

QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 23 FEBRUARY 2023

The following questions have been received under Standing Order 8.1. The draft replies, which are subject to amendment, are set out below.

“Councillors are thanked for their questions.”

1. Question from Councillor Colin Kemp

“The town buggy service is a life line for many of our most vulnerable residents and so earlier this year I questioned what impact outsourcing the grants to Foundation for Surrey would have for this service provision and was assured it would be supported. I understand the application has been refused by the Foundation. Why has this been allowed to happen and will the council now step in to support this vital service.”

Reply from Councillor Will Forster

“Although Woking Community Transport (WCT) completed an expression of interest for funding for the town centre buggy, however they did not submit a full application by the deadline. Therefore, it is not correct that the Community Foundation for Surrey (CFS) refused the application.

I have been reassured that WCT was fully aware of the grant process and deadline for the Woking Borough Council Community Fund, so I am as disappointed as Councillor Kemp that no application was submitted and the town centre buggy will not be funded by the Community Fund.

The Council will work with WCT, Woking Shopmobility and other partners to ensure local people with mobility issues are supported when visiting Woking. Woking's town centre facilities are fully compliant under the Disability Discrimination Act which requires public service providers to take reasonable steps to provide access for disabled people.

However, it is worth noting that shopping habits have fundamentally changed following the pandemic and as a result the demand for the town centre buggy has declined significantly. For example, last month the buggy was not used at all after 1.30 pm. It made a total of 172 trips across the town centre which when calculated against the monthly cost, equates to over £8 per trip across Jubilee Square.”

2. Question from Councillor Colin Kemp

“The Community bus service is used by the disabled, elderly and most vulnerable residents. Demand is continuing to grow with a further 208 Woking residents joining the service since March last year with the current membership standing at 3745 Woking residents. However, since the councils financial support was switched to a Service Level agreement the council is continuing to reduce support by 3% this year and 13% over the next three years. This is putting huge pressure on the service to increase their ticket prices for the most vulnerable users. Does the portfolio holder agree that this is hugely unfair on our most vulnerable residents and confirm what will be done to rectify this terrible situation.”

Reply from Councillor Will Forster

“Woking Community Transport is a valued local charity and the increase in membership is to be commended. The scale of the charity is also to be noted and the service supports local residents in Woking and wider residents across the County in other contractual arrangements with the County Council.

The Council has committed to funding Woking Community Transport for its services through a Service Level Agreement in order to better monitor and support the charity. Previously the charity had to submit annual funding applications to the Council but this new arrangement provides more clearer, secure and sustainable funding.

A reduction in the Community Grants budget was agreed by the Executive in Autumn 2021 and therefore there is an overall reduction in community grants this year to meet that agreement. All recipients of Service Level Agreements have themselves agreed a reduction in costs and Woking Community Transport will receive a 10% reduction, not 13%, over the next three years under current arrangements. Woking Borough Council will continue to support our local community transport provider more than any other Council in Surrey.”

3. Question from Councillor Melanie Whitehand

“In the Investment Programme Paper.. 12.1..

It states..

There are a number of initiatives that have not been included in the Investment Programme as they are not yet ready for formal consideration. These include projects at the former Robin Hood and Anchor pub sites.

My understanding from the last Full Council meeting, whereby I submitted a question on these two sites and that question was answered by Cllr Roberts was that the sites were under review. The paper says there are no formal plans for these sites. Are there informal plans that the residents of Knaphill could help shape if they are consulted on at an early stage? One of these sites is now an eyesore and to see the other site be in such a sad state is disappointing for the Village street scene so it would be helpful if the Portfolio Holder could give some steer on future plans on these two sites.”

Reply from Councillor Dale Roberts

“As set out in my answer two weeks ago, we need to carefully consider our options for these two sites given the complexities of these and the over-inflated price paid. The Council now has a strategic approach to the management of its assets and future proposals for all Council assets will be considered in the context of the Council’s strategic priorities and our wider financial challenges. There are currently no formal or informal plans for these sites.”

4. Question from Councillor Melanie Whitehand

“I recently subscribed to the Green waste collection programme.

I was advised I would be added to the list and payment was required in order for my name to be included.

I duly paid the subscription of £45, as requested. It occurred to me though that all the many customers on the waiting list have also paid their fee up front. Could the Portfolio Holder advise me as to whether this is normal practice? Because it would seem that Amey are holding some considerable funds before any service is delivered.”

Reply from Councillor Peter Graves

“Since the scheme commenced in 2009, all new garden waste subscribers pay the subscription fee upon signing up to the service. This generates an instruction for Amey to deliver the garden waste containers. To ensure that the resident receives a full years' worth of collections, the 12-month subscription commences from the date that the bin is delivered to the property, and not the date that the resident paid to join the service.”

Date Published:

23 February 2023

REPORT ENDS