



## COUNCIL

13 SEPTEMBER 2023

### SUPPLEMENTARY PAPERS

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The following report was not available for publication with the rest of the agenda which was published prior to the meeting of the Executive referred to.

Susan Halliwell  
Chief Executive

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Can the Executive Member give an update on this Council's plans for this autumn, 2023, to repair the many potholes in public roads in Bracknell Forest Borough Council area [which are of great concern to many residents] and report to Council, each year, before winter?	



**Meeting:** Council  
**Date:** 13 September 2023  
**From:** Councillor Harrison  
**To:** Councillor Purnell

**Question:**

Jealotts Hill Community Landshare provides a valuable service, helping residents build resilience and improve mental health through horticultural activities. Would the Executive member responsible for liaison with community groups please update the Council on what they have done to ensure a viable future for the Jealotts Hill Community Landshare?

**Answer:**

I agree with Councillor Harrison that the Jealotts Hill Community Landshare site is a valuable asset which has had a positive impact on a wide range of communities. Including people with mental, physical, and learning disabilities giving them an opportunity to work together in the fresh air, build their confidence, develop new skills and find support for their health and wellbeing

A recently bereaved lady found a new way of life after visiting the site. "It's a very special place," she says. "I was a bit apprehensive and overwhelmed to start with, but spending time at Jealott's Hill and enjoying its fresh air, wildlife and flowers has helped me overcome my grief to some extent. Bereavement caused me to seek new friends and opportunities and here, that's exactly what I get" This quote was taken from Royal Horticultural Society website who call the project "An innovative community growing space.....a source of solace and new beginnings"

I don't think there is a single person in this room or watching this meeting today who does not agree that every effort must be made to save this precious landshare.

I am working closely with council officers, the Friends of Jealotts Hill Community Landshare and partners to identify ways in which the Landshare can be sustained. The site is owned by Syngenta and has been leased to Silva Homes who have been the lead organisation in managing the Land share and employing the staff that work there. Silva Homes have given Syngenta notice on the lease and the site closed at the end of August to the public with activity since, focussed on tidying the site and handing it back to Syngenta at the end of September. Silva Homes have cited the ongoing financial liability for the operations of the site with decreased levels of use since the Covid pandemic and it not being aligned to their strategic priority to invest in the communities they operate in.

Since being made aware of the possible closure of the site the Council has had several meetings with Silva Homes including one with Syngenta to understand the issues, liabilities, and opportunities for sustaining the Landshare. The council's Chief Executive has written to the Chief Executive's of both Silva Homes and Syngenta to request a meeting and further discussion. I have also personally met with the Chair of the Friends of the Jealotts Hill Community Landshare to offer my support in trying to sustain the project. Options to sustain the Community Landshare include establishing a CIC (Community Interest Company) are being explored with the support of Involve Community Services. The Council has also been looking to identify alternative organisations whose aims align with the Landshare who may be interested in taking on a lease and management of the site.

I can assure Cllr Harrison that I am committed to supporting and working positively with the Friends of the Jeallotts Hill Community Landshare, fellow borough, town and parish councillors, as well as partner organisations like Involve. I will do all I can to ensure a viable future for the Landshare and look forward to further discussions with him on the next steps in doing so.

**Meeting:** Council  
**Date:** 13 September 2023  
**From:** Councillor Virgo  
**To:** Councillor Wright

**Question:**

Question: Our sexual health provision is at crisis point, what urgent action will be taken to make it fit for purpose in our expanding town?

**Answer:**

Data from the Office for Health Improvement (OHID) and the local services do not indicate a crisis in the sexual and reproductive health services. The trend in newly diagnosed sexually transmitted infections (STI) are showing an upward trend in 2022, however the rates are lower than 2019 and lower than the national trends. This trend is similar to local authority areas with similar demographics.

Data from our local services indicate that from April to June 2023 98 per cent of service users calling the service for an appointment during reception's opening times were triaged within 30 minutes, with 97 per cent of service users seen within two days. The services are meeting the standards set for management of STI by the British Association of Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH).

Councillors can be assured that the current evidence does not indicate a crisis in sexual health service provision in Bracknell Forest, but there are always matters that need to be reviewed and addressed to respond to the needs of our population.

The Council is committed to commissioning services that meet the future needs of the growing population and our changing demographics. We are therefore engaged with our local authority partners on an East Berkshire sexual health needs assessment which will inform the future commissioning of Sexual Health services in Bracknell Forest over the next year. As part of this we will be seeking to improve digital access to sexual and reproductive health services which is a priority locally. The Public Health teams have been working with experts in good digital design to understand how we can do this well. It is important so that people access both the testing they may require alongside good quality triage and tailored advice.

Finally if someone is experiencing symptoms they should not wait for a test, but should get to a clinic as soon as possible, to receive the treatment that is required. They can access local services or any clinics outside the area as well. Links on how to access sexual health clinics can be found in my written answer.

For information on accessing sexual health clinics

These are listed here: [Garden Clinic - Safe Sex Berkshire\\*](#).

The [All Clinics - Safe Sex Berkshire](#) website shows the location of clinics across Berkshire, which are available to everyone

There are appointment times available throughout the week, including evenings, across the sites available within Berkshire.

Information on sexual health clinics including local clinics can be accessed via on NHS Choices [Find a sexual health clinic - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk).

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**Meeting:** Council  
**Date:** 13 September 2023  
**From:** Councillor P Thompson  
**To:** Councillor Gillbe

**Question:**

Can the Executive Member give an update on this Council's plans for this autumn, 2023, to repair the many potholes in public roads in Bracknell Forest Borough Council area [which are of great concern to many residents] and report to Council, each year, before winter?

**Answer:**

Without doubt, the travelling public are contending with a national pothole problem.

Like all highway authorities nationally, the challenge in Bracknell Forest centres around an ageing road network which needs increased maintenance investment.

Whilst the generally difficult winters in the UK, combined with increasingly frequent severe weather events and ongoing traffic demands are all factors in the national pothole problem, there is no doubt that insufficient maintenance funding is at the core of this issue.

Council's receive annual grant funding for highway maintenance from central Government but this has broadly remained at a static level for many years (if not a decade) and the scale of this funding has simply not matched the demands of the ageing infrastructure. And of course, this Government grant is not provided solely for road maintenance, but also for meeting the needs of wider highway assets like street lighting, highway structures and drainage systems. Rising inflation has of course worsened this situation, with some construction materials having increased by over 35% in the past 18 months.

In practical terms, roads have a life-span beyond which they require resurfacing; but this process is expensive and there are many candidate roads. Even with the additional Council funding provided there is no alternative but to repair potholes in locations where our first choice would otherwise be to provide a whole new road surface. This is not unique to Bracknell Forest and all highway authorities face this reality.

But despite this challenge, the Council must be responsible. We must do all we can to maintain a safe highway network for our residents. This means managing the unavoidable pothole problem in a systematic, responsive and affordable way.

Our engineers continuously inspect and monitor the highways, necessarily making risk assessments to prioritise our resources within the limitations of our funding. Our highway inspectors patrol and identify potholes, but of course the public also play their part by reporting potholes too. There is no doubt, however, without an increase in Government funding this pothole challenge will be relentless.

Throughout the past winter and early spring (broadly October to April) the Council made 709 carriageway repairs, involving 1871 tonnes of road material.

Post winter (from May onwards) there has been a further push to stabilise network condition with 754 carriageway repairs alongside our annual road resurfacing programme – a combined total of 5798 tonnes of material.

Described in a different way, these collective carriageway works across the last 11 months would cover an area approximately the size of 15 full size football pitches.

Whilst the annual National Highways and Transport survey shows public satisfaction in Bracknell Forest in relation to '*condition of road surfaces*' as above the national average (ranked 10<sup>th</sup> overall out of the 145 Highway Authorities that take part) we must look to what more can be done. Whilst funding remains our overriding challenge, I continue to engage with our Highways and Transport Division on our future options and what we can do to maximise all efforts.

The capital programme is agreed each year by the Council's Executive at its March meeting annually, which sets aside funding for all forms of highway maintenance, including carriageway programmes to deal with matters such as potholes. Progress against this programme is captured in the Corporate Performance Report, presented to the Executive on a quarterly basis.

So, turning to the specific question regarding the actions being taken this Autumn to repair potholes, I believe I have demonstrated the broader and continuous work that is undertaken year-round to tackle the pothole challenge.

I am certainly committed to tackling the underlying pressures on highway maintenance funding, but I hope that Government will play its part too in recognising that grant funding for local authorities must now increase.

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Notes:

Current 2023/24 financial year highway maintenance budgets:

DfT Highway Maintenance Grant (core element) £1.888m  
DfT additional 'performance based' top-up for Highway Maintenance (BFC receive the highest band) £236k  
DfT additional 'pothole fund' grant (an occasional hand-out which is sporadic) £377k  
**TOTAL DfT maintenance grants £2.501m (capital)**

BFC capital contribution to Highway Maintenance £1.2m  
BFC revenue budget for Reactive Highway Maintenance £2.4m  
**TOTAL BFC maintenance funding £3.6m (capital and revenue)**

**Funding directed towards Carriageway Maintenance (combined DfT and BFC) £3.209m**