



**Winchester**  
City Council

**COUNCIL MEETING – 22 April 2009**

**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 1**

From: Councillor Johnston

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment

“What proportion of waste collected for recycling is currently being recycled, what are the current recycling levels and how do they compare with last year?”

**Reply**

“Recycling rates vary from month to month. During 2007/08 the City Council recycled and composted an average of 36% of household waste and it is expected that this will increase to an average of 38% for 2008/09.

Generally, the Council aims to embrace the principles in the waste hierarchy as detailed in the Waste Strategy for England 2007. This gives priority to waste avoidance, reuse, recycle and composting, energy recovery from any residual waste with land filling only being used as a last resort.

Our current policies are not only proving successful at recycling and composting but also in the prevention of waste. In this respect the overall waste generated has reduced from 400kg per head during 2004/05 to 373.6kg per head for 2007/08 and is expected to fall still further to 365kg per head by 2010.”



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#### QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Evans

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing

“Could the Portfolio Holder for Housing please inform me of officer resources available to progress affordable housing projects. In particular, could the Portfolio Holder inform me whether the Community Land Trust project proposed for Wickham has the Council’s full support?”

#### Reply

“The Council invests approximately 10 hours per week of housing officer time to enable rural affordable housing schemes. In addition significant support is also received from planning and legal officers at certain stages of any scheme development. The Council also part funds a Rural Housing Enabler (employed by Community Action Hampshire) as an independent adviser to Parishes.

The Council has a well established partner to deliver rural affordable housing schemes in Hyde Martlett who the Homes and Community Agency have identified as their lead partner for Hampshire schemes.

The priority is, however, to focus on the delivery of affordable housing rather than the vehicle by which this is done. This is particularly so given the overwhelming requirement for affordable housing and the limited resources available to the Council to ensure the delivery of affordable housing. The Council has given considerable officer time to the support of Wickham Community Land Trust (CLT) as it values community’s involvement in the provision of housing. Discussions remain ongoing with the CLT. However, the CLT have not been able to demonstrate what additional value they would bring as a provider over and above that which Hyde Martlett could offer. Nor have they demonstrated their financial robustness or suitable constitutional arrangements.

A meeting has been organised, which involves the Portfolio Holder for Housing, a local member and the Parish Council to explore these matters further with the CLT. These issues must be addressed to justify departing from the current model of provision and to justify the additional officer time and resources that would be required to develop a new model of delivery.

If the CLT are not able to progress the scheme, Hyde Martlett would remain in a strong position to progress the whole of the planned housing scheme independently.”



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**QUESTION 3**

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access

“Would the Portfolio Holder confirm that it is not the Council’s intention to carry out action to enforce the Planning Conditions that were imposed by the Development Control Committee on the Travellers Site located in Appledown Lane near New Alresford in February 2008, which were specifically designed to restrict the site use to one family?”

Would he further confirm that the officers have advised the residents on site that they should submit a planning application to allow the site to accommodate all the persons currently living at the site, which is in breach of the planning conditions which were applied at the time the planning condition was imposed?”

**Reply**

“The current planning consent for the occupation of the site referred to does restrict occupancy a single family.

Officers are aware that a number of people live on the site but, based upon their investigations, consider that they form part of a single extended family. Consequently, condition 4 of the permission (one gypsy family only) is not being breached at present.

Officers are of the opinion that there are other breaches of conditions imposed upon the current permission because an additional mobile home has been brought on to the site. In accordance with good enforcement practice the occupiers have been invited to make an application to regularise this situation and it is understood that they intend to do this. It will be for the Planning Development Control Committee to determine this application and if it does not grant consent then the unauthorised development would be the subject of enforcement action.

If an application is not received by the Council within the next 28 days officers will take the appropriate enforcement action.”



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#### QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing

“Could the Portfolio Holder advise me of the number of people currently registered on the Council’s Housing Waiting list (joint housing register, elderly persons register and transfer list) and how this figure has altered over the last 10 years? Could I also be advised of how many new ‘affordable’ homes have been completed in the current year and what our target is? What is the Council’s best guess of how many additional new affordable homes are required to make some inroads into the housing waiting list?”

If in answering this question the Portfolio Holder determines that there is a shortfall in the affordable housing provision in the Winchester District, could I be advised of what action this Authority is taking to address this issue?

#### Reply

“As at December 2008 there were 3168 applicants on the Housing Waiting List, this has increased from 1962 as at March 2004. Further analysis of figures relating to the list is not possible at the present time due to the switch over to Choice Based Lettings on 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

67 new affordable homes have been completed in 2008/09, the original target was to complete 120. This target was revised downwards throughout 2008 as the national economic situation worsened and building activity slowed. The Council has been investigating how development within the current economic situation can be encouraged, this has resulted in a series of recommendations in Cabinet report CAB1824, Planning for Affordable Housing In The Economic Downturn.

The Council has carried out regular Housing Needs Surveys and Housing Market Assessments since 1999, the annual requirement for new affordable housing is approximately 700 properties per annum. Clearly it would not be feasible to provide that figure. However, the Council is in the process of developing a Local Development Framework that requires that 35% of the total plan requirement of new housing is affordable, this equates to 4459 properties to be provided over the 20 year period (223 per annum).

The Council recognises that there is a shortfall in provision of affordable housing and is addressing the issue in a number of ways,

- Investing 50% of the capital receipts from the voluntary sale of Council dwellings towards new affordable housing (potentially £1M pa)
- Providing Council owned land at nil cost to Housing Associations for affordable housing development.
- Funding the Rural Housing Enabler programme to increase the supply of rural exception schemes, as well as streamlining processes to speed up that supply.
- Ensuring planning policies provide the maximum amount of new affordable housing provision possible without compromising the delivery of schemes.
- Developing new planning policies through the LDF process to deliver additional affordable housing.
- Ensuring corporate priorities communicate the importance of affordable housing provision, that business plans are aligned to those priorities and that resources are allocated to support provision.



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**QUESTION 5**

From: Councillor Pines

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access

“Will the Council respond positively to the new Department of Transport guidance on 20mph speed limits being issued this week and work with the County Council urgently to ensure that all residential areas in the City are consulted about reducing speed limits to 20mph?”

**Reply**

“The Town Forum has allocated a sum of funding to allow 20mph zones to be investigated within the City Winchester Town. A meeting has been set up to seek County Council’s approval for City Council officers to look into this matter and to draw up proposals. This process will take account of existing Government Guidance and the current DfT consultation on appropriate speed limits. Once proposals have been considered these will be brought to Members to consider and to decide how best to consult.

We will also consider the implications of the current DfT consultation guidance for the rural areas in liaison with the County Council.”



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**QUESTION 6**

From: Councillor Jackson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access

“Since traffic has been both entering and exiting Parchment Street at its junction with North Walls successfully for the past couple of months, while cultural and pavement improvement works have been carried out at the southern end, what measures are being put in place to allow cyclists to continue using the road in both directions?”

**Reply**

“During the road works cyclists have been required to dismount and walk their bikes through the road works. They can use Parchment Street in both directions whilst the one-way order is suspended. This is considered satisfactory, as there are no through traffic movements whilst Parchment Street is closed at the St Georges Street end, and because there is no other alternative whilst the road works are undertaken.

Once the road works are completed and the one-way order is reinstated on Parchment Street, cyclists will again only be permitted to cycle in one direction. The City Council has to make an order to allow contra-flow cycling along Parchment Street, but this has been declined by the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) who must approve contra-flow cycle lanes. The City Council has argued against this decision, in liaison with the County Council, but GOSE believes that the road is too narrow to allow contra-flow cycling and will not change its position. Cycling access within the City is being considered more widely as part of the Winchester Town Access Plan.”



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**QUESTION 7**

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Leader

“Would the Leader confirm that a method of financing the Alresford Town Public Toilets has been agreed which has had the consequence that they will remain open for the full twelve months, without any extra money being provided from the New Alresford Town Council Budget?”

**Reply**

“I do recognise the importance of public toilets in Alresford and other towns across the District. I also remain of the view that we need to strike the right balance in sharing the cost of such a service used by both local people and visitors between City and Parish taxpayers, a principle which is accepted in many other districts across the country.

I will continue to talk to New Alresford Town Council, who I believe share my commitment to a sensible outcome on this matter, and do not wish to see it made a political issue. In particular, I hope to be able to overcome concerns about their wish to ensure such a cost pressure can be properly considered as part of their budget process.

As my joint statement of last week with Cllr Roy Gentry made clear, I hope we can together take active steps to safeguard this public facility. It is a matter for NATC how they choose to fund such arrangements, although I will endeavour to support them in whatever way I can.”





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**QUESTION 8**

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing

How many Council Houses are currently on the open market for sale and for how long have they been unoccupied and unsold?

Approximately how much rent has the City Council lost during the period when these Council Houses have remained unoccupied and on the open market?

How many Winchester City owned Council Houses are currently unoccupied?

**Reply**

“The Council currently has four Council homes that are being marketed for sale through the Asset Sales programme. All four have been empty since April 2008. Whilst the market has been significantly depressed throughout this time, I am pleased to note that sales on 3 of these 4 are agreed and subject to contract.

There are a further 3 properties in need of major repairs which have been empty for some months and whose future currently remains under review. These properties have been considered for sale, for major disabled adaptations, redevelopment with housing partners and for reletting as Council homes. However, to date, resources have not been available to support these options. It is possible that the Government review of HRA finance may provide additional resources to meet the cost of this work and other repairs programme shortfalls. However, this will not be clear for some months.

Keeping these 7 properties empty has resulted in lost rent totaling £20,000 in 2008/09. However, to bring them up to a lettable standard would have cost the Council in excess of £130,000, money which has simply not been available to the Repairs programme.

Even at current low market values, the sale of these 7 properties would generate £1.4 million, providing an additional £700,000 to support repairs to

Council homes, and sufficient resources to support the development of up to 14 new affordable homes with housing partners.

In addition to the above properties, a further 3 Council homes have been sold in the 2008/09 financial year to development partners as part of new build schemes where the Council has retained nomination rights.

The above figures do not include out-dated bed-sit accommodation in sheltered schemes which have now been removed from all “negative subsidy” calculations.

Members will be aware of the £2.7 million per annum shortfall in the Council’s Repairs programme. Whilst this gap cannot be closed through sales, the Asset Sales programme remains the only short term option open to the Council to address this situation.

In addition to the above properties, the Council will at any time have up to approximately 40 properties that are empty and either subject to “voids” work or being offered for letting. In the last two years, the Council has reduced the average letting time for general needs properties from over 80 days to 33 days. The commencement of the Choice Based Lettings scheme provides an opportunity to improve this performance still further.”