

a) Councillor Davey asked the following question of Councillor Clark, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Digital Connectivity:

How is RBWM ensuring that new 5G Masts are not exceeding ICNIRP guidelines once installed?

Written response: *The council is required to deal with the planning, installation and operation of new telecommunications equipment in line with legislation and policy as set out by central Government. Those seeking to install and operate electronic communications infrastructure are required to self-certify that their installations will comply with the ICNIRP guidelines. We are not permitted to set health safeguards or require additional information beyond this through the planning process. Monitoring and enforcement powers sit with OFCOM as the regulator and therefore the council has no powers in this regard. As the Cabinet Member for this issue alongside the responsible officers I would be happy to meet with any local residents who have concerns about specific sites to understand the concerns and consider what we can do as a local authority. Where appropriate we can request surveys to be undertaken by Ofcom to assess the compliance with ICNIRP guidelines.*

b) Councillor Haseler asked the following question of Councillor Carroll, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health:

The pandemic has caused serious challenges across all sectors and despite the excellent performance and ratings across our services, I'd like to know how the Children's and Adult Social Care Services have been sustained during this incredibly challenging time throughout the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead.

Written response: *Thank you for your question. Looking first at Adult Services, staff within Optalis have worked hard throughout the pandemic to continue to provide support to adults at risk and to support the NHS, particularly in relation to timely discharge from hospital. From the beginning of the pandemic, we have ensured staff who can work from home do so and have access to the equipment they need to do this. We made sure adequate supplies of PPE were available when this was an issue early in the pandemic and have supported staff with accessing vaccinations achieving a high level of concordance.*

Staff have been incredibly flexible and resources have been re-organised where needed in the short term to ensure continuity of service delivery. Staff wellbeing has been, and continues to be, a focus throughout the pandemic. There have undoubtedly been challenges and we are very conscious that our residents' need for support and services continues to increase.

The fact that adult social care services overall have been sustained is also testament to the quality of providers in the borough, with the majority inspected as good or outstanding by the Care Quality Commission, the dedication of their staff and the close partnership working they have with the Council, Optalis, the NHS and the CQC. The Royal Borough, in partnership with the NHS, had an existing Care Home Quality Programme, and following the onset of pandemic this was enhanced with:

- *Supportive phone calls to providers*

- A teleconference to provide support, guidance and to answer questions, now hosted by Berkshire Care Association
- A care home hotline staffed by clinically trained staff to access Infection Control support including out of hours
- A newsletter summarising new guidance
- Co-ordination and provision of PPE supplies
- Testing provided for staff and residents prior to the roll out of the testing programme nationally
- Training to all providers on infection control measures
- Financial support to all CQC registered providers through government grants
- Weekly COVID care governance meetings (attended by the three local authorities, the NHS and Care Quality Commission) across East Berkshire to target support to providers in need

Turning to Children's Services, during the early stages of the pandemic, the council acted quickly to accelerate the change of ICT provision for Children's Services from a desk-based, thin client model to providing laptops and mobile phones for all staff which enabled all to work from home. Some short-term national relaxations in regulations allowed the adoption of a risk-based approach to face to face meetings which help staff feel supported, along with PPE when visits were required.

The vaccination rollout started back in January 2021 with a specific element which included front line health and social care staff. Through the tremendous efforts of the East Berkshire health team and the volunteers, many children's social workers and health visitors were able to secure a first vaccination before the national regulations reverted to pre-pandemic times.

It is widely recognised that there has been an increased number of contacts to the single point of access (SPA) since the start of the pandemic, along with increased levels of complexity. During 2021/22 the service has increased the number of front-line staff in the SPA team and have recently approved further short-term cover in light of absences due to the Omicron wave. In addition to the statutory roles, the service is committed to early intervention where possible and additional staff will be joining the early help teams for the remainder of the current school year to deal with the increasing number of families and young people asking for help to avoid a crisis situation.

When compared to other parts of the country and other local authorities, our performance has been outstanding and our contribution to the pandemic response and follow up has been excellent. As Cllr Haseler says, it has been challenging across all sectors, and I want to thank each and every member of the children's and adult services teams for their resilience and commitment to working with our vulnerable residents during the pandemic.

**c) Councillor Larcombe asked the following question of Councillor Stimson
Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside:**

How is the 'wildflower verge' project progressing please?

Written response: *Eleven local verges have been chosen as a trial for creating 'roadside reserves'. These verges will have a different cutting regime with either one or two cuts per year. This will include an early spring (cut only) and a late summer (cut and collect). The late summer grass cut and collect is the most essential to reduce the nutrients in the soil and reduce the dominance of the grasses in order for a greater diversity of wildflowers to become established. The maintenance regime will be under review depending on the variety of plant communities that emerge. This may take a few seasons to assess but these verges will quickly become important wild spaces that can also provide some colour and interest for local residents to enjoy.*

Signs saying 'Growing Wild - do not mow' are placed on the verges to highlight the change in maintenance to both residents and our contractors. These verges will take time to improve in biodiversity but we will assess them on a regular basis. The new Natural Environment Team based at the Braywick Nature Centre will be identifying further verges this coming year to expand the scheme. Officers have undertaken engagement with communities on some of the local wildlife verges including a bug hunt with families in August 2021.

d) Councillor Singh asked the following question of Councillor Clark, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Digital Connectivity:

I have concerns relating to changing the illuminated bollards to non-lit ones, although these work well during the day, the concern is the bollards have in areas around the borough become dirty and poorly maintained which at night can seriously diminish their effectiveness. Is a regular safety check and cleaning contract in place? If so, how often are they inspected?

Written response: *The Borough replaced the traditional bollards with TMP non illuminated ones around 5 years ago, to reduce energy and lower CO2 emissions. These new bollards are fully compliant for use on the highway. All streets are subject to a visual inspection on a set frequency dependent on road category, with the busiest routes being inspected monthly and smaller roads either every three, six or twelve months as scheduled. If any safety defects; including signage, bollards or road markings are detected, a works order is raised and actioned. In addition, we carry out an ad-hoc annual programme in the summer months to clean signs and non-illuminated bollards, on routes that are subjected to heavy traffic flows, where signage becomes particularly soiled*