



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 24 February 2011

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for High Quality Environment

“Could the Portfolio Holder remind me of the details of the affordable housing figures for the CALA Homes planning application for the Winchester North Major Development Area (Barton Farm) (09/02423/OUT and 10/01063/OUT) and if the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government were to allow the planning appeal presently being deliberated on who would be eligible to bid for these properties as and when they were built?

Could the Portfolio Holder briefly explain what is meant by the description ‘affordable’ in terms of the planning legislation?”

Reply

“The planning application for Barton Farm is for 2,000 dwellings of which 800 would be affordable. This requirement would be secured through the Section 106 agreement which would be a condition of the consent and CALA Homes have said specifically that no external grant would be required from the Homes and Communities Agency to provide these units.

The affordable rented units would be made available through the Council’s choice based lettings scheme, with the intermediate affordable housing, such as shared ownership, being made available through the HCA appointed/ Council nominated Zone Agents.

The definition of ‘affordable’ homes for planning purposes is given in PPS3. The Government is currently consulting on a revision to this definition so that it will in future include homes provided at the so called ‘affordable rent’ of 80% market rent which is the Government’s new benchmark for rented housing provision through Registered Providers. This does not mean that the Council cannot agree with developers that there will be other types of tenure within a mix of affordable units as it has always done and the Government’s intention is to retain both ‘social rent’ and ‘intermediate affordable housing’ within the definition of ‘affordable housing’ in PPS3.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Godfrey

To: The Portfolio Holder for High Quality Environment

"Could the Portfolio Holder advise me which members of Cabinet made oral statements to this month's Public Inquiry in to the appeal following the refusal of the planning application for development of Barton Farm, and what were the main themes of this evidence?"

Reply

"No Members of Cabinet made statements to the Inquiry. Any Members making a statement would be bound to be questioned by Counsel for CALA Homes and given the highly technical nature of the Council's position it was sensible for the Council's evidence to be provided by its professional and technical experts. Members should note that the Inquiry is not closed and further discussion of the appeal at the Council meeting would be inappropriate."



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Rutter

To: The Portfolio Holder for High Quality Environment

“Could you give us an update on the Barton Farm Inquiry? What are the likely next steps?”

Reply

“The Barton Farm inquiry has overrun slightly and will conclude early next week.

In the next few weeks the Inspector will prepare her report and recommendation and submit this to the Secretary of State for his final decision. The Council does not receive notice of the Inspector’s recommendation. The Council will be notified of the Secretary of State’s decision at the same time as it is made public. It could take several months for a decision to be made.

When the decision is issued, it will have to be considered in relation to the stage which has been reached in the preparation of the Core Strategy. It will have great significance for the Vision for Winchester whichever way the determination goes but it would be inappropriate to discuss this further with the Inquiry still in progress.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Jackson

To: The Leader

“Congratulations to Kevin Warren, Gentle Consulting and the Council for the excellent refurbishment work on the Guildhall.

What plans are in place to fix the minor mistakes in the room signage and to re-hang the curtains over the Minstrels Gallery in the King Charles Room?”

Reply

“The project to refurbish the Guildhall is nearing completion, being both on time and in accordance with the projected cost. Further works are being considered to improve the toilets, refurbish the Wykeham Room, fit out the Secret Rooms and to turn the Staff Offices into changing rooms to support the development of Concert business.

The Wykenham Room sign has been amended to read Wykeham Room and when a safe and cost effective way can be found to fix the drooping curtain in the King Charles Room it will be done.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Coates

To: The Portfolio Holder for Communities

"Could the Portfolio Holder provide the following figures regarding Former Tenant Debt:

- a) Debt outstanding as at 31 March 2010
- b) Debt outstanding at current date
- c) Amount of debt recovered during this financial year
- d) Number of cases pursued by the Legal Dept in this financial year?"

Reply

- "a) The total Former Tenant (FT) debt outstanding on 4 April 2010 was £222,287.99 (figures relating to rent and arrears have to be provided on a Sunday)
- b) The total FT debt outstanding as of 6 February 2011 was £197, 343.02
- c) It is not possible to separate the recovered FT debt figure from the total debt recovered to date figure in time for the Council meeting, although it can be reported as part of the year end results
- d) So far this financial year, a total of 78 cases have been passed to Legal Services for further action, all of which either have been or are being actively pursued."



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Sanders

To: The Portfolio Holder for High Quality Environment

“One of the aims of the draft Town Access plan is:

- To ensure that the vitality and resilience of the local economy is strengthened by planning for movement and access which is economically and environmentally sustainable

Could the Portfolio Holder reassure the business community that any reduction in city centre parking will not form part of the final plan?”

Reply

“The Draft Winchester Town Access Plan contains a measure to reduce gradually over the course of the plan the number of parking spaces within the ‘inner’ and ‘central’ area by up to 15%. This is within the context of a coherent car parking strategy which will seek to meet the objectives of the plan.

Details of how, where and when this can be achieved have not yet been drawn up.

A Members’ working group is currently considering comments received on the Draft Plan and a revised plan will be brought to a future Cabinet meeting later this year.”



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Berry

To: The Leader

"Are the comments attributed to Cllr Learney, printed on page 13 of the Hampshire Chronicle, published on 27 January 2011, an accurate report of what she said?"

Reply

"The quotes are accurate. They were given as part a telephone interview which of course covered much more ground than was reported and a separate statement issued sometime later."



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Portfolio Holder for Communities

“What is the current situation with the Council’s announced intentions for energy saving in electricity through solar panels on some council houses?”

Reply

“Work on this project is progressing well.

The opportunity is new and there is little existing information on which to base our work. However, all contract documentation has now been prepared and an advert to seek interested partners will be placed in the next few weeks. It is still the intention to secure a suitable partner in time for installations to commence in June 2011.

A detailed survey of all council properties has also been completed. This indicates that there are 2,100 that could potentially benefit from solar panels. However, the potential impact of such a scheme must not be under-estimated and final numbers will depend on the successful completion of an initial tranche of properties. The specific properties to be included in the first phase of works will be selected once the partner organisation has been identified.

Members may be aware that a small scale trial of such a scheme is currently underway in Winnall. Officers have met with A2 and Savills who are jointly managing the scheme and will ensure that any learning from this trial is taken into account prior to the commencement of works on Council properties.”



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Higgins

To: The Leader

“Can the Leader of the Council inform us what arrangements have been made for the issuing of concessionary bus passes and tokens from 1 April 2011?”

Reply

“Following an extensive consultation exercise, the County Council has agreed rules for the new scheme which will come into effect on 1 April 2011 under their administration and management.

The scheme in Hampshire will follow the national scheme, where those who are of eligible age are entitled to free off-peak bus travel from 9:30am to 11pm, Monday to Friday, and at any time at the weekend and on Bank Holidays. There will be no option for tokens.

For those who meet the criteria for a disabled person’s pass (and are over five years old), there are a number of enhancements to the national scheme. These include free bus travel all day (before 9:30am until close of service) every day, with the option of a companion pass where they are unable to travel alone owing to their disability, as well as travel on contracted Car-share and Taxi-share services and half fare travel on defined community transport schemes including Dial-a-Ride and Call & Go.

Those who meet the criteria for a disabled person’s pass will also have the option, as an alternative to the pass, to have vouchers (to the value of £32 per annum) for use on defined community transport schemes such as Dial-a-Ride as well as voluntary car schemes and taxis.

Holders of an older person’s bus pass will also be able to travel half price on Dial-a-ride.

District and Borough Councils will administer and manage the Concessionary Travel Scheme up to 31 March 2011. From 1 April 2011 this responsibility will transfer to the County Council. Application forms will be available in most libraries, Adult and Child services offices, District and Borough Council Offices, Bus stations and Information Centres. Supplies of forms and information leaflets and application forms have been sent out to parish representatives and other organisations as above. Completed application forms will be sent to and dealt with by HCC Passenger Transport Group from 1 April 2011.”



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Henry

To: The Portfolio Holder for High Quality Environment

“Could the portfolio holder please provide further details regarding the brand new Kerbside collection of glass and the continuing green waste collection resulting from the new Environmental Services contract negotiated recently?”

Reply

“I am please to say that that by securing efficiencies through the re letting of the Joint Waste Contract we will be able to maintain our existing green waste collection service and further improve our recycling rate by introducing the kerbside collection of glass.

All households will be provided with a plastic crate to recycle all their glass bottles and jars which will be emptied each month. The new service will support the existing network of bottle banks which will still be available throughout the district.

The initiative is likely to recycle an extra 1000 - 1200 tonnes of glass each year which represents about 3% by removing it from the residual waste bin. It will also achieve a 600 - 700 tonne reduction of CO2 by avoiding the need for disposal as waste.

The rollout of glass collection should start in October 2011 and all households will be provided with information and a collection calendar to ensure they can make the most of this new system.”



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Winchester and Surrounds

“Further to the question I asked at the Full Council meeting on 29 September 2010, could the Portfolio Holder advise me what response he has received from Eastleigh Housing Association about the state of the figure of a Black Swan on the Black Swan Building on the corner of Southgate Street and the High Street and whether he feels that to leave the figure in its current damaged state is acceptable?”

Reply

“It is understood that the Housing Association accept liability for the repair of the Swan and are researching ways of effecting a repair.”



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QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Portfolio Holder for High Quality Environment

“Why was a submission made on the last day of the consultation period under the current Blue Print exercise accepted as a valid contribution by the City Council concerning Old Alresford, when it was made by a Planning Consultancy on behalf of a London Based developer?”

Reply

“The Blueprint consultation was open to any person or organisation and the submission referred to was made within the advertised comment period. It would not be appropriate for the Council to be selective about which responses it accepts, therefore all responses have been accepted and were reported to the Cabinet (LDF) Committee yesterday (23 Feb 2011).”