

COUNCIL MEETING

28th February 2011

ORAL PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1) Question for oral reply from Dr Harry J Ivey of the Leader of the Council

Because of public concern over Biggin Hill Airport Ltd's Olympics Proposals for greatly increased operating hours and for permission to fly individual fare-paying passengers, will the Council now agree that the Officer's Report on this be issued at least 10 working days prior to the Council Meeting on 21 March 2011?

Reply:

Councillor Carr thanked Dr Ivey for his question and advised that the legal requirement for all Council meetings was for agendas and reports to be published five clear working days before the day of the meeting, excluding the day of publication, which in this case would be Friday 11th March 2011.

However, because of the considerable interest he had insisted that the report be made available on Tuesday, 8th March 2011 at the latest allowing nine clear working days before the meeting.

Supplementary Question:

Dr Ivey thanked the Leader for arranging that and in reconfirming that the report would be publically available on the Tuesday asked whether it would be earlier or later in the day.

Reply:

Councillor Carr replied that he would ask for it to ready as soon as possible, but could not guarantee the time of day, if it could be ready any earlier then he would ask for that to be done and inform Dr Ivey of the arrangements.

2) Question for oral reply from Mr Michael Latham (on behalf of the Directors and Committee of Farnborough Park Estate) of the Leader of the Council

Will the Council confirm that at the Council Meeting on 21st March Councillors will have a vote and that this vote will be a free vote – and that each vote will be recorded so that residents may know how their Ward Councillors represented them as regards the Airport's Olympics Proposals?

Reply:

Councillor Carr confirmed that all Councillors would have the opportunity to vote on this issue at the full Council meeting on 21st March 2011. He also advised that he had indicated to all colleagues in the Conservative group that they would be allowed a free vote, although he could not speak on behalf of members of the opposition parties. Regarding recorded votes in the event of a free vote he considered that it was a matter for the individual to decide for themselves. Councillor Carr pointed out that as a consequence of the Local Government Act 2000 (section 13) the final decision could only be taken by the Council's Executive, which meeting would follow immediately after the Council meeting on 21st March 2011.

Supplementary question:

Mr Latham asked for confirmation that the Executive would be materially guided by the vote of Council and that at the Executive meeting there would be a recorded vote for the information of residents.

Reply:

The Leader responded that he could only answer personally and in this context he considered that there was no higher authority than full Council. Therefore he would be minded to take a very serious view of whatever the Council asked him to do.

3) Question for oral reply from Adele Titford of the Portfolio Holder for the Environment

How many volunteers will the council have to recruit, train and insure before the £233,000 you want to save is reached and do you still plan to axe the lollipop people even if any net savings is far less than the £233,000 you're aiming to save?

Reply:

Councillor Smith advised that it was too early to say how many volunteers would be required as this may not be the solution at all sites.

As had been explained previously, the intention was not to "axe" the lollipop service. Were that to have been the case implementation of such action would have been scheduled for April 2011.

The Council had already opened conversations with schools on related matters and would be working with teachers, PTAs and the wider community wherever possible to investigate how the service could be delivered differently, but at greater value for money for the Council Tax Payer with projected savings beginning from April 2012.

Supplementary Question:

Ms Titford asked was it rather that the Council was planning to make the cuts regardless of the real tangible costs to the children. If schools were asked to contribute they would only be able to do so by making cuts on their education budgets.

Reply:

Councillor Smith responded that it was not for the Council to judge where these new savings might or might not arise. It could be that the schools decide this was a good investment; it could be that the PTAs do; or it might be on a review of the service that perhaps with just 5 children crossing during an hour that a Zebra crossing might be a better long term solution rather than a lollipop person. There were no certainties at this stage which was why this budget option had been set back to April 2012 rather than now and to be clear there were no cuts to the service at this stage. Rather it gave time to investigate how to save the major part of a £¼m which could be spent on even more vital services such as children's Social Workers who dealt with the very vulnerable children in our community.