*
- h) Annual loan repayment for Capital items (Public Works Loan Board)*
- i) Annual WBC Revenue Support (if not included in the EA leisure contract)*
- j) Annual lease costs payable to Newbury Rugby club ((if not included in the EA leisure contract)*
- k) Ongoing Costs (Annual running costs for the grass mitigation – Manor Park)”*

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

The paper included actual costs associated with the Sports Hub project. There has been no spend in relation to points A, B, C, D.

e) It is not possible to accurately reflect the cost of the interim consultant's time in relation to the Sports Hub project as the officer was working on multiple projects/tasks not just the Sports Hub.

f) Legal officers' costs have been included for the judicial review and the sports hub costs as part of legal costs set out in the report. It is not possible to accurately reflect the time other officers have spent on the Sports Hub project specifically.

g) There are no current plans to develop a pitch at Manor Park.

h) Zero as no loan has been undertaken to finance capital items in regard to this project.

i) No additional revenue funding to that already specified in the leisure contract.

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

j) On the assumption that the Sports Hub doesn't go ahead there will be no lease payments to Newbury Club (We assume this point refers to Newbury Rugby Club).

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 have written to yourself, Mr Lynn, Mr Holmes and all the members of the Executive. I can't understand why the Council does not provide fully costed business cases. Why can you not as a Council provide fully costed business cases so that the public and Members can make fully informed decisions. Without that bad decisions are made".

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

That has already been responded to. It is not always easy to break costs down into the numbers you have requested, because people spend time looking at other projects.

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

Item (H)	Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023
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(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Alan Pearce:

“Question for the Executive meeting 2nd of November 2023 Agenda item 8. Review of the Newbury Sports Hub Development.

Section 7.5.4 of the report states that the “Newbury Sports Hub is the principal priority within the current action plan”. Is the “principal priority” the same as the “No.1 Priority” of the PPS action plan?”

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

The simple answer to the question is yes.

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:

“Could I ask you to confirm what the number one priority of the pitch playing strategy is?”

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

At the moment that is going forward for the review E. The consultants will be feeding back their information in due course. Until that we can not specify what the priorities are.

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

Item (I)	Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023
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(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paul Morgan:

“Now that the Leisure Contract has been awarded, please can the Council provide the following visibility, details / information: What are the specific costs / charges for the total and all individual elements of the Sports Hub, for example: WBC Revenue Support; Premises costs (rental to Newbury Rugby Club); Utility Costs (gas, electricity, water etc.); Personnel (staff costs), marketing, maintenance, bookings, sports programme development, EA management costs / profit, etc.?”

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

The leisure contract was awarded on a flat fee across the ten years with a total value of £1.5M. Whilst indicative costs for running the sports hub were submitted as part of the procurement exercise these are deemed as commercially sensitive so cannot be provided.

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:

“When I asked the same question back in March, Councillor Wollaston promised to provide full visibility of the costs. Why are you not providing it?”

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

The answer is commercial sensitivity.

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

Item (J)

Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023

(J) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Alan Pearce:

“Why was the Sports Hub included in the new Leisure Centre Management contract (EX4221) when the main contract to build the Sports Hub (EX4332) was under the “call in” process and the Liberal Democrat’s and Green’s had clearly documented in their election manifestos that the existing Faraday Road football pitch would be retained / developed if they were elected?”

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

The tender documents for the procurement of the Leisure Management contract were advertised on the 21 April 2022. Those documents included a specification where the proposals for the Sports Hub facility and its management were set out and bidders submitted their bids on that basis.

The Leisure Management contract terms include a mechanism to remove up to four Facilities over the lifetime of the contract and therefore it was always possible to invoke that mechanism in respect of the Sports Hub should that prove necessary.

The Leisure Management contract award was approved at the 23 March 2023 Executive. At the time of the call-in of the Sports Hub, the leisure and legal teams were focussed on the preparation of a final version of the Leisure Management contract to ensure that mobilisation activities were in place ready for the 1 July 2023 commencement.

The removal of the Sports Hub facility at this stage would have been premature given that no decision of the Executive had been made regarding the future of the Sports Hub.

The Portfolio Holder asked: *“Do you have a supplementary question arising directly out of the answer to your original question. A supplementary should be relevant to the original question and not introduce any new material?”*

Alan Pearce asked the following supplementary question:

“Was it not a mistake that the Liberal Democrats didn’t call in EX4221 because it included the Sports Hub. The opportunity then as the opposition to call it in wasn’t taken. Was that a mistake?”



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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

The Leader of the Council answered:

Councillor Lewis wasn't a member of the opposition at the time, but as Councillor Lewis said in her original statement the contract does allow for variations within it. So, it still allows us to fulfil our wishes as the Administration whilst making sure that a contract was in place to allow for things like the lido happening and opening according to schedule. So no, it wasn't a mistake.

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

Item (K)

Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023

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

“Now that the Leisure Contract has been awarded, please can the Council provide the following visibility, details / information: What Income (if any) was assumed by EA in the contract for the Sports Hub?”

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

The leisure management contract which included the operation of the Sports Hub was awarded on a flat fee across the ten years and whilst indicative costs for income related to the sports hub were submitted as part of the procurement exercise these are deemed as commercially sensitive so cannot be provided.

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 are not answering the questions and you may as well remove question (L) as it will be the same answer.”

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

Item (A)	Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023
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(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“At the Executive meeting in September, you assured us that the idea of planning officers hand delivering neighbour notification letters for nearby planning applications was an example of out-of-the-box thinking which had got out, would clearly be more expensive, and that officers had come up with a more sensible solution. Can you confirm categorically that planning officers will not be asked to hand-deliver these letters?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Quite simply yes Councillor Mackinnon.

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

Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023
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(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Stephanie Stevenson:

“Given that the report by Hemingway for Thatcham made a recommendation of a 20 mph speed limit on the A4 through the Town Centre, will the Council consider including this section of road as a pilot in addition to the suggested trial in Theale?”

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

At this stage we are only looking at Theale to pilot our new approach to 20mph speed limits. We are primarily focussing on residential areas for this new approach and, as the report suggests, “main” roads are less likely to be suitable for 20mphs limits and it may not be realistic to expect drivers to stick to 20mph on main roads without changes to the road environment.

We are looking at all the recommendations made by Hemingway for Thatcham Town Centre but their suggestion to reduce the speed limit on the A4 was part of a range of recommendations and it wouldn't be appropriate to proceed with this one in isolation.

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

Item (C)

Executive Meeting on 2 November 2023

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

“At the Council meeting in October, you proposed a motion, which was passed with Liberal Democrat, Green and Labour votes, containing the false statement that the Home Office had cut the notice period given to successful asylum seekers to leave dispersal accommodation from 28 to 7 days. Will you now issue an apology on behalf of the administration for misleading the Council and residents of West Berkshire?”

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

I was delighted that both our Green and Labour colleagues supported the Liberal Democrat administration in our asylum seeker motion at Council recently. It was disappointing that our Conservative colleagues abstained. I have nothing to apologise for. It was a very relevant and time critical motion.

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:

“I think this is really important. How can you possibly think that passing a motion that contains a falsehood, knowing that it is untrue is fulfilling your responsibility to tell the truth to residents?”

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

I have some statements here from the Monitoring officer that stipulates that what we said in that motion was not a lie.

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