

QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE

29 JULY 2021

PUBLIC QUESTIONS RECEIVED AFTER DESPATCH OF THE AGENDA

EP5

Lesley Doyle has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

Regarding agenda item 28 - Climate Emergency Community Deliberative Processes; Why has this document been put to Executive for approval when the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee raised a number of concerns about it that demonstrate it lacks any credibility?

EP6

Peter Major has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

Barkham Solar Farm (Agenda Item 29) Barkham Parish Council has published in their recent residents' newsletter (Barkham & Arborfield Green Village Info June/July 2021) that WBC has increased the size of the proposed Solar Farm by extending East into Rooks Nest Farm, an additional 48 hectares and from 72,000 panels to 83,000. What are the financial implications of the increased size, i.e. what are the additional "Estimated Costs / Income over 25 Years", over and above the figures given in the Executive Committee briefing for Agenda Item 29?

EP7

Andy Croy has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

The weighting method in the Council's review of local deliberative processes places more emphasis on cost and speed than it does on the potential for discussion or the variety of participants.

It also excludes any weighting given to the ability of residents to influence the scope and content of the plan. With the weighting choice employed, the report was bound to reach the conclusion that a cheap and quick way of consulting is best.

With the Climate Emergency Plan supposedly having a budget of £71m, it is astonishing that the weighting for a few thousand pounds of cost were given such importance. With no consultation at all on the measures residents were prepared to see implemented, it is even

more astonishing that these proposals only relate to the plan as it stands and do not allow meaningful additions to the plan to make the plan as good as it can be.

Leeds, Oxford and Camden Councils have all had successful Citizens' Assemblies. Why is this Council going to such lengths to rig the appraisal on consultations rather than simply opt for the most democratically legitimate and effective form of local engagement - a Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Emergency?

EP8

Helen Palmer has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

School meals are chosen by pupils from a menu produced by Caterlink on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council who manages the contract.

Could the relevant councillors and officers, please, insist on 2 small but important changes to the menu?

Firstly:

- to implement a meat-free Monday every week (currently this is 2 Mondays in 3) in all schools, whilst continuing to offer fish but no meat on Fridays.

Secondly:

- to offer a vegan choice every day. Currently vegan choices appear just 2 or 3 times a week.

For many children, school lunch is the only solid meal of the day. It needs to be nutritious and balanced.

In the past it was believed that children needed regular meat to provide protein and iron, but research shows that lentils, beans and quorn provide these and other nutrients in abundance and without saturated fat. Therefore, I am asking for a healthier menu, not an impoverished one.

It is also vital that, every day of the week, every child can select a meal which respects their ethics, religion, culture and food allergies.

Meat has a big carbon footprint. This change will make a small but significant contribution to the Borough's carbon reduction target.

MEMBER QUESTIONS RECEIVED AFTER DESPATCH OF THE AGENDA

EM3

Prue Bray has asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

Question

Given Cllr Murray's answer to a question on climate change at last week's full Council meeting in which he stated that changing people's behaviour was vital, will the Council work with the appointed school catering company to provide more meat-free menu options, and perhaps meat-free days, replacing meat with vegetarian protein to reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions?

EM4

Gary Cowan has asked the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement the following question:

Question

Page 299 Executive Summary states and I quote "On 23rd January 2020 the Council set a target to plant 250,000 new trees in the Borough as part of the Climate Emergency Action Plan. The aim of this target was to increase the amount of carbon captured by trees in the Borough".

Why was there no condition placed in the planning consent for the replacement of about 500 very mature trees given planning permission to be removed without any consultation at Bearwood Lakes as to have done so would have helped considerably to increase the amount of carbon capture as part of the Council's Climate Emergency evolving policy?

EM5

Sarah Kerr has asked the Executive Member for Resident Services, Communications and Emissions the following question:

Question

Generating renewable energy is a good thing. We must ensure though that in our quest to tackle climate change, there aren't adverse effects in other areas. This solar farm site is classed as a BMV site - Best and Most Versatile - as it falls within grades 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification. It was being used for both cattle and crops. The NPPF specifically states that if agricultural land has to be used, it should be poorer quality, which this isn't. Why is prime agricultural land being used against government advice?

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