



Winchester

City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 2 November 2005

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14(2)a

Minute 390 Cabinet 12 October (Page 390)

QUESTION 13

From: Councillor Jeffs

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning

"In view of the importance of achieving the Government performance planning targets and safeguarding our Planning Delivery Grant, would the Portfolio Holder agree that a small team of say three (one non-planning officer and two members) be appointed to review how the targets are being met. That team would meet and review progress on a monthly basis and report to the Environment Scrutiny Panel. It would have the mandate for monitoring and recommending any necessary corrective action to the Planning department.

'Would the Portfolio Holder also agree that Cllr. Beckett's statements on the Planning Improvement Plan made at the Cabinet meeting on 12th October (Council Minutes Page 357, Item 390 first para.) appear to be misrecorded as I believe the "small team" suggestion was made at that meeting. The Environment Scrutiny Panel meets too infrequently (about every six weeks) to effectively control the situation."

Reply

"The Council now has a well established scrutiny process and I am sure that the Environment Scrutiny Panel meetings are frequent enough for its members to be able to monitor and comment upon progress in improving planning performance. Also the monthly meetings of the Portfolio Holder with relevant officers are an additional form of less formal scrutiny when I would expect the progress of the performance targets to be discussed. At the moment I am not persuaded that additional meetings of other officers and Members (which would only be able to report to the same meetings of the Scrutiny Panel) would add any value to the existing scrutiny process. However I am willing to discuss this with the chairman of the Environment Scrutiny Panel as I said when he raised this matter with me at the last meeting of the Panel.

Detailed performance figures are produced on a very regular basis and the Planning Improvement Plan provides a schedule of action which is now underway.

Cllr Beckett did make a comment regarding the scrutiny process in his remarks to Cabinet at the meeting on the 12th October 2005 and suggested that regular monitoring was necessary. I recall there was also mention of a small group, which would also have to report to the parent Scrutiny Panel. My response at Cabinet, as here, is that the Environment Scrutiny Panel is well equipped to take on the task itself and meets frequently enough to do so effectively."