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

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Question (A)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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(A) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Councillor Howard Woollaston:

"Please explain why Appendices 4-6 of the Playing Pitch Strategy were not released to me when I asked twice? I have now seen them through a member of the public who received them through the FOI process, and they do not seem remotely confidential"

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

Thank you.

My apologies Councillor Woolaston, that we did not provide these to you when you requested them initially. The Background Documents 1-3 did not form part of the approved Playing Pitch Strategy consultation, and we needed to check the status of these before sharing them. I believe that officers have now shared the documents with you and these will also be published with the final strategy as background documents.

The Portfolio Holder 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 Howard Woollaston asked the following supplementary question:

"There was a typo there, it was actually 4-6 rather than 1-3. What surprises me is that I am also the Shadow Portfolio Holder. When I asked the Officers, they were very coy and implied they were told they could not release them. Having now read them, I cannot see why".

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

As far as I am aware, no Member requested that they shouldn't be released. It was an error, and I accept responsibility.



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Question (B)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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(B) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation by Councillor Owen Jeffery:

“Would Executive agree that our Council can miss opportunities to let the public know just how many areas of our communities’ life West Berkshire Council supports? If so, what might we do to improve our visibility within our local communities?”

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement, Economic Development and Regeneration and Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation provided a written response:

The Council remains committed to promoting the work we do and the communities we support.

Through the Let’s Talk programme, we are increasing our visibility by offering early support and information directly within local settings. This programme is now a regular feature at community-run cafés and within our family hubs, ensuring residents can engage with us in familiar community spaces.

We are also working to further promote the Members’ Bids scheme, showcasing how it helps deliver local projects with support from West Berkshire Council funding.

We include a weekly item in the residents’ newsletter showcasing various bits of work the team does. We have contributed articles to the Residents Magazine, we attend a number of high-profile events including the Victoria Park family Day, The Thatcham Family Fun Day, The Pangbourne Fete and Kidsfest in Thatcham.

Our Officers attend events where they speak to community groups about scam prevention and also go into schools to talk to pupils about vaping, alcohol and tobacco use.



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Question (C)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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(C) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services by Councillor Ross Mackinnon was deferred.



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Question (D)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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(D) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services by Councillor Ross Mackinnon was deferred.



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Question (E)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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(E) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“Can the lead member assure members that our responsibilities towards all our children are being taken seriously?”

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Family Services answered:

I assure you that we take the care of our children seriously. 96 per cent of our schools are good or outstanding. Our Children Services is good. Our Youth Justice is outstanding. Castle Gate school is outstanding.

I think we take this very seriously.

The Portfolio Holder 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 Ross Mackinnon did not provide a supplementary question.



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Question (F)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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(F) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“The Playing Pitch Strategy is described as being behind schedule. Given the administration appears unable to decide what to do with the pitch at Faraday Road, will the lead member consider that the significant funding earmarked for this site might be spent on higher priority areas such as our children’s mental health or SEND provision?”

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

Thank you.

We do know what we want to do with the Faraday Road Football Ground, and it will remain a football ground for as long as we can possibly keep it that way.

We are proposing the insertion of a 3G artificial grass pitch, which implies that we intend to keep it as a football playing facility for a while.

On the second part of your question, an artificial grass pitch will increase playing opportunities, particularly for young people. To give you some idea, the Sport England data suggest that, for well-maintained grass pitches, they can be played for up to 6 hours per week and that artificial grass pitches could be played on for up to 80 hours per week. As you know, we approved the planning application for the floodlights which will extend the playing ability of that pitch for an even longer period.

In that planning meeting, I quoted a letter from a resident in my ward highlighting that the Newbury and District Girls under 11 side would find it a perfect place to play, helping their mental health.

I am comfortable with the amount we are spending on that ground.

The Portfolio Holder 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 Ross Mackinnon asked the following supplementary question:

“You mentioned the planning application last night. Why was the planning for the pitch itself withdrawn from the application, and we are putting some floodlights up with no pitch”.



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

Of course, we are not putting up floodlights without with a pitch, there is a grass pitch there in existence.

The artificial grass pitch was removed because we share the concerns raised about drainage of the pitch and the proximity to the River Kennet (a Site of Special Scientific Interest). We are actually exploring enhanced drainage filtration mechanisms to satisfy Natural England. That work is being done as we speak.



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Question (G)	Executive Meeting on 19 March 2026
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(G) Question submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

"The administration made pothole repair a key manifesto commitment for the 2023 elections. Yet the number of potholes repaired within 28 days is only 89% compared to a target of 95%. What will the administration do differently in order to hit this target?"

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Councillor Mackinnon, thank you for your question.

The Council's contractor Volker Highways was let down by a particular supplier in Q1 of this financial year which significantly affected this KPI, which is cumulative. An action plan was put in place to address this issue which has been effective.

99.6 per cent of all potholes were completed on time in Q2 and 100 per cent completed on time in Q3. Officers have continued to monitor this important metric through weekly meetings.

The Portfolio Holder 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 Ross Mackinnon asked the following supplementary question:

"Thank you, Councillor Gourley. It seems then that a reliance on one contractor, or subcontractor, has resulted in a big miss (point taken about the KPI being cumulative). Does that give a suggestion that there might be a need to strengthen how the Council managed and monitored subcontractors and contractors to make sure we can consistently deliver on residents' expectations."



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The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways answered:

Funny you should say that we are currently procuring our highways contract at the moment, which Members cross party have been involved in, and that is an area I am keen to see – supply chain resilience.

We have an excellent set of responses, and I look forward to seeing them forward to procurement, it is a focus of that procurement exercise.

It is also important to highlight at this point as well that we are one of a handful of councils in the country to receive a triple green rating in the recent Department for Transport gradings on road maintenance and conditions.
