

**QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL – 20 MAY 2019**

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 D E Hughes

“Earlier this week over 400 residents in the Hoe Valley submitted a petition asking for assurance that their application for designation of the forum and area be on the agenda of the July’s Council meeting or earlier.

This petition was not accepted on procedural grounds, but the question remains. Will the Council assure residents in the Hoe Valley that the Hoe Valley Neighbourhood forum (HVNF) will get a fair hearing no later than the July 25<sup>th</sup> Council meeting?”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“I can assure you that all effort is being made by Officers to report to the 25 July meeting of Council. Agenda papers for Council are confirmed when they are published. The Council has already committed to write to every household within the proposed Neighbourhood Area to notify them of the date when it is confirmed. I can also assure you that the application will have a fair hearing when it is considered.”

2. Question from Councillor D E Hughes

“We were expecting the HVNF to be presented at the April 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, but this was removed from the agenda at the last minute with no consultation with the ward councillors or the chair of the forum. To date we have not been made aware of the reasons for this and what are the issues that have required further investigation. Please can these be disclosed.”

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

“I do not accept that Councillor Hughes has not been made aware of the reason for the matter being on the 4<sup>th</sup> April Council Agenda because the then Portfolio Holder, Ashley Bowes explained the reasons to her in an email date 30 March 2019.”

3. Question from Councillor D E Hughes

“Like all councillors recently we have been doing a lot of knocking on doors. One of the questions we are asked repeatedly is about the secrecy surrounding the proposed Westfield/ football Club development. As councillors we are party to information given to us in part 2 (confidential) part of council going back as far as March 2018. When will these details be disclosed?

We understand that the agreement between GolDev, the Council and the Football Club has been signed. When will the substance of this become public knowledge?”

Reply from Councillor A Azad

“I do not agree that the proposed football club development has been surrounded by secrecy.

The Council has issued three press releases at key stages of the process. The first was issued on 10 April 2018, the last on 5 February 2019. In addition, the Leader of the Council ensured that a Part I public report was presented to Council on 26 July 2018. This included details of the proposed development.

As is the case with transactions of this nature, a small amount of detailed information remains commercially confidential. As advised in my reply to Councillor Hughes' Question put at the Council meeting on 13 February 2019, this will be released when the Proper Officer (i.e. the Monitoring Officer) decides that the reasons for it being confidential no longer apply."

4. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

"Conservative party election material announced that the purchase of two fields adjoining West Byfleet Recreation Ground had been agreed by Cllr Bittleston. Can Cllr Bittleston tell us:

- a) Exactly which land he has agreed to purchase
- b) Under what authority this purchase was agreed
- c) The cost to the Council of the land to be purchased
- d) How this land purchase will be financed"

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

"I had reached an agreement with the Leader of Surrey County Council and made that statement which reflected that aspiration in good faith. However, subsequent due diligence meant that it has not been possible to conclude the acquisition."

5. Question from Councillor A-M Barker

"Residents were very upset to see the locally listed Robin Hood pub building burn down on Sunday 12 May. How will this affect future development plans for the site?"

Reply from Councillor D J Bittleston

"The site is owned by Rutland Woking and the company has made the following statement;

"The fire is being treated by the police and fire brigade as deliberate arson and the site remains a crime scene with officers present 24 hours a day. Investigations continue but two local youths have been arrested.

There is a concern that someone may have been lost in the fire and as the remnants of the building are unsafe, steps are being taken to agree, at the request of Surrey Police, a method statement with emergency services, structural engineers, and WBC's Chief Building Control Officer that will enable outward demolition of the structure and careful removal of the internal rubble to establish the presence or otherwise of a body without further endangering life enabling the police to stand down as soon as possible.

Whilst the plans for the site remain unaltered; a depot for the Community Bus Service, financed by enabling residential development above, this unfortunate turn of events will result in additional costs and impact the financial appraisal."

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REPORT ENDS