



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 2 November 2005

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14(2)b

QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Verney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

“In this year of the volunteer will the Portfolio Holder consider following the lead of some other councils by giving exemption from council tax to the unpaid Special Constables living in our area? This will encourage the type of public spirited volunteer to join and existing members to continue their worthwhile service. During my 31 years as a Special Constable I was involved in helping the public almost as much while off duty as when in uniform. These type of public spirited people will be more likely to immediately report vandalism and antisocial behaviour, thus making this District an even better place to live in. The cost to the council in lost tax will be very small and a great deal less than the cost of employing extra regular police or Community Wardens but will have the effect of increasing available manpower, and extra trained eyes and ears in this time of terrorism.”

Reply

“The City Council and the community generally greatly values the service provided by volunteers such as Special Constables. Clearly many parts of our public services rely upon the enthusiasm and involvement of individuals who enjoy putting something back into the community and do not seek a reward. As well as Special Constables we as a society benefit from a variety of individuals volunteering for such things as school governors, Red Cross and St John Ambulance personnel, carers, charity trustees and youth workers to name just a few.

Local authorities have the power to create locally defined discounts which could be used to grant exemptions to particular classes of people. The costs of such discounts are met solely by the City Council (ie the costs are not shared with the County Council or other precepting authorities). The average Council Tax bill for a Band D property is £1,200, Band A being £800 and Band H being £2,400.

The Council is largely unaware of how many such individuals live in the Winchester District and therefore cannot say exactly what financial impact this proposal might have. However the financial consequences are potentially not insignificant and that together with the fact that most if not all volunteers do so without seeking a reward, it is suggested that this proposal should not be taken forward.”