



Winchester City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 2 November 2005

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14(2)a

Minutes 393 and 394 Cabinet 12 October 2005 (Pages 359-360)

QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Lipscomb

To: The Leader of the Council

"Will the Leader note that neither of Cabinet Minutes 393 (Carroll Youth Centre - Emergency Grant request) and 394 (Decision under Section A.2 of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers - Appointment of Consultants) is explicit as to the decision referred to? A similar situation applies to Referred Minute 388 (South East Plan "Where shall we live?" Consultation) and all three instances reflect a style and tradition of minuting which relies on the reader referring back to the original report.

Will the Leader agree that clarity and transparency are cornerstones of our minuting processes and will she therefore agree to ask the City Secretary and Solicitor to review the Council's minuting practices and procedures and bring a report before Members to ensure that resolutions and recommendations stand alone without reference elsewhere?"

Reply

"I am sure that most Members are aware that, in common with many other local authorities, the Council operates a 'report based' system of minuting. In practice, this means that the number of the written report (e.g. CAB999) is included in the minute as a reference and none of the detail set out in that report is reproduced in the minute. The main aim of this practice is to avoid report summaries increasing the length of minutes, when the whole document is easily available elsewhere.

If the meeting amends the report's recommendation(s), a summary of the discussion which produced the change is included in the minute, to provide a record of what issues persuaded Members to take a different view to that recommended in the report.

With regard to recording the final decision of the meeting, the recommendations contained in the report should normally be reproduced in full in the minute, whether or not they are amended. This is because, as far as practicable, minutes should set out the full decision.

On those occasions when the 'full decision' would include several pages of comments on a consultation document for instance, then the minute will only record any amendments to the recommended comments, unless the document was particularly important or complex, in which case it could be appended to the minutes.

On other occasions when, for example, the report recommends 'agreeing the general approach/comments set out in paras 5.1 – 5.9', then only that phrase will be recorded in the minutes as the decision. This may be one area for improvement.

The specific points made by Cllr Lipscomb are accepted and I believe his aims may be best achieved by requesting the City Secretary and Solicitor to liaise with report authors to draft, wherever practicable, specific recommendations providing reasonable detail of the proposed decision, rather than having more general wording such as referring to several paragraphs of a report.

On that basis, I do not think a committee report on the matter is required."