

Supplemental Items for Executive

Thursday 18 December 2025 at 6.00 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

Part I

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Sarah Clarke.

Sarah Clarke

Executive Director - Resources

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

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at

www.westberks.gov.uk

West Berkshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity. We will treat everyone with respect, regardless of race, disability, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation.



WestBerkshire
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Item 4:

Public Questions to be answered at the Executive meeting on 18 December 2025.

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

A. Question submitted by Rachel Gibbs to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation:

"Will pooling the resources/finances of both Boroughs lead to better decision-making?"

B. Question submitted by Lee Allen to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources:

"Is it true that the council is bringing in outside consultants to assess the council's care packages budget and if so much did the council pay/is projected to pay for them?"

C. Question submitted by Richard Garvie to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources:

"The Council recently achieved a rather generous headline in the local media: 'Council asks public for help saving money'?. In this instance, however, the headline is rather misleading with the public only allowed to comment on two cost savings worth £63,000 or just 0.92% of the cost savings needed. Where are the other 99.2% of cost savings coming from and will the public be consulted on those proposed savings when announced?"

D. Question submitted by John Gotelee to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways:

"Are shops/restaurants that spread out onto the pavement charged extra business rates, or do they get free rent of the pavement? Who is responsible insurance-wise if someone had an accident on the pavement but in the confines of the restaurant furniture?"

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

"The requirement for EFS is increasing; £13M in 2024/25; £15M (up from £3M) in 2024/25; and £27M in 25-26, which is / will be reflected in the need for additional and increasing borrowing. Based on the current financial situation it looks like the loan requirements will exceed £70 million in this FY. What is the current forecast for the total loans required in this FY and what is the expected end of year reserve position of the Council?"

F. Question submitted by Rachel Gibbs to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing:

"Bond House (the Bayer Building). How many flats are going in there? The prices allegedly range from £850 PCM to £1250 for a 1 bedroom flat! Are there council flats going in there too?"

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G. Question submitted by Richard Garvie to the Leader of the Council:

"When people ask questions of this Council, I believe many do so to question the political administration. Because of this, all questions asked would be determined to be of a political nature. Why is this administration allowed to pick or choose what questions to allow based on whether they deem the questions to be "political" or not and can they set out the criteria as to how questions are deemed to be political or not and whether each questions is accepted or rejected?"

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

"The "Legal" section of the sports hub task group says Recommendation 25 outlines that the Council should refer itself to the LGSCO. This would be highly irregular. If there is a suggestion of any proposal or decision of the Council has given rise to or is likely to or would give rise to any illegality, maladministration or breach of statutory code, the Monitoring Officer is under a duty to prepare a report to Council under Sections 5 and 5A of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (LGHA 89). Would this action be irregular if high ranking officers were implicated in misleading the public or the executive?"

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

"Extracts from the CIPFA report states that the capital programme is too large, lacks focus and is not affordable. It also states that roles and responsibilities between Members and officers are blurred which contributes to a lack of focus and undermines accountability. How will the Council respond to this? What if any Capital projects will be either cancelled or postponed?"

J. Question submitted by Rachel Gibbs to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing:

"Re. Prospective Social Tenants - how does the Bidding system work now? Is it fair to single people?"

K. Question submitted by Richard Garvie to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources:

"Councillor Cottingham stated in reply to one of my recent questions that it's "not possible" to deliver "all proposed savings" / policies in a budget. Do you think successful companies or organisations set policy or financial planning by throwing mud at the wall and hoping something sticks?"

L. Question submitted by Richard Garvie to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources/Children and Family Services:

"The SEND spending is spiralling out of control all over the Country, and residents are fed up that SEND is being used as a constant excuse for not

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delivering other services. Can you tell us what the biggest cost centres are when it comes to SEND and what the Council is doing to tackle those big ticket costs?"

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Item 11:

Member Questions to be answered at the Executive meeting on 18 December 2025.

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

A. Question submitted by Councillor Clive Taylor to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services:

"Can the Portfolio Holder please explain why no progress has been made with the school rebuilding plan for Calcot Schools and provide a date on which the project will commence."

B. Question submitted by Councillor Dominic Boeck to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing:

"What do you consider a reasonable interval between a site visit in respect of a Member's call-in of a planning application and that application coming before the relevant planning committee?"

C. Question submitted by Councillor Howard Woollaston to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways:

"Having attended a presentation by the Waste Team recently , I understand that the change to 3 weekly black bin collections, which is deeply inconvenient to many of our residents, has resulted in zero savings in vehicles or manpower, In light of this can the Portfolio Holder explain exactly where the anticipated £150,000 annual savings are coming from?"

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