



COUNCIL

TUESDAY, 23RD FEBRUARY, 2021

At 6.15 pm

in a

VIRTUAL MEETING - ONLINE ACCESS,

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

PART I

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>PAGE NO</u>
5.	<u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u> Written responses	3 - 8

This page is intentionally left blank

Written responses to Public Questions

a) Ed Wilson of Clewer and Dedworth West ward will ask the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:

If RBWM want to increase their reserves beyond those required to deal with its residual risks could this not be achieved through deferring loan repayments to HM Treasury et al rather than reducing services to residents?

Written response: Any deferral of loan payments would have to be by agreement with HM Treasury which we do not believe is possible according to their terms and conditions of loans. Even if we were to secure agreement, according to the lending terms of the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) any late payments are potentially liable for interest payments from the date they are due and therefore this would add to our revenue costs overall. This would therefore not be prudent and in fact achieves the converse impact to the one that is trying to be achieved.

b) Sharon Bunce of St Mary's ward will ask the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

Budget Saving #49 will cut £200k from supported living packages. How many adult residents with Learning Disabilities are in supported living within the Borough vs outside the Borough and how many are waiting for a supported living place?

Written response: The savings proposed in adult social care are aligned with the already published adult social care transformation strategy, which was unanimously agreed through the cross-functional Health and Well-being Board and with NHS colleagues, and which is being implemented within the context of the Care Act and the core purpose of adult care and support is to help people to achieve the outcomes that matter to them in their life. The saving proposed is based on a full analysis of those packages to determine the appropriate level of need and funding required. They are not cuts but savings as part of transformation. The council will continue to meet its statutory responsibilities to meet people's assessed and eligible care needs, whilst embracing best practice and emerging evidence on how best to deliver services. Overall, the council is spending more on adult social care in future so whilst there are some savings from existing packages, there is also funding to pay for increased packages if that is what the assessed need is. There are 85 residents with learning disabilities in supported living accommodation, 68 in the Royal Borough and 17 outside of the borough. At the current time, there is no one in immediate need of a placement.

c) Sharon Bunce of St Mary's ward will ask the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

Budget Saving #50 will cut £200k from community / home care packages. How many adult residents with Learning Disabilities currently have a community / home care package and how many are waiting to be assessed for such a package?

Written response: *The savings proposed in adult social care are aligned with the already published adult social care transformation strategy, which was unanimously agreed through the cross-functional Health and Well-being Board and with NHS colleagues, and which is being implemented within the context of the Care Act and the core purpose of adult care and support is to help people to achieve the outcomes that matter to them in their life. The saving proposed is based on a full analysis of those packages to determine the appropriate level of need and funding required. They are not cuts but savings as part of transformation. The council will continue to meet its statutory responsibilities to meet people's assessed and eligible care needs, whilst embracing best practice and emerging evidence on how best to deliver services. Overall, the council is spending more on adult social care in future so whilst there are some savings from existing packages, there is also funding to pay for increased packages if that is what the assessed need is. There are 68 residents with learning disabilities with community/homecare packages, 54 in the Royal Borough and 14 outside of the borough. At the current time, there is no one in immediate need of a placement.*

d) Lisa Hughes of Furze Platt ward will ask the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

Budget Saving #47 halves the spend on Day Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities: Only one English council ranks lower than RBWM in the NHS Digital Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework measure for the percentage of adult social care users who have the amount of social contact they would like. How will RBWM ensure this doesn't worsen?

Written response: *The council currently spends £2.3m on day and other care for people with learning disabilities so the saving represents just over 10% of the total spend. We will continue to meet the needs of all clients who have been assessed as requiring day service support; however, the proposal in relation to the day centres is part of a wider programme to transform the day opportunities offer in the borough. Our aim is to ensure that there are things on offer that appeal to everyone and meet their individual needs, not a one size fits all approach. This is an imperative emerging evidence and independent best practice is encouraging. The only choice that people currently have is to go to a day centre or not go – we want people to have more choices than that. Feedback from clients over the last 12 months has shown that many users of our day services are interested in accessing a wider range of activities, including the opportunity to learn new skills and have new experiences. The new Community Lives day service programme incorporates a blend of traditional services and alternative offers, including an Out and About service which will offer customers a wide range of stimulating new activities as soon as it is safe to do so. We will match the service offer for each customer to their particular needs. We absolutely recognise that there will be a need for some people to have building based services and where*

needed, that will be provided but on a smaller scale as many of the people currently using the day centres do not need to be building based. What is recognised nationally is that a blend of building-based services, community opportunities including volunteering and leisure, along with direct payments for people who want them, is considered best practice and through our transformed offer, we expect to significantly improve the percentage of adult social care users who have the amount of social contact they would like.

e) Lisa Hughes of Furze Platt ward will ask the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

Budget Saving #48 will cut £200k from residential care for adults with Learning Disabilities: How many Adults with Learning Disabilities have a residential care place in the Borough vs outside the Borough and how many are waiting for a place?

Written response: The savings proposed in adult social care are aligned with the already published adult social care transformation strategy, which was unanimously agreed through the cross-functional Health and Well-being Board and with NHS colleagues, and which is being implemented within the context of the Care Act and the core purpose of adult care and support is to help people to achieve the outcomes that matter to them in their life. The saving proposed is based on a full analysis of those packages to determine the appropriate level of need and funding required. They are not cuts but savings as part of transformation. The council will continue to meet its statutory responsibilities to meet people's assessed and eligible care needs, whilst embracing best practice and emerging evidence on how best to deliver services. Overall, the council is spending more on adult social care in future so whilst there are some savings from existing packages, there is also funding to pay for increased packages if that is what the assessed need is. There are 58 residents with learning disabilities in residential placements, 11 in the Royal Borough and 47 outside of the borough. At the current time, there is no one in immediate need of a placement.

f) Andrew Hill of Boyn Hill ward will ask the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:

Given the admission by RBWM that the CTRS consultation was unlawful (CO/1251/2020), why wasn't a public paper brought to Cabinet or Council under paragraph 7.2(b) of the Part 5 Scheme of Delegation to Officers, **before the reconsultation**, informing Members and the public of this unlawful act, in order to scrutinise and inform the reconsultation process?

Written response: There was no requirement for the Monitoring Officer to prepare a report because the decision of Full Council made on 25 February 2020 had already been implemented (Council Tax Bills were issued 11 – 13 March 2020) and the Council was subsequently bound by the Consent Order dated 9 July 2020.

g) Andrew Hill of Boyn Hill ward will ask the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:

Why has RBWM continued to take the elevated sum (20%) from CTRS recipients, after admitting that the necessary **statutory precondition** for changing the taxation rate - namely, a lawful mandatory consultation by March 11th 2020 - was in fact unmet?

Written response: *The decision of Full Council made on 25 February 2020 had already been implemented and Council Tax Bills had already been issued. The Consent Order did not quash the decision of Full Council and it did not require the fresh consultation and subsequent re-making of the decision to be carried out within a particular timescale.*

The cost of a re-billing exercise in year would be in excess of £50k.

h) Alan Gass of Eton and Castle ward will ask the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council:

How many people:

a) in receipt of CTRS benefit and

b) not in receipt of CTRS benefits

were posted a full paper copy of the consultation including the questions and associated explanatory information?

Written response: *One copy was requested; the person requesting the full paper copy declined to confirm whether they were or were not in receipt of CTRS benefits.*

i) Alan Gass of Eton and Castle ward will ask the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council:

Why did RBWM not post a complete paper copy of the consultation including the questions and associated explanatory information to all recipients of CTRS benefits?

Written response: *There was no legal requirement to post a complete paper copy of the consultation. Please see Paragraph 8 of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme report for further details of the various methods used in promotion of the consultation.*

j) Craig McDermott of Riverside ward will ask the following question of Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance and Ascot:

In what way do the budget proposals meet the demands of the council's Environment and Climate Strategy and will they change to reflect the fact that, to avoid climate and environmental catastrophe, the borough will need to reach zero carbon emissions by 2030, as recognised by Slough Council, Wokingham Council and numerous other administrations around the globe?

Written response: *When the Environment and Climate Strategy was approved by Cabinet in December 2020 it was made clear that it would be delivered across the council and could only be achieved if everyone worked together from individual*

residents, to businesses, community groups, as well as external organisations and central government.

Therefore, delivery of the strategy is spread across both our revenue and capital budgets. Some examples include changing the way that waste is collected to help increase recycling rates and supporting investment in digital and transport infrastructure to reduce emissions from transport. We have secured external funding to reduce carbon emissions and energy use from our own estate, investigating alternative approaches to providing heat and will be showing leadership in reducing single use plastics from the council's own activities.

We are committed to the borough being net zero by 2050 at the latest with a credible plan to reduce emissions. The advice prepared by the Climate Change Committee to Government in May 2019 indicated that whilst some sectors could be net zero before 2050, for most sectors the earliest credible date would be 2050. We will continue to review the science and technical advice to make sure that our targets are ambitious and credible.

Our strategy adopts a trajectory of carbon emissions reductions developed by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research. The approach is derived from the commitments within the Paris Agreement, informed by the latest science on climate change. This will accelerate reductions in carbon emissions with a 50% reduction by 2025 and 75% by 2030 and 94% reduction by 2040.

k) Mike Copland of Bisham and Cookham ward will ask the following question of Councillor Stimson, Lead Member for Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside:

Under the proposed budget proposals, will the overall number of Tree officers be maintained, and will the overall number of Planning officers be maintained? This is important to clarify in light of the increasing number of tree-related applications coming forward and the nature of consents required combined with the Council's stated policy to sustain the tree cover.

Written response: *The proposal is to reshape the service to deliver efficiency savings and focus on high priority work. As set out within appendix 1 of the budget report on the agenda, delivery of the saving would involve a reduction in posts.*

l) Mike Copland of Bisham and Cookham ward will ask the following question of Councillor Stimson, Lead Member for Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside:

What steps are being taken, in line with the Council's Environment and Climate Strategy, to accelerate specific arboricultural as well as ecology training of Planning officers who, following these cuts, would be responsible for caring for our trees?

Written response: *The responsibility for trees within the borough is currently shared by a number of services, teams and officers, including planning officers, who work collaboratively to deliver outcomes and the proposals would not alter these existing responsibilities. A significant number of planning officers have already attended*

training courses and webinars in relation to the habitat regulations, ecological issues and biodiversity net gain in the autumn of 2020. Planning officers currently work collaboratively with the trees team to deliver the right outcomes and the proposal would not change this, however if a need for additional training is identified it will be provided.