

Agenda Item 19.

TITLE	Public and Member Questions
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 12 July 2016
WARD	None Specific
DIRECTOR	Andrew Moulton, Head of Governance and Improvement Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the checks and balances which ensure that the Council and its partners make and implement effective decisions for all the residents of the Borough. Questions submitted to the Executive and Council give an indication of issues of interest and concern. These issues may generate review topics for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee consider the list of questions set out at Annex A and determine whether any of the issues raised should be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2016/17.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

At its meeting on 31 May 2016, the Committee considered a report containing suggestions for improving the Overview and Scrutiny process. One of the suggestions related to the monitoring of questions submitted to the Council's Executive and Council.

Members agreed that regular monitoring reports be submitted to the Management Committee.

Background

At its meeting on 31 May 2016, the Committee considered a report containing a number of suggestions aimed at improving the Overview and Scrutiny process and developing greater public interest and involvement. One of the suggestions related to the monitoring of questions submitted to the Executive and full Council meetings.

Members and residents regularly ask questions at the Executive and Council meetings. These questions indicate areas of interest and concern and may generate ideas for Overview and Scrutiny investigation. The Committee agreed to consider regular monitoring reports on the questions submitted. This is the first monitoring report. Annex A contains details of the public and Member questions raised at the meeting of the Executive on 30 June 2016.

Analysis of Issues

Members are requested to consider Annex A and determine whether it contains issues requiring further consideration and inclusion in the Work Programme for 2016/17.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

List of Background Papers

None

Contact Neil Carr	Service Governance and Improvement Services
Telephone No 0118 974 6058	Email neil.carr@wokingham.gov.uk
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QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE - 30 JUNE 2016

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

EP1

Kevin Morgan has asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

Please can you inform me when the Northern Distributor Road link to the Reading Road will be completed?

EP2

Jan Heard has asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question:

Question

The Local Access Forum for Mid & West Berkshire is keen to understand why we were informed by WBC in 2015 that funds for a project to improve safety with a Crossing in Mole Road were being identified in 2016 with a feasibility study underway, but subsequently found that it was to be included, sometime in the future, in the Greenways project which is for 'quiet commuting and leisure', not safety.

When, why and by whom was the decision made to downgrade this issue?

EP3

Guy Grandison has asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:

Question

Due to Concerns raised from residents in the last few weeks about grass cutting, was this caused as a cost saving exercise or was it due to the changeover between the old contractors and the new?

EP4

Pamela Stubbs has asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:

Question

Barkham Parish Council had always understood that the School would be a Community School and that, out of school hours, facilities would be available for use for local residents, particularly the Sports Hall and its integral features. We understood that during the building phase the sports hall and the lecture theatre/library complex would be utilised by the school as temporary accommodation, but it is becoming evident that they are destined to remain exclusively with the school to the detriment of the local community, both the existing and the potential new residents. The sports hall, with its climbing wall could prove to be one of the best in this part of the country and the library would be a major asset to this new community. The loss of this and also the delay to the building of the swimming pool means that any community facilities will not be in place

for both new and existing residents. Indeed, they might conceivably never be returned to the Community which has funded them.

Could the Executive Member please reassure us that these facilities will be retained for the use of local residents and not remain for the exclusive use of the school pupils?

MEMBER QUESTIONS

EM1

Gary Cowan has asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question relating to the Arborfield District Centre item:

Question

I welcome the intent of this report but I cannot understand why as the Council who claim they face severe financial pressure have already signed a 3 year contract using schools capital funding which in essence is tax payers money to provide a facility they the public will be denied access to.

The report states that only the new Bohunt academy will have access to the Gym facilities at Arborfield Garrison when the school opens with no public access to the facilities until at least 2018.

EM2

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey has asked the Executive Member for Environment the following question:

Question

The report on the RE3 Waste Strategy (item 18) shows that RE3 have set a number of targets aimed at improving reuse and recycling to 50% by 2020. One of these targets is G3, which lays down a 2% increase in collected recycling/composting/reuse from 18% to 20% of total household waste and a 4% reduction in the contamination of kerbside recycling from 19% to 15%, both by 31st March 2017. The report does not include the action plan for how those two things are to be achieved. Could you please tell me what is in the action plan?

EM3

Prue Bray has asked the Executive Member for Economic Development and Finance the following question:

Question

The Executive is recommended to approve the Economic Development Strategy 2016/2021 (item 20) to go to full Council for adoption. We are pleased to see such a strategy, as the last one expired in 2013. The report says that the draft strategy has received positive feedback from a number of different local organisations and local businesses. Given that there does not appear to have been any formal consultation on the strategy with anyone, could you please tell me which local organisations and businesses were asked for their opinions?