

Notice of Meeting



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Executive

Thursday 12 December 2024 at 6.00 pm

in the Council Chamber, Council Offices,
Market Street, Newbury

Note: This meeting can be streamed live here: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/executive/live>

Date of despatch of Agenda: Wednesday 4 December 2024

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

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



To:	Councillors Jeff Brooks (Chairman), Patrick Clark, Heather Codling, Iain Cottingham, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines (Vice-Chairman), Stuart Gourley, Justin Pemberton, Louise Sturgess and Vicky Poole
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Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke
Service Director: Strategy and Governance

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



Item 4:

Public Questions to be answered at the Executive meeting on 12 December 2024.

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

A. Question submitted by Alison May to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways:

"Noting the inter-relationship between WBDC's Waste Strategy and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy combined with WBDC's commitment to the Environment will WBDC agree to commission an Environmental Report which at a minimum will provision Councillors with the assurance WBDC's Waste Strategy will be determined upon an imperative and necessary evidence base?"

B. Question submitted by John Gotelee to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources:

"What is the cost to the taxpayer of servicing the council's borrowing?"

C. Question submitted by Alan Pearce to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"I understand that the Council, within the last six months, placed an order with consultants to provide a report regarding the viability of installing a 3G pitch at the Faraday Road Football Ground. If this is the case, please can the Council confirm the cost of this work and where it has been documented in the response to Executive public question (E) on the 7th of November 2024"

D. Question submitted by Paul Morgan to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources:

"In March 2024 (the "Settlement Date") the Council received a £25 Million (£5 Million x 5) loan from the PWLB. In response to questions from a member of the public and a Councillor it was advised that this money was to be "used to finance capital expenditure" but also "to fund short term cash requirements" and "for an overdraft for high needs block". Please can the Council clarify and provide full details of how much of £25 Million has been used / allocated / spent and what it has been specifically used for.

1)How much of this £25 Million has been spent / utilised year to date?

2)What are the specific capital projects that have or will be funded in this FY from the £25 Million?

3)Specific details on how much has / will be required to fund short term cash flow requirements?

4)Specific details on how much has / will be required for high needs block overdraft?"

E. Question submitted by Paula Saunderson to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing:

"Given the amount of National Press coverage of Local Planning Authorities concerns over the increase in Housing Targets, and in line with other LPAs, will

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WBC LPA please consider publishing its Response(s) to the recent NPPF Consultation and any response given to DHCLG correspondence on the doubling of our Housing Delivery Targets?"

F. Question submitted by Richard Bobrocki to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources:

"Please can the Council confirm the current and former members of the Procurement Board together with the board meeting dates and attendees, during this current administration?"

G. Question submitted by John Gotelee to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration:

"What was the cost of Ardent designing the Rain Gardens in Faraday rd and as they are clearly flawed in design is there any way of getting that money back?"

H. Question submitted by Alan Pearce to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"I understand that the Council, within the last six months, placed an order with consultants to provide a report regarding the viability of installing a 3G pitch at the Faraday Road Football Ground. If this is the case, please can the Council describe the Invitation to Tender (ITT) / brief, so I can understand what the report is going to cover."

I. Question submitted by Paula Saunderson to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing:

"As part of the forthcoming additional Public Consultation on the Local Plan Review 2023-2041 Main Modifications please will WBC LPA consider holding Local Staffed Exhibitions for Areas with significant impacts from Site Allocations, especially those added later in the plan cycle which have not been included in previous Consultations?"

J. Question submitted by Richard Bobrocki to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"With respect to the Faraday Road Football Ground, it looks like the Council, since June 2023, has placed a significant number of contracts valued at over £9,999. Can the Council please confirm: a) how many contracts in total have been placed that are over £9,999 but less than £49,999, and b) how many contracts in total have been placed that are over £50,000."

K. Question submitted by John Gotelee to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration:

"In what way has economic regeneration made a positive or negative contribution to the councils finances?"

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L. Question submitted by Alan Pearce to the Leader of the Council:

“My understanding is any member of the public that is not a member of Newbury Community Football Group can have no input into decisions taken by the Faraday Road Football Ground steering group. Please would the leader of the Council (Who is also the Chairman of the steering group) consider allowing me to join the steering group so there can be some input from someone not associated with any football group or political party, but who has a vested interest in how the Faraday Football Ground and surrounding designated employment area (DEA) is developed?”

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Item 15:

Member Questions to be answered at the Executive meeting on 12 December 2024.

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A. Question submitted by Councillor Martha Vickers to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration:

"What is the Peace Garden on Newbury Wharf costing this Council and do you consider this value for money?"

B. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Leader of the Council:

"Does the Leader agree that Opposition members represent their residents, and as such, questions that they ask at Council and Executive meetings should be answered clearly and directly, regardless of how politically uncomfortable that may make members of the Executive?"

C. Question submitted by Councillor Dominic Boeck to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources:

"What is the annual cost to the Council of maintaining the grass pitch at Faraday Road?"

D. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"Does the 'Newbury Community Football Group' have, or at any time had, a say in who can use the pitch at Faraday Road?"

E. Question submitted by Councillor Dominic Boeck to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"Since the Faraday Road pitch opened in November 2023, how many bookings have been made by members of the public?"

F. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"Manchester City FC moved from Maine Road in 2003. Arsenal FC moved from Highbury in 2006. Hamilton Academical FC moved from Douglas Park in 1994. Does spending hundreds of thousands of pounds on keeping Newbury FC 'at its spiritual home', as the administration told us was its objective at Scrutiny Commission on 26th November, represent a good use of council-taxpayers' money?"

G. Question submitted by Councillor Dominic Boeck to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"Burghfield FC, Mortimer FC, AFC Aldermaston, and Hungerford Town FC currently occupy higher places in the FA Football Pyramid than Newbury FC, yet have not benefitted from the council-taxpayer spending hundreds of thousands of pounds to provide them with a 'spiritual home', let alone keep them at one. Why has the Council decided to commit taxpayers' money to provide Newbury FC with such preferential treatment?"

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H. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"Burghfield FC's website states: "The club remain intent on establishing a dedicated home location, and work will continue as we look to secure suitable land that can be developed to match our requirements. Our long-term intention is to develop a site that will not only be our home - housing a clubhouse that can be used for events such as our presentation day - but also a place that can be used by schools and the local community offering state of the art facilities and all-weather 4G pitches." Will the Council commit financial and operational resources to assist Burghfield FC with their mission?"

I. Question submitted by Councillor Dominic Boeck to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways:

"The Liberal Democrats made a manifesto commitment in May 2023 to make parking cheaper across the district. What is the average charge today in Council-owned car parks for one hour's parking on a weekday lunchtime, and how does that compare with May 2023?"

J. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing:

"What would be the immediate consequences for development in West Berkshire if the Local Plan were to be withdrawn or otherwise struck down?"

K. Question submitted by Councillor Dominic Boeck to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"With so much money being poured into a football pitch in Newbury which, according to the administration, can only be used for 2 matches per week, and will, we are told, eventually be replaced by a brand new facility, can you explain to residents who use Downland Leisure Centre 4,500 times annually why their facility is threatened with closure to save just £30k per year and cost 5 jobs?"

L. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Leader of the Council:

"Does the administration support the efforts of at least one Liberal Democrat councillor to rally support for, and solicit donations to, a campaign to have the Local Plan set aside by a Judicial Review?"

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

"Why have the administration refused to add comments from Thames Valley Police to the consultation website for the proposal to switch off street lights in West Berkshire, despite recognising that the information presented to residents is unbalanced?"

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N. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Leader of the Council:

"When the last boundary review reduced the number of West Berkshire Councillors from 52 to 43 in 2019, the Conservative administration cut the number of Executive portfolio holders from 10 to 9. On taking control of the Council in 2023 the Liberal Democrats immediately increased the size of the Executive back to 10 members. We are told that the Executive must consider "difficult decisions" like closing leisure centres and cutting the mobile library. Will the Leader revert to 9 Executive members, contributing over £10k per year to the required savings?"

O. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways:

"Item 6 of the Agenda– Paragraph 2.2 (d) states £0.76m of external funding relating to street lighting improvements, essential maintenance budgets, drainage & flood risk projects and car park improvements is allocated to cover in year expenditure. Is any of this funding earmarked for drainage improvements or flood prevention around Burghfield Bridge?"

P. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources:

"Item 7 of the Agenda– Appendix A table 1.1 shows £3.9m of transformation funding being allocated to the revenue budget to partly plug the £11m overspend. After this allocation how much is left in the Transformation budget?"

Q. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources:

"Item 12 of the Agenda: Could the proceeds from the sale of commercial property be used to top up the Transformation budget?"

R. Question submitted by Councillor Ross Mackinnon to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside:

"Item 14 of the Agenda – paragraph 5.6 - One of the KPIs on the Performance Portal noted as Green is "Agree plans for sports at Faraday Road through working with the local sporting community (31/12/24)". Which sporting groups did the Council work with to agree its plans for sports at Faraday Road?"

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