



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 2 November 2016

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Laming

To: The Leader

“In the light of rumours about Bushfield Camp development, would the Leader please inform the Ward Members of these discussions that have taken place with the Church Commissioners Agents and the outcomes. This is a very contentious site and used by many people so it is extremely important for the council to be transparent and work in the best interests of the residents.”

Reply

“Everything that anyone needs to know about the Council’s policy position on Bushfield Camp is in the relevant policy of the Local Plan Part 1. This could hardly be more transparent, given the years of public discussion and scrutiny through statutory processes to which it was subject.

The Church Commissioners and their agents, Deloitte, have had several meetings recently with officers and relevant portfolio holders to explore how they could bring forward proposals which would meet the Local Plan requirements. A great deal of the content of those meetings has focused on the highly sensitive nature of the site and the importance of making any proposals compliant with the Local Plan.

It is the landowner’s decision as to how and when to consult the public, but the Church Commissioners and Deloitte have been keen to seek advice from the Council about Deloitte’s programme of frontloading engagement and evidence-gathering. Alongside a number of technical studies in hand, they are running a workshop for representatives of the business community; a workshop for local amenity groups and parish councils, and a community drop-in session which anyone can attend on Tuesday 13th December in the Middle Brook Centre from 2pm to 7pm. A Member Briefing Session is also being arranged by Deloitte and all Members will be invited to this.

Council officers will continue always to promote the Local Plan policy in any discussions.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Weir

To: The Leader

“Winchester City Council retains 100% of Business Rates from commercial scale renewables. This amounted to £286k in 2015/16, up from £85k in 2014/15. Forecasts for 2016/17 are for the City Council to retain at least £286k in business rates from renewables. Given this potentially steady source of income to the Council, what is being done to promote new investment in commercial renewables in the District and build a valuable pillar for Winchester’s future revenue base?”

Reply

“Through its Efficiency Plan, the Council is actively adopting a more commercial and enterprising approach to replace the removal of Government grant of almost £1.5m by 2020. This includes identifying new income streams.

There has been a good level of investment by the private sector in renewables in the Winchester District, particularly in the form of solar farms. Our planning policies and practices support most of the applications that have come forward

With an economic aspiration to build a ‘low carbon economy’, the Council continues to explore ways to promote renewables locally in its community leadership role. This has included a ‘solar city’ project championed, as Cllr Weir will know, by Winchester Town Forum; investment in renewables on new and refurbished Council-owned properties, and efforts to prompt action to harness methane emissions from the former landfill site at Funtley.

The Council continues to explore opportunities to attract private sector investment in renewables, but the economic incentive for such schemes has been greatly reduced by changes in Government subsidy levels. Market forces will be a major challenge for our own, continued efforts in this area.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Mather

To: The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Professional Services

“Can the Portfolio Holder outline the steps taken to accommodate the additional volumes of traffic we will experience over the coming Christmas period?”

Reply

“The Council, working in conjunction with the Winchester Business Improvement District, is implementing a range of measures this year which are intended to help manage the high levels of demand we experience in the city during the lead up to Christmas. We shall be taking the following steps:

- Traffic marshals on duty at the Brooks Car Park and King Alfred statue, providing information and parking directions to incoming vehicles subject to finding a suitable contractor able to undertake the operation;
- 150 spaces are being offered at weekends for BID members on Hampshire County Council’s lower deck at Tower Street Car Park, to leave spaces in public car parks for shoppers;
- More parking for City Council staff at St Catherine’s Park and Ride and the Bar End Depot to leave spaces at Chesil Multi Storey Car Park for shoppers;
- The inclusion in the new Park & Ride contract of an extension to 8.30pm (an hour later than usual) on all park and ride routes for the five weeks before Christmas, and a Sunday service funded jointly by the BID and City Council;
- The lifts and toilets in Chesil Street Multi Storey Car Park will be operational for the first time on Sundays;
- Parking marshals will be on duty in the Park and Ride car parks on peak days to help people find parking spaces.
- Launch of a new counter system, which will cover some city centre car parks and the park & ride sites, which will provide on-line information about the availability of spaces for visitors before they leave home. This is funded by the BID and City Council.
- Usual seasonal arrangements for coaches and buses in the Broadway in terms of parking bay suspensions and relocation of stops.
- The Brooks centre car park will be open longer, to 11.00pm, on days of peak demand and we are in the process of finalising the detailed arrangements.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Hiscock

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Wellbeing

“When will the facilities at the Worthy Lane Recycling Bring site be restored to those advertised on the City Council Website?”

Reply

“The Worthy Lane details are up to date on the website.

The site currently advertises the collection of paper, which, if you click on the drop down menu tells you the bank is for books. Due to the set up of the website, which is managed by recycle now, books come under the category of paper. <http://www.recyclenow.com/local-recycling>

The paper/cardboard bank that was at this site will not be restored because of the contamination and poor quality recycling that was being collected from there. This provision was provided by a private company and as the residents of Winchester can recycle paper and cardboard at the kerbside it is no longer necessary.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Gemmell

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

"What is the latest state of play of the New Homes?"

Reply

"I am pleased to say that,

- 57 new homes have been completed (and occupied), including developments in Itchen Abbas, Otterbourne, Stanmore, Weeke and Swanmore
- 92 homes are on site at Victoria Ct and Chesil Lodge in central Winchester and Hillier Way, Abbots Barton.
- 14 homes will start on site in January 2016 in New Alresford and Stanmore
- And finally, planning applications for 87 new homes, predominantly in Stanmore are being prepared and (subject to Cabinet approval) will be submitted this financial year.

In total 250 of the target of 300 new homes have now been delivered, started or about to start, this represents nearly 85% of the 10 year programme delivered in 5 years."



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Hutchison

To: The Leader

“Please can the Leader inform us of how many meetings senior officers and Cabinet members have had with Hendersons/SW1 (the developers of Silver Hill) since January 2016 and what has been their outcome; similarly how many meetings have taken place with Stagecoach and again what has been their outcome, and if there have been meetings with other stakeholders can we please have similar information?”

Reply

“THRE owns the company which itself owns the redundant Friarsgate Medical Centre building. They will have aspirations to either relet, sell or develop the site as any landowner would in similar circumstances. The Assistant Director (Estates and Regeneration) has had one meeting with THRE to discuss their strategy for the property (letting, sale or development) and has commissioned a valuation of the property for information purposes.

Officers have met with Stagecoach on two occasions recently to discuss the future of the bus station and how Stagecoach can best participate in the Central Winchester Regeneration process, which they are anxious to do.

Officers meet regularly with representatives of the St Clements GP practice to progress the purchase and relocation of the surgery.”



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Burns

To: The Leader

“Can the Leader please answer the following questions with regard to the 2009 planning consent for the Silver Hill development scheme:

- 1) what decision has been taken, if any, in relation to the validity of the developer’s claim to have undertaken material works such as to comply with the Works Commencement Date under the conditions of the development agreement;
- 2) what decision has been taken, if any, on the discharge of pre-commencement conditions, required by the grant of planning consent, by the developer;
- 3) has that decision been communicated to the developer, and if so, on what date;
- 4) if no decision has yet been communicated to the developer, has the developer issued any notice(s) of deemed discharge; 5) has the Council taken action to confirm the lapse of the 2009 planning consent; if not, why not?”

Reply

“No formal decision has been taken with respect to whether the works which have been undertaken are sufficient to comply with the Works Commencement Date condition under the development agreement. However, Members will recall that notice of termination of the development agreement was given earlier in 2016.

The application for discharge of the pre-commencement decisions has been considered by officers under delegated powers granted to them. The majority have been approved, although some have not. The decision notice will be issued shortly.

No deemed discharge notice has been received. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services will be writing to the developer confirming the Council’s view that the 2009 permission has not been lawfully implemented.”



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Tod

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“What action is the City Council taking to ensure that we have enough specialist housing to cope with the needs of our elderly frail residents in our district?”

Reply

“The Council recognises the increasing number of frail elderly households in the District and works closely with Hampshire County Council to identify and make provision for this group. Specifically the Local Plan makes provision for frail elderly housing within Major Development Areas such as Barton Farm, Whitely and West of Waterlooville.

The Council has a significant portfolio of specialist elderly accommodation that it owns itself. In addition to 420 units of sheltered housing in 12 schemes across the district, the Council manages two existing Extra Care housing schemes providing 55 homes including 20 for specialist dementia care. Both schemes benefit from dedicated 24 hour on site care and support. The Chesil Lodge development will add a further 52 Extra Care homes to the Council’s portfolio.

The Council has also worked closely with other providers such as St John’s Charity and Abbeyfield to develop new stock which meets the needs of elderly households.”



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“Can the Leader please advise how many meetings the Council, or anyone acting on its behalf, has held with THRE, or its representatives or successors, in respect of any aspect of the Silver Hill project or any part of the site, since the Council terminated the contract with THRE on February 10th this year? Could the Leader also advise of the substance of those meetings and who attended them?”

Reply

“The Assistant Director (Estates and Regeneration) has had one meeting with representatives of THRE in relation to their property interest on the central Winchester site, the redundant Friarsgate Medical Centre.

The purpose of the meeting was to seek to understand better the owner’s intentions for the site and whether they intended to dispose of their interest, obtain a tenant or seek to develop it. At present those options remain open to them subject to due process.”



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Thompson

To: The Leader

"Could he set out the protocol used by Officers when responding to emails from Members?"

Reply

"I would expect officers would reply promptly and helpfully to any Member email following the principles of the Member's Charter and the Code of Conduct for Officer/Member Relations. These are published on the Council's website."



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“Could the Portfolio Holder explain why it is felt appropriate to go ahead with the housing scheme in Bailey Close for 5 one bed units each measuring 50 sqm at a cost of £710,000 (against an initial estimate of £550,000) excluding the land which has been valued at £140,000. Surely this equates to a build cost of £2840 per sqm which is significantly higher than virtually any other scheme delivered in Winchester either by the Council or a private developer and when one includes the land this scheme has a negative value.

How does this build cost compare to other developments across the District and does the Portfolio Holder share my concern that the Bailey Close scheme does not represent good value for money?”

Reply

“Cabinet (Housing) Committee discussed and approved the development of 5 new homes at Bailey Close, Stanmore on the 11th October 2016. The development site consists of a block of old garages which are difficult to let and require significant investment to maintain. A planning application was made earlier this year to demolish the garages and replace with 5 x 1 bed flats, there were no objections.

As Cllr Tait points out the build cost is higher than average (and originally estimated), the explanation for this put forward by the Council’s appointed agents is that there is not a lot of interest from contractors for this size scheme. This was evident in the tender exercise where 7 contractors expressed an interest in tendering but only two ultimately submitted bids.

Overall the scheme, including the notional land value of £140,000, shows a negative Net Present Value (NPV) over a 35 year period using rents at 70% of market value. The Council’s development strategy sets out the viability test but points out it is a guideline and a benchmark of the profitability of one scheme against another. If the business case for this scheme was wholly

reliant on the financial case (profitability) then development would not proceed however the overall economic case for development is strong, in that, 5 new homes are provided and an underused, poor condition garage area with significant financial liabilities is redeveloped.

Clearly the Council would not want to develop a significant number of schemes with a negative NPV as this would have a long term impact on the HRA Business Plan, however, in this case Bailey Close is a small scheme with a proportionally low capital cost within the overall new homes programme which brings a significant environmental improvement to the area.”



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QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Evans

To: The Leader

"Could the Leader please confirm that the public participation item on all Council agendas allows members of the public to give their comments to the committee at that point?"

Reply

"All the Council's main Committee meetings (with the exception of Personnel Committee) provide an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions, make statements etc within the general remit of the particular body. There is a general public participation session at the start of each meeting where 15 minutes had been set aside for this purpose.

For meetings of Cabinet and Cabinet Committees, in addition to the 15 minute slot at the start of the meeting, the procedure is that for a particular item on the agenda, the public (and Councillors) will normally be asked to speak at the time of the relevant item.

In all cases, the Chairman's discretion applies and where it has been considered appropriate, other Committees have also heard public participation in the same way as for that at Cabinet meetings.

Please note that there are special procedures for dealing with public participation on individual licensing and planning applications."



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QUESTION 13

From: Councillor Burns

To: The Leader

“How much does the developer owe Winchester City Council following the termination of the Silver Hill development agreement?”

Reply

“The Council has claimed £721,000 and discussions are on-going.”



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QUESTION 14

From: Councillor Porter

To: The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

“As the opposition spokesperson for Health and Wellbeing I am particularly keen to follow guidelines to 'keep children active outdoors.'

Many flat tenants are charged with maintaining their allotted garden or space in their tenancy agreements. A growing number of flats are occupied by families with little hope of moving to a house with a garden.

How will the City Council maintain the opportunity for the growing number of tenants to place seating, swings, slides and trampolines on land allotted to them, but through which the community can currently pass?”

Reply

“Whilst some Council flats have dedicated gardens, the majority of communal housing blocks have communal grounds, maintained by the Council and intended for shared use by all residents.

The Council has always adopted a policy that personal items should not be left out in communal grounds. The Council is responsible for the safety, access and in most cases the maintenance of these areas. Recent inspections have identified some areas being taken over by some residents to the detriment of others and also some incidents of unsafe equipment being left unsupervised (including half filled paddling pools).

I would positively support any initiative that encourages children to play and be active and would welcome any proposals as part of the Estate Improvement programme that would provide communal facilities for shared use by residents.

There are a very small number of areas of communal housing where allocation of garden space and responsibility for maintenance is disputed and officers are currently seeking to clarify this with residents.”



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QUESTION 15

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“Can the Leader please confirm that the planning permission granted on the Silver Hill site in February 2009 was unimplemented and has thus expired?”

Reply

“Although no formal determination has been made, I consider that the planning permission has not been lawfully implemented and has therefore expired.”



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QUESTION 16

From: Councillor Hiscock

To: The Portfolio Holder for Economy and Estates

“What arrangements are being made to facilitate the dropping off and embarking of visitors to Winchester arriving by coach both over Christmas and in the longer term?”

Reply

“This year we have again suspended the parking bays in the Broadway around King Alfred’s statue and moved the park and ride bus stop from its current location to a position outside the Guildhall to help alleviate coach congestion.

In addition to the all-year round coach park off Worthy Lane on the north side of the city spaces will be available to coaches at the old Council depot in Bar End. When coaches arrange a booking to visit the Cathedral Christmas Market they are sent details of the location of the coach park.

Stewards arranged by the Council and Winchester Business Improvement District meet coaches arriving in the Broadway, either with advance bookings or on an ad hoc basis, and also hand maps out to drivers. This measure helps to alleviate congestion on the one way system.

Council officers are exploring options for future all year around coach provision on the south side of the city with officers from Hampshire County Council in accordance with the Portfolio Plan for Transport & Professional Services.

The Council is keen to encourage coach travel as an alternative to visitors using their private cars as it is a more sustainable method of transport and places less strain on the parking infrastructure of the city. Group trips are also more lucrative in terms of tourism spend, often spending longer hours in the city and having more leisure time in the local shops and eateries.”



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QUESTION 17

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Leader

“Further to the representations made at last week’s Cabinet by Jon Walker and myself about the issue of A-boards on the Highway could the Leader advise me what has been done to investigate this matter so far? If nothing has yet happened does he feel that any action is required to help our small businesses in these challenging economic times particularly with a view to licencing A-boards.

Does the Leader also share my concern that whilst the County Council has decided to take action against A-boards by confiscating them and threatening fining their owners the County appears to be reluctant to take any action against businesses who leave their commercial refuse bins permanently on the Highway which are both unsightly and are a fire hazard.

Am I right in thinking that the legislation that the County is using to enforce the removal of A-boards could also be used to deal with the scourge of commercial refuse bins left on the Highway?”

Reply

“I am concerned about any issue which may adversely affect businesses in the city centre.

The County Council has recently taken action in relation to unlicensed A-boards on the highway and I believe that they can also use these powers to deal with other items such as bins. I understand that the County Council has in the past contacted premises about waste storage where it is causing an obstruction of the highway.

However, as I’m sure city Members appreciate, advertising and bin storage present challenges in most town centres. It is entirely understandable that business off the High Street want to attract trade by using A-boards but a

proliferation of such signs can present issues in relation to visual clutter and highway safety.

Similarly many premises store bins on the highway because they have no internal space so seeking their removal could cause operational issues for these businesses.

Officers from both the County Council and City Council have been working with the Winchester BID for sometime regarding the management of these matters but there are no easy solutions which will satisfy everyone's aspirations or requirements.

In light of the concerns you and others have recently highlighted our Assistant Director for Environment is due to meet with County Council officers, HCC's Executive for Environment and the BID next week to discuss signage in the city. I'm sure the issue of waste storage can also be raised.

I am hopeful that by working in a coordinated way it will be possible to find a solution which is acceptable to all parties."



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QUESTION 18

From: Councillor Tod

To: The Portfolio Holder for Built Environment

“How many offices in the Winchester district have been converted to housing?”

Reply

“I assume this question relates to permitted development rights which were introduced nationally in 2013 which allow offices to be converted into residential accommodation. Members will be aware that we have just agreed to remove these rights in Winchester by making an Article 4 Direction and this process is now underway.

Since their introduction the Council has decided about 60 notifications made under the PD regulations with some 57 approved and 3 refused. It should be noted that some office premises have been subject to more than one notification.”



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QUESTION 19

From: Councillor Burns

To: The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Professional Services

“Can the Portfolio Holder please provide a list of newly appointed Council officers, with the positions they now occupy?”

Reply

“It was agreed at the last meeting of Personnel Committee that officers would review how essential information relating to staff is made available to all Members. For example, this may include a summarised version of the Establishment Report being available for all Members and incorporating new starter information (currently available on City Voice) into the Members’ Briefing. The Council’s telephone directory is available to Members on the Intranet. The information includes post title and a structure chart to show the post in context.”



Winchester
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QUESTION 20

From: Councillor Thompson

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Wellbeing

"How will the City Council be managing the inevitable dumping of fridges now that the County Council has refused to accept any more for recycling."

Reply

"As part of the Joint Contract for street cleansing and grounds maintenance with East Hampshire District Council, the contractor 'idverde' (previously known as The Landscape Group) are contracted to collect all fly tips and have been made aware of the possible increase in the volume of these items. Where possible we will involve the enforcement team should the required evidence be found, however this is a separate operation to the clearance contract and managed by the Community Safety Team.

We endeavor to remove small fly tips within 48 hours and larger fly tips within 10 working days as per the contract.

We are in weekly contact with Hampshire County Council for any updates on the situation of disposal of fridges and freezers. We are encouraging anyone wishing to book a bulky collection through the Council, to seek removal from the 'take back' schemes that exist from providers of such items. Alternatively, if they are able to store the item and keep an eye on the updates on our website as to when we are able to start taking bookings again then contact us to assist in removal of the item."



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QUESTION 21

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“Can the Leader please confirm that as and when the Station Approach project progresses, at no point will any Member be prevented from expressing their views, accepting that matters of real commercial confidentiality may only be discussed in exempt session?”

Reply

“I am not aware that any Member acting in their everyday capacity has ever been constrained from expressing their views on Station Approach and there is no reason why they should be prevented from doing so in the future. I would expect all Members to follow the advice of the Monitoring Officer in regard to any discussion of confidential matters.”



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QUESTION 22

From: Councillor Tod

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Wellbeing

“When was the information on Winchester's 'bring sites' at recyclenow.com last updated?”

Reply

“The Winchester bring site information was last updated on the Recycle Now website approximately 3 months ago. Recycle Now is run by the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP), an external site, independent of WCC. The Contracts Management Team are only authorised to update those bring sites located on Council owned land.”



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QUESTION 23

From: Councillor Burns

To: The Portfolio Holder for Built Environment

“The Council will be aware of the proliferation of Homes in Multiple Occupation in areas of Winchester like Winnall and Badger Farm. Please could the Portfolio Holder for Housing please confirm whether urgent consideration can be given to the imposition of a Winchester-wide Article 4 direction, as was issued in Stanmore in the spring of 2016. This is necessary in order to stem the trend towards speculative multiple lets by landlords who frequently fail to provide adequate facilities for their tenants and who deplete the housing stock especially of houses suitable for families, with an invasion of residential streets and closes which cannot support the level of antisocial behaviour, the downgrading in property maintenance and values and the increased parking and noise typically associated with HMOs.”

Reply

“I am aware that increasing numbers of HMOs can cause issues within neighbourhoods in the city which is why we included Policy Win.9 in our Local Plan Part 2. This policy is intended to maintain an appropriate mix of housing and to avoid harmful concentrations of HMOs in parts of the town.

Most changes of use from family homes to HMOs can be undertaken as permitted development so we will take action in areas where there is a rising number of HMOs which threaten to create an imbalance in the housing stock by making Article 4 Directions to remove these rights as we did last year in Stanmore.

Recent research by Council officers has indicated that there are now approximately 80 HMOs on Winnall (in excess of 10% of all homes in the neighbourhood). Numbers in areas such as Badger Farm and Weeke are increasing although detailed information on numbers for other areas of the city is not held at this stage.

I am happy to consider whether making an Article 4 Direction for Winchester is the best course of action to address this issue. Evidence that numbers are increasing across the city would be required to support such a Direction and I have already asked officers to collate information on all city wards.

Government guidance is that PD rights should not be removed lightly and such intervention should be evidence led so we would need to carefully consider whether a Winchester wide approach is merited.

Removing rights across the rest of the city could raise expectations that new HMOs could be controlled and resisted in many locations but it is likely that in areas with relatively few existing HMOs new proposals would comply with our policy requirements so would be permitted.

In conclusion therefore I will seek advice regarding the best approach to tackle this issue in Winchester and will up-date members shortly.”



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QUESTION 24

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“Does the Leader, and the whole of Cabinet, accept that there is no provision in the Constitution allowing for the suspension of any Member, and does he, and they, accept that interfering with any Member’s access to officers would be unlawful?”

Reply

“Cllr Gottlieb raised this same question before Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Monitoring Officer provided a concise and accurate reply which Overview and Scrutiny Committee was satisfied with.

In short, it clearly is in accordance with the Constitution for Cabinet to determine who serves on Cabinet appointed committees. Cabinet amended the person nominated as chair of the Central Winchester Regeneration Group from Cllr Gottlieb to Cllr Weston.

There has been no restriction or ‘interference’ with Cllr Gottlieb’s access to officers which was confirmed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The access which Members have to officers, and to information held by the Council, is set out in the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations.”



COUNCIL MEETING – 2 November 2016

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QUESTION 25

From: Councillor Gottlieb

To: The Leader

“The timetable for appointing an urban design consultant to advise the Central Winchester Regeneration Group, from the issue of the brief to the appointment of the consultant, to include the preparation, receipt and assessment of submissions and interviews, all to be completed within a single month is inadequate. Apart from anything else, it allows no time for the prospective consultants to advise of their views on the brief provided, which itself is not without flaws. Bearing in mind the unprecedented Station Approach situation where three out of five shortlisted consultants withdrew from the bid, does the Leader not agree that more time and care is needed for this important appointment?”

Reply

“The brief for the commissioning of an urban design consultant was published on 31st October and it is hoped to appoint on the 7th December.

Prospective bidders have a little over three weeks to submit a fee bid and proposal. This is acknowledged to be a tight timescale but it is not unreasonable given that a considerable amount of material to be submitted will be information about the skills and experience of the consultants which they will have produced for many similar opportunities.

Nevertheless, if it is apparent from a number of prospective bidders that an extension of time available is needed then we will have to respond to that.

The consultants are not being asked to comment on the brief. The brief is considered to be flexible enough to allow consultants to be innovative and creative in developing their proposals in relation to the formulation of a Supplementary Planning Document and associated engagement.

This is a very different type of procurement to that used for Station Approach. This is a direct commission of a single consultant and will be assessed to a large extent on the skills and experience of the consultants in terms of working on similar projects.”