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

Question (A)	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
Relevant Officer(s):	Neil Stacey

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

"I'm sure I speak for many businesses along and in the area of Hambridge Rd/Boundary Rd and Kings Rd. With reference to your Work ref: ARN-340-63909659 Why were all the works not completed within the time frame stated especially phase 5 which states " Final Road Surfacing-Full Night Time Road Closure, which has now resulted in another month's closure. In addition to this there has been no works carried out on the crossroads for at least the last 5 weeks, so why did the Traffic lights have to remain in place. The whole management of these closures needs looking into, who is holding the contractor accountable for these ongoing delays and missed deadlines. And finally, who compensates the businesses who have suffered loss of trade."

Ken Omor could not attend the meeting and received the following written response:

We have been notified by Southern Gas Networks of their plans to carry out a major gas main replacement project at Kings Road. As a result, the resurfacing works have been delayed because we always try to avoid newly laid road surfaces being disturbed. We anticipate that the gas main work will start in late summer and we will carry out the resurfacing as soon as possible afterwards. SGN have written to local residents to inform them of their start date and programme. Advance warning signs will be installed prior to work starting to bring the work to drivers' attention.

The temporary traffic signals were removed from the Hambridge Road/Boundary Road/Kings Road crossroads as soon as the work reached a stage where it was safe to do so. I do sympathise with local residents and businesses for the disruption that this project has caused, but the Council did work with the developer responsible for the project as closely as possible to minimise inconvenience and the traffic signals and partial road closures were much less disruptive than a full road closure would have been. This included regular site visits and inspections and the imposition of conditions on the contractor's permit to work.

Unfortunately, there is no mechanism in highway legislation for compensation to be paid to parties that have been affected by roadworks.

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

(B) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by John Gotelee:

“Regarding the upgrading of the faraday Rd pitch from grass to an all weather surface will a Habitat Regulations assessment be needed?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Thank you for your question.

An assessment under the Habitats Regulations (known as a HRA) must be undertaken to test if a plan or project proposal could significantly harm the designated features of a European site.

In the case of the Faraday Road football pitch, the nearest European site is the River Lambourn Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which joins the river Kennet approximately 1,200 metres downstream from the football pitch.

Initial plans for Faraday Road will enable the grass pitch to be used for football. A longer-term plan for the site will be developed and will be subject of future Executive report. However, the introduction of the all-weather surface is not considered a project under the HRA regulations, and it is unlikely that the proposals would impact on the SAC.

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?”*

John Gotelee did not ask a supplementary question.

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Question (C)	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
Relevant Officer(s):	Joseph Holmes

(C) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services by Miss Staniforth:

“Would it be possible for people to have a say in how their council tax is used? For example, a form is sent out with various categories on, i.e. schools, police service, roads etc, and we can select a few options for our council tax to be allocated in. There would be suitable options for young people, parents and the elderly. For those who don't respond, their money could be allocated to the areas in more need. I feel this would make people feel more involved in the community, and especially with the cost of living crisis, being happy and understanding where our money is going.”

Miss Staniforth could not attend the meeting and received the following written response:

The Council publishes information on where monies are spent and these are included online <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/council-spending>. The Council has consulted on its budget in recent years, using a budget simulator to demonstrate a way of allocating different funds to different services, and for the current year asking specific questions on priorities for spending (with 376 responses); the summary of these consultations were included in the budget papers. In recent years there has also been the opportunity for community groups to bid into the Council for funding to support local infrastructure. We will be considering options for budget consultation for the year ahead (2024-25) and how best to involve the public in having their say.

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

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

“As DEFRA have a “Grants-in-Aid” scheme which is currently open, what All Source Flood Risk Management activity is underway for my Clayhill Ward Area 3 which I define as a roughly triangular Area bounded by the A339 to the West, South of the River Lambourn and North of the A4 down to roughly the confluence with the River Kennet?”

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

Ms Saunderson, thank you for your question.

The Council successfully bid for grant in aid funding from DEFRA and has been awarded £40,000 for a surface water study covering the Clay Hill Ward. The brief for this work is currently being finalised and consultants will be procured in the near future.

Other than this study, the Council is undertaking a retrofit of some of the Highway drainage on Faraday Road with Sustainable Drainage features and will undertake routine and reactive Highway drainage works where needed. Your first and second questions are similar but covering different areas but the answer given will be the same.

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?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“The £40k only covers areas one and two. It does not cover areas three or four hence I need to have a talk with the appropriate portfolio holder. I would like to thank the ex councillor Jeff Beck for allowing me to become the lead on this, I would like to meet with someone and will ask my supplementary under area four”.

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

(E) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by John Gotelee:

“Regarding the reinstatement of the football pitch at faraday road what sustainable drainage measures are / will be in place?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Mr Gotelee, thank you for your question.

There will be no change to the hardened areas around the football pitch, no additional surface water drainage is necessary.

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?”*

John Gotelee asked the following supplementary question:

“The pitch has a drainage system under it, It either works or it does not. You are about to spray a herbicide onto it that is poisonous to aquatic life and will drain into the Kennet. If it does not work will you have a waterlogged pitch.”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

“Mentioning herbicides is introducing new material and I do not have the answer but thank you for the information that I will look into”.



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

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

“What All Source Flood Risk Management activity is underway for my Clayhill Ward Area 4 which I define as another roughly triangular Area bounded by the A339 to the West, South of the A4 (and including its route) and down to the River Kennet?”

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

(The Following answer had been given to Paula Saunderson under question D).

The Council successfully bid for grant in aid funding from DEFRA and has been awarded £40,000 for a surface water study covering the Clay Hill Ward. The brief for this work is currently being finalised and consultants will be procured in the near future.

Other than this study, the Council is undertaking a retrofit of some of the Highway drainage on Faraday Road with Sustainable Drainage features and will undertake routine and reactive Highway drainage works where needed.

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?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“Looking at area 4, work is under way and I want to know what the work on Faraday Road will do, will it mitigate the 10 to 12 pollution incidents I have recorded in the last few months. I am about to write to our MP on this. I need to meeting with people who understand the issues within West Berkshire Council to bring together the correct authorities to bring this forward”.

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

“if you give me your contact details I will organise a meeting”.

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Question (G)	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
Relevant Officer(s):	Jon Winstanley

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

“Is the Thames water Sewer / Northcroft stream primarily a drain for carrying surface water from the town centre and associated catchment area?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Mr Gotelee. I welcome this question as it is a subject close to my heart.

You are correct, the sewer is a surface water sewer that drains surface water from a large proportion of Newbury Town centre.

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?”*

John Gotelee asked the following supplementary question:

“The last administration paid no attention to sustainable drainage. They commissioned a survey into sustainable drainage but there is no water drainage strategy. How can you do SuDS with no strategy yet you have a surface water drainage through it which you do not know what it is carrying, gets polluted so how can the SuDS work?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

“So far we do not have any projects that have SuDS, when we get a planning application that requires SuDS that is the time to answer that question”.

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Question (H)	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
Relevant Officer(s):	Clare Lawrence

(H) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Paula Saunderson:

"I had difficulty following the new Local Plan Review 2022-2039 for the area defined as Newbury Settlement as all individual policies for this Settlement seem to have been dropped and there are none of the usual Tables immediately visible, therefore I would like to know what the projected number of dwellings (all types) will be for that Settlement by 1am on New Years Day 2040 please, and what plans are there to ensure adequate Water Supply and Sewage/Surface Water Drainage Infrastructure will be in place?"

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Thank you for your question.

The number of dwellings in Newbury settlement on the 1st January 2040 is projected to be 23,296.

With regards to "plans to ensure adequate Water Supply and Sewage/Surface Water Drainage Infrastructure will be in place" we regularly consult with our statutory water provider, Thames Water, and no deficit in provision has been identified. However, there is a new policy in the Local Plan Review as submitted that covers water supply, its DM7. It will require all new buildings to comply with regulations of higher water efficiency standards of 110 litters per person per day. Planning conditions will be applied to new developments to ensure water efficiency standards are met. Also, the 2021 West Berkshire Water Cycle Study Phase Two by our consultants states that our district suffers from sever water stress and that a request that new development has a higher standard of 80 litters per person per day. This has been submitted and we will have to see if the Inspector will include this modification.

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?"*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

"I think we are now up to 150 litters per day so any public information we can give in the interim would be useful. How do we fit this all together with the plans Thames

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Water have. Thames Water have a Drainage and Waste Management Plans and ground water impacted systems. And their management plan ”.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Drainage and flood protection is a complex issue involving a number of agencies. We will continue to work closely to try and do better than has been done in the past.



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Question (I)	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
Relevant Officer(s):	Eric Owens

(I) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Paula Saunderson:

“The Berkshire Data Observatory for West Berks is predicting a decline in population of 3,853 by 2043, so can we assume we need 9000 new dwellings because there are this number of homeless, sofa surfers, children leaving home, or people wishing to live alone or get divorced?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Thank you for your question.

I am afraid that the Council is unaware of the assumptions the Berkshire Data Observatory have made in respect of birth rates or death rates. For example, we are not aware of how they have they applied a Berkshire figure or a West Berkshire figure in their assumptions. The Council uses the standard methodology as set out in the NPPF to calculate the number of houses. The Government requires us to use its methodology in the preparation of the Local Plan and this will be tested by the Planning Inspector at the Examination. This process has been followed since 2012.

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?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“Have we ever challenged the figures like many other Councils. Have we ever challenged the calculations?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

It's a good point and I will take that away to see if they can be challenged, it is very difficult to predict that far into the future.

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Question (J)	Council Meeting on 20 July 2023
Relevant Officer(s):	Jon Winstanley

(J) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement by Paula Saunderson:

“When will West Berkshire Council Undertake the Green/Blue Infrastructure work promised within Policy CS18 under the current Local Plan 2012-2026, including the mapping and categorisation of all Public Open Spaces which can form the basis of an Ecological Current State Assessment of all WBC managed lands and water stretches? See Arun District Council Local Plan 2011-2031 and its daughter (evidence) documents as an example.”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

Thank you for your question.

‘The Council’s Environment Delivery Team are working with internal stakeholders to scope a Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework to support Council activity. This work is at concept stage, but the aim is that as the Framework is developed it will support Planning Policy colleagues in developing a Green and Blue Infrastructure SPD in support of new Policy SP10 which is for Green Infrastructure with the Local Plan Review.’

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?”*

Paula Saunderson asked the following supplementary question:

“I am encouraged to hear the answer as I have but a piece of work in with Shaw and Cum Donnington Parish Council. Please can you look at other Councils that have good examples of how these all interact”.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Community Engagement answered:

I think that is a good idea and I have already looked at one or two other councils at your behest.

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