

Responses to Public Questions for Council on 21 February 2023

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

How much money has RBWM saved by switching to fortnightly black bin collections?

The changes were not introduced specifically as a cost saving exercise, in fact the council launched its revised waste collection regime in October 2021 to drive an increase in recycling rates in the borough and decrease the volume of waste produced to help increase its recycling rate to at least 65%. This contributes to the council's Environment and Climate Strategy, which includes a commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest.

The move to fortnightly waste collections came with additional waste collection costs, which were reported at the time and additional funds made available in the budget to cover these. The move to fortnightly waste collections has resulted in a decrease in waste disposal costs as waste moves from black bins into food waste, garden waste and recycling bins, or waste minimisation behaviour change takes place and less is thrown away which has mitigated some of the additional costs.

- b) **Ed Wilson of Clewer and Dedworth West ward will ask the following question of Councillor Rayner, Deputy Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Business, Corporate & Residents Services, Culture & Heritage, & Windsor**

What provision has been made in the budget for investment in Windsor's public toilets?

The draft capital budget has identified £30k to invest in public conveniences in 23/24, there is also approximately £34k in the revenue budget which goes towards maintaining the public conveniences.

- c) **Sunil Sharma of Cox Green ward will ask the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Growth & Opportunity**

Does Councillor Johnson agree with me that it is important RBWM does not burden our children and grandchildren with unsustainable public debt that leads to higher taxes for them in the future?

The Council has borrowed money to finance vital assets, but as you can see from the capital cashflow included within the budget papers (Appendix 4 Annex D p203), the Council is on course to pay off most of its debt over the next 12 years.

- d) **Ian Haggart of Clewer and Dedworth East ward will ask the following question of Councillor Cannon, Cabinet Member for Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime, and Public Protection**

Reduction of crime is important to many residents of the Royal Borough. Can the Cabinet Member expand or comment on the local priorities for the additional four Neighbourhood Police Officers that The Royal Borough is proposing to fund for the next three years?

The four extra police officers will be dedicated to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in the Royal Borough and are proposed to be recruited to support community safety and enhance local partnership working between the council and police. They will address key local crime issues and anti-social behaviour affecting communities and the environment.

The main objective will be to focus on the joint priorities outlined in the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) strategy 2022-25. The key purpose of the CSP is to ensure a partnership approach is taken to tackle crime and disorder and improve the quality of life of our residents. This extends beyond just policing and is about promoting stronger communities, in partnership with local stakeholders, to ensure all agencies prioritise safeguarding and put residents first.

CSP Priorities:

- Working with our communities to reduce the likelihood of being exploited and protecting our most vulnerable from harm*
- Reducing the negative impact of violent on communities*
- Tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG)*
- Provide support for individuals who are vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism leading to terrorism through the Channel/Prevent process*
- Develop out partnership resilience and agility to respond to local crime and safety issues*

We are holding a Community Safety, Crime & Anti-social behaviour summit on 17 March to help identify which local policing and community safety issues and areas should be the initial priorities for the extra police officers and our enhanced partnership working.

e) Ian Haggart of Clewer and Dedworth East ward will ask the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Growth & Opportunity

The public are encouraged by Government to reduce their energy-use footprint and move to a low carbon future. Can the Leader of the Council confirm that the Royal Borough will continue to offer a free permit to residents owning Electric Vehicles, to park in Council car parks, for the next year fiscal year?

The council has no plans to introduce charges for electric vehicle parking permits in 2023/24.

f) Adam Bermange of Boyn Hill ward will ask the following question of Councillor Hilton, Cabinet Member for Asset Management & Commercialisation, Finance, & Ascot

Saving PLA04S of £50k is to be achieved by charging out a portion of the Sustainability and Climate Change Team's staff time to grant and developer-funded projects but could the Lead Member please confirm the total budget for this team and it's organisational structure including the total number of Full-Time Equivalents?

The Sustainability and Climate Team was established after the Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. It now has 10.6 FTE's. It is responsible for delivery of the Council's Environment & Climate Strategy and is made up of Officers with specialisms in the natural environment, energy, flooding and the circular economy. The staffing budget for the team is £335,870.

g) Mohammed Ilyas of Belmont ward will ask the following question of Councillor Carroll, Deputy Chairman of Cabinet & Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Health, Mental Health, & Transformation

It is great to note the increase of £11m to the DSG for 2023-24. Please could you inform as to how much of this will be allocated to issues relating to the impact of the pandemic on areas such as pupil catch up on gaps in learning.

Thank you for your question. The total Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for RBWM is £151m for 2023-24 which will help maintain the high standards of education in the Borough. In

addition to this funding schools also receive direct funding from the Department for Education for Pupil Premium which is targeted at those on low income and eligible for Free School meals. This is estimated to be £3.7m for 3,200 young people who need the extra help. This funding is very welcome and will help our schools continue to focus on reducing the gaps in learning for our children. The Department for Education has previously also funded additional Covid-catchup grant directly to schools and that programme ceased in August 2022.

h) Julian Tisi of Clewer East ward will ask the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Growth & Opportunity

The Major Capital Cash Flows schedule (Appendix 4, Annex D) identifies that, over 13 years, capital receipts of £295m are proposed to flow to the Council from residential and commercial projects. Could the Leader confirm, broadly, what proportion of those receipts are expected to relate to the development and disposal of the Maidenhead Golf Course?

Approximately 75% of the receipts would arise from Maidenhead Golf Course. However, most of these are due after the period of the current Medium Term Financial Plan.

i) Nelly Semaille of St. Mary's ward will ask the following question of Councillor Stimson, Cabinet Member for Climate Action & Sustainability

What is the total value of revenue and capital grant funding from central government, included in the 2023/24 budget, for energy generation and efficiency projects in the Borough and, for comparison, please can she provide a quantitative list of any such grants received to date?

In total, the Council has secured around £4 million of funding from Central Government to tackle energy efficiency and carbon emissions. These are for projects ranging from new low carbon heating systems in schools, feasibility work across the Council's estate as well as heat networks across the Borough and energy efficiency upgrades to residents homes. In terms of the next financial year, the Council has a number of funding applications in with Salix as part of the latest round of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding. We have already had confirmation that we have been successful in two of those applications, with funding of £1.02 million secured and we expect further good news over the coming weeks.

j) Tina Quadrino of Pinkneys Green ward will ask the following question of Councillor Haseler, Cabinet Member for Planning, Parking, Highways & Transport

In 2021, the budget for flowers in planters across the Borough was withdrawn; this provided an estimated saving of £86,000. It is understood from Cllr Rayner's remarks at Cabinet that flowers will return to Ascot, Windsor and Maidenhead. In which case, what will the additional cost be and which service area budget will be funding this?

The three main towns of Maidenhead, Windsor & Ascot are critical to the Council's economic growth. Providing a high-quality experience to our residents and visitors is essential, it supports repeat visits and builds confidence in our local retailers and business who trade in these areas. It has been recognised that there is a need for investment to bring key aspects of the towns up to a high standard, which will also help remove street clutter, renewal old planters with sustainable planting, clear 'Grot Spots' and improve signage and wayfinding around the towns.

k) Paul Hinton, Old Windsor ward will ask the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Growth & Opportunity

Despite receipt of an additional £3.5m in funding from central government, this budget relies on s106 payments to meet its commitments to the environment, climate change, and the Climate Partnership. Please explain why this is necessary, and what your response is to those who believe that you are putting this council's environment and climate change commitments up for sale?

The Council has faced difficult decisions over the budget, with very difficult savings put forward in many areas of the Council's statutory responsibilities. I am therefore pleased to have been able to maintain funding to the Climate Partnership. A partnership we created with the purpose of leveraging in private funding to help us deliver upon our climate commitments. The use of s106 has been utilised to enable us to also invest in other key areas such as tackling crime through investing in more police officers, and in clamping down on environmental crime, plus removing a number of savings proposed across adult social care and children's services.

l) Mark Loader of Oldfield ward will ask the following question of Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Growth & Opportunity

With higher interest rates on borrowing "an increasing share of the Council's budget is required to service debt before money can be spent on day-to-day services". Budgeted at around £7m for 23/24.

Please can you explain how it has arisen that the debt on which this interest is paid, in excess of £200 million, is so high?

The Council inherited historic debt from the old Berkshire County Council. In addition it has borrowed money to finance its capital programmes over the last 25 years, financing vital public facilities such as Braywick Leisure Centre. However, as you can see from the capital cashflow included within the budget papers (Appendix 4 Annex D p203), the Council is on course to pay off most of its debt over the next 12 years.

m) Mark Loader of Oldfield ward will ask the following question of Councillor Stimson, Cabinet Member for Climate Action & Sustainability

Please can you clarify what is the 23/24 budget for the Sustainability and Climate change team and the Climate partnership team. What are their deliverables (where documented) and are they constrained by the available budget. Who is responsible for ensuring residents get value for money ?

The Sustainability & Climate Change Team are responsible for the delivery of the Environment & Climate Strategy. The strategy includes action plans across its key themes which detail the deliverables of the team.

The Climate Partnership was set up by the Council as an independent body to engage broadly across the Borough to enable the scale of change required to deliver the carbon reduction targets set out in the Environment and Climate Strategy.

As Lead Member, my responsibility is to ensure residents get best value. I meet with Officers at least bi-weekly to ensure I am happy with the work being undertaken and the value the team are delivering. I am absolutely satisfied the team are delivering against the objectives set out and have the resources they require.

n) Sian Martin of Belmont ward will ask the following question of Councillor Carroll, Deputy Chairman of Cabinet & Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Health, Mental Health, & Transformation

The Medium-Term Financial Plan (Appendix 1, Annex A) identifies budget gaps for the four years from 2024/25 to 2027/28 totalling £10.2m. Given this administration's earlier draft

2023/24 budget included cuts to the Early Help provision, can the Lead Member confirm that, if he were to continue in post, this service would be protected from cuts in those years?

Thank you for your question. I am very pleased that the additional funding received from government has enabled us to protect the early help provision in the coming year. I remain committed to funding the services which protect the most vulnerable and provide prevention services as far as we are able within the resources available to us. Should the electorate continue to put their faith in us and I retain this post in future years I will maintain my focus on ensuring the children of the borough are supported by high quality, good value services, with protection for those most in need, within a financially stable budget for the overall council.

o) Will Scawn of Belmont ward will ask the following question of Councillor Cannon, Cabinet Member for Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime, and Public Protection

I am delighted this Conservative-led Council is so committed to tackling crime and antisocial behaviour, and is funding four extra police officers to help keep local residents safe, and feeling safe.

Could policing the many, important footpaths in my home ward of Belmont be included in the remit of these extra police officers?

The four extra police officers will be dedicated to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in the Royal Borough and are proposed to be recruited to support community safety and enhance local partnership working between the council and police. They will address key local crime issues and anti-social behaviour affecting communities and the environment. The officers will enhance our partnership working at a local level and focus more strongly on tackling local crime and anti-social behaviour issues at a community level. If issues are reported and raised in Belmont Ward then these will be addressed along with other competing priorities.