



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 13 April 2016

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Power

To: The Leader

“Would the leader kindly explain the plan for consultation regarding the new Leisure Centre?”

Reply

“The proposed leisure centre development project has been running for a number of years and details of the extensive consultation we have undertaken with the community and sports clubs from 2013 to date to narrow down options and to inform the proposed facility mix can be found on our website. More recently an initial exercise was carried out to test local reaction in Highcliffe to the possibility of siting a leisure centre at Bar End. This consultation was designed to identify key issues for residents and local businesses which would need to be addressed, and also to inform further technical studies that will be commissioned (e.g. the Transport Assessment). Further consultation will now take place after Purdah on the concept designs which were approved for further development by Cabinet in March to understand the public’s views on the proposals, which will be fed into the Member decision in November as to whether the Council proceeds with the Bar End option. This consultation will be aimed at all residents and interested parties – particularly those living in Winchester town but also in the wider district.

Conversations will continue with key community groups and stakeholders to help inform decisions that need to be made to finalise a new leisure centre’s facility mix as well as to better understand issues which were highlighted during the Highcliffe consultation at the end of last year.

If a decision is made to proceed at the end of the year, there will then be further consultation with the community to input into the development of a planning application and then the formal planning consultation once the application is submitted.

In a representative democracy we all, as Ward Councillors, have a duty to speak for our residents. We must take that role seriously, and ensure we

“speak for the whole community. We should recognise that every debate we have, whether at Council, Cabinet or wherever, is simply another facet of community consultation.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Weir

To: The Leader

“What public consultation is proposed for the next stage in developing plans for a new Leisure Centre at Bar End - how will the Council ensure all existing and potential users across the Winchester Town area are properly engaged in this process?”

Reply

“A considerable amount of consultation has already been done to date to inform proposals for a new leisure centre at Bar End. Further consultation will now take place after Purdah on the concept designs which were approved for further development by Cabinet in March to understand the public’s views on the proposals, which will be fed into the Member decision in November as to whether the Council proceeds with the Bar End option. This consultation will be aimed at all residents and interested parties – particularly those living in Winchester town but also in the wider district.

Public exhibitions will be held of the concept designs which will also be placed online for those who are unable to attend. Members of the public will be able to comment at the exhibition or online. Consideration will be given to how best to communicate the consultation so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute, and Members are welcome to contact the Project Office to suggest ways of promoting the consultation within their wards.

Conversations will also continue with key community groups, sports clubs and stakeholders to help inform decisions that need to be made to finalise a new leisure centre’s facility mix as well as to better understand issues which were highlighted during the Highcliffe consultation at the end of last year.

If a decision is made to proceed at the end of the year, there will then be further consultation with the community to input into the development of a planning application and then the formal planning consultation once the application is submitted.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Mather

To: The Leader

“Would the portfolio holder like to respond to the recent press criticism that the Council has failed to consult with its residents especially with regard to the proposed leisure centre development?”

Reply

“We are very fortunate that we have many people in the district who are keen and willing to engage with us about a wide range of issues, including our major projects, and Cabinet considers engagement with residents on matters that affect them a key priority.

In 2011 the Council won the regional RTPI award for its planning engagement ‘Blueprint’ and has since offered many opportunities for residents and all interested parties to be involved in our consultations.

In response to feedback that our major projects required further in-depth consultation with the public, the Station Approach scheme ran a programme of engagement on a much larger scale than before. This included targeted leaflet drops, online surveys and public events. This was held at a very early stage of the project, allowing the public’s comments to influence and shape the Station Approach Design Brief.

The proposed leisure centre development project has been running for a number of years and details of the extensive consultation we have undertaken from 2013 to date to narrow down options and to inform the proposed facility mix can be found on our website. More recently an initial exercise was carried out to test local reaction in Highcliffe to the possibility of siting a leisure centre at Bar End. This consultation was designed to identify key issues for residents and local businesses which would need to be addressed, and also to inform further technical studies that will be commissioned (e.g. the Transport Assessment). Further consultation will take place after Purdah on the concept designs which were approved for further development by Cabinet in March to understand the public’s views on the proposals, which will be fed

into the Member decision in November as to whether the Council proceeds with the Bar End option. This consultation will be aimed at all residents and interested parties – particularly those living in Winchester town but also in the wider district. If a decision is made to proceed, then there will be further consultation to input into the development of a planning application and then the formal planning consultation once the application is submitted.

Since late last year the Council has also developed a web based consultation hub, where all of our consultation initiatives will be recorded and publicised. This hub will not only record the online consultations conducted by the council, but will also provide details of all other non-internet based consultations.

The hub also provide links from the consultations to further more in-depth information about each survey and/or consultation as well as providing feedback to residents about the results of the consultations and more importantly how the Council have responded to their views. The hub can be found either by using the Council's main web page and clicking on the 'consultation' link or just by Googling 'Winchester Consultation Hub'. Since we launched the Consultation Hub at the end of last year there have been 22 completed public consultations using the site.

Going forward, I have instructed officers to ensure that all major projects have an engagement strategy developed up front. I am also keen that all residents have the opportunity to participate in our consultation and engagement exercises, so that we can take into consideration all views in the community, not just those of a more eloquent minority. Achieving a consensus through consultation is difficult due to the large number of often conflicting views we receive from the public. However, it is our duty to ensure all voices are heard and all views are considered before Members take these important decisions.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Twelftree

To: The Portfolio Holder for Local Economy

“In 2010 the Lib-Dem administration introduced Sunday parking charges and scrapped the free 30 minutes in the city centre. Are there any plans to do so again as part of the forthcoming parking strategy review?”

Reply

“Both free parking on Sundays and the free 30-minute period in the City Centre are key drivers of our continued economic success, and whilst the charging schedule will be reviewed as part of the Parking Strategy Refresh there is no intention to reverse either of these policy positions as a result.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Huxstep

To: The Portfolio Holder for Local Economy

“Will the Portfolio Holder for Local Economy: Economy & Arts; Tourism; Parking & Community Grants, please outline the business support measures which the Council has implemented and those which have been continued over the past year?”

Reply

“Business support is a key element of the Economy and Arts team’s work, and it is also covered by other business-facing teams such as Tourism, Environmental Health and Licensing. The following areas summarise the business support offering over the past year:

Sharing information and signposting

Winchester City Council’s website features a section devoted to business support www.winchester.gov.uk/business/business-support-advice/ which is regularly updated. You can also link to ‘The Winchester Entrepreneur’ newsletter at www.winchester.gov.uk/business/entrepreneur-newsletter/ which is issued bimonthly and features news about upcoming projects and schemes to benefit local businesses. Officers regularly reply to email and telephone enquiries from businesses seeking help on matters ranging from business planning to workspace availability and legislative matters.

Training and advice

Three rounds of ‘Digital Business Skills’ training were delivered in 2015/16 to local, small businesses. Demand was high with a waiting list for each one. This training is in addition to a range of courses and networking event provided through Southern Entrepreneurs (www.southernentrepreneurs.com/) who we commission, along with many other Hampshire local authorities, to deliver services to small businesses. We also deliver an arts advisory services via Creative Eastleigh, featuring local ‘surgery’ type and one-to-one advice sessions with our creative businesses from across the District.

Grants and funding

The Economy and Arts Team have awarded almost £16,000 start up grant to 13 new businesses plus almost £12,000 micro business development grant to 9 small businesses from across the District in the 2015/16 year. This has helped them to purchase equipment, training and marketing materials, for example. A Cultural Grants scheme was also launched with over £16,000 awarded to 12 cultural organisations bringing footfall into the District and showcasing many of our local businesses. Winchester City Council is the accountable body for LEADER funding which covers East Hampshire District and Eastleigh Borough as well. The second round of this fund has only recently begun awarding European funding once more for rural projects. A range of open meetings for businesses of different kinds facilitated by the Council (eg the bi-monthly Cultural Network) provides access to peer-to-peer support, collaboration and information-sharing. The Tourism Team co-ordinates accreditation services for visitor accommodation, which helps businesses to strive for higher standards to meet growing visitor expectations.

Sustainability

Environmental awareness is a subject Winchester City Council is keen to promote amongst Winchester businesses. The Carbon Smart Winchester scheme has certified a total of 180 businesses who have shown awareness and committed to take action to improve their carbon foot print. This is further enhanced by the Council sponsoring the Green Business award of the Winchester Business Excellence Awards, due to be announced on 3 June this year. The Council also supports the Sustainable Business Partnership which holds regular events across the county, including four in Winchester District, sharing information and news on steps businesses can take to reduce their carbon footprint.

Location specific support

We also respond to the needs of specific communities within the District. Not only do we have a very successful Market Towns project working with Alresford, Bishops Waltham, Denmead and Wickham, but officers have been working closely with Hambledon, which has seen major upheaval due to the Flood Alleviation Scheme works. Businesses there continue to be supported during road closures. Winnall has also benefited from increased support, as the emerging Winnall Business Forum gets to assist with the delivery of the Winnall Planning Framework. Teams also work very closely with Winchester Business Improvement District in terms of managing the city centre at large events, marketing, environmental enhancements and other measures to make Winchester an excellent place to do business.

PR and marketing

The Council's Tourism Team has achieved significant success in securing media coverage for individual businesses in the District as well as for the destination as a whole. Marketing products include the annual Visitor Guide, Visit Winchester website, thematic DVDs, local pocket guides and specialist publications, all benefiting from the professional support of a London-based PR consultancy through the Discover Winchester consortium."



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Leader

I: What has been the financial consequence of the collapse of the Silver Hill Development Project on the Council's Capital and Revenue resources to date?

II: What capital expenditure is anticipated as being necessary in the immediate future as a direct result of the failure of the Silver Hill Scheme?"

Reply

"The General Fund budget approved in February 2016 (CAB2763 Revised) and covering the period 2015/16 to 2020/21 was prepared on the basis of the 'worst case' assumption, which was that the Silver Hill scheme did not receive any positive impact on its revenue position from the build out of the scheme. Adjustments to the revenue budget were subsequently approved to deal with the immediate consequences of the termination of the Development Agreement and subsequent decisions, and are kept under monthly review. Further details can be found in Cabinet reports CAB2785 and CAB2794. In particular:

- a) A receipt of £0.7m was previously forecast to be received in 2015/16 has been removed from the budget.
- b) Net revenue expenditure budgets of £0.871m relating to legal and associated costs have been provided for.
- c) Revenue expenditure budgets of £0.540m, increased to £0.590m (per CAB2785), relating to the necessary works to the retained JDS properties have been provided.
- d) £0.2m has been provided for work on the central Winchester SPD as per CAB2794.
- e) A minimum revenue provision of £0.17m per annum has been included in the budget relating to the funding costs of retaining the JDS properties.

As detailed in CAB2785 the following capital expenditure budgets have been set:

- f) Friarsgate car park demolition costs £0.6m
- g) Car park surface works £0.2m



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Leader

“Could the Leader explain what are the requirements placed on contactors who undertake work on the repaved High Street and Square in terms of making good the surface if they need to lift the stone sets. Could he also advise me why there are now two separate patches of tarmac, one outside 31B The Square and the other is in the High Street outside Schoon the shoe shop. Both areas of tarmac have been there for in excess of six months?”

Reply

“The County Council has an agreed specification for repairs to the paving in the event that utility companies have to excavate the High Street for repair or improvement works to their apparatus.

Utility companies are bound through legislation to make repairs in accordance with this specification which is essentially to make the repairs using York stone to match the existing paving.

Utility companies are allowed to make temporary repairs in cases where the materials or construction methods are non standard as is the case with the High Street. In such cases utility companies are allowed up to six months to undertake reinstatements following the implementation of a temporary repair.

I believe in the cases quoted that the Utility Companies have had difficulty in obtaining matching York stone and are being allowed further time by the County Council, however, I will ask my officers to press for these repairs to be made in a timely and professional manner.”



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Thompson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“Given that an Article 4 Direction is shortly to be introduced in Stanmore, what plans are there for rolling this out to other areas of the City?”

Reply

“When the Council agreed to make the Article 4 Direction for Stanmore it did so because of the evidence it could bring to bear that the number of HMOs in Stanmore was reaching levels which would have a detrimental impact on the community. If and when there is evidence that this is also the case in any other part of the City then an Article 4 Direction can be considered under policy WIN9 in Local Plan Part 2. There are no plans to roll out greater regulation unless it is necessary.

Whilst the Council retains the option of using an Article 4 Direction if necessary, other changes to the taxation regime on buy to let landlords introduced by the Government from 1st April 2016 may serve to reduce the attractiveness of converting a family home into an HMOs, not only in Winchester, but across the country as a whole.”



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor E Berry

To: The Portfolio Holder for Local Economy

“To the Portfolio Holder for Local Economy , can the Portfolio Holder outline the ways in which markets have contributed to the continued economic success of the District, both in Winchester City and rural areas?”

Reply

“Members will recently have read the summary of a review of the Winchester markets programme presented to Cabinet on 29 March (CAB2787 – Markets Review refers). This included reference to two pieces of independent research, both of which reinforce the importance of markets in creating a vibrant and diverse trading environment, and appealing to a wide range of shoppers and visitors.

A recent study by the Institute of Placement Management at Manchester Metropolitan University concluded that ‘markets contribute to the economic, social and political health of town and cities’, adding to vitality and acting as important catalysts for change. The same study found that markets generate around three times the amount of direct spend for the shops and are a significant employer in their own right. Because of the low barriers to entry, they are also excellent business incubators, with stall holders moving on to occupy longer term premises over the course of time, and whole families employed. Markets can increase retail spend at traditional outlets and create new income opportunities for businesses such as farmers or for local suppliers (eg of crafts or food). They also attract tourists by adding to the overall offer for visitors, alongside heritage attractions, regular shops and seasonal events.

Tourism South East’s research on attitudes to the Winchester markets found that

- On average a person spends £8.01 on goods purchased at a market stall and £20.31 on goods purchased in local shops
- 94% of local residents and 95% of non-residents felt that the markets made the experience of visiting Winchester more enjoyable.

- Over 90% felt that the markets were in keeping with the City's image as a visitor destination.

Some year-round businesses and some shoppers will inevitably feel that the markets have a negative impact on city and village centres. However, the overall picture is one of markets playing an important role in securing the economic wellbeing of commercial centres, and helping to 'futureproof' them through their agility in responding to changing consumer and retail trends."



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Maynard

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health & Wellbeing

“Does the Leader share with me concern about Hampshire County Council’s proposals to make the introduction of new 20mph zones much harder? Does he recognise that despite consistent support for many years from the City’s unparished wards it still took many years for the partial introduction of a 20mph zone in Winchester, does he recognise that there are wider benefits of 20mph zones beyond pure safety considerations, and will he be writing to his colleague at Hampshire County Council to encourage him NOT to make the introduction of 20mph zones conditional on people first being seriously injured or killed?”

Reply

“I would be concerned about any change in approach that would have a detrimental affect on highway safety. While I am aware that the Hampshire is changing its policy for traffic management, including speed limits, across the County they had already decided not to make further 20mph limits until the effectiveness of the pilot schemes has been assessed. I am therefore intending to write to the Executive Member for Environment & Transport asking him to clarify when the pilot scheme evaluation will be completed and how thereafter the County Council intends to move forward with possible 20mph zones in future.”



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Gemmell

To: The Portfolio Holder for Built Environment

“Just where are we with the Local Plan and the provision of a 5 year supply of land for Travellers' sites?”

Reply

“The Government’s ‘Planning Policy for Traveller Sites’ (PPTS) expects local authorities to demonstrate an up-to-date 5 year supply of deliverable sites for travellers and that, if they cannot do this, it should be a significant material consideration when considering planning applications. The City Council had intended to include a traveller pitch target and site allocations within the Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2), but a combination of factors has meant that this has not proved realistic without incurring substantial delays to LPP2.

The ‘Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Hampshire’ (undertaken by Forest Bus) produced recommended pitch targets for Winchester and these were included in the draft LPP2. The intention was to include site allocations to meet these requirements and the City Council, East Hampshire District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority appointed consultants to assess potential traveller site allocations. Work on that report is now well advanced, but in the meantime the Government amended the PPTS in August 2015, in particular the definition of ‘travellers’. It has been concluded that the change to the definition of travellers will require a new assessment of traveller accommodation needs to be undertaken.

As a result, it was not possible to include an up to date pitch target or site allocations in LPP2, which has now been submitted for examination by an independent Inspector. The Council has resolved to deal with traveller needs and site allocations in a separate Development Plan Document (DPD) rather than to delay LPP2. This Gypsy and Traveller DPD is included in the Local Development Scheme for the District -
<http://www.winchester.gov.uk/n/planning-policy/core-strategy-timetable-lds/>

A Background Paper on Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation has been produced to update the LPP2 Inspector on the situation, which provides a more detailed update - <http://www.winchester.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan-part-2/lpp2-submission/>

The current situation is that, for reasons largely beyond its control, the Council has not been able to establish the up to date need for traveller accommodation, or to allocate sites to meet these needs. It is not, therefore, able to demonstrate an up-to-date 5 year supply of deliverable sites for travellers and, in accordance with Government advice, this must be taken into consideration when considering planning applications. The Local Development Scheme programme for the Gypsy and Traveller DPD is for consultation on a draft document in late 2016, followed by the Pre-Submission Plan in mid 2017 and final adoption in 2108.

City Council officers are currently working with colleagues in neighbouring Districts with a view to commissioning an up to date reassessment of traveller accommodation needs. It is expected that up to 9 authorities will commission such a study shortly, and this will inform the City Council's Gypsy and Traveller DPD. This study will enable the Council to be clearer about accommodation needs and how they might be met, and clarify the position on the 5 year supply of sites. In the meantime, the lack of such a supply is a material consideration, although any applications or appeals allowed as a result will contribute towards meeting such needs."



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QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Hutchison

To: The Leader

“I welcome the reference in the Cabinet paper (CAB2794) to commissioning a traffic and transport study to underpin proposals for Silver Hill, can the Leader please give assurance that this will not just be a study but will indeed be a strategy, with identified projects, initial designs and costs, based on a Vision to reduce the number of vehicles in the city centre and improve the environment for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport, and furthermore that this will be developed in partnership with HCC?”

Reply

“The brief for this work as outlined in Cabinet paper (CAB2794) has not yet been written. An initial meeting with the County Council has taken place to explore the scope and both parties agreed that a fairly wide ranging study covering all modes of transport as well as parking and air quality issues together with the identification of appropriate measures would be required. It has been agreed to jointly develop this work with the County Council. The primary purpose of such a study is to provide evidence. It will be for us, as a Council, to decide what to do with that evidence.”



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QUESTION 13

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“Now that there is no challenge to the judgment of the High Court issued in February 2015 there can be no doubt whatsoever that, in the words of Mrs Justice Lang, the Council committed a "serious breach" of the procurement regulations. The independent inquiry the Council then commissioned makes clear that this was not just a matter of bad luck following a robust decision making process, but as a result of failures on the part of the administration, the opposition and, in particular, the executive.

Would the Leader agree that it is now time for him, on behalf of the Council, to apologise to the residents of the district of Winchester for the fact that the City Council acted unlawfully?”

Reply

“The Council has already apologised for any shortcomings in its decision-making. Now is the time to move forward with making Winchester a better place to live, work and visit.”



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QUESTION 14

From: Councillor Thacker

To: The Portfolio Holder for Local Economy

“How does the Council's Destination Management Plan contribute to the continued economic success of the District as a tourist destination?”

Reply

“In terms of its contribution to the local economy, this Plan embodies the dynamism of the local tourism sector, outlines a clear vision for the future and offers a flexible framework that resonates with the strategic aims of the four organisations that created the Visit Winchester and Heart of Hampshire Destination Management Partnership (DMP). These organisations are Winchester City Council; the South Downs National Park Authority; East Hampshire District Council and Tourism South East. The Plan also represents the wishes of local businesses from the tourism industry and some actions within it are delivered via wider strategic partnerships with Hampshire County Council; Test Valley Borough Council; Hampshire Cultural Trust; Hampshire Fare; and The Marketing Collective.

The overall purpose of the plan is to increase the contribution visitors make to the prosperity and cultural and environmental wellbeing of Winchester and the Hampshire area of the South Downs National Park. By having this Plan, the DMP is able to agree and focus on key activities and measure and communicate progress to 61 businesses, 113 advertisers and partner organisations during the regular network meetings with the sector.

Activities already completed while the Plan has been in draft stage have been undertaken as a direct response to requests from the local industry. Examples include the introduction of summer bus routes to rural attractions and improvements to the Festivals in Winchester and Christmas in Winchester websites. Because the activities impact upon the bottom line for businesses within particular sectors in the industry, this encourages further investment in the tourism service. Winchester City Council reinvests 50% of all membership

fees and approximately £40k in advertising subscriptions back into the service.

The Plan thereby epitomises the momentum within the local industry as it represents a critical mass of common aims and leads to the realisation of common goals. The pace of growth in the industry before and after the Partnership was created has accelerated. This Plan helps define the vision for sustainable future growth whilst maintaining this pace. For the 27 months before the Destination Management Partnership was established, the value of column inches netted by the Visit Winchester PR consortium in the national media averaged £59k per calendar month - this increased to £103 k per month for the same number of months after the establishment of the DMP. Overall Winchester now welcomes 5.6million day trippers to the city area alone each year contributing £350m to the local economy and the Plan, an evolving document, also addresses the way we as a Council will manage these visitors going forward. Our businesses have responded positively to the Plan as it embodies a 'you said, we did' culture which has no doubt contributed to a 24% rise in members of the partnership since the circulation of the draft plan in 2014."



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QUESTION 15

From: Councillor Osborne

To: The Leader

“Has the Winchester City Council now been accredited with the Living Wage Foundation?”

Reply

“The Living Wage Foundation has agreed to accredit the Council with Living Wage Status on the basis that certain milestones are met in relation to future contract negotiations. This is normal practice and reflects the reality that some existing contracts with external suppliers may not currently meet the requirements of the Living Wage Foundation.

The Council is currently going through a formal approval process in the form of a Portfolio Holder Decision.”



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QUESTION 16

From: Councillor Warwick

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“Can the Portfolio Holder please confirm how many New Homes will be added to the WCC housing stock in the year 2015/16?”

Reply

“The Council completed 25 new homes during 2015/16,

- 21 at New Queens Gate, Stanmore
- 2 at Swanmore
- 1 conversion of a common room at Lisle Court, Stanmore to create a 1 bed flat
- 1 conversion of a garage at Eastacre, Weeke to create a bungalow

During 2016/17 there is expected to be a further 29 new Council homes completions. Principally there will be 12 new homes at Westman Rd, Weeke and 13 at Hillier Way, Abbots Barton.”



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QUESTION 17

From: Councillor Weir

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health & Wellbeing

“In light of the imminent closure of the local bring site at Weeke shops, why is the City Council instructing residents in north-west Winchester using this facility to take their bottles and glass to the East Winchester Park and Ride (St Catherines) for recycling?”

Reply

“I am pleased to confirm that there are no plans to close the recycling facility at Weeke shops.

The bins at the site have recently been replaced using ones that were previously located at the Chesil Street surface car park. These had been labelled with advice that the alternative nearest site was at the Park & Ride location. Unfortunately because of an error by the contractor the labels were not removed before the bins were relocated to Weeke.

The Contract Monitoring Team was unaware of this error and the signs have now been removed. The contractor has been advised to ensure that they review their systems to make sure that in future a similar problem does not occur.

Can I apologise for any confusion that this error has caused.”



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QUESTION 18

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Local Economy

“Does the Portfolio Holder share my great surprise and disappointment that at a recent Winchester Town Forum meeting Cllr Tod criticised the allocation of £150,000 to be used to improve the area around the Casson Block as “wasting money, £150,000 on a pollution patio is ridiculous”?”.

Could the Portfolio Holder briefly explain what the Council, in conjunction with the local businesses, is hoping to achieve here and also is the initiative likely to benefit independent retailers who it is generally accepted create much of the character of Winchester which is so much liked by our residents and visitors?”

Reply

“The Casson Block enhancement scheme aims to make improvements to the area at the front of the Casson Block. The project has been considered for many years, and in 2015 was brought forward again by the business tenants of the Casson Block. At that time, Cabinet agreed to allocate £150,000 to carrying out an enhancement scheme.

The scheme has been consulted on using a draft design, and a detailed design is currently being drawn up following those consultation responses. More information is available at <http://www.winchester.gov.uk/business/casson-block/> It is anticipated that the terraced area directly in front of the businesses will be extended, the area will feature more planting, and the unsightly planter behind the air quality monitoring unit will be removed.

The purpose of this work is to make the Casson Block a more inviting area, with an expectation of increased footfall, and revenue, for the independent businesses who are tenants of the Casson Block.”



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QUESTION 19

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“The Silver Hill Development Agreement provided that the Financial Viability condition was to be discharged after all the other conditions had been satisfied. Can the Leader please confirm who advised the Council to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds in professional fees on assessing the Financial Viability condition, before the Funding and Social Housing conditions had been properly dealt with?”

Reply

“At its meeting of 1 April 2015, full Council considered a motion proposed by Cllr Tod and seconded by Cllr Learney. The motion was passed unanimously by Council. The motion called upon the Leader and Cabinet to “seek at least two external opinions on any viability calculations submitted on any Silver Hill scheme.” The motion was subsequently considered by Cabinet and accepted.

On 8 May 2015, the developer made formal submissions in respect of the outstanding conditions under the development agreement, including the financial viability of the proposed scheme. The submissions included heads of terms and the identity of a social housing provider and funder, and the developer indicated that following approval of these terms, agreements with those bodies would follow shortly afterwards, at which point those two conditions would be fulfilled (provided the agreements reflected the approved heads of terms).

The work needed to assess financial appraisals and the supporting information beneath them is time-consuming and lengthy. In order to ensure that Members had sufficient information before them when considering the information under the outstanding conditions, it was appropriate for the Council’s external advisors to be instructed to review the financial viability information and prepare their report, which was then presented to Members when they considered the other conditions. Their report would then be reviewed and updated immediately before the conditions were finally fulfilled.

As Members had specifically instructed that a second external opinion should be obtained on viability calculations, instructions were given to a second firm to provide this. As the second firm would not have had the previous experience with advising on the scheme, it was essential that these instructions were given concurrently with those to the Council's retained advisors.

At the time, the developer was indicating that it expected to enter into the necessary agreements (thereby fulfilling two of the three outstanding conditions) within a matter of weeks, and therefore the Council would need to be in a position to determine quickly whether the financial viability condition had been met.

The costs of the work of the retained advisor would be met by the developer under the terms of the development agreement. As the decision to obtain a second external opinion was one made by the Council, the costs of this could not be recovered from the developer. However, the terms of the resolution in April meant that the second opinion would have to be ready at the same time as the first opinion."



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 13 April 2016

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 20

From: Councillor Osborne

To: The Portfolio Holder for Local Economy

“Can you please confirm what measures are available or could be introduced to support Pop-up and start up businesses across Winchester? Particularly where these could be encouraged outside the city centre in smaller wards and could be located in Council owned spaces?”

Reply

“The Economy and Arts team currently provides support to start up businesses by providing a range information on the Council’s website and via the regular e-newsletter ‘The Winchester Entrepreneur’. By their nature, new businesses are not generally known to the Council before they make an approach for assistance. However, the team frequently receives enquiries from business people looking to establish a business in Winchester, to which we offer bespoke replies. Topics range from premises and funding searches to support through the planning process and details of local networks and contacts.

In addition to information and signposting, the Council’s small business grants have been a great success in 2015/16, with almost £16,000 awarded to 13 start-up businesses. In addition to being able to offer small grants helping entrepreneurs to take their initial steps, this contact also allows officers to make recommendations to the business, or referrals to other services such as the training and support offered by Southern Entrepreneurs.

The Council’s policy on business rate relief contains details of relief available to businesses in rural settlements. The Council’s policy on rate relief is available at www.winchester.gov.uk/business/business-rates/ together with information on Small Business Rate Relief which is available to occupied properties with a rateable value less than £12,000. This limit is due to be increased from 1 April 2017 according to the Chancellor’s recent budget announcement.

Pop-up businesses have also found success in Winchester. For example, Rawberry started as a market stall, then moved into The Brooks as a pop-up shop, before moving into longer term premises on St George's Street in March 2016. Moreover, the Council lets properties to small businesses such as shops: these can be in residential areas (eg Stanmore) or in the city centre and are often made available on short term agreements which are more manageable for new businesses.

As Members of Winchester Town Forum will know, officers are currently working to support the development of a Cycle Café close to the Hockley Viaduct. This would see the creation of a new social enterprise outside the immediate City Centre, providing a leisure facility for walkers and cyclists.”



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QUESTION 21

From: Councillor Warwick

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health & Wellbeing

“Can the Portfolio Holder update us on the early impact the Great Waste and Textile Bank campaigns have had on Winchester’s recycling levels?”

Reply

“The Great Waste campaign continues to the end of April 2016, with a design competition culminating in an exhibition and catwalk display as part of Winchester Fashion Week currently in progress.

The three objectives for the campaign are as follows:

1. To support waste reduction by local residents with a programme of information, education and encouragement;
2. To support waste reduction by local residents with a programme of information, education and encouragement, and
3. To extend the range of recyclables which are collected from kerbside.

As was reported in a response to a question by Cllr Weir in January 2016, changing the habits and systems of many years is not a quick process, but the Campaign has certainly reached out to people of all ages through initiatives ranging from a colourful ‘Trash to Treasure’ exhibition and a schools’ debate on waste in the Council Chamber to a ‘Low Cost Christmas’ promotion and a ‘Love Food Hate Waste’ Leftover Lunches challenge. A full report on the impact on the year will be made available once the campaign draws to a close and a formal evaluation exercise has been undertaken.

During 2015/16 the textile and shoe banks across the Winchester District collected a total of 57.69 tonnes of textiles and 9.45 tonnes of shoes. This represents a contribution of 0.6% towards the overall recycling rate of just over 35%.

Last month JESC considered an update report on the Joint Waste Minimisation Plan with our partner East Hampshire District Council which

included further plans to try and expand the textile bank network as well as other initiatives to increase the capture and reduction of contamination of recyclables. This work will be informed by the completion of a Project Integra Review into the range of materials which might be added to the input specification of the Materials Recycling Facilities.”



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QUESTION 22

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“Can the Leader please confirm how many former Council employees have returned to work for the Council as consultants, in the last 24 months?”

Reply

“Two members of staff have returned to work for the Council as consultants in the last 24 months. In addition, one returned as an expert witness to provide evidence at an inquiry on a case which they had previously been working on.”



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QUESTION 23

From: Councillor Warwick

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health & Wellbeing

“I understand "Ocean Adventure" at RPLC has been closed -please can the Portfolio Holder update members on the status of this popular play area?”

Reply

“Ocean adventure, the soft play area at River Park Leisure Centre is currently closed to the public for maintenance repairs. It was closed on 31st March. The maintenance team are waiting for delivery of parts to make safe the rollers and netting. It is estimated that this facility will re- open week commencing 9 May 2016.”



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QUESTION 24

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health & Wellbeing

“Can the Portfolio Holder please advise of how much the Council spends each year dealing with fly tipping? I am mindful that if the waste site in Alresford ever closes (to save money), there is a real danger that fly tipping in this particularly wonderful corner of the district will increase as will the net costs”

Reply

“The cost of fly tip removal is approximately £60,000 per annum and includes the resources deployed to remove the material and also specialist disposal costs for items such as asbestos cement sheets which cannot be disposed of through the routine outlets. The resources have been recently supplemented by a further hit squad to ensure prompt removal of material deposited.

The County Council’s consultation on the proposed changes to the Household Waste Recycling Centres is currently underway and ends on 25th May. I have recently met with the Head of the Shared Contract Management Team to formulate a draft response to the consultation which will be referred to members for comment in the form of a Portfolio Holder Decision Notice. It is hoped that a shared response can be agreed with our waste services partner, East Hampshire District Council and submitted on behalf of the partnership. The reply will emphasise the whole system costs aspect of the service and the potential for displacement of costs from one local government service to another which will impact upon the City Council’s budgets.”