



COUNCIL MEETING – 25 June 2008

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Jackson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access

“What measures are being put in place to ensure that Winchester City Council maximises its income to promote cycling in the City and District?”

Reply

“The City Council plays a supporting role to the County Council in the provision and promotion of cycling and associated facilities. The County Council as the Transport Authority has the major responsibility.

The City Council is however keen to assist and support cycling as far as possible within the resources it has available for this. Elected members and officers are part of the Winchester Cycling Group and thereby assist with the promotion of cycling and the development of cycling schemes.

The City Council assist with the provision of cycling parking facilities and in the identification and development of cycling schemes again as far as resources allow. The City Council also contributes towards the costs of running Bike Week activities and jointly with WACA runs the Bikeabout Scheme after having secured £20,000 from the County Council to help fund the scheme.

In terms of maximising income, a number of opportunities exist such as grants from the Government and organisations such as Sustrans. Funds can also be secured through developers contributions negotiated as part of new developments and the recent adoption of a new transport contributions mechanism will help to secure additional resources which can be put towards cycling schemes.

The City Council and County Council are working with Sustrans to help provide the National Cycle Route from Alresford to Southampton.

Other opportunities such as the Government's Cycling Towns initiative will be looked at closely in the future. It was considered that the most recent invitation by Government to bid for this scheme was too early for Winchester as one of the main criteria of having a fully developed cycling strategy could not be met. This is now being developed as part of the Winchester Town Access Plan.

The City Council is encouraging staff to play their part by signing up to a scheme which allows them to purchase a cycle to commute to work tax-free. This will be announced as part of a package of measures designed to improve home-work transport shortly.”



Winchester
City Council

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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Weston

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency

“Could Winchester City Council consider a discounted Council Tax Scheme for Special Constables who live and work in the District?”

Reply

“Council Tax legislation allows a billing authority (Winchester City Council) to reduce the amount of Council Tax paid in relation to a particular case or class of cases. The amount a person is liable to pay may be reduced to nil. The reduction applies to the amount a person is liable to pay so exemptions, discounts etc must be taken into account before applying the reduction.

Any such scheme would need to be formally approved and the rules would need to be defined carefully to ensure that the scheme is fit for purpose and easy to administer.

The cost of awarding a reduction is funded in full by the City Council’s General Fund. This would include all Council Tax amounts i.e. county, police, fire and parish, not just the District Council Tax. The cost of administering the scheme would also fall to the City Council.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Safety

“Can the Portfolio Holder advise me whether there has been any noticeable reduction in the problems of alcoholism across the City (6 Town Wards) since the introduction of the extended Alcohol Exclusion Zone (AEZ) and whether he feels that further funds should be committed to offering support for alcoholics as part of the AEZ project?”

Reply

“The Community Safety Partnership will be undertaking a full evaluation of the AEZ in its entirety in the Autumn of this year. It will be only at this point that the Partnership will be in a position to verify the success of the project and means that they will be in a better position to identify any specific gaps in services.

It is important to recognise that the AEZ has been put in place to deal with harassment, intimidation and public order issues that can be attributed to those who are ‘in drink’. However it is unlikely to contribute to a reduction in alcoholism amongst those individuals who may already be entrenched in their need for alcohol.

The Community Safety Partnership cannot say for certain that the AEZ has been successful in its reduction of alcohol related nuisance until the evaluation has been completed. However, the police are saying anecdotally that they feel the AEZ has been successful and that it has encouraged a core group of individuals who might be considered as ‘street drinkers’ and who drink in public places, to do so much more covertly. This may have had a positive impact on members of the public in relation to the fear of crime. Certainly the number of ‘concerned calls’ to the Community Safety team has reduced significantly. The Community Safety Manager has taken a ‘snapshot’ of nuisance related calls to 101 from October 2007 to date. Of the 93 recorded incidents, 24% of those were alcohol-related nuisance but did not fall into the category of under-age drinking or issues specifically relating to the night-time economy. In relation to this snapshot, it is most likely that when we undertake a full evaluation we will find that there is more of a need for alcohol-related outreach services for young underage drinkers than adults.

The Community Safety Partnership has agreed that the impact of drugs & alcohol in relation to crime & disorder will be considered as overarching themes within the partnership plan over the next three years. This will mean that as gaps are identified the Partnership may need to look at how those gaps can be closed and/or resourced.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access

“Can the Portfolio Holder advise me of the number of bus shelters in the City area (the 6 City Wards plus Harestock, Badger Farm and Oliver's Battery) that have been vandalised over the last two years and approximately what has been the cost to repair the damaged structures?”

Reply

“20 bus shelters in this area were damaged by accident or vandalism in both 2006/07 and 2007/08. The cost of repairs to these was £5,498 in 2006/07 and £3,421 in 2007/08.

We do not specifically record how the damage was caused so we cannot split the costs between accident and vandalism.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment

“Could the Portfolio Holder explain to me the facilities available for disabled people to use the Mornhill recreational land given by Hampshire County Council in mitigation for the loss of land at Bar End when the Park and Ride was extended and whether there are any figures available for the number of people who use this area?”

Reply

“At the time that the improvement scheme to this land was implemented in 2004 3 wheelchair accessible gates were installed and linked by a footpath so as to ensure the site was readily accessible to disabled persons. A motorised wheelchair turning area was also installed. The client for these works was Hampshire County Council and the scheme was designed and implemented by the Engineering Team of the City Council.

Members of staff within the Environment Division are not aware of any data relating to site usage as this is not routine data which would be collected or collated by City Council staff.”



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access

“Can the Portfolio Holder advise me of the expenditure that has been incurred by this Authority in the last three years on costs awards against the Council over lost planning appeals?”

Reply

“In the last three years there have been 20 applications for costs against the Council in relation to planning appeals. Of these, 6 were allowed.

The Council’s records confirm that 4 of these were pursued and amounts totalling £22,200 were paid. Of the remaining 2 cases, 1 award (a partial award of costs in respect of an enforcement notice) was not pursued (in any event the issue was a minor part of the appeal and the amount involved would have been modest). There is no record of an amount being paid in the remaining case, which also appears not to have been pursued.

Just outside of three years from the date of this question there was a large cost award against the Council for one application, for a total amount of £34,500.

Officers are currently investigating bringing in a process where costs awarded will be monitored on a quarterly basis.”