

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC

Meeting: Council

Date Of Meeting: 12 December 2024

Report Author(s): Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services | frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk

Lead Officer: Frank Jeffrey, Head of Democratic Services | frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Ann-Marie Barker | Cllrann-marie.barker@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 4 December 2024

Will the decision be open for call in (i.e. is it a key decision)? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The following questions have been received from Members of Public. The individuals who raised the questions have been invited to attend the meeting. The relevant Portfolio Holder will be asked to provide a formal response.

Question 1 – Bhushan Sharma

“What are your plans going forward regarding the plot of land by the Morrisons roundabout on Goldsworth Rd (where a pub use to be, since knocked down)?”

Question 2 – Bhushan Sharma

“What is the latest plan going forward concerning the development of the triangle section of Guildford Rd (next to railway bridge) which has been mostly bulldozed and fenced off?”

Question 3 – Wade Pollard

“On what date will the Council make available to its residents the response it made to the recent NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) Consultation?”

Question 4 – Bhushan Sharma

“What is the plan going forward regarding the future of the derelict shopping zone previously occupied by Debenhams in Town centre?”

Question 5 – Andy Caulfield

“Could the Council please provide an update on matters with Woking Gymnastics Club, specifically the new lease being negotiated to allow it to submit planning permission for it's much needed expansion on the current site?”

Supporting Statement

“This matter has been ongoing for some years, which I dealt with during my time as local Cllr. I had understood earlier this year progress was being made, but understand nothing has progressed and given asset sales etc (affecting current temporary facilities), the new facilities are much needed and all legalities and formal processes need to progress urgently now.”

Question 6 – Andy Caulfield

“Thanks for reply to my question last month “Commissioners will consider the position of those named in the report and whether further action is necessary. This is reflected in the report to Council.””

“Given GT's confirmation that their report was NOT a forensic accounting/ audit exercise, therefore many matters may well require further investigation to satisfy residents, will the Council/Commissioners confirm a wider scope in their further enquiries. This should obviously include (i) key individuals at all material times in WBC, especially in leadership and statutory roles; (ii) but also failures by appointed auditors; (iii) beneficiaries of over-payments by WBC (without proper valuations); (iv) loans to private schools & (v) the whole array of issues that has led to WBC massive debt.”

Supporting Statement

“The types of issues to be investigated were set out in a non-exhaustive list in last month's question (given the limitations on words permitted) relating to WBC officers and political leadership.”

“In addition, BDO must answer for numerous years incomplete accounts (still); and the former auditors* of WBC subsidiary companies for their failures, including audits having to be restated by new auditors. [*Hamlyns LLP (company number OC339112) renamed Cooper Shrubbs Associates LLP (November 2021) - Council will recall my unresolved frustrations at both BDO and Hamlyns LLP failures through my role on WBC Audit committee repeatedly raising these issues for 2 years (2022-2024)]”

“Finally, there are many examples of people benefiting financially from over-priced acquisitions by WBC in numerous cases, which clearly need further investigation as to the circumstances (in some cases, further exacerbated with questions of either direct or family connections to WBC, at the time or historically).”

“All transactions clearly require fuller investigation to confirm or allay concerns as to why gross over-payments were made (including any potential collusion or under-hand dealings) at huge public expense leading to the current stark situation for WBC and particularly its residents.”

Question 7 – Wade Pollard

“I understand there is a delay to the signing of leases for the new library in Botanical Place in West Byfleet. Will Woking Council consider allowing Surrey County Council to sign a direct lease with the landlord and remove its involvement in the process?”

REPORT ENDS