

# COUNCIL

TUESDAY, 26TH APRIL, 2022

At 7.00 pm

in the

COUNCIL CHAMBER - TOWN HALL, MAIDENHEAD,

## SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

### PART I

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>PAGE NO</u>
5.	<u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u> Written responses	3 - 10

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**a) Ed Wilson of Clewer and Dedworth West ward will ask the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, Parks & Countryside & Maidenhead:**

Will the Lead Member advise what steps are being taken to make sure RBWM cemeteries are properly maintained?

Written response: *Work is ongoing with the service provider to ensure they have the correct resources and equipment to deliver the services outlined in the grounds maintenance contract. Regular contract monitoring is carried out, with joint inspections of sites in the borough, including cemeteries included in the contract management, to ensure that work is delivered to the correct standard and that key performance indicators are met. Additional staff have been employed on the contract to make sure that the work is completed.*

**b) Ed Wilson of Clewer and Dedworth West ward will ask the following question of Councillor McWilliams, Cabinet Member for Digital Connectivity, Housing Opportunity, & Sport & Leisure:**

It's nearly a year since RBWM purchased Cedar Tree Guest House in Windsor for temporary accommodation. What progress has been made in creating this new facility?

Written response: *Thank you for your question, Mr Wilson. The council took the decision originally to acquire the property, Cedar Tree Guest House, in order to create eight individual units to enable us to discharge people from temporary accommodation into affordable homes and a planning application to that effect has been submitted.*

*However, with the substantial increase in construction costs over recent months and changes to building regulations, we are currently reviewing those proposals to ensure that the plans still represent value for money. The outcome of the review will be coming before Cabinet in May 2022 for a decision.*

**c) Sarah Walker of Clewer East ward will ask the following question of Councillor Rayner, Cabinet Member for Business, Corporate & Residents Services, Culture & Heritage, & Windsor:**

How is the efficiency of the RBWM 'Report it' system measured across the Borough? Please could the performance levels be reported to residents on a regular basis in order to indicate the service levels provided in terms of issues raised, issues resolved and speed of resolution.

Written response: *Thank you for the question regarding the efficiency and performance of the Report it function. We agree that it would be helpful to publish data on the resolution of issues raised through the Report it system, in order to increase transparency about the effectiveness of the tool, and to give confidence to residents, that their reports will result in timely action.*

*Reports submitted to the Report It system are sent to individual services for action, in line with the issue raised in the report. The responses are currently tracked by each service individually, as part of internal case record management (CRM) systems. However, as part of the new Citizen's Portal and wider Corporate Plan performance management, the council is working to collate information from services on the issues raised and their resolution, to provide overall data on the performance of the Report It system. This information will then be shared publicly on the Citizen's Portal on a regular basis going forwards.*

**d) Sarah Walker of Clewer East ward will ask the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, Parks & Countryside & Maidenhead:**

Are you fully satisfied that previous issues with ongoing contracts such as grass cutting and refuse collection are now resolved and that contracts are being well managed and monitored by RBWM? What process is in place to ensure service levels to residents will not drop again, particularly in light of the proposed Council Tax increase?

*Written response: Yes. The refuse collection contract is running to a high standard with a very low number of missed collections. In March there were only 19.26 missed collections per 100,000 collections, against a target of 60 per 100,000. This is now a high performing contract. Regular contract meetings are held with the contractors to ensure the service is running well. Discussions continue with the grounds maintenance service provider to ensure they have the correct resources and equipment to deliver the services outlined in the grounds maintenance contract. Regular contract monitoring is carried out, with joint inspections of sites in the borough included in the contract management, to ensure that work is delivered to the correct standard and that key performance indicators are met. Additional staff have been employed on the contract to make sure that the work is completed.*

**e) Mohammed Ilyas of Belmont ward will ask the following question of Councillor Carroll, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health, Mental Health, Children's Services and Transformation:**

The NHS has done a fantastic job and continues to do so during this very tough pandemic. St Mark's is a key local NHS site and residents are keen to understand more the NHS plans. Will the Cabinet Member and Leader of the Council with NHS leaders agree to meet with me to discuss this policy imperative further?

*Written response: Thank you, Mr Ilyas, for your question. I wholeheartedly agree that the NHS has done, and continues to do, a fantastic job in this pandemic. Of course, the pandemic has presented unique challenges in terms of site locations and delivery of some services with patient safety and infectious disease control being paramount. As the Cabinet Member and Leader of the Council, we are here to serve all residents in the borough. I am happy to meet to discuss any specific concerns relating to wider health policy. Please be assured that I regularly meet with senior NHS leaders and I have impressed upon them that St Marks remains a key site for now and for the future. I am confident that they will come forward and share their plans for the site with all residents at the appropriate time.*

**f) Hari Sharma of Furze Platt ward will ask the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council:**

I believe that Council's budget shows a clear, strong and responsible framework, with prudent and smart management of its finances. However, the suffocating influence of inflation, supply chain disruption, Russia's invasion on Ukraine, legacy of COVID and Brexit leaving great exposure to economic shocks.

Has Council got sound finances and sufficient reserves to face unexpected challenges in the coming year?

Written response (from Cllr Hilton, Cabinet Member for Asset Management & Commercialisation, Finance, & Ascot): *The 2022/23 budget anticipated a large increase in inflation from the lower levels of recent years. An inflation rate of 4.8% was used in budget assumptions, with much larger increases in areas such as energy where significant increases were already expected. In addition, an inflation rate for each major contract was also calculated. Any further increases will be managed by setting aside money in a specific earmarked reserve as we close the 2021/22 accounts. Sufficient funds will be available. The 2022/23 budget also includes over £1 million of funding to offset income losses in car parking and leisure centres due to the continuing effects of Covid-19. Income in both areas is now recovering steadily and I do not expect any further funding to be required.*

**g) Hari Sharma of Furze Platt ward will ask the following question of Councillor Carroll, Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Children Services, Mental Health and Transformation:**

Mental Health problems don't define who you are, but it needs great attention. Latest studies shows that an alarming 1 in 4 people in England will experience depression, fear and anxiety.

What steps and actions have been taken by our council to address those issues?

Written response: *I would like to thank Mr Sharma for his question on such a vital issue. Mental health is an essential component of health. It is more than just the absence of mental disorder or disabilities; it is fundamental to our collective and individual ability to think, handle stress, make healthy choices, socially interact with others, and enjoy life ([World Health Organisation, 2022](#)).*

*The COVID-19 pandemic, particularly periods of national lockdowns and restrictions, has had a negative impact on many people's mental health ([2. Important findings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).*

*For these reasons, championing mental wellbeing and reducing social isolation is one of the four priority areas of focus for the RBWM [Health and Wellbeing strategy](#). This strategy sets priorities and the overall direction for the RBWM Health and Wellbeing Board which I chair and on which council officers and members sit.*

*Frimley Clinical Commissioning Group commissions the majority of adult and children community mental health services; these range from talking therapy services*

to dementia care advisors, counselling services and Getting Help Teams in our schools. A full list of services for adults can be found at: - [Mental health services \(eastberkshireccg.nhs.uk\)](https://www.eastberkshireccg.nhs.uk) and for children at: [Children and Young People Mental health :: Frimley HealthierTogether \(frimley-healthiertogogether.nhs.uk\)](https://www.frimley-healthiertogogether.nhs.uk).

Schools have been supported by the council's services to aid the return of pupils with a recovery and wellbeing programme based on the five psychological principles of sense of safety, sense of belonging, sense of control, sense of calm, and hopes and plans. This has given children and staff the tools to understand and discuss how they feel.

Mental health issues can range from common problems, such as depression, anxiety or obsessive-compulsive disorder ([NICE, 2021](#)) (which may be managed by physical activity, mindfulness, and social connection), to rarer and more severe and complex disorders such as psychosis, obsessive compulsive disorder or clinical depression, which will require clinical and psychological support.

We know that mental health is determined by many different social, psychological and biological factors. Everyone, including the council, has a responsibility to look after and promote good mental health & wellbeing. The council plays a key role through:

- promoting access to green space and nature
- increasing uptake of physical activity and promoting active travel
- ensuring support for residents is based on local needs by talking with residents and analysing local/national datasets
- providing employment support and additional signposting to mental health support (e.g., through library services)
- working with local community groups, such as the [Maidenhead Magpies](#), who work to promote good mental health
- championing internal workplace mental health policies and support programmes
- promoting campaigns which support good mental health and local services
- funding a Support Time and Recovery Service, which provides support for those with more serious and complex mental health issues including support on starting/returning to work

We can all play a role in protecting and looking after our own mental health, whether it be getting active, drinking less, joining a social group or spending time in nature, the [Better Health – Every Mind Matters \(2022\)](#) has useful advice and guidance for looking after your mental health.

Anyone with concerns about their own, or another person's, mental health, can get access to support through the Frimley CCG webpage - [Mental health services \(eastberkshireccg.nhs.uk\)](https://www.eastberkshireccg.nhs.uk).

**h) John Affleck (not a resident of the borough) will ask the following question of Councillor Carroll, Deputy Chairman of Cabinet & Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health, Mental Health, & Transformation:**

The peer review stated the following portfolio is unbalanced:

- Deputy Chairman of Cabinet
- Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care,
- Cabinet Member for Children's Services,
- Cabinet Member Health, Mental Health, & Transformation

Does Councillor Carroll believe this to be a fair assessment?

Written response: *Thanks for your question. The specific recommendation following the LGA Peer Review Report was that the Leader of the Council "Review Cabinet portfolios so that they are re-balanced across people, place and corporate functions to enable more capacity to influence at a sub-regional and national level alongside local place leadership responsibilities". Following recent changes made to the composition of the cabinet, and a realignment of a number of place functions, cabinet concluded when it met on 31st March to consider the final Peer Review report, that this recommendation had already been principally met.*

*In terms of my own position, the role of Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services was combined with the role of Cabinet Member for Children's Services in May 2019. When the current Leader assumed office he sought to, correctly, place a much greater emphasis on mental health, and the brief was explicitly added accordingly. Since then, there has been a very strong track record of delivering significant service improvements across these areas, of improving outcomes for the most vulnerable, and the implementation of transformation initiatives which have continued to drive major set for improvements and savings, and in turn ensure we have one of the top performing people services in the country as exemplified by independent ratings from the Care Quality Commission, Ofsted and other bodies.*

*Based upon this record, and having discussed the Peer Review Report, the Leader remains convinced that I am the right person to continue to lead across the people brief, and has, in fact, augmented my remit to reflect the work I have already been leading on in the area of transformation. From my perspective, I do not consider my brief to be unbalanced, but actually a huge honour and a profound privilege and an integrated brief which has enabled critical focus during the pandemic and vital people services. The peer review was a very helpful exercise and I am grateful for the many positive comments and findings about the council including across adult social care, health, mental health and children services. It is also pleasing that transformation has been identified as wider positive priority.*

*I am totally committed to my cabinet position and continue to approach it with maximum diligence, passion and dedication, with significant time ring-fenced to enable and facilitate, working with our excellent and highly skilled team of expert officers to deliver on critical resident priorities. I do not consider that unbalanced, but a clear focal point which has been particularly important during the pandemic to enable a highly integrated and collaborative approach across key council services and with the NHS, government and other organisations. I am also pleased with the overall high*

*performance of these services and the many improvements made since I became responsible for the brief. Yet my focus remains on ensuring we continue to deliver the best possible services for local residents, not least given the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and its many consequences.*

*I am sure Councillor Johnson would be happy to address any additional questions as the Leader of the Council.*

**i) John Affleck (not a resident of the borough) will ask the following question of Councillor Carroll, Deputy Chairman of Cabinet & Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, Health, Mental Health, & Transformation:**

RBWM are placing refugee Ukrainian children in private family homes in the borough, what safeguarding policies are in place and what checks will be made prior to placements being agreed for these children? Can you please confirm that SEND provisions will be in place for these children, along with mental health and counselling support if needed?

*Written response: Thank you for your question, Mr Affleck. I want to make it absolutely clear that the Royal Borough is not placing Ukrainian children in private family homes.*

*The Government is operating the Homes for Ukraine scheme, under which visas are issued to Ukrainian applicants who have named people in the UK willing to sponsor them. Under this scheme, the matching is done by the individual sponsors and their guests – the council is not involved in this process in any way. Once the visas are issued, the council is required to carry out a check of the accommodation to ensure it is fit for purpose and to carry out DBS checks on all adults in the host household. The council is prepared and ready to undertake this requirement.*

*Where there are families being accommodated, children’s services will carry out an initial welfare check to identify if any additional support is required and implement the appropriate support as needed. The council’s normal and robust safeguarding processes will be followed immediately in the event of any safeguarding issues being raised or identified at any point. In terms of education provision, funding has been made available by the Government to support Ukrainian children placed in Royal Borough schools, including any child with additional needs.*

**j) Louise Crawfoot of St Mary’s ward will ask the following question of Councillor Haseler, Cabinet Member for Planning, Parking, Highways & Transport:**

Who gave permission for the 5G mast to be installed directly outside St. Mary's School in Maidenhead? What steps have been taken by the council to ensure parents and grandparents that our children are safe from the 5G masts radiation levels?

*Written response: An application for prior approval of the installation was made on behalf of Three on 16 April 2021. The application was processed by the Local Planning Authority in accordance with relevant policy and was approved on 10 June 2021.*



The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) takes the lead on public health matters associated with electromagnetic field (EMF) emissions or radio waves and has a statutory duty to provide advice to the Government on any health effects that may be caused by exposure to EMF emissions. UKHSA's main advice is that EMF emissions should comply with the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines. See:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health>

and <https://www.icnirp.org/cms/upload/publications/ICNIRPemfgdl.pdf>

Ofcom are responsible for managing the use of radio spectrum in the UK and take advice from UKHSA in their management of the radio spectrum. In 2020, Ofcom published results of a nationwide EMF measurement campaign on their website where they took measurements from areas close to mobile base stations using 5G technology. Their results suggest at all locations where they conducted measurements, the EMF levels were at small fractions of the levels identified in the ICNIRP guidelines.

As part of considering the application the Planning Authority confirmed ensured that the installation was certified to be in compliance with the ICNIRP guidelines.

Further information about such installations and health can be found at gov.uk via the link below:

[Mobile phone base stations: radio waves and health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health)

**k) Louise Crawfoot of St Mary's ward will ask the following question of Councillor Haseler, Cabinet Member for Planning, Parking, Highways & Transport:**

Parents and grandparents feel very strongly that we were not informed properly before it was installed. Now it is installed we are requesting RBWM to arrange for OFCOM to take readings in the school time hours to prove it is safe. Why were students not given a letter to take home to alert them of this tower's installation?

Written response: *The applicant supplied information confirming that they sent letters of consultation to various parties including St. Marys Primary School prior to submitting the application. On receipt of the application the Local Planning Authority also wrote to 74 nearby premises including St Marys Catholic Primary School. All necessary consultation steps were taken by the Local Planning Authority to notify premises in the vicinity of the installation.*

*Ofcom provides surveys of radiofrequency electromagnetic field (EMF) emission levels near to mobile base stations. Subject to resource availability, Ofcom may provide surveys free of charge in response to direct requests from schools and hospitals. The school would have to arrange for such a survey with Ofcom directly as access etc. may be required and the Council has advised provided the school with information about how to request this.*

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