



COUNCIL MEETING – 17 July 2013

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Leader

“What was the final cost of the Consultants Report on the Leisure Centre, which was originally budgeted at £50k?”

Does the Leader consider that the Council got good value from the report?

Does the Leader believe that he gave reasonable consideration to the views of his fellow Councillors, before announcing his decision at Cabinet to locate any replacement Leisure Centre facility adjacent to the River Park Leisure Centre?”

Reply

“The two consultancy reports that the Council has commissioned to assist with the first stages of considering the feasibility of a replacement leisure centre have cost £17,500 in total. The Continuum report has been published and the report from Savills on planning issues at Bar End and North Walls has been received in draft and is now being finalised.

I consider that the Council has obtained excellent value from these in helping with the decision making process.

I am grateful to all Councillors for their views on the possible location of the any new facility. My announcement at the Cabinet meeting was not intended to pre-empt further discussion and analysis, but rather to indicate my view as to which location offered the better prospects for further consideration bearing in mind the initial feedback from our planning consultants.

I have asked officers to prepare a comprehensive report for the September Cabinet meeting which will draw together all of the work done to date so that Cabinet can consider the next steps to take on the project.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Weir

To: The Leader

“What steps are being taken to mitigate the loss of open space arising from the Council's new homes delivery programme? What assurances will you give residents affected by the loss of open space that funds will be available to carry through any proposed mitigation?”

Reply

“Approximately 60 new homes out of 200 in the Council’s 3 year development programme involve the loss of open space. The planning applications for these new homes that impact on open space will have to address the relevant planning policy requirements of the Council in order to receive a consent.

In respect of open space policy, there is a presumption against the loss of open space except where it can be demonstrated that –

- Alternative facilities will be provided and are least as accessible to current and potential new users, and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality; or
- The benefit of the development to the community outweighs the harm caused by the loss of the facility.

The compensatory costs of mitigation for loss of open space are included in the scheme development costs (funded by the new homes programme), these are approved by Cabinet before the scheme can proceed. The Council will therefore be committed to funding the appropriate open space mitigation as determined by the requirements of the planning consent for each individual scheme.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Stallard

To: The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Environment

“Would the Portfolio Holder summarise the Community Safety key priorities for the Winchester District and comment on the extent to which the community safety team has achieved its outcomes in tackling anti-social behaviour?”

Reply

“The detailed key priorities for 2013/14 have yet to be developed by the Community Safety Partnership following agreement of the high level priority themes at its meeting on 12 June. The priorities chosen were:

- **Organisations** – To utilise frontline services to reduce crime and keep communities safe
- **People** – Endeavour to protect victims and vulnerable people from crime, disorder and harm
- **Partnership** – Work together to reduce crime, ASB and increase effective operational delivery
- **Community Impact** – to reduce re-offending

Individual delivery plans supporting each of the above priority themes will be developed in the forthcoming months and agreed at the September partnership meeting.

The end of year results for anti-social behaviour showed that by working in partnership a 17% reduction on the overall target of 3840 was achieved against a 3% target of 3170 which is an excellent result. The largest reduction was for Envirocrime cases followed by Personal cases involving a victim and lastly nuisance cases relating to rowdy and inconsiderate behaviour in the street.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Hutchison

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Organisational Development

“How much did the City Council as a whole spend on 'business travel' in the last financial year? How many City Council posts carry 'essential car user' status? And could a list of the job titles of all such posts be made available to any member who requests it?”

Reply

“The total cost of business travel for the Council for 2011/2012 (the last complete full year), based on expense claims and rail warrants paid, was £143,181.

This includes: staff car mileage totalling £104,789, public transport £25,414, Members car mileage £12,932 and Members taxi £46.

The total number of Essential Car User status posts is 228 on the staff establishment.

The details of the posts are held within Organisational Development and are available to any member who requests it.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Gemmell

To: The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development

"Could the Portfolio Holder explain what the effect of the business charter will be and how the Winchester District business community has received it?"

Reply

"The Business Charter is a joint initiative between Winchester City Council and the Winchester Area Committee of the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce.

It sets out in writing for the first time how the Council seeks to support business, following through its continued commitment to economic prosperity as a key priority for the Administration.

Here are just three examples of how we are working to deliver this Charter:

Firstly: we are providing direct financial support. We have already given out over £12,000 in micro business development grants and nearly £5,000 in apprenticeship grants over the past year. In response to feedback, we have this month introduced two new grant schemes, one for business start ups and another to support access to work for long term job seekers

Secondly: we are tackling red tape and enabling business development, implementing a range of effective measures to make the planning process less confusing for small rural businesses.

Thirdly: we are responding to concerns from specialist retailers about the current trading environment by commissioning a study to support the District's enviable line-up of independent shops.

The Council is increasingly aiming to provide a 'joined up' and positive response to the needs of individual businesses. The Charter is a standard under which all our services will be expected to operate in the future.

The Charter has been well received by those in the business community. Chris Turner, Executive Director Winchester Business Improvement District, said: "The Charter confirms what has already been happening [in Winchester]. We are well-blessed with a local authority keen to do business."



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Evans

To: The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development

“Could the Portfolio Holder please inform me the following information? When the Council awards a grant to organisations which is dependent on conditions being fulfilled, what systems are in place to monitor these conditions are actually carried out?”

Reply

“The Council operates a broad range of different grants programmes, and occasionally makes additional, ad-hoc awards for individual projects or initiatives in keeping with its commissioning approach.

Conditions for grants to not-for-profit organisations tend to be similar in nature. They range from requirements for public monies to be used for the designated purpose to appropriate acknowledgment of Council support in publicity materials.

Officers holding the budget from which a grant is made are responsible for finalising conditions and for monitoring use of the grant. However, with an ever-increasing number of grants to oversee, monitoring is often focused on financial management and safety issues – complementing by some ‘spot checking’ of other conditions over a period of time. Ward Members and the Council’s nominated Member representatives on external bodies can play a helpful role in feeding back on the successful deployment of grants locally.

Where it is known that an organisation has not complied with the full conditions of a grant, this can be considered in any future grant application and may affect the outcome of further funding decisions.”



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor McLean

To: The Deputy Leader

“Can the Deputy Leader comment on the recent Tourism conference?”

Reply

“The *Visit Winchester and Heart of Hampshire* Tourism Conference was held on 3 July in Guildhall Winchester. The agenda included an interview with chef and broadcaster Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, along with a national overview of the visitor economy from James Berresford, the Chief Executive of the national tourism body Visit England.

Over 100 delegates from local tourism businesses attended the free event, and feedback forms indicated that they found it positive, inspiring and a useful networking opportunity.

The venue was chosen in order to showcase the Guildhall and also local suppliers keen to work with tourism businesses.

The conference explored the links between the city and the surrounding rural areas, in terms of making the most of the benefits of tourism for the local economy and increasing resilience during this difficult economic period.

Delegates also received a comprehensive update about the progress of the *Visit Winchester and Heart of Hampshire* Destination Management Partnership founded two years ago following a similar conference, and they were invited to contribute to plans for future development of the Partnership. Funding partners are the City Council, East Hampshire District Council, the South Downs National Park Authority and Tourism South East. There are currently 52 paying members, and 350 associate members via the Winchester Business Improvement District.”



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Environment

“This Council's recently produced performance figures show that it is still failing to improve recycling levels. While top performing authorities are achieving recycling rates of 68-69% Winchester recycles less than 40% of its' waste and league tables show the Council has gone from one of the top performers in the Country to well below mid table.

What are the Portfolio Holder's plans to improve the recycling service we offer our householders, reach national average levels of performance over the next few years and reach the Country's national target of 50% by 2020?”

Reply

“The City Council's recycling rate has fallen slightly in recent years in line with both National and local trends caused by a number of factors such as the economic conditions. However, our rate of 36.63% for 2012/13 compares favourably with our neighbours and we were 4th best performing authority of the 13 in Hampshire.

Work is continuing to develop plans to try and improve our recycling rates by increasing the capture of materials and reducing contamination although the City Council performs well on this latter aspect compared to other Hampshire Authorities.

The plans will be delivered through a joint Waste Resources Action Plan with our partners East Hampshire District Council which will support the wider Project Integra Partnership Plan and the work of Recycle for Hampshire which delivers County wide projects to address these issues.

It is important when delivering such projects at a time when resources are limited to ensure that any projects to improve recycling rates can be linked to a clear business case demonstrating that any expenditure can be matched by corresponding increases in income from the sale of recyclables and each future project will be considered against this principle.”



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development

“Can the Portfolio Holder please advise of what events the Council is putting on or supporting next year, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of WW1?”

Reply

“As Members will know from the Change Plans adopted earlier this year, the Council has already committed itself to supporting the national commemorations for the outbreak of World War 1.

A local working group, chaired by Lt Gen Sir Christopher Wallace, has been co-ordinating responses from a range of partner organisations which include Winchester College, Winchester Cathedral, Winchester’s military museums and the Theatre Royal, among others.

The Council’s own teams have been supporting a project led by the Upper Itchen Valley Society called *To Honour a Promise*. This seeks to erect a permanent memorial to those service personnel of the British, Commonwealth, American and Allied Forces who passed through Winchester’s Morn Hill Camps on their way to the battlefields.

Staff are also working with Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council museums and arts teams to produce two major, multi-site exhibitions – *Artists Rifles*, and *Soldiers’ Journeys* – which will feature in venues across the County, supported by a lively programme of education and outreach events.

The Council will be supporting a special three-day festival of live poetry, education, workshops and talks, which is rooted in the centenary commemoration and in Hampshire’s literary heritage. The festival will bring a dozen contemporary poets to Winchester for readings about, among other matters, the impact of conflict in poetry today.

In addition to promoting the many excellent events across the District, the tourism team will be launching a campaign around Winchester's wider military heritage, including a new DVD.

As you will agree, there is significant activity already going into our 1914 campaign. In the meantime, I would encourage Members to visit City Space at Winchester Discovery Centre during the forthcoming summer holiday period to see the current exhibition which explores life in Edwardian England, just before the outbreak of World War 1, providing a timely bridge into our commemorations next year."



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Cutler

To: The Deputy Leader

“In view of the continuing failure to initiate enforcement proceedings against breaches of planning consents at the South Hants Country Park in Boarhunt, does she consider that the planning enforcement department has sufficient resources to maintain the credibility of the planning system?”

Reply

“In general terms the Enforcement team is sufficiently well resourced to deal with cases that arise in the District in an efficient manner and they prioritise their work in line with our adopted Enforcement Policy.

Over the last 5 months however, the team has experienced temporary staffing issues, which has inevitably caused delays in resolving some of the more difficult cases and resources have understandably been directed towards the sites requiring the most urgent attention.

The South Hants Country Club site in North Boarhunt has a complex planning history. A Lawful Development Certificate application for a proposed unrestricted use of land for residential caravans was refused in May 2013, and officers are now concentrating on trying to establish the extent of any planning breaches on the site with particular regard to caravans being occupied on a permanent basis rather than for holiday accommodation.

The investigation is on-going and officers are in the process of instigating formal steps which should help build up a better understanding of the site’s use. By September we should be in a position to take enforcement action as and where appropriate.”



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing and New Homes

“Could the Portfolio Holder advise me of the level of affordable housing contributions agreed by this Authority (either on site or as a financial contribution) since the adoption of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 on the 20 March 2013 with particular reference to sites which would have previously been excluded from the requirement due to the number of dwellings proposed or size of the site?

Could the Portfolio Holder also explain how officers are balancing the need to maximise the amount of affordable housing against that of the higher build costs associated with complying with higher code levels within the Code for Sustainable Homes framework?”

Reply

“It is not possible in the time available to provide you with the information requested in the first part of your question so officers will write to you shortly setting out these details.

The cumulative impact of the Joint Core Strategy’s policies on development viability was considered by the Local Plan Inspector last year and the Plan was found to be sound. Hence the Council adopted the Plan in March this year.

Policy CP.11 requires development to achieve code for sustainable (CSH) level 4 for water and level 5 for energy unless this is unachievable on the site, in which case minimum standards are required on site with the remaining carbon reduction provided by means of allowable or other solutions off site. There was no equivalent saved policy in the 2006 Local Plan so this is new requirement and it was always recognised that it would add to development costs until national (Building Regulations) standards ‘catch up’.

Policy CP3 seeks 40% affordable housing provision for all residential sites schemes regardless of their location, number of units proposed and site area. However, if it can be demonstrated that meeting the full affordable housing requirement renders a scheme economically unviable, a reduced (viable) level of provision will be accepted. This process involves applicants submitting viability reports which are then assessed by Council officers or by suitable consultants on our behalf. This information allows us to secure the highest affordable housing provision that the proposed scheme can reasonably afford to accommodate.

Clearly, meeting Policy CP11, along with other Joint Core Strategy and saved Local Plan policies, will be a factor in determining the cost of development and this can impact on viability. This may mean that affordable housing, transport and open space contributions will need to be adjusted where the basis for doing so has been adequately evidenced and procedures are being put in place to enable this to happen with the minimum of delay to applications.”



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QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Lipscomb

To: The Leader

“Will the Leader say what has been the level of service satisfaction, month by month, attributed to the Customer Service Centre over the past 12 months? In a similar vein, will he give figures for complaints received about Council service overall for the same period?”

Reply

“Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction within the Customer Service Centre is measured by calling 100 customers in each quarter and asking a number of questions including:-

Q1: How satisfied were you with the overall service you received from the Customer Service Centre?

Over the last year the following results were recorded:

Period	Question 1
Q1 2012/13	95%
Q2 2012/13	93%
Q3 2012/13	93%
Q4 2012/13	88%

Due to the installation and configuration of the new telephone system the Q1 2013/14 survey has not been completed.

Complaints

The table below shows the cumulative number of complaints recorded and allocated to service areas on the complaints system in 2012/13 and the breakdown of those complaints by service area:

Month	2012/13
April	39
May	48
June	134
July	210
August	273
September	323
October	381
November	426
December	456
January	522
February	583
March	628

Complaint by service area	2012/13
Building Control	0
Access & Infrastructure	67
Cultural Services	4
Customer Services	3
CX	21
Director of Operations	6
Environment	197
Estates	11
Financial Services	1
Housing Landlord Services	139
Housing Services	12
I M & T	3
Legal Services	10
Organisational Development	2
Partnerships & Communication	2
Performance & Scrutiny	1
Planning Control	88
Revenues	54
Strategic Housing	4
Strategic Planning	3
Total	628



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QUESTION 13

From: Councillor Stallard

To: The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development

“The 2013 Festival was the first time that the Hat Fair had worked in partnership with the Theatre Royal, Winchester. Would the Portfolio Holder agree that the new arrangements had worked well and further enhanced Winchester's reputation for being a cultural centre of excellence?”

Reply

“The short answer is a very definite yes.

Hat Fair is one of the five most significant street arts celebrations in the UK.

2013 has been an exceptional year for Hat Fair, which was integrated into the Theatre Royal's management structure this spring. It has greatly benefited from the additional management, marketing, administration and technical expertise on which it has been able to call as a consequence. The Safety Advisory Group and officers across the Council enjoyed a very smooth run-up to the event which took place during the first weekend in July.

The public came out in their thousands to enjoy the wide range of entertainment on offer, which included a new strand of programming for pre-school children and some chargeable events which will over time help Hat Fair to be more financially resilient. Previous difficulties in working alongside the street markets were addressed.

A second, three-year funding package from Europe was secured, with the University of Winchester playing an important new role in 'bankrolling' the grant to ensure that previous cash flow problems for Hat Fair do not reoccur.

And the sun came out for the first time in three years – the icing on the cake for a great cultural event of which the people of Winchester are understandably proud. I am sure Hat Fair will continue to go from strength to strength, benefiting the local economy by tens of thousands of pounds each year.”



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QUESTION 14

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Environment

“Could the Portfolio Holder clarify for me the legal position regarding leaving commercial refuse bins permanently on the public highway and also inform me of what advice/direction is given to businesses to ensure that they comply with the relevant legislation?”

Does the Portfolio Holder feel that any lessons have been learnt from the problems experienced in Parchment Street when a refuse bin was set on fire and caused very considerable damage to one to the shops?”

Reply

“The City Council has been working hard on this issue over the last few months as part of a broader approach to issues affecting the ‘Public Realm of the City Centre led by the Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods & Environment). Working with the Winchester BID, a team has been finding ways to deal with not only commercial waste bins the work but also fouling by pigeons, the maintenance of historic buildings, the renovation of St Maurice’s covert, additional street cleansing and removal of unnecessary street furniture.

A joint approach has been taken to address the commercial bin issue on a case by case bases supported by Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service because of the arson incident experienced previously. Businesses are being asked to remove bins from outside and store waste within the premises and, if necessary, change bin collection frequencies so that this is possible. Options for alternative bin store locations are also being developed in conjunction with staff from the Historic Environment team from the City Council.

Several specific problems have already been resolved and it is hoped that further progress will be made over the forthcoming months.”



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QUESTION 15

From: Councillor Lipscomb

To: The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Environment

“Will the Portfolio Holder say if she is satisfied with the levels of service provided by the Council's Landscape Contractor, in particular their maintenance or otherwise of high profile areas such as the gardens alongside the River Itchen on Kingsgate Walk?”

Reply

“Following recent concerns about the performance of The Landscape Group Ltd officers within the Joint Client Team are undertaking a detailed review of the complaints received so far during 2013 and the action being taken to address any shortfalls in performance. The results of the review will be used to inform the focus of future monitoring of the contract including an assessment of the current capacity within the Client Monitoring Team and the processes used to address poor performance.

The Corporate Director (Steve Tilbury) and the Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods & Environment) also met with key Joint Client Team staff from East Hampshire District Council today to consider this issue as part of a schedule of meetings to monitor service performance. This followed an earlier meeting between Joint Client Team staff and the Landscape Group earlier to discuss current performance.

The Chair of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has brought forward the 12 monthly review of all three environmental services contractor's performance to their meeting on 28 October when the results of the Joint Client Team review and response taken to recent complaints will be known and considered in more detail.

The areas in the vicinity of the River Itchen or Kingsgate Walk are high profile and as such should receive regular maintenance. Following a recent inspection of these areas Client Staff were not satisfied with the quality of work and as a result rectification notices were served requiring the area to be brought back up to the required standard by the end of this week.”



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QUESTION 16

From: Councillor Lipscomb

To: The Portfolio Holder for Business Services

“Will the Deputy Leader say what plans exist, with timescale, to improve the Council's visible identity by display of our Coat of Arms in both the Guildhall Reception and the Bapsy Hall? Will he note that the plain brown lectern on the stage of the Bapsy Hall (an obvious location for our coat of arms or that of hirers) seriously detracts from the overall significant improvements to the hall, as commented upon by customers at last week's Winchester Festival?”

Reply

“As part of the restoration works for the Guildhall the Civic Crest which was formerly sited over the stage in the Bapsy Hall was removed, restored and re-sited at the entrance to the Civic Corridor. There are currently no plans for further Civic branding within the Guildhall.”