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

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

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**Question (A)**

Council Meeting on 26 March 2026

**(A) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Capital Projects (Built Environment) by Alison May:**

*“Air and water pollution are inherently transboundary. For example West Berkshire's sewage discharges, permitted or illegal, flow downstream impacting upon communities located within the Kennet Lower Valley area, via the River Kennet's tributaries and onto the River Thames. Our neighbouring local authorities, in particular Reading, continue to be subject forms of pollutants emanating from West Berkshire. Can the council update citizens with previous and future plans of engagement with Reading Borough Council which seek to address air and water pollutions challenges?”*

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

Thank you for your question.

The Liberal Democrats have a long history of fighting for clean rivers up and down the Country. We have worked across authority, country, and national lines. But the rules and regulations about what we can make other authorities do are really quite limited.

However, we do work with Reading and Hampshire authorities a lot.

If there is anything we do together, we publish on our websites, through the JPPC. We publish our air quality monitoring, river pollution, and a whole bunch of information that is readily available. Therefore, it is difficult to pull out some specifics, but if there are specific examples that you would like us to look at, then I would be more than happy to speak to the person concerned.

Wherever possible we put our information on the Councils website and the JPPC agendas, the agendas come to this authority. It is all open to the public. If we are missing something, I would be more than happy to bring it forward as a suggestion. We are all about openness and transparency.

**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?”*

**As Alison May could not ask a supplementary, a written response would be provided.**

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

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<b>Question (B)</b>	Council Meeting on 26 March 2026
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**(B) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways by Alison May:**

*“During 2024 West Berkshire Council hosted a meeting to address the challenges and implications associated with sewerage infrastructure, both Thames Water and the Environment Agency were in attendance. Subsequent to this meeting associated challenges continue to persist. Can the Council provide a progress update on plans to convene a public meeting with Thames Water and the Environment Agency?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways provided a written response:**

Thank you for your question.

I am pleased to let you know that Thames Water and the Environment Agency will be invited to attend a meeting of the Council's Resources and Place Scrutiny meeting in September this year.

This will also be attended by West Berkshire Council Officers and will be specifically to discuss actions relating to flooding and will cover the associated impact on Sewage infrastructure. This will be a public meeting, and further information will be available of the Council's website.

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

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**Question (C)**

Council Meeting on 26 March 2026

**(C) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside by Alison May:**

*“Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) are spatial strategies for nature and environmental improvement as required by law under the Environment Act 2021. Berkshire's LNRS, which includes West Berkshire, was ratified by all Berkshire Councils resulting in the formal publication of Berkshire's LNRS on 7 October 2025. The next phase includes the implementation of the strategy to reconnect habitats and boost biodiversity. Can the Council provide a progress update on next steps?”*

**The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside provided a written response:**

As a Council, we were very pleased to work with colleagues across Berkshire to contribute to the development of the Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The Council supported the development of the final strategy and are grateful to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for their leadership of this process.

The Council will continue to support progressing the LNRS into its delivery phase and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead will remain the lead authority. Natural England convened a meeting for all the Responsible Authorities in February and have confirmed that financial support will be offered to all areas for the implementation of their LNRS. We do not yet know what amount of funding will be offered to Berkshire nor is there a public timetable for its announcement.

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<b>Question (D)</b>	Council Meeting on 26 March 2026
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***(D) Question not related to an item of business submitted to the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme by Alison May:***

*“The Council's Transformation programme is a welcome initiative providing citizens with open and transparent access as the programme progresses through defined project phases.*

*Can the Council provide details of plans to mitigate against bias when considering the inclusion or exclusion of future transformation projects?”*

**The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Corporate Programme provided a written response:**

The Council applies a consistent, transparent process to reduce the risk of bias when deciding which projects enter the Transformation Programme. All suggested proposals require an outline business case which sets out the problem to be solved, expected financial return, costs, deliverability, and risks. Using business cases as the entry point helps us test financial viability early and base decisions on evidence rather than preference or assumption.

Decisions on what to include also make use of data to reflect possible impact. This creates an evidence base across proposals and reduces the risk that anecdote or individual judgement shapes prioritisation.

A final decision on the final list of projects for inclusion will be taken collectively at Executive. The cross-party Policy Development Group will also play a role in shaping priorities and providing democratic input as the programme is developed.

Equality Impact Assessments are used where proposals involve service or policy change. EQIAs help identify whether a proposal could disproportionately affect a particular group and require mitigation. This adds another safeguard against unintentional bias.

Finally, the programme is carefully monitored by our Projects Service to ensure that stated objectives and benefits materialise. This information is also available to the Scrutiny Committee, which reduces the risk of opaque or inconsistent decision making.