

## Responses to Councillor Questions for Council 11 March 2024

- a) **Councillor Larcombe will ask the following question of Councillor Werner, Leader and Cabinet member for Community Partnerships, Public Protection and Maidenhead**

Four of the five Directors of RBWM Property Company Ltd resigned on 13 February 2024. Can you please explain the circumstances behind these resignations?

Written response:

*In terms of the reasons for these resignations, the decision of the former Chair and the non-exec directors is their own and we thank them for their contribution. A new interim company board has since been installed.*

*Regarding the RBWM Property Company more widely, as part of our financial recovery plan we're looking at all services to determine whether the current delivery model is the right one - that's something we have to do given the pressures facing the council. It's in this context that we'll be reviewing the Property Company and the services it provides, although no decisions have been taken about future approach. We've also taken steps more recently to strengthen council oversight of the company, which was needed.*

- b) **Councillor Gosling will ask the following question of Councillor Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Communities and Leisure**

Windsor is one of the UK's best tourist attractions. I believe that our iconic Museum is part of this with an accreditation from The Arts Council. When it charged, it still had a large footfall. Over 1000 people have signed the Museum petitions. What alternative ways are being considered to preserve this attraction for future generations?

Written response:

*The official RBWM petition has just over 70 signatures from local residents asking us to keep the museum open. You are correct to say that when the museum charged a small admission fee there was an income generation from the museum. When the decision was made by the previous administration to remove the fee, they failed to remove the income target.*

*Therefore, the museum has always been set up to fail in the eyes of the budget.*

*We are committed to keeping a museum service within Windsor, and options for the museum are currently being explored with stakeholders. The Windsor and Royal Borough collection is a vital part of our history, and we want to ensure that residents still have access to our local heritage.*

*We're also exploring how we can get the museum to different community groups. Since 2020 0 school trips have been booked to the museum, which is disappointing and somewhat different to what's been shared on social media. Therefore, we're exploring whether we can send the museum collection out to schools and care homes so more of our residents can learn about the history of The Borough.*

- c) **Councillor Brar will ask the following question of Councillor Coe, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Household & Regulatory Services**

Can I be assured that the Environment Agency and council will engage with Bisham Parish Council and the flood wardens to make sure that any lessons are learnt from the recent flood events on the Thames?

Written response:

*The council is working through its debrief process to ensure the lessons are learnt from the recent major flooding incident across the borough. This includes working with multi-agency partners as well as meeting with all local communities affected by the incident to get feedback on how we can improve our plans and complete our statutory duty to investigate all flooding incidents as the lead local flood authority. The council has provided all impacted Parish Councils the opportunity to feed into the Council's debrief process through a survey. This has helped to shape immediate learning which can change processes quickly ahead of any new flood events. Meetings with each impacted Parish Council are being organised to collect data for the Section 19 Flood Investigation Report. 3 of these have been completed and the final details of the remaining 3 are being put together.*

*The council has also secured the support of Environment Agency and Thames Water to meet with Bisham and Cookham Parish Councils to discuss their concerns. We are in the process of finalising the details of that meeting.*

*Although the formal review has a timetable, we will continue to welcome stakeholder ideas on how we can improve at any time.*

**d) Councillor Price will ask the following question of Councillor Bermange, Cabinet Member for Planning, Legal and Asset Management**

A Motion was agreed by Council in September relating to Part II items. When will the periodic review take place regarding historic Part II decisions?

Written response:

*The council is fully supportive of a new approach to transparency and this can be clearly seen in the subsequent reduction of information reserved for part 2 discussions to date in the interests of local democracy. Since last summer, steps have been taken to reduce the number of Part 2 papers over the past year and ensure that more information is covered in Part 1 discussions. I fully supported the Motion agreed by Full Council in July 2023.*

*Concerning the provision in that Motion to periodically review historic Part 2 Reports and Minutes with a view to publication, this was subject to officer capacity and resource availability.*

*As was noted in the Report of the Chief Financial Officer at Budget Full Council in February 2024 (Appendix O to the Budget Paper), the Council faces a significant risk in relation to capacity, and in all areas of the Council resource has been reduced to very lean levels. Officers are regularly facing difficult decisions on how to prioritise the resources available and our focus is rightly on delivering the budget recently agreed by Full Council to help reduce the risk of effective bankruptcy.*

*The periodic review of historic Part 2 Reports and Minutes requires significant officer resource and capacity. This impacts both teams within Law & Governance (Information Governance and Democratic Services) and also the relevant Service Areas responsible for the original reports, especially where there has been a high turnover of staff which necessitates lengthy research into historic issues.*

*Therefore, at the present time, we are prioritising doing what is required to put the council back on a firmer financial footing and deliver the essential services the borough needs. As a consequence, there is, unfortunately, no capacity to prioritise the review of historic reports at present.*

*However, this does not affect the ability for FOI requests to be made in relation to historic Council Reports, which will be handled through the statutory process.*