



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 28 September 2011

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Nelmes

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Can you please advise whether you are aware of the disgraceful condition of some of our loos? For example, the Market Street loos are permanently extremely dirty and those in Tower Street (ladies) have no working door locks. Please can you say what plans are in place to improve their condition and who is responsible for their upkeep? As the Town Forum is now being charged for paying 50% of the upkeep charge we like to know that we are getting value for our money.”

Reply

“The Environment Team is responsible for ensuring that public conveniences are cleansed and maintained in satisfactory working order. Currently, cleansing is undertaken by Serco and repairs are carried out by suitable contractors as a necessary.

Following Councillor Nelmes’ representations the toilets at Tower Street have been inspected and the locks to the female toilets were found to be inoperable as the doors had been vandalised. Repairs were immediately undertaken and the locks are now working satisfactorily.

Market Lane and Abbey Grounds Toilets are maintained by a cleaner operating between both facilities. Market Lane Toilets are the busiest in Winchester and following a recent inspection were found to be in need of deep cleanse and this will be undertaken shortly. These facilities are also in need of refitting and redecoration and bids will continue to be submitted to have this work considered as part of the future capital programme.

The contract for cleaning public toilets has recently been re let as part of the Joint Waste Contract to Superclean Services Wothorpe Ltd. Regular deep cleaning of all of the facilities has been included in the new contract which commences on 1 October 2012 and arrangements have also been made to increase the frequency of inspections to ensure that the facilities are maintained in a satisfactory condition.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Maynard

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enforcement

“With the proliferation of takeaway food outlets in Winchester and the consequent increase in smells from such establishments can the Portfolio Holder advise:

- a) to what extent odour control is considered in the planning process for new outlets?
- b) what measures can be taken to tackle the nuisance caused by existing outlets?”

Reply

“a) When a planning application is received either for a new development or a change of use class to A5 ‘Takeaways’ the Environmental Protection Team are consulted on the proposals. Where there concerns about potential odour then a condition is attached to any permission requiring the approval of a scheme to control the emission of fumes and smell from the premises prior to use.

Each consultation is considered on its own merits, and does not take into account whether there are already other establishments in the vicinity which is a matter taken into account by the wider planning process.

Some establishments do not require planning permission as they are already within the A5 use class but change the type or food prepared which may be inherently more odorous and increase the potential for nuisance.

b) If an existing A5 use is causing an odour nuisance, Planning Enforcement may investigate if there is a planning condition in place which is not being complied with and in doing so will liaise with the Environmental Protection Team.

If a condition does not exist, then the Environmental Protection Team use the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to take action if there is a statutory odour nuisance.

Any nuisance investigation will attempt to validate the complaints using record of odorous incidents and then witnessing the odour first hand through officer monitoring visits.

If a statutory nuisance is confirmed an abatement notice requiring the nuisance to be abated can be served. The notice must be reasonable in its requirements and allow sufficient time for compliance. Remedial measures usually include

- a cooking range with grease filters;
- the use of carbon filters;
- a large enough extraction fan;
- a stack which terminates at roof height.

Or alternatively they may cease the odorous cooking process.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Scott

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

"Is the Portfolio Holder satisfied with the progress of the Carroll Centre following the doubling of their grant in this financial year?"

Reply

"I am very pleased with the performance of the Carroll Centre so far this year. Our increased grant towards the Centre's revenue costs recognised the important role it plays in our priority neighbourhood of Stanmore.

The Centre has had an unannounced OFSTED inspection of its summer play scheme for primary aged children and was praised for creating a welcoming, stimulating and enjoyable learning experience for children both indoors, out in the park and on trips in the local area. The overall rating was good to outstanding in all aspects that were inspected.

The Children's Centre 'Annual Conversation' (inspection) by HCC this spring achieved Good to Outstanding on all aspects.

Some of the other achievements this year and current activities at the Centre this year are as follows:-

- Touching Base where the Centre worked with hard to reach young people & involved centre based & outreach work, including a cooking project for Winchester soup kitchen, trampoline sessions, basketball, health & social skills activities & art activities in conjunction with a local church youth groups (mural painting in centre)
- Primary youth provision on Tuesday & Friday night attracts 70-100 children – they engage in a range of activities including cooking, art, sport & social education activities
- Youth Provision: The Centre has established stronger links with Kings School – 5 young people came on work experience for 2 weeks and engaged in a wide range of centre activities

- In August the Centre introduced Friday night family BBQ & activity nights where parents can participate in family team activities. 10-12 families attended each week (including fathers as well as children attending with older siblings)
- Extension of Adult and Family learning with crèche provision: Eight local women achieved Level 1 National Award Working With Children: An ESOL course that was attended by women (local mothers) from 7 different nationalities: Nine parents attended NCFE accredited cookery course which included a healthy eating module
- The Centre secured Youth Transition Funding from HCC to continue the Bumps & Beyond project (teenage & young parent group that runs weekly in the centre of Winchester). This project was a Carroll Centre initiative that was set up with business funding that expired in April. The project now also supports other practitioners with an input from Health Visitors, Midwives & Children's Centre outreach staff from centres across the region
- Play work sessions have been established at Lent Hill Courts to support families in temporary accommodation
- The integrated Children's Centre sponsors a trained counsellor who offers sessions at the centre 1 day per week
- A Community Café runs every Thursday lunchtime. This is open to the whole community. In conjunction with this activity the Job Centre provides single parents job club/support sessions each week
- The Family Forum has started the 'Next Steps' initiative to support parents and children making the transition from nursery to school. They have produced a song book & work book – distributed to 200 children under 5
- A monthly Lads & Dads Saturday breakfast & activity club is held. 12-15 fathers/male carers attend with children
- Speech therapists & health visitors are running sessions and appointments at the centre. Speech therapists ran an 8 week course for local children & parents."



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Power

To: The Leader

“When may the residents of Alresford and the villages see resolution to the dangerous area outside the Co-operative Supermarket in Alresford, which suffers from an entanglement of pedestrians and parked cars, caused by the planning permission making inadequate provision for pedestrian safety?”

Reply

“The planning permission which included the new Alresford Co-op was granted in December 2006. The area in front of the Co-op to which Councillor Power refers is public highway and did not form part of the planning application site and so therefore no changes to the layout were required by the consent. No objections on highway safety grounds were raised by the Highway Engineer relating to the area in front of the proposed shop.

Parking is prohibited in the area by double yellow lines but people still choose to risk parking which is the cause of some of the problems Councillor Power mentions. She has not raised the issue with the Parking Service but under the arrangement with the Town Council visits are made by a Civil Enforcement Officer to the town every day to improve compliance with parking regulations.

Councillor Power is already aware that the Leader has asked the Corporate Director (Operations) to consider the proposals drawn up by the Alresford Society for improvements to the area and I know that he has already been in touch with her. She also knows that there is no package of funding but that the Director will examine what might be possible in current circumstances.

On that basis her question cannot elicit from me more than she already knows herself.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Warwick

To: The Leader

“Can the Leader report any progress with plans to refurbish Hockley Viaduct and establish cycle route 23?”

Reply

“Since Cabinet considered this matter in July the feasibility work has progressed and a project steering group has been established. Some initial vegetation removal is being undertaken over the next 2 months and further reports will be brought to Cabinet in November and January to set out further proposals and seek approvals to the next stages of the works and scheme progression.

Ongoing survey and ecological work is being undertaken to enable a preferred route for NCN23 to be determined and to establish the likely costs of the project. A LEADER Bid for funding to carry out the necessary design and feasibility work has been submitted to the Government.

A community stakeholder group will also be set up in the coming months.”



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Higgins

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“How many new glass recycling sites have been introduced this year?”

Reply

“The number of sites where glass is collected has increased by 5 (five) this year. Additional storage capacity has also been provided at 4 (four) sites.

There are currently a total of 87 ‘bring sites’ within the District with 1,931 tonnes of glass collected for recycling during 2010/2011.

Officers are always actively seeking opportunities to expand the network of sites for the collection of glass and would welcome suggestions from Members and Parish Councils as to where suitable additional sites could be provided.

Prior to providing any new site for recycling glass a risk assessment is undertaken to check on its suitability from a health and safety perspective, ease of access for servicing and avoidance of potential noise nuisance.”



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Gemmell

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“With the new waste collection contract starting on 1 October 2011, can the Portfolio Holder reassure members that residents will be properly and persistently notified of changes in routes and collection days? Also, have arrangements been made for dealing with problems during the settling down period?”

Reply

“A comprehensive communications campaign has been delivered in order to ensure that all residents received the information required prior to any changes to the refuse and recycling collection arrangements. The campaign has included:

- Press releases in advance advising of the changes which have received good coverage
- Post card delivered to all households confirming the need to check new collection calendars once delivered in order to ensure any changes are recognised
- Revised new style collection calendars and letter from both Council Leaders confirming the actual date of collection and any changes to existing arrangements
- Updated website pages and a new ‘landing page’ to direct residents to the correct source of information
- Briefing Sessions offered to all elected Members with facts sheets sent to those who cannot attend
- Updating of all Parish Councils through the Parish Connect newsletter

All queries relating to the revised arrangements will be directed through a new contact telephone number via the City Council’s Customer Service Centre and there will be improved real time communications with crews to identify any issue during the early bedding in period. During this time client Officers will be working closely with the contractor to iron out any teething problems and ensure any issue are dealt with promptly.”



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Banister

To: The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Landlord Services

“In the light of the decision not to progress the PV panel scheme for council houses, what other plans do you have in place to meet the Council's 2012 Carbon Reduction Target?”

Reply

“The decision taken by the Cabinet (Housing) Committee on 22 September was not to proceed with one particular proposal for a ‘roof rental’ approach to solar PV which offered little or no return to the Council.

Solar PV remains a priority, alongside many others for the Council's housing stock. Some provision has been made in the 2011/12 maintenance programme to fund installations directly and the Council is currently considering options to significantly increase funding in future years.

However, in addition to the PV panel scheme the City Council has a number of other projects progressing to build upon the progress made so far as part of a developing carbon reduction programme. These include:

- Delivery of a 5 year energy reduction plan following the appointment of a dedicated Energy Manager to oversee the process. The energy reduction plan will be closely linked to the Asset Management Plan
- Delivery of a Staff Travel Plan with targets for travel and emissions reduction
- A new fleet of refuse collection vehicles with more fuel efficient engines
- An Internal ‘Carbon Cutters’ Team driving forward staff behavioural change work.

All of this work is currently being review by a Carbon Reduction ISG which will report back on its conclusions later this year.”



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Landlord Services

“Was the proposal by the previous administration to stick a PV panel on every council house roof, feasible?”

Reply

“The Council has never been advised or considered it feasible to add a PV panel to every council roof.

Initial proposals that approximately half of all buildings could be suitable were inaccurate due to the number of communal homes (sheltered and general needs flats) managed by the Council. Officers advise that approximately 1000 to 1500 of the Council’s 5050 homes may be suitable.

Whilst the ‘roof rental’ scheme previously being considered is certainly feasible, I do not consider that it offers value for money to the Council or its tenants.

The potential returns that can be generated through the Government’s ‘Feed in Tariff’ for solar PV have resulted in some ambitious claims from private companies seeking to gain access to a large number of roofs. However, the actual rental prices offered through the recent tender process were much lower than the initial ambitious claims.

Whilst the Council’s housing stock already achieves a very high degree of energy efficiency, I am keen to ensure that solar PV remains a priority to be considered alongside the many priorities that tenants have for their homes. I am also keen to ensure that returns achieved through the FiT scheme benefit the Council and its tenants rather than private investors and banks.”



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Leader as Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Tourism,
Communication and Major Projects

“What changes will the Portfolio Holder be making in the recommendations for the Core Strategy as a result of the recent consultations with residents and Parish Councils?”

Reply

“The last full version of the Core Strategy that was published was the ‘Preferred Option’ in May 2009. Since then there has been a change of Government and considerable work to develop and consult on local development needs and targets. This resulted in the Blueprint exercise and the ‘Plans for Places’ consultation in summer 2011. Plans for Places proposed different development targets to the Preferred Option Core Strategy, based on responses to Blueprint and further evidence work on housing and other needs.

It was acknowledged at the time that Plans for Places was published that further work was needed to update the economic projections on which employment land requirements were based and to check the assumptions behind the housing projections. This work has been done and was reported to the Cabinet (Local Development Framework) Committee on 28 September. It concluded that the need for employment land had reduced considerably but that the assumptions behind the housing projection used in Plans for Places continue to give a realistic reflection of the District’s housing needs. Having taken account of the updated evidence and the comments received on Plans for Places, the Cabinet (LDF) Committee is recommended to endorse the housing requirement and distribution proposed following Blueprint.

Comments on Plans for Places were made by a range of interests, with some promoting more and some promoting less. Account also has to be taken of the existing evidence base and updated studies, and of Government advice. In particular, the draft National Planning Policy Framework and the Coalition’s Plan for Growth, have established the importance of planning for growth. All of these matters have had to be taken into account in recommending the way forward following Plans for Places.

The next version of the Core Strategy is due to be considered by Cabinet (LDF) Committee in November, followed by Cabinet and full Council. This will incorporate the changes agreed by LDF Committee on 28 September.”



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Administration, Innovation and Improvement

“Could the Portfolio Holder give me an update on progress with the restoration of the damaged figure of a black swan on the Black Swan building in Southgate Street and could she advise me it is likely that the figure will be removed for repair?”

Reply

“The Tenant First Wessex has begun to investigate the refurbishment of the black swan, by seeking quotes for its removal from the building. There is some reluctance on the part of the tenant to carry out the work because of the cost of removing the Swan and the complexity of its repair. The Head of First Wessex has been requested to progress the refurbishment and I will update Councillor Tait when I have received a response from him.”



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QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Rutter

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

“One of the key pledges in the Conservative election literature was zero tolerance of anti-social behaviour. Can the Leader explain what this means in practice?”

Reply

“The Community Safety Partnership (the City Council being a responsible authority within that partnership) will take robust action against those who are persistent perpetrators of anti-social behaviour using a variety of enforcement powers as provided in the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. Powers can include applications to the courts for Civil injunctions, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, the use of Housing related powers around tenancy agreements and alcohol related orders (section 27 notices and drink banning orders – both are police led in relation to ASB and the Night-Time economy). However, it is important to note that all of the above powers are only obtainable through the use of very stringent criteria that are evidence based.

The CSP has developed a process that identifies those who are vulnerable to becoming victims of ASB or those who are on the cusp of becoming entrenched in their Anti-Social Behaviour. Officers in the City Council and other external partners use this process to put in place interventions that are proportionate to the needs of the individuals identified e.g. in May 2011 Officers of the City Council were informed about complaints of ASB in a residential area and their investigations showed the initial reports of ASB were really a symptom of the Class A drug dealing taking place from one of the properties. Using evidence collected in partnership with other agencies, we were successful in an application to the courts for a closure order against the property.

The Community Safety Team are happy to advise on individual cases as they occur.”



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QUESTION 13

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Leader as Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Tourism,
Communication and Major Projects

“What progress has been made in reviewing the SHLAA in line with the notice of motion passed by Council in July?”

Reply

“Work is well advanced on updating the SHLAA. At the time of the Notice of Motion it was hoped that it would be possible to bring a revised SHLAA to the LDF Committee’s meeting in late September, although the Notice did not specify a programme. Unfortunately, work on responding to comments on Plans for Places has resulted in this being delayed, but the SHLAA remains a key piece of evidence work which is required for the next stage of the Core Strategy. Therefore, the aim is to present an updated SHLAA alongside the next version of the Core Strategy, which is due to be considered by Cabinet (Local Development Framework) Committee on 10 November.”



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QUESTION 14

From: Councillor Hutchison

To: The Leader as Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Tourism,
Communication and Major Projects

“What response the City Council will be making to the consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework?”

Reply

“A report will be presented to the Cabinet meeting on 12 October which will make officer recommendations as to the comments the City Council should make on the draft National Planning Policy Framework. This will be published in accordance with the normal procedures but I recognise that this is a matter that is of interest to several Members.

Accordingly, it would be helpful to Cabinet if Members could email any views they have on the recommended comments to the Leader in advance of the Cabinet meeting, so that these can be taken into account by Cabinet in its debate. I hope this will avoid Member involvement dominating the public participation element of the meeting, whilst still ensuring Members’ views are taken into account.”



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QUESTION 15

From: Councillor Laming

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“In view of the cuts StageCoach and Hampshire County Council are making to the Bus services, could the Portfolio Holder please explain what, if anything, has Winchester Council done to represent the concern of local residents about the serve problems will create?”

Reply

“The consultation undertaken by Hampshire County Council in relation to bus service subsidy reductions was brought to the attention of Councillors in order that local issues could be raised.

Unfortunately, the City Council is not in a position to be able to subsidise bus services. Officers are discussing specific issues raised with County Council officers to look at innovative ways of reducing the impacts.”



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QUESTION 16

From: Councillor Maynard

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Why are we charging people on benefits for a pest control service that other authorities would provide to them for free?”

Reply

“Not all Councils offer a free pest control service for those on benefits and some neighbouring authorities like Southampton and Portsmouth do levy a charge. Winchester has chosen a 50% reduction on fees for those on benefits in order to assist these individuals but also to encourage them to take a responsible approach towards rodent control on their own properties. For cases of particular hardship, there is scope for the Head of the Environmental Protection Service to waiver charges.

In agreeing this policy Cabinet also asked for a review to be undertaken after 6 months operation of the service in order to consider any impact upon service demands and pest infestations.”



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QUESTION 17

From: Councillor Higgins

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“What arrangements have been made to scrutinise Project Integra by Winchester City Council?”

Reply

“A ‘Fit for Purpose’ review was completed during 2011 which examined the future role and strategic direction of the Project Integra Partnership. This review was considered firstly by the Environment Scrutiny Panel and then by Cabinet on 14 March 2011.

The outcome of the review was recently considered by the PI Board and the City Council is being consulted on the proposed way forward. One of the recommendations is that the current Project Integra Policy Review and Scrutiny Committee which scrutinises the work, policies and decisions made by the PI Strategic Board be disbanded. This would mean that scrutiny would be undertaken by each authority as it feels fit and within its own constitution and scrutiny arrangements.

Within the City Council such scrutiny would be coordinated through The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any subsequent ISG established to examine any topic of specific interest. The outcome of such reviews would be reported to Cabinet to consider the recommendations and take forward any conclusions.

This arrangement provides the opportunity for more in depth and robust scrutiny of PI issues than would be possible through the partnership committee. It also gives the City Council greater opportunity to focus on the issues which are of direct concern to the Council and its residents.”



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QUESTION 18

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Does the Portfolio Holder feel that Urban Bike Pods would be beneficial to the residents of Winchester and if yes then are there currently any plans to pursue this scheme further?”

Reply

“The issue of bike storage for residents of flats and terrace houses is recognised and the idea of a bike pod storage system may be one that could assist in such circumstances. There are a number of practical issues to consider such as locations, cost of installation and on going maintenance and seeking any necessary approvals.

There are no current plans to install such pods but opportunities will be explored through the implementation of the Hampshire Sustainable Transport Towns project. This project which includes Winchester was recently awarded £4m funding from the Department for Transport.”