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

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Question (A)	Council Meeting on 26 February 2026

(A) Question related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by William Beard:

"Can the Council explain how charging 54p per kWh to charge a roadside EV is going to encourage people to have an EV when domestic and commercial rates for electricity are less than half this price."

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Mr Beard, thank you for your question.

Public EV charging costs more than home electricity because it includes installation, maintenance, software, customer support, higher commercial grid charges and long-term infrastructure costs. Our 54p/kWh tariff is in line with other public chargers in the region, and we review the price regularly as energy costs change.

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Question (B)	Council Meeting on 26 February 2026

(B) Question related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paul Morgan:

"Question relates to the Investment and Borrowing Strategy:

EFS is not a government "bail out" as any capital redirection to revenue has to be funded by the Council itself.

It is stated that the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) which is the Authority's underlying need to borrow is being primarily driven by Exceptional Financial Support (EFS): £13 million in 2024/25; £20 million in 2025/26; £30 million in 2026/27. What it does not show or explain is how and when the loans for EFS, and other short-term borrowing requirements (fixed maturity), is going to repaid and how this will impact CFR (and when).

Please can the Council clarify / explain how the short-term borrowing requirements will be repaid (and when)."

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Thank you for your question.

Individually identifiable loans for EFS are not undertaken. EFS is an accounting adjustment undertaken at outturn (i.e. close of the accounts and determined by need at outturn up to the cap of provisional EFS).

The need driving EFS is the level of revenue overspend and impact on General Fund, offset against available resources, hence it cannot be treated until outturn when actual costs are known. The repayment of the EFS actually drawn down (i.e. scale of accounting adjustment undertaken at outturn), is prescribed within the provisional agreement issued by MHCLG and financed through Minium Revenue Provision, not specific EFS linked loans. For example, the £13million treated in 2024/25 is subject to a 20 year MRP period as designated by MHCLG.

In respect of short-term borrowing, these are repaid at maturity. Repayment method depends on cashflow at the time of maturity. The Council is deemed a long term borrower (i.e. under the Prudential Code), and hence maturing loans are usually subject to refinancing. Refinancing decisions are informed by local and national economic conditions and adherence to the adopted Prudential Indicators.

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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Paul Morgan asked the following supplementary question:

"Will you have to, on maturity, get another loan out to pay for that loan?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

As you know Mr Morgan, we have set rules saying that no more than 30 per cent of our borrowing is short term, and we will adhere to this rule but also ensure that we get the best interest rates possible.

At the moment, the Public Works Loan Board rate is roughly 5.48 per cent and if needs be, we will do a revolving credit of refinancing, but it would depend on the time that the loan matures. So, simply, it depends.

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Question (C)	Council Meeting on 26 February 2026

(C) Question related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paula Saunderson:

"MULTI-USE & FOOTBALL PITCH FUNDING - Govn. has recently announced 991 projects across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been awarded funding through the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme in 2025/26, with more beneficiaries to be announced soon, therefore are there any sums within the current year and next years Budgets from this Source of Funding?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Thank you for your question.

I can confirm that there are no sums included within either the current year's Budget or next year's Budget from this specific source of funding.

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 was expecting it to include Faraday Road Pitch, what sources will that be using?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

At the moment, it is fully provided for in the current financial years budget for 2025/26 with a mixture of borrowing and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. Depending on when the project come on line, it will likely be CIL funded.

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Question (D)	Council Meeting on 26 February 2026

(D) Question related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paul Morgan:

"Question relating to the Capital Strategy and Supporting Programme:

Projects such as the Grazeley Solar Farm, the 3G pitch at Faraday Road are not on the Capital Programme 2026/27. Can the Council please confirm what capital projects / aspirations been cancelled or postponed?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Thank you for the question.

Point 7.4 of the Capital Strategy covering report refers to the solar farm project. In accordance with recommendations made within the recent CIPFA Resilience Review, the business case is currently under review. Should the business case be supported moving forward, alternative models of funding will be sought – such as a hybrid model of both external borrowing and the proceeds arising from the sale of commercial property – and the programme updated through the corporate governance process. In respect of the Faraday Road 3G pitch, this has been approved as an amendment to the current year programme, with unutilised funding, treated at outturn and slipped into 2026/27, in accordance with standard budget processes.

The capital programme details those projects proposed and supported by this administration with delivery over a multi-year programme, aligned to the MTFS.

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?"*

Paul Morgan asked the following supplementary question:

"Will reports come forward on both of these projects, and other capital projects, so the public and Members see all the details?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Yes.

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Question (E)	Council Meeting on 26 February 2026

(E) Question related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paula Saunderson:

"HOMES ENGLAND FUNDING STREAMS - At the Compton Exhibition I was advised the 14 Streams of Funding are being streamlined into 4, therefore will Our Council be applying for any of these Sources Of Funding, especially schemes delivered by the new National Housing Bank such as the National Housing Delivery Fund and the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (through Partners)?. n.b. A short answer is required."

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Thank you for your question.

The Council are committed to increasing levels of affordable housing in the district. Officers are continuing to engage regularly with Homes England officials and our Registered Provider partners around delivering an increased pipeline of new affordable housing.

At the current time no direct applications have been made for funding and the focus is on supporting Registered partner providers with their proposals for growth in the district.

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 National Housing Delivery Fund looks like a replacement for the Brownfield Land Release Fund, helping to free up stuck public sector brownfield land, which we have in Bond Riverside. Will the Council take advantage of this scheme?"

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and and Housing answered:

There Government have provided Local Government with a number of different funding schemes, and the Council is clarifying exactly what these pots of funding are designated for. We are looking at every opportunity to provide affordable housing.

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Question (F)	Council Meeting on 26 February 2026

(F) Question related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paul Morgan:

"Question relating to the Capital Strategy and Supporting Programme:

According to the find a tender service website a contract award notice for the "Design and Construction of 20 MWp Grazeley Solar Farm in West Berkshire" was announced on 19 May 2025. Is there a contractual agreement in place or has / will any contractual agreement be cancelled?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Mr Morgan, thank you for your question.

I can confirm that there is currently no contract in place for the delivery of the Solar Farm. The Council is currently reviewing the viability of the project, and a decision will be made in the near future whether to proceed.

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?"*

Paul Morgan did not ask a supplementary question.

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Question (G)	Council Meeting on 26 February 2026

(G) Question related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paula Saunderson:

"SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS - There is a small amount in the budget so will this be enough to keep pace with recent legislation on The Polluter Pays, and can any funding be obtained from the £2.4m Nutrient Neutrality Source Of Funding?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Ms Saunderson, thank you for your question.

The Council owns a number of small sewage treatment plants that serve between 3 and 30 properties across the District and this funding is used for routine maintenance. Two of these treatment plants fall within the Lambourn catchment, and these will be upgraded using the Nutrient Neutrality funding.

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 did not ask a supplementary question.

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Question (H)	Council Meeting on 26 February 2026

(H) Question related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources by Paula Saunderson:

"SERVICE LEADS AND SERVICE MANAGERS reporting to SERVICE DIRECTORS (Draft SPP for 2026-2027 refers).

How many of each of these Types of Role are being included in the Budgets for 2026-2027?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

Thank you again for your question.

There are 17 Service Leads and 12 Service Managers which report to Service Directors, that are included in the proposed budget for 2026-27.

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:

"Would it be possible within the SPP when it goes to full Council in March, to list those roles that are Chief Officers?".

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered:

We will look into this, and if we can, we will.

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West Berkshire COUNCIL