



**Winchester**  
City Council

**COUNCIL MEETING – 9 January 2013**

**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 1**

From: Councillor Mason

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport

“A road sweeper came last Thursday to Colden Common and men with brooms came just before Christmas to clear areas of heavy leaf fall. This action was much later than in 2011. Can I have comment on the present situation with contractors?”

**Reply**

“There have been difficulties with the leaf clearance programme this year and the client team have been addressing these with the contractor over the last few weeks.

Each year it is difficult to accurately predict the timing and intensity of the leaf fall and dealing with it satisfactorily requires a great deal of flexibility and planning on behalf of the contractor. Experience of previous years programmes is also a significant advantage in the way work is scheduled and managed.

The Landscape Group have admitted they have experienced difficulties and will be changing the approach to clearance in future years including the likely use of different equipment to speed up operations and ensure that the priority areas are addressed in a timely manner. The Client Team staff will ensure that this is the case and will be carrying out additional monitoring when the work is next carried out.”



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**QUESTION 2**

From: Councillor Power

To: The Leader

“Could the Leader please advise Council of Steve Brine MP’s response to the Leader’s letter on the subject of the Boundary Commission Proposals?”

**Reply**

“I wrote to our MP after Council discussed this matter. I know he has taken note of the Council’s views, and will make his own representations as he sees fit.”



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#### QUESTION 3

From: Councillor E Berry

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport

“It is well documented that this has been the worst year for rainfall and flooding, but the problem within Winchester and Area of drain blockage was flagged up well before this dreadful year. It is not enough for the public to phone and report that drains are blocked, and then be told ‘Sorry, the City Council does not deal with blocked drains, it is Hampshire County Council’. But, one would think (if you were a member of the public) that once reported, i.e. blocked drains and flooding, that the person that has been contacted then has the responsibility of furthering on this complaint and then seeing it through. It is becoming common knowledge that some of the drains are collapsing; who will endeavour to get all the drains checked for damage and who will make sure that flooding where drains have not been sorted is responsible? It cannot be the public’s fault, and they cannot put it right. Is the suggestion too far-fetched that City Council and Hampshire County Council work together to do a survey of all the drains?”

#### Reply

“Enquiries concerning drainage can be complicated due to the nature of drainage systems and the different agencies which are responsible for these systems. Highway gullies and the associated drains are a County Council responsibility. Enquiries about these can only be passed on to the County Council as the City Council has no authority or resources to take its own action on complaints. Surface water sewers come under the responsibility of the relevant water company and main rivers fall to the Environment Agency. The City Council has the land drainage duty which relates to watercourses and some ditches and in Winchester Town has responsibility for some underground culverts and riparian land owner duties with respect to sections of the river.

If an enquiry is received by the Customer Service Centre from a member of the public about a highway drain then this will be redirected to the County Council using the following protocol:

**Telephone enquiries:** - We confirm the type of drain that is blocked and the location of the flooding. If this is from a road or gully inform the customer that they need to speak to Hampshire County Council who are responsible for these, and offer to transfer them to Hantsdirect. If they do not want to be transferred we will give the customer the contact details.

**Email and online form enquiries:** - We forward the details to [roads@hants.gov.uk](mailto:roads@hants.gov.uk) and advise the customer by email that we have done this and that the County Council will be in touch.

**Your Winchester reports (reported through the on line application):** We forward details to [roads@hants.gov.uk](mailto:roads@hants.gov.uk) and advise customers that we have done this and that the County Council will respond.

The County Council's reporting system includes a reference number which enables progress with the complaint/ issue to be monitored by the person reporting it.

Plans of drainage systems are held by the County Council and the water companies in respect to highway drains and surface water sewers and such systems are maintained and inspected by those bodies.

Water courses and ditches are mapped on Ordnance Survey plans but they do not show details of where these have been piped. As such any investigation of problems will fall to the City Council as land drainage authority but ultimately the land owner is responsible for maintenance.

Some of the drainage systems that we have in place have not been able to cope with the very heavy downpours we have been experiencing over an extended period. This is not unique to Winchester and the scale of the infrastructure investment required to upgrade systems is very large. I have no doubt this will be the subject of debate about whether this should be a national priority if there is evidence that conditions over the last five years represent an established pattern of weather.

We will continue to liaise with County Council and other relevant bodies on these matters and the issues raised in this question.”



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**QUESTION 4**

From: Councillor Achwal

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport

“Would the Portfolio Holder give an update regarding the forthcoming consultation to ‘Open Yew Tree Drive bus gate in Whiteley on a trial basis’ with reference to the following;

When will the survey be going out?  
Who will be receiving the survey?  
When is the deadline to respond?  
Who will be analysing the responses?  
What is the cost of the consultation?”

**Reply**

“The consultation on the possible trial opening of the Yew Tree Drive bus gate is being conducted and will be analysed by the County Council. The City Council will be consulted on the results and the County Council’s proposed response to them. At present the City Council does not have specific answers to any of the other questions Cllr Achwal asks but we will assist in publicising and promoting the consultation if that is requested to ensure the best possible level of response from Winchester residents.”



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**QUESTION 5**

From: Councillor Verney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration

“What is the approximate cost of the last Council meeting?”

Reply

**“Full Council Meeting Costs**

	<u>£</u>
Arranging the meeting, communicating the meeting and producing minutes	<b>1,000</b>
Printing of Papers - Council Questions & Minute Book	<b>1,110</b>
Guildhall Costs (per internal charge)	<b>800</b>
Members Travelling Expenses	<b>250</b>
Total Estimated Cost of Full Council Meeting based on the above	<b><u>3,160</u></b>

The above figures do not include a cost for officer time at the meeting because, due to their seniority the officers involved are not paid overtime and do not take time off in lieu.”



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**QUESTION 6**

From: Councillor Rutter

To: The Leader

“Can the Leader explain why despite Cabinet considering the November motion to Council on planning matters on December 5th the matter has not come before Council in January?”

**Reply**

“Councillor Rutter’s Notice of Motion was considered by Council on 7 November 2012 where it was 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.’

Cabinet on 5 December 2012 considered the Notice of Motion (Report CAB2414 refers) where it was resolved:-

- ‘1. That the content of the Notice of Motion moved by Councillor Rutter at Council on 7 November 2012 be noted.
2. That the draft response to the Government’s consultation on the relaxation of permitted development rights be approved, as set out in Appendix 1.’

Most (but not all) Notices of Motion come back to Council after Cabinet or scrutiny consideration, but where they do not, the usual reason is one of urgency. In this case, Council thought it was likely that the consultation deadline would have expired before tonight’s Council meeting and therefore authorised Cabinet to determine and forward the comments of this Authority to the Government.”



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**QUESTION 7**

From: Councillor Green

To: The Leader

“Further to the question raised by Councillor Cook at the Council Meeting on the 7 November 2012, does the Leader think that it accords with accepted conventions that a Councillor for one Ward runs a petition for an issue which has no direct bearing on that Members own Ward?”

**Reply**

“I would not normally expect a Councillor to raise such a petition. However, I'd suggest that in such circumstances by far the best answer is for the Members concerned to resolve any concerns between themselves.

Cllr Cook's question raised much comment at the last Council meeting, particularly from the Liberal side, though I am sure that Cllr Cook raised this in all good faith. In view of the comments made previously, it does seem strange for a Petition on Stanmore to be raised by, I believe Cllr Tod, in order for him to gain information as to what is going on in Stanmore. I would have thought that he would first have consulted either Cllrs Scott or Green who have done so much for the Stanmore Ward and are well aware of the residents' views and could give him the information he seeks.”





**COUNCIL MEETING – 9 January 2013**

**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 8**

From: Councillor J Berry

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Administration

“How effective are Discretionary Housing Payments in providing financial assistance to those currently experiencing particular difficulties or hardship in the Winchester district, and is situation likely to change at all after April 2013?”

**Reply**

“Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) are free standing payments which are made where it is considered that additional help with housing costs is needed. Payments are subject to an annual cash limit, which the Council cannot exceed. DHPs may only be awarded if the customer is already in receipt of some Housing Benefit (HB).

In 2011/12 the Council awarded £11,838 in DHPs. The funding allocated to the Council by the Government was £20,708. To date in 2012/13, £23,732 has been awarded from a funding allocation of £47,614. The funding allocation for 2013/14 is £105,155. The funding level has increased due to the Welfare Reform changes that are due to be introduced.

To put these amounts in context, in 2011/12, the Council paid out over £30 million in Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

The procedures for determining DHP awards are being reviewed due to the restrictions that are being introduced to Housing Benefit from April 2013. In previous years the full funding allocation has not always been awarded. This is likely to change in 2013/14 and future years due to the impact of the Welfare Reform changes and the types of customers that these changes will affect. In the past DHPs have been predominantly made to customers in the private sector whose rent has not been met in full by HB (e.g. Rent Officer has agreed a lower rent for HB purposes or the Local Housing Allowance rate for the property is lower than the rent). Due to the nature of these tenancies these payments are normally made for a short period of time, until the current

shorthold tenancy comes to an end, and the customer can find cheaper accommodation.

The size criteria changes due to come into effect from 1 April 2013 will affect customers in the social sector (including the Council's tenants) who have historically had their full rent used in the HB calculation. These customers are in more secure tenancies and it will be difficult for them to move to cheaper or more suitable accommodation within a short period of time. Some of these customers may also be living in accommodation that has been adapted because they have a disability. Due to these factors DHPs may have to be made for longer periods of time than currently and to customers who have not had reason to claim them before.

The overall benefit cap was due to be introduced from 1 April 2013 but has been delayed until the summer of 2013 except for 4 London Authorities who will be trialling the changes from April 2013. Winchester has 22 customers potentially affected by the cap with 5 of them estimated to lose more than £100 per week and one of them estimated to lose £270 per week.

It is difficult to know how customers will react to the changes that face them and what adjustments they will make to their income and expenditure. DHP awards and refusals will be carefully monitored and reviewed from 1 April 2013 so that the procedures can be reviewed as required."



## COUNCIL MEETING – 9 January 2013

### Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

#### QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Portfolio Holder for New Homes Delivery

“Could the Portfolio Holder please provide an update on the progress of the New Homes Delivery Programme?”

#### Reply

“I am pleased to say that the New Homes Delivery Team have been working hard to provide new Council homes within the Winchester District. As part of the programme,

- 5 rented homes are on site at Dever Close, Micheldever with completion expected in September 2013.
- Planning permission was granted for 3 rented homes at Bourne Close, Otterbourne in November 2012, with a start on site planned for March 2013.
- Planning permission was granted in December 2012 for 5 rented homes at Itchen Abbas with a start on site planned for March 2013.

The New Homes Team is currently working on the Abbots Barton Masterplan which will be reported to Cabinet (Housing Delivery) Committee in February which if approved will provide up to 50 new homes and landscape enhancements to benefit the community. Work is also in progress on the Stanmore Planning Framework which has provisionally identified a number of sites that can contribute new affordable homes.

With regards to emerging projects, I am delighted to say that we are currently in advanced discussions for a further 3 schemes that we are hopeful will provide an additional 150 new homes.

Overall, I am pleased with progress that the New Homes Delivery Team has made in meeting one of the Council's key objectives of building 350 Council owned homes over the next 10 years. A full update on all of the schemes identified in the Approved Development Programme will be reported to Members in March 2013.”



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**QUESTION 10**

From: Councillor Tod

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport

“When does the Portfolio Holder expect to have an up to date list of recycling banks on the council's website?”

**Reply**

“The list of recycling banks currently on the website was updated just before Christmas and is therefore up to date.

The website page is managed by a Member of the Joint Client Team who is also updating the previous information leaflet which included a map showing the location of the sites and this will be posted on the site as soon as it is completed which should be within the next few weeks.”



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**QUESTION 11**

From: Councillor Mather

To: The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture and Sport

“Could the Portfolio Holder update me on any progress made towards providing some play facilities/equipment for residents of Erskine Road, Peninsula Road and Frances Sheldon Court and could he also detail what consultation has taken place with local residents to establish what facilities are required?”

**Reply**

“Consultation with affected residents of Erskine Road, Peninsula Road and Frances Sheldon Court was undertaken by the land owner / tenant a2Dominion on Thursday 17 May. This was attended by 50 % of the local residents and both officers of the City Council and local ward Members. The consultation consisted of an on-site marquee staffed by a2’s architects and planners with coloured plans illustrating two options for the green space and play area. The event was well attended by residents who were able to provide feedback on what they believed to be important, including improvements to the parking provision on Erskine Road, as part of the proposed house building scheme. This on-site consultation meeting had been preceded by a ‘consultation document’ a short time before hand by way of a mail drop invitation to all residents setting out the plans and options for the play area and green space.

Resident feedback then enabled the a2 development team to prepare a detailed planning application (case No 12/02574/FUL) which was submitted to Winchester City Council in December and is currently pending consideration.

The application is for ‘development of the site to provide 18 no affordable dwellings, together with improved parking and landscaping, and the enhancement of the open space to include a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)’. With regard to the public open space the application also proposes that the following facilities be laid out by the owner.

- A timber 'trim trail'
- A picnic area with picnic tables
- A play facility with climbing frames, slides and swings

It is also proposed that the open space and these facilities are transferred to the City Council with an accompanying commuted sum of £50,000 toward the future maintenance of this facility, and that a sum of £21,024 is provided in lieu of on site sports provision.

NB: All these details have been available to view on the Council's Website since early December."



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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 12**

From: Councillor Pines

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing

“The government is changing the organisation of Housing Benefit payments by making these direct to Tenants.

Under government plans, a host of benefits, including housing benefit, will be combined into one monthly universal credit paid directly to tenants from October 2013.

Although this scheme is being trialled elsewhere currently, does the Council recognise the potential difficulties for many of our own tenants who do not have bank accounts?

Would the Council assist its tenants by, for example, working with the Credit Union (operating out of the Council’s reception area) to offer financial advice and help in setting up accounts?”

**Reply**

“The Council does recognise the potential difficulties that many tenants may face through the introduction of universal credits.

The draft Change Plan and Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for 2013 and beyond will both make specific reference to measures to assist tenants and to mitigate the impact of welfare reform.

This will include liaising with the Credit Union and other bodies to assist those tenants that don’t have bank accounts.

An initial briefing on the impact of welfare reform was prepared and considered by Cabinet (Housing) Committee in September 2012 (CAB2390(HSG) refers). A further member briefing session on the Reform proposals will be arranged in the next two months.”



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**QUESTION 13**

From: Councillor Gemmell

To: The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport

"What action can be taken to strengthen officers capability for action when faced with a contravention of planning enacted over a holiday period?"

**Reply**

"The Planning Enforcement Team maintains adequate cover on the working days of holiday periods, including half terms, Christmas and Easter, which enables it to respond appropriately to any breaches of planning control which come to light. This includes issuing enforcement notices for serious breaches where immediate action is required.

All breaches which are reported, whether during holiday periods or at other times, are dealt with in accordance with the Council's Enforcement Policy which prioritises the investigation of cases according to their seriousness and explains that we will adopt a proportionate approach when deciding whether to take formal action.

The Council does not provide an 'out of hours' service because the cost of paying staff on standby arrangements would be prohibitive but this has not resulted in significant delays or created particular problems in dealing with enforcement cases which have occurred when the offices are closed."





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**QUESTION 14**

From: Councillor Power

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing

“Could the Portfolio Holder please advise council of the proportion of houses on each of our housing estates that are in private ownership?”

**Reply**

“Information on the proportion of houses on each of our housing estates that are in private ownership is not readily available at an estate level.

Since the introduction of the Right to Buy regime in the 1980's, 3011 properties have been sold, amounting to approximately 40% of the original stock. This figure will vary significantly from one estate to another, but has been used as a basis for recharges to the Council's General Fund in relation to services such as grounds maintenance, where the whole community benefits from estate services funded through the Housing Revenue Account.”



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**QUESTION 15**

From: Councillor Green

To: The Leader

“Could the Leader give a progress report on the Winchester Covenant?”

**Reply**

“Officers have met with the Forces representatives at Worthy Down, and I have discussed details of the proposed Covenant with officers. I am keen to ensure this is a constructive document which allows both sides to build on the strong relationship Winchester District already has with the Armed Services.

We have shared a draft with the lead Officer at Worthy Down, and a meeting is being arranged to discuss the text. I hope to be in a position to sign this shortly.”



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**QUESTION 16**

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“Is the Leader completely au fait with the ‘To Honour A Promise Project’ which is raising funds to build a memorial to the more than two million allied soldiers who passed through the army camp at Morn Hill during the First World War, and can the Portfolio Holder please ensure that information about the project is disseminated throughout the Council, with a view to giving every assistance possible to the Project’s fundraising efforts?”

**Reply**

“Yes. I have met with Brigadier David Harrison to discuss how the Council can assist this very worthwhile initiative, and offered £3,000 to support the project.

The City Council is considering its own programme of events to commemorate the outbreak of the First World War. We will liaise with the organisers of ‘Honour A Promise’ as well as the County Council and others to ensure Winchester recognises this important date appropriately.”