

COUNCIL – 13 FEBRUARY 2019

[NOTE: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, Peter Bryant (Head of Democratic and Legal Services) has declared an interest in Question 2 arising from him (i) being a member of the Cards Trust, the supporters' club for Woking Football Club and (ii) providing occasional unpaid assistance to Woking Football Club, e.g. acting as Returning Officer for the election of directors. The interest does not prevent Mr Bryant from advising the Council on this matter.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, Leigh Clarke, (Finance Director) has declared an interest in Question 2 arising from her husband having a small shareholding in the Club. The interest does not prevent Mrs Clarke from advising the Council on this matter.]

QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 13 FEBRUARY 2019

The following questions have been received under Standing Order 8.1. The draft replies, which are subject to amendment, are set out below. Questions with elements that are considered to contain, or relate to, information deemed exempt are set out in a supplementary report to be considered under Part II of the agenda.

“Councillors are thanked for their questions.”

1. Question from Councillor I Johnson

“Last year, Thamesway Developments Limited, a wholly-owned Council company submitted a planning application for a 34 storey development in Church Street East, which is significant in the context of the townscape.

Does the Leader agree that

1. There appears to be a democratic deficit where councillors have no knowledge of what are effectively Council proposals, and
2. Thamesway Developments Limited should give councillors an opportunity to input into proposals at the earliest reasonable time before they are formally submitted?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“No.

The Council set up the Thamesway companies as separate legal entities, and they should operate as such.

The Council does exercise influence over the Thamesway companies. The Opposition has been offered the opportunity to be appointed to a Board but has declined. It appoints Councillor directors to the Board of Directors of each company. The Council approves annual Business Plans for each Thamesway company. Finally, any Member may have access to Board papers, and attend Board meetings, if they sign the standard non-disclosure agreement.

The Council has formally instructed Thamesway in future to both notify all Members of major Planning Applications before they are submitted to the Local Planning Authority and to engage in public consultation at the earliest opportunity.”

2. Question from Councillor D E Hughes

“Following the recent news release on the signed development agreement between GolDev, WBC and WFC

1. Could the Council please confirm that this is indeed a tripartite agreement?
2. Could the Council provide information on the nature of the agreement between WBC/ GolDev and the Football Club. Members are not party to this information, why is this?
3. Development on this site was first discussed in Council in March 2018, there are still items discussed in the confidential in part 2 of this Council which have not yet been disclosed, when are these likely to be released?
4. Are these plans now different to those proposed then?
5. Just what adjoining land will be used? Is there a threat to existing homes and properties?
6. How many residential properties are planned on this site?
7. The football club plans to include residents in the plans prior to planning application... who and in what form..
8. For some residents this news release is deeply disturbing and presents concern over their very homes. Can the Council reassure existing residents adjoining the football club that their homes are safe for the long term?”

Reply from Councillor A Azad

“Replies to the numbered parts of Councillor Hughes’ question are as follows:-

1. Five legal agreements were exchanged on 30 January 2019. Three were between the Council and GolDev Woking Limited, and two between GolDev Woking Limited and Woking Football Club Limited.
2. The legal agreements incorporate the matters agreed by Members, at Council meetings, for the development of the Kingfield Road and Egley Road sites.
3. Part II information will be released when the Proper Officer (i.e. the Monitoring Officer) decides that the reasons for it being confidential no longer apply.
4. The legal agreements are consistent with the decisions of Council. Some of these decisions have been made since March 2018, so there have been changes to the plans since that date.
5. The Kingfield Road and Egley Road sites were clearly shown on the plans appended to the public report submitted to Council on 28 July 2018. Properties within these sites will be affected by the development.
6. This will be for GolDev to consider in working up detailed proposals for the planning application.
7. This will be determined by Woking F.C.
8. Owners of properties required for the proposed development will be aware of the development proposals. Other property owners should not be concerned that their land will be required.”

3. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

“The BBC has recently filmed the first UK based version of War of the Worlds which should be on our TV screens in 2019. Sadly Woking was just a bit too modern to be used for filming. What plans are there to use the opportunity of this serialisation to promote Woking, given that HG Wells lived in Maybury when he started writing the book and the Martians landed on Horsell Common.”

Reply from Councillor C S Kemp

“I am looking forward to the series and will ensure we take advantage of any appropriate publicity. We will ensure that the series is promoted on the following twitter accounts @wellsinwoking @celebratewoking @wokingcouncil @wearewoking.

In addition, as part of our legacy from Celebrate Woking, the Wells in Woking community group now promotes all Wells events (<http://wellsinwoking.org.uk/>).

4. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

“I asked at the last Council meeting about recent closures of the Leisure Lagoon. The pool has been closed again since January. Will the pool be open in time for the upcoming half term holiday?”

Reply from Councillor C S Kemp

“The position at the Leisure Lagoon has been most disappointing. Officers and Freedom Leisure are doing all they can to get it back into operation for Half Term.”

5. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

“Given the pressure on town centre parking has the Executive looked at whether there could be any movement from town centre car parks to edge of town parking areas for any groups?”

Reply from Councillor C S Kemp

“We are continuing to consider opportunities within the town and on the edge of town to assist with parking demand during the period that the Red Car Park is rebuilt.”

6. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

This question will be dealt with under Part II of the agenda.

7. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

“What are the future plans for Woking Market?”

Reply from Councillor A Azad

“The Council now directly operates Woking Market and it has a very positive future when Victoria Square is completed. The Oversight Panel, of which Councillor Barker is a Member, has been briefed that there are short term changes to allow Victoria Square related building works at the western end of the Market and that Officers are considering further improvements for customers and stall holders that can be implemented prior to the completion of Victoria Square. As with other town centre proposals the Oversight Panel will be briefed before any works are brought forward.”

8. Question from Councillor T Aziz

“Exclusion of Martyrs Lane site from DPD

After very comprehensive and long consultations process it has been established that Martyrs Lane site is not suitable for future development.

The removal of this site from DPD has been overwhelming welcomed by residents especially the residents of Woodham and Horsell common.

Can the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder give reassurance to the residents of Woodham and Horsell common that this site will never be considered for any future development?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“No.

We cannot give that re-assurance. The Council has been clear on its decision not to safeguard the land east of Martyrs Lane for future development. However, we are also aware that there has been a number of objections to the Council’s decision during the Regulation 19 consultation of the Site Allocations DPD. The DPD process is on-going and it is likely that this matter will be considered by the Inspector of the Secretary of State as part of the DPD examination. It is important to wait for the recommendations of the Secretary of State to be able to provide such assurance.

We will also stress that paragraphs 145 and 146 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) allows certain types of development in the Green Belt if a case could be made. This can only be determined on a case by case basis through the development management process. In this regard, technically, the Council cannot say that it will **never** consider the site for **any** future development.”

9. Question from Councillor M Ali

“What changes have taken place in Victoria Square project since consultation in terms of size and number of apartments? How has the number of storeys changed?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“The Council, at Executive and Council Meetings, has formally approved changes to incorporate additional fire escape stairs post the Grenfell Fire, revised lay out of the apartments and rebuilding of the Red Car Park with additional floors to provide access directly to the Hotel and Conference facilities. No additional floors have been approved for the residential or hotel buildings.”

10. Question from Councillor M Ali

“How much has the cost of Victoria Square gone up since the original consultation?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“The Victoria Square proposals changed in scope through public consultation and engagement with business. Any attempt to compare cost with initial concepts of a substantially smaller scheme is not appropriate or possible.”

11. Question from Councillor M Ali

“How many unplanned changes have taken place in Victoria Square e.g. When the car park issues came as a surprise and how has the cost gone up due to these mismanaged changes?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“There have been no unplanned changes and no mismanagement.”

12. Question from Councillor M Ali

“Why are the properties in Sheerwater not being used rather than boarded up. People were living in there so they are liveable and will alleviate the burden. The reason for not using them was not made clear in the last meeting.”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“In April 2018 the Council stopped letting any vacant properties in the Regeneration area until the phasing of the work had been finalised and while options to accelerate the programme were being explored. All remedial and major works on voids were suspended.

Now that the revised phasing has been submitted and, although not yet approved by planning, it has been decided that voids that are not required for three years for the development would be made available for temporary lets. New Vision Homes is in the process of assessing which of those properties in those later phases are in a fit state to be brought up to a lettable standard.

The work to bring the viable ones up to standard is being programmed into the voids team’s work schedule and the properties will be released when they are ready to be let. They will be allocated in the first instance to rehouse those tenants in the earlier phases who would prefer to wait for one of the new homes in the development once built.

Six properties are due to be released in the next few days.”

13. Question from Councillor M Ali

This question will be dealt with under Part II of the agenda.

14. Question from Councillor M Ali

“A statement was made that increasing the CPZ hours will make us more safer and help businesses. Is there any backup data or study to support that was considered at the time the statement was made? Any consultation with businesses that backs up this statement?”

Reply from Councillor C S Kemp

“The statement is entirely based upon the behaviours of motorists in the town once CPZ hours end each evening. The most common features being CPZ bays occupied for the evening by the same vehicles, parking on single yellow lines and often pavement or obstructive parking in the same areas which cannot be enforced by Council Officers once the CPZ controls end.

The proposal is to extend control hours into the evening to safely manage traffic in the Town Centre and encourage a turnover of parking in CPZ bays for shorter stays with vehicles needing to park for longer directed to Town Centre car parks. The town has an increasingly vibrant evening economy and appropriate parking controls into the early evening are long overdue. Informal engagement has taken place with the local Chamber of Commerce. However, any formal consultation would take place once the traffic orders are publicly advertised.”

Date Published:

13 February 2019

REPORT ENDS

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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