

Questions and Answers

Executive
Thursday 6 November 2025

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Item (A)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Simon Pike:

“The Local Plan adopted by this Council on 10th June stated in Policy SP14 that it will lead the development of a Masterplan SPD for the North East Thatcham development, “which will be produced in collaboration with relevant town and parish councils, the community and other stakeholders”, and that it intends “that the Masterplan SPD will be adopted within 12 months”. A timetable presented at a meeting with Parish Councils on 24th July indicated that during this autumn there would be both public engagement events and then the drafting of the SPD. When will the Council start this collaboration with Parish Councils and the public engagement events?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:

We recognise that residents and the parish and town councils have an extremely keen interest in development of the Masterplan supplementary planning document, so it's totally understandable.

I appreciate the importance of this stage of the development, and I'm personally involved in the process. Whilst community engagement has not yet begun as we originally anticipated for the autumn, I want to reassure you and residents that the preparatory work for both the SPD and the consultation process is actively under way.

Officers are progressing key elements and in recent discussions at a consortium of landowners, reaffirmed their commitment to working collaboratively with us to produce the SPD.

We understand that residents are eager to see progress, however, it's important that the Council take the necessary time to carefully develop the project plan and ensure that the right resources are in place. This will help us deliver a process that leads to the best possible outcome for the community. It is important to us that we undertake appropriate engagement and that we produce a quality Masterplan that we are all supportive of.

As a consultation process has yet to begin, I have asked for a further meeting similar to the meeting in July to take place with the town and parish councils to update them on the progress to date. I'm planning on this for the end of the month and information that will follow.

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:

Policy SP14 calls for studies on healthcare, education provision, landscape and vision impact and transport and travel. It also requires development proposals to be

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supported by a number of strategies, assessments and plans. Preliminary work on those may be needed for the Masterplan to ensure that the SPD is capable of delivering their objectives. So, my question is, when do you envisage that those studies will be completed, and will the period of collaboration and public engagement enable residents and stakeholders to comment on those once they're available?

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:

My short answer to the second part would be yes, but I will just expand on the first bit. SP14 does give a clear steer on what is required for the SPD and I welcome that. That gives us bones to build on because that's what we've got to start with. We have already started looking at these areas in a very high-level way. So, we've looked at education and travel at a very high level. But we will be keen to listen to both parish and town councils and residents about the specifics in those areas.

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Item (B)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(B) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Ben Holden-Crowther:

“West Berkshire Council holds the Silver Award under the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme and for publishing its Armed Forces Covenant Status Report and Action Plan earlier this year. That Action Plan commits the Council to “undertake an audit of the requirements of the Armed Forces Act 2021 and Covenant to understand the level of compliance and any improvements needed.” Can the relevant Executive Member please confirm: 1) Whether that compliance audit has now been completed — and, if so, when the findings will be published; and 2) What key actions or improvements have been identified to ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory “due regard” duty to veterans and service families in housing, health and education decisions?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

Thank you for your question and a really poignant one to raise at this time of year with Remembrance Sunday this Sunday coming and Armistice Day next week when we locally and as a Nation will pause to remember, reflect and thank our military personnel for all they have done and continue to do.

We in West Berkshire are hugely proud of the military personnel, their families and of course the veterans who work and live in this area, indeed we have the highest number of veterans across Berkshire living in this area. We were therefore really pleased to receive the Silver award in the Governments Employers Recognition Scheme in recognition of the work we do.

It is not all about awards however and when we signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2024 we did so knowing that it comes with responsibilities. Since then, we have been reaching out and working with other agencies, updating our website to provide as much help and assistance to those military in the area and supporting those who come to our door for assistance without prejudice to their military background. Indeed, recently the Armed Forces Champion has been engaged with a Care Home engaging with veterans and work is being looked into with our Public Health service in relation to veterans with dementia and what additional support may be offered.

Specifically in relation to your questions we can confirm that a review was undertaken in 2024 about the Councils compliance with the Armed Forces Act 2021. At that time, on reviewing the main areas of Health, Housing and Education, it was considered the Council was compliant. However, to ensure compliance is considered when any key decisions are being made by the Council an amendment was made to the Equity



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Impact Assessment to include the Armed Forces Community as part of the additional Community Impacts to be considered in all that we do.

All that said the Council is not complacent and we remain committed to upholding the statutory 'due regard' duty to veterans and service families in our decision-making across housing, health, and education and will continue to monitor and strengthen its practices to ensure ongoing support and inclusion for the Armed Forces community.

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Item (C)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Lee Allen:

“How many people have applied for an extra bin since the 3 week collection scheme was announced and how many have been approved?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you for your question, Mr Allen.

We are committed to continuing to support residents who have genuine needs, as part of our recent change to three-weekly general waste collections. Our range of support measures include separate medical waste collections, assisted collections for residents who are less able to present their bins at the kerbside, and a nappy reuse incentive scheme for new parents. We have also been providing additional black bin capacity for selected households who meet our assessment criteria.

To specifically address your query, since April 2025 we have received over 2,000 applications for extra capacity with over 620 approved requests in the first ten months of the year. This compares with a total of 564 applications received for the whole of last year. Alongside this, we've also approved an extra 132 assisted collection requests to support residents that need it the most

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Item (D)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by John Gotelee:

“With bankruptcy staring the council in the face is it time to stop the wasteful spending on frivolous unpopular projects such as the 20mph limits, pedestrianisation and an extortionate loan to fund a dismal exercise in party politics planning an all weather pitch?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

I would like to reassure you as a resident, and all residents of West Berkshire, that we are not facing bankruptcy. However, we do face significant financial pressure and we are responding to this financial pressure via a number of actions to alleviate cost, which I will describe later on this evening. I do not believe we are frivolously spending money.

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:

“It just appears that the spending is going on and on without anyone really taking too much notice of things. So how can you convince me that the finances are in good order, because everybody seems to be telling me that they are not”.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

We have been introducing additional internal controls with regards to finance spend, which I will come to later within the report. Rather than repeating ourselves, I think it is probably better for me to give that detail later on this evening.

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Item (E)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Richard Garvie:

“In the past two and a half years I have warned repeatedly about poor project and financial management decisions by this Lib Dem administration. At Full Council you revealed that many proposed financial savings in your previous budgets had not been fully achieved. Is the dire financial plight of this Council directly linked to your failure to budget responsibly or execute even the most basic proposals?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

No, the financial pressure faced by West Berkshire Council and other councils up and down the country is not down to the annual budget setting process.

We all face significant financial pressure in relation to providing social care to the most vulnerable members of society. Later this evening we will be discussing a report that rates our Children's Services as good.

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 was told at full Council that numerous policy decisions were not gone ahead with because the Council had decided to listen to the public in the form of petitions, consultations and everything else. Isn't it the case that not being able to execute planned financial efficiencies has resulted in the Council not being able to make those savings?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

For any budgetary setting process, there are a list of savings which are contained within the report and there is a success rate with those. We are doing our very best to deliver those savings. However, it's just the nature of those projects that not all of them will be delivered on time within the timescales. A good illustration is that we had a projected saving regarding the NRS contract. They went bust, and that was from TVI. So not everything which we believe will happen when we set the budget back in February earlier this year through other circumstances will be delivered. We don't live in a perfect world.

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The Leader of the Council commented:

You have also mentioned savings we hadn't taken after consultation. You might have been thinking of the Resource Centres. Clearly we carried forward straight away a £469,000 pressure, but Councillor Clark will talk more about the Adult Social Care situation later.

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Item (F)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Lee Allen:

“Has Fly tipping increased since the move from 2 to 3 week bin collections, and if so by how much?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

We have not seen a significant change in fly-tipping rates since moving to 3-weekly black bin collections last month. It is probably too early in the change journey, and we will need at least three months for enough data to be compiled to allow a proper comparison with the preceding period. We will provide an update to all stakeholders around December 2025. The Waste team will also present to the Council's Scrutiny Commission in spring 2026 about the initial outcomes of this change including any impacts on waste generation levels, recycling and whether there have been significant changes to fly-tipping rates. Finally, it is important to note that most fly-tipping incidents in England are caused by waste criminals and rogue traders and have limited connection with household waste policies.

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 by the end of the year we do see a significant increase in fly-tipping as a result of this change, will the Council consider a move back from three-week back to two-week bin collections?”

Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

I think it would be far too early to make that that decision to be honest. Mr. Allen, I think, this is a huge change with many benefits. I'm confident that it won't increase fly-tipping rates because that is not what the evidence suggests. Where other local authorities have made the change, they have not seen that increase. So, I think it's too early to tell, but obviously we will continue to monitor it.

What I would add is that it is the national campaign against fly tipping next week, and it is important to highlight that if people do consider fly tipping, they can get a fine of up to £1,000. I would really urge waste, criminals and rogue traders to think twice. We

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do have a quite successful rate here in West Berkshire of issuing those fines to waste criminal

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Item (G)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services by John Gotelee:

“Is it fair on the tax payer to spend over £5400 a day on just 2 children?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services answered:

This is a valid and important question, and one that deserves a thoughtful and balanced response.

Firstly, it's essential to recognise that the children in question are likely to have highly complex needs, often due to significant trauma, disability, or safeguarding concerns, which require intensive, specialist support. These placement provisions are not typical; they are exceptional and often involve bespoke arrangements to ensure the child's safety, stability, and therapeutic recovery.

From a safeguarding and statutory duty perspective, local authorities are legally and morally obligated to protect children who cannot live safely with their families. In some cases, this means highly commissioning specialist care environments, which can be costly but are often necessary to prevent further harm and to support long-term outcomes.

From a taxpayer value perspective, it's important to consider not just the immediate cost, but the long-term societal impact. Investing in high-quality care now can reduce future costs in health, criminal justice, and adult social care. It's also a reflection of our collective values — that every child, regardless of their background or circumstances, deserves safety, dignity, and the opportunity to thrive.

That said, the system must also be accountable. We are actively working to improve commissioning, explore, and develop local provision, and reduce reliance on high-cost placements through early intervention, family support, and fostering recruitment.

These efforts aim to ensure better outcomes for children and better value for public money.

While the figure may seem stark, it reflects the complexity of need and the seriousness of our safeguarding responsibilities. The challenge is not whether we should spend to protect children — but how we can do so more effectively, sustainably, and compassionately.

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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John Gotelee asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you very much for that detailed answer. My concern is that if you have, say, certain forms of cancer and there's a treatment but it's too expensive, the NHS will block it through Nice. I am just wondering where the limit is on the SEND spend for children, whether there is an upper limit at all, where we have to step in and say, look, sorry, we just can't afford this”.

Rebecca Wilshire, Service Director for Children's Social Care answered:

It is a fair question. I wouldn't say we have an upper limit in terms of putting on a value, but every placement is reviewed and agreed by myself. We look at it from a needs and outcome perspective. We have now got a commissioning provision that is heavily looking into this area. So, it we will always go first with the outcome of the child, the needs of the child and making sure that safe and stability as well as how are we funding this and how is it meeting needs. There is also a work that we need to be doing around joint funding of placements, continued healthcare and health contributions that we are also doing more work in. But there is no upper limit. I absolutely hear what you're saying, but we are working with local providers to try and manage that so that we are not in that position’

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Item (H)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Richard Garvie:

"The financial illiteracy of this Lib Dem administration is quite staggering. A perfect example would be the proposed works at Faraday Road. Having not delivered the manifesto commitment of a community stadium "equal to or better than what was there before" funded mainly by grants, the Council are now rushing to do "something" before the next election if they are not successful in having the 2027 election postponed. They say it will generate a profit, but in figures they have released in the paper they didn't factor in the cost of a private company operating the pitch. What will Everyone Active charge to run the facility?"

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

I am intrigued to know where you got the information that Everyone Active is going to run this facility at Faraday Road because that is news to me,

What I would say is that we are intending to go out for a market engagement exercise and when those expressions of interests have been made, we will obviously assess them and ultimately a decision will be made about running the facility.

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 is good news that there will be a tendering process and expressions of interest. In the media when the new pitch was announced, you said that the pitch was going to be profit making. The only way the pitch can recover its costs in its proposed form is if there is not a business appointed to run it. Once you appoint a private business to run it and you remove the management costs, you will not recover the cost from the pitch, which is why others, and I have lobbied for it to be given to a community entity or a team to run. On that basis, it is very good news that you are putting it out for expressions of interest."

The Leader of the Council commented:

You make an absolute statement that we cannot make a surplus on that business All that work will be done as you would expect when offers, bids, tenders come in. We will assess if the business case is A) realistic, and B) delivers the return that pays for the financing costs. We have not hidden those at all. We will also check that the provider

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is resilient and capable of running the site for quite some years. The danger would be somebody running it for a couple of years and then not being able to progress beyond.

It is a good question, but I think pre-amble regarding illiteracy is unnecessary.

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Item (I)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Lee Allen:

“Given the appalling state of rural infrastructure, especially the sewage systems around Lambourn, Eastbury, Chaddleworth, Great Shefford and other rural villages. Does this council have a plan to upgrade these areas which have not received a proper upgrade to infrastructure in decades and if so what is it?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thames Water are the responsible body for the sewage systems and have provided the following response.

We are currently addressing an issue of groundwater infiltration into the sewer network within the East Shefford Sewage Treatment Works catchment area.

The affected villages include:

- Upper Lambourn
- Lambourn
- East Garston
- Eastbury
- Great Shefford
- Weston Village

To mitigate the impact of infiltration on our customers and the environment, we have made significant investments in this catchment. We continue to work closely with local stakeholder groups — including SAGLUV, parish councils, and Lambourn Valley Flood Forum to better understand and reduce the levels of groundwater entering the sewer network.

Over the past two years, we have undertaken extensive work to investigate and resolve infiltration issues. This has included comprehensive CCTV surveys across substantial sections of the sewer network to identify areas requiring targeted investment. Based on these findings, we have delivered the following improvement works in the network:

- Upper Lambourn: 1,250m of leak-tight lining installed and 19 manholes sealed
- Eastbury: 450m of leak-tight lining installed and 9 manholes sealed
- East Garston: 150m of leak-tight lining installed
- Great Shefford: 48m of leak-tight lining installed and 4 manholes sealed
- Weston: 500m of leak-tight lining installed and associated manhole sealing completed



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In addition, last year we invested £14 million at East Shefford STW. This work included the installation of an Actiflow system to enhance treatment performance and effluent quality, along with an increase in storm tank capacity by 55m³ (from 353m³ to 408m³).

Next Steps

We are currently finalising our assessment of a wider strategy for the catchment to address spills at East Shefford STW and East Garston SPS as part of the AMP8 Storm Overflow Programme. This is expected to include works across the sewage treatment works, sewer network, and pumping stations.

Network Catchment Lining

As part of the storm overflow programme, we will undertake further lining works across the catchment to close gaps in areas not previously addressed. Additional lining works were also completed in 2008 and 2015. Scoping is ongoing, and the next phase of lining is planned for completion during 2026.

Pumping Stations

A project is currently being developed to replace the rising main from Eastbury Pumping Station. The detailed design, final location, and delivery timeframe are still under review.

Sewage Treatment Works

Works required at the sewage treatment works are currently being defined. We will provide further information as the project scope is confirmed.

That was a long answer, but I hope Thames Water have answered that well. Obviously, I would naturally want them to go further and faster and I would again urge the Labour Government to really make sure they put a rocket up our water companies to solve this problem once and for all

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:

“Thank you for that long answer. It would be great if you could send that to me by e-mail as well, so that I can share that with the people that have contacted me about it.”

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The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Of course.

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Item (J)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(J) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Richard Garvie:

“Given the precarious financial position of the Council, why won't the Council put the Faraday Road facility out to tender to get best value and potential attract a community group to operate it while also generating grant funding?”

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

This is very similar to your earlier question, and I hope I have covered that by saying that we are intending to go out to a market engagement exercise.

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Item (K)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(K) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Richard Garvie:

“With the news that West Berkshire Council is potentially going to ask the Government for another bailout, is it not time to freeze all but essential spending including what BBC Berkshire describes as the "20mph Town" proposal for Thatcham? A pause whilst addressing the huge financial difficulties could then facilitate a proper consultation with residents, businesses and emergency services?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

I can confirm that we will be implementing a Spend Panel. As I said earlier, further details will follow later on this evening

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 guess my only follow up would be is that in addition to the Spend Panel, hopefully given the huge interest, not just in Thatcham but district wide in relation to the introduction of these 20 mph zones, perhaps we can have it as an agenda item at the next full Council meeting.

I actually welcome reduction of speeds. I think many people in the community regardless of where it is in the district, do support speed reductions. Again, I just feel like these decisions are pretty big, especially when it covers a whole town. You would think that naturally this would come to Council before a decision was made instead of being a delegated decision”.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

We based this off of the Theale pilot that we did last year and we have a methodology that we have used in terms of what streets we would include in such a scheme. That also went out to consultation to the democratically elected ward members of Thatcham to have their input before proceeding to public consultation. The public consultation has now closed, and we will look at the responses and make modifications or not depending on the outcome of that consultation once it has been analysed.

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What I would say is the scheme is not delegated; the decision is not delegated. Highways changes are an individual decision process; they are not delegated to officers.

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Item (L)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(L) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Richard Garvie:

“Given that money is incredibly tight for the Council, how much does it intend to spend on the Thatcham “20mph Town” project?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

The cost of work to date on the Thatcham 20 mph project is far less than £10,000.

It is also important to highlight at this point that it is a capital spend and is separate to the revenue budget pressures you allude to in your questions this evening.

I would hope you agree that improving road safety and the impact of accidents and incidents on our roads is money well spent. Studies have shown introducing 20 mph speed limits and zones can have wider benefits to physical and mental health, including encouraging active travel such as walking and cycling, improving air quality and reducing noise pollution. I am therefore confident that this proposal and future proposals planned would give value for money if implemented

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 don't think my original question was answered, which was how much the Council intends to spend on implementing the Thatcham 20 mph town project.

I would dispute that, you know, planning a new traffic light or any roundabout would be compared to a new 20 mph town proposal.

I have asked for roads in Thatcham in the past to be made 20 mph and the police opposed it, saying that they would not enforce it. So being able to change something is probably a once in a generational opportunity when it comes to certain roads. There are roads that were left out of the proposal and then there are other roads that have been included that, living in Thatcham you think, well, why would you make that 20 mph?

The Council also don't appear to have mentioned whether the police will enforce the reduction.



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So, there are lots of other questions that I don't want to get into because I'm conscious that I don't want to introduce new subject matter, but just to come back on your previous one. I, I don't think it is the same as a new roundabout or a new traffic light.

Anyway, if you could tell us how much the, the proposed spend is on the Thatcham 20 mph town project, I'd very much appreciate it."

The Leader of the Council commented:

I have given you a lot of latitude there to make a bit of a statement. I don't want to split hairs, but you didn't ask in your question, how much does the Council intend to spend on the implementation? Clearly that's what you meant.

If it is not implemented, then obviously we're not going to spend terribly much money on it, are we? One thing Stuart might say is that changing 20 mph speed limits piecemeal is difficult. I spent the best part of three to four years to get the A4 at the bottom of Hennick Worthy Field down from 40 to 30.

When you do them incrementally like that, it's a huge amount of work and takes a long time. The idea of a 20 mph zone is as much about drivers getting used to being in an area that is 20 mph. I had one member of the public come to me and say in my Road it is so short you could not get up to 30 mph from a standing start. What on earth are you doing taking it down to 20 mph? But it is because as I understand it, that local drivers coming off a designated 30 mph road; A4, Lower Way or the Moors, will get to know that there is then a move into a 20 mph zone. I am not sure that has been fully understood, but we will see what the consultation says.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

I heard two questions in there and that was around what's the intended cost and also why didn't we go to consultation?

I think it is great news that the consultation closed yesterday, and we will analyse those results. We have statutory consultees, and the police are one of those alongside other, other statutory consultees. So, we will bear that in mind review that feedback once that comes back.

In terms of the second bit, and of the cost, as I said the consultation has just closed. It is hard to give you a cost on what we are going to spend when we don't know what the finished proposal is going to look like. So, it would be inappropriate at this point to predetermine any outcome or implementation.

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Item (M)	Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025
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(M) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Richard Garvie:

“Residents are upset that all this administration does is cut services and raise Council tax by the maximum allowed (5%). Lee Dillon promised a much different vision if people voted for the Lib Dems, but all we have is a pay more, get less service. How much would Council tax need to increase to allow it to operate sustainably?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Since coming into power in 2023, the Lib Dem administration has invested significantly in services provided to residents. For example, we have more people receiving social care for adults and children. We have invested in repairing potholes and improving roads across the district. We have more sporting facilities and pitches and residents using them. We have more streams of recycling and have increased the tonnage of things being recycled. We have more accessibility to library services such as delivering prescriptions and books to the most vulnerable in West Berkshire.

In that time the gap in our funding requirement is the results of 15 years of austerity with a 38% real terms reduction in our budget. With adequate funding from central government, we would not have to increase council tax by the maximum allowed.

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:

“The original point of the question was to ask how much council tax would need to go up to put the Council in a sustainable position. I know what is sustainable will differ based on perspective. But what I would say is based on that number, can we not just go to a referendum with members of the public and say, “this is the figure council tax would need to go up to, to put the Council in a sustainable position.”

The Leader of the Council answered:

The point about council tax I have always thought was a bit perverse. You go out for a referendum to say do you want to pay more tax. You spend about £300,000 to do the referendum I'm told, and then you end up having lost the £300,000 and people have told you 'No, I don't want to pay more tax'. It is a little bit of a funny offer really

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for councils and I think only one has ever done it. So, Mr Garvie, the mechanism is there, but councils don't tend to go in that direction.

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Item (A)

Executive Meeting on 6 November 2025

(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor David Marsh:

"Why does the footpath between Monks Lane and Newbury Rugby Club come to an abrupt end at the right turning into Falkland surgery and pharmacy? This means pedestrians, including children, elderly people, carers and (on election days) voters, have to walk in the middle of the road to reach the club, a danger that could simply be remedied by modifying the roadside bank into a pathway."

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

The land off Monks Lane leading to Newbury Rugby Club is private and not part of the highway. Any requests for improved infrastructure should therefore be addressed to Newbury Rugby Club, and I'm happy to support an approach if required.

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 am glad to hear that. Just to say that a couple of weeks ago no fewer than 1,500 people, mainly older residents such as myself, were vaccinated against flu by Falkland Surgery at the rugby club.

By no means all those people drove to the rugby club to be vaccinated and the sight of dozens of people walking down the road with cars also trying to get through was not a pretty one. It's not just a little local issue, a lot of people use that surgery and go to that club. So, if say a councillor, or ward member approached the rugby club and asked them to do something would you support that?

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Yes, I think it makes sense to try and work with private landowners to connect transport access where we possibly can. I would absolutely support asking the question and seeing what the opportunities are with the rugby club and advocate linking it all up.

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