

# Questions and Answers

## Executive

**Thursday, 13th February, 2014**

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West Berkshire  
COUNCIL

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# **Executive Meeting**

## **13 February 2014**

**Questions and Answers**



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COUNCIL

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

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There were no public questions submitted in relation to items not included on the agenda

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

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**(a) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations) Emergency Planning and Newbury Visions by Councillor Keith Woodhams:**

*“Can the Executive Member for Highways & Transport tell me what action is being taken to stop the partial and repeated flooding on the roads listed below, where I have witnessed pedestrians and cyclists trying to avoid being soaked or splashed by passing vehicles:*

- *East corner of pedestrian crossing - Post Office to Kennet Centre entrance*
- *South corner of bend in road - Entrance to Bear Lane from Sainsbury's roundabout*
- *A4 London Road outside Dreams Bedding*
- *A4 London Road northside, east of Skylings*
- *A4 London Road southside approaching B&Q roundabout*
- *A4 London Road southside, opposite Dorneywood Way*
- *A4 Bath Road northside, opposite Southdown Road*
- *A4 London Road north side, opposite Tesco's*
- *Hambridge Road east side of road, after junction with A4 London Road*
- *Hambridge Road west side of road, just north of the new roundabout*
- *Underpasses in Newbury town centre in vicinity of Sainsbury's roundabout are frequently flooded too?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations) Emergency Planning and Newbury Visions answered:**

We all appreciate that the weather is causing considerable problems and we've got equipment out all day and every day jetting drains and gullies in the key areas to prevent flooding of properties. I assume you have reported all these individual items to Highways and they will be investigating all of those in addition to the ones that are being dealt with on an emergency basis.

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

**Keith Woodhams asked the following supplementary question:**

*“This situation has been going on for some considerable months prior to the recent heavy rains and my question is – would you agree with me that if you had carried out these works more quickly and efficiently that these floods would not have inconvenienced West Berkshire residents trying to get around the district, and would also have reduced half the pot holes formed by the surface water laying on these roads as witnessed in London Road in particular?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations) Emergency Planning and Newbury Visions answered:**

All I would say is that up until the last few weeks everything was being dealt with on a needs basis as they are reported. Unfortunately, the weather has been going on for some long while and our roads are suffering as are everybody else's.

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**(b) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations) Emergency Planning and Newbury Visions by Councillor Keith Woodhams:**

*"What advice would the Executive Member for Highways & Transport give to school children and adults crossing the north side of the Thatcham Garden Centre Roundabout, when faced with traffic moving in a 40mph speed limit and where vehicle crashes have led to road signs being demolished by vehicles at or near the crossing points?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations) Emergency Planning and Newbury Visions answered:**

The crossing point that you refer to has a seven metre wide central refuge with dropped kerbs and tactile paving, which enables pedestrians and cyclists to cross the road safely in two stages. This location was recently investigated as part of a 'home to school' assessment and it was considered that it is a safe location to cross Tull Way.

Road Safety Officers provide a number of initiatives to improve safety for children. One such initiative is the Safer Steps programme which is promoted to all year three classes (approx 1,680 pupils). Each pupil receives a boot bag, activity book, DVD and parents feedback form. The aim of the programme is to increase children's knowledge of safe practice when crossing roads and the correct use of Pedestrian Crossings and why they should always use them.

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

**Keith Woodhams asked the following supplementary question:**

*"I could just about pick out what you said. It would be very helpful if you could copy me in on the action taking place. I still feel, however, that this is a very dangerous crossing. Small children and parents trying to cross this road, even in two stages, with traffic coming off the roundabout at 40 miles an hour is still incredibly dangerous and I don't think we've found the solution yet and I shall be pressing either yourself or the officers for a continued solution. It's not satisfactory at this time".*

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**(c) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport (Policy), Culture, Customer Services and Countryside by Councillor Alan Macro:**

*"Could the Executive Member for Planning please tell me by which date the council is likely to have identified additional sites for travellers and gypsies?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport (Policy), Culture, Customer Services and Countryside answered:**

The Council has stated through the adopted Core Strategy that the identification of sites for Gypsies Travellers and Travelling Showpeople will be contained within the Site Allocation and Delivery DPD.

According to the Local Development Scheme, which was approved by Council in September 2013, the publication of the proposed submission documents will be February 2015.

Members I'm sure will recall that before Christmas a "Call For Sites" was made and the Planning Policy Team have recently met with Parish Councils and Ward members (those who are in the adopted settlement hierarchy) to discuss the sites put forward and that was a very well attended event.

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

**Alan Macro asked the following supplementary question:**

*"February 2015 is still a long way away. In the meantime we've had several applications for sites for gypsy and travellers in the countryside and AONB and the agents, they're laughing at us, because they know we have a great deal of difficulty in resisting these applications for gypsy sites and this now looks like it's going to go on for at least another year if not longer. Could something not be done to speed this process up please?"*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport (Policy), Culture, Customer Services and Countryside answered:**

There's nothing that can be done to speed the process up Councillor Macro, but I do understand your very real concerns. As you referred, we recently lost a single pitch appeal via the Inspector's decision. The main reason was that there was no identified five year land supply of sites. Unfortunately we can't make people come forward with the sites, but we are as an authority putting together a working party to look at Council-owned land to see what we as an authority can identify within our own estate anything that would be a suitable site for a small provision.

**Alan Macro asked:** *"And that could be done in a more timely fashion?"*

We can be doing that in a more timely fashion, yes.

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**(d) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations) Emergency Planning and Newbury Visions by Councillor Roger Hunneman:**

*"Can the Executive Member for Highways tell me when the Newbury On Street Car Parking Charging Scheme will now be implemented together with the improvements to traffic management, parking offers and road safety measures promised from this new cash flow?"*

## **The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations) Emergency Planning and Newbury Visions answered:**

Following the endorsement by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission on 21 January 2014 of the Individual Decision to proceed with this scheme, it will now be implemented as soon as possible in the new financial year. Before it can be commenced it will be necessary to procure the payment machines. This will be done as soon as possible, but it may be that the scheme is not ready to go live with effect from 1 April 2014, although it will commence as soon as possible after that date. It has also been agreed that for the roads in the very central area of Newbury, where 30 minutes free parking is to be provided, consideration will be given to a phased introduction to allow further information about the current usage of free parking to be gathered. The roads in question are Northbrook Street, Broadway, Cheap Street, Kings Road West and Bartholomew Street.

We have not identified specific projects that the income from on-street charging will be spent on because that's not how these budgets are managed. What we can say is that this additional income will increase the overall income in the parking budget and help to reduce the deficit between expenditure on transportation measures and income from parking. This will help us to continue to provide an appropriate level of spending on traffic management measures going forward. One immediate impact is that we will be able to continue to support the existing parking promotions in Newbury, namely free parking after 5pm in the two multi-storey car parks on the four Thursday's before Christmas, free parking in the Council's staff car park in the four Saturday's before Christmas and free parking after 3pm during the 'Shop Local Week' from Monday to Friday in the two multi-storey car parks.

**The Chairman 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?"*

**Roger Hunneman asked the following supplementary question:**

*"Will you be carrying out a baseline survey of economic activity in the areas and comparing it with what has happened some reasonable period after the introduction of the scheme? I would have thought that would be a very important thing to do to see whether this scheme was damaging trade or not, and when might you do that sort of survey?"*

## **The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Transport (Operations) Emergency Planning and Newbury Visions answered:**

First of all, as I've said, we'll be reviewing the 30 minute free parking proposal in those areas to see whether that is appropriate or not, and secondly, to do a footfall survey later in the year.

**Roger Hunneman commented:** *That's rather coarse isn't it, a footfall survey?"*

Well, that's all we could ever do. We can always get people into the town but we can't tell them where to go.

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