



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Scott

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“Can the Portfolio Holder explain how the City Council Sheltered Housing and Support Services will be effected by Hampshire County Council withdrawing their funding from next April, and will City Council Tenants continual to receive a high quality service?”

Reply

“Sheltered Housing and Support encompasses four service elements, and each is affected differently by the withdrawal of funding from HCC.

1. Community Alarm Service. This will be retained in all designated sheltered schemes, and will be available on request to any other tenant who wishes to use the service. Monitoring will continue 24 hours per day, every day of the year, but will be outsourced to achieve an affordable price, since every customer will have to pay for the service themselves. (estimated cost of £1 to £1.50 per week)
2. Responding Service. Loss of funding here will result in the service closing. Without public funding (from HCC or through Housing Benefit) it is too expensive to charge direct to each customer. Customers will be supported to identify three named contacts where possible to respond in place of the current arrangement.
3. Community Support Service. The City Council will no longer be involved in delivering this service. In its place, Hampshire will commission a new service to provide ongoing support to those older people who receive a care package, and a short-term ‘crisis-intervention’ service for anyone over 55 years of age who needs support for up to 16 weeks to deal with a crisis or major life incident.
4. Sheltered Housing. The Council will retain a good supply of sheltered housing in designated schemes, and will provide a team of nine officers who will offer a regular presence at sheltered schemes, as well as two new Tenancy Sustainment Officers to work with our most vulnerable tenants.

Overall, the service will look quite different, but those in sheltered schemes will retain a comprehensive Community Alarm service (albeit chargeable), and will benefit from an increased regular Landlord presence on their scheme. In its role as a social landlord, therefore, the Council will be providing a good service offer to sheltered tenants.

County Council decisions to no longer fund alarm services or to provide , responding services and the Community Support service currently delivered to all sheltered housing tenants will clearly result in a reduction in help and support provided to tenants. However, emergency help will be sought by the Control Operator for any alarm customer who requires it, if necessary involving the emergency services.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Gosling

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“Is the Portfolio Holder aware of the current position regarding Liberty Gas?

Having received complaints about work carried out by members of my Ward, is the Portfolio Holder significantly satisfied with what Liberty Gas are doing on our behalf?”

Reply

“We are aware that there have been a number of issues with Liberty’s service delivery over the last few weeks. Full details of all the complaints and problems we have received over the last month has been compiled and sent to Liberty for comment. A meeting with their lead manager has been arranged for the 13 November 2014 to discuss the problems and to review their plans for returning the service to an acceptable level.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Dibden

To: The Portfolio Holder for Built Environment

“Following the successful response to last year’s flooding by Winchester City Council (alongside other authorities and organisations), please can I ask what measures the Council is taking in case the District suffers another flooding incident this winter?”

Reply

“The City Council is working closely with the County Council, Environment Agency and parish councils to promote preparedness for the winter.

The response to and recovery from last winter’s events has been extensively debriefed and learning points have been widely disseminated. Arrangements for the coming winter will be similar as they generally worked well, but refined and improved where possible, particularly to improve communication and the deployment of assets. There will, of course, be a greater availability of some resources, such as sandbags, although these will still only be deployed as a strategic measure. City Council officers and Environment Agency staff have reviewed the operation of sluices in Winchester and discussions are taking place regarding dredging operations where these might be needed. Many ditches, culverts and other infrastructure items have been checked and maintained across the District by a variety of agencies and owners.

The most important single step in preparing locally is for communities which feel at risk to come together to produce consider and put in place a Flood Action Plan and local Flood Action Group to ensure it is implemented. Both the City Council and County Council can offer practical help in this work.

This will enable them to make the best use of the information, advice and support which they will be able to receive from Hampshire, Winchester and the Environment Agency.

The City Council has evaluated its own management of the flood response and is revising the arrangements for its own control room, for staff training and

for ensuring that staff will be available to support communities, although it has to be accepted that it has only a finite capacity to deal effectively with a prolonged incident.

The City Council has processed quickly and efficiently over 60 applications from households for additional flood resilience measures funded through the Government's national grants scheme. A multi household application for Government funding in Littleton is being actively supported by the City Council.

A number of capital schemes to provide new drainage for flood waters, to protect against flooding, and to improve the resilience of infrastructure are being worked up by the agencies, including the City Council but it is unlikely that the full range of these will be in place for 2014/15. Communities should therefore evaluate and prepare for the risks they face based on their experience last winter and be ready, as the City Council will be."



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Laming

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“Would the Portfolio Holder inform us of the steps taken to bring uninhabited houses back into use using the 2004 EDMO related legislation. What is the empty housing policy adopted by the council?”

Reply

“A detailed response on the Council’s approach to Empty Properties was prepared in response to a question from Cllr Janet Berry at Council last month.

The full content of the response provided is repeated below:

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 – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Huxstep

To: The Portfolio Holder for Built Environment

“Can the Portfolio Holder confirm what our planning policies require in terms of the provision of affordable housing for any particular planning application and what measures have been taken to ensure members fully understand how the financial viability of any project is robustly assessed and tested?”

Reply

“Under the provisions of Policy CP3 of Local Plan Part 1 developments are required to provide 40% affordable housing unless this would render the proposal economically unviable.

When undertaking viability assessments the Council takes a consistent approach by applying the test set out by the Institute of Chartered Surveyors which states the following:

An objective financial viability test of the ability of a development project to meet its cost of planning obligations, while ensuring an appropriate Site Value for the Landowner and a market risk adjusted return to the Developer in delivering the project.

If the Developer considers that the scheme is unable to support the full affordable housing contribution he must submit a development appraisal. The Council’s own Valuer, or an externally appointed Valuer acting on his behalf, will not merely accept the development appraisal submitted but will check whether the costs and values provided are reasonable bearing in mind the benchmark values and costs in the prevailing market conditions and will form their own opinion of the maximum level of affordable housing contribution which should be paid whilst allowing the scheme to remain viable.

A number of steps have been taken to help members understand the policy and development viability including:

- Cross party members' meeting in January to look at the implementation of Policy CP3.
- Briefing note in Democratic Services Up-date 7th March relating to the performance of Policy CP3.
- Discussion at the Informal Planning Committee meeting in October where members were briefed on viability assessments by the Head of Estates.
- The Head of Estates regularly attends Planning Committee to support members' decision making in relation to specific developments.

In addition officers are currently working on a new Supplementary Planning Document for Affordable Housing which will provide further information about how Policy CP3 operates including where viability is raised as an issue by developers.”



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Pines

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Organisational Development

“May I remind you of the two questions I asked at Council last July.

Following recent Council Questions and Replies supporting the very successful City Council sponsored apprenticeship scheme, could the Portfolio Holder –

- 1. Indicate what progress has been made to encourage our contractors to follow our lead;*
- 2. At suitable levels of contract value, insist Officers who prepare contracts, insert clauses requiring some apprenticeships;*
- 3. In view of the number of large construction schemes on the horizon, prepare a protocol for prospective contractors/partners to undertake sponsorship for local population apprenticeship schemes;*
- 4. Promote discussions with City wide partners, such as Winchester BID, to encourage wider support for apprenticeship schemes locally, including rural projects.*

To the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Organisational Development:

Following this Council’s pledge to pay the Living Wage to all its employees, can the Portfolio Holder indicate what progress has been made to –

1. Request or require City Council contractors to pay at least the living wage to their employees, when contracts are take out or renewed;
2. Indicate what discussions have taken place with Winchester BID or other bodies to promote our policy in Winchester district;
3. What steps have been taken to follow up the proposal to make Winchester a “Living Wage City.

Could you let me know what progress has been made, what obstacles we are facing and how these may be overcome?”

Reply

“The City Council does pay at least the Living Wage to all permanent staff. With regard to the Living Wage accreditation and wider promotion, this matter is currently being investigated. We are asking our contractors about their

views and practices, and will need to consider the direct cost implications for the Council and the indirect costs passed on to the Council by contractors. I will be discussing the matter with Cabinet colleagues and making a recommendation early in the New Year.

As has been reported in answer to previous Council Questions on this topic, the Winchester Business Improvement District (BID) has been approached about promoting the Living Wage. However, the BID's view is that most employers in their area are paying at least this already, reflecting the competitive local employment market. Once the Council has finished its deliberations about the Living Wage in the New Year, a more formal communications programme can be put together to encourage other employers to follow the Council's lead. Indeed, I will look forward to sharing my own commitment to the Living Wage at the forthcoming Business Budget Briefing on 4 December."



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Hutchison

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Wellbeing

“Can I ask the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Wellbeing whether she would wholeheartedly support the aspiration to turn Winchester into a Solar City – with much of its electricity provided through solar technologies?”

Reply

“Few people would deny that solar power is good news, and my own ‘top ten’ of solar power benefits might run as follows:

1. it is one of the quickest renewable technologies to get going;
2. as well as providing ‘zero cost’ electricity or ‘zero cost’ heat, solar power installations can give an additional return on investment through feed-in tariffs and Renewable Heat Incentive payments;
3. it can be generated at any size, from a small garden shed to a multi-hectare farm;
4. if placed on roofs, it takes up no additional space;
5. it offers the opportunity to communities in generating their own energy, providing them with a long term income stream as well as cost reduction;
6. the environmental ‘cost’ of producing solar PV panels is significantly outweighed by the long term benefits;
7. the technology is now tried, tested and reliable;
8. it is largely acceptable to the public: latest research shows support for solar power at 80%;
9. PVs can be retrofitted to existing constructions - though it is cheaper, and thus gives even faster return on money invested, if built in from the start;
10. it offers us as a Council a means to earn income, in the right locations.

The Council's planning policy is supportive of the principle of renewable energy, and we have allowed a number of large scale solar farms in recent times. However, as in all planning matters, such developments must be appropriate to their setting. Whilst there will be some locations where such technologies may be challenging to accommodate, officers assure me that there is good scope for most applications – and indeed many instances of permitted development that will not require planning permission at all.

I am pleased to confirm that the commitments we have already made in the Low Carbon Route Map for the Winchester District which we welcomed at Cabinet in June this year are a strong basis for ensuring that not only Winchester Town but the wider District make the most of solar power technologies. By way of example, the Housing Revenue Account includes a provision of £200,000 per annum to fund investment in renewable technology: the installation of solar PV solutions is always considered as part of this programme, particularly when replacing roofs for Council stock across the district.

I know that all my fellow Portfolio Holders are keeping the Route Map in mind as they develop their Portfolio Plans for 2015/16, and look forward to seeing such commitments turning into achievable actions with long term benefits for this District.”



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Lipscomb

To: The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Transport

“Will the Portfolio Holder comment on reports circulating that Hampshire County Council are proposing to withdraw all subsidies for bus services after 1900h, with the consequence that there will be no Stagecoach services operating after that time?”

Accepting that this is primarily a County Council matter, will he say what steps he has taken to mitigate the effect of these cuts, both on individual service users (many of whom have no alternative) and on the evening economy?”

Reply

“A decision regarding subsidised bus services across the county, including services operating in Winchester, was taken by the County Council’s Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment on the 27th October and followed a widespread consultation and review by HCC officers.

For Winchester city the decision was made to withdraw funding between 1900 and 2100 for bus services 1, 3, 5 & Spring. This reflects the County’s decision to withdraw all financial support for evening bus services.

This is disappointing but bus provision is primarily a matter for the County Council as transport authority. The City Council does not fund bus services across the district. However the Town Forum does subsidise the night bus which operates on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays which helps to support the evening economy and, at the moment, there is arrangement for this to continue until 2017.

However the fact that HCC is withdrawing funding does not automatically mean those services will stop. This will be a matter for the operators ultimately and I have already had discussions with county officers and will shortly meet with Stagecoach to explore whether there are any alternatives which might enable some services to continue to operate after 19.00 even when subsidies have been withdrawn.

It’s also worth noting that the changes to bus subsidies does not mean that all services will cease after 1900 as buses on routes like the 66, 64 and Bluestar 1 will run albeit they do not serve all areas of the city.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Weir

To: The Leader

“What, if any, representations has the Leader made to Hampshire County Council regarding the economic impact of recently announced cuts to evening bus services on principal bus routes in and around Winchester?”

Reply

“The County Council’s decision to withdraw bus subsidies for evening services in Winchester is disappointing but is consistent with their wider approach to bus services across the County.

I have discussed this issue with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Transport and am content that he takes up this matter for the Council. To this end he has already talked to County Council officers and is due to meet with Stagecoach to see if there are any alternatives available which may enable some evening buses to continue to run beyond 19.00 after the subsidy is removed at the start of next year.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Mather

To: The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Transport

“Would the Portfolio Holder agree that, in the light of the two year subsidy of the no.66 Winchester/Romsey bus by the developer of Abbotswood, Romsey (which began at the end of October) and the extension of the service late into the evening (last bus 22.40), the very few passengers that use the Town a/c sponsored late 5A bus on Thurs/Fri/Sat evenings will also be able to use a competing late evening hourly service along the Romsey Road so the weak case for using Town precept money to support the late buses running this route to Badger Farm (whose Parish Council do not contribute to the service) is now even weaker?

Surely the Council could use Town precept money more appropriately to support the evening economy? If the Town Forum decides that should be by late night bus subsidy, another route should be selected.”

Reply

“The funding of the night bus service is a matter for the Town Forum. As recently as 25 June this year the issue of providing a subsidy to support the service for a further period of 2 years beyond September was considered and agreed by the Forum and I understand the merits of continuing its operation were debated in some detail by its members.

If any member considers that there has been a change in circumstances since the decision was made earlier this year any review of funding is a matter which would need to be considered by the Forum itself.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 2 October 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Rutter

To: The Leader

“What progress has been made over the past 12 months in taking forward plans for a replacement RPLC?”

Reply

“If the Council decides to go ahead with the replacement of River Park Leisure Centre it will be one of the largest capital projects the Council has ever undertaken, and will have financial consequences for many years to come. The Council, literally, cannot afford to make the wrong decision. But it is not an easy one because there is no consensus around what would be the ideal facility, no certainty over future income and because people want to challenge and test each part of the decision making process. That is their right and I respect it – but it adds considerably to how long it takes to get to a decision.

Members will be aware that we have now published the report undertaken for us by Roberts Limbrick and MACE. This is a detailed study and it will help us to narrow down our options, something I intend we should do at Cabinet in December. Members will note that even without site acquisition costs or other opportunity costs a replacement facility will cost in the order of £25million – more if we were to incorporate a 50m pool.

The Council will soon have to consider whether that cost, less any external funding which may be available, is the highest priority for Council spending for many years to come.”



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Fancett

To: The Leader

“In relation to the portable event space, could the Portfolio Holder please provide details of the number of uses, number of bookings received for future use, ease of construction and additional revenue expenditure incurred directly relating to its use?”

Reply

“The Portable Event Space was tested on the Cathedral Close in Winchester in June, when local community groups interested in using the stage were invited to send volunteers to help fine tune the final stages of development. Around 30 people signed up for the day, and the response was extremely positive. As an engineer by training myself, I have taken a keen interest in this project and attending the testing day in June.

Unfortunately, we received formal notification in August that the manufacturers had gone into administration and would be unable to complete the work. Since this time, we have been in discussion with a local engineering firm about the outstanding works required which are inevitably of a specialist nature. We have also – just this week – had the structure checked by an external health and safety consultant to ensure that the completion work meets all the relevant legislation and good practice requirements.

Knowing that a bespoke design can require more desnagging than an ‘off the shelf’ product, officers had deliberately restricted the number of bookings for the Space this year, aiming for a range of types of booking rather than quantity in this first year. Given the situation, officers have not yet promoted availability in 2015 but have already been asked to make five provisional bookings by local groups. There continues to be a high level of interest.

The final payment to the staging company was withheld as part of the desnagging conditions, and there has been no additional cost to the project over and above what was previously agreed by Cabinet. Some money remains in this budget to pay for the final engineering works.”



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 13

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Portfolio Holder for Built Environment

“Is the Portfolio Holder aware of the significant issues surrounding the operation of the Alresford Salads business and the reported breaches of conditions imposed on the grant of planning permissions and the failure of the Council to take appropriate enforcement action?”

Is the Portfolio Holder aware that the Council officers have yet to provide a satisfactory response on the specific breaches in the conditions, which were highlighted in recent correspondence from a prominent local resident and the Alresford Society?”

Reply

“The matter of commercial vehicles servicing Alresford Salads has been raised with me and the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Transport and we have met with officers to look at the issues highlighted.

Further to representations received an investigation is underway to establish whether there is a breach of planning control and, to this end, officers in the Planning Enforcement team have researched the planning history of the site and made contact with Alresford Salads and also the Watercress Company that has an interest in the site.

Both companies are keen to engage with the Council and ensure that they are operating in accordance with the planning permissions granted. A meeting to discuss the concerns of local residents and the Alresford Society is in the process of being arranged following which all interested parties will be updated.

The Watercress Company has advised that an increased number of lorries from Spain visited their site over the summer which may have contributed to concerns being raised locally but this declined more recently as the watercress season is nearly finished.

However it should be recognised that this is a complex case with planning permissions dating back a number of years. All the matters raised need to be properly considered before conclusions can be made as to whether there are planning breaches occurring and, if there are, what action it may be appropriate to take.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 14

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“The concept for the current Silver Hill development proposal was devised in the early 2000s, and resulted in a planning application being submitted in 2006, still well before the recession and the revolution in the retail sector caused by the internet.

The concept, by which I mean use and principal architectural features has not been reconsidered since. The Silver Hill Reference Group accepted the concept as a 'given' and did not, at any time, consider any alternative development concepts.

In an effort to explore the alternative development possibilities and to inform the process generally, I have issued an 'Alternate Vision' statement and have arranged a series of open days (starting today, tomorrow and Saturday at the Wessex Hotel - other dates/venues to follow) to which all are invited to attend and to offer their own thoughts.

I appreciate that the Leader has a busy schedule, but could he possibly find time to attend one of these open days himself?”

Reply

“I have seen Cllr Gottlieb’s proposals for his alternate vision. My problem is that it is not costed and, frankly, is misleading if he thinks all that he seeks can be delivered without significant public or private investment. I have spent many months discussing Silver Hill, with colleagues, local businesses and the public. I want those discussions to be grounded in reality.

Council and Cabinet have debated Silver Hill very thoroughly in recent months. Members have raised a number of concerns, notably on affordable housing, but many expressed a strong desire to get on with redevelopment of this blighted area. Unlike Cllr Gottlieb, I do not see it as my role to undermine the democratic process by promoting alternatives which have yet to be shown to be feasible.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 15

From: Councillor Thompson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Business Services

“What arrangements have been made to keep services going should there be a power outage this winter?”

Reply

“The City Council has a Business Continuity Plan which can be found on the Chief Executive’s page of the Intranet. This outlines the steps we would take to protect critical services in the event of power outages which affected the City Offices or Guildhall.

In the event of power cuts which affect our communities the Council would not normally be the lead agency, but we stand ready to assist the emergency services or others in line with our normal emergency response procedures.”



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 16

From: Councillor Osborne

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“Could the Portfolio Holder update me as to the likely start date for the Westman Road development? Could he also briefly detail what local Councillor/resident engagement took place with this project to ensure that there was appropriate consultation? Does he therefore feel that it was sufficient and detailed enough to allow the local community to understand the proposals?”

Reply

“The Westman Road scheme was granted planning consent in August 2014 with development originally scheduled to commence in 2016/17, the delay between consent and start on site being due to the lack of funding available within the new homes programme. The Council however was successful in a bid to the Government for additional Housing Revenue Account (HRA) headroom granted through the Local Growth Fund (LGF) which has allowed the scheme start to be scheduled for April / May 2015. The build tender documents are currently being prepared and the results, with a recommendation to proceed with the successful bidder, will be presented to Cabinet (Housing) in February 2015.

The Westman Road site was identified as a potential development site as part of the St Barnabas and Harestock Community Plan. The first consultation event, in the form of a focus group, was held with local residents and Ward Members in April 2013. Following this event an exhibition of initial designs was held in June 2013 at the Taplings Road Centre where 800 local residents (and Ward Members) were invited. Over 70 people attended and commented on issues such as the design, overlooking and potential loss of open space. The revised scheme was then displayed at the Community Centre in September 2013 prior to Cabinet (Housing Delivery) meeting that authorised the scheme to be submitted for planning consent. During this period an update was sent to all local residents (and Ward Members) and the scheme plans displayed on the Council’s website.

The scheme was submitted for planning consent in May 2014 following consideration of the implications of a planning inspectorate appeal decision on a neighbouring site. During this period consultations took place with local school children to the form of mitigation measures for the loss of open space.

It is my view that the community was adequately consulted and they were given ample opportunity to comment on the proposals both before a planning application was submitted and after.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 17

From: Councillor Green

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“Can the Portfolio Holder reassure me that the council take seriously the concerns raised by the residents of Stanmore regarding the issue relating to HMO'S?”

Reply

“The City Council certainly does take the concern of Stanmore residents regarding HMOs seriously.

It is clear that the only effective way of controlling the ongoing increase in numbers of HMOs is by pursuing an Article 4 Direction as set out in the response to Cllr Scott's question on this issue. Whilst the Council is able to consider an additional licensing scheme, this would not help prevent future growth in numbers.

Whilst it is accepted it will take time to comply with the formal requirements of such a direction, I do support this approach. It is unfortunate that the Informal Scrutiny Group that investigated this issue in 2013 did not support this action at that time.

In the meantime, the Council will continue to work closely with landlords, student, the University and the Police to coordinate neighbourhood management work and to address residents concerns.”



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 18

From: Councillor Pearson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Organisational Development

“Could the Portfolio Holder explain what he expects will happen to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme following the completion of public consultation on options to change the scheme?”

Reply

“The public consultation closed on 19 October 2014. There were 2 replies from members of the public. One of the replies was in support of the increase in earnings disregards but the points raised in the second reply did not have any relevance to the options being considered. There was also a reply from a parish council who supported the options being considered.

A report will be going to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2014 and Cabinet on 3 December 2014. This report recommends that the following changes are made to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme.

1. Base the Local CTR Scheme for 2015/16 on the scheme adopted for 2014/15 with amendments to reflect wider legislative change to CTR and other related legislation
2. Increase components in the CTR calculation in line with the increases DWP & DCLG provide for in the Housing Benefit regulations 2006 (as amended) and the CTR Scheme (Prescribed Requirements) regulations 2012 (as amended) for 2015/16
3. Increase income disregards for working age claimants further so that single claimants have the first £30.00 of earned income disregarded and others have the first £60.00 of earned income disregarded.

The detailed CTR Scheme will be presented to Council on 7 January 2015 for approval.”



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 19

From: Councillor Prowse

To: The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Transport

“Can the Portfolio Holder detail how many calls have been made to 101 with relation to 'student anti social behaviour' on Stanmore since September 2014? How do these compare to previous years? Based on these figures and the number of complaints to neighbourhood services this term, how confident is he that the council is effectively resolving the issues being raised by residents? Could he clarify the strategy used to report and respond to residents that are disturbed in the late evening/early hours by anti social behaviour?”

Reply

“It is not possible to identify from 101 records whether a particular call about anti social behavior in Stanmore was made about, or by, a student or students.

The total number of calls about anti social behavior in Stanmore for the period from 1 September 2013 to 5 November 2013 was 8. For the same period this year the figure is 2. I would not wish to draw any conclusions from these numbers as it is acknowledged that they do not represent the only incidents of anti social behavior of which residents have experience. They do however give some context to the current concerns.

The 101 number is the mechanism that people should use to make reports of non-urgent matters that they wish to bring to the attention of the Police or other agencies.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 20

From: Councillor J Berry

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Organisational Development

“Given that this week is Living Wage week, does the Council, as a Living Wage employer, intend to follow other councils and pay its apprentices a Living Wage?”

Reply

“The City Council does pay at least the Living Wage to all permanent staff. With regard to the Living Wage accreditation and wider promotion, this matter is currently being investigated. We are asking our contractors about their views and practices, and will need to consider the direct cost implications for the Council and the indirect costs passed on to the Council by contractors. I will be discussing the matter with Cabinet colleagues and making a recommendation early in the New Year.

The City Council employs apprentices through the Government’s scheme and pays in accordance with that scheme, which provides a wider package of benefits including skills development and training opportunities. This also includes an investment in time from council officers to benefit apprentices at the start of their working lives.

The current pay arrangements provide more opportunities for the number of apprenticeships available. If the pay scale is increased to the living wage threshold this will significantly reduce the number of apprentices that the Council could employ.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 21

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Transport

“When was the Council told of the County Council bus cuts affecting Winchester District and what representations were made to the County on the issue?”

Reply

“On 4 March 2014 the Council were informed that Hampshire County Council were carrying out a review of Local Bus and Community Transport services as they were looking to save up to £1.5 million from public and community transport spending by 2015/16. This formed part of a consultation designed to seek the views and preferences of organisations and individual users the results of which would be used to assist the County Council in its decision making process.

All members of the City Council were subsequently informed via email on 6 March and were invited to respond directly to Hampshire in relation to any specific proposals which could affect their wards and also to share the information more widely with other organisations that may have an interest.

A response was sent from the City Council by means of a Portfolio Decision Notice during June in which concerns were raised about the impact the cuts in bus services would have commenting that they are potentially a major blow to local communities and appear inconsistent with the transport policies we share with the County Council which are aimed at reducing dependence on the car as a mode of transport. The Council further commented that we should be moving towards a situation where those who do not have a car, whether through necessity or choice, have the alternative of using readily accessible public transport. At a time when we are all seeking to improve air quality in Winchester, and are trying to avoid isolating rural communities, reducing bus services (rather than promoting or improving their desirability) seems paradoxical in policy terms.

The level and nature of the subsidy reductions across the county was agreed by the County Council’s Executive member for Economy Transport and Environment on 27 October.”



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 22

From: Councillor Pearson

To: The Leader

“Would the Leader explain how the Fieldfare Local Action Group has been able to support the Rural Economy of Winchester in 2014. What hopes do we have to further support Rural communities in the Test and Meon Valleys?”

Reply

“Members will know that I have been involved with the Fieldfare LEADER programme from the outset, and as a rural businessman myself, supporting our rural communities is a subject close to my heart.

The Fieldfare Local Action Group (LAG) used LEADER monies to grant-fund rural economic projects across Winchester and East Hampshire Districts from 2009 to 2013. The programme has enjoyed great success, allocating 134 grants to a value of £1.4m. This in turn has levered in an additional £7m investment in projects across the Winchester and East Hampshire area, and has created 126 new jobs. Grants have been made for micro-business start up and development, farm diversification, training, conservation and community buildings. Within Winchester District, 91 businesses received LEADER support creating 78 new jobs. Many of these projects were in the District’s southern parishes.

The previous LEADER programme finished on 31 December 2013. It was agreed that 2014 be a ‘transition year’ to consult with the local rural community about their needs for the future, and to publish this in a Local Development Strategy (LDS). The Fieldfare LAG has been through extensive consultation (information and research has been gathered from over 2,000 sources), and written its LDS using the information gathered from this bottom-up approach. The full LDS is applicable to Winchester, East Hampshire and, for the first time, Eastleigh, and is available to view at <http://www.fieldfareleader.org.uk/http-www-fieldfareleader-org-uk-transition/>.

The new proposed LEADER operating areas includes the entire defined rural communities of Winchester City, East Hampshire District and Eastleigh Borough Councils and named Parishes within Basingstoke & Deane, Fareham, Havant and Gosport. The Test Valley area is covered by a proposal from the Loddon & Test LEADER programme.

A number of projects in the Meon Valley area have been identified for the next round of LEADER funding and these include new tourism accommodation, farm diversification and business growth. The LEADER Programme Team have been working with these businesses to help them prepare information that will support an application for LEADER support.

The bid to DEFRA for further LEADER funding was submitted on 5 September. DEFRA are due to announce which bids for Rural Development Programme for England funding are successful this month, with the next LEADER programme for successful LAGs due to commence on 1 January 2015. The LEADER programme can be delivered until 31 March 2021. If the bid is successful, there will be a total budget of £1.79m, resulting in a grants budget of £1.375m, covering the whole LDS area. The target outputs will be 95 new jobs, 166 jobs sustained, 155 grants awarded. We will find out the result of the bid at the end of November.”



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 23

From: Councillor Scott

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“In light of the recent press articles regarding the impact of HMO's in Stanmore, can the Portfolio Holder please explain the timing's for the proposed Article 4 for Stanmore Estate, and once implemented what happens to the existing HMO's?”

Reply

“Cabinet decided in September to proceed with an Article 4 Direction in Stanmore and it will take around 14 to 15 months for the Direction to be made and come into effect. The lead in time is necessary in order to avoid the potential requirement to compensate applicants whose planning applications are refused or have conditions imposed on them resulting from the removal of permitted development rights by the introduction of an Article 4 Direction. The Council therefore needs to give at least 12 months’ notice before bringing the Direction into force. Policy Win 10 in our emerging Local Plan Part 2 deals specifically with HMOs and is intended to maintain a balanced mix of housing in neighbourhoods where Article 4s are made.

It is intended that the notice period for the Article 4 runs alongside the Local Plan adoption process so that by the time the Local Plan policy is adopted, which should be July 2016, an Article 4 Direction would be ready to be brought into effect.

Article 4 directions are not retrospective so deal only with new proposals for HMOs and do not therefore affect existing premises which are being used as HMOs.”



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 24

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“The Leader was kind enough back at the last Full Council meeting in September to quash the rumour that Henderson would receive compensation if the contract with them fell away.

Another rumour characterised by the advice given to Cabinet (CAB2603 para 11.1 d)) is that if Henderson chose not to proceed with the development of Silver Hill, no other developer would be interested in the opportunity.

I thought to challenge this rumour/advice and wrote to a small number of major developers, 10 of whom have written back to say that they would be interested - some of them very keenly.

I will of course pass on their details, but would the Leader having made personal contact with them all and having noted their interest, be prepared to quash this rumour also?”

Reply

“Cllr Gottlieb makes a number of points in his question which are factually inaccurate and need correction.

In my reply at the last meeting I told him that provided the Council met its contractual obligations then no compensation was provided for in the Development Agreement.

I have no idea what ‘rumour’ Cllr Gottlieb is referring to in his second paragraph but CAB 2603 para 11.1 d does not say that no developer would be interested. In that section, which comments on risk, para.11.1.d of CAB2603 draws attention to:

“The risk of substantial delay in securing redevelopment of the area by another developer if the development does not proceed.”

It seems to me delay is inevitable given the statutory procurement and compulsory purchase procedures which would be necessary if we did start afresh. It is certainly not a "rumour". Para.11.1.b of that report, which the Councillor may be referring to, says:

"If the development does not proceed, it may not be possible to secure an alternative developer for the site (either at all, or on comparable financial terms), again leading to adverse financial effects on the Council."

If he does mean that section, then I fear Councillor Gottlieb is misrepresenting the advice given. The report says that, whilst there may be other interest, no developer would be interested on the same favourable terms, a view backed up independently by Deloitte.

There was, therefore, nothing for Cllr Gottlieb to challenge.

I was aware that Cllr Gottlieb had written to at least one company inviting them to express an interest in his revised scheme because that company, a respectable medium sized local house builder, sent his letter to officers for advice as to how they should respond. No company has approached the Council expressing an interest in discussing Silver Hill with the Council as a result of Cllr Gottlieb's letter.

I must say I find it disappointing that Cllr Gottlieb has chosen to use substantial resources to try to ensure that a scheme his own Council has supported over many years does not go ahead. He has commenced a Judicial Review of a democratically taken decision; he has made an offer to buy a Council property in a manner which was an attempt to undermine the revised scheme, and he is now writing to construction companies, as a Councillor but with no Council authority, soliciting their commercial interest in his alternative proposals.

Throughout the 18 years that the Council has been progressing development of this site successive Administrations have always been open and transparent, and ensured that decisions have been taken through the proper democratic process. I hope Cllr Gottlieb shares that commitment."



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 2014

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 25

From: Councillor Scott

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“Can the Portfolio Holder explain why the 10 week Stanmore HMO Additional Licensing consultation in 2011 didn't result in additional licensing being implemented, and why additional licensing wasn't again implemented on the City Estates effected by HMO's in 2013 as a result of the recommendation from the ISG on the impact of HMO's on the City Estates?”

Reply

“The findings of the consultation process in 2011 did not clearly conclude that HMOs in the Stanmore area were poorly managed, which would be the main reason to support additional licensing.

Whilst members of the 2013 Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) were minded to recommend re-consulting on this issue, it was determined that the Council would first implement enhancements to its Neighbourhood Management approach, including working closely with landlords, student, the University and the Police to address residents concerns. Any consultation on additional licensing or other formal action was to be subject to the outcome of these enhancements.

Since that time, the continued growth in demand and in numbers of new HMOs on the estate (something that was not anticipated by the ISG), has resulted in the proposals for considering an Article 4 Direction to address this increase, rather than additional licensing, which will have little impact on this increase.”