

Questions and Answers

**Executive
Thursday 25 September 2025**

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Item (A)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Paula Saunderson:

“On 28th July 2020 the London Road Industrial Estate Task & Finish Group Report came to OSMC and it included 2 Spreadsheets titled: a) Appendix 6D - Capital Cost Centre 87750 - totalling £571, 977.77 b)Appendix 6E - Expenditure Paid to Individual Organisations Involved with LRIE- totalling £6,182,493.14 Therefore, please would it be possible to either have these old Spreadsheets Updated or to produce Continuation Spreadsheets with no gaps in the chronology, including ALL Expenditure on ALL the WBC Lands in this Area, including those now known as Bond Riverside and the adjoining Public Open Space which includes a new football pitch? e.g., Avison Young, Ardent, Hemingway Reports. Sports Lab, and others.”

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

Thank you for your question, Ms Saunderson. I am a little curious to understand the rationale behind the request, which starts from quite a long period of time ago, over five years. Our officers will endeavour to be helpful, and the Council is of course committed to transparency. However, the time required to provide the information in the form that you have requested will be significant. So, it would be helpful to understand the reason that you are asking for the information as it may be able to be addressed in a particular way or an alternative way. In terms of the information itself I have to tell you, Ms Saunderson, that it seems likely that we will struggle to provide that in a timely manner.

So, there is the option of a Freedom of Information request, which you will of course be aware of. You will probably be aware that such a Freedom of Information request needs to be made in writing. If you are unable to make the request in writing, you can of course contact our officers, and they can assist you to make that request in another way. But there must be a valid reason as to why the request cannot be made otherwise than in writing.

Again, as you may know, and I, I do apologise if this is information that you are aware of, but I think it's important in terms of setting the context to this information request and we are required to give that information to you subject to an FOI request within 20 working days. Our officers will tell you when to expect that information, if they need extra time and if that request involves more than one council team, they may have to share your details and that request between them to answer it as effectively as possible. No other details will be shared in that scenario and the information that you provide to us won't be used for any other purpose.

Again, apologies if this is labouring the point, but I also need to make you aware that even with Freedom of Information requests there are also limits on officer time as well

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as certain circumstances in which even FOI requests may be turned down. For example, we are entitled to refuse your Freedom of Information request if that will cost the council more than £450. This is set out in Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Should the threshold be exceeded and we can't respond to the Freedom of Information request, you can then ask us to review that decision. Then if you're not satisfied with that response, you can complain or appeal to the Information Commissioner. Without wishing to be overly technical and pedantic about the request, that legislation gives you an entitlement to information rather than documents. So, the information requested may consist of a whole document or sequence of documents. I should also make you aware that it may be the case that some of that information which you are requesting doesn't exist, so it may have to be recreated, or reconstructed, located and merged from multiple different sources.

It may be held in the form of different document types, it may be located on different servers which will take council officers longer to access. So, I guess the reason I'm telling you all this is that it will obviously have a bearing on the way in which that information is disclosed.

Depending on where we get to with a Freedom of Information request if you make one, because I appreciate that you haven't yet made one, we will of course provide you with advice and assistance to help understand where that information may be held by us. And finally, I apologise for speaking for so long, where we refuse a Freedom of Information request, the Information Tribunal is responsible for hearing appeals under the Freedom of Information Act and also the Data Protection Act 2018. That tribunal is a panel composed of a Chairman and a deputy Chairman, along with two lay members, all appointed by the Lord Chancellor. Either party has 28 calendar days after receiving an Information Commissioner decision notice in which to lodge an appeal. Appeals may be decided either by written or oral hearings. Thank you very much for bearing with me. I know that was a long answer.

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

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

"Do you honestly expect me to have one supplementary question after all that? I will go home, listen to the answer again and consider what action I take, but it might be that I can send you a spreadsheet and you may have to interrogate your purchase ledger and then add a few totals."

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Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Lee Allen:

“Does this council still stand by its Leader’s claim that residents struggling with the 3 week bin collection move should “get a bigger bin.”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you, Mr Allen, for your question and it's a great question to ask.

The Council's position is that any household demonstrating a genuine and evidential need for additional black bin capacity will be supported. I'd also like to take the opportunity to reassure residents that where a clear and evidenced need exists, additional capacity is being provided.

So far this year, a further 467 households have received an additional or larger black bin, compared to the 263 issued during the whole of 2024-25. In many cases, residents are first offered advice on reducing wastes and making full use of recycling options before extra capacity is granted. This approach helps us meet our wider goals of reducing waste and increasing recycling while ensuring no one with a legitimate need is left behind.

We are continuing to provide standard size bins which are 240 litres that are bigger than other councils' who have adopted three weekly collections with some providing 120 litre bins for three weekly collections, and this demonstrates our commitment to supporting those with unavoidable non-recyclable waste. Also, alongside the extra capacity request that has been approved and issued, we also offer an unlimited recycling container request as well and in turn have seen over 36,000 containers shipped up to September this year, which is significantly more than the full 12 months of 2024 and this again shows that there is support available for our residents during this change.

On top of the recycling containers, we also have sent out a significant number of food caddies this year. And our data shows that since the change in frequency was communicated earlier in the year, we're now collecting over 20 tonnes more of food waste per week than pre communication, demonstrating that residents are getting behind this change and doing their bit in recycling as much as they can. And for that I really thank residents for doing so.

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?”*



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Lee Allen asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you for your answer, Councillor. It would just be a very simple one that if large bins are the answer, then why is it that several families have come to us saying that some large families and some with disabilities have said that their request for a larger black bin have been denied by the Council?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Unfortunately, I don't know the specifics of each of those cases, but I am more than happy for you to send me those details and I will gladly have a look at that with officers, to understand exactly what was behind those requests and whether any of those have been turned down inadvertently by mistake.

If they are eligible, then happy to make that right. Like I said, so far we've already sent out to 467 households and supported those with extra capacity and larger bins. So more than happy for you to send me those details over Mr. Allen, and happy to take a look at it.

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Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Keith Hoddinott:

“Appertaining to the enactment of Sections 3 & 42 of the 2010 Flood & Water Management Act , I request that WBC make representations through their nominee member to press the Local Government Association (LGA) & the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) to make strong representations to DEFRA to implement these clauses as a matter of urgency & “Duty of Care” to future home-owners / Council Tax payers.”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you for your question. Officers have raised these questions through their contacts at the Environment Agency, and we will continue to follow up with those contacts and ensure that we get an answer to your query. But I am also happy to make those representations directly with Defra as well.

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?”*

Keith Hoddinott asked the following supplementary question:

“The question was to make representations to the LGA and the ADA and I would just like to know who represents the Council on the LGA and the ADA”.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Happy to pick up that cause and lobby Defra and the LGA. I believe we have 3 council representatives that sit on the LGA. I think they are the Leader, Leader of the opposition and possibly another member of the ruling group. So, I will double check, but happy to pass over your concerns to them and ask them to raise that with the LGA. I will pick up with Defra and the EA again as well.

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Item (D)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by John Gotelee:

“Referring to the list of budgets for projects under £250K, the top two are Speed restriction changes and Accident reduction works. Surely Speed restriction is part of accident reduction? Is this a case of salami slicing the budget to avoid the \$250K limit?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you, Mr Gotelee, for your question. I am always happy to talk about the work that we are doing on speed restrictions and accident reduction works across West Berkshire. It's such a critical part of what the council does. The council has traditionally had an accident reduction budget which is aimed at tackling accidents and other related accident types. Speed or excessive speed is not always a factor in those changes.

I would like to take the opportunity to raise the fact that we are doing some work around speed reduction and the speed reduction budget itself represents a new investment by this Liberal Democrat administration in the roll out of 20 mph zones in our towns and our villages and across West Berkshire, which I am sure will be welcomed in these communities.

We will shortly be going to consultation on the Thatcham schemes and then rolling out three further geographical areas for consultation on 20 mph zones over the next couple of months.

What is really good is that recent data from the reductions in speed in Wales have shown to lead to 100 less road deaths in the first year of operation. Admittedly, whilst our approach is different to that in Wales and I'm happy to remind residents of that, I remain focused on delivering these schemes where residents want them and I'm confident that they will benefit the community as much, if not more.

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:

“Yes please. Thank you for your answer by the way, very comprehensive. Doesn't it rather suggest splitting it that way, that speed reduction doesn't actually have much to do with safety.

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The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

No, I think I think it's important to highlight that there are many accident causes. Speed is not necessarily one of them, although it can be a contributing factor. I would disagree that we have split the budget and salami sliced it as you say, because the, the 20 mph roll out project is a specific project. So, we have ring fenced that cash just for that particular change.

I think I quoted some data from the BBC, so a reputable media source, that shows that reducing those speed limits and introducing 20 mph zones has reduced their road deaths by 100, which I think is excellent. If reducing speed or implementing any accident reduction measure saves one life, then I would say it is money well spent.

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Item (E)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Simon Pike:

“When will the Council approve/adopt the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, to replace the one dated 2010-2020?”

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

Dear Mr Pike, thank you for your question.

I am pleased to report that the Rights of Way Improvement Plan is on the forward plan for the Executive meeting on 6th November 2025.

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Item (F)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(F) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Phoebe Cowhig:

“The Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund, managed by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, administers the Local Government Pension Scheme on behalf of West Berkshire. Employees of West Berkshire Council are automatically enrolled in this scheme. Research by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign has found that the Berkshire Pension Fund invests £134.8million in companies enabling or profiting from Israel's genocide, military occupation and apartheid against Palestinians. This includes companies supplying Israel with weapons and military technology used in its assaults on Palestinians, and companies financing and aiding the construction of Israel's illegal settlements in the West Bank. I understand that the LPPI asset manager for the Pension Fund monitors the Fund's portfolio against the UN OPT list, however companies supplying Israel with weapons and military technology fall outside of the scope of this list. 17 councils in England & Wales are now recognising their profound moral and legal obligation not to contribute to Israel's violations of international law, by supporting the divestment of pension funds from companies enabling Israel's crimes. Will West Berkshire Council join them by writing to Berkshire Pension Fund to call for divestment from companies enabling Israel's grave violations of international law?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

Thank you for your question.

The Royal County of Berkshire Pension Fund will present its revised Responsible Investment Policy for adoption by the Pension Fund Committee on 15 September 2025. That policy reflects that the Fund is a Responsible Investor, seeking suitable long-term investment returns to enable it to fulfil its fiduciary duty to pay benefits in retirement to its over 87,000 members. The consideration of environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) matters is integrated into decision-making on the basis that it can impact financial performance.

As noted in the question, LPPI monitors the Fund's portfolio daily against the United Nations list of companies involved in activities related to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Currently, the Fund has exposure to just one company on the UN OPT list, representing approximately 0.8% of fund's assets. This investment is at the global parent company level, not in the specific business segments identified as active in the occupied territories which constitutes a small fraction of the company's overall operations. In more recent developments, the pension fund has confirmed that it now has no exposure to Israeli government bonds through its investment in the LPPI Fixed Income Fund (FIF).



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The Fund is very much aware of the ongoing situation, and, with LPPI and its partner funds, continues to monitor its investment holdings and address the responsibilities associated with being an LGPS administering authority which include legal obligations, market standards, and a primary duty to provide pensions.

Having reviewed the pension fund website and published draft minutes of the meeting dated 15th September 2025, the following comment is noted with regard to the Responsible Investment Policy.

AGREED: That the Pension Fund Committee noted the report and: i) Adopted the Responsible Investment Policy, on recommendation from the Local Pension Board, with commitment to further revision and updated statements as required and presented back at the December Fund Committee meeting. ii) Approved the publication of the Responsible Investment Policy on the Fund's website.

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Item (G)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Paul Morgan:

“What date did the Executive approve the construction work for the Grazeley Solar Farm (anticipated value is up to £20M)?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you, Mr Morgan for your question and you know I am quite happy to talk about this because I appreciate it is a large investment on behalf of the Council and the residents of West Berkshire. But I am confident that it delivers on investing for our future as a Green District.

At its meeting on the 25th of July 2024, the Executive gave delegated authority to the Service Director for Environment to award a contract for the construction of the scheme, subject to the approval of the Council Section 151 Officer and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways.

Grazeley Solar Farm will be an excellent addition to our Council assets and will offer a significant contribution in our commitment to reach Net 0 by 2030, whilst bringing in a healthy income to the Council to support essential services. We have already started some groundwork on the site and look forward to bringing this scheme forward in the coming months and delivering for our residents of West Berkshire.

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:

“My question is can we have a copy of the ‘EX’ report that was actually signed off by the Executive please?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

That report is in the public domain. We can send it to you, but I am sure there are ways you can probably discover it yourself.

Paul Morgan responded:

It is not, Mr Brooks.

The Service Lead for Legal and Democratic commented:

I can confirm that any reports that have come to the Executive or Council are published on our website. If you go on to our website, you should be able to search by the decision number. If you've got any difficulties, do contact Democratic Services and we can assist with that.

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Item (H)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Alan Pearce:

"With regards to the question below asked to the Executive on the 14th of December 2023. "Please would the Council confirm it will not make a decision on the Bond Riverside Regeneration Programme Review (Currently deferred on the forward plan) until it has calculated and published the three calculations below not included in the Ardent, West Berkshire Council, London Road Newbury Catchment Study, Report Ref. 195110-01 December 2019? a. The liters per hour green field runoff rate of the catchment area which outfalls into the Northbrook stream about 70 Hectares/172.9 Acres. (Report ref 2.4. Figure 2-2 Catchment Extent) b, The liters per hour urban runoff rate of the catchment area which outfalls into the Northbrook stream about 70 Hectares/172.9 Acres. (Report ref 2.4. Figure 2-2 Catchment Extent) C, The liters per hour flow rate of the enclosed Tesco culvert (Report Ref 2.9. Figure 2-9)"Answer - therefore calculations will be undertaken and suitable mitigations proposed through any planning applications. Please can the Council confirm that this is still the case, and has the council received any costings from drainage consultants to carry out the work?"

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

Mr Pearce, thank you for your question.

Whilst Council officers are not currently working on these specific questions, I can confirm that drainage and sustainable drainage will form a key part of the Bond Riverside regeneration programme.

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

Alan Pearce asked the following supplementary question:

"I am disappointed to hear that they are not being done as I understood that they were being done. You haven't answered the question. Can I have clarification on have you asked for costings of these?"

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

To respectfully point out to you that we have discussed these kinds of issues relating to Bond Riverside multiple times. I know that you've been in contact with our officers. We have discussed these issues in depth at various times and I am struggling to add anything else to the central premise that as individual development programmes come



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on board, we will consider the situation and decide next steps at that point. I really cannot add much more to that.

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Item (I)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Richard Garvie:

“The published Council Strategy (page 16) states that in 2024 the Council will finalise plans for new Community Sports Stadium at Faraday Road and in 2025 /26 “Commission and build new Community Sports Stadium”. If this is still a strategic objective, why is there no reference to it in the EX4542?”

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

Mr Garvie, thank you for your question.

The report confirms this initiative is a priority and manifesto pledge for this administration. We feel that is sufficient.

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:

“It's hard to ask a supplementary question when the original question isn't answered. My supplementary question would be the Council proposed to deliver a community sports stadium that is equal to or better than what was lost under the previous Conservative administration. The proposal here tonight relates to the delivery of a 4G pitch, not a community sports stadium. So, is there a detailed project plan in place for the delivery of a community sports stadium and will the council allow expressions of interest from community groups such as the football club and community sports groups to run the facility?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

You have come in with a supplementary that really doesn't relate to your substantive question and I'm not going to therefore ask the Portfolio Holder to respond to it.

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Item (J)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 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:

“From the paperwork included in the 28th July 2020 Meeting there is a chronology starting in May 2008 and lists of Consultants and other Parties and some Outputs, however it is impossible to identify whether, to date, a COMPLETE Geo-Environmental Study (not the name of a Company) has ever been conducted for London Road Industrial Estate Lands or for Bond Riverside (renamed at a Careers Event in February 2023), therefore can the Council please State whether a Full Geo-Environmental Study has ever been undertaken, thank you?”

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

An estate wide Geo-Environmental Study has not been conducted. As and when individual leaseholders come forward with future regeneration proposals that require planning permission, applicants will be expected to provide reports confirming environmental ground conditions due to the areas' established land use as an industrial estate and the estate's proximity to the river. It should be noted that significant sections of Bond Riverside are already recorded on the Council's Environmental Health Interactive Map as being potentially contaminated due to historic landfill. This information reinforces the need for appropriate ground investigations at planning stage to confirm environmental ground conditions and whether ground remediation is required as part of any planning consent.

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Item (K)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(K) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Lee Allen:

“Does this Council have any plans for new anti-flooding infrastructure in rural West Berkshire? Such as Lambourn and Chaddleworth given we are the most vulnerable to it and if so will the council fund it or will it force local parish councils to foot the bill as the Conservatives attempted to do in Great Shefford?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

There are many sources of flooding and depending on the source of the flooding will depend on who the flood risk authority is.

So, for instance, for main rivers such as the River Lamborn, it's the Environment Agency and they will be responsible for delivering flood risk schemes to mitigate flooding here, such as the one you mentioned at Great Shefford.

Following the flooding in early 2024, the Council undertook a review under the Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act on all of the locations that experience flooding. Many of these are rural and where the Council is responsible, actions have been added to the programme of works which the Drainage and Flood Risk Team are working through, and the Section 19 report can be found on the council's website.

I'd also add that we increased the flood risk and drainage budget this administration this year by almost £1,000,000, which is over double what it previously was. So, I'm confident that we've got a good record on looking after our flood risk and I would only urge the current government, the current Labour government, to match us in that ambition and support local councils to deliver on the ground for residents

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:

“If there is any more anti flooding infrastructure taken, can you just quickly tell me yes or no if parish councils will be made to pay for it or if the burden will be taken by West Berkshire or an outside authority?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

We would work in conjunction with flood risk management authorities to understand what that funding is. We would look to source that funding initially from somewhere like the Environment Agency or the Thames Valley Regions Coastal Committee. So, we would work with them to understand what funding was available. But until those projects come forward, I don't think we can really comment what we would ask and what we wouldn't.

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Some parish councils are happy to support. I think residents of Great Shefford, if I remember correctly, did an excellent job of fundraising to match fund what the Environment Agency put in for their Great Shefford scheme. But obviously I would ask the government to put in more because I don't think it is necessarily right that parish councils have to bear the brunt of the cost. I would demand the Labour government do more, do it quicker, do it faster, with more money. So thank you for your question.

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Item (L)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(L) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Keith Hoddinott:

“Does the Council have an identifiable separate REVENUE COST CENTRE for its duties & responsibilities as the LLFDA & LDA for its area, including any riparian landowner responsibilities adjacent to watercourses (not incl. highways). If not, should not such a budget head be introduced, given the recently completed Flood Alleviation Scheme at Thatcham which will require ongoing future maintenance”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Mr Hoddinot, thank you for your question. The Council does have a revenue budget for its duties as Lead Local Flood Authority. This mainly pays for staff time and a small consultancy works budget for investigations and routine maintenance work on council assets, such as trash screens.

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?”*

Keith Hoddinott asked the following supplementary question:

“Do your budgets for this year and next year then reflect the extra costs of maintaining the flood alleviation scheme at Thatcham?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Yes, they do and will do going forward as that's a fixed asset.

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Item (M)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(M) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by John Gotelee:

"If the council went into administration, what would happen to the main expenditure budgets, such as adult social care and SEND? Would there be cuts if so, what services are likely to be affected?"

The Leader of the Council on behalf of the absent Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Those services that you refer to within your question, such as Adult Social Care and SEND, would be protected. A local authority in the United Kingdom cannot go bankrupt in the legal sense as insolvency law does not apply.

A Section 114 notice is a formal report issued by a local council's Chief Finance officer, the Section 151 Officer, stating that the authority's projected spending will exceed its available income and resources for the financial year, meaning it's likely to incur unlawful expenditure. The notice imposes strict controls on new spending, allowing only essential spending on statutory services like safeguarding vulnerable people, payments for goods and services already received, and existing payroll and pension costs. Any new expenditure outside these parameters would be authorised on a case-by-case basis by the Section 151 Officer. Council leaders must then meet within 21 days to address the financial situation and find a way to bring the budget back into balance.

In Slough where commissioners and a new CEO were appointed in 2021, residents were assured that 'we will still be collecting your bins next week, safeguarding the most vulnerable in our town, maintaining the roads and supporting the schools'. That is what has happened. I meet Councillor Dexter Smith, the Leader of Slough Borough Council regularly and he tells me how it has worked out there.

In West Berkshire I am confident that the steps we are taking to manage our budget, with some extra financial support from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will mean that the risk of a Section 114 notice being issued is very small indeed, subject to some unforeseen event.

Of course, a pandemic might occur, but I'm confident that we have the right three-year financial plan in place to get the Council back to good financial health. It was not in good financial health when we took over. It probably wasn't in the last couple of years, the previous administration. That is not a dig at the previous administration before Councillor Boeck gets himself aerated. It is a case of where we are and we intend over the next three years not to have to continue or further rely on any MHCLG support. We expect to continue to deliver very good services and provide new facilities in sport and leisure, for instance, and you'll hear one of those again tonight, to maintain a schools building and refurbishment programme and to transform assets such as Walnut Close to reduce cost and prevent residents being in bed and breakfast

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accommodation. I don't want anyone listening or observing to think that this Council is close to issuing a Section 114 notice. It is not.

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Item (N)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(N) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paul Morgan:

“At the start of this Financial Year (2025/26) the General Fund was reported as being £10,597,414. Can the Council please confirm what is the current level of the General Fund?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

The General Fund remains as at today's date at the General Fund level per the budget papers £10,597,414. The General Fund is adjusted at outturn annually as part of the close down process and production of the financial statements, this is standard practice. The level of General Fund anticipated at the yearend is forecast alongside budget monitoring during the course of the financial year. Based on quarter one forecasting the General Fund is anticipated to be in the region of £10 million at the year end.

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Item (O)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(O) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Alan Pearce:

“EX4725 says that in terms of policy this request for capital is for “the provision of additional 3G pitches is in line with the emerging West Berkshire Playing Pitch Strategy”. Should the Council have combined the requirements, business case, budget, and funding requests for both the 3G pitch and new clubhouse / facilities to allow all stakeholders to review them together?”

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

Mr Pearce, thank you for your question.

We felt this was the most expedient way to take this proposal forward. Once plans have been developed for additional facilities at the site, this will be brought forward separately for review.

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

Item (P)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(P) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Richard Garvie:

“Can the Council please tell me why it did not follow through with the full planning permission granted to Newbury Community Football Group for Faraday Road Previously?”

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

Mr Garvie, thank you for your question.

The planning permission gained by Newbury Community Football Group came with an extensive list of pre-commencement conditions and did not include for some key features, most notably floodlighting. It was therefore felt to be in the interests of transparency to re-submit a new application for review.

The new planning application has included within it, most of the relevant pre-conditions that the NCFG planning application had. Pre-application work has been done to ensure the new planning application is as fit for purpose as we can make it and will satisfy the Planning Committee, when it comes before them for approval.

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

Item (Q)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(Q) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Paula Saunderson:

“The Council has within it, the responsibility for running and conducting the Governments Land Contamination Risk Management process, therefore has this Authority ever conducted a LCRM Tier 1 Risk Assessment for the Lands now known as Bond Riverside, and if so what was the result, please?”

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

A Tier 1 Risk Assessment can be covered by an initial desk top survey of land potentially contaminated due to historic uses known or suspected. Approximately one third of the lands known as Bond Riverside are recorded on the Council's Environmental Health Interactive Map as land potentially contaminated through historic landfill. As and when any future planning applications come forward, this information will automatically trigger applicants being required to carry out, as part of the planning process, geo-technical surveys to determine the environmental condition of the land and whether land remediation is required as part of any possible planning consent.

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

Item (R)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(R) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Lee Allen:

“Why is it that the Council has suddenly developed such an interest in the affairs of Tilehurst, Calcot, Pangbourne and Theale now there is a chance they could join Reading? When for years The voices of those out east were down the priority list, alongside us out in the rural areas?”

THIS QUESTION WAS WITHDRAWN

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

Item (S)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(S) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Keith Hoddinott:

“What was the revenue expenditure on these duties of staff costs & work content in 2024/25; & the revenue estimate for the current & future years.”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Mr Hoddinott, thank you for your question.

The revenue expenditure was in line with budget at £170,000 and is at a similar level going forward. However, in response to the flooding in 2024, this administration bolstered the Council's capital flood and drainage programme by £900k (an increase from £800k to £1.7m), showing our commitment to ensuring the safety of our residents.

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

Item (T)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(T) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health by John Gotelee:

“What is the average cost per patient of the councils mental health services?”

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

We support 261 people with a primary support need for mental health support. Of this:

18 – 65 years old equate to 187 people

65 + equates to 74 people.

It should be noted that the local authority provides only a small proportion of support and intervention for people in need of mental health support. The local authority's responsibilities relate to eligibility under the Care Act, as well as our responsibilities to provide mental health act assessment due to our statutory responsibility to undertake mental health act assessments through our statutory responsibility to provide Approved Mental Health Professional assessments.

A much broader and greater level of Mental Health support is provided by either NHS community or inpatient NHS care.

‘In the current year, the council expects to spend £422,110 on staffing costs for the mental health team, and £9,189,590 on packages of care for people whose primary need is mental health. Using the current figure of 261 people receiving support whose primary need is mental health support, this yields an average figure of £46,659 per person.’

In relation to the costs for Adult Social Care:

		2024/25 Expenditure Budget	2024/25 Expenditure Outturn	2025/26 Expenditure Budget	2025/26 Expenditure Forecast Q2
Specialist Team	MH	£358,090	£360,351	£424,710	£422,110
MH Care		£5,387,760	£6,553,594	£7,833,620	£9,189,590

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

Item (U)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(U) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paul Morgan:

"The BBC has recently reported that Bracknell Forest Council, in response to the government's Fair Funding Review 2.0, claims that it will leave it with a "funding gap of at least £14m" by 2028-29. Has West Berkshire Council undertaken a similar review in response to the government's Fair Funding Review 2.0?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

In short yes. The impacts of changes to government funding is modelled on a regular basis throughout the financial year as part of our midterm financial planning and budget setting process.

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

Item (V)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(V) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Keith Hoddinott:

“Can the Council demonstrate its maintenance schedules for undertaking its riparian owner responsibilities in clearing debris (trees, branches, weed etc.), regular clearing of trash grills/screens, reinstating & repairs to banks etc in the area from Donnington downstream to the A4 (i.e.. the Spout Ditch & River Lambourn).”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Mr Hoddinott, thank you for your question.

The Council has a maintenance regime for trash screens which are under our ownership which I will ask officers to share with you. With regards other riparian duties, we will undertake these as and when the need arises. With regards Spout ditch, the repair in this location is not straight forward and will be a significant cost, and officers question whether such a repair would have a material effect on flood risk given that the watercourses in this area are all hydrologically linked. It is, however, something we are investigating.

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

Item (W)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(W) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paul Morgan:

“EX4725 “Faraday Road 3G Pitch Development” is a well-prepared document that provides members and the public with a good level of detail together with the rationale and justification for additional funding required in the 2025/26 & 2026/27 capital programme. If successful, and in parallel with any planning application that will follow can the Council, please consider and confirm that it will undertake the following activities:

- 1) Undertake an unbiased and thorough evaluation of different business and operational models to guarantee that the football ground remains protected in perpetuity and remains viable and sustainable. E.g. Community Asset transfer, Long Lease, Short Lease, Fields in Trust deed, Council owned / managed, etc.*
- 2) Provide a holistic project plan that identifies all key activities / critical paths required (including timescales) to incorporate and deliver an enhanced stadium / facility.*
- 3) Urgently explore the sources and options available for external funding (capital and revenue) and understand the dependencies, caveats and impact on timescales associated with successful funding applications for both a 3G pitch and enhanced stadium facilities.”*

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

Mr Morgan, thank you for your question.

The Faraday Football Ground is owned by the Council and further protection of this site is not considered necessary at this time. The Council has and will look at external funding in relation to the delivery of the wider playing pitch strategy and will also be developing plans for enhanced facilities at Faraday Road and will discuss this with stakeholders.

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

Item (X)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(X) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Keith Hoddinott:

“Will the Council serve notice on other riparian owners using its LDA powers to require riparian owners to clear debris (fallen trees & branches etc.) from watercourses.”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Mr Hoddinott, thank you for your question. Where the Council is the Lead Authority, we will, and do serve notice on riparian owners. We cannot serve notice on other flood risk authorities (EA and Thames Water), nor can we serve notice on assets or watercourses where we are not the lead authority (e.g. main rivers).

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

Item (Y)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(Y) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Keith Hoddinott:

“Will the Council provide an update to property owners on the progress being made in restoring the breached River Kennet bank at the far western end of Northcroft park adjacent to the weir .”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Mr Hoddinott, thank you for your question.

I understand this breach is on the River Kennet and falls within the authority of the Environment Agency, however I also understand that WBC officers have been in discussion with landowners and the EA to arrange a repair, and I will ask officers to provide an update.

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

Item (Z)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 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 Keith Hoddinott:

“There is public disquiet & concern at the delays in completing the “Peace Garden” in the Wharf. I understand this is due to EA lengthy deliberations over repairs to the river bank – can the Council provide an update & anticipated completion date?”

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

All information required for the EA to assess sheet piling design proposals and delivery methods have been submitted for approval which is targeted for the end of October. This will allow Volker to commence installing the sheet piling during November and December 2025 which is in accordance with Volker's programme to deliver sheet piling and then to complete the Peace Garden project in the new year and before the end of the financial year March 2026. Engineer consultants acting for the Council have received input from the EA while designing sheet piling proposals and it is assumed there will be no significant queries. Officers and consultants will remain in continuous contact with the EA to check progress on issuing the operational permit.

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

Item (AA)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(AA) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Keith Hoddinott:

“The near future expansion of housing & commercial development to the north of Newbury & north-east of Thatcham; & the expected development on the Hampshire border at Wash-water ARE the Council’s engineering & planning staff (together with other Council services staff) considering & outlining future highway ring road plans to encompass routes; (a) Washwater to A339 Newtown (parallel to the northside of the R.Enborne), & (b) from the A34/A339 north-east to Thatcham & southwards over the railway & river/canal & onto the A339 (Hants border). This infrastructure to accommodate the increase in traffic volumes using WBC schools & health services etc. & allay residents’ traffic safety issues in Wash Common.”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:

Thank you, Mr Hoddinott, for your question. It highlights the importance of planning for infrastructure to support new development.

Whilst these are routes that have been the subject of discussion over time, there are no current plans to develop them and deliver this infrastructure. The business cases would not attract the significant funding needed, particularly as they would not be addressing issues on the Strategic or Major Road Networks but, instead, very local issues. These local issues we would aim to manage in more affordable and sustainable ways by encouraging developments of a size where trips are internal and kept local and by integrating new development well into existing settlements.

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

Item (A)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

"I'm sure you'll agree with your 2023 manifesto that said "The Liberal Democrats know that a good Council is one that can be held accountable for its decisions, and is transparent about decision-making". Given that a majority of residents told you that they could not cope with or would struggle at certain times of the year with 3-weekly black bin collections, can you be transparent now with residents and tell them what criteria they must meet to qualify for a larger black bin?"

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

The Council recognises that some households may struggle with the standard black bin capacity under the three-weekly collection schedule. To support residents with genuine need, applications for additional black bin capacity are assessed individually using qualifying criteria that is well established and comparable to those used by other Councils. Households will be approved for additional capacity if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- households with six or more permanent residents,
- households with five permanent residents including two or more children in disposable nappies,
- households generating significant amounts of hygiene waste or other non-recyclable waste linked to a medical condition (excluding clinical waste, which is collected separately).

In all cases, the household must demonstrate that their current bin capacity is regularly insufficient for non-recyclable waste, and that this is beyond their reasonable control to reduce further. The aim is to ensure fairness while encouraging full use of the council's extensive recycling services.

To protect the integrity of the service and manage costs, successful applications may be subject to review at appropriate intervals. For example, when children are expected to be out of nappies or following a house move. Additional capacity is not guaranteed permanently, and the Council reserves the right to revert households to the standard bin capacity if eligibility changes.

We want to reassure residents that where a clear and evidenced need exists, additional capacity is being provided. So far this year, a further 467 households have received an additional or larger black bin compared to the 263 issue during the entirety of 2024/25. I believe this demonstrates our commitment to supporting those with unavoidable non-recyclable waste whilst protecting the integrity of our service and encouraging responsible waste behaviours.

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

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

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

"I have been contacted by residents who are at their wit's end in dealing with this. I know it's only now being introduced but they are daunted by the prospect. You made clear what criteria must be met to qualify for a larger black bin. But I worry that people who don't necessarily have the capacity to challenge the Council might be daunted by the prospect and are struggling to live with the three weekly collections. I have a resident who is in that position, and she doesn't understand why her appeal for a larger black bin has been refused. I'm sure there are many others like that. What can we tell our residents?"

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

What I would say is if you have got those examples, please do share them with myself and, we will work through them with the waste team. If there's an error that needs to be reviewed, then we absolutely can.

Waste officers have been out and visited residents that have raised concerns where perhaps extra capacity has not been granted and they have spoken to officers, worked that through with officers and come to different arrangements. It is really hard to put a hard and fast rule in place so I would absolutely say if you've got specific examples, please share them with myself and I can work with the waste officers to arrange home visits so we can talk through issues and concerns and look at what solutions can be put in place.

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

Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(B) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Councillor Dominic Boeck:

“Will the administration join the Conservative Group in calling on our MPs not to support Government’s proposals to increase gambling tax which would cause severe harm to West Berkshire’s racing industry?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

We are happy to write to Olivia Bailey MP, but to save a stamp we don't need to write to Lee Dillon MP as both he and our party, the Liberal Democrats, oppose the harmonisation of taxation rates between horse racing and online casinos.

However, I do agree that considering Labour are once again looking to damage rural communities, we should write to Miss Bailey, newly promoted as the Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing, who by the way we must congratulate, and we hope she will bring the much needed support for SEND and the high needs block into much sharper focus with government. We will write and ask her for her views on balancing the need to protect the vulnerable from the harm of online gambling while supporting important rural communities like Lambourn and the stables in her own constituency such as West Ilsley. So, I thank you for your question.

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

Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment) by Councillor David Marsh:

“What steps will the council take to ensure that there is no repeat of the “rave” that took place on Friday/Saturday September 5/6, which was allowed to continue for approximately seven hours, until 6.20am, denying a night’s sleep to many thousands of residents of Newbury Wash Common ward and beyond?”

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

This is primarily a police matter. The police have very specific powers to deal with events of this type where the noise is likely to cause distress to residents. They have the 1990 Act for Statutory Nuisance.

I do believe there was numerous calls made to the police and indeed our service which didn't manage to actually bring it under control appropriately. We did contact Thames Valley Police and raise our concerns that not enough action was taken or quickly enough.

I am sure Mr Marsh is, like myself, old enough to remember the 1980s and the 1990s when these things popped up everywhere and it was like ‘whack-a-mole’. On any weekend there would be 10,000 people driving around the country. I can assure you that we will do everything within our powers to help the local residents not become victims to this again where we can and we will encourage the police to pick up their responsibility appropriately and in a timely manner.

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 David Marsh asked the following supplementary question:

“Residents report that the police initially said this was a Council matter and then when members of the public managed to get through to the Council were told it was a police matter, which you are now confirming and is helpful.

How can it be that we can get somebody who is drumming in their house and disturbing the neighbours and we can get the Council to take action to stop that? It has happened in my ward, something as relatively small as that, yet we are powerless apparently to do anything about 7 hours with very loud music which was causing considerable distress, especially to elderly people, some of which some of whom came around to my house to say what on earth is going on out there.

Is there nothing that we can do, because we do stop minor infringements, but this apparently not.

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

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

I can assure you that we at this Council take these issues very seriously and we will again reinforce with Thames Valley Police that we need them to be quicker of foot instead of quite cumbersome and slow to react. I think on that evening concerned there was two police officers for the whole of Newbury, and probably only two or four for Reading. So, the numbers of policing around the area is very small to deal with the not a lot of crime goes on with the greatest respect. But hopefully they will be quicker of foot next time. It is very irritating, but I'm 40 years older since the last time I went to a rave.

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

Item (D)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“Will you apologise to service users and staff of West Berkshire’s resource centres for the months of uncertainty and stress caused by the administration’s decision to review the provision of these centres?”

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

It's tempting to refer back to earlier on, but I think also important to reinforce that we have to make a number of complex and uncomfortable considerations at the Council when looking at ways on how we can save money.

Our approach to the resource centres has involved a significant degree of discussion with a wide range of stakeholders and some serious consideration by officers and members. All the way through we've been very clear that we won't be changing the provision of services at the resource centres if we cannot provide a service that is at least as good, if not better than the one which we currently provide. Most importantly, the decision has major impacts on people. It has also had an impact on budgets. So it was important that we took the necessary time to reach the right decision.

During this time, we have continued to talk to our staff often when we had minimal updates for them. I'm confident that we have now made the right decision. As I said earlier, I am of course sorry for anyone who has been impacted by the uncertainty, but I think we've asked the right questions in the right way and come to the right answer. We'll continue to keep people informed about any changes to the resource centres, but they will continue to provide the services that people are used to.

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

Item (E)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor Dominic Boeck:

“Rag Hill is a single lane country road in Aldermaston which is used by articulated lorries servicing an industrial logistics hub. The surface of the road and its verges are being destroyed and residents fear for their safety and their children’s. What is being done to protect our residents and council’s assets?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you for your question. It is not unusual for industrial units such as the Padworth Sawmill to be situated off rural roads. Whilst it is not ideal, there is no breach of planning at this location and nothing that can be done from a highways perspective to restrict access. I will ask officers to look at this route to see if there are any local measures that could be carried out to improve conditions for local residents. In the meantime, I would urge that any issues be reported on the Council’s online problem reporting system.

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:

“The big issue really is that this is one of a whole series of enforcement issues in the area. Taken in isolation, I take your point about the difficulty of enforcing in one specific road, but it's not just one road, I have a whole list of enforcement issues here in front of me which I don't want to bore you with, but they are across the region. The council is not doing right by Aldermaston with this uncontrolled development and growth and I would ask you, Councillor, if you'd join me in Rag Hill and the area to take a look at the problems that residents face.”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

I would be happy to arrange that visit and if you can share the details of the enforcement concerns you have got, I would absolutely advise you to report those. But yes, happy to set up a meeting and you can show me the issues on the ground.

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

Item (F)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor David Marsh:

"How much has the council spent on publicising the change to three-weekly black bin collections, up to and including the recent "Changes That Count" leaflet, personally addressed to residents and delivered by Royal Mail?"

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Communication is critical to ensure the success of a change and as you can imagine, this change was affecting a vast number of households across West Berkshire. It was critical to make sure residents were aware and this message repeated in as many formats as we possibly can to reach as many residents as we possibly could.

To do this we've spent £55,928.00 publicising the change to three weekly black bin collections and that covered the cost of the July bin hangar, the September mail out and also other advertising costs as well such as local press and social media costs.

This was taken into account when setting this year's part year budget saving attached to this change that in frequency, and benefits in terms of this change outweigh the costs. To contextualise it, I guess it equates to approximately 88p per household affected by the change. I hope you agree, it's such a critical change that we needed to ensure that message reached our residents.

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 David Marsh asked the following supplementary question:

"Well, only that it has taken as I expected a huge slice out of the first year's tranche of savings of £150,000. I just wonder would you agree that there is a case at least that rather than having to spend this amount of money explaining a complex system and presumably continuing to do so because the pattern is so relatively complex compared to what people have now. I mean, when we all want to see more recycling, could this money have been better spent on, for example, as you said, publicising but explaining to people the need for recycling? Or even better, to improve the amount of kerbside recycling that people can do, which actually would be guaranteed to increase recycling"

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

I think you've lost the bigger picture and I think that's unsurprising. There is a bigger picture here and it's not just about the recycling rate. That is a critical part of this change, but there is also that big bit, and I would expect a member of the Green Party to be able to see that, reducing waste in that waste hierarchy is the first thing that we should be looking to do. Reduce, reuse, recycle, being the waste hierarchy. So, I can absolutely understand your concern, and I register that.

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

I think this has been an excellent opportunity to talk about recycling in great detail. Thank you to the local media for coming out and spending significant portions of time with our waste teams at Veolia and also waste officers and myself looking at and giving it really good important coverage. I do appreciate it's a lot of money, but like I said, it's actually been taken into account in that part time saving is also under budget compared to what we were expecting to have to spend in the first place.

You are right, we will be doing reinforcement activity in terms of what those dates are and things we can do, but we'll be doing that in our usual communication outlets and timings. For me, it's that long term bigger picture we've got to remember as well, we've got the emissions trading scheme coming down the pipeline really soon in 2027/28, which is central government legislation. If we carry on doing what we're doing and don't reduce and recycle, we could end up with an extra tax bill of £1.4 million a year.

We've talked tonight a lot about the resource centres and adult social care. and I hope you would agree with me that it would be better to reduce that tax bill now than have to talk about other essential services. I also find it somewhat strange that a member of the Green Party is critiquing our conversations on recycling. I find it a little bit disappointing that this initiative and this communication and reinforcement activity hasn't had that cross party support. After all, we are tackling a climate emergency.

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

Item (G)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“Regarding the sale of the Council’s commercial property assets, which have always generated a net profit to ease the burden on Council Tax payers, do you agree that a balance must be struck between the lure of a one-off capital receipt which could potentially fund some additional transformation spend in the short term or reduce the impact of EFS borrowing versus the long-term revenue streams we might be sacrificing which, under current PWLB restrictions, cannot be replaced and that all rental income sacrificed will need to be replaced with income generation or savings proposals to offset the lost revenue stream?”

The Leader of the Council on behalf of the absent Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

I do agree that a balance must be struck between a capital receipt and rental income that helps the revenue account. It's something we're calibrating regularly. Councillor Woollaston sat with me in our Property Investment Board on Monday of this week and he heard me say that we will continue to undertake that assessment.

You know that the properties we hold have not all maintained their original value. I don't know if we bought at the top of the market, but prices are deflated at present and that is being looked at all the time. We do not have any properties on the market at this time, but that may change. But freeing up some money to invest in transforming services and thereby save money both initially and in the long term is important too.

The world is changing all the time and with the coming of AI systems, we must harness those that work and which make us more efficient, spending less taxpayers' money and improving their services. And I'm sure you would join me in that aim, so I'm not disagreeing with the thrust of your question in any way, I'm trying to put a bit of context behind it.

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

“I think it's fair to say that we had this discussion at Property Investment Board and I think we're at one effectively saying we're not going to rush sell properties if it's going to impact on the income to the Council”.

The Leader of the Council answered:

Absolutely. I can imagine if Councillor McKinnon was here, he'd be talking about how we said we were going to unwind the property portfolio and we still intend to do so. But we are managing our finances in such a way that we don't have to rush it, but we do need to free up some capital to help us with the transformation programme.

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

Item (H)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor David Marsh:

"The all-party Speed Limit Review panel agreed in February 2024 to recommend a decrease from 50mph to 40mph on the stretch of the A339 from Newbury College to the Swan roundabout, which passes two schools and the Newtown Road recycling centre. Why has it taken 18 months for this proposal (and three others from the same meeting) to be sent out for consultation?"

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Before I go on to answer the question, I think it is pertinent to pay my respects to the, the family and friends of the recent tragedy that we had on the A339, further along on a different stretch of road to the question. There was a fatality there this week and whilst the investigation is ongoing and no cause has been determined, I just want to recognise that and pay my respects to the family.

With regards to the stretch that you mentioned in your question from Newbury College down to the Swan roundabout, I can completely understand the frustration here. I'm sure Mr Winstanley probably has headaches about the amount of times I speak about the cumbersome bureaucracy of not just West Berkshire Council's traffic regulation orders, but the national legislation that underpins it.

I speak to a lot of my Liberal Democrat portfolio peers and they are probably as arguably frustrated as I am, if not more. However, what I would say is once a speed limit has been approved at the task group, those speed limits are programmed for delivery in the following financial year, which means there's always a delay between the approval and the consultation. However, unfortunately this particular scheme has taken slightly longer than we would have liked due to vacancies within the various delivery teams on that critical path, whether that's from Legal, whether that's in the Highways, Traffic and Road Safety. But what I can say is that consultation has concluded and it is scheduled for an individual decision on the 24th of October. So we are nearing the end of this process now.

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 David Marsh asked the following supplementary question:

"I think you probably agree that this is so disappointing. It shouldn't be taking this long. Since that meeting there's been another one in February this year where we looked at several schemes for other parts of the district and recommended some. When are they going to happen? I mean, is it always going to be this kind of delay?"

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

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

My understanding is that it's roughly 18 months from task group to implementation and I think there are several reasons for that. One, you've got the Legal processes to go in the preparation of the traffic regulation order. You've got the decision-making processes and if there are objections that extends that timeline quite significantly and triggers an awful lot more officer time and work to prepare the various reports, as well as the statutory consultation period on top of that and call-in periods.

So, I completely understand the frustration, and I am with you and that's why we've engaged outside help to support the 20 mph roll out. And I've also used that support to mop up some of those previous long-standing changes as well because when we took over the Council, we inherited quite a backlog to be fair. We are working really hard to recruit to the vacancies both within traffic and road safety and every area of that critical path. I'm really hoping to speed it up as much as we possibly can. But I do apologise for the delay.

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

Item (I)	Executive Meeting on 25 September 2025
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(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor David Marsh:

“Why are parked cars still being allowed to obstruct the north side of the Andover Road cycle path (and adjacent footpath) between Buckingham Road and St John’s roundabout, Newbury, more than three years after the council, following a consultation with residents, provided parking spaces on the other side of the road and agreed that there would be “no parking” on the north side?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

As a cyclist myself, I completely understand the frustration that inconsiderate parking causes. I would urge residents to bear this in mind when parking their cars, and park considerately for the sake of all road users, whether that's keeping pavements free, or keeping cycle lanes and dual-purpose pavements free. It's in everybody's interest that we go home safe at the end of the day.

The Traffic and Road Safety team have been working on other key priorities of the administration that we promised to deliver such as the pedestrianisation extension and the roll out of 20 mph zones across the district. Now that we are over the hump of that work the team will be working on the business-as-usual activities and duties and the various restrictions that we need to put in place.

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 David Marsh asked the following supplementary question:

“The only thing that will stop it is double yellow lines in between the cycle lane and the pavement. That's been done elsewhere. Can you give a commitment that that will happen? Because that will solve this problem just like that”.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Yes, absolutely, if it's in the work programme, then it will be done.

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