

Questions by Members – Council – 29 November 2023

<u>Written Question</u>	<u>Written Answer</u>	<u>Verbal Supplementary Question</u>	<u>Verbal Supplementary Answer</u>
Q1 – Councillor Andrew Lyon to Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities.			
<p>In July 2018, the previous administration voted to transfer the freehold of Unterhaching Park, in Witney Central ward, to Witney Town Council. It never materialised.</p> <p>At the Executive meeting in June 2023, my fellow ward representative, Councillor Andrew Coles, asked for an update on the timeframe for transfer and was told that it was 'imminent'. Could I ask the Executive Member when the transfer will be happening please?</p>	<p>Terms have been agreed for some time with Witney Town Council for the transfer of the freehold of the site, and solicitors are instructed by both parties. There have been significant challenges in respect of the legal title transfer due to pre-existing restrictions. These have been complex and difficult to overcome and the additional time has also meant that repairs were required at the site before legal matters of transfer could continue.</p> <p>The Town Council's solicitors do not wish to complete until the Deed of Release of a Routing Agreement, which is registered on the title to the site but should not apply, has been processed by the Land Registry.</p> <p>The application was submitted last October, and our legal team has requested that the application be expedited. This has been accepted. Once this is processed, a completion date can be agreed.</p>	<p>I'd like to say thank you, first of all, for the comprehensive answer, but whilst I appreciate that this problem was not of her making, can I ask her if she understands the deep frustration of residents for the length of time that this task has taken, and heed their eagerness to see an end to this?</p>	<p>Thank you. I should just say that I am on Witney Town Council, and since I joined Witney Town Council in 2019, this has been an ongoing problem, which went back years! I have never been more desperate to get this thing moving along as soon as we can. Work is ongoing to bring the site into better condition and we are just desperate for the situation to be resolved.</p>
Q2 – Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council.			
<p>Witney Buttercross Scout Group is one of the largest Scout Groups in the country with over 400 young people from the ages of 4-18. During this year, members of the Groups Trustee Board have</p>	<p>I am advised that Estates would be happy to re-engage with the Witney Buttercross Scout Group. The previous research resulted in one site of interest at Deer Park, that was not suitable due to covenants on the land preventing use other than as 'public open space' and the intention for future use for Witney Destination</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>engaged the Estates and Asset Team, as well as the Leader of the Council to try and explore pieces of land in Witney and the surrounding area which could be used for camping and outdoor activities. However, discussions have so far not progressed.</p> <p>Please can the Leader of the Council ask relevant officers to engage with members of the trustee board at Witney Buttercross Scout Group, to see if suitable land can be identified for the use of Witney's young people?</p>	<p>Play Area. Officers could now provide ownership plans showing all of the Council's ownership in Witney and work with the Scout Group to review them.</p> <p>It must be noted that most, if not all, of the open land that the Council owns is subject to S106 agreements/covenants on acquisition that prevent use other than as 'public open space'. It is possible to vary S106 agreements and covenants, but the original parties may need to be contacted and be a party to any variation. Any proposal would need detailed legal advice and Planning advice.</p>		
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Q3 – Councillor Jane Doughty to Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities.

<p>I am pleased that after the hard work of local residents and councillors, planning applications for the shops and sports pavilion have been approved on Windrush Place.</p> <p>As part of the Section 106 contributions, there is a significant fund for an adventure play area, which would be of great benefit, not only to young people in my ward, but also the rest of the town. Please can the Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities</p>	<p>Officers have confirmed that £878,489.59 has been received from the West Witney / Windrush Place development (planning app. 12/0084/P/OP). Of this contribution, £180,000 is allocated to the MUGA project at Raleigh Crescent. The S106 agreement specifies it has to go 'towards the construction and on-going maintenance of an adventure play area and a multi-use games area on land owned by the District Council in the vicinity of the Site'.</p> <p>In relation to the adventure play area, I am advised that Officers are working closely with Witney Town Council to determine the best route forward for its delivery. Although there are overhead cables on the proposed land</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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<p>confirm how much S.106 contributions there are, and can they work with officers to ensure that this project begins in the next financial year?</p>	<p>alongside Deer Park Road, which would need to be relocated to enable the project to progress, and this is the next stage of work officers and the Town Council are looking at.</p>		
<p>Q4 – Councillor Jane Doughty to Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities.</p>			
<p>In July, the Executive Member confirmed that the District Council held regular meetings to ensure that the land for a Multi-Use Games area in Deer Park.</p> <p>Please can the Executive Member provide an update about how the progress is going and whether land will be transferred to Witney Town Council in early 2024?</p>	<p>I am advised that Officers are working closely with Witney Town Council to bring forward the MUGA at Raleigh Crescent Play Area. The Town Council are amenable to project managing the installation on Council land with the S106 funding allocated. The Town Council has met with designers to discuss design, concepts and cost. On completion ownership will transfer to the Town Council.</p>	<p>Thank you for answering the question. Is it possible that we could have involvement in future meetings as ward members? As you know at the Town Council this has been going on for some while, and we would really like to get this moved on? I would also like to say thank you for your support.</p>	<p>Yes, that's possible. The Town Council are looking at fitting some children's football pitches on the area as well. So there is some negotiation about where these pitches will go.</p>
<p>Q5 – Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment.</p>			
<p>At the last Executive meeting on 15 November 2023, you collectively agreed to raise the price of fly-tipping fines to the maximum levels allowed. I fully support this decision as like most of us, fly-tipping is in the top things complained about from residents. How many reported fly-tipping incidents in the last year have we successfully fined?</p>	<p>The details of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) and other actions for this year is as follows:</p> <p>Fixed Penalty Notice (Duty of Care) – 1;</p> <p>Fixed Penalty Notice (Littering) – 1;</p> <p>Fixed Penalty Notice (Other) – 0;</p> <p>Fixed Penalty Notice (S33Za) – 16.</p> <p>Of the 18 FPNs, 10 have been paid so far, two are being investigated for prosecution and 6 are pending further action.</p>	<p>Thank you for your response. Can you shed some light on how many fly tipping instances there have been altogether, because all we have here is fixed penalty notices, which is what I asked for, but it would be nice to know how many have been reported throughout the year, and do we have any provision for putting in any cameras to stop any hot spots for fly tipping? I know that we have places that are</p>	<p>Yes, so altogether we had over 1100 instances of fly tipping in a year. That translates to 49 visits that were completed. Now obviously have very limited resources to be able to carry out the investigations.</p> <p>Everything is cleared by Ubico and all the rubbish is picked up, although some of the fly tipped material is very difficult to pick up, including some of the waste having to be picked up from the</p>

		<p>continuously fly tipped like Farmers Field and car parks in Carterton, so it would be nice to know if you're going to put some cameras up to catch fly tippers, now that we can charge them a fortune.</p>	<p>river. These things cost us a lot of money.</p> <p>We now have a new officer who is working with the team to help carry out the investigations, and if we get permission we will install the cameras in the hot spots, and will work closely with Thames Valley Police to bring the overall numbers down and to get a better outcome in our investigations.</p> <p>In October this year, we had altogether 19 investigations undertaken and 8 FPNs were issued. That compared with the last quarter of last year, we only had 2 FPNs issues. So we are doing better and making progress.</p>
<p>Q6 – Councillor David Cooper to Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare.</p>			
<p>Could the Executive Member confirm how many residents are recorded as homeless in West Oxfordshire?, and how does this compare to years 2020, 2021 and 2022?</p>	<p>West Oxfordshire currently has 2 people recorded as rough sleeping. Both are new to rough sleeping and the Council's Homelessness Team and the County Outreach team are working with both to find solutions. Historically, West Oxfordshire has maintained low numbers of people rough sleeping, preferring to take a proactive approach to find solutions at the earliest possible stage. The Council is required to undertake an annual 'snapshot' estimate and</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

	<p>these figures are recorded with the government as below:</p> <p>2019 – 7;</p> <p>2020 – 5;</p> <p>2021 – 1;</p> <p>2022 – 2.</p>		
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Q7 – Councillor Alex Wilson to Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change.

<p>What plans does this Council have to install more Electronic Vehicle (EV) charging facilities in West Oxfordshire for the year 2024?</p>	<p>Oxfordshire has been allocated £3.6million of Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) to scale up the provision of public EV charging facilities across the County over the next two years. Oxfordshire County Council, as a Tier I Highways Authority, is set to receive this funding and is coordinating a county-wide plan in close consultation with West Oxfordshire District Council and other Oxfordshire District and City Councils on how this money is best spent. The priority for the funding is ‘standard’ 7kW public charging to meet the changing needs of residents who cannot easily access home charging, either by not having private parking, or perhaps living in rented accommodation. The Oxfordshire proposal will include three key work streams to meet this need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of EV charging hubs in Council owned car parks, similar to those delivered in the Park and Charge Oxfordshire project (www.parkandchargeoxfordshire.co.uk); 	<p>Thank you very much for the information in regard to the scheme. I just wanted to clarify with Councillor Prosser, how many rural areas, as opposed to Carterton and Chipping Norton will be able to receive their fair share of the scheme, and can he assure me that it won’t just turn in charging points for Witney?</p>	<p>So the allocation of sites has not been decided of yet. The final applications are being led by Oxfordshire County Council. Basically that will ensure that one of the criteria for funding for EV Chargers is allocated to rural locations where it is much more harder to economically justify the private sector bringing in charging points, so there definitely will be EV chargers in rural areas, and that will be decided in the coming months by the Government.</p>
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- Working with Town and Parish Councils, community halls, schools and other non-profit third parties to install up to 100 'community micro hubs' in rural and/or deprived areas where County, City and District Councils lack suitable parking estate;
- Installation of on-street EV chargers on the highway where insufficient off-street car parking bays are available.

The overall programme is expected to deliver upwards of 1,200 new public chargers across the County, which will be spread fairly and equitably according to where the need is and will look to fill rural gaps in the network. All chargers deployed will have contactless payment facilities, and charging hubs will include a range of specialist bays for EV car clubs, disabled drivers, and van drivers to create a comprehensive network of chargers that will assist people in Oxfordshire to transition to electric more quickly. Oxfordshire also has £700,000 of LEVI pilot funding to help fund up to 500 cable gullies as an alternative solution to allow people without private off-street parking to charge safely at kerbside using a home charger.

Getting from plans to live chargers on the ground is a long process involving feasibility studies, securing a new electrical connection and of course groundworks and testing. For this reason, a small proportion of new EV chargers

	are likely to go live in 2024 and the whole programme completed by the end of 2025.		
Q8 – Councillor Dean Temple to Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects.			
<p>The Government, via Sport England, has awarded this council £354,000 for Witney, Chipping Norton and Carterton Leisure Centres. Can you confirm how this extra funding will now be spent?</p>	<p>The Government announced the Swimming Pool Support Fund (Phase One) in the March 2023 Budget and provided a total of £20m to Local Authorities in England as a support package for public leisure facilities with swimming pools. The fund was provided by the Government to help support facilities with swimming pools facing increased cost pressures which could leave them vulnerable to service reduction or at worst closure. The key items highlighted in the grant application were the rise in energy costs, cost of heating, and chemical costs. Subsequently the Government defined that ‘Expenditure relating to energy or chemical use for the Facility’ would be deemed as ‘Eligible Expenditure.’ Once the grant fund has been drawn down from the Government, the Council will use it to directly fund items of ‘Eligible Expenditure’ incurred by the Leisure Operator between April 2023 and March 2024 (the Grant period). The payment claims will need to be supported by evidence of expenditure through invoices and the open book accounting arrangement that is currently in place with GLL Better.</p> <p>Following the receipt of a grant award the leisure operators will also provide financial and performance information, and accurate energy data reports to Sport England to enable further monitoring of the leisure sector and an</p>	N/A	N/A

	<p>evaluation of the impact of the grant funds delivery. As a successful recipient of this grant funding the Council is also required to have in place, or to obtain, a Sport England strategic plan for leisure, or Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM). The leisure team are currently working in conjunction with consultants to put together this strategy for West Oxfordshire and it is expected to be completed in Spring next year.</p>		
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Q9 – Councillor Martin McBride to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council.

<p>Please could the Leader confirm how much this administration has spent having Executive meetings on tour, including the cost of venues, travel and officer time?</p>	<p>As you know, this administration has taken meetings of the Executive ‘on Tour’ over recent months, in order to meet with residents of our local communities, and also to allow our residents to ask the Executive the questions they would like answers to. The ‘on-tour’ meetings have also provided the local communities in our district with opportunities to see democracy in action, without the need for them to travel to the Council Offices at Woodgreen.</p> <p>To date, the Executive has held 6 meetings ‘on tour’ in Chipping Norton, Charlbury, Woodstock, Carterton, Eynsham and Burford. Another meeting in Charlbury is planned for 13 December 2023, and Officers are routinely looking at further options for future meetings, at the request of the Executive.</p> <p>In total, the costs of hiring the venues used to host the 7 meetings mentioned above has totalled £681, plus VAT. This has taken into account venue and room hire, the setup of the</p>	<p>Thank you very much for the reply. I was a little bit surprised that we couldn’t get a cost of getting the officers to and from the venues. Once we have the changes made that you have spent £250,000 on in the Council Chamber completed, I would presume that we would not be ‘on tour’ because everything would be available for live streaming. Please could you confirm that will indeed be the situation?</p>	<p>Thank you for the supplementary question. I certainly will be considering that but as you know, at times the room will be used by other parties, such as the Planning Inspectorate, and in those situations if there is a clash, we will actually be looking into possibilities of going elsewhere.</p> <p>But let me just say to you really, this this is not just about having the convenience of a new space, but the whole idea behind this was making it accessible for the community so that they could see the whole democratic process. As for the figures provided to you for your first question, the costs are actually quite nominal, to the impacts</p>
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	<p>venues by local staff and any catering costs associated with the meetings.</p> <p>Information about officer time is not readily available. Officers are able to claim 45p per mile and have, wherever possible, shared transport in order to keep associated mileage claim costs to a minimum.</p>		<p>and benefits that this has for our residents.</p> <p>So I kind of think that it would be considered, in the round, and I thank you again for your supplementary.</p>
<p>Q10 – Councillor Liam Walker to Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare.</p>			
<p>The Executive Member has the responsibility of neighbourhood policing in West Oxfordshire.</p> <p>Can he confirm if he's met with policing teams in the District, and what work is being done between the police and this Council as a result of these meetings?</p>	<p>As Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, I meet regularly with the Police, oversee the development and delivery of a Community Safety Plan designed by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) including the Police, WODC, Oxfordshire County Council, Housing, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Probation services. A new CSP plan is being finalised which includes our response to the new Serious Violence duty.</p> <p>Operationally the Councils Environment and Regulatory Services work alongside the Police regularly on Operations – recently including Modern Slavery, Animal Welfare and Licensing. Officers at the Council also attend the Police-led operational Joint Agency Tasking and Coordination group (JATAC) and Tactical Tasking Coordination group (TTCG) meetings, and our Fraud team also works closely with the Police.</p> <p>Where appropriate we will be proactive and help the Police teams to contribute to wider discussions and connect with other agencies –</p>	<p>Thank you for the response. I wonder if he had the opportunity to attend the Woolbrine Farming Conference at Blenheim Palace recently, and if he did attend, would he be reporting back to Members?</p>	<p>I'm afraid that I wasn't able to attend the event.</p>

	<p>such as linking them with the Carterton Strategic Planning work currently underway.</p> <p>Following direct feedback from residents, I have pushed for more support around Rural Crime and am pleased to announce that the OPCC has bid for on our behalf, and been successful in securing funding from Safer Streets 5 to tackle rural crime. West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse District Councils will benefit from £201,000 to deliver interventions on neighbourhood and rural acquisitive crime.</p> <p>This will include deploying effective signage and property marking products for agricultural equipment, tools and quad bikes and the recruitment of a Rural Crime Advisor who will work across the areas to promote rural crime prevention and engage with rural communities, industries, farms and organisations such as Young Farmers and the National Farmers Union. In addition, there will be a Project Support role based at WODC.</p>		
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