

**QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 18 OCTOBER 2018**

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 M Ali

“The Woking Food Festival was a good event. A good choice of location too. Will the Leader consider banning smoking through the town square and event areas in future. The event attracted families and its not only injurious to health but also a safety concern for families with children e.g. a child accidentally running into a lit cigarette. So will the Leader consider a smoking ban through event premises in future.”

Reply from Councillor C S Kemp

“The Woking Food and Drink Festival is a fantastic event and has been recognised accordingly across Surrey. Yet another excellent achievement by our Officers under Conservative leadership.

I share your concern about the effects of cigarettes and will explore what we can do to prohibit smoking at future events.”

2. Question from Councillor L M N Morales

“Given the scale and number of substantial financial ventures the Council has undertaken in recent years, does the Council consider that the position of director of finance should be reinstated?”

Reply from Councillor A Azad

“The Council has an excellent Director of Finance, Leigh Clarke, who was appointed by the Council under the Statutory title of Chief Finance Officer. I am therefore extremely disappointed that a senior Member of the Opposition should ask such a question which is either naïve or malicious but in either case wholly unacceptable.”

3. Question from Councillor L M N Morales

“Assuming item 8 is passed tonight, when will the section 19 public consultation commence and how long will residents have to respond?”

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

“Assuming the recommendations of item 8 are approved by Council as recommended, the intention is to publish the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) for Regulation 19 consultation starting on 5 November 2018 for a six weeks period ending on 17 December 2018.”

4. Question from Councillor L M N Morales

“What is the longest time any current tenant, single or family, has been housed by WBC in Temporary accommodation?”

Reply from Councillor D Harlow

“A mother with two children has been in temporary accommodation since December 2013; nearly five years.

Whilst she has been offered alternative permanent accommodation she has declined.”

5. Question from Councillor L M N Morales

“Does the Leader think it is appropriate that WBC houses new born babies and their families in temporary accommodation with rats and visible damp?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“No.”

6. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

“How much has been spent in the original set up and maintenance of HG Wells over the last 23 years and what costs will be able to be recouped when the lease ends?”

Reply from Councillor K M Davis

“The original development of the former Asda store was some £17m; this included the provision of HG Wells. Over the last 23 years Investment Programme projects specifically relating to the HG Wells of some £1.3 million have been undertaken. In addition Rent, Service Charge and repair and maintenance expenditure has been incurred; the current annual net cost of £479,000 will be saved when the lease ends in March 2020.

No costs will be recovered at the end of the lease because that is not how business leases work. However revised arrangements were agreed with the Landlord which means the Council will not be liable to pay for dilapidations or reinstatement which would otherwise have cost several million pounds.

New facilities for business and the community will be provided at the Victoria Square Hilton Hotel. The Portfolio Holder for Leisure is currently reviewing the needs of local community groups for music and concert activities and will be reporting to the Executive later in the year.”

7. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

“Why did the Council stop the ice cream van from selling its wares in Woking Park?”

Reply from Councillor C S Kemp

“The operator of the ice cream van that was formerly renting space in Woking Park was unsuccessful in the tender exercise for the new kiosk but was offered alternative locations.”

8. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

“What preparatory work has been done by officers to assess the impact of BREXIT on our local area?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“Officers have prudently assessed and taken action, with Victoria Square, to protect the project from the risk of Exchange Rate fluctuations by fixing the Euro price at the contract level. Consideration has been given to major contract supply chains and wherever practical UK supplies have been secured. Where it has been necessary to secure supplies from the EU, particularly for Victoria Square, the suppliers have been requested to secure alternative routes for delivery, or early delivery, to minimise the risk of delay to the project.

More generally the other major risk is availability of labour but given both UK and EU Government statements about the ability for EU citizens in work to remain this risk is considered low.

The greatest risk considered by Officers is the danger that the EU exit date is used by some to justify making no decisions about investment activity considered vital to the future of the Borough. We have our destiny in our hands and this Conservative led administration will continue to make decisions in the interests of the residents of the Borough and not be distracted by speculation about what might happen after 29 March 2019.”

9. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

“As a Which report published this week shows 50% of Woking trains were delayed in the first 9 months of 2018 will the Leader write to Southwestern Railway and Network Rail asking what they are doing to improve on this dreadful performance in future?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“Yes.”

10. Question from Councillor J E Bond

“Site Allocation Development Plan (Item 8) - Responses

Is there a breakdown of the number of responses by Ward?”

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

“No.”

11. Question from Councillor J E Bond

“Site Allocation Development Plan (Item 8) – Urban Study

The Brett study was an independent external report which concentrated solely on Green Belt sites, has there been a similar study of urban sites?”

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

“Yes. The Council has carried out a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to identify suitable, deliverable and developable housing sites in the urban area. However, the study has been carried out in-house because Officers have a proven expertise to undertake the study.”

12. Question from Councillor J E Bond

“Site Allocation Development Plan (Item 8) - Forecasts

As stated in the report, the government’s housing requirement has been reduced fairly recently and more reductions are likely, but no change has been made to Woking Core Plan. If the requirement had increased it seems certain that the Core Plan would have reflected this increase, is it valid and defensible to ignore a decrease?”

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

“Yes, it is defensible to continue to deliver the Core Strategy housing requirement of 292 dwellings per year. The Office for National Statistics has recently published the revised 2016 household projections. By using the revised projections to calculate the objectively assessed housing need for the Borough based on the Government’s standard method for calculating housing need, Officers estimate of the need is 266 dwellings per year as against the 409 per year figure previously published by the Government based on the 2014 household projections (please note that others have estimated the need figure to be 263). The Government has said that the housing need figure calculated by using the standard method should be the minimum to be provided. If the Council were to apply a 5% buffer to the figure as encouraged, the figure would be 279 dwellings per year. Given that the 266 dwellings per year is marginally lower than

the current Core Strategy requirement of 292 dwellings per year and the figure is supposed to be the minimum to be provided, Council is advised to continue with the 292 requirement. If Council is minded to recommend a change of the housing requirement, it will have to be done through a formal modification of the Core Strategy, and it is highly likely that the requirement could rather go up by the time the review of the Core Strategy is complete.

The 266 dwellings per year figure is more likely to go up rather than down as suggested by Councillor Bond. The Government's Chief Planner (Steve Quartermain) has said in his September 2018 letter to local planning authorities 'we noted that the revised population projections are likely to lead to the minimum need numbers generated by the method being subject to a significant reduction, once the relevant household projection figures are released. We will consider adjusting the method after the household projections are released'. This was said in the context of seeking to increase the amount of housing to be delivered to enable the Government to meet its target of 300,000 dwellings per year."

13. Question from Councillor J E Bond

"Site Allocation Development Plan (Item 8) - Concentration

This new plan has a high concentration of development in the Byfleet and West Byfleet area. This area is already over developed with severe traffic and flooding problems, has sufficient consideration been given to the cumulative effect of the suggested developments?"

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

"Yes, due regard has been given to the cumulative impacts of development in Byfleet and West Byfleet. The impacts of the proposals have individually and cumulatively been assessed. For example, the Council has undertaken a Transport Assessment and a Flood Risk Assessment of the proposals in the draft Site Allocations DPD. The Council has also undertaken a study to identify measures of mitigation along the A245 corridor. With appropriate measures of mitigation as set out in the key requirements for each proposal, the sites can be sustainably developed."

14. Question from Councillor J E Bond

"Site Allocation Development Plan (Item 8) – West Byfleet Playing Fields

The Plan states that "This land will not be developed" even though it is being removed from the Green Belt. How absolute and long lasting is this commitment?"

Reply from Councillor A C L Bowes

"The site is proposed to be removed from the Green Belt and be designated as an urban open space to serve the local community. The removal of the site from the Green Belt will enable a defensible boundary of the Green Belt to be drawn."

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REPORT ENDS