



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 20 July 2016

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Weir

To: Portfolio Holder for Built Environment

“A major lesson from Silver Hill and River Park is that effective, inclusive public engagement is fundamental to successful council-led development in sensitive areas which attract high levels of public interest and demand widespread public buy-in. What steps are being taken to ensure that Winchester City Council has the necessary protocols, skills and resources in place to deliver best practice in public engagement throughout the life of projects currently in the pipeline and in the future?”

Reply

Winchester already has a good track record of public engagement, notably the award winning ‘Blueprint’ process we adopted in developing our Local Plan. However, we do keep our approach under review and are always willing to learn from experience.

The Council’s approach to Community Engagement is being reviewed by the Head of Policy & Projects and Head of Communications. A Community Engagement Strategy for Major Projects is being developed and we have invited an independent expert in community engagement to review an early draft, and will discuss it with the Portfolio Holder for the Built Environment before it is brought to Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny in the autumn.



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Elks

To: The Leader

“Can the Leader please explain why it was necessary to commission the RIBA Client Adviser Review on the Station Approach scheme given that one of the compilers had been involved in the competitive design process and the Council had paid for an ‘expert’ Design Jury?”

Reply

The role of the Jury was to score the shortlisted concept designs against the qualitative design criteria. The RIBA advisor was commissioned at Members’ request to advise the Council and bidders on design issues through the design competition including the competitive dialogue discussions. She was subsequently retained to advise Cabinet in relation to how, if appointed, the highest scoring bidder’s concept scheme design could be modified as part of the next stages to take the scheme through the planning process.

These are entirely different processes.

RIBA client advisors have a great deal of experience in design competitions and in advising clients on construction projects. Stakeholders including the City of Winchester Trust recommended that the Council commission an RIBA client adviser and it was felt that due to the nature and importance of the project that this was appropriate. Officers and Members of Cabinet feel that the role has been very beneficial.



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Mather

To: The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Professional Services

“Now that the parking survey has been published, can the Portfolio Holder explain what the next stage of the parking review will be?”

Reply

“As part of the refresh of the Council’s Car Parking Strategy we undertook a survey in May to better understand how well our car parks are being used. These results have been published in conjunction with a consultation now underway which is seeking views from the public, businesses and other interest groups on the performance and priorities of the current Strategy. The consultation is running for 6 weeks and will close at the end of August. The feedback received will be carefully considered, along with the parking data and any other sources of relevant information, before a report is taken to Cabinet in the autumn setting out options for any proposed changes to the Strategy.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Burns

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing

“Can the Portfolio Holder please confirm that an Article 4 Direction, under policy WIN9 in Local Plan Part 2, is being considered for Winnall, there being evidence that HMOs are having a detrimental effect on the community, and could she say when it is likely that such a measure will be introduced?”

Reply

At the current time the Council is not actively considering any further Article 4 Directions in the city relating to HMOs.

The Direction in Stanmore was introduced as there was clear evidence that the increasing number of HMOs in the area was threatening to unbalance the housing stock in that part of the city and was a matter of considerable local concern.

If information comes forward which shows that there are similar issues in other neighbourhoods within Winchester the Council can consider removing permitted development rights by making further Article 4 Directions. However permitted development rights are granted nationally by Government and should not be restricted unless there is good evidence that there is a growing proliferation of HMOs in an area which is causing planning related issues.

The Council licenses a number of HMOs in Winnall and current information suggests that the density of HMOs in the area is less than 10%, well short of the 21% in the Stanmore area which led to the introduction of the Article 4 Direction. There is a risk that the current situation may result in an increase in numbers in areas such as Winnall. I have therefore asked officers to review all data sources to determine precise numbers and to monitor any increase in HMOs in Winnall. Any local intelligence that members and other representatives can provide is welcomed.



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“The Leader will know that I am very pleased that the new leisure centre at Bar End is making progress, but can he please explain why the extensive refurbishment of River Park that was due to have been undertaken following a contract extension in 2010 was never commenced?”

Reply

Cllr Gottlieb should refer firstly to CAB 2047 considered at the Cabinet meeting of 15th September 2010 and the minutes thereof.

Subsequent to that decision by Members, further consideration of an extensive refurbishment of the River Park Leisure Centre has been an active, but not preferred, option if a new centre cannot be provided.

The fact that it is nearly six years since this decision was taken demonstrates clearly why moving the project forward is now so important.



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Thacker

To: The Portfolio Holder for Economy and Estates

“Please could we have the details of the grant to be made to Winchester Cathedral, to support the conservation of the Winchester Bible?”

Reply

“An approach was made to the Leader by Dame Mary Fagan, Chair of Winchester Cathedral Trust (the Cathedral’s fundraising committee), in February 2016. She explained that whilst work was proceeding well with the multi-million pound repairs, improvements and conservation works at the Cathedral, there was still a need for funding for one important element of the plans.

The improvements include creating access to all parts of the Cathedral building for visitors, and also to the full range of its cultural treasures that it houses. One of these is the Winchester Bible, the largest and finest of all surviving 12th-century English bibles.

Because of the age and value of the Winchester Bible, the Cathedral has embarked on an ambitious conservation and digitisation programme which will mean that it can be enjoyed in its entirety by much larger numbers of people. Two of the four volumes have been conserved already. The County Council has provided funding for a whole volume, at £168,000.

The Cathedral has been successful in securing significant sums of Heritage Lottery Fund monies to support other elements of the restoration and redisplay work, and the City Council has already made a contribution to these capital works. However, it has proved more difficult to secure funding for work on the Bible in view of the religious nature of the document.

Following a Portfolio Holder Decision Notice ([PHD696](#), signed 14 July 2016) a grant of £80,000 was approved. This is payable in four equal instalments over four years from 2016/17. The budget is being identified from existing revenue budgets in the Economy & Communities Division. A formal funding agreement will be signed with the Cathedral before the first payment is released in the coming weeks.”



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Burns

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Wellbeing

“Policy DM4 (Protecting Local Areas) in Local Plan Part 2 provides that: 'Open areas within defined settlement boundaries which have an important amenity, biodiversity, heritage or recreational value, as shown on the Policies Map and detailed in the Open Space Strategy, will be protected from development. Built development will only be permitted on these spaces where it accords with the Development Plan and:

- i) the proposal is for a facility which is ancillary to the function of the open space; and
- ii) the contribution of the open area to the character of the wider area is maintained or enhanced.

Development may exceptionally be permitted where it is demonstrated that the benefit to the community clearly outweighs the harm caused by the loss of all or part of the facility, and options for developing elsewhere have been explored'.

Can the Leader confirm that this Policy will be rigorously enforced, especially where communities in areas more vulnerable to exploitation, such as in Stanmore and Winnall, are concerned?”

Reply

Adopted Policy CP7 of Local Plan Part 1 is also relevant when looking at how proposals address open space issues and deals with the provision of such space on new developments, and also sets out the presumption against the loss of open space, sports or recreation facilities, except where it can be demonstrated that:

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

I can confirm that Policy CP.7 of LPP1 and emerging policy DM4 of LPP2 will both be applied to any affordable housing schemes brought forward by the Council or any other forms of development which involve the loss of identified open space. Proposals in Stanmore and Winnall will also be considered in relation to the Council's Planning Frameworks for both these areas and corresponding policies WIN8 and WIN11 in Local Plan Part 2.

In making a planning assessment for schemes where existing areas of open space are affected a judgement will be made on a case by case basis regarding the acceptability of the proposal and whether the scheme in question has demonstrated that exceptional circumstances exist which justify the development of the site in line with our planning policies and frameworks. This will involve carefully considering the community benefit of the new development in relation to the value of any open space which would be lost in conjunction with the community benefit of any compensation/mitigation being proposed in terms of alternative provision of space in the area.