

Unanswered Member Questions from Full Council
Monday 6 October 2014

Written answers despatched under Standing Order 11.11

9. Question from Councillor M Hanif the Leader of the Council

Can you please inform us about the key performance indicators and measures used to assess the WDC's performance with the service delivery to its local residents and how does the current year progress compare with the year 2012 and 2013?

We published our Annual Report in June this year, summarising the Council's performance and this is freely available on our website, along with previous years.

I would also point out that my Cabinet reviews service performance regularly throughout the year and the 2013/14 year end position was considered on the 16 June. The key external performance measures for the year related to:

- Wycombe Sports Centre
- Museum
- Waste
- Homelessness
- Major planning applications

I cannot do justice to the many year-on-year service improvements we have delivered within the 3 minutes so will highlight a couple of areas of significant improvement. The first one relates to waste recycling. In 2013/14 we recycled or composted 47.9% of all household waste we collected, which is a huge increase from 39.1% in 2012/13. The second example is regarding homelessness, where we have helped 392 people from becoming homeless through our preventative work, well above our target of 300 for the year.

Our financial challenges means we need to continue to closely review all our services, not just for performance, but looking to the future with a view to ensuring value-for-money services are provided wherever we can but not always necessarily by ourselves. An excellent example of this is the lease of thirteen woodlands to the newly formed Community Interest Company (CIC), Chiltern Rangers. The new CIC continues to provide a range of woodland management services across Wycombe district, whereas previously this was done directly by the Council.

I finish by saying that this has all been achieved, along with many other improvements, with no increase in council tax for the current year.

10. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability

At the meeting of Bucks County Council on 18th September the Cabinet Member for Transport stated that “there is continuing monitoring of junction 3 on the M40” in relation to the safety of this junction. Do you share her concerns about the safety of the existing junction 3 and would you support a full study into the opening up of this junction as an unrestricted interchange?

The Highways Agency (HA) is responsible for the safe operation of the motorway network and its monitoring, so it is not clear what the role of the County Council (as local highway authority) is in monitoring, unless the Cabinet Member was referring to the local highway network connections to junction 3. Any alteration to the motorway network in terms of adding slips or new junctions would have to satisfy any safety concerns of the HA. In previous discussions with the HA they have discouraged the completion of the existing junction 3 by adding west-facing slips. Not only would it present a significant engineering challenge, because of the lie of the land, traffic (including HGV) would join the westbound carriageway on an uphill gradient which in itself presents a risk to safety. A crawler lane could be added (like the London-bound side) but it would significantly increase any land take, cutting into the ancient woodland of Fennells Wood, and potentially taking land from Flackwell Heath Golf Club.

11. Question from Councillor B Pollock to the Leader of the Council

At the Cabinet meeting on 22nd September it was reported that in the Financial Year 2014-5 there is a projected likely underspend of £850,000. Would the Leader agree with me that one of the most useful expenditures members can make is that within their ward budgets and will he therefore undertake to recommend that, should a surplus remain at the end of the financial year, ward budgets should be doubled for 2015-6 as a one off decision?

In 2013/14 the Council recorded a large surplus, which was largely due to one-off factors which are not anticipated to recur in 2014/15. This has provided an opportunity to invest in key strategic priorities. In September Cabinet received a budget report for the first quarter, indicating a projected underspend. It is important to understand at this early stage in the year this is only an initial projection and the position will change before the end of the financial year. As members know there is significant uncertainty over local government funding and rising pressures and it would be wrong in light of these to make any commitments about how any potential surplus might be used.

12. Question from Councillor R Colomb to the Cabinet Member for Environment

The inability to maintain revenue from car parks during their conversion to ANPR is concerning. The period when free parking was available was over a week in Liston Street, Marlow. Could the Cabinet Member advise the total number of days free parking available in all car parks converted and an estimate of the loss of revenue?

The total number of days when parking was free in the car parks where ANPR has been rolled out was 195 days. The majority of this time relates to Central car park in Marlow (40 days), the rear Council offices car park (57 days) and Kingsmead (17 days). In many car parks there was no down time

Based on September's actual income per day by car park, the loss in income is estimated to be approximately £39,000.