



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 20 July 2011

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Evans

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Could the Portfolio Holder inform me of what action she is taking to eliminate inappropriate flyers being placed under windscreens of cars parked in City Council car parks?”

Reply

“All instances of flyers being placed on windscreens in public car parks are reported to the Parking Manager following routine daily inspections. The originators of flyers are then written to, or contacted, directly asking them not to do this and pointing out the liability and littering issues associated with such practices.

We are not aware of any ongoing problems in specific areas but if there are then these can be reported to the Parking Manager. The use of signing to dissuade businesses from doing this could be considered but there will be cost implications and signing clutter issues.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Hutchison

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“What policies and plans does the City Council have in place to meet the UK Government target of recycling 50% of waste from households by 2020?”

Reply

“There are a number of measures which can be taken by the Council to increase recycling up to 50% by 2020 including:

- promoting waste minimisation and reuse
- separate kerbside collection of food waste
- kerbside collection of glass
- increasing the range of materials collected through kerbside collections such as mixed plastics.

Prior to introducing the collection of additional materials a full evaluation of the option will be undertaken to ensure that they are cost effective, that the material collected can be processed locally and in a sustainable manner and that there are suitable markets and outlets for all materials collected.

Any additional expenditure will also have to be balanced against the Council's other priorities and financial constraints prevailing at that time.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Ruffell

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement

“Could the Portfolio Holder please update the Council on the progress of the proposed changes to the planning fees?”

Reply

“The Government has indicated that local authorities will be able to set fees for planning applications on an individual basis rather than in accordance with a national scale. The regulations for fee setting were expected in February this year but they have still not been published. This means the Council is not clear at this stage exactly what it will be able to charge for and when local fees can be brought in. Originally national fees were to be abolished in October 2011 but this now looks very unlikely given the delays in issuing the regulations. However, the Government remains committed to allowing councils to charge fees which reflect their costs.

The Council has already been undertaking work to help us produce our fees schedule which has included detailed application time recording and officer time recording. We signed up to the national fee benchmarking club, run by the Planning Advisory Service, along with many other authorities in Hampshire and the country as a whole, which will enable us to produce the evidence base needed to set local fees. We are also working with the other councils in the county to try to ensure that we all adopt a robust and consistent approach to fee setting.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Mason

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement

“Can the Portfolio Holder please advise with respect to the County and City Council arrangements for dealing with travellers that are prevalent in the District at the moment and giving cause for concern?”

Reply

“The primary responsibility for dealing with travellers is the landowner concerned. They are able to take possession proceedings in the County Court to require unauthorised occupants to leave their property.

Where the City Council is the landowner, welfare reports need to be obtained before proceedings are issued, in order to ensure that the Council’s duties under the Human Rights Act are discharged. The City Council has arrangements with the County Council for its Gypsy Liaison Officer to visit sites and provide these reports.

The City Council is able to act on behalf of Parish Councils and other voluntary bodies, where they are the landowner of an unauthorised site. In such cases, the City Council can obtain welfare reports from the Gypsy Liaison Officer and make the necessary court applications on behalf of the Parish Council, etc. Clearly, however, this means that other work of the Legal Services Team has to be delayed whilst these proceedings are being dealt with. For this reason the preferred approach is for parishes to have insurance and make their own legal arrangements.

If the landowner is unknown, or is unwilling to evict the travellers, the City Council could not take possession proceedings, and would have to use planning enforcement powers against what would normally be an unauthorised change of use. These powers would take significantly longer to undertake than possession proceedings.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Mather

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement

“Could the Portfolio Holder please update the Council on any progress made in the improvement of the performance of the Planning Department?”

Reply

“Following the serious delays experienced last year in relation to the time taken to make decisions, when virtually all cases were determined outside target dates because applications were not being registered quickly enough, much progress has been made and performance in this area has improved significantly in recent months. This follows a review of application processes last year which included an independent report from an experienced officer in another local authority which looked at the factors constraining our performance. Following this report a number of changes to processes and procedures were made which has enabled the team to cope much more effectively with volume of work coming in and to register applications more quickly.

However, to build on the progress which has been achieved to date, the Head of Planning Management has produced a Planning Performance Improvement Plan which was issued this month and is designed to speed up decision making further. This has been informed by the recent Managing Excellent Planning Services project run by the Planning Advisory Service which Winchester participated in along with all other councils in the South Downs National Park.

The Improvement Plan includes a range of measures which are due to be implemented by the end of this year and will enable Planning Management to make the best possible use of resources available by streamlining procedures further and re-organising the structure of the teams dealing with applications to enable better performance management. The Plan is to be reviewed on a quarterly basis starting at the end of September. I am optimistic therefore that performance will continue to improve.”



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Maynard

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Following reductions in operating costs of the Winchester Residents Parking Scheme, when will those cost reductions in a scheme which is explicitly cost neutral be reflected in reduced charges to our residents?”

Reply

“Although the number of parking staff has been reduced in recent years we believe that the level of service offered has been retained. New working practices have been introduced and a large amount of staff time has been put into reviewing the residents parking scheme and in delivering improvements in relation to the misuse of permits and alterations to parking restrictions.

The cost of the permits has also been held at the same level since 2006.”



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Administration, Innovation and Improvement

“Does the Leader support my view that St Maurice’s Covert would benefit from being painted and having the lighting repaired and also that a mural, similar to that painted in the passage way in the Casson Block, would enhance this area tremendously?”

Reply

“St Maurice’s Covert is an important link between the Cathedral and High Street and would benefit significantly from improved lighting and painting. Originally it was intended to repaint this area on completion of repaving the High Street.

Redecoration of the Covert was held in abeyance whilst consideration was given to using the rear of the area for the storage of building materials etc to reduce disruption associated with refurbishment of the Square. Works in the Square have now commenced and, once completed, will further improve the City Centre.

In view of the important location of the Covert, I have asked Officers to come forward with proposals to enhance the area, in consultation with the Business Improvement District, including an assessment of any related costs. In the meantime arrangements will be made to clean and redecorate the area.”



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Is the Portfolio Holder aware of the effects of excess levels of nitrogen oxides on the health of local people and particularly local children?”

What priority is the Portfolio Holder giving to the improvement of air quality in central Winchester and the removal of the Air Quality Management Area designation of this part of our district?”

Reply

“The objectives applicable to Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) are set out in the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000 (SI 928) and the Air Quality (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (SI 3043). The objectives for nitrogen oxides are written in terms of nitrogen dioxide and are a 1 hour mean of $200\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ not to be exceeded more than 18 times a year and an annual mean of $40\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. These objectives are based upon health impacts on a susceptible population such as the young/elderly and especially those with pre-existing respiratory conditions. Further information on these health issues are contained within the National Air Quality Strategy evidence base that underpins all our air quality work.

Currently, in common with many local authorities, there are areas that are still failing to meet the annual nitrogen dioxide objective. The Portfolio Holder has recently requested that an informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) reviews the progress of the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) and the first meeting of this group is scheduled for 22 July. It is proposed that a report on this important issue will be available from the ISG by the end of this calendar year.”

Further information on all aspects of our air quality work can be found on our website – www.winchester.gov.uk/airquality



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Hiscock

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Estates

“What are your plans for reviewing Parking charges this year?”

Reply

“It is planned to start a review of parking charges in the autumn in the context of budget planning as the Council does every year. Regular meetings will take place with businesses groups and other organisations including the BID and these will help to inform that process. Parish and Town Councils will also be consulted.

Comments made in relation to the Winchester Residents Parking Scheme and the best use of car parking capacity will also be taken into account as part of the review.”



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Would you agree that despite the meticulous preparations and planning by the City Council officers, the recent JLS Concert at Matterley Bowl proved to be chaotic in terms of road travel to and from the event, because of the failure of the Concert Organisers to deliver their agreed Management Plan and the Police underestimating the number of officers necessary for proper control?”

Would you agree that in view of these problems which undoubtedly attracted considerable and unfair criticism of the City Council that no event of this type and scale should be permitted at Matterley Bowl in the future?”

Reply

“The JLS Concert at Matterley Bowl was licensed by Winchester City Council and was therefore subject to specific licence conditions, most notably a condition requiring the submission of an Event Management Plan to the Safety Advisory Group no later than 28 days before the event and that the Event Management Plan must contain a Traffic Management Plan.

The event organisers attended the Safety Advisory Group meeting on 15 March when the Traffic Management Plan was discussed. The traffic engineers questioned the detail of the plan and the event organisers were confident that the plan would service the event as intended. Of course as we now know the weather on the day was appalling and set in motion a series of events that adversely impacted upon the traffic loadings of the area network, at a time when they are already traffic stressed. The experiences also put into question the management of onsite traffic in wet conditions.

A debrief of the event was held on 28 June and was attended by the land owner, the event promoter, and the security stewarding firm employed, as well as the Police, the Hampshire Traffic Engineer and City Council Officials including David Ingram the Safety Advisory Group chair.

The brief of the meeting was not to make judgements as to the future use of the Matterley Bowl but to identify what went wrong, and how we can improve the resilience of the site's traffic management for future events. It was recognised that the site has successfully hosted numerous large scale events since the early 1990's demonstrating that the venue, with the correct event management, can be a suitable site.

With specific regard to the JLS Concert on 17 June, various constructive points were made and it was resolved that the land owner Peveril Bruce should employ a Traffic Engineer, experienced in large festivals traffic management solutions, to write bespoke Traffic Management Plans to reflect the events to be hosted at the Matterley Bowl. These Traffic Management Plans will be subject to close scrutiny from the local traffic engineers and once agreed to their satisfaction, it is expected that they will be promoted by the Licence Holder as being the preferred Traffic Management Plan to be used for the site.

Therefore it is currently not Winchester Safety Advisory Group's position that the Matterley Bowl should not be used for events of this size and type, but that with the correct event management, the traffic issues experienced by the JLS Concert should be avoided in the future. The site has a premises licence under the Licensing Act 2003 which permits events to be held, subject to submission and approval of event management plans and compliance with other conditions.

It should however also be recognised that in using the Matterley Bowl for large scale concerts and festivals, as with any such event, there will be an inevitable and unavoidable impact on local traffic flows for a short durations. It is the Safety Advisory Group's position that this impact should be practically managed so as to be reasonably acceptable to local traffic and event attendees."



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Thompson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Safety and Public Health

“When does he expect the much needed VISA programme to be successfully launched in Stanmore?”

Reply

“Officers from the Community Wellbeing Team, primarily the Community Wellbeing Officer, have been leading the VISA programme on behalf of the Winchester District Older People Partnership and the Project Management Steering Group.

I am delighted with the efforts being made to ensure that the programme can be launched successfully in the two pilot areas in the Autumn – comprehensive training manuals have been developed for both sites along with welcome packs, baseline surveys and client referral forms. I must stress that additional flexibility has been built into the two year project timeline to allow sufficient time for the recruitment of volunteers. It has always been accepted that one of the key success factors for the project is finding the ‘right’ people to fill these roles – if this means taking a little more time seeking out suitable volunteers in Stanmore, so be it. Notwithstanding this however, I am pleased to report that two VISAs are in place for the Winnall pilot and one excellent volunteer has already been recruited for Stanmore - efforts are continuing to identify the second volunteer as soon as possible. In the meantime, the training programme for the existing VISAs has begun.

Finally, discussions are underway with our key voluntary sector partners from the Older People Partnership to decide how best to fill the VISA Project Manager role following the recent resignation of the Community Wellbeing Officer. Negotiations are progressing well and I will report the outcome as soon as possible.”



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QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Collin

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement

"Please could the Portfolio Holder advise me what steps are being taken to promote the Council's aspirational policies for Development Control in respect of:

- Code 5 for environmental efficiency for new build or
- for extra affordable homes in respect of smaller developments.

When will the Council decide on any how to accept and subsequently use off-site monetary contributions in respect of these policies?"

Reply

"The aspirational policies are promoted as part of pre application enquiries and through other communications with planning professionals. For example the Planning Management Team arranges quarterly meetings with planning agents. The meeting held on 12 January this year included an agenda item regarding the adoption of the Council's Interim Policy Aspirations and this issue was discussed in some detail. Officers explained the nature of the policies and how they would impact on application being made in the District.

In addition, when officers are involved discussions relating to pre-application enquiries, or planning applications, applicants are reminded of the need to address the Interim Policy Aspirations adopted by the Council in January this year. Applicants should either design proposals which accord with these policies or, if this not possible or feasible, explain the reasons why. Full details of these polices are available on the Council's website.

As yet the aspirational policies have not generated any off site contributions and work will be commencing later this year on the preparation of a charging schedule for contributions under the Community Infrastructure Levy."



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QUESTION 13

From: Councillor Banister

To: The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Landlord Services

“In the light of the failure to move forward with the project to fit PV cells to council house roofs, does the Portfolio Holder share my disappointment that the Council is not making faster progress towards reducing carbon emissions in the Winchester District?”

Reply

“The claims made last year by companies seeking to use Council roofs to exploit the financial opportunity offered by current Government tariffs for solar PV cells have not been supported by formal tender prices available to the Council through local framework agreements. Whilst ‘renting out’ a proportion of Council housing roofs to contractors to install Solar PV panels remains an option for the Council, I am concerned that current proposals may not offer value for money to the Council or its tenants.

I have asked officers to bring a detailed report to the next meeting of the Cabinet (Housing) Committee in September, detailing how solar PV will form part of the Council's ongoing energy strategy. Whilst funding our own installations will take longer, this option needs to be considered in more detail and I am pleased to note that provision has been made in the Maintenance programme this year for this. The first panels will be installed as part of an energy efficiency trial at a Stanmore property in the next few weeks.

The Council's housing stock is well maintained, well insulated and has one of the highest energy efficiency ratings of all councils nationally that still manage their housing. We invest over £1m annually in upgrading boilers, improving insulation and further improving energy efficiency of the stock. The Council continues to make good progress in improving the energy efficiency of its housing stock within the restrictions placed on it by the current housing finance regime.

With regard to private housing, the Council has, since the autumn of 2009, been supporting the work of the Mark Group through their Heatseekers thermal insulation initiative. This scheme involves homes being thermally imaged and where homes are identified as being thermally inefficient, householders are approached and encouraged to have either loft/cavity wall insulation installed. To date, 269 loft measure and 246 cavity wall measures have been installed equating to an estimated annual CO2 saving of 365 tonnes and a lifetime (25 years) saving of 9,125 tonnes.

During 2009/10 City Council monitoring confirmed that total savings across the district of 1405 tonnes of CO2 had been made through a variety of energy saving measures including loft/cavity wall measures and PV installations.

Additionally, Winchester City Council also supports the work of Crest Surveying which is another local insulation company which offers CERT discounted insulation to our residents.

The Council has commissioned WinACC to manage and drive forward the Council's existing Climate Change programme and Chris Holloway is working closely with all Council teams on this.

Work has begun on the development of an internal 5 year Carbon Reduction Plan and an energy manager has now been appointed to take this work forward. In the meantime progress has been made with the travel plan and revision of the employee car scheme as well as developing a green fleet."



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QUESTION 14

From: Councillor Jackson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Whilst the organisers of the Hat Fair this year are to be congratulated for a very successful event, what plans did Winchester City Council have in place for coping with (a) the additional litter which could be anticipated and (b) the need to signpost visitors to the various locations of the performances?”

Reply

“a) Litter

Provision for the collection of litter was included in the event planning process through discussions at the Hat Fair Support Group, as traditionally happens. Extra bulk bins litter bins were provided in the Cathedral Outer Close, The Broadway, The High Street, River Park Leisure Centre and Orams Arbour. At the end of each day a team of Hat Fair staff and volunteers carried out an intensive litter pick to return the sites to their normal condition.

The closure of Abbey Gardens and inclusion of the High Street market appear to have had the unforeseen effect of encouraging more picnicking in the Cathedral’s Outer Close on the Saturday. Officers observed that this resulted in overflowing bins in the area, and greater amounts of litter around the Close than in previous years.

Hat Fair were concerned at the levels of rubbish that built up during the day, particularly in the Close, will be working with officers to explore measures to control this next year. At the time of writing, the subject is planned for discussion at the Hat Fair wash-up meeting on 19 July.

b) Signposting

In order to help visitors find the locations of the performances, Hat Fair provided a map in the printed festival programme and on their website. This year, a new i-phone ‘app’ was introduced which also included a map. The

programmes were available earlier than in previous years, and distributed from key points such as the tourist information centre. They were also available from the Hat Fair information stand near City Museum during the event.

Organisers provided signs to River Park to help visitors find their way there as it is rather further from the main festival focus.

Hat Fair has not in the past found additional signposting to be necessary as most sites are already indicated through the pedestrian fingerposts, which visitor surveys have shown to be effective in guiding people around the town.”



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QUESTION 15

From: Councillor Ruffell

To: The Portfolio Holder for Administration, Innovation and Improvement

"What steps are being taken to ensure the overhead projector system in the Walton Suite will be in use for the next Planning Development Control Committee meeting on the 28 July?"

Reply

"The Guildhall Manager has been exploring the options for replacing the projector system in the Walton Room. Specialist equipment is required to overcome the constraints imposed on the use of the existing system by the bracing structure which was installed to overcome the defects discovered in the original construction of the roof.

A specification for the new equipment was put out to three contractors, all of whom have now replied. A review of the tenders is taking place and as soon as this has been completed an order will be placed. The lead in time for the supply of the projector equipment is 4 weeks. The installation will take 3/4 days and to avoid any interruption to pre-booked events, committees etc the works are scheduled for completion in August. The new projector will therefore not be available for the July Committee meeting and the current temporary process will operate during that meeting. The room should be fully operational by the end of August. The cost of the replacement equipment is in excess of £7,000, and the delay in resolving the problems has been caused by the need to investigate the best and most affordable options."



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QUESTION 16

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Leader

“Could the Leader confirm the current proposals for affordable housing and public open space provision for the ‘Silver Hill’ development and whether the percentage of 35% for affordable housing is viable in the current economic conditions?”

Reply

“There is no indication from the new investor in Silver Hill that they will seek to make any changes to the existing planning consent which include the requirement for 35% affordable housing and the provision of public open space. These requirements were included in the recent financial update.

As with any planning consent the Council would be obliged to consider an application for amendment on grounds of viability but the requirements of the Development Agreement would also have to be met.”