COUNCIL MEETING – 1ST OCTOBER 2026

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 (2) - PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No	Question from	Question	Response from	Response
1	Zack Culshaw Resident of Rowhill Ward	**Nature Emergency** Would Rushmoor BC consider declaring a Nature Emergency? - declare a nature emergency and develop a comprehensive plan to address it. - establish a nature advisory committee to guide the cabinet and council officers in addressing local biodiversity and habitat loss. - include ecological impact assessments alongside strategy and sustainability considerations in all committee and council reports. - make nature recovery a top strategic priority in planning policies and design guidelines for new developments. - update locals annually on progress	**Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Property** **Cllr Keith Dibble**	Cllr Keith Dibble, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Property advised that, Rushmoor welcomed residents' concerns about its natural environment and the depletion of nature that was occurring. The Council was already committed to addressing these issues and declaring a nature emergency would not assist in delivering the change the Council knew was required. The Council had already: • Published a Biodiversity Duty Report which had been updated in March 2026 which set out its plan to address the biodiversity of the Borough over the next five years. • Consulted on the natural environment as one of the priority areas for the new Local Plan • was reviewing its Green Infrastructure Plan as part of the preparations for the new Local Plan. The biodiversity reporting and the new Local Plan was overseen by the Strategic Housing and Local Plan Group which was a Cabinet Working Group. Creating a new group could cause duplication and by ensuring the existing group continued to focus on integrating nature recovery as part of its role was more likely to be effective.

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				The Council was happy to review how progress against these plans could be reported so it was more accessible to the public on an annual basis.
2	Peter Crerar Resident of Manor Park Ward	**Local Government Reorganisation** Without any mention in the 2024 Labour Party General Election Manifesto, the Labour government rushed through ill-conceived proposals to re-organise local government. Proposals supported by Rushmoor's Labour Council absorbing Rushmoor into a Greater Basingstoke called North Hampshire. On Monday the 9th of September, the Labour government was forced to abandon its inept plans as its proposals did not comply with the law. How much money (including officers time) has been wasted on this whole pointless exercise and why were the people of Rushmoor never consulted on whether or not they wanted their council abolished in the first place?	**The Leader of the Council** **Cllr Gareth Williams**	Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council advised that, Local Government Reorganisation was intended to deliver local services that were fit for the future, responsive to local needs, and capable of supporting communities in the years ahead. Residents have had opportunities to have their say on Local Government Reorganisation through four separate consultation exercises. During summer 2025, consultations on business case proposals were undertaken by Hampshire County Council, the group of 12 Hampshire districts and cities, and the North Hampshire districts. The Government had subsequently consulted residents on all submitted proposals for local government reorganisation in Hampshire. The future structure of local government was ultimately a Parliamentary decision. However, it was important that the Council engaged fully in the process to ensure the interests of Rushmoor residents and businesses were properly represented throughout. All Hampshire and Solent authorities were working together to establish the full costs of Local Government Reorganisation across the area. For Rushmoor, expenditure to date (direct cost and officer time) was estimated at approximately £275,000 on the development of the business case and a further £231,000 on implementing the decisions.

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				The Leader considered the work undertaken to date as not being a waste, as a revised timetable for Local Government Reorganisations was still awaited from central Government at this time.
3	Norma Francis - Crerar Resident of Manor Park Ward	**Housing Policy** In 1990, 67% of 25-to-34-year-olds owned their own home whereas now that figure has dropped to well under 50%. By contrast, the private rented sector has increased from 10% to 20% of all UK households. Southampton City Council has a policy of limiting Houses in Multiple Occupation to protect family housing, preserve community balance, and manage high concentrations of shared rentals driven by absent landlords, through strict planning policies, an Article 4 Direction, and expanded local licensing schemes. Does Rushmoor Borough Council have any plans to follow Southampton, and if so, when?	**Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Property** **Cllr Keith Dibble**	Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing, Planning and Property Portfolio Holder advised that, the Council recognised the challenging housing situation and was committed to tackling it. In particular, it recognised the need for affordable housing. The Council has looked at whether it could justify use of Article 4 direction and local licensing schemes and similar measures. At the moment, it was not considered that the situation in Rushmoor would meet the necessary tests to justify such measures. It was not therefore pursuing this course of action. The Government had legislated for a more stringent national licensing scheme for private sector landlords and was very focused on implementing this effectively. The national licensing scheme was due to launch in the south-east between March and July 2027. The Portfolio Holder advised that he had had the privilege of being present at a speech made by the Prime Minister earlier in the week, at which Mr Burnham had made reference to housing. The Portfolio Holder quoted the Prime Ministers' speech which had referenced the "poor state of repair" of some rented homes on Britains streets, which were "often owned by absent landlords who were paid through the benefits system but refused to reinvest in the upkeep of their properties". It was also quoted that those landlords with the "worst quality homes" would be "given warnings to improve them" and it would be made "easier for councils to

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				acquire those homes" should they refuse to improve them, through legislation as required.
4	Terry Parrott Resident of West Heath ward	**Annual Governance Statement** For 2025/26 why is the 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement still in draft form six months after the end of the financial year, and when will the 2025/26 accounts be audited and for 2026/27, why is the draft 2026/27 Annual Governance Statement not yet available despite the financial year already being six months underway, and when is it expected to be finalised?	**Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee** **Cllr Bill O'Donovan**	Cllr Bill O'Donovan, Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee advised that, on the 26th November, 2026 the Council's external auditors would be in attendance at the Audit and Governance Committee to report on the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2025/26 was a live document and would be finalised and signed off alongside the Audited Financial Statements. It was noted that the AGS 2026/27 was a live document and would not be compiled until after the financial year ended and would be produced alongside the 2026/27 financial statements. Governance matters were a live topic, and the public and Elected Members could raise any matters of governance with the Audit Committee for consideration in year with a summarisation in the AGS after the year end.
5	Resident of Wellington Ward	**Graffiti** What is the policy on graffiti removal? Where I have reported graffiti nothing has been done about it. There are tags on council property in Aldershot that have been there for years. Is it simply tolerated?	**Portfolio Holder for Pride in Place and Neighbourhood Services** **Cllr Christine Guinness**	Cllr Christine Guinness, Pride in Place and Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder advised that, the Council took pride in the Borough and worked hard to create and maintain clean and inviting areas. The demands on the Council were significant and the officers available worked as efficiently as possible to carry out service requests, prioritising when necessary. The Council could only remove graffiti from property that it owned. Many instances of graffiti were dealt with as and when they were discovered by the Council's patrolling officers, who carry graffiti wipes with them. Stubborn or large areas of graffiti required either

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				pressure washing or re-painting (dependent on the surface) and some graffiti was almost impossible to remove entirely. Offensive and/or obscene graffiti was moved as a matter of urgency and usually within 24 hrs. The Council acknowledged hot spots of graffiti across the Borough and continued to explore ways in which to deter and identify those responsible. The Council were committed to working with communities and encouraged continued reporting of graffiti offences within the Borough. If the graffiti referenced in the question was still present, the Portfolio Holder requested that the questioner contact her direct via christine.guinness@rushmoor.gov.uk and she would endeavour to look into the situation.
6	Kyle Russell Resident of Wellington Ward	**Wellesley Development** Will RBC refuse planning permission for any further housing at Wellesley until key community facilities, including shops, community centre and sports pavilion, are delivered? Under the original planning arrangements, many of these facilities should already be completed. However, residents are concerned that the developer has repeatedly been allowed to revise delivery milestones while housing numbers continue to increase. There are also ongoing issues with unfinished areas being left below the required standard, with no organisation accepting responsibility. As a result,	**Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Property** **Cllr Keith Dibble**	Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing, Planning and Property Portfolio Holder advised that, the delivery of key community facilities was important for the Wellesley Community and a matter of concern for the Council. However, it would not form a legally valid reason for refusal of planning permission for further development. Instead, the Council continued to engage closely with Grainger on delivery of their responsibilities. The Leader, Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder and Executive Head of Property and Planning met with Grainger quarterly with regular further meetings of the senior leadership in between. In addition, there was a regular implementation meeting between the two organisations.

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		residents are experiencing poor grounds maintenance and delays in land being transferred to the Wellesley Trust.		The economic climate in recent years had made delivery of aspects of the scheme challenging, in particular, the realisation of the Neighbourhood Centre and community facility. The Portfolio Holder was glad to report a number of proposals were progressing and were expected to be made public in the coming months. The Deed of Variation to enable the Community Centre to move forward had been signed by all parties except the DIO. Once this was received Grainger would be able to submit the planning permission to move this project forward. The Neighbourhood Centre was currently being considered on legal matters, which were expected to conclude by the end of this calendar year. This would enable planning permission during the first quarters of 2027.
7	Chris Ankers Resident of Knellwood Ward	**Asset Disposal for Investment** Why don't you sell properties *(assets)* in other councils (*areas)* and use the money to invest in assets in this council, e.g. astroturf pitch etc that you can get a return on by hiring out?	**Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Property** **Cllr Keith Dibble**	Cllr Keith Dibble, Housing, Planning and Property Portfolio Holder advised that, the Council had undertaken two reviews in recent years of its assets to establish whether to retain or dispose of assets and how to achieve the best value for money. In order to provide best value, the sale of the asset needed to provide a revenue saving that outweighed the loss of income. In the vast majority of cases the Council's assets provided more income than would be saved from their sale and if the Council disposed of them it would be in a worse position financially. Where the Council identified underperforming or high risk assets which should be sold it would dispose of them and has done so. For example, 168 High St, Guildford.

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				The Council would be reviewing its Portfolio again as part of the 2027/28 year's budget planning.
8	Roger Watkins Resident of North Town Ward	**Frimley Park Proposed Location** Frimley Park acts as the general hospital for all residents of Aldershot and Farnborough. Does the Leader have an opinion on the proposed location for the new Frimley Park Hospital, which is 2 1/2 miles north-east of the existing building. Does he agree with me that unless there are major infrastructure changes, Rushmore residents will be impacted by having to negotiate already heavily congested local roads?	**The Leader of the Council** **Cllr Gareth Williams**	Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of the Council advised that, the proposed location of the new Frimley Park Hospital was clearly an important issue for many Rushmoor residents. Any relocation of a significant public facility further away from some communities was likely to result in longer journey times for those residents. The Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust was currently consulting on the proposed location, and the Leader strongly encouraged residents to take part and ensure their views were heard. The Council would also be making its own representations as part of the consultation process, including highlighting the importance of ensuring that transport infrastructure and accessibility for Rushmoor residents were fully considered in any final decision.

Public Questions submitted and not accepted for a response at the Council Meeting:

No.	Issue raised in question	Reason not accepted
1	Parking on gun hill for the school - congestion.	On street parking is the responsibility of Hampshire County Council (HCC). Questioner referred to HCC
2	Double yellow lines for Montgomery Road. Congestion issues for residents	Highways and on street parking is the responsibility of HCC. Questioner referred to HCC.
3	Evidence of drug use in family residential area	Deemed a police matter. Questioner referred to Hampshire Police and the Housing Development Manager.
4	Action to address safety in response to community tension	Further clarification sought from questioner related to the details raised
5	Decisions related to housing asylum seekers	Decisions are the responsibility of the Home Office (Government) referred to previous answer on this topic.