

# Questions and Answers

**Executive**  
**Thursday 19 March 2026**

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.

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

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

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<b>Question (A)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by John Gotelee:**

*"Who is paying for the ongoing repairs and maintenance of the rain gardens in Faraday Rd?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:**

Mr Gotelee, thank you for your question.

Any repairs needed to the rain gardens will be funded from the Council's highway maintenance budget. We are aware of issues with HGV's damaging the kerbs and are discussing this with the original designers and with our contractor.

**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:**

*"I think you admitted it was a flawed design, therefore it would be the designer at fault. Should there not be a claim on their professional indemnity?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:**

I don't think I admitted that there was a fault with their original design, however, I agree there are issues needing resolving. If there were issues with their original design, we will be looking to recoup that money I assure you.

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

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<b>Question (B)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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***(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Paula Saunderson was withdrawn.***

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

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<b>Question (C)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Ian Young:**

*“I’ve just been reading that homelessness in West Berks has increased from 100 households to 163 in 1 year. Do you recognise and agree with those numbers, and if so, what plans are there to increase social housing to address this?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:**

The Council does recognise these numbers. The data in the article reflects information that the Council submit as part of the statutory case level data, required to be submitted on a quarterly basis to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This increase in homelessness is not unique to West Berkshire. Across the Country, most Councils are seeing an increase in the number of individual and families needing a roof over their heads.

We are investigating every possible means to identify and increase the level of social housing in the district, so we can provide homes for those residents who find themselves in the most desperate position.

**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?”*

**Ian Young asked the following supplementary question:**

*“As far as I understand social housing in West Berkshire is managed by Sovereign Network Group. However, as South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils buy their own housing stock, given the proposed Council merger into a single Ridgeway Council, how would that differing approach work itself out should the merge go ahead?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:**

Obviously, the merger is not definitely going ahead. South Oxfordshire District Council does have its own housing company, which is not quite the same as being a housing provider.

We also use a number of social housing providers, not just Sovereign. They are all required by planning law to provide affordable housing on new development sites.

Ultimately, it is difficult to say how this would play out given a reorganisation.

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

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This particular month, we are down to 92 homeless families, although it changes greatly from one month to the next, the time of year, and housing stock available. Given new housing stock going online, we can now offer more of them a home".

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

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<b>Question D</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Isabel Smith:**

*“The Council owns a 2-bed bungalow property which has been vacant since 2024. Niki Hinman (NWN) reported on 8th March 2026 that 48 families were in emergency accommodation and stated this was 'non West Berkshire housing stock'. Can the council please explain why this property, owned by them is being allowed to deteriorate and not; a) being used as emergency accommodation or b) been added to the Homechoice list for people to bid on”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:**

Thank you for your question.

We are aware that the property you mention is currently empty, it is not habitable at the moment as it needs significant internal refurbishment to bring it back into use. This would require capital funding, which has been secured, in order to undertake this work before it could be released for rental.

I am anxious to get this work carried out as soon as possible, as you can imagine. However, this building is of non-traditional post-war construction, and it has therefore been necessary to have an engineer's report to be commissioned to before any works are able to be commenced. As soon as the necessary works have been completed on the property, it will be relet to be a home for a family in housing need

**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?”*

**Isabel Smith asked the following supplementary question:**

*“The property is a two-bedroom bungalow in a retirement area. Will it then be rented to a family, or will it never go back on the home choice list to be bid on for people over fifty (the criteria of the original property)”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:**

I was not aware that it had an over fifty covenant. If it did, we will try to keep to that, but otherwise it would go to a family”.

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

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<b>Question (E)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paul Morgan:**

*“So far, this financial year (up to the end of February 2026) the Council has borrowed £70 Million (15 separate loans) from the PWLB on a short-term basis (between 12 months and 21 months). Can you please provide full details of how and where this £70 million (15 separate loans) has been allocated / used by the Council.”*

**The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme answered:**

These loans have been used to support the Council's cash flow requirements and wider Treasury Management activities. For instance, refinancing maturing debt where internal borrowing was no longer sufficient, managing timing differences between income receipts (e.g., grants, council tax, business rates, occasionally capital asset receipts) and expenditure commitments, ensuring liquidity to meet day to day operational and capital financing needs and aligning borrowing levels with the Council's Liability Benchmark, ensuring borrowing is taken at optimal times and maturities to manage risk and cost

**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 request was for full details, so how much would it be for each category you mentioned. If that could be provided, that would be great. Back in December 2025, I predicted it would exceed £70m, how much do you anticipate borrowing from the PWLB in March?”*

**As the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources had issued his apologies for the meeting, it was agreed to provide Paul Morgan with a written response to his supplementary question.**

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

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<b>Question F</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Ben Holden-Crowther:**

*“The November update email to Parish and Town Councils stated that the North East Thatcham Masterplan will fix the locations of the access roads, but detailed traffic modelling will be delayed until the final planning application stage. Why is this critical traffic data being delayed?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:**

Thank you for your question.

It is normal practice for the final detailed traffic modelling and assessments to be carried out by the Developer and submitted as part of the planning application. However, for a site as important as North East Thatcham, much earlier work is carried out to assess the ability of the site to be delivered from a transport impact and infrastructure perspective.

The initial transport assessment work for the North East Thatcham development site was carried out prior to the site being allocated in the Local Plan. Considering the impact of proposed strategic developments was a key part of the Local Plan Review and the outcome of this assessment work was included in the Examination of what is now the adopted Local Plan.

Additional scenarios around possible schemes and measures to support this key site were also tested and developed at this time and these will inform the masterplanning work going forward.

**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?”*

**Ben Holden-Crowther did not ask a supplementary question:**

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<b>Question (G)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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***(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Alan Pearce was deferred to the next meeting.***

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

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<b>Question (H)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(H) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Alison May:**

*“Access to air quality data provides communities with the opportunity to interpret the levels of types of pollutants being dispersed throughout their local area. Noting the UK Government's launch of a new interactive dashboard designed to make air quality information more accessible to the public, can the Council provide citizens with an update of the frequency and types of measured pollutants submitted to UK's Air's portal?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways provide a written response:**

Thank you for your question.

Local Authorities are required to submit an Annual Status Report to DEFRA at the end of June every year. This includes air quality monitoring results for the previous year. The new national portal is updated using this information. The dashboard tool allows users to search by postcode and view air quality information relevant to their area, including local monitoring data. The dashboard will also showcase the actions local authorities are taking to improve air quality, as set out in annual reports.

This report encompasses all the nitrogen dioxide data collected during the previous year. This data is collected using diffusion tubes, which are changed and monitored monthly. The data submitted is used to calculate the annual mean. The data published in local authority annual reports, is then brought together in one central location on UK-AIR.

It is important to note that the 2026 report will contain the 2025 data. In West Berkshire this work is undertaken by the Public Protection Service and all past reports can be found on the [PPP website](#).

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<b>Question (I)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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***(I) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by John Gotelee:***

*“Is the cafe culture promoted by the extension of pedestrianisation a success?”*

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

Thank you for your question.

It is an interesting one, because in terms of defining success, there is an element of subjectivity. Are you referring to the amount of outdoor seating occupied, social utility, number of hours resident visited bars and restaurants in the pedestrianised areas, the square footage that those business output, or on spend.

On the point about spend, what I would say is that food and drink is our largest retail sector in Newbury, approximately 27 per cent of all spend. Despite challenges and some feedback during the pedestrianisation consultation, we have seen a slight increase on year-on-year sales throughout the summer of 2025, after those hours took effect, from 2024. The data also suggests that there was also a significant increase from visitors outside Newbury and Thatcham. So, 36 per cent of that spend was from visitors coming into the town and spending more on retail.

We are seeing progress in terms of the number of businesses coming to Newbury Town Centre and have even seen more business offering that facility to customers in the last few weeks. Hopeful they will be able to take advantage of it as we see nicer spring weather.

**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:**

*“We have not seen the result of the survey you carried out, for six months. On the extension of pedestrianisation, most of the time it has been ineffective. Is this going to continue and are we going to see the results of the survey”.*

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

Firstly, I would respectfully reject the suggestion that the trial was ineffective. As previously said, we have seen more business come to town and offer outdoor seating space and there was an uptake in retail food and drink.

There will always be a bedding in effect after change, and businesses will take time to adjust to changes. What our businesses want is certainty. You are right to make that point. The trial was for 6 months, ending in November last year. We have 18 months to make a decision, the fact we have not done so shows how seriously and thoughtfully the Administration is deciding on what to do next, despite what some commentators feel that what we want to do.

There is still lots of thinking around what this would look like if and when it becomes permanent.

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

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Question (J)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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***(J) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Paula Saunderson was withdrawn.***

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<b>Question (K)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(K) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paul Morgan:**

*“How much does the Council anticipate it will need to borrow in FY 2026/2027?”*

**The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme answered:**

The borrowing for 2026/27 is anticipated to be between £60-£70m.

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

**Paul Morgan asked the following supplementary question:**

*“I would be interest to know how you can to this calculation at such a low figure. Can I have a breakdown of why you think you only need to borrow that amount of money?”*

**The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme answered:**

That would be our net estimated borrowing, but a breakdown will be provided in the response to your earlier question.

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

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<b>Question (L)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(L) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Ben Holden-Crowther:**

*“Recent correspondence from the Council says that the public consultation for the North East Thatcham development will be run by consultants paid for by the developers. Have these developer-funded consultants been appointed yet?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:**

Thank you for your question.

The public engagement exercise for the North East Thatcham Masterplan will be carried out as a collaborative exercise with the developers, the Council and supported by specialist consultants who have experience of this type of engagement work. This is the accepted standard process for larger developments. Independent consultants are frequently employed in Masterplanning to provide specialist expertise, strategic advice, and impartial assessments that guide the development of large-scale sites, such as this, and infrastructure planning.

The involvement of consultants will be funded by the developer. However, they will be instructed by the Council. These instructions are in the process of being finalised and the consultants cannot be formally instructed before the Planning Performance Agreement is agreed and signed by all parties. This is currently in progress.

We are totally committed to ensuring a positive and meaningful public engagement process is carried out. This will involve the Town Council and all parish Councils as well as all residents concerned. We will be in touch with all interested stakeholders with an update on these plans within the coming weeks.

**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?”*

**Ben Holden-Crowther asked the following supplementary question:**

*“Can you confirm it will only be the Council involved in the hiring process for the consultants, and that there won't be any shortlisting by the developers or the ability for them to veto the appointment of the consultants.”*

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

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### **The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing answered:**

The developers will be paying for the consultants, so they would be commissioned by them. However, the Council will need to make sure they have the right skills, experience, and objectivity to do the work. We will have input and need to agree who that person should be. The choice will be together, if the developers bring someone forward who we don't believe has the expertise, we can say they should look for someone else.

We would need to be satisfied that the Masterplan was developed by someone capable of doing it properly.

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

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Question (M)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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*(M) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Alan Pearce was deferred to the next meeting.*

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

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<b>Question (N)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(N) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Alison May:**

*“Council's response to a public question on the subject of Proposed Local Wildlife Sites (pLWS) confirmed the significance of protecting and enhancing environmentally sensitive areas (ref: Council meeting, 28 November 2024, public question C) . Subsequent to the publication of the above response, the Council updated their online map to reflect pLWSs located within WBDC's jurisdiction however it has been noted the Proposed Local Wildlife Site layer is once again hidden. Will the Council agree to rectify with immediate effect?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways provided a written response:**

Thank you for your question.

Central Government requires local authorities to identify, designate, and protect Local Wildlife Sites through the planning system. Local Wildlife Sites are areas that include important and rare habitats and species.

The Thames Valley Environmental Research Centre (TVERC) carries out the identification and designation of Local Wildlife Sites on behalf of authorities in Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

Designated Local Wildlife Sites are shown on the Local Plan Review policies map, and they are also included under the Planning Policy Local Plan layer list on the online map. We will need to consider further whether the proposed local wildlife site layer is available and appropriate for display and will need to respond to you separately regarding this.

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

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**Question (O)**

Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026

**(O) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Richard Garvie:**

*“There is only a few weeks left to insure the football ground meets the ground grading requirements for Step 6 to ensure Newbury Town FC can be promoted. Can the portfolio holder confirm he has read the ground grading requirements and set out to me tonight what the Council is doing to ensure ground grading requirements are met by the 31st March deadline?”*

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

Thank you for your question.

The answer is that the Football Association Step 6 inspection is being held next Thursday, and we have every confidence that the ground will pass that inspection.

**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:**

*“Can you explain what you have put in place to meet the Step 6 ground grading requirements, and if the ground grading is not successful, will you resign?”*

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

It is quite a lengthy number of items to tick off, as you are probably aware, but I can tell you that at the last Western Area Planning Committee meeting, the floodlighting was unanimously approved. That forms part of the Step 6 requirements.

In addition, we are introducing another stand area to ensure that the seating and spectator capacity can pass Step 6. Other items are about technical measurements that I am very confident we will be able to meet.

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

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<b>Question (P)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(P) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by John Gotelee:**

*“What or who determines whether a manifesto pledge is acted on or not?”*

**The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme answered:**

In effect, it is the Executive that decides if a manifesto pledge has been delivered.

Any political party will put down in their manifesto their objectives and ambitions. We did, in consultation with residents, and you saw our document. It was published.

We have achieved about 88 per cent or are in the process of delivering about 88 per cent, of it. There will be times when you look at something and ask if it is now affordable, given how finances have gone in a different direction from how Councillors have wanted in recent years, is it still relevant and sensible, and was there legislation introduced that knocked you out of whack.

The question is puzzling, but at the end of the day, we decided whether we act on it or not, and the voters will.

**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:**

*“I was referring to the ‘Building for the Future’ document, which said that the best idea business wise was (item 3), introducing cheaper parking and creating targeted lower cost parking with town and parish Councils”.*

**The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme answered:**

I am not sure you first question teed that up. I still have that as an aspiration. But Council's, about 35 per cent of them, went to Government for Extraordinary Financial Support to borrow for day-to-day stuff. With that comes more scrutiny from the MHCLG about how we spend money. To a degree, as I said in my first answer, the reality of finances comes calling.

It is an aspiration that we will look to achieve.

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

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<b>Question (Q)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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***(Q) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Paula Saunderson was withdrawn:***

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<b>Question (R)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(R) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paul Morgan:**

*“Has the Council submitted PWLB lending Access Forms for 2024-2025; 2025-2026 and 2026-2027?”*

**The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme answered:**

Access Forms have been submitted for 2024/25 and 2025/26, and the one for 2026/27 will be submitted this year.

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

**Paul Morgan asked the following supplementary question:**

*“When will 2026/27 be submitted, this financial year or next? Also, can copies be provided”.*

**The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme answered:**

The return will need to be submitted by the 27 March 2026, so it will be going in shortly. We can supply a copy of that form, it is downloadable.

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

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<b>Question (S)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(S) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Alison May:**

*“Minuted item 201, as noted within the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee minutes dated Tuesday 1 July 2025, states: “201 (water companies as statutory consultees) - the letter had been sent by Councillor Stuart Gourley to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government requesting that water companies be made statutory consultees for major planning applications. A response is awaited.”. The illegal spillage of sewage impacts upon the health and wellbeing of communities whilst equally impacting upon the natural environment. Can the Council provide a progress update on the letter sent to the Secretary of State?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways provided a written response:**

Dear Ms May, thank you for your question.

Following the Committee’s request, I wrote to the Secretary of State on 30 June 2025 asking that water companies be made statutory consultees for major planning applications. The Council has now received a response.

The Secretary of State’s Correspondence Unit confirms that:

- Current national policy already expects early engagement between planning authorities, water companies and the Environment Agency where wastewater issues may arise.
- The Government is reviewing national planning policy related to decision making, which may include matters relevant to water and wastewater infrastructure.
- A moratorium on creating new statutory consultees is in place, and wider reforms to the statutory consultee system will be consulted on before any legislative changes are considered.

While the Government has not committed to making water companies statutory consultees at this stage, this is seemingly under review. The Council will continue to monitor these developments and engage in consultations to ensure local concerns around sewage discharges and environmental protection are fully represented.

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

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**Question (T)**

Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026

**(T) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Richard Garvie:**

*“Given that the Council are currently working towards a new Playing Pitch Strategy, why has only £1.3m (all of which Council funded) been allocated for the next three financial years? Surely the proposed budget doesn't reflect the actual needs identified in your draft strategy, including the Henwick masterplan, the £1.25m you say you want to spend at Faraday Road nor the ever increasing deficit of playing pitches (grass and all weather) in the District?”*

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

Thank you for your question.

The £1.3m in the Capital Programme was to enable the Council to undertake a feasibility study on projects to deliver the Playing Pitch Strategy. This would allow for individual business cases to be developed for consideration by the Executive to allocate them funding, or, be brought forward during future years budget setting processes.

The only current project identified with a supported business case is for Faraday Road, which was built into the 2025/26 budget and is CIL funded.

I would like to point out that the Playing Pitch Strategy also proposed to work with partners, developers, town and parish councils, and the wider community to deliver enhanced facilities in the district. Not all enhancements will be directly funded by the Council.

**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 £1.3m was on feasibility study only? Has the £1.25m for Faraday Road has been allocated?”*

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

Yes, it has.

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<b>Question (U)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(U) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by John Gotelee:**

*“At a meeting of Newbury town council on 12/12/2022, Councillor Foot proposed that the council resolve to prohibit the use of artificial grass on any land owned by the town council and further resolved to approach West Berks Council and request that they follow a similar approach and ban the use of artificial grass (turf). As the portfolio holder for sport, he is now supporting the planned artificial pitch at Faraday rd. Could he say whether he still holds his views of 2022, or explain his recent change of views?”*

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

Thank you very much for your question.

I don't recall seeing you at that meeting of the Community Services Committee of Newbury Town Council. I did not propose the Motion, I seconded it.

The resolution stated that, 'Newbury Town Council Resolved to prohibit the use of artificial grass (turf) on areas of land owned or managed by Newbury Town Council unless specific permission had been granted by this [Community Services] Committee on identified approved Town Council projects, and that NTC would approach WBC to request that they follow a similar approach to prohibit the use of this artificial grass turf'.

What we were talking about was the sort of artificial grasses people put on paved areas, impermeable surfaces, that mimic the appearance of grass.

**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:**

*“By seconding the motion, you were obviously against the plastic grass. Is it not then a 180-degree turn in views, or are you committed to this all-weather pitch?”*

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

No, it is not, because that motion actually states that those cases would be assessed on merit. If you are talking about artificial grass pitches for sport, they are entirely

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

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different to the type of artificial turf people put over patios and other hard surfaces that we were talking about in that resolution.

As you are probably aware, artificial grass pitches are carefully designed, they have shock pads, design to allow people to not be injured, and are permeable with drainage systems in place. They are an entirely different beast.

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

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<b>Question (V)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(V) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Richard Garvie:**

*“Can I now ask the Leader of the Council, has he ever seen the pavements, rubbish bins and green spaces / vegetation growth in District looking this bad at any point in the last thirty years?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:**

Mr Garvie, thank you for your question.

West Berkshire Council takes littering very seriously, and we are proud that our district performs strongly in this area. Our most recent Local Environmental Quality (LEQ) survey (January 2026) found that 95.5 per cent of surveyed locations met or exceeded acceptable standards for litter and also fly tipping has remained low. These results compare favourably with national averages and reflect the effectiveness of our approach.

We maintain a comprehensive street cleansing service across more than 2,100 km of public highways, footways and cycle routes, supported by active partnerships with community groups. We provide equipment for local litter pickers and collect any bagged waste afterwards, which helps strengthen civic pride and complements our operational work. There has been no change to these services or route.

I would also point out that we are coming out of the winter period, so yes verges may look slightly unkempt at this time of year, and I would also point out that we have adjusted our verge cutting regime in recent years to promote biodiversity and boast some of the best wild-flower verges in the Country.

With regards our parks and open spaces, we are in possession of 2 green flag awards that we didn't have 30 years ago and biodiversity in our Country Parks is flourishing under the stewardship of the Berkshire Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. We are also working closely with parish and town councils to devolve litter and dog waste provision to provide even better services for our residents.

It is also a great opportunity to highlight that the Keep Britain Tidy Great Spring Clean started on the 17 March and runs through to the 2 April. I wanted to thank all the

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

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volunteer groups that I have already seen pitches of out and about, including volunteer groups and schools, and those who are planning session all across West Berkshire.

If you are around, I would be more than happy to join you in a session in our local area Mr Garvie.

**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:**

*“My question has not been answered. Have any of you seen the district looking this bad in the last thirty years”.*

**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:**

It is important to highlight that service requests and report problem requests don't reflect an increase across West Berkshire. Everyone has a part to play when it comes to things like this.

People should not be littering in the first place, that is point one to highlight. I find it a bit unfair that the burden for those who do litter falls to the taxpayers of West Berkshire to have to solve.

Also, if you do see an overflowing bin, do report it on the report a problem page. That means they will be collected and the issue will get resolved.

No, I don't recognise that and the data does not reflect that either.

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

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<b>Question (W)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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***((W) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Paula Saunderson:***

*“Re HP8 - when referring to Developing a Delivery Plan from the Newbury Town Centre Masterplan which document(s) are you referring to please and will it take into account the latest NPPF Definitions of (Main) Town Centre, Edge of Centre, and Out Of Centre?”*

**As the time allocated to public questions had elapsed, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided a written response:**

Thank you for your question.

The Newbury Town Centre Masterplan was developed in 2022 and set out the long term vision for the Town Centre. It included a set of guiding principles as well as more detailed proposals and actions, a number of which have already been delivered such as event activation in the town centre, enhancement of green space alongside the canal at the Wharf, extension of ‘pedestrian priority’ across Bartholomew Street, Market Street, Northbrook Street, improvements to Victoria Park, and reuse of the Debenhams building.

We are currently reviewing the delivery plan for the masterplan in light of activities undertaken and any other changes since the masterplan was developed. Any actions contained in the revised Delivery Plan will need to have regard to the emerging NPPF to ensure that any proposals that require planning permission would also be aligned with both the national and local planning policy position. The Government currently anticipate publishing the final version of the revised NPPF this summer

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

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**Question (X)**

Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026

***(X) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Paula Saunderson;***

*“Re HP8 - In their May 2024 Meeting the Executive voted to bringing the Regeneration of Sites within Bond Riverside within the Management of the wider Newbury Town Centre Masterplan programme, therefore have the Boundaries of the Main Town Centre been redefined to include these previous Edge Of Centre Sites and will this new Delivery Plan include the Sites mentioned in EX 4494?”*

**As the time allocated to public questions had elapsed, the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation provided a written response:**

No, the boundaries of the town centre remain as defined in the adopted Local Plan (the West Berkshire Local Plan Review). One of the reasons for the decision to bring regeneration of Bond Riverside within the wider Newbury Town Centre Masterplan programme was to join up delivery, understanding that due to its proximity and connections, any development on Bond Riverside would affect the town centre and could support elements of the Action Plan associated with the Masterplan.

Any review of the town centre commercial area boundaries would be undertaken as part of the local plan preparation process.

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

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**Question (Y)**

Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026

***(Y) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing by Paula Saunderson:***

“Re HP5,HP6,HP8,HP13,HP14,HP17,HP18,& finally HP22 - re NEWBURY CLAYHILL WARD - All these High Priority Measures have the potential to impact Newbury Clayhill Ward and without any progress on the Newbury Neighbourhood Plan, more of Newbury Business Park being turned into flats, 2 Rivers and their floodplains still on Flood Alerts, Capital Items in relation to the A4, or any Information available since the decisions made in EX4494, would it be possible to issue some sort of statement to show the Direction this unfortunate Newbury Ward is likely to be subject too.”

**As the time allocated to public questions had elapsed, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing provided a written response:**

Thank you for your question, I am sure you will agree that a number of the proposals you reference, including the playing pitch strategy, a delivery plan for the Town Centre and canal improvements, will offer benefits to the Clayhill ward and its residents. The aim of these proposals are to improve the vitality of Newbury, which is of benefit to the wider Newbury area .

The Newbury Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) area has been designated and we understand the NDP group are in the process of drafting the plan. You may wish to contact the group to become more involved in this work and contribute to the future development of the plan. This work is not led by the council but we will be ready to support at the relevant point.

I note your request for an update on Newbury Town Centre Masterplan programme and Bond Riverside, after the decision in 2024 to close down the Bond Riverside and an update on this has been provided in response to your previous question.

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

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(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Councillor Howard Woollaston: .....	1
(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Councillor Owen Jeffery: .....	2
(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:.....	3
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## Member Questions as specified in the Council's Procedure Rules of the Constitution

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<b>Question (A)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Councillor Howard Woollaston:**

*“Please explain why Appendices 4-6 of the Playing Pitch Strategy were not released to me when I asked twice? I have now seen them through a member of the public who received them through the FOI process, and they do not seem remotely confidential”*

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

Thank you.

My apologies Councillor Woolaston, that we did not provide these to you when you requested them initially. The Background Documents 1-3 did not form part of the approved Playing Pitch Strategy consultation, and we needed to check the status of these before sharing them. I believe that officers have now shared the documents with you and these will also be published with the final strategy as background documents.

**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 asked the following supplementary question:**

*“There was a typo there, it was actually 4-6 rather than 1-3. What surprises me is that I am also the Shadow Portfolio Holder. When I asked the Officers, they were very coy and implied they were told they could not release them. Having now read them, I cannot see why”.*

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

As far as I am aware, no Member requested that they shouldn't be released. It was an error, and I accept responsibility.

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

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<b>Question (B)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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***(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Councillor Owen Jeffery:***

*“Would Executive agree that our Council can miss opportunities to let the public know just how many areas of our communities’ life West Berkshire Council supports? If so, what might we do to improve our visibility within our local communities?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation provided a written response:**

The Council remains committed to promoting the work we do and the communities we support.

Through the Let's Talk programme, we are increasing our visibility by offering early support and information directly within local settings. This programme is now a regular feature at community-run cafés and within our family hubs, ensuring residents can engage with us in familiar community spaces.

We are also working to further promote the Members' Bids scheme, showcasing how it helps deliver local projects with support from West Berkshire Council funding.

We include a weekly item in the residents' newsletter showcasing various bits of work the team does. We have contributed articles to the Residents Magazine, we attend a number of high-profile events including the Victoria Park family Day, The Thatcham Family Fun Day, The Pangbourne Fete and Kidsfest in Thatcham.

Our Officers attend events where they speak to community groups about scam prevention and also go into schools to talk to pupils about vaping, alcohol and tobacco use.

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

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Question (C)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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***(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services by Councillor Ross Mackinnon was deferred.***

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

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Question (D)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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***(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services by Councillor Ross Mackinnon was deferred.***

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

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<b>Question (E)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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***(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:***

*“Can the lead member assure members that our responsibilities towards all our children are being taken seriously?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services answered:**

I assure you that we take the care of our children seriously. 96 per cent of our schools are good or outstanding. Our Children Services is good. Our Youth Justice is outstanding. Castle Gate school is outstanding.

I think we take this very seriously.

**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 Ross Mackinnon did not provide a supplementary question.**

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

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<b>Question (F)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:**

*“The Playing Pitch Strategy is described as being behind schedule. Given the administration appears unable to decide what to do with the pitch at Faraday Road, will the lead member consider that the significant funding earmarked for this site might be spent on higher priority areas such as our children’s mental health or SEND provision?”*

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

Thank you.

We do know what we want to do with the Faraday Road Football Ground, and it will remain a football ground for as long as we can possibly keep it that way.

We are proposing the insertion of a 3G artificial grass pitch, which implies that we intend to keep it as a football playing facility for a while.

On the second part of your question, an artificial grass pitch will increase playing opportunities, particularly for young people. To give you some idea, the Sport England data suggest that, for well-maintained grass pitches, they can be played for up to 6 hours per week and that artificial grass pitches could be played on for up to 80 hours per week. As you know, we approved the planning application for the floodlights which will extend the playing ability of that pitch for an even longer period.

In that planning meeting, I quoted a letter from a resident in my ward highlighting that the Newbury and District Girls under 11 side would find it a perfect place to play, helping their mental health.

I am comfortable with the amount we are spending on that ground.

**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 Ross Mackinnon asked the following supplementary question:**

*“You mentioned the planning application last night. Why was the planning for the pitch itself withdrawn from the application, and we are putting some floodlights up with no pitch”.*



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

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

Of course, we are not putting up floodlights without with a pitch, there is a grass pitch there in existence.

The artificial grass pitch was removed because we share the concerns raised about drainage of the pitch and the proximity to the River Kennet (a Site of Special Scientific Interest). We are actually exploring enhanced drainage filtration mechanisms to satisfy Natural England. That work is being done as we speak.

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

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<b>Question (G)</b>	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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**(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:**

*“The administration made pothole repair a key manifesto commitment for the 2023 elections. Yet the number of potholes repaired within 28 days is only 89% compared to a target of 95%. What will the administration do differently in order to hit this target?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:**

Councillor Mackinnon, thank you for your question.

The Council's contractor Volker Highways was let down by a particular supplier in Q1 of this financial year which significantly affected this KPI, which is cumulative. An action plan was put in place to address this issue which has been effective.

99.6 per cent of all potholes were completed on time in Q2 and 100 per cent completed on time in Q3. Officers have continued to monitor this important metric through weekly meetings.

**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 Ross Mackinnon asked the following supplementary question:**

*“Thank you, Councillor Gourley. It seems then that a reliance on one contractor, or subcontractor, has resulted in a big miss (point taken about the KPI being cumulative). Does that give a suggestion that there might be a need to strengthen how the Council managed and monitored subcontractors and contractors to make sure we can consistently deliver on residents' expectations.”*

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

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**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:**

Funny you should say that we are currently procuring our highways contract at the moment, which Members cross party have been involved in, and that is an area I am keen to see – supply chain resilience.

We have an excellent set of responses, and I look forward to seeing them forward to procurement, it is a focus of that procurement exercise.

It is also important to highlight at this point as well that we are one of a handful of councils in the country to receive a triple green rating in the recent Department for Transport gradings on road maintenance and conditions.

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