

WYCOMBE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday 23 February 2017

AGENDA ITEM

Questions from Members

1. Question from Councillor R Raja to the Leader of the Council.

WDC, at its meeting on 16 January 2017, opted for a two unitary authority model for Buckinghamshire. The draft proposals are peppered with plenty of 'sales talk' but no mention of the gap in educational achievement between the children from well off families and those from economically disadvantaged groups, or how the road infrastructure is to be made fit for purpose or indeed about housing or social care.

Would the Leader tell us how and where she believes the new unitary authority will prioritise to raise the quality of core services?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

2. Question from Councillor M Knight to the Leader of the Council.

In recent years the dominant service delivery model for both Wycombe District Council and our neighbouring district councils has been that of outsourcing services to external agencies. This model has clearly delivered savings although whether it has always resulted in service improvements is less clear.

According to the Modernising Local Government document it appears that this approach would continue to be favoured. Additionally the Labour motion at the last meeting of full council, which was supported by your group, specified the desire for a new unitary authority to deliver only "statutory" services.

Can you confirm that services such as adult social care and children's services are at risk of outsourcing, and that non-statutory services will cease to be a priority within the proposed local government structure?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

3. Question from Councillor B Pearce to the Cabinet Member for Environment.

Does the member responsible for the environment agree with me that the attitude of the crews on the waste disposal vehicles is counter-productive by their ridiculous attitude of basically sorting out what is in the bins at the roadside, removing items, throwing them onto the grass verge, surely this can be sorted out at the relevant recycling facility because I am convinced that sometimes a member of the public walking by the bin must chuck in

an ordinary bit of litter, also refusing to take green bins unless there is nothing in any way overhanging.

Do you agree with me that this can alienate residents, and is counter-productive when we are all trying to make an effort and do our bit to save the environment?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Mrs J Teesdale (Cabinet Member for Environment).

4. Question from Councillor M Hanif to the Cabinet Member for Housing.

After perennial failure and countless announcements, the housing crisis is getting worse. The Secretary of State, has admitted that the housing market is broken and local councils and developers need to "get real" to the scale of the challenge we are facing. I am sure that the cabinet member will agree with the Secretary of state and accept that this is the biggest social issue we are facing today, which cannot be left to fester. She will also share my views that this council has failed young people for not having sufficiently robust policies to get the young on to the housing ladder and into affordable rented homes.

In view of the current situation what is planned by WDC to address the problem highlighted by the Secretary of State?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Mrs J Langley (Cabinet Member for Housing).

5. Question from Councillor S Graham to the Leader of the Council.

Can the Leader of the Council tell, me how much money Bucks. County owes to Wycombe District Council for works to be carried out as part of the improvement to our High Street, and if money is owed, when will the work commence?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

6. Question from Councillor K Ahmed to the Leader of the Council.

The ANPR system has cost the taxpayers of Wycombe around £1.28 million, if one includes the cost of the system, damage and theft from machines due to vandalism, judicial review costs and costs associated with reverting back to pay display, but excluding the loss of £500,000 due to poor forecasting.

The fact that WDC installed a system which has failed to perform as intended begs the question as to why no due diligence appears to have been undertaken.

Rather than extolling the virtues of the system would the leader not agree that the basic homework was not done and as a result the people of Wycombe have been short changed and is it not time that she came clean and accepted her own party's culpability in this fiasco?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

7. Question from Councillor Ms A Baughan to the Cabinet Member for Environment.

In the Swan and Easton Street Multi Storey Car park, over the last few months there have been speakers installed playing music. The volume is variable. I would be interested to know the purpose and cost for this scheme?

It has attracted both positive and negative comments on social media, although for children and adults with processing disorders I do believe it does cause some distress and discomfort.

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Mrs J Teesdale (Cabinet Member for Environment).

8. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Cabinet Member for Housing.

What is the expenditure on bed and breakfast in the year to date?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Mrs J Langley (Cabinet Member for Housing).

9. Question from Councillor M Knight to the Leader of the Council.

All district councillors of the wards of the unparished area of the Wycombe District are also required to be Charter Trustees, an ancient part of High Wycombe's heritage.

Charter Trustees set a precept to cover the costs of their activities and in doing so receive public funds. Despite this the Charter Trustees operate outside of the council's standards regime and are not bound by the same code of conduct which govern their activities as Wycombe District Councillors.

Is it right that the Charter Trustees receive public funds, collected and disbursed by this council, when there is little opportunity for them to be held to account?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).

10. Question from Councillor M Hanif to the Cabinet Member for Environment.

Following the release of a list of 60 restaurants with the worst hygiene ratings by the Bucks Free Press last week, a local business owner feared that their Bourne End business would go bust after a paperwork error left the eatery with a poor hygiene rating and was forced to wait months before a re-inspection.

My concern is for many other local restaurants that may fall in the same category and experience a negative impact on their businesses as a result. Why is WDC not as efficient as our sister organisation the Chiltern District Council, who are far more responsive and caring, when it comes to supporting the local businesses?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Mrs J Teesdale (Cabinet Member for Environment).

11. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Cabinet Member for Planning.

What progress has been made with Network Rail on the refurbishment of the Brunel Shed?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor R Wilson (Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Regeneration) in place of Councillor D Johncock (Cabinet Member for Planning).

12. Question from Councillor M Knight to the Cabinet Member for Environment.

Could you report to us the levels of air pollution in the London Road A40 corridor in the last year and indicate whether this shows a deterioration or improvement and whether these levels are within an acceptable range?

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Mrs J Teesdale (Cabinet Member for Environment).

13. Question from Councillor Ms J Wassell to the Leader of the Council.

Could the Leader of the Council, in view of the rise in crime rate and its nature, confirm that the Council will be giving more money to the voluntary sector which supports victims of crime?

Women's Aid and Rape Crisis for example are facing increasing demand.

Verbal reply to be given by Councillor Ms K Wood (Leader of the Council).