



## COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014

### Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

#### QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Wellbeing

“What materials are collected at Recycling Banks in other Hampshire districts that are not collected in Winchester – and what plans are there to catch up with our neighbours?”

What materials are collected on the doorstep for recycling in other Hampshire districts that are not collected in Winchester – and what plans are there to catch up with our neighbours?”

#### Reply

“I am not convinced that there is a significant need to catch up with our neighbours, as recent data from Project Integra confirmed that the City Council was the 4<sup>th</sup> best performing authority in Hampshire with a combined recycling rate of 34.43%, and the worst authority having a rate of only 22%.

There are a number of materials accepted at collection banks operated by neighbouring local authorities, including aluminium foil, batteries, books, CDs and small items of electrical equipment. Some of these materials are also collected at the kerbside as part of the local authorities’ routine collections.

This Council is currently considering options for increasing the variety of materials collected for recycling within the District, particularly through the “bring site” network. However, decisions to do so will need to be based on clear business cases and practical options appraisals, in order to ensure that they are cost effective. This work will be informed by advice from Project Integra, which is currently undertaking a review of additional materials that might be collected with existing dry mixed recyclables.

The improvements proposed are included within a suite of measures contained in a Draft Waste Minimisation Plan recently prepared with our partners East Hampshire District Council. This will be considered by the Joint Environmental Services Committee at their next meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> October. The plan includes actions to increase the capture of recyclables, minimise contamination and reduce residual household waste.

Winchester Action on Climate Change (WinACC) has developed a major initiative for 2015 called The Great Waste Project. This will take an innovative approach to encouraging households to recycle more and reduce their waste, working with key partners such as the University of Winchester, the School of Art, the new Cultural Trust and the City and County Councils. The Project will deliver a six week exhibition, a new website, a film competition, talks, workshops, an artistic trail of the City and new performance work. WinACC is currently awaiting the outcome of a funding bid to WRAP for this work, and there is potential for the Council to build on this ambitious programme, by running our own corporate campaign around waste reduction in 2015. Clearly, this is something in which we, as Members, could all play a valuable and practical part.”



**Winchester**  
City Council

**COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014**

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**QUESTION 2**

From: Councillor Read

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Wellbeing

“At the recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee questions were raised about Winchester’s recycling rate. What plans are in place to improve our recycling rate in the future?”

Reply

“Whilst concerns were expressed about Winchester recycling rate, recent Project Integra data has confirmed that the City Council is still the 4<sup>th</sup> best performing local authority in Hampshire with a combined 2013/14 recycling rate of 34.43%.

Despite this I am still keen to improve this position and officers are currently considering how to develop cost effective options for increasing the variety of materials collected for recycling within the District particularly through the bring site network. The option appraisals will include advice from Project Integra and any conclusions from a recent review of additional materials that might be collected at the kerbside with the existing dry mixed recyclables. The Council will also work with other partners who may be able to provide bank sites at no cost to the Council.

Plans to improve the recycling rate are included within the Draft Waste Minimisation Plan recently prepared with our partners East Hampshire District Council. This contains measures to address increasing the capture of recyclables, minimising contamination within the recycling bin and reducing the amount of residual household waste.

The draft plan will be considered by the Joint Environmental Services Committee at their next meeting on 13 October.”



**Winchester**  
City Council

**COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014**

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**QUESTION 3**

From: Councillor J Berry

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing

“How many empty homes are there currently in the Winchester District, and how many of these are long term empty dwellings, and how do these figures compare to the number of empty homes five years ago? Does the Portfolio Holder agree that the development and implementation of an empty homes strategy would ensure that the most is made of every home, bringing empty properties back into use, benefitting the individual owners, potential occupiers and the wider community?”

**Reply**

“Council Tax records list 406 properties listed as having been empty in the District for 6 months or longer. There are a number of reasons for properties being empty, but this figure includes a number which are closed awaiting demolition (such as Victoria House in Winchester and Cunningham House in Bishops Waltham). It is difficult to compare numbers with five years ago as there have been changes in how numbers are recorded. However, officers believe there has not been a significant change in numbers over this period. The majority of empty properties do not cause on-going concerns or problems within their neighbourhood, but they are an extremely valuable housing resource within the district.

Even without a formal empty homes strategy, it has been the policy within the Private Sector Housing Team (PSH) to try and engage where possible with the owners of empty properties in order to explore how they might bring their property back into use. In a recent example in Alresford, through engagement and dialogue with PSH, the owners have sold their property (vacant for more than ten years) and the site is to be redeveloped and a new home built on it. However it is important for the Council to consider whether an empty homes strategy is needed. A strategy could bring together the wider enforcement powers available to this authority and build upon the work already being undertaken to bring empty homes back into use, whilst recognising that we do not have grant funding available to support landlords with improving the condition of their properties as described in other districts strategies.

It is envisaged that any empty property strategy will emphasise in the first instance the need for officers to offer advice, assistance and support to empty property owners to bring their properties back into use and that the Council would work with owners to provide a package of advice, assistance and incentives, and where possible, specific to the owner's needs. It would need to encompass a range of powers including Compulsory Purchase Orders and powers to take over land; enforced sales procedures; orders to require a property to be made safe; unsecured properties and Empty Dwelling Management Orders

There are two activities in the PSH Action Plan for 2014/15, which will help inform the need for an empty homes strategy. Firstly, a private sector housing stock condition survey is currently underway which will provide current and valuable data on property conditions, characteristics and socio - economic information on residents across owner-occupied and privately rented tenures. This information will help to identify potential areas where service delivery might need to be focused. This will allow completion of a new Private Sector Housing Strategy by the end of the current year, which in turn will identify the need for an empty property strategy to be considered.”



**COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014**

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**QUESTION 4**

From: Councillor Scott

To: The Portfolio Holder for Built Environment

“Can the Portfolio Holder please explain the difference and benefit between ‘additional licencing of HMO’s’ and Issuing an ‘Article 4’ for an area such as Stanmore which is experiencing high levels of ‘Student let Properties’?”

Is the Portfolio Holder confident that Officers recommendation in the section WIN 10 of the LPP2 of an ‘Article 4’ for Stanmore wouldn’t have significant impact on other City areas, and is the Portfolio Holder assured that from the ISG Briefing paper 23rd October 2012 the figures quoted proves there is a disproportionate ratio of family units to HMO’s in many parts of Stanmore?”

**Reply**

“The benefit of making an Article 4 Direction is that it brings within planning control the change of use of single dwelling houses to smaller HMOs which otherwise would take place without requiring planning permission from the Council. This gives the Council the opportunity to assess the impact of such changes of use and to this end Policy WIN 10 has been included in the draft Local Plan Part 2 which is designed to limit the proportion of HMOs in particular areas where Article 4s are made.

An Article 4 is being pursued in Stanmore because existing information shows there is already a relatively high proportion of HMOs in the neighbourhood, some 20%, and in some locations the proportion is even higher than this. This is unbalancing local housing mix and the trend of losing family homes to HMOs looks likely to continue.

If an Article 4 is made in Stanmore it is possible that similar issues may arise in other areas of the City where properties could be converted to HMOs without planning permission from the Council. Should evidence come forward which demonstrates that there is increasing proliferation of HMOs in other neighbourhoods the Council has the option of making further Article 4s. Policy WIN 10 is a general HMO policy and does not therefore relate solely to

Stanmore and would apply equally to other areas where Article 4s are considered appropriate.

### Additional Licensing

The primary and most significant difference between an Article 4 Direction Order and additional licensing, is that an Article 4 can be used to help address and regulate potential increases in HMO numbers. Additional licensing has no bearing whatsoever on helping to limit increasing HMO numbers, apart from that it might deter landlords from buying a HMO in a declared area, as such a property would likely be subject to a licence fee.

Section 56 of the 2004 Housing Act (the Act) provides the Council with discretionary power to introduce additional licensing and can be implemented in specific locations, or across the whole of a council's District.

Additional licensing can bring into the licensing regime those HMOs considered to be lower risk and below the trigger point for mandatory licensing. In most instances such properties would be smaller 2 storey properties such as typical student houses.

Additional licensing schemes however are primarily aimed at areas within an authority's district where a significant proportion of the HMOs are being managed ineffectively and schemes generally operate for a period of no more than five years. At the end of the five year period a council would have to make a new designation if it wished a scheme to continue.

HMO additional licensing is unable to address neighbourhood issues such as parking, anti- social behavior or other estate matters but can help with:

- Improvement in property conditions
- Creating a level playing field for all landlords
- Improvement in management standards
- Prevention of overcrowding
- Consistent approach to Management

It should be noted that additional licensing is extremely resource intensive and is aimed at neighbourhoods where there is concrete and not just hearsay evidence of HMO housing management / repair and tenant problems. Although it is known that over the last 10 to 15 years HMO numbers in Stanmore have increased year on year, there has not been a corresponding increase in complaints regarding HMO property conditions or management.”



**Winchester**  
City Council

**COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014**

**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 5**

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“It is still rumoured that should the contract with Henderson be terminated, for whatever reason, that they are entitled to compensation. The rumour mill suggests ‘millions’. On the assumption that the Council does not wilfully breach any ‘good faith’ or other obligations in the Development Agreement, can the Leader please confirm that there is no provision for Henderson to receive compensation in the event that the contract falls away, and that any such rumours are unfounded?”

**Reply**

“If such a rumour is indeed circulating then I am happy to lay it to rest. Providing the Council meets its obligations under the Development Agreement then there is no contractual basis for Henderson to receive any compensation if the contract ‘falls away’.”





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City Council

**COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014**

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**QUESTION 6**

From: Councillor Pines

To: The Leader

“Could the Portfolio Holder provide a statement on why the local Credit Union is no longer operating at the City Offices?”

**Reply**

“United Savings & Loans Hampshire Credit Union discontinued its operations at the City Offices without warning in early September, without notifying the Council directly. Despite officer efforts to do so, it has not thus far proved possible to contact the organisation.

A copy of a letter sent by the Credit Union to its customers on 16 September 2014 says simply:

I am writing to you to inform you that as part of our continuing review of service provision we have developed our online service delivery via our website, it is now possible to view balances, request transfers & complete loan applications online at [www.usal.org.uk](http://www.usal.org.uk). To request balances and transfers you can also text 07537404480 or email us at [Info@usal.org.uk](mailto:Info@usal.org.uk).

Please also note **with immediate effect** we are ceasing our service point at Winchester.

Thank you for your continuing support.

The move is unfortunate, given the importance of providing access to banking support as the roll-out of Universal Credit continues across the country.

Officers will continue to try to make contact with the Credit Union, although a move to on-line provision to reduce operational overheads is a common strategy for the banking sector.”



## COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014

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#### QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Mather

To: The Leader

“What steps is Winchester City Council taking to address the issues experienced last year with regards to coach and car parking during the pre - Christmas period?”

#### Reply

“Council officers have been looking at ways to improve the operation of car and coach parking in the City Centre this year including liaising with external organisations. As a result a number measures are planned:

- The Cathedral will have their own greeters to meet coach parties and Stagecoach also has controllers that operate at certain times.
- For the first time this year parking bays in the middle of The Broadway will be suspended to allow easier flow for buses/coaches. Taxi ranks will still be available.
- Park & Ride (P&R) bus services will be enhanced during the 5 week period before Christmas so that services run at a 10 minute frequency during the whole day rather than the current 15 minute frequency. During this time the P&R bus stop in front of Abbey House will be temporarily relocated (in front of the Guildhall) to provide additional coach loading space on the Broadway.
- The Council will be funding a free South P&R Sunday service that runs from the car park to The Broadway (via the motorway) only on the 5 Sundays before Christmas. This is a new initiative for 2014 which will run every 15 minutes from 0900 to 1800. (Winchester BID are funding the Sunday service to East P&R).
- Coach parking has been arranged at HCC's P&R site at the weekends. The Council is also looking at whether it will be possible to use the old SERCO depot at Bar End as a temporary coach park but this arrangement still needs to be confirmed.
- A strategy will be in place to utilise extra signage, CCTV, and radio networks to advise where remaining parking spaces are available.

- Transport and Parking teams will promote changes via the council website which includes a page dedicated to Christmas parking.

Hopefully these initiatives, which are a combination of new and tried and tested measures, will have a positive effect on visitor experience but the success of the City, including the Christmas market and other festive activities, in recent years mean that managing traffic is always going to be a challenge at our busiest times.”



## COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014

### Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

#### QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Stallard

To: The Leader

“Winchester is a great and historic city which attracts large numbers of tourists each year and the City Council’s Tourist Information Centre has consistently done an excellent job of marketing the numerous festivals and wide range of cultural activities on offer. However, there is always opportunity to develop both the performance and growth of our tourism businesses and I would like the Leader to identify how he might set about this?”

#### Reply

“I know all Members are proud of the achievements of our tourism team, among which have been two national gold medals for Tourist Information Service of the Year.

Last week, we received the latest figures for the economic impact of tourism on the Winchester District – and there is more good news. We have seen visitor numbers rocket, hitting 5.5 million in 2013 with a growth rate in day visitors of over 9%, compared with the previous average of 6.5%, and significantly outstripping national performance.

The overall value of tourism to the district has reached £341million, which is an increase of £100million over the last five years – a 42% rise when compared to 2008. And the number of jobs supported by tourism has also reached its highest level, at 5,350.

I firmly believe that at the heart of this success story is the creative and energetic Destination Management Partnership (or DMP) with East Hampshire District Council, the South Downs National Park Authority and Tourism South East.

Working with our excellent stakeholders – the Winchester BID, the Cathedral the larger businesses who are members of the Discover Winchester PR Consortium and the many others who have joined the Destination Management Partnership – and building on major projects such as Silver Hill, I am confident that we will achieve this.

I hope, in the meantime, you will join me in congratulating the Destination Management Partnership and our own Tourism team on these excellent results.”



**Winchester**  
City Council

**COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014**

**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 9**

From: Councillor Huxstep

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health & Wellbeing

“Will the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health & Wellbeing explain how the ecosystem mapping for green infrastructure has already been used to inform the Local Plan Part II?”

**Reply**

“A series of maps have recently been produced by Winchester City Council which show the value of our green areas (eg parks and natural spaces) and blue areas (eg waterways and rivers) within the District. Known as Ecosystem Mapping, these maps show the areas of land which deliver vital services for those who live, work and visit the District. These services include flood relief, urban cooling, pollination of crops and areas for recreation.

Unfortunately, the mapping was not available in time to inform the initial Local Plan site selection work in late 2013 and informal public consultation in late 2013/early 2014.

The Ecosystems mapping uses much of the same background information as the Local Plan constraints mapping and the Sustainability Appraisal. It will, nevertheless, be useful as a cross-check on the proposed allocations and this will be done following the proposed public consultation stage, taking account of any issues raised through that exercise. It will also be useful for future work on a Green Infrastructure strategy which it is hoped can be produced, as resources permit, to develop the aims of Local Plan Part 1 policy CP15.

In addition the maps will be used to identify areas which need to be maintained and which can be enhanced to deliver better services and this will be taken forward through numerous work programmes and projects led principally by the Landscape and Open Spaces Team.”



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City Council

**COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014**

**Question under Council Procedure Rule 14**

**QUESTION 10**

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“The way that the Council has allowed the Silver Hill planning applications to be submitted has effectively given Henderson options. Even if the S73 and the ‘drop in’ applications are tightly linked by condition, the commercial reality is that if Henderson is unable to secure a department store tenant, they will simply pursue the S73 scheme alone and it would be very difficult for the Council to resist. The possibility that the S73 scheme, with its very different composition and viability profile, might be built out was never presented to Cabinet or to Overview and Scrutiny or to Full Council or to the public, for their consideration. Was the Council simply unaware of this options scenario, or did it choose not to examine it?”

**Reply**

“Cabinet, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Full Council considered Henderson’s request to amend the previously approved form of development, for which planning consent has previously been given. The Development Agreement will require Henderson to carry out the scheme (as amended) which the Council (as landowner) has now approved.

Planning Committee will now consider the planning applications which Henderson have submitted to obtain the necessary planning consent to allow this amended scheme to be constructed. If it resolves to grant consent, it will be recommended that this is subject to appropriate conditions and the applicant entering into a Section 106 agreement. These measures, together with the development agreement requirements, will ensure that Henderson implement the updated scheme as a whole.”