



**Winchester**  
City Council

**COUNCIL MEETING – 31 October 2007**

**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 1**

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

“How many full and part time staff/officer posts are currently vacant?”

**Reply**

“The current agreed establishment of the Council is 523.17 fte. Of that there are 490.38 fte in post (569 headcount) with a net figure of 33.59 fte vacant. This net vacancy figure takes into account those members of staff who are employed in posts which are not on the agreed establishment and which are therefore over filled. In the majority of cases these are staff taken on with temporary contracts under the delegated powers of the Heads of Division or Directors. These are offset against the overall vacancy figure.

If the employees in non-established posts are discounted, the overall figure for vacant post sits at 46.97. Of this number, 31 fte are full time posts, the remaining 13.97 fte are made up of part time posts. Within the 13.97 which relates to part time posts 4.9 fte cannot be considered as vacancies as they relate to a number of posts which have a few hours vacant (less than the equivalent of 2 days) and which could not be recruited to in their existing form. This is frequently the case for example when a full time member of staff returns to part time hours after maternity leave.”



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**QUESTION 2**

From: Councillor Beveridge

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport

“Does the Portfolio Holder agree that the decline in the number of cars parking in the Park and Ride car parks this year compared with 2006 reported to the Environment Scrutiny Panel is a significant cause for concern for Winchester’s parking strategy? Can he confirm that he is taking steps to address the causes of this decline?”

**Reply**

“Usage of the Park and Ride did show a decline in the early part of the year but the figures in September and October have shown a reversal of this trend. It would be wrong to immediately draw a negative conclusion from any reduction in usage. The decline in the number of vehicles parked could be the result of more people deciding to car share, thus cutting their own costs whilst also having a positive effect on the environment, or to use public transport for their whole journey. Whilst it is possible that some people have decided to use long stay town centre car parks instead of Park and Ride, the differentials on cost still ensure that park and ride is a very good value option.

The building works at Hampshire County Council and resulting relocating of staff within Winchester and to other areas may also have had an impact on usage, although this is very difficult to ascertain. The Saturday usage figure is very encouraging and has been steadily increasing. It is hoped that this will be further helped by the 3 hour charge to be implemented in due course.”



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#### QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Biggs

To: The Leader

“West Meon Post Office has been scheduled for closure and replacement by an ‘Outreach service’, as yet undefined.

Given that:

- The financial analysis on which the decision was based is for the last three years but the relocation to the village shop caused the Post Office to be closed or only partially open from June – November 2006
- The financial analysis only takes account of a very short period when shop and post office were combined
- Some 450 local residents (over half the entire village) have bought a share in the community shop, thereby indicating considerable support for the shop. Furthermore, 50% of the population is over 45 and Post office closure would necessitate an increase in car travel in an area where public transport is also being reduced.
- A £20,000 Post Office Rural Restart grant was received in mid 2006 and the Post Office may recover this grant if the Post office is shut, leaving the shop insolvent.

Would the Leader agree with me that, while it would be expected that representations be made on behalf of all communities in the Winchester District that are to lose their post offices, a particularly vigorous representation should be made in respect of West Meon?”

#### Reply

“The Council is currently considering its response to the Government and Post Office’s proposals for reducing the number of post office branches nationally. A report outlining the proposals and concerns will be submitted to Cabinet on 14 November 2007.

In the Winchester District, five branches have been earmarked for closure including the West Meon branch. There is a general concern about the impact of all the closure proposals, as they tend to affect the most vulnerable people in our communities. The Post Office propose providing ‘outreach’ services in two areas, Micheldever and West Meon, but it is not yet known how this would replace the current services.

I note the particular matters raised in relation to the West Meon situation and will ensure that the points are part of the response that the Council will make on behalf of that community. I should also say that there will be opportunity for Members to raise concerns in respect of any of the other closure proposals so as to make as strong and robust a response as is possible.

I am sure all the communities affected will be making their own responses to the consultation and indeed I would urge them to do so.”



## COUNCIL MEETING – 31 October 2007

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#### QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Jackson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Safety

“Does the Portfolio Holder share my concern that Winchester has been described as ‘bottom of the heap’ in UK’s pollution league?”

What new action does the Portfolio Holder intend to take to rectify this situation?”

#### Reply

“The report to which you refer is the WWF report on ‘Ecological footprint of British city residents’. This is not simply about pollution. Ecological footprint is the measure of land that can be attributed to resource consumption.

It measures the hectares it takes to grow our food and farm the animals we eat; the area that our house stands on and that oil refineries and other energy infrastructure we depend on take up; the hectares of forest that would be needed to absorb the CO2 emitted by our fuels; a share of the area taken up by our roads; and everything else we do that has an impact on the planet’s ecology.

I am concerned that Winchester residents were described as worse than other city residents, but the real message of the report is that the way we live our lives, in Winchester, the South East and Britain as a whole, is unsustainable.

The commitment to change by residents, organisations and businesses is crucial in making a difference - this is not something the Council can do alone. However, we are doing, and continue to do good work. Here are some examples:

- Following roll-out of alternate bin collections, recycling rates are currently 44%
- Our park and ride buses are eco-friendly
- We are improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock, and ensuring new social housing is built to high eco-standards.
- We are working towards creating sustainable communities in West of Waterlooville, and ensuring sustainability in developments such as Silver Hill.
- And our plan to tackle Climate Change will be presented to Cabinet in December.”



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**QUESTION 5**

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

“Is the Council currently Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard compliant, if not, when is it anticipated we will be?”

**Reply**

“The Council is not compliant currently. MasterCard and Visa have different compliance deadlines. MasterCard was June 2007 and Visa has no specific date.

A significant amount of work has been carried out including fact finding with relevant partners e.g. Verrus and Capita.

Assuming partners provide the relevant documentation, the Council will submit a compliance statement by the end of the financial year.”



## COUNCIL MEETING – 31 October 2007

### Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

#### QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Cooper

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Safety

“A recent submission to a neighbouring local authority indicated that to roll out a weekly collection of domestic food waste for a group of 8000 homes would incur capital costs of £70,000 for bins and around £300,000 to provide the specialist vehicles needed to service 10,000 homes to be included in the scheme overall. The annual revenue cost of this extension to a further 8000 homes was estimated at £160,000.

Given the fact that Winchester has some 47,700 homes, nearly 6 (actually 5.96) times higher than that of the area considered above can I have answers to the following questions:

a) Will the Portfolio Holder please confirm that, given its rural nature, the overall costs for such a weekly food waste collection scheme in the Winchester District are very unlikely to be lower?

b) Will the Portfolio Holder also agree that if 2 specialist vehicles were considered necessary to service a 10,000 house scheme it would be reasonable to assume that as many as 9 vehicles would be required to service the Winchester District's 47000+ homes at a capital cost of around £1.35M and that a further £420,000 capital cost would have to be met for bins and other equipment?

c) Will he also confirm that it is reasonable to assume that the overall revenue cost of such a scheme for the whole Winchester District would be in the region of £870,000 per annum even after some recycling income and scale savings against a gross revenue cost of £953,000 (= £160,000 x 5.96) plus £70,000 lost interest on a capital investment of £1.77M @ 4%?

d) Can the Portfolio Holder also confirm that as things stand the professional judgment of this Council's Officers is that it is not environmentally sustainable to transport food waste in specially commissioned tankers to Dorset for processing as would be required now?

e) Will the Portfolio Holder also confirm that the current professional advice is that the food waste content of the current non-recycled waste is an important component in the process which allows large amounts of domestic refuse to be incinerated for power generation?

f) Finally, can the Portfolio Holder assure me that this Council will continue to review the situation and that, if and when more local processing facilities become available which allow weekly collections of food waste to be processed in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way and when costs can be lowered, this Council will actively pursue the uptake of such a scheme?"

### Reply

"a) The costs of introducing a separate weekly collection of food waste within the Winchester District would be considerable and significantly more than those for an urban authority.

b) The cost of separately collecting food waste and the number of specialist vehicles required would be dependent upon the location of disposal infrastructure, collection methodology, numbers of properties to be serviced, participation by residents and whether or not such a scheme was to cover the whole District.

At the present time it is estimated that a District wide scheme would require funding in excess of £1million per annum revenue including vehicle leasing costs. In addition £700-800k of capital funding would be required to purchase and distribute storage bins/caddies to each household and promote the scheme. It should be noted that under current arrangements there would be no additional income from the collection of food waste as a recyclable material to offset the ongoing revenue costs.

Any such scheme would need to be piloted and evaluated prior to its introduction in order to assess the numbers of vehicles required, staffing, final costs, environmental benefits and customer acceptance.

c) I have answered this question in the reply to *part b* above.

d) There are currently no facilities for the treatment of food waste within Hampshire and none are proposed within the District in the near future. Any food waste collected would require transportation out of County for treatment and it is therefore the Officers opinion that this is not an environmentally or financially sustainable solution at the present time.

e) I can confirm that the professional advice is that the food waste content of the current non-recycled waste is an important component in the process of domestic refuse incineration for power generation as it helps to regulate the calorific value and balance of waste treated through energy recovery.

f) I can give an assurance that the Council will continue to keep under review options for the weekly collection and disposal of food waste. Further consideration will be given to providing a weekly collection service for food waste once suitable processing facilities have been provided locally and that it represents a sound environmental and financial solution."



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**QUESTION 7**

From: Councillor Cooper

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

“Can the Portfolio Holder inform me as to the total Revenue Income derived from each 1% of Council Tax levied by Winchester City Council?”

**Reply**

“For each 1% increase about £60,000 pa is raised.”





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**QUESTION 8**

From: Councillor Bell

To: The Portfolio Holder for Performance and Communications

“Given that a quarter of the Winchester District population do not have a personal computer at home (24.9% quoted in answer to Q12 at Council meeting of 12 September) and that a larger percentage do not have access to the internet, could the Portfolio Holder inform me what steps are being taken and what performance indicators are in place to ensure that individual citizens who do not have electronic access to information are provided with it on request in hard copy?”

Would the Portfolio Holder further agree that where the individual has a specific case before the Council, whether on Planning or Licensing or Housing or other matter, committee reports relating to that case should be available to the individual in hard copy as of right?”

**Reply**

“The most recent quarterly monitoring figures are showing that the Council’s latest drive to reduce paper consumption in terms of committee reports and minutes is achieving encouraging results. However, paper copies are still available at the meeting and, on request, can be collected in advance; a note to this effect appears in the published monthly list of meetings. Even before this latest initiative, the requests from the public for paper copies were minimal and that situation has not changed, but the Member can be assured that hard copies will remain available on request to anyone who does not have access to the Internet.

For completeness on this point, it should be noted that in June 2006, the local libraries discontinued holding paper copies of our agendas and reports. They direct users to the website on the library’s PCs.

With regard to licensing applications submitted to the Licensing Sub Committee, a paper copy of the agenda is always sent to the applicant. Interested Parties receive an official notification of the hearing, but that notification does not currently mention the availability of the committee report, either on the website or in hard copy; this information will now be included. Those who make representations but who cannot be categorised as ‘Interested Parties’, will also now receive that additional information.

With regard to planning applications, many of these are submitted via professional agents who do have access to the Council's website. However, press notices and individual letters of notification in relation to planning applications advise that application documents are available for inspection at the City Offices. Additionally, the individual letters advise that copies of the application documents are held with Parish Councils (where appropriate) and can be viewed by arrangement with the Parish Clerk. With regard to hard copies of the Committee reports, these are sent out on request.

Finally, it is worth emphasising that whilst the Council will continue to cut back on paper usage wherever practically possible, any reasonable request by a member of the public to be supplied with a paper copy of information will be met. There may be occasions when, say, the size of the document or confidentiality issues may limit what can be produced, but officers will always try to co-operate where possible."



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**QUESTION 9**

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport

“Can I be advised as to what powers are available to the Local Authority to amend speed limits to 20 mph and whether these powers have changed since May 2005?”

**Reply**

“Speed limits are a reserved matter under the Traffic Management Agency. As such, most speed limits are dealt with by the County Council and there are no powers in law for the City Council to unilaterally impose a 20 mph limit on a highway.

The national regulations which cover the provision of 20mph limits were recently relaxed and more discretion given to the County Council to allow the installation of 20 mph limits, without speed reducing features such as traffic calming being installed at the same time. Whether they use this flexibility remains a matter for the County Council.”



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**QUESTION 10**

From: Councillor Johnston

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport

“Could the Portfolio Holder indicate whether any of the neighbouring authorities in Hampshire or nearby intend to restrict the hours of elderly free bus pass holders to the hours of 9.30am to 11.00pm?”

Reply

“Other authorities in the Hampshire Farepass Scheme are in the process of deciding the time periods over which the concessions will apply when the National Scheme starts in April 2008. From initial investigations, it appears that some will be recommending that pass holders will continue to be allowed to travel free all day and others will not. Those which it is known have agreed to offer all day travel are:

- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Basingstoke and Deane District Council
- Test Valley Borough Council
- East Hants District Council

Those which will be recommending that the Statutory National Scheme times of 9.30am till 11pm are adopted are:

- Havant Borough Council
- Portsmouth City Council
- Gosport Borough Council
- Winchester City Council”



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**QUESTION 11**

From: Councillor Huxstep

To: The Leader, as Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism

“Will the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism please state how far the Council has progressed in considering publishing contract opportunities in a South-East business Portal by 2008, in accordance with the ‘Procurement Concordat for Small and Medium sized Enterprises?’”

**Reply**

“The Council has been developing a Contracts Register, which should be finalised within the next two months.

The South East Centre of Excellence (SECE) is promoting the use of a contracts portal developed by Due North. This is a web based tool - free to use for both buyers (Local Authorities) and prospective sellers – that is intended to host basic contract information for 74 authorities in the South East.

Once the Contracts Register is ‘live’ we can begin to put relevant information on the Due North portal.

It is the intention of SECE that the information gained from the portal will be utilised to consider collaborative contract opportunities for authorities in the South East as well as increased interest from potential contractors.”



## COUNCIL MEETING – 31 October 2007

### Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

#### QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Collin

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Safety

“The Portfolio Holder will remember our correspondence about the ‘sharp edge’ of policy that allows families of 6 or more to have two large residual waste bins whereas no provision is made for families of 5. The Portfolio Holder will further remember that I argued that families of 5 should be allowed to have a further smaller residual waste bin, if other circumstances support the conclusion that they have difficulties managing with the standard provision.

Will the Portfolio Holder tell me if any such exceptions have been made to the current policy? Will he further tell me whether he will be willing to support my suggestion that the sharp edge of policy which disadvantages families in particular circumstances can be relaxed? Will he further therefore reconsider his refusal to help the family in my ward which has been the subject of our previous correspondence?”

#### Reply

“The policy of only providing additional bins for households of 6 members or larger was introduced following successful completion of a trial scheme, which was evaluated by the previous administration of the City Council. Whilst the policy has led to some requests from households with 5 members for additional bins, these have not been agreed, as it is important to have a consistent policy. In all cases a visit by a Recycling Advisor has been offered and, where carried out, the evidence shows that the householder could adapt to the new scheme, provided they are prepared to embrace the behavioural change required to manage their waste.

Following recent requests regarding this subject, I have asked for this issue to be revisited and requested cost implications of any change to the current policy for consideration. Any proposals involving additional costs are likely to need submission as a growth bid, for consideration alongside other priorities at a time when resources are particularly stretched. It should also be borne in mind that the aim of the ABC collection scheme is to not only increase the recycling rate, but also to reduce the total amount of waste produced by each household and provision of additional bins would contradict these aims.”



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**QUESTION 13**

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

“Does any member of the Guildhall Staff or the Department responsible for the management of these facilities have any formal marketing qualification or relevant marketing experience of a similar conference and leisure facility?”

**Reply**

“The Acting Guildhall Manager (normally Senior Event Manager) has this experience with a hotel background. We have also specified it as a requirement for the Guildhall Manager interviews which are taking place this week.”



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**QUESTION 14**

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources

“Can I be advised of the purpose and value of the two signage boards outside the front steps of the Guildhall and also could I be advised as to the current literature on display in them?”

**Reply**

“The current literature details the seasonal offering at the Guildhall plus information on the Guildhall Gallery move. We are starting to change the information on the sign boards more regularly. (Last week we had information on the Guildhall café.)

These boards are used for marketing purposes to advertise the events and services offered in the Guildhall and to raise the profile of the Guildhall plus other relevant information.”





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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 15**

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities

“Was it an administrative error by the City Council that caused some senior citizens living at Makins Court to receive a threat from the licensing authority concerning the use of their television sets, which caused them some concern?”

**Reply**

“There was a significant delay in the City Council receiving renewal notifications from the licensing authority. Also, due to staff shortages, there was some delay in getting the completed notifications back to the licensing authority. Both of these issues were compounded by the postal strikes at that time.

As a result, the licensing authority did send out letters demanding payment to residents entitled to free licences. These were immediately cancelled once the licensing authority was made aware of the circumstances.

The Council responded by sending an immediate letter of apology and explanation to all residents affected. Sheltered scheme managers, mobile wardens and housing officers attending schemes were also briefed and discussed the matter with residents to put their minds at ease.

The Council’s policies have since been reviewed and a more proactive reminder system has been set up to ensure officers pursue notifications if they are late in future years.”



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**QUESTION 16**

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport

“Can I be advised of the total number of new style street nameplates that have now been erected across the District and their total cost to this Council?”

**Reply**

“The annual budget for street nameplate provision is £25,000. This covers not just new name plates but maintenance and replacement of damaged nameplates. Some new nameplates are also paid for privately e.g. by developers.

Each nameplate typically costs £180 and around 140 are provided each year, some of which will be replacements and some new. The new policy to include the City Council logo was initiated in April 2000, but there are no easily accessible records of the precise number installed in this period.

The City Council has a statutory duty to supply street nameplates.”



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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 17**

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport

“Can I be advised as to the value of the traffic island on St Cross Road opposite the turning for Five Bridges Road and whether the Portfolio Holder feels that there would be any value in having an additional refuge/crossing point on the Grange Road/Close and St Cross Road junction?”

**Reply**

“The pedestrian island on St Cross Road, opposite the turning for Five Bridges Road, has a value in terms of helping cyclists and pedestrians get across the road, and in addition, help to slow down vehicle speeds on the approaches to it.

An additional refuge/crossing point near the Grange Road/Close and St Cross Road junction would help pedestrians to cross the road to reach the bus stop. This is a County Council matter and has been raised with the County in the past, in relation to development in that area. It is understood that there may be design issues which would make the provision of an island difficult and the County Council has not pursued the matter.”



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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 18**

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Leader

“Does the Leader consider that the Tower Arts Centre plays a significant role in the cultural life of the City?”

**Reply**

“Yes, I do agree that the Tower Arts Centre plays a significant role in the cultural life of the city. That is why I agreed to commission a consultant to test the options for the future of the Tower and to give a view on what the County Council’s proposals for a transfer of management to Kings School would actually mean in practice. There is a public meeting regarding the future of the Tower tomorrow night and it would be pre-emptive to say anything more in advance of this.

However, I can reiterate that the annual revenue grant of £21,000 will remain to support the programme as outlined in the Service Level Agreement.”