
FULL COUNCIL
Tuesday, 9 July 2024

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 15

5a) Question 1 from the Public, Roger Seabourne

An unprecedented three-party challenge was made during the May 2024 council meeting, to the appointment by the Liberal Democrats of one of their members to the Council's cabinet. The challenge was in respect of concerns about the conduct of that person, including behaviour at Council meetings. What measures have been taken in order to ensure that the behaviour of that individual does not adversely impact on the effective running of the council?

Written response:

All Members of Council are expected to abide by the Local Government Association model Code of Conduct as detailed in the Council Constitution and at the Annual Council in my acceptance speech as Leader I made that clear and have also reminded all members of my group of this and I hope other group leaders have done the same.

5b) Question 2 from the Public, Stephen Martin

There have now been two successive council meetings in which allegations of bullying - perpetrated by Liberal Democrat councillor Sara Bedford - have been made. Those allegations have not been denied. What actions have been taken to ensure that bullying does not impact on the effective running of the council, or on the welfare of Three Rivers employees?

Written response:

There are no allegations of bullying relating to the Council's Code of Conduct and Cllr Sara Bedford that are either being investigated or under consideration. My earlier answer covers the other points.

5c) Question 3 from the Public, Marie-Louise Nolan

I watched the Annual Council meeting on 21 May online. Under Agenda Item 8 Appointment of the Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Members, I learned that there had been a number of complaints made in February 2024 about the behaviour of a councillor that were still being investigated and the member concerned was being nominated by the administration for the role of Lead Member for Housing and Public Health. In the ensuing debate members from all opposition parties and the independent councillor expressed their serious misgivings about this

nomination since the investigation into the complaints had not been concluded. Can the Leader of the Council outline the time frame for these investigations being undertaken, by whom or which body these complaints are being considered and, given the nature of the complaints, why was the member nominated by the administration and does the Leader agree with me that all members should abide by Lord Nolan's Seven Standards in Public Life as exemplified in this Council's Members' Code of Conduct?

Written response:

I refer to my two previous answers to similar questions.

There are no allegations of bullying relating the Council's Code of Conduct by Cllr Sara Bedford that are either being investigated or under consideration. I expect all Councillors to adhere to this code.

Having watched the video of the Council meeting you will have noticed that I made it clear that the administration lead members are chosen by a democratic will and election of its group members. The lead members put forward by myself were ones elected by the Liberal Democrat Councillors in a secret ballot undertaken by an external administrator following an hustings meeting. The Liberal Democrats operate a democratic party whereby all its positions are open to election and not just by appointment by one person as may happen in other parties.

I will not comment on any other internal party matters that are outside of this Council's remit or its Code of Conduct.

5d) Question 4 from the Public, Vishal Patel

As a resident of Oxhey Hall and Hayling Ward, I would like to ask the following question to the full council:

I am concerned by the lack of transparency surrounding the decision to remove the area of South Oxhey Playing Fields that was previously used for recreational cricket. The petition I have submitted, signed by many residents, highlights the value this space holds for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Specifically, I would like to ask why the decision was made to remove the cricket pitch without any prior consultation with the community, and what alternative solutions has the Council considered to address the concerns raised while preserving this valuable community space?

Written response:

- All works undertaken on our playing fields are undertaken with proper policy, budget and project approvals in place. In the case of South Oxhey Playfields the works your reference were approved by Council Committee as part of the 2019 - 2024 Management Plan for South Oxhey Playing Fields and undertaken within Council approved Leisure Service budgets.
- The Council holds no records of a cricket pitch or cricket facilities in South Oxhey Playing Fields nor of any use formal or otherwise of the location for organised cricket

- it is worth noting also that under the Councils byelaws, cricket is not permitted except in a designated area for playing cricket.

- All actions taken by officers have been made within the council's policies and procedures and with the required delegations or approvals.
- Officers have made more than reasonable attempts to offer alternative solutions in this matter for you but you have not accepted any of them.