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

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Question (A)	Council Meeting on 17 July 2025
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(A) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Councillor Phil Barnett:

“This spring and early summer has seen minimum rainfall in the South East England, effecting the growth of grass in Parks/Open spaces and road side verges Obviously, this has effected the scheduled grass cutting required to be undertaken by West Berks Council.

Therefore can the executive member for the environment and highways identify if any financial savings have been achieved with the reduction in grass cutting?”

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

Thanks for your question.

It is true that reduced rainfall has affected grass growth in recent months. I can confirm that this has not yet resulted in any financial savings.

Our grounds maintenance contract is structured around staff availability and readiness to deliver services as needed, regardless of temporary fluctuations in weather or grass growth. As such, the resources required to maintain these public spaces remain allocated and costs have not changed as this is a temporary situation.

It is also worth noting that the grass cutting frequency was reduced from seven to five cuts a year as part of last year's budget consultations. Thus, the temporary reduction in grass growth has helped the contractor to get on top of the new cutting requirements this year and to learn relevant lessons for how a more typical vegetation growth season can be effectively managed in future.

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 Phil Barnett did not ask a supplementary question.

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Question (B)	Council Meeting on 17 July 2025
Relevant Officer(s):	Deborah Vincent / Moira Fraser

(B) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment) by Councillor Phil Barnett:

“Many West Berks residents are now living in high rise apartments, totally dependent on efficient lifts to take them to their respective flat, if living above ground level. In the case of persons with limited mobility a necessity, where breakdowns on lifts occur, unless lifts can be repaired immediately [and many lifts are old and spares difficult to source] residents have no alternative than to move out and source alternative accommodation until the lift can be repaired, sometimes months [or reside in their apartment and have daily necessities delivered to them, if it can be arranged]. Therefore what can West Berks Council do to make sure landlords or Management agencies conform to the Disability and Discrimination Act?”

The Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment) answered:

I am sure that all Members across the Country have the same issues. When residents have issues related to bad maintenance or inappropriate work that reduces their ability to access services or their homes, I would recommend any Member contact Adult Social Care.

When lifts break down, it can be frustrating even to go to the shops. If there are any examples where you would like us to speak to Adult Social Care, please bring them forward.

As an Authority, we try to enforce as much of the statutory disabled legislation as we can, although not all of it is under our responsibility. Where you know it is happening, please contact the property managers and chase this up.

My mother, who had a stroke around seven years ago, would be stuck in her flat when the lifts were out and no one knew what was going on. Neighbourly contact reduces as well.

If you have any example, we will do our best, but we are not the decision makers in most cases.

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 Phil Barnett did not ask a supplementary question.

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Question (C)	Council Meeting on 17 July 2025
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(C) Question related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor Alan Macro:

“The Local Transport Plan (LTP4) talks about the desire to create a better maintained Highways Network. With this in mind, how many potholes has WBC repaired within 28 days in 2025 and how many dangerous potholes have been repaired within 72 hours in 2025?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you for your question, Councillor Macro.

In 2024/25 we repaired 3,048 potholes. This compares to 2,011 in 2022/23 and 2,928 in 2023/24, which is more potholes.

Dangerous potholes are either filled in 2 hours or 24 hours depending on the location and severity. In 2024/25 we were made aware of 567 dangerous potholes and 99% were repaired within 2 or 24 hours in line with the Council's standards.

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 Alan Macro asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you, that sounds encouraging. Could you tell us what the Council is doing to try to prevent potholes developing in the first place?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Thank you.

We all know that prevention is better than a cure, so looking to the future we are investing in our roads and highways network and have enhanced our Highways Improvement Programme with an additional investment of £4m this year, doubling the amount of schemes that we do in terms of resurfacing.

This means our roads will be more structurally sound and therefore reducing the number of potholes that appear in the first place. We recently finished the A4 east of Hungerford, which is excellent, and we did this two days early.

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Our ambition is to be in the top ten per cent nationally for well-maintained roads in the next two to three years.
