



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 13 January 2010

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing

“How many applicants made bids on the exception affordable housing schemes at Littleton and Swanmore? What proportion were able to demonstrate a local connection?”

Reply

“There were 847 bids made on the Littleton scheme and 979 bids at Swanmore. It should be noted that applicants have up to 3 bids per letting cycle and some of the figures above will be inflated as a result. Inspection of the bids seem to indicate about 5% of bids above are multiple bids.

With regard to local connection, 797 indicated they had a local connection to Littleton and 713 for Swanmore. The Housing Needs Team wrote to every applicant who claimed to have a local connection at the two schemes requesting evidence and as a result 14 applicants proved a connection with Littleton and 22 at Swanmore. These applicants were then placed in housing need order and the details passed to HydeMartlet Housing Association for offers to be made.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Ruffell

To: The Leader

“I understand a programme officer has been appointed by PUSH to work on details of the proposed NE Hedge End Strategic Development Area (SDA) on behalf of Eastleigh Borough Council and Winchester City Council. Could the Leader please advise what progress has been made so far, and when he expects the first results of this work will be available for members to see?”

Reply

“PUSH has appointed Matthew James as the Project Feasibility Manager for the North/North-East Hedge End SDA. As the title suggests, the Project Officer is leading various studies and areas of technical work aimed at testing the feasibility of the proposed SDA, which is a requirement of the South East Plan.

Much of the ‘baseline information’ on site characteristics has been collected and various technical studies are underway (see Eastleigh Borough Council/Winchester City Council web site on the SDA for further information and programme), either being led by the Project Manager or being undertaken externally e.g. M27 corridor study. A range of factual information on site characteristics will be available on the SDA web site within the next month, covering matters such as nature conservation, topography, community facilities, and floodrisk.

The programme anticipates the feasibility studies being reported in June 2010, in time to inform both the emerging Winchester and Eastleigh Core Strategies. It will be for Winchester and Eastleigh Councils to interpret the findings of the studies in their respective Core Strategies, both due for publication in October 2010.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Thompson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access

“What plans does the Council have to treat treacherous pavements should the current cold spell continue?”

Reply

“Hampshire County Council, as Highway Authority are responsible for the gritting and treatment of the public highway. Roads, footways and cycletracks are treated in a priority order, in line with national guidelines:

- **First priority routes** are the 'A' class roads, access roads to emergency services establishments and to areas of high traffic concentration, and other most heavily used roads (about one-quarter of the county's roads).
- **Second priority routes** are single accesses to villages, to schools, to emergency and to other public services not already treated

Footways are not salted routinely, but busy pedestrian routes are treated after prolonged sub-zero temperatures with persistent frost or ice which is expected to continue.

Winchester City Council helps by the gritting of certain areas within its responsibility, including car parks, the park and ride sites and footpaths on public open spaces such as Abbey Gardens.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access

“What is the closing date for comments on the Barton Farm planning application?”

What efforts have been made to inform the public of the deadline?”

Reply

“The planning application for Barton Farm was made valid on 27th November 2009 and at that time a closing date for responses of 31st December 2009 was set in accordance with the normal periods for public responses on planning applications. This was the date given on the Council’s website.

In the edition of the Hampshire Chronicle of the 10th December 2009 a report incorrectly stated that the closing date for public responses had been moved to the 15th January 2010. This may have been because the Council had been asked by Headbourne Worthy Parish Council to allow them until this time to respond because of their meeting arrangements, which we had agreed to do. Unfortunately the Chronicle did not check whether this date applied to all responses – which it did not.

In view of the confusion this incorrect report caused and the risk that members of the public would be misled, the Council has extended the publicity deadline and the deadline given to consultees for a response.

The closing date for representations on the application to be received is now the 14th January 2010. This date is clearly shown on with application details on the Council’s website.

Two public notices have been displayed in the local press. The first of these, published on December 3rd 2009 correctly states the end of the publicity period as the 29th December 2009. After the Chronicle error a second notice was published which correctly states an end date for that notice of 11th January 2010. These are slightly different dates from the ‘closing date’

because of the different statutory time periods required for each but the later of the two dates is the overall closing date for all comments on the planning application.

In addition to publicity through statutory advertising, press reports and emails to Members, 6 site notices have been erected at prominent locations around the site that are fully viewable by the public. Approximately 1550 individual letters have been sent to households located in the immediate vicinity of the site.

The application is available to view on the Council's web site and a hard copy of the planning application is available for Public Inspection at the Council's main reception area.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Lipscomb

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment

“Will the Portfolio Holder allow me to congratulate all the members of his Recycling Team, under the excellent leadership of David Boardman and the staff of SerCo for their absolutely sterling efforts throughout the prolonged spell of snow, ice and sub-zero temperatures to ensure that refuse collection continued with the minimum possible disruption during the emergency? The daily bulletins issued to Members, Parishes and the public were most helpful and reflected the reality that Winchester is indeed a caring Council and determined not to be beaten in the most trying of circumstances.

Other functions of the Council are, I am sure, also deserving of our thanks for their efforts to maintain ‘business as usual’ but, as the Scrutiny chairman for recycling operations, I want to pay special tribute to that team.”

Reply

“This recognition is welcomed by me and I will make sure that it is passed onto the Team Members involved, particularly David Boardman who has led this process throughout the difficult conditions. Members should also recognize the important contribution made by Serco in their willingness to assist as much as possible during this period. The City Council was one of only two authorities within Hampshire who managed to provide some form of refuse collections throughout the recent freezing conditions.

With the length of the inclement weather it will take sometime to clear the backlog of missed collections and the team will continue to co-ordinate this work until normal service has been restored.”



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Sanders

To: The Leader

“Would the Leader of the Council join me in congratulating the officers and staff of the Authority following the Audit Commission’s scoring of Winchester’s performance as 3, ‘good’, noting the improvement from four years ago when it was 2, ‘fair’?”

Reply

“The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is an outcomes based assessment which looks at how well local public services are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It is a joint assessment made by all inspectorates about how well public services meet local priorities.

The CAA has two elements: Area Assessment and Organisational Assessment. The Area Assessment looks at Hampshire as a whole. The Organisational Assessment makes a judgement on how well this Council is run and whether it is delivering good services for its residents.

The Council’s overall assessment for how we managing performance resulted in a score of **3 out of 4** – judging us ‘an organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, performs well’.

Within that overall assessment was also a score of 2 out of 4 for our ‘Use of Resources’, judging us ‘an organisation that meets minimum requirements, performs adequately’. This year, the Use of Resources assessment has deliberately been made tougher, and the Council’s Auditor acknowledged that, notwithstanding the similar score, there is clear evidence of the Council’s improvement in this area.

I agree this independent judgement is an excellent sign of the Council’s improvement since 2004, and congratulate all whose work has resulted in this vote of confidence.”



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Sport

“What efforts are being made to ensure that the Tower Arts Centre continues to put on a full programme of events?”

Reply

“Officers are in regular dialogue with the manager of Tower Arts, and have been pleased to note the progress being made. The manager is a confident programmer and is well supported by Kings’ School. He routinely liaises with other venues and both local authorities to ensure that the centre continues to offer a vibrant and attractive programme. Ticket buyers include former Tower regulars as well as new audiences.

The performance strand has been developed in new directions, and recent concerts have included celebrities of the calibre of Beverley Craven and Midge Ure. The participatory strand has expanded too, with a wider range of workshops and activities enjoying good levels of take-up. New courses include languages and digital photography, and classes have been scheduled at different times to increase accessibility. The Tower also offered a programme of summer activities for children in 2009.

The manager of Tower Arts made a presentation to members of the Culture and Economy Informal Scrutiny Group in July 2009, when he outlined developments. These have included the relaunching of WinFest (music by young people for young people) at the Tower. Tuition is offered to young people, with a mix of new technology and more traditional music, and the group is supported by the County Council’s youth service, the City Council’s arts development service and the Tower team.

A group called the Winchester Music Development Group was established after the transfer of management of the Tower to Kings’ School. This consists of staff from the County and City Council arts services, Winchester Discovery Centre and the Tower. A service level agreement exists to guide the work of the group and to ensure that the Tower is responding to an agreed set of indicators. At this time officers are very pleased with the programming and continued development of the centre.

Members can find out more by logging onto the Tower website at www.towerarts.co.uk.”



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Lipscomb

To: The Leader

“In view of the assessment of the Council's consultants, Vail Williams, that *“...the development is not viable at today's yields and, even assuming a significant improvement in the market, a negligible land value would need to be attributed to the site if development of a "Knowledge Park" is to occur”*, will the Leader please make a full statement of the administration's intentions, given his assurances at full Council on 22 April 2009 that a full and detailed appraisal would be undertaken before the proposal for a Knowledge Park could be confirmed and taken forward. Given my own statement at that Council meeting that I would ensure that full scrutiny of that appraisal took place at an appropriate time, will the Leader indicate when that time might be reached?”

Reply

“Bushfield Camp is identified in the Core Strategy Preferred Option as a future Knowledge Park allocation, subject to ‘further studies of its suitability and viability’. These studies include the transport implications, biodiversity impacts and mitigation (including impact on the River Itchen Special Area of Conservation), landscape impact (including on the South Downs National Park), and deliverability (including viability). The Cabinet (LDF) Committee received a detailed update on these studies (CAB1944LDF) at its meeting on 15th December and agreed that they should be completed to enable a decision to be made on whether the allocation should be carried forward.

The Vail Williams study is only one of those required and was commissioned by the City Council, along with a transport assessment of the various ‘strategic allocations’. These studies are complete and available on the Council’s web site, as part of the LDF Evidence Base. The assessments made by Vail Williams were based on the current availability, letting value and characteristics of existing office space, and it is that on which they based their valuations and advice on viability. In my view, and that of the Church Commissioners, a Knowledge Park is quite a different proposition and, in the

proposed location, would attract quite a different clientele. If developed right, it would present a unique opportunity for high value businesses to take space suited to their needs – not offices. I have asked the Commissioners to provide more detailed submissions which explain their vision and why they consider the proposed Knowledge Park is viable. That evidence can support consideration of this allocation in our Core Strategy.

The promoters of the site have also agreed to undertake studies on landscape, biodiversity and archaeology, to briefs produced by the City Council. These studies have been produced in draft and are subject to discussions with officers before being finalised. The promoters have also undertaken further work on transport and infrastructure which are also subject to draft reports. These are more positive about development viability but officers believe that further work is required to be able to demonstrate deliverability to the level which would be expected by a Planning Inspector.

My Administration, and indeed the local business community are very supportive of the Knowledge Park proposal, as are important organisations such as the Universities of Southampton and Winchester. I want to see the full studies range completed to provide a proper assessment of the vision for a Knowledge Park. The exciting opportunity I have in mind is an important component of our future economic prosperity. I believe studies will show that the development is acceptable and deliverable so that it can be made a firm allocation of the Core Strategy. A decision on this and other allocations will be taken prior to the publication of the next stage of the Core Strategy, due in October 2010. The next stage of the Core Strategy will be considered by the Cabinet (LDF) Committee, Cabinet and full Council so there will be ample opportunities for Member consideration and scrutiny.”