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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>	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
<b>Relevant Officer(s):</b>	Jon Winstanley

**(A) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Woollaston:**

*“Are you concerned that the responses from local businesses and disabled residents to a formal consultation on your rushed extension of pedestrianisation hours in Newbury Town Centre from 10am to midnight will be negative, which is the reason you won't carry out any consultation before the trial?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

Cllr Woollaston, thank you for your question.

The pedestrianisation trial has been deferred, however the administration is committed to progressing with the trial as soon as possible. The whole purpose of this trial is to consult with stakeholders whilst being able to see in detail the exact impact pedestrianisation will have. I am confident that the benefits to the town centre and particularly the evening trade will far outweigh any potential negative impact which we will look to address during the trial.

**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?”*

**Councillor Woollaston asked the following supplementary question:**

*“Can I assume that this will be a formal consultation, particularly with local businesses?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

We will continue working with officers on what the next steps will be.

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<b>Question (B)</b>	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
<b>Relevant Officer(s):</b>	Jon Winstanley

**(B) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Mackinnon:**

*“Has any survey been carried out to establish how many disabled residents will have their independence and daily lives disadvantaged by your planned extension of pedestrianisation hours in Newbury Town Centre?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

Cllr Mackinnon, thank you for your question.

As mentioned, the purpose of the trial is to consider the actual impacts on all sections our community. The Council will undertake a comprehensive consultation and engagement exercise as part of the trial and where possible address issues that are raised.

**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?”*

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

*“Thank you for the information and about the deferral of the scheme and trial given the roadworks. What will you say to residents with mobility issues who say that a failure to consult with them before the scheme is a failure of duty of care towards them. They should be asked their views before the council experiments with their lives”.*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

Thank you for your question. We will continue to work with all representatives, organisations and local residents to find the best way forward.

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<b>Question (C)</b>	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
<b>Relevant Officer(s):</b>	Jon Winstanley

**(C) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Woollaston:**

*“What traffic problems will be created on surrounding roads by the extension of pedestrianisation hours in Newbury Town Centre?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

Cllr Woollaston, thank you for your question.

Removing traffic from the town centre in the evenings will create a pleasant and welcoming environment for visitors and residents and will have a significant benefit for the night time economy. It will create more active travel and hopefully have a net impact environmentally.

Inevitably the displaced traffic will cause an increase on alternative routes, however this will be monitored during the trial and will help inform the decision on whether to make the trial permanent. Inevitably the displaced traffic will cause pressures on alternative routes, however this will be monitored during the trial to help inform the decision.

**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?”*

**Councillor Woollaston asked the following supplementary question:**

*“Would it not be better to conduct a traffic modelling exercise in advance”.*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

Thank you, as I have just referred we will work will officers, local organisations and residents to look where we are going to go forward.

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<b>Question (D)</b>	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
<b>Relevant Officer(s):</b>	Jon Winstanley

**(D) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Mackinnon:**

*“Does the Council follow the Statutory Guidance on highway network management issued by the Secretary of State on 1 April 2022?  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reallocating-road-space-in-response-to-covid-19-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities/traffic-management-act-2004-network-management-in-response-to-covid-19>)”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

Thank you Cllr Mackinnon.

The Council has due regard to all relevant statutory guidance when undertaking improvements on the Highway network.

**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?”*

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

*“The statutory guidance states that at the design stage of any scheme local police and emergency services must be consulted and that businesses must be consulted to say if it meets their needs. Local disability groups should be consulted at an early stage of scheme development. How can any order done prior to the consultation comply with the legislation”.*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

Any changes with emergency services will be looked at with officers, local residents and businesses.

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<b>Question (E)</b>	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
<b>Relevant Officer(s):</b>	Jon Winstanley

**(E) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Woollaston:**

*“Have you consulted with the emergency services to obtain their views on how emergency vehicle access to Newbury Town Centre might be maintained after your proposed extension of pedestrianisation hours in Newbury Town Centre?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

Thank you Councillor Woollaston.

Emergency vehicles can currently gain access through the bollards during the current hours of pedestrianisation using electronic tags, as would be the case for the proposed extended period. Consequently, emergency services will be unaffected by the proposal we put forward.

**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?”*

**Councillor Woollaston asked the following supplementary question:**

*“The statutory guidance says that an early stage of any scheme local police and emergency services must be consulted. Why is the Council in breach of statutory guidance?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

I refer back to my previous answer, we will consult with local businesses, local residents and all of the statutory services that we are required to talk to.

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<b>Question (F)</b>	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
<b>Relevant Officer(s):</b>	Jon Winstanley

**(F) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel by Councillor Mackinnon:**

*“How do you propose to support businesses who may be unable to manage their supply chain to ensure all deliveries are taken between midnight and 10am following your rushed extension of pedestrianisation hours in Newbury Town Centre?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

Thank you Cllr Mackinnon,

Businesses will be fully engaged throughout the trial to understand the issues they face and, where possible, adjustments would be made to minimise any detrimental impact. We have already engaged with the BID, Newbury Town Council, Newbury Town Centre and had over 4000 responses.

**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?”*

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

*“You mentioned the BID but that does not represent all businesses and lets say a couple of months into the trial a business or businesses say they can not arrange deliveries between midnight and 10 am or they can only do so with increased costs putting their future at risk what happens then”.*

**The Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel answered:**

A trial is a trial that's the whole point of a trial and as we go thought the trial there will be consultation. So we will talk to businesses find out what the issues are and make appropriate recommendations.

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<b>Question (G)</b>	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
<b>Relevant Officer(s):</b>	Clare Lawrence

**(G) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Councillor Clark:**

*“Can the Portfolio Holder provide us with an update on the state of the Local Plan Review?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:**

Thank you for your question.

The Local Plan Review, under the previous administration, was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in March 2023. An Inspector has been allocated and has asked a number of preliminary questions which the Council is required to respond to. An extension of time to respond to the questions has been requested. This has been granted by the Inspector. We now have until the end of September to answer his questions and an examination in public of the submitted Local Plan will begin next year.

We understand the importance of an up-to-date local plan to secure high quality new development which is supported by infrastructure, and which seeks to minimise the impact on the environment. However, there is currently uncertainty surrounding the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which has led a number of Councils to pause their plans. We also remain concerned about the issues we raised at Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan Review when we were in opposition.

Given the circumstances, the extension of time provided by the Inspector is very welcome to allow members to understand the progress of the legislation and to work with officers to see if our concerns to the West Berkshire Local Plan as submitted can be addressed.

**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?”*

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### **Councillor Clark asked the following supplementary question:**

So what are the risks that will guide the recommendation you expect to present to Council later this year?"

Over 50 Council's have paused their local plans on the basis of this uncertainty but the advice from Government is to continue with the process of preparing local plans.

### **The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:**

The biggest risk is not knowing what the National Government would do with planning policy with the NPPF and Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. A revision of the NPPF that was consulted upon earlier this year started after our Regulation 19 consultation started which the Government said it would respond to by late spring is delayed and we will not know what they will do until September. The developers doubt if the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill will be enacted in the parliament. When a Bill fails to complete its passage in one parliament year it has to begin all over again. All this amounts to great uncertainty and is a big risk. The whole development industry is being held back and the whole economy. 50 local planning authorities, including Mr Gove's, have paused their local plans. There is much that is good in this Council's plan and that's why after much hard work we are reluctant to lose the Local Plan for a few years. This has to be a plan for the whole district not just Thatcham and Newbury. Our response as an opposition to the Local Plan is in the public domain, its our starting point and we are committed to amend the Local Plan accordingly. Our approach will be to work over the summer with all key stakeholders, negotiate the best possible outcome that can satisfy as many as possible reducing costs and delays. There is no outcome that did not have risk and we have until the end of September to come back to Council.

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