



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 18 April 2012

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Achwal

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Given the high number of residents in Whiteley who still wish to have Yew Tree Drive bus link opened to all traffic now rather than waiting the many years it might take until Whiteley Way is complete, what action is the Portfolio Holder taking to support Whiteley residents wishes?”

Reply

“A decision on whether or not to open the Yew Tree Drive bus link can only be taken by Hampshire County Council as highway authority. It is very well aware (at officer and Member level) of the different views of people living in Whiteley and has decided to review the situation as part of the planning of the North of Whiteley MDA. There is nothing more that the City Council can do directly other than to continue to work with the local communities and the promoters of the MDA to complete the necessary traffic studies and to encourage them to bring forward a planning application for the MDA as soon as is reasonably possible.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Henry

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Could the Portfolio Holder please explain what pro-action work is being done by the Pest Control service in areas of known rat problems?”

Reply

“Currently the Environmental Protection Service employs a 0.5 full time equivalent member of staff to undertake proactive baiting programmes to target areas of high rodent activity and in support of the treatments undertaken through service requests. This is often where there are multiple properties affected necessitating a strategic approach to affect a resolution.

In addition there are a series of static bait stations installed throughout the District, with the majority focused on Winchester. These static bait stations are placed in locations that are known to support or have in the past supported higher than acceptable levels of rodent populations and are regularly baited and checked as required. Where there are increased rat sightings in the vicinity of a static bait station, then of course the bait station is baited more regularly and checked for activity. In areas where there is no static bait station, consideration is given to the installation of a new station. These have all been mapped on the City Council’s GIS system. This approach has been established as being the most successful and cost effective approach in strategic baiting control.

In addition to strategic bait stations where required Winchester City Council works closely with Southern Water to either ensure that baiting of the sewers is undertaken by them directly, or that Winchester City Council baits the sewers by arrangement on their behalf. Such arrangements have been undertaken on many occasions in higher activity areas such as Fulflood.

In addition to the above, the Pest Control Service is supported by the Environmental Health staff within the wider Environmental Protection Team where there is the necessity to undertake additional investigations and appropriate enforcement actions.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Gemmell

To: The Leader

"Does the Leader agree that the 18% rise in Young Unemployment as reported on the front page of the 12 April edition of the Hampshire Chronicle is to of rising concern?"

Reply

"I do agree this is a worrying trend, albeit the overall numbers remain small. Whilst the 265 unemployed represent only 1.9% of our 16-24 year olds, I know unemployment is a real challenge for every single one of them.

Helping young people into work has been a priority for my Administration. We have introduced many initiatives which I know will help young people get their feet on the first rungs of the ladder.

The long term solution, of course, is to ensure our local economy thrives, and so creates jobs. We have been working with local businesses across the district to do just that. Initiatives have included support for our growing market, which has helped keep the High Street bustling; working with Basepoint to open the business centre in Winnall, and taking steps to help ease planning difficulties for rural businesses."



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Hutchison

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport:

“What are the current arrangements for monitoring the street cleaning contract and is the Portfolio Holder satisfied that they are working effectively?”

Reply

“The street cleaning contract is monitored by staff from the Joint Environmental Services Client Team. The team consists of officers located at the offices of both Winchester City Council and East Hampshire District Councils, and their remit is to carry out proactive and reactive monitoring of the contractor’s work.

The team has recently filled two vacant posts, which will mean that from May 2012 all four contract monitoring officers will be available to carry out inspection work.

Proactive inspection work is planned in advance to ensure that we monitor the types of work and areas which are important to residents and will help to drive up standards. For example, during the peak grass-growing months of early summer a lot of monitoring of the grass cutting teams will take place, with less of this being scheduled towards the end of the year. Similarly, if a particular ward has been inspected and found to be heavily littered, the work of the team will be focused on finding out the reasons why and putting improvements in place through liaison with the contractor and/or using contract mechanisms to force improvements using default penalties.

The street cleaning contractor is a company called The Landscape Group, and they also carry out the grounds maintenance work for both councils. Early teething troubles have now settled down, as the crews have become familiar with new working areas and neighbourhoods, and standards have improved over the last few months.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Gemmell

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Can the Portfolio Holder report on the progress of National Cycle Route 23?”

Reply

“The National Cycle Route Network through Winchester is being progressed in two stages i.e. Stage 1 from Winnall to the City Centre and Stage 2 from the City centre to the South Winchester Park and Ride. Stage1 has been completed.

The NCN 23 Stage 2 including Hockley Viaduct refurbishment is progressing well and a full update report was considered by Cabinet on 11 April. The legal processes and agreements which are required are at an advanced stage and a planning application for the new sections of the route which needs to be constructed has been submitted. Public consultation is now being undertaken on the planning application. A full funding package has been put together including contributions from the City Council, County Council and Sustrans.

Following a tendering exercise a contractor will shortly be appointed to start the repair works on the Hockley Viaduct which will be undertaken over the summer.

A further report will be taken to Cabinet in July to consider tenders for the path construction and it is planned to start construction of the path immediately after completion of the viaduct repairs.”



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Estates

“How much will the switch to using blackberry mobile devices cost the council in set up and device provision and annual running costs?”

Reply

“The Council changed from Windows Mobile™ devices to Blackberry™ devices in October 2011 in order to best support government security and information management standards. Blackberry solutions which allow for centralise management of mobile devices and common policies to be used to secure the devices and in the event of loss will ensure that local data cannot be compromised.

Procurement was made under rules and guidelines of the HPSN2 Framework.

All transition costs of moving\replacing existing Smartphones to Blackberry mobile devices were met by a Vodafone UK (Network supplier) through a government financed technology fund in conjunction with Premier Mobile. This meant that that capital replacement cost of the handsets were at £0.00 cost to the Council.

Ongoing Revenue costs increase for data provision from £7.50 to £10.00 per month per device. Through agreement the Council get the difference rebated quarterly by the contracted management company Premier Mobile (HPSN2 Framework) that reduces the annual cost back to that of the previous pre-Blackberry solution.

Blackberry operational costs are:

£10 per month...for data (email) less £2.50 rebate = £7.50

+ £2 per month...for voice

Total: £9.50 per device per month.

Therefore:

127 devices @ £9.50 = £1, 206 per month

Total 127 devices = £14,478 per annum.

Individual budgets for Mobile phones remain within the services and recharged directly from Finance.

Centralised management costs have not increased by introducing a BES (Blackberry Enterprise Server) as the solution is virtualised utilising existing licensing.

Please note: Any additional devices (on top of the original estate) will be subject to the £10.00 per month data and not be subject to the rebate agreement.”



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Higgins

To: The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Landlord Services

“Can the Portfolio Holder update us on the problems caused by the upgrading of lifts at Winnall flats and what measures are being taken to alleviate them in the continuing programme?”

Reply

“The passenger lifts in Winnall Flats were last upgraded in 1986, and have now reached the point where many of the parts are reaching the end of their serviceable life; with a number of the parts are now obsolete.

To this end the upgrading of the passenger lifts in each block is now essential. Unfortunately the flats were designed with only a single passenger lift installation per block, and the upgrading work requires that each passenger lift will be out of service for a period of 6-8 weeks; leaving the block without lift facilities for the duration. Contractors are working with Council officers to minimise the time lifts are out of action.

In the build up to the work being carried out on each of the blocks the Tenancy Services Manager has written to the residents advising them of the timetable for works and asking the residents if they had any specific needs that would require assistance whilst the lifts were out of service. In addition to this elderly, disabled and residents with medical needs were given the opportunity to be decanted to other properties for the duration of the works.

The two site based Caretakers are supporting residents throughout the works and assisting with lifting and carrying shopping, etc, to and from their homes. They have also offered assistance out of hours where possible.”



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Estates

“When is the contract for the printing of the City’s council tax bills and housing benefit statements to be re-tendered?”

Reply

“The contract runs until 30 April 2014 with an option to extend for a further period of two years.”



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Maynard

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Estates

“Following on from my requests for information, is the Portfolio Holder able to advise the residents of Lower Brook Street and me what Winchester City Council’s plans are for the derelict land to the rear of their properties and the details of the access we have offered the residents through that land?”

Reply

“This land known as Faberlux Yard is situated behind numbers 29-38 Lower Brook Street and is accessed via a short track with a flat situated over it. Following the announcement of the closure of the fire station the disposal of the Council’s land was considered. In February 2010 Cabinet authorised the disposal of the freehold of this land to the developer who had acquired the option to re-develop the fire station. The developer considered that subject to the outcome of an archaeological study being favourable and planning consent being received, three two bed houses might be accommodated on the land. The developer’s proposals included a footpath which would provide rear pedestrian access to the properties fronting 29-34 Lower Brook Street.

However, the developer’s option on the old fire station would only crystallise allowing its purchase when planning permission was secured for the development of that site. Consequently the developer would not wish to proceed to purchase the Council’s land until such time as they had secured a viable planning permission for the redevelopment of the old fire station.

Given that the old fire station is immediately adjacent to the Council’s land, holding it makes sense for the Faberlux site to be developed at the same time. I anticipate that the Developer will prepare revised proposals for the old fire station site. In this respect the Estates team will meet with the developers prior to any new submission on the old fire station site, to ensure that consideration is given to the Council’s land holding being included, allowing for a comprehensive development to be arrived at. If it is possible to incorporate the Council’s land, it is likely that there would be a separate planning application for its development. In these discussions we will of course seek to get the best deal for local residents.”



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Jackson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport

“Notwithstanding the recent period of April rain showers and the fact that a hosepipe ban has not been imposed on residents of Winchester District, we are all conscious of the need to conserve our precious water resources.

What pressure can Winchester City Council bring to bear on the Southern Water and Network Rail to stop the scandalous waste of water which has been flowing down the walls of the tunnel on Stockbridge Road in Winchester (St Paul Ward), rotting the fabric of the brickwork for the past three decades?”

Reply

“The Environmental Protection Service has given an undertaking to investigate the nature of this problem, in consultation with Southern Water and Network Rail, and report back to Cllr Jackson directly.

However, depending upon the outcome of this investigation i.e. whether it is a burst water main owned by Southern Water or Network Rail, it is the responsibility of either Ofwat, the Drinking Water Inspectorate or the Environment Agency to exert pressure on requisite body to undertake the necessary remedial action.”