
**Council Meeting
3 March 2011**

Questions and Answers

This page is intentionally left blank

Council Meeting

Thursday, 3 March 2011

Questions and Answers



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

(a) Question submitted to the Executive Member for Highways, Transport (Operational) and ICT by Mr Richard Coles:

"Can the representative from the Council please explain why the full adoption of the Mortimer Hill Development is still not completed? Taylor Wimpey, (the developers,) have made it quite clear that West Berkshire Council have no reason to delay (other than a small area of tarmac repair which should be completed within the next couple of weeks), the full engrossment of the Section 38 Agreement, as the Section 278 Agreement has now been formally terminated."

This question was withdrawn.

(b) Question submitted to the Executive Member for Highways, Transport (Operational) and ICT by Lucy Flowerdew:

"What were the costs of the recent resurfacing of Burnthouse Lane, Burghfield and what proportion of these costs were paid by the Atomic Weapons Establishment?"

Mrs Flowerdew was not in attendance at the meeting and was sent the following written reply:

The total cost was approximately £380,000 which was fully funded by AWE.

(c) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Mr Grahame Murphy:

"We are supposed to have a coalition government made up of Tories and Lib Dems. When are West Berks Council (Tories and Lib Dems) going to start behaving as a coalition and start consulting with each other, never mind the rest of us poor electorate?"

The Leader of the Council answered:

A coalition is usually formed when no single party can muster an overall majority. That is not the case in West Berkshire.

Consultation does take place routinely between elected politicians on various matters. Sometimes it's a formal process and, indeed, sometimes it's Councillor Brooks and myself sharing a curry.

Both parties worked on the Local Development Framework proposals. These proposals, involving significant consultation across West Berkshire, came from a cross party working group and the submission was supported by both parties on this Council.

The Council is open and transparent about the various consultation exercises it undertakes and these are freely/proactively publishing details, available on one particular website and it's the West Berkshire Consultation Finder available at www.westberks.gov.uk/research. This includes

key information about any consultation exercise/research item, as well as its findings for people to freely browse and scrutinise.

Would you like to ask a supplementary?

Mr Murphy said that he did not wish to ask a supplementary.

(d) Question submitted to the Leader of the Council by Mr Richard Garvie:

"Almost 1,000 in Newbury have said they do not want a pavilion on Victoria Park, yet the Council press ahead with this plan. There was little or no consultation with the public regarding the cuts to youth services, nor was there any consultation before the decision to axe five day centres was made. May the Leader of the Council please explain the value of which consultation has to this administration?"

The Leader of the Council answered:

Your wide ranging question has a number of misconceptions.

The pavilion is not a Council project. A number of partners including Greenham Common Trust and Newbury Town Council are involved with this. Greenham Common Trust have said they will consider funding the majority of the construction costs with the remainder coming from grants.

During consultations many people have expressed support for a pavilion and indeed many people have objected. When a model of the proposed design was displayed in late 2009 about a third of people submitted feedback suggestions and opinion forward and against was divided roughly 50:50. There are clearly a multitude of opinions on this particular proposal and it is important that *should* it proceed it has a broad community support, both in relation to design and sighting.

Whilst West Berkshire Council has led on consultation regarding this project *no* Council money will be committed to it.

Personal budgets were introduced by the last Labour government. I support this initiative as it places the client in control. Their implementation has been accelerated by the coalition.

Personal budgets will lead to inevitable changes in the range of care provision as those in receipt of personal budgets have selected a different range of care provision to that provided by the local authority. Irrespective of political leadership, Conservative, Labour or Lib Dem, Councils up and down the country are having to reorganise their Day Care Services in line with changing demand. With the continuation of Greenfield House in Calcot, Walnut Close in Thatcham, The Phoenix Centre in Newbury and the Hungerford Centre we are maintaining access to Council-run services across the district.

Yesterday the Council ran a very successful open day at the Rugby Club for those in receipt of personal budgets where they could meet providers from the voluntary, charitable and private sectors.

I've been given some comments from Kelvin Hughes, Chief Executive of the Community Furniture Project: "The opportunities for involvement in this process have been excellent throughout. In particular we found the recent provider event to be especially useful. It gave us

an opportunity to describe in depth what we can offer to people in the community requiring a day service provision as well as giving potential service users the opportunity to advise us of their needs and suggest ways we might improve our provision. We have since been contacted by a number of people who attended the provider event and who are interested in using our service.”

Huge cuts in public spending were signalled by all three political parties prior to the general election. The reality is that the public entrusted the Conservatives and the Liberal democrats to get the country out of the mess that labour got us into.

West Berkshire Council is much better placed than most authorities to deal with these cuts.

We will continue to protect front line services as much as possible; however the cuts in central funding mean that the Council cannot afford to continue to do everything it has done in the past. To argue otherwise would show an inability to understand the problem.

In order to deal with the financial challenges that lie ahead we will all have to be open-minded about how we provide services in future.

Whilst the Youth Service will be targeted according to need, this is a fantastic opportunity through the Big Society to work with local communities to enhance services available for young people.

As you know we have widely consulted about future budget priorities, via the budget simulator. We had a very high response rate and I must thank all those who took part. We will be using and building on this information extensively over the difficult years ahead.

Mr Richard Garvie asked the following supplementary question:

“I take it you do value consultation with the public then, and can the Leader of Council ensure everybody that, should the majority of people be against the pavilion it doesn’t go ahead, and can you also ensure the users of the youth service centres and the day care centres that no user of any of those services would be left without any provision in the district?”

The Leader of the Council answered:

I can on the first point on the pavilion, I’ll refer you to my answer that that will not go ahead without the broad support of the community for a pavilion to be in the park and its particular sighting.

In relation to the other questions you asked, we will be doing our utmost to ensure future provision of services both for young people and adult care services and youth services.

(e) Question submitted to the Executive Member for Community Care, Pensions and Insurance by Mrs Diane Smith:

“Why has West Berkshire Council withdrawn (the very little) funding for ROAR, a dual benefit project which enables learning disabled adults to be meaningfully employed in litter picking and clearing of excess vegetation from commons and rights of way?”

In the absence of the Executive Member for Community Care, Pensions and Insurance Environment and Public Protection, the Executive Member for Environment and Public Protection answered:

Adult Social Care doesn't put any funding into this project, but it does provide support worker staff and transport to enable service users at the Phoenix Centre to participate in the ROAR group and its work of litter picking and clearing of local commons and public rights of way. We would very much like this project to continue as it's a popular one with service users and it does an excellent job. We are therefore looking at two options for this to continue:

The first is that the project develops as part of a staff 'social enterprise', or small business that would continue work with the Council's Countryside service and Ramblers' Association, offering work placement and training for service users to purchase with their Personal Budgets.

Or the second option is an existing organisation took over the project, maintaining the current partnerships and again offering placements for individuals in receipt of Personal Budgets.

Do you have a supplementary?

Mrs Diane Smith asked the following supplementary question:

"Yes I do. Do you think it fair that people with a learning disability should pay to pick up litter?"

In the absence of the Executive Member for Community Care, Pensions and Insurance Environment and Public Protection, the Executive Member for Environment and Public Protection answered:

That, Mrs Smith, is their choice. It has been offered as a service to them and they have a personal budget now and it is their choice how they spend that budget. If they choose to spend it in an outside environment which is well suited to people with learning disabilities who can enjoy working and performing a service to the local community, then I think we should allow them that choice.

(f) Question submitted to the Executive Member for Community Care, Pensions and Insurance by Mrs Diane Smith:

"How is West Berkshire Council going to ensure that all learning disabled adults are provided with the independent assistance necessary for a meaningful discussion to take place about setting and managing a personal care budget?"

In the absence of the Executive Member Executive Member for Community Care, Pensions and Insurance, the Executive Member for Leisure and Culture, Equality and the Visions answered:

Adult Social Care staff are currently reviewing all the service users who use the Council provided day services, plus offering Personal Budgets to new service users eligible for social care services funded by the Council. All our service users will have a Personal Budget within the next three years in line with Government policy.

To set a Personal Budget staff work with the individual to identify their needs through a Self Assessment Questionnaire and they will also involve Carers and friends where appropriate. Should the individual not have someone to assist them with this process, then the Council has

agreed to use case management advocates from Age UK or WEBCAS. The advocate can also support and encourage the service user in setting up their support plan which further details their needs, the services to be used to meet those needs and the costs. The Support Plan will look at what is important to the individual, what do they want changed, what do they want to achieve, how will the support and money be managed, what is the emergency plan. An advocate is therefore key if the individual has no support networks to ensure this is a constructive and meaningful discussion.

Personal Budgets can be set up in three different formats: West Berkshire Council can continue to purchase the services directly for the individual or a cash payment to the service user or another person to manage on behalf of the service user or indeed a mixture of both.

Managing a Personal Budget: there are six options for those who choose to take a direct or indirect Personal Budget based on their choice and abilities: A user can manage the Personal Budget directly; a carer/relative/friend can manage it on their behalf; a Trust (where two or more individuals manage on the client's behalf); an Individual Service Fund (where the Service Provider manages the Personal Budget); a Broker, and West Berkshire Council is re-tendering for an organisation to provide this role or a care manager - but not for a direct or indirect payment.

Adult Social Care will also review the Support Plan to ensure it continues to meet the individual's identified needs that are eligible for social care funding.

Do you have a supplementary?

Mrs Diane Smith asked the following supplementary question:

"I do. This is more an observation than a question. I'm interested that you mention WEBCAS because, as a trustee of that charity and having spoken to the Executive Director this afternoon, we have only just started to speak to West Berkshire. They have not involved us until this week, so I am extremely surprised to hear you say that they're involved."

In the absence of the Executive Member Executive Member for Community Care, Pensions and Insurance, the Executive Member for Leisure and Culture, Equality and the Visions answered:

Well I can only comment on my understanding because we had a Service Level Agreement with WEBCAS as I understand it and I know that that needs updating then I understand that discussions with the new Chief Executive about perhaps changing the way in which it's delivered.

Mrs Smith added: But that is not my understanding as it is.

The Chairman of Council stated: As you've highlighted that to us I'm sure the point will be picked up and thank you very much for your questions.

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

NOTE: As there was not enough time for the Members' question and answer session at the meeting, the questions were answered via written replies.

(a) Question submitted to the Executive Member for Highways & Transport (Operational) and ICT by Councillor Keith Woodhams:

"Can the Executive Member for Highways and Transport tell me what progress is being made to fund a right hand only turn for buses, from the A4 into the West Berkshire Hospital, to reduce the journey time for both passengers and bus operators?"

The Executive Member for Highways & Transport (Operational) sent a written reply as follows:

This question was only raised on 13 January by Councillor Woodhams and so no progress has yet been made as officers have been busy delivering this year's extensive capital programme. However it will be given a high priority in the new financial year and as part of the feasibility study, possible sources of funding will be explored.

As I mentioned at the January Executive, I have asked officers to keep Councillor Woodhams informed and I have no doubt that they will do so.

(b) Question submitted to the Executive Member for Highways & Transport (Operational) and ICT by Councillor Keith Woodhams:

"Can the Executive Member for Highways and Transport tell me what provision is being made at the new Park Way shopping centre, to accommodate bus passengers in a waiting room whilst they wait for a bus?"

The Executive Member for Highways & Transport (Operational) and ICT sent a written reply as follows:

There is no waiting room provision within the Parkway development, which is the normal situation with developments of this nature. Bus shelters will however be provided at the main bus stops at the southern end of Park Way and these will have real time passenger information displays.

(c) Question submitted to the Executive Member for Children & Young Families, Youth Service and Culture & Leisure by Councillor Jeff Beck:

"It is with much regret that the national Comprehensive Spending Review and the subsequent Local Spending Decisions have resulted in Youth Service and Commissioning deciding to withdraw staff and support from the Riverside Community Centre and its associated MUGA."

I would remind Members of this Council that this building was constructed as the result of "Planning Gain" from the redevelopment of the old Turnpike School site - it was intended for community use!

The Coalition Government are bringing about changes in the relationship between Local Government and the Community, by the promotion of the Big Society and Localism concepts.

Youth Services and Commissioning, in conjunction with the Clay Hill Residents' Association, are holding exploratory discussions with a view towards establishing a "Partnership Arrangement" which will ensure the Riverside Community Centre continues to be available for use by all sections of the Community.

I seek this Council's unequivocal assurance, that the financial responsibility for ensuring the future use by the community of the Riverside Community Centre facilities, will be the responsibility of the entire administration and not limited to the resources of Youth and Commissioning."

The Executive Member for Children & Young Families, Youth Service and Culture & Leisure sent a written reply as follows:

I very much welcome the exploratory discussions which are underway between the Clay Hill Residents' Association and the Council regarding the future of community and youth facilities in Clay Hill. It is right that communities identify the kinds of facilities and services that they need, and work with the Council to put these in place. For our part, we will help local residents to take this work forward, and have put in place a Transition Fund which will offer time-limited support at Riverside and elsewhere to help secure the long-term viability of youth and community facilities.
