

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

At an Ordinary Meeting of the Council held in the Guildhall, Winchester on 7 November 2012

Attendance:

Councillor Pearson (The Mayor in the Chair) (P)

Councillors:

Achwal (P)	Mason (P)
Banister	Mather (P)
Berry E (P)	Maynard (P)
Berry J (P)	McLean (P)
Bodtger (P)	Miller
Byrnes (P)	Nelmes (P)
Chamberlain (P)	Newman-McKie (P)
Clear (P)	Pearce (P)
Coates (P)	Phillips (P)
Collin (P)	Pines (P)
Cook (P)	Power (P)
Cutler (P)	Prowse (P)
Evans (P)	Read
Gemmell (P)	Ruffell (P)
Godfrey (P)	Rutter (P)
Gottlieb	Sanders (P)
Green (P)	Scott (P)
Henry (P)	Southgate (P)
Hiscock (P)	Stallard (P)
Humby (P)	Tait (P)
Hutchison (P)	Tod (P)
Huxstep (P)	Verney (P)
Izard (P)	Warwick (P)
Jeffs (P)	Weir (P)
Johnston (P)	Weston (P)
Laming (P)	Witt (P)
Learney (P)	Wood (P)
Lipscomb	Wright (P)

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 27 September 2012 be approved and adopted.

2. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR**

The Mayor congratulated the Blue Apple Theatre on receiving The Queen's Golden Jubilee Award for Voluntary Service for Groups in the Community. The award was the equivalent of an MBE for voluntary groups and was presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Dame Mary Fagan DCVO JP.

The Mayor then reminded Members about the King's Royal Hussars Homecoming Parade and Thanksgiving Service, being held in Winchester on Monday 3 December 2012. Further details would follow.

Finally, the Mayor reported that he had attended a ceremony in Giessen organised by the Winchester Twinning Group, at which oaths of friendship were signed and gifts exchanged.

3. **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader reported that a memorial would be erected in the Great Hall square, to commemorate the many thousands of World War 1 troops who were accommodated at Morn Hill, before embarking for France. An information board would also be placed at Morn Hill. The City Council would be supporting this initiative, which would include an exhibition; further details would follow.

4. **COUNCILLOR KIM GOTTLIEB**

The Council was informed that Councillor Gottlieb had been taken ill and Members asked that their best wishes for a speedy recovery be conveyed accordingly.

5. **DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, or personal/prejudicial interests, were made in respect of items on the agenda.

6. **QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14**

1. **Renewable and Low Carbon Energy**

The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Councillor Huxstep, answered a question from Councillor Weir.

2. **Olympics Legacy – Purchase of Event Stage**

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture and Sport, Councillor Stallard, answered a question from Councillor Henry.

3. **Vacant Retail Properties in Winchester High Street**

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Economic Development, Councillor Humby, answered a question from Councillor Mather.

4. Living Wage Week

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration, Councillor Godfrey, answered a question from Councillor J Berry.

5. Apprentice and Micro Business Development Grants

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Economic Development, Councillor Humby, answered a question from Councillor McLean.

6. Empty Homes

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Coates, answered a question from Councillor Tod.

7. Council Tax Exemption - Student Properties in St Lukes Ward

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration, Councillor Godfrey, answered a question from Councillor Scott.

8. Ward Business – Involvement of non-Ward Members

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Wood, answered a question from Councillor Cook.

9. Events to support businesses during the Christmas period

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Economic Development, Councillor Humby, answered a question from Councillor Southgate.

10. Seats in Kings Walk and Silver Hill Update

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Wood, answered a question from Councillor Pines.

11. Design Standards for Barton Farm Development

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport, Councillor Weston, answered a question from Councillor Hutchison.

7. **PETITION**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15, a petition was submitted by Ms Emma Back on behalf of the Winchester Fit for the Future Group, containing 3,334 signatures. The prayer of the petition was as follows:-

'We, the undersigned, urge Winchester City Council and local partners to work together now, to plan for the construction and operation of a sustainable and accessible community sports and leisure centre that meets the relevant competition standards.'

At the invitation of the Mayor, Ms Back explained that during the past 18 months, the Group had researched and developed proposals for a new centre in Winchester, to serve the City and District. In particular, they had identified that the new centre must be:-

- (a) Accessible – both in terms of being in the right place geographically and offering the right mix of competition and leisure facilities, which were affordable and useable by all, whatever their level of income or mobility.
- (b) Sustainable – a centre which incorporates the latest technology, allowing power to be generated on-site and running costs to be minimised. It must also create an operating surplus which enabled profits to be reinvested in the Centre to maintain and refresh facilities.
- (c) Meeting Competition Standards – to create a high quality centre so that the many excellent local clubs could thrive and promising athletes did not need to go further afield to find decent facilities.

Ms Back concluded that local decision makers must act swiftly, but not rashly, because whilst there was a clear and immediate need, this was a rare opportunity which everyone must get right if the new centre was to be a true success.

During the debate which followed, Members made a number of key points including:-

- (1) the Council was fully aware that the River Park Leisure Centre was in need of a major refurbishment or replacement and consultants would be engaged in due course to provide a comprehensive examination of all the possible solutions.
- (2) funding was, of course, a crucial factor and even with the current low interest rates and possible partnership finance, the Council would be committed to substantial repayments which would extend over many years. Therefore, a sound business case was essential for such a major decision.
- (3) many public leisure complexes were built around the time of local government reorganisation in 1974, meaning that a fair number of local authorities were now in a similar position to Winchester. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was common for Councils to have well-staffed leisure/amenity departments, but ongoing budget reductions since that period had severely reduced in-house leisure services in

particular. Therefore, much of the necessary expertise for a new centre may need to come from the private sector.

(4) there were only 29 50m pools in the country. The 25m pool was far more common and there were currently five in the Winchester District. So there needed to be a full assessment of both future aspirations and co-ordination with what existed already.

(5) at RPLC, it was the Learner Pool and the studio facilities for exercise classes etc which were the most under pressure and this must be taken into account.

(6) the size of the District meant that areas such as New Alresford and Denmead must not be forgotten during the future debate.

At the conclusion of debate, the Mayor thanked Ms Back for her presentation and explained that a report covering all the points made would be submitted to a future meeting of Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the petition be referred to a future meeting of Cabinet.

8. **CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDED MINUTES**

Licensing and Regulation Committee – 11 October 2012

Gambling Act Statement of Principles - Draft

RESOLVED:

That Recommended Minute 338 of the Licensing and Regulation Committee be approved and adopted.

9. **NOTICE OF MOTION**

1. The following Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor Rutter:-

"This Council, wishing to safeguard the quality of the built environment in the Winchester District, supports the Local Government Association in rejecting the Government's claim that the planning system is stifling economic growth and opposes Government's proposals to significantly extend permitted development rights and allow the removal of affordable housing requirements from developers."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Learney.

Councillor Rutter explained that the Government proposed to increase Permitted Development rights for extensions to homes, mainly to stimulate the construction industry. However, current planning laws were not the reason for

a failure to proceed with the many existing approved housing developments not yet built. It was the general economic situation which had reduced house building and the real need was to free up lending, so that first-time buyers could secure mortgages and developers could borrow to build. The Government was also going against the spirit of the Localism Act 2011, which encouraged more local control of planning policies, whereas these proposals ignored local democracy, would fail to protect local communities and would encourage more neighbourhood disputes.

Councillor Rutter continued that local authorities approved nearly 90% of all planning applications they received from householders. It was a strength of the current planning system that it usually improved poorly designed extensions and made them more acceptable to neighbours. Last year, of the 200,000 applications councils received from householders, only around 22,000 were rejected outright. The majority of the remaining extensions were either approved straightaway or after amendments were made. For all those reasons, the Motion should be supported.

Councillor Rutter then explained the concern at the proposals to give developers a 'get out' clause in relation to Section 106 Agreements, which may allow them to avoid contributing to or building affordable housing. Over the past decade this has been an essential plank of the Council's housing policy, and in an area where housing was so expensive, provision of affordable housing through the planning process was absolutely essential. Again, these were proposals which should be resisted and the Motion supported.

During debate, some Members supported the Motion and highlighted that there were enough planning permissions already in existence - but not yet implemented - to provide building work for the next three years. To allow extensions of up to 8m without planning permission would create problems of overlooking, loss of amenity and neighbour disputes. Applicants always had the appeal system to review the fairness of decisions, but objectors did not have that opportunity. The proposal regarding affordable housing offered many developers a way out of providing such homes and so must also be strongly opposed. The Local Government Association had already presented a good case nationally and it was now necessary for Councils to reinforce that message from the local perspective and present a united front.

Other Members pointed out that, with regard to affordable housing, the Council had always adopted a flexible approach to negotiations with developers and that had achieved good results. Moreover, as the detail of both proposals set out in the Motion had yet to be clarified by the Government, it would be preferable to await that clarification and then consider the situation at a future meeting of Cabinet, which would still allow comments to be submitted within the likely consultation deadline.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion be referred to the meeting of Cabinet to be held on 5 December 2012 and that, having regard to the likely consultation deadline, Cabinet be authorised to submit representations to the Government on behalf of the Council.

2. The following Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor Power:-

“This Council, notes the historical connection of the town of Alresford to the City of Winchester and believes that the proposal of the Boundary Commission to place the City Council Ward of The Alresfords in a Parliamentary Constituency extending to Fleet and Hook is unacceptable to Alresford residents. Therefore:

- a) the City Council will respond to the Boundary Commission consultation opposing this change by the deadline of 10 December 2012
- b) the Leader of the Council will write to the MP for Winchester asking him to vote against any legislation or regulations which remove The Alresfords from the Winchester Constituency.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Cook.

Councillor Power explained that, in addition to the strong geographical and historical associations between Alresford and Winchester, the Town looked to the City for further education and most shopping and employment needs. There was also a high degree of co-terminosity in the democratic representation provided by the City and County Councils, and the local Member of Parliament.

The proposed Constituency was dislocated and included large urban settlements that were likely to take priority on the agenda of the local MP. Residents would share little in common and the difficulties of travel within the Constituency demonstrated how contrived the solution had been to achieve the necessary elector numbers. The proposed Constituency was 70 miles long and, in places, only two miles wide and the shortest public transport journey from end to end would take over two and a half hours.

Councillor Power concluded that it was not practical for the Council to get into the ‘numbers game’ by suggesting alternative solutions, but it was clear that the proposal for Alresford could not be justified on any sensible assessment of the true situation. Therefore, the Council should support the Motion as submitted.

During debate, some Members agreed that Alresford was a market town which related strongly to its rural district. The Boundary Commission’s proposal for such a community was fundamentally wrong and had been driven by the aim of achieving electorate equality at all costs. Other Members considered that,

whilst they had sympathy for Alresford's situation, the Motion did not set out the best way forward and therefore an amendment was proposed. It was also pointed out that Members could make individual representations if they wished to express alternative views.

Amendment (1) Councillor Wood (2) Councillor Humby

“Delete all wording and state:-

The Boundary Commission are consulting on changes to the Parliamentary Boundaries –this does not affect the boundaries of Winchester City Council. In any consultation this Council needs to act responsibly and reflect the views of all constituents wherever possible.

The Council supports Alresford in its desire to stay as part of the Winchester Constituency. It also is aware of concern in Denmead, Wickham and some villages that they also wish to be within the Winchester Constituency boundary.

However, any proposal for changes in the Boundary Commission proposals will require a compensatory adjustment elsewhere and will probably affect other areas of the proposed Constituency. There is not time at this late stage to take soundings from the other areas that may be affected and therefore it would be improper to make representations on their behalf without knowing their views.

Therefore, it is proposed that the City Council makes no recommendation on this but would encourage Town and Parish Councils to submit their views to the Commission.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 32(1), one quarter of the Members present and voting required that a recorded vote be taken in respect of the amendment.

Division List

The following Members voted in favour of the amendment:-

Councillors Byrnes, Chamberlain, Coates, Gemmell, Godfrey, Humby, Huxstep, Phillips, Ruffell, Sanders, Scott, Southgate, Stallard, Tait, Warwick, Weston and Wood (17).

The following Members voted against the amendment:-

Councillors Achwal, E Berry, J Berry, Bodtger, Clear, Collin, Cook, Cutler, Evans, Green, Henry, Hiscock, Hutchison, Izard, Jeffs, Johnston, Laming, Learney, Mason, Mather, Maynard, Nelmes, Newman-Mckie, Power, Prowse, Rutter, Tod, Verney, Weir, Witt and Wright (31)

The following Members abstained:-

Councillors McLean, Pearson and Pines (3)

Amendment Lost.

Original Motion

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 32(1), one quarter of the Members present and voting required that a recorded vote be taken in respect of the Original Motion.

Division List

The following Members voted in favour of the Original Motion:-

Councillors Achwal, Clear, Collin, Cook, Cutler, Evans, Green, Henry, Hiscock, Hutchison, Izard, Jeffs, Johnston, Laming, Learney, Mason, Mather, Maynard, McLean, Nelmes, Newman-Mckie, Power, Prowse, Rutter, Sanders, Tod, Verney, Weir, Witt and Wright (30).

The following Members voted against the Original Motion:-

Councillors Byrnes, Gemmell, Godfrey, Huxstep, Phillips, Stallard, Tait, and Weston (8).

The following Members abstained:-

Councillors E Berry, J Berry, Bodtger, Chamberlain, Coates, Humby, Pearson, Pines, Ruffell, Scott, Southgate, Warwick and Wood (13).

Original Motion carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Power be approved and adopted.

The meeting commenced at 7pm and concluded at 9.25pm.

The Mayor