

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday 22 May 2025

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C O U N C I L

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Item (A)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Lee Allen:

“Will West Berkshire Council make it a priority to build more anti-flooding infrastructure in rural areas of West Berkshire seeing as we are the most vulnerable?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you for your question. Flood risk investment will be prioritised in locations where the impact of flooding has been the greatest. There are examples of both rural and urban communities that have been severely impacted by flooding and these feature in the Council's Flood and Drainage works programme, which will be taken forward this year.

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

Lee Allen asked the following supplementary question:

“I'm sure the Councillor can understand apprehension caused by his words as Great Shefford had to wait a decade after extremely bad flooding in 2014 to be given its anti-flooding infrastructure. So can Councillor Gourley give a rough time when we can expect anti-flooding infrastructure projects to be created?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

I can't give you a time because they are very long projects. Unfortunately, the current Labour government have put a freeze on all flood risk funding at the moment, so it's going to become increasingly hard for local authorities such as ourselves to access funding to be able to deliver these larger scale schemes. We have done a lot across the district in flooding and spent millions and only here locally in terms of what we can deliver as a council, increased our flood risk budget by almost £1 million pounds for this year.

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Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Simon Pike:

“On 14th December 2023, I asked a question to the Executive on the status of a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order for Lawrences Lane between Thatcham and Cold Ash. The then portfolio holder replied that this would not be made permanent, but that other measures were being considered to make that narrow lane safer for pedestrians. What progress has been made on these developing and implementing measures?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Unfortunately, no progress has been made on this project due the difficulty in delivering a cost effective and practical access control solution. We have therefore asked officers to a focus on priorities that will deliver more effective road safety results. However, the project remains on the Network Management Works Programme and will be taken forward when resources allow.

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?”*

Simon Pike asked the following supplementary question:

“The local transport plan specifically sets as a priority to grow the network of safer routes, providing attractive local routes that support increased recreation and improve quality of life. As you are aware, this road is barely less than two metres wide in many places and has no passing places for almost a kilometre. So, it is not a safe road. So will you consider this being a priority under the implementation plan for the local transport plan?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you for the question. The draft local transport plan is still out for consultation, so I would heavily advise putting these comments into the consultation so that we can pick that up as we finalise that draft as it makes its way to full council in July. But absolutely happy to take a look at it.

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Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Paula Saunderson:

"Name changes occur and using the correct Name for WBC/ Public Owned Lands within the Newbury London Road ESTATES DEA is very important to ensure the Public and Residents have a common understanding of what precisely is being referred to, so why has WBC LPA chosen to rename the wider LNODON ROAD ESTATES Dedicated Employment Area, and to use a name for this DEA that has previously been used for the smaller WBC Lands within the DEA, as I find this very confusing?"

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation answered:

The current Development Plan designates Protected Employment Areas, which are areas of land where it is sought to retain and direct specific employment uses. These areas have been reviewed as part of the Local Plan Review, and they will be renamed as Designated Employment Areas in local planning policy. The reason for this name changes is to reflect changes to national policy, and changes to use classes. For example, it is not always possible to 'protect' areas for certain changes of use, such as where there has been a relaxation of permitted development rights at a national level, or where use classes have been combined.

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Item (D)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Alan Pearce:

“My understanding is the Council have commissioned Sports Labs Ltd to do a feasibility report on the viability of a 3G pitch at the Faraday Road Football Ground. Please can the Council confirm if an unredacted copy is going to be put in the public domain, and if so, when can the public expect to see a copy?”

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

Thank you for your question. I am happy to ask officers to send you a copy of the report.



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Item (E)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Richard Garvie:

“Could the Portfolio Holder tell me what the criteria is for households in West Berkshire to qualify for the larger size bin as part of the new waste strategy and how much that larger size bin costs?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you for your question, Mr Garvie.

We have a robust procedure for assessing if selected households qualify for larger black bin capacity, and requests are considered on a case-by-case basis against our qualifying criteria. Wherever practicable, the team will first of all explore with the applicant ways in which they can minimise the amount of waste they produce and to increase the amount of waste they recycle. We currently generate a lot more waste per head than both the regional and national average rates, so the focus should be on generating less waste instead of collecting more waste

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?”*

Richard Garvie asked the following supplementary question:

“Neither part of my question. my initial question was answered. So I don't know if I can ask you to ask the question again before I ask my supplementary. Is that possible?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

I think I did answer the question, which was that we have a robust procedure for assessing if appropriate households qualify for larger black bin capacity.

Richard Garvie asked the following supplementary question:

What is that criteria and how much do the larger size bins cost? Not how much do the residents pay, but how much does it cost the council per unit? It is a very simple question. You know, how do people qualify? What do those bins cost? I do not understand why you can't answer the question, Mr. Gourley.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

There are a number of factors that will come into play, and that is around the number of people in the household, the number of children in nappies, medical conditions, and other extenuating circumstances. With regards to the second-half of the question and

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the second-half of the supplementary, I do not have that number to hand, I'm afraid. What I can say is residents do not get charged for a second bin if they are eligible for it. But in lots of other local authorities, they do charge for second bins.

Richard Garvie made the following request:

Councillor Jeff Brooks, could I just ask that you provide a proper written answer to that question whenever the officers have that information available, please?

The Leader of the Council answered:

I do not see any reason not to tell you a sort of basic charge cost of a black bin. I think that is reasonable.

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Item (F)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paul Morgan:

"Please provide full details / the report (i.e. the date, the EX-number, authority to enter into a contract / agreement etc.) of the original Executive Decision that approved the Northcroft (dry side) refurbishment project and its cost. For clarity I am requesting details of the original EX report authorising the Re-development of Northcroft Leisure Centre (dry side), which should be similar to the report provided for the Re-development of Northcroft Lido (EX4159) PDF 3 MB"

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

I can confirm that the contract for award was approved by Executive on 6 July 2023. The report was a Part II report and was not publicly available because it contained commercially sensitive information. With reference to your point about a report similar to the Redevelopment of the Lido, an updated reporting process had been implemented in July to that in place when the Lido contract was awarded so there is no comparable report to EX4159.

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 very frustrating, Nigel, that you are not answering the question. You have got an 'EX' report for the Lido. You also have an 'EX' report for the Sports Hub, both of which are less in terms of capital expenditure than this one for the Northcroft refurbishment. Why do you not have an 'EX' report that's gone to the Executive for signature for the Northcroft dry side development? It is a simple question. I just do not understand why you guys are not answering"

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

I have to confess, I am not absolutely clear what you are asking. I think that all of these reports are in the public domain, apart from the detail, as we said, that's mentioned in.

Paul Morgan asked the following supplementary question:

But Nigel, they are not. I have asked for the 'EX' report specific to the Northcroft dry side. Why have you not provided it? It is a simple question.

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The Leader of the Council answered:

Okay, so let's be clear. Could you say again what you are expecting to see, sir?

Paul Morgan made the following comment:

I first put this question back in February, Jeff. You have reports to the Executive that have been signed off by the Executive for the Lido, which is the 'EX4159' report. You also had an 'EX' report for the Sports Hub which went into great detail about what it was for, the public consultation, how much it was going to cost, etc. My simple question is, where is a similar report for the five and a half million pounds that you are going to spend on the Northcroft Dry side? Why is there not a report that's been issued for this?

The Leader of the Council answered:

Councillor Foot and I will go back to the officers. We will refresh our memories about that report, which will have come to Executive, and we will come back to you with its critical path decision, the decision path.

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Item (G)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Alison May:

"West Berkshire District Council's (WBDC) Carbon Definitions Report (Appendix F, para 4.2) states: "The council is aiming to be a carbon neutral operation by 2030. This includes all scope 1, scope 2 emission and the scope 3 emissions from business travel and emissions from some of our contractors." The proposed Scope 3 emissions element is limited when noting there exists opportunities to identify and include other 'Scope 3 emissions'. How might the Council record and convey these limitations?"

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Councils are not currently mandated to report on Scope 3 emissions. Along with our Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, we are voluntarily reporting on our Scope 3 emissions linked with some of our largest contracts. These are Veolia for waste management, Volker Highways for highways works and our Leisure Centre operator, Everyone Active.

We make it clear every year through our Annual Progress Report which Scope 3 emissions we report. These progress reports are brought to the Executive and are published on our website. We believe our Scope 3 reporting strikes an appropriate balance between resources needed to monitor and report on these emissions whilst capturing the main impacts of our activities and monitoring how these are reducing through working alongside our contractor partners.

For anyone listening to this who does not know what Scopes 1,2, and 3 mean, can I commend the Carbon Definitions Report to you which is Appendix F of Item 6 on tonight's agenda.

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Item (H)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Lee Allen:

“Does the new waste management programme involve a reevaluation of the current bulk waste collection programme’s price of £63?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you for your question, Mr Lee.

Our bulky waste collection charges are reviewed annually to ensure they represent value for money for our customers and reflect the prevailing costs for delivering the service. The current rates compare favourably with those charged in neighbouring authority areas. Next year’s rates will be set after a review later this year, as part of the usual budget-setting process.

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?”*

Lee Allen asked the following supplementary question:

“Surely the price should be considered to be lowered as the current flat £63 for one to five items encourages practises like fly tipping as the high price combined with the fact that villages like Lambourn and Great Shefford are so far from the large tips in Hungerford and Newbury that many people suffer from the pressure of garbage build-up in their bins. And surely this would help alleviate that if the price were lowered by the council?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

What I would say is that fly tipping in West Berkshire has actually reduced over the last few years and fly tipping is not normally carried out by individual households. It is not something we see, and fly tipping is normally carried out by organised businesses. It is very rare that it is by individual households themselves. So I don't believe that the cost of the bulky waste item is at all linked to fly tipping. But thank you for the question.

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Item (I)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Simon Pike:

“When does the Council intend to next update its Infrastructure Delivery Plan?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:

The infrastructure delivery plan that informed the Local Plan Examination is in the process of being updated to align with implementation of the Local Plan, should it be adopted. In addition, it is also anticipated that a specific infrastructure plan for the North-East Thatcham Allocation will accompany the masterplan SPD.

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?”*

Simon Pike asked the following supplementary question:

“The infrastructure delivery plan describes itself as a living document. So, I have to say, given that it hasn't been updated for two years, it's been in a very long hibernation, and I'm sure that some changes have been made to the items within it since the Regulation 19 consultation and indeed several errors were pointed out in the Regulation 19 consultation that have not been corrected. So, will the council consider updating the document much more frequently, so it reflects decisions by the council on infrastructure? Perhaps you could also change it from a document to an Excel spreadsheet, which is what several councils do, which enable it to be updated very easily and frequently as circumstances change?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:

I will do my utmost to make sure the infrastructure plan is updated more frequently. I cannot, however, promise that it's going to go on an Excel spreadsheet until I've spoken to officers as to whether that's the best form for the council. Thank you for your question.

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Item (J)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(J) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Paula Saunderson:

"In a previous answer to a Questions about Bond Riverside I asked if a new Map could be issued showing the Planning Red Line Boundary, now amended to exclude the Public Open Space, and if necessary a Blue Line shown to illustrate the whole Tenure - therefore is this being progressed please?"

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation answered:

This question may require some further clarification; however the planning position is as follows:

In terms of land ownership, regardless of what lies within that ownership, the entire holding should be bound within a redline and that is the standard presentation for example by the Land Registry recording freehold title. WBC is the freeholder on Bond Riverside including commercial properties, the football ground and areas of green space.

In planning terms, a developer needs to submit an application, showing land to be developed bound by a redline and land around the development site which is also in the ownership of the developer, but not being developed, bound by a blue line. For example – if the Council submitted an application on the old Faraday Road depot site (over which it has direct control) the application would show a redline around the depot site and a blue line around the rest of the estate where the Council is freeholder including the football ground. This approach is a requirement of planning.

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Item (K)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(K) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Richard Garvie:

“How much did West Berkshire Council spend on creating the new Waste Strategy? This would include consultation, consultants, experts and any costs that formed part of the planning and adoption of the new waste strategy?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

The development of the Waste Strategy and consultation was delivered with a focus on achieving a suitably ambitious approach for managing our waste, protecting the environment, and obtaining value for money for our ratepayers. Wherever practicable, the time and expertise of our officers were utilised, as part of the strategy development process. We also engaged the services of an external technical advisor to ensure that best practice solutions were being considered. This cost in the region of £40,000 over the last three years of their services and relevant expenditure can be found on the West Berkshire website for those costs over £500 at: <https://westberks.gov.uk/expenditure-over-500> .

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?”*

Richard Garvie asked the following supplementary question:

“So just to be clear, you're saying that the new Waste Strategy in total from starting the process to the end of the process cost £40,000?”

The Leader of the Council commented:

Bear in mind, we do not cost officer's time. They do not complete timesheets

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

So, the answer to the question for the consultancy costs was £40,000 over the last three years. As Councillor Brooks mentioned, the cost of officer time is not costed into the creation of strategies as it is part of their day job.

Richard Garvie made the following statement:

Just so we are clear, I did not ask for officer time. I asked for the question that is there on the screen. But just to be clear, you did not answer my first question. You did not answer my second question. You have not answered other questions here tonight.

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What is the point of us asking questions 10 days in advance if you do not provide the answer to the question?

The Leader of the Council commented:

As you know, we do not calculate officer time and that would have been considerable, to develop a Strategy. We went out for consultants to help us with it, and you have had that figure. I am not sure what you are looking at in hidden costs, but if you want to contact me and tell me what we are missing I will respond. I do not like this idea that we are ducking questions. We give as comprehensive responses as we reasonably can.

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Item (L)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(L) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paul Morgan:

"It was stated that £5.4 million is planned to be spent in year (this FY) "redeveloping the dry side provision at Northcroft Leisure Centre, with further improvements to provision across the leisure estate (£648k)". Please confirm how this £5.4 Million was funded, e.g., reserves, short term loan, long term loan etc."

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

The dry side is a capital funded project financed by the Council through borrowing. Borrowing is undertaken when financing is required depending on the Council's wider cashflows. The Council's average cost of borrowing is 3.94%.

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'm fully aware, as you know, Nigel, in terms of what borrowing is and how much it costs. My question is specifically where a short-term loan, is it the Public Works Loan Board short-term loan is at 5%. So can you confirm that £5.4 million has come from the short-term loan from the Public Works Loan Board. Yes, or no? I am disappointed again that the question has not been answered."

Shannon Coleman-Slaughter the Section 151 Officer answered:

There will be no specific loan for this project. It will be undertaken as part of the Council's wider borrowing at the time. It can be from a combination of loans, so I could not specifically say which loan would fund this, but I can say based on all the short-term borrowing and all the long-term borrowing, the average weighted cost of borrowing throughout the financial year was 3.94%.

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Item (M)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(M) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Alison May:

"The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge - Progress Review (Jan 2025) states: "...that transformation needed to be embedded across the organisation with strong leadership from the political leadership, CLT, and an empowered central team to drive and enable transformation activity." How might the Council's organisational structure be strengthened to deliver the numerous economic benefits associated with the Council's Environmental Strategy?"

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

The Council's organisational structure has already been strengthened through the appointment of a permanent Service Director for Transformation, Customer and ICT.

They will lead a wide-ranging programme of transformation projects that will include delivering cost savings in line with our Environment Strategy. Where we can transform the way we operate to deliver cost savings and strong environmental benefits to help us on our pathway to net zero, these projects will be prioritised.



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Item (N)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(N) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Lee Allen:

“As there is a new road Upgrade scheme being created by this Council will the program only focus on upgrades in and around Urban areas or will it also provide Upgrades to Rural roads?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

We are currently consulting on our Local Transport Plan which is closely linked to the Local Plan and details transport proposals for the district over the next 15 years. The consultation can be found on our website and closes on 25th May so there are still a few days left to respond.

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?”*

Lee Allen asked the following supplementary question:

“Given the essential role that rural roads play in connecting isolated communities, supporting local and national economy, and ensuring access to vital services, can this Council justify the historic exclusion of these areas from improvement plans? Does the Council plan to improve rural infrastructure after this historic exclusion? And I will give you the benefit of the doubt, this is not just a Liberal Democrat failure. We saw it a lot under the previous Conservative Council as well.”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

One of the first things the new administration did when we took control in May 2023 was to start to reverse that decline in our roads by changing the definition of our potholes so that we filled on average over 600 more each year. We have also just signed off a highways improvement programme as part of the budget, which invested so much more in our roads that we will be able to completely double the amount of resurfacing and surface dressing this year than we have ever done before. And that literally does reverse the decline that we have seen over years and years of neglect, as you point out. But rural roads are not excluded. You can look on our website, we have a fantastic interactive map now, which shows you where the roads are as part of that highways improvement programme. There are a significant number of rural roads because we really appreciate, they are the A&B roads that the urban areas utilise. In fact, we are in the top 10% in the country for unclassified roads. So, we do have a good record there. So, I hope that allays your concerns and your fears, but I would encourage you to fill out the Local Transport Plan as well.

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Item (O)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(O) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Simon Pike:

“What weight does the Council give to Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework and accompanying Design Guide in developing planning policy and determining planning applications?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:

The Green Infrastructure Framework was designed to help local planning authorities and developers meet requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework to consider green infrastructure in local plans and in new development. The emerging plan contains several detailed policies regarding green and blue infrastructure which align with the Natural England Framework. The supporting text of the emerging Green Infrastructure Policy SP10 references the Natural England Framework and states that development proposals will be expected to be designed having regard to the Natural England Framework. In terms of decision taking on planning applications, the framework and accompanying design guide can be a material consideration for relevant applications but the weight to be given to this is a matter for the decision maker.

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?”*

Simon Pike asked the following supplementary question:

“Of course, you are referring to the new local plan which will not have been material for planning applications up until now. So, I am not expecting you to answer this, but I would be interested if you are able to give me a few references to officers' recommendations in planning applications which have referred to this green infrastructure framework. Thank you very much.”

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Item (P)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(P) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Paula Saunderson:

"The WBC Employment Lands now known as Bond Riverside currently has No Site Planning Policy to guide its future Redevelopment and, unlike Greenham DEA (Dedicated Employment Area) which has a LDO (Local Development Order), the wider London Road Estates DEA has no LDO, therefore how will the Next Steps for Bond Riverside Re-development be guided in the absence of any Planning Policy for the bigger or smaller Areas?"

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation answered:

From the perspective of the Local Planning Authority, there are policies in the emerging Local Plan Review that continue to designate Bond Riverside as a focus for employment uses. For example, Policy SP1 (Spatial strategy) which talks about regeneration opportunities in Newbury, SP3 (Settlement Hierarchy) where Newbury is the focus for growth, and Policy SP20 (Employment) which identified Designated Employment Areas and gives criteria against which any development is assessed. These reflect existing planning policies in the current development plan.

From the perspective of the council as freehold landowner, the council's drive to promote regeneration must be by working with long leasehold tenants who have direct control over most of the land. The council is working with some leaseholders to explore how best to develop regeneration ideas and along with that possibly seek external funding that might help unlock redevelopment.

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Item (Q)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(Q) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Richard Garvie:

"I recently launched a petition to ask the Council to pause the reduction in bin collection aspect of the new Waste Strategy. Thousands of people have signed at the time of writing within just a few days. As a result, West Berkshire Recycling have posted on various threads on social media that they are looking to give some people exemptions to the reduced bin collections. Can the Council tell me what circumstances would justify an exemption to the three weekly collection?"

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thanks for your question, Mr Garvie.

I am not aware of any exemption to the free weekly collection process other than to those in flats. Those with communal bins will continue to be serviced under their current arrangement. Ahead of the proposed collection service change, the Council has scheduled a series of communication and stakeholder engagement events to ensure residents are well informed about the reasons for the change and the expected benefits. In addition to using newsletters and social media updates, Council officers are also doing a series of community drop-in sessions, such as the ongoing outreach events at local libraries. These communications are not necessarily in response to a petition. The quality of waste services being delivered in West Berkshire – including the kerbside collections and recycling centre provision – are among the best in the country. Residents who need additional support for their waste collections will continue to receive advice and assistance from the Council to enable them to adjust to the proposed change. I would really urge residents that when we get to that point, when we make the change, that if they have concerns, they get in touch. It is also worth reiterating that residents who live in flats or share a communal bin will not be affected by this change.

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?"*

Richard Garvie asked the following supplementary question:

"I am sad that Paula is not here this evening because West Berkshire Recycling went on to Facebook and answered Paula and a number of other residents saying that they were looking at ways to offer exemptions to people with certain extenuating circumstances. If you have to send the waste collection vehicles out to, let's say there is a house in every four or five streets in the district, then all the savings from reducing the collections would pretty much be gone anyway. So, can you provide a written

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answer in a week or two once you have spoken to whoever runs the West Berkshire Recycling Facebook page and ask them why they have suggested there may be exemptions if there are not? Thank you”.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

I would be happy to do so. Like I said, perhaps there is a miscommunication or some uncertainty around the overcapacity that I have talked about where you can get that assistance if you require it. What I would say is that it is key to highlight the fact that this is not about efficiency, this is not about saving money. There are so many more benefits to making this change that are critical that keep getting overlooked. It is about being more efficient, but most importantly, increasing our recycling rate and also reducing the tonnage per head of waste generated where we are in the top 25 worst councils.

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Item (R)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(R) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paul Morgan:

“The contract for the Northcroft dry side redevelopment project was original placed with Alliance Leisure but due to the need “to take action to ensure the delivery of the redevelopment project of Northcroft Leisure Centre” the Council re-awarded the contract to “Everyone Active” in July 2024. What tender process was undertaken by the Council prior to the award of the contract to Everyone Active?”

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

The leisure contract between the Council and Everyone Active was varied (by way of a deed of variation) so that Everyone Active was responsible for delivering the Northcroft Leisure Centre refurbishment project in consultation with the Council. This allowed the project to be delivered in a cost-effective way and made use of Everyone Active's technical expertise. As a result, the Council did not need to undertake a procurement process as it did not award a contract.

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 am very surprised to hear you say that. As you know, I have been quite critical over the years, about the lack of going out to tender for major projects because it is the right way to do things and you get the right costs, and you get the right ideas. With Northcroft dry side you avoided the tender process when you went directly to Alliance Leisure under a framework agreement. That did not work out and you binned them off. Then you went to Everyone Active who are the operator management of the leisure centre. This is a massive capital project of £5.4 million. You should have gone out to tender. There is no reason why you should not have gone out for tender. I do not think that you are using the best price. So why did you not go out to tender for Everyone Active?”

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

I believe that is what I answered in the first part of the question. We did not go out to tender because the Council did not award a contract. There was a deed of variation that was applied, and I believe I have answered that question fully.

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

Item (S)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(S) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Alison May:

“West Berkshire District Council's (WBDC) Environment Strategy - 2025 Refresh identifies behavioural change as a relevant factor in the effective and efficient delivery of a Local Government authority's Environment strategy. Transitional Behavioural change is reliant upon the willingness of the individual, being the organisation (the Council) and each Council member representative (the individual) - how might the Council seek to imbed behavioural change which is an imperative transformational component?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Some examples of how we are working to deliver behavioural change within the Council and amongst our staff and Members are through education and processes. We seek to provide climate change training for staff and are currently in discussion with other local authorities through the work of the Prosperity Board to see how we might work together to bring about more effective and efficient use of training resources across Berkshire.

We also seek to educate colleagues on climate matters in a range of other ways such as regular lunchtime learning sessions. Two weeks ago this focused on the pathway to net zero and the refreshed Environment Strategy and there have been a range of other topics covered in recent months from waste management through to EV charging innovations.

We have a team of Eco-Champions across the organisation who play an important role in developing and delivering initiatives for staff and Members to raise awareness of what we can all do to play our part and change our behaviour.

A new process that we have introduced to impact on the way we work and bring sustainability even higher up in the planning process of our projects, policies and events is our Sustainability Assessment Tool. This is an assessment that is carried out on our projects to help us ensure that they are being delivered in ways that are as sustainable as possible. As officers carry out this assessment on their projects it will help to bring about behavioural change in the way we work across the organisation and deliver improved outcomes

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

Item (T)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(T) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Paula Saunderson:

“The Redefined Bond Riverside land is no longer showing on the Government PDL/Brownfield Register and has therefore been removed, so is there an intention to re-register it or will it no longer be available for Flatted Developments, and solely for Employment?”

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation answered:

Part 1 of the Brownfield Register has been updated since Dec last year and now includes land off Faraday Road and Kelvin Road, Newbury. To be clear the Brownfield Register is not a policy instrument, so the inclusion of land within Part 1 of the Register does not mean there is any intention to develop, nor does the exclusion of land necessarily imply that the land is not available for future development. Any planning application will be considered on its merits in accordance with the relevant planning policy at the time.

The Brownfield Register is subject to regular reviews, and sites will be included or excluded based on the evidence available at that time.

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

Item (U)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(U) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Richard Garvie:

“West Berkshire Council are currently working on plans to merge with Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Council as part of devolution proposals, the latter has the second best recycling rates in the Country. If we truly want better recycling rates, would it not be better to aspire to what they do with their collections and recycling process?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you for the question. Whilst the merger proposals are under consideration, we do not believe it will be appropriate to comment specifically on services provided in the named council areas. We do not believe it would be appropriate to comment specifically on service provided in named council areas, as it is important to understand the difference between 2 tier areas and unitary councils in their waste collection responsibilities. As a general principle, we are always keen on benchmarking and learning from our peer authorities. Equally, there are many service areas where other councils can also take inspiration from us.

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?”*

Richard Garvie asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you for the answer. Although the devolution plans are still very much up in the air, has the Council considered sharing services with White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Council as part of saving money now? If we are going to work towards a Waste Strategy in two or three years' time, if the devolution proposals go to plan, why would we spend money on a Waste Strategy for the next two years and then rip it up again?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

As Leader, I am leading on devolution and the local government review. It would not be appropriate to go along to the Vale and South Oxford and discuss sharing some services? I think Oxford County Council might have something to say about that. They are the ones who provide a lot of services in conjunction with the Vale and South Oxford. So, it is not as simple as saying, let's start working as if we are going to be combined. But the officers are working hard together from the three authorities. So, you know, it is moving but it is not certain.

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

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

I think I would just add to that, that it is important to understand the different services that two-tier authorities provide compared to unitary authorities. There is a significant amount of work to unpick there if that local government reorganisation happens and our proposal is accepted. I would also add to that this is an eight-year Waste Strategy which takes us out to 2032, when the PFI agreement with Veolia is up for renewal. So, I think that is some important context that we cannot just stop what we are doing. I would also highlight that the climate emergency isn't going to hang around and wait for local government reorganisation to happen. So, we want to get on, we want to move, we are ambitious, and we are bold in what we want to achieve. That is why we need to crack on now.

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

Item (V)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(V) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paul Morgan:

“Can the Council please provide details of the terms associated with the £16 Million emergency loan recently received from Government, i.e. what is the interest rate being charged, is it based on a “fixed maturity” basis and over what period (when does the initial loan need to be repaid) etc”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Thank you for your question.

Exceptional financial support in two separate tranches has been provisionally agreed by central government. £13million attributable to 2024/25 and £3million attributable to 2025/26. There is not a physical single loan of £16million.

As part of the Council's 2024/25 outturn position the EFS requirement will be finalised (within the cap of £13million), this process is currently underway. Financing of EFS is effectively over a maximum 20-year period at the council's weighted average cost of capital financing as opposed to a single interest rate applied to a single loan, this will be finalised as part of the Council's finalised outturn position.

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

Item (W)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(W) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Paula Saunderson:

"In the past the Government have run a funding scheme for Public Lands for Re-developments which have become stuck and need funding to release them, this latterly being the BLRF (Brownfield Land Release Fund), and as Bond Riverside has effectively been stuck in Planning Terms for many years, have any bids been put in for Funding under the various phases of this funding stream which has been running in one form or another since 2018? <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-of-new-homes-to-be-built-as-government-unlocks-brownfield-sites?>"

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation answered:

There has been no external funding secured since 2018. No defined regeneration proposals with clear deliverability have come forward externally. The Council is now actively working with some leaseholders to identify any deliverable projects that may be eligible for funding. It may be necessary to develop a funding package comprising several sources and this is currently under review as part of the work.

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

Item (X)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(X) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Richard Garvie:

“Families and larger households are already struggling with fortnightly collections. These people are already trying to recycle everything they can to ensure they can fit everything in their bin every two weeks. Given that we will likely face another waste reorganisation with the merger of the Council into two other Councils, can we not just pause the reduction in bin collections aspect of the waste strategy until we can formulate a joint waste strategy with Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire Council?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

The Council provides advice and practical assistance to selected households who need more than the standard general waste bin capacity. With our separate food waste collections and ever-increasing range of dry recycling collections from the kerbside (including most recently plastic pots, tubs and trays), majority of residents should be able to manage with available general waste bin capacity. Our household recycling centres also provide a helpful backup option to householders. Similar collection changes have been successfully implemented in a number of comparable English councils including Bracknell Forest, East Devon, and Stratford-on-Avon.

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

Item (Y)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(Y) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paul Morgan:

“Can the Council please confirm when the Northcroft (dry side) refurbishment project was submitted on the Forward Plan to the Executive?”

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

This report was placed on the Forward Plan on 5 June 2023 ahead of the contract consideration by the Council's Executive on 6 July 2023.

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

Item (Z)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(Z) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Paula Saunderson:

"Both Web Pages on the 2 different Web Sites that exist for Bond Riverside have not been updated for some time: The New Site on the Business Hub was last Updated in Feb 2024 (<https://www.businesswestberks.co.uk/bond-riverside-london-road-industrial-estate>), however it does NOT have the latest posting up of: (https://westberks.gov.uk/media/61296/Bond-Riverside-Place-Making-Strategy/pdf/DRAFT_Place_Making_Strategy_-_Sept_2023.pdf?m=1738751875817), as this has recently appeared on the bottom of The Old Site, <https://westberks.gov.uk/lrie> , therefore please can both Web Sites have the same Information, or can they be rationalised back to one Web page on One Web Site, thank you?"

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation answered:

The Bond Riverside work package is being reconfigured and incorporated into the Newbury Programme work so a new cohesive plan can be worked up, setting out clear objectives and a plan for delivery in Newbury. As part of this piece, the online presence will be reviewed and linkages to West Berkshire Business website will also be updated.

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

Item (AA)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(AA) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment) by Richard Garvie:

"I was disappointed to learn that Hungerford and the Downlands is losing it's very well thought of Police Inspector and as a result will be left with two police officers and two PCSO's to cover that area. Has the Council made any representations to Thames Valley Police to object to this decision?"

The Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment) answered:

The changes that you have highlighted are part of a large Thames Valley Police reorganisation which has been ongoing over the past 18 months. Berkshire West Local Command Unit (LCU) is the final area to implement the changes and sees West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham become one LCU which commenced 8 May 2025.

In the first half of 2023 consultation on the re-organisation took place and representations were made on the reorganisation. We feed into consultations about issues that impact on local residents, but it is for TVP to consider its own structure and levels of policing. Any further queries regarding the reorganisation should be directed to Thames Valley Police.



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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

Item (BB)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(BB) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health Integration by Paula Saunderson:

“I commend the Council for production of a 3 year Carers Strategy, thank you, and I am wondering whether the relevant Service Directors of Adult & Children's Social Care would support having a Strategies Performance Measure which relates directly to our wonderful West Berkshire Unpaid Carers as I could not spot anything specific in the Strategies Performance Measures reviewed and voted for under Council Decision C4615 on the 15th May 2025?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health Integration answered:

The performance measures for the strategy are integrated into Appendix 1, Action (Delivery Plan), where specific targets have been set for its three-year duration. The Carers Strategy Group will oversee the Delivery Plan, conducting quarterly reviews to monitor progress across all six priority areas.

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

Item (CC)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(CC) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health Integration by Paula Saunderson:

“The Office of National Statistics UK Census undertaken on 21st March 2021 was able to identify 7.8% of the West Berks population aged over 5 provide some form of Unpaid Care = 11,941 Carers, with this broken down as follows:

a) Under 19 hours per week: 4.4% = 6736T

b) 20-49 hrs per week: 1.3% = 1990

c) 50+ hrs per week: 2.1% = 3215.

These full figures are not included in the Carers Strategy and Wokingham have also been able to break these down into Age Groups, therefore what does the Portfolio Holder think about the 11-12% Reach of WBC involvement with Carers, and only 88 Carers completing the Consultation on the Draft Carers Strategy?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health Integration answered:

The strategy includes references to the Office for National Statistics UK Census 2021, with a link provided on page 12 for those seeking detailed survey results. The consultation for the Carers Strategy survey was conducted over six weeks and widely promoted to gather insights from unpaid carers. Additionally, we reached out to organisations that unpaid carers frequently engage with to ensure they were informed and encouraged to participate in the survey.



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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

Item (DD)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(DD) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health Integration by Paula Saunderson:

“I know from personal experience as a Family Unpaid Dementia Carer that one of the most important pieces of information to know when contacting WBC for the first time is how long it is likely to be before your Loved One and yourself can have their Needs Assessments, and again there appear to be no Performance Measures in relation to these timescales or targets to benchmark against, so how would Adult & Children's Portfolio Holders feel about having a Performance Measure along these lines?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health Integration answered:

Performance measures are established to track new referrals and the support offered to individuals who rely on care services, as well as their unpaid carers. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are used to assess reviews and carers' assessments through client-level datasets. Additionally, ASCOF is in place to further support monitoring and evaluation.



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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

Item (EE)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(EE) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health Integration by Paula Saunderson:

“Many of the Actions in the Strategy will enhance the lives of local Unpaid Adult & Child Carers, again thank you, however we do have a concern around the 3215 Carers who are undertaking over 50 hours of Caring per week and I would like to understand how the NHS & Social Care Interact together specifically to ensure the Needs of this Group of Carers are catered for, therefore would the new Health & Social Care Scrutiny Committee be receptive to exploring this as a Topic for Scrutiny, or would it be a matter to raise with the WBC Health & Wellbeing Board?”

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health Integration answered:

The Carers Strategy Group comprises key partner organisations, including health professionals from the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and Social Prescribers representing GP surgeries in West Berkshire. Together, they are committed to identifying, enhancing support, and empowering unpaid carers who reside in West Berkshire or care for someone in the area, helping them balance their caregiving responsibilities with personal well-being.

Social prescribing plays a vital role in this initiative, enabling GPs, nurses, and other primary care professionals to connect unpaid carers with a variety of local and non-clinical services designed to support their health and well-being. Through collaborative efforts between the NHS and social care providers, carers' needs are addressed through joint planning, shared resources, and a person-centred approach. This includes assessing carers' requirements, offering essential support services such as respite care and informational resources, and ensuring their voices are heard in care planning decisions. Additionally, local authorities and NHS organisations are mandated to work together to strengthen support for carers.



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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

Item (A)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“What percentage of residents responding to the consultation on the extension of pedestrianisation of Newbury Town Centre supported the plan, and what percentage opposed?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Cllr Mackinnon, thank you for your question. A total of 37% of respondents were for the proposal, 5% were neutral and 58% against.

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 on behalf of Councillor Ross Mackinnon asked the following supplementary question:

“If Councillor Mackinnon were here, he would be asking you about the actual questions that were put to residents. insofar as they weren't specific, the questions did not appear to be specifically reflecting the claim that residents supported the plan?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

I think this is related to the pedestrianisation question and there was only one question on that. There is a question further along for Councillor Mackinnon with regards to the Waste Strategy, and that might be where the multiple questions were asked. For the pedestrianisation, it was only the one question that was asked at the time, and that was around favour and support.

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

Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services by Councillor Dominic Boeck:

“During the current financial year, what government grant funding is expected for children’s social care?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services answered:

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy assumes provision of approximately £300,000 of specific children’s social care funding in 2025/26 from central government

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:

“Have you received yet the £2.8 million transformation funding that was promised by government?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services answered:

That is coming through at the moment, yes. It was delayed at the start due to the sale. We were waiting on the sale of assets. So yes, we do have it now.



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

Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“What percentage of residents responding to the consultation on 3 weekly black bin collections supported the plan, and what percentage opposed?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

71% of respondents disagreed that moving to three-weekly black bin collections would help increase recycling or reduce the amount of waste households produce. However, about 53% indicated that they might be able to cope with a three weekly collection service, if provided with the right information and support. The consultation also showed that 47% have some space in their black bin on collection days and that was before we introduced plastic pots tubs and trays at the kerbside collection service.

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 on behalf of Councillor Ross Mackinnon asked the following supplementary question:

“So, when 53% said that they could cope, they were not saying that they support the change from 2 weeks to three weeks, are they?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

No, they are saying they could make that change with support. As part of the increase in recycling services, the extra capacity option, the educational sessions, we are providing that support, and we are here to help. I think I have said this several times when it has been through scrutiny and EAG (the environment advisory group) that the Council are here to make this a success with residents. So please do speak to us if there are concerns.

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

Item (D)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(D) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Dominic Boeck:

“On polling day in the recent Thatcham Northeast by-election, electors had to endure unacceptable delays in casting their votes in all three polling stations. What is being done to ensure this does not happen again?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

The system used that day was offered to us as a free trial by the established software leader in the modern election polling market. We had previously used a similar system provided without cost by another company. We will not be entering into a contract to use this type of technology at present, but as polling solutions are successfully used by other Local Authorities, this may be something we re-visit in the future.



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

Item (E)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Councillor Dominic Boeck:

“At the recent District Parish Conference, the creation of Community Hubs was announced. When will the hubs open and where will they be located?”

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation answered:

The Council launched the new community hub/ outreach information, advice support service in West Berkshire this week on the 19th May 2025. Residents will be able to access trusted, high-quality information and advice in existing venues such as leisure centres, libraries, village halls and at community group settings. The venues incorporated in the service will become known as community hubs.

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:

“To be specific, where will the residents of Aldermaston Ward find a community hub?”

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation answered:

I do not have the specific technical information relating to your own residents, Councillor Boeck. But what I can tell you is that as part of the scheme, there will be a rolling programme of drop-in sessions. Those sessions, and setting out where those sessions will take place, will be advertised via the Council website, social media, and the usual round of posters and leaflets.

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

Item (F)	Executive Meeting on 22 May 2025
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(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Councillor Dominic Boeck:

“The number of active planning enforcement cases in Aldermaston ward is growing. What can be done to support officers responsible, who appear to be severely overworked.”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:

The planning enforcement service receives a large number of enquiries, averaging a total of 46 cases per month from across the whole district. There are two enforcement officers in the team supported by a manager, a recent organisational change. Each case officer has a high number of cases on hand which is challenging, but the Team are highly experienced, dedicated and do an excellent job with the resources available. To manage the high caseloads, it is necessary to implement a prioritisation system, to ensure that cases which are high risk with the potential for significant or irreversible harm/impact on the environment or local community are prioritised for investigation. This means that some enforcement investigations may progress at a slower pace than expected to enable officers to concentrate efforts on the most important investigations. The service recently implemented an online report a breach function which assists with triaging requests for service and a refreshed Enforcement Plan is in development to assist with prioritisation. We are also looking to implement systems to support officers with the management of general correspondence and customer updates which will support day to day activity and provide improved updates to our customers where possible.

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:

“Just to clarify for me, please, are things going to get better?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:

Yes, they are. As I said, there has been a slight reorganisation. So we have now got a manager who was actually an enforcement officer in the past. He is now managing that team. One of our team members has been recently promoted to senior enforcement officer because he is doing a fantastic job, as is the other officer. So yes, we are also looking at technology to try and manage some of the administration sides of these things.
