



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 10 January 2018

Question under Council Procedure Rule 14

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Green

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment (Cllr Warwick)

“Could the Portfolio Holder please tell me who pays for the electricity for the Christmas lights and why they have been left on 24hrs a day since they were first turned on?”

Reply

“Winchester BID is responsible for organising Winchester town’s Christmas lights, and the lights switch on event which took place on Thursday 16 November 2017. Since this date, the lights were on for 24 hours a day until 6 January 2018.

The BID made the decision to leave the lights on 24 hours a day rather than have them switched on and off at particular times. This course of action not only costs very little extra as the lights are all LEDs which consume less energy, but it means they do not require third parties to remember to switch them on during the day. Relying on third parties in this way risks inconsistency of timings for each set of lights, with the possible result of some being switched on and some switched off at any particular time of day.

The electricity used to power the lights is paid for by Winchester BID. More information about the BID and its own sources of funding are available at their website www.winchesterbid.co.uk. This year the lights have been received very well, with plenty of positive mentions on social media.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Tait

To: The Leader (Cllr Horrill)

“Does the Leader share my view that it would be of significant benefit if it were possible to construct a footbridge immediately adjacent to the existing City Bridge particularly as the Council’s Extra Care Facility Chesil Lodge is almost ready for occupation and the current footway is considered dangerous by many pedestrians?”

Reply

“I do share that view, and I have asked officers to evaluate the options and opportunities to do so.

The existing bridge is obviously of great historic value so we cannot make significant changes to its structure. However, there may be a way to add a sympathetic and accessible structure alongside which would make life much easier for pedestrians and encourage people to walk from the city centre to the Chesil Lodge, to the car park and out to the new sports and leisure park.

This will be a challenge but if it is feasible then we will bring forward a plan for implementation.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Cutler

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance (Cllr Ashton)

“Has the independent valuation of the property, identified for purchase under the Strategic Asset Purchase Scheme, been undertaken? If so, what is the outcome?”

Reply

“The owners of the property have confirmed that at the present time they do not wish to proceed with the sale and therefore an independent valuation has not been undertaken. Should the situation change, a valuation will be obtained prior to committing to purchase.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Burns

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment (Cllr Warwick)

“Will the Portfolio Holder consider increasing the range of recyclable materials collected at the doorstep when the new waste contract is approved in 2019?”

Reply

“I keep the range of materials that can be collected in our recycling bins under constant review and look for every opportunity to increase the District’s overall recycling levels.

The current list of materials collected is decided by the Hampshire County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority on the Project Integra partnership. Project Integra recent carried out a review of the materials collected to decide whether additional waste streams such as glass or plastics could be collected in an economic, practical and sustainable way. This work is continuing as it would require changes to the processes at the Materials Recycling Facility. The conclusions should be known this year and all authorities will be able to adopt the changes if approved.

Other changes that could be incorporated within the refuse and recycling contract are being explored as part of the options appraisal process and the conclusion of this work will be known before any final decision on the next waste contract is taken by Cabinet.

In the meantime the City Council will continue to promote good recycling and waste practices in order to increase the capture of existing materials and reduce contamination by non-recyclable items.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Learney

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment (Cllr Warwick)

"What steps are being taken to bring forward the Park and Ride on the Barton Farm site and is this still expected to be a Park and Ride Lite scheme?

What progress has been made on proposals for a further Park and Ride at Sir John Moore Barracks?

What funding is being made available for Park and Ride to the North of Winchester?"

Reply

"It is very important that we have a long term and properly coordinated plan for investing in new transport infrastructure to improve Winchester's environmental and economic prospects. The details of that investment need to be tested and consulted upon as part of the preparation of the new Winchester Movement Strategy which, as all Members know, is well underway. I would certainly support additional park and ride provision serving the north of Winchester if that is identified as a priority. When we can properly plan for it we will have a better idea of what it will cost and how it can be funded.

It would therefore be premature to discuss specific proposals, but I can confirm that officers are in touch with Cala Homes to examine the practicalities of bringing forward the park and ride facility which is already an integral part of that development and to consider how it could operate. This will include ensuring that there is sufficient capacity within the bus services serving Kings Barton to ensure that users of the park and ride can get to and from the town centre efficiently.

The future use of the John Moore Barracks site is a major planning decision and we would expect to see options being considered and consulted upon by the MOD in the course of 2018 and 2019 before they become the subject of any formal planning application. The Council is in discussion with the current Commanding Officer regarding whether some interim use for park and ride facilities may be possible."



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Weston

To: The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing (Cllr Griffiths)

“Can the Portfolio Holder explain how the council is working to address and provide support for the increasing reports on domestic abuse?”

Reply

“The City Council, via corporate activity and the work of the Community Safety Partnership actively supports the delivery of domestic violence and abuse educational and support services.

The following information provides a snapshot of the work the City Council in partnership with other agencies and support services has undertaken over the last year:

- Supported the delivery of the Hampshire Domestic Abuse & Violence Strategy via Winchester Domestic Violence Forum;
- Ensured officers from a variety of services within WCC attend Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings;
- Provided grant funding to local support services;
- Included Domestic Violence and Abuse advice within the corporate safeguarding policy;
- Worked in partnership with the police on a variety of issues which include victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse e.g. housing services;
- Considered domestic violence and abuse as a criteria in a variety of partner agency meetings e.g. Supporting Families;
- Promoted the annual White Ribbon Campaign which emerged as WCC’s top three tweets for November, reaching 2,106 people.
- Purchased a women’s’ refuge move on house through a successful Hampshire wide funding bid to the DCLG in 2016 Operate a rent deposit scheme to all households to provide access to the private rented sector as an alternative housing option

- The Council's Scheme of Housing Allocation awards a higher rehousing banding level to homeless victims of domestic abuse.
- Management moves can be arranged to allow the safe transfer of tenancies for social housing tenants.
- Free home security measures are offered to council tenants to ensure they can remain safe in their home
- All staff undergoes safeguarding training and specific domestic abuse training.

There is an Integrated Domestic Abuse Service for Hampshire (IDASH) which provides outreach and domestic violence support. A Hampshire wide initiative has been developed that aims to better identify and assess perpetrators and implement an improved programme of interventions

Moving forward the CSP has identified a gap in the provision of early intervention for those who don't meet the MARAC criteria (Medium/high risk). It has been agreed that a sub group of the Domestic Violence and Abuse Forum will be developed to address this issue. As a result a professional's coordination group has been arranged in early February to explore how this might be formulated."



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Tod

To: The Leader with Portfolio for Housing Services (Cllr Horrill)

“What is the profile of Empty Homes in the Winchester District – and what action has the council taken to address them?”

Specifically:

- How many private sector homes are currently deemed as long-term vacant i.e. have been empty for over six months?
- How many of these properties have been vacant for over a) two years b) five years and c) ten years?
- In the year 2016-2017 how many empty homes have been brought into use? (By that I mean are now occupied)
- How many Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOS) has the City Council used in 2017 to date; 2016; 2015; 2014 and 2013?”

Reply

“Homes in the Winchester district empty for more than 6 months - 318

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|----------------------------------|----|--------------------------------|
| Empty for more than two years - | 95 | (includes 60 properties below) |
| Empty for more than five years - | 42 | (includes 18 properties below) |
| Empty for more than ten years - | 18 | |

Long term empty homes brought back into use in 2016/17 - 236

Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) used to date - 0

An application for an “interim EDMO” in relation to a property in Badger Farm has been submitted and will be considered at a First Stage Tribunal on 2 February 2018.

The Council’s Housing Strategy recognises the need to maximize the availability of homes across the district, not just to meet the demand on the waiting list for social housing, but also to help meet the housing needs of all residents.

An Empty Homes Strategy was approved in March 2016 and in the last year, officers have been reviewing the database, visiting empty properties, liaising with landlords and taking action to encourage them being brought back into use. In that time, 236 properties that had been empty for more than 6 months are now occupied.

The Empty Homes Strategy is currently under review and a report on progress will be considered by the Cabinet (Housing) Committee in March 2018.”



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Huxstep

To: The Portfolio Holder for Finance (Cllr Ashton)

“What is the impact on Winchester City Council from the Local Government finance settlement, 19th December 2017?”

Reply

“There have been no immediate significant impacts on the Council’s financial position. Winchester City Council signed up to the four year grant settlement covering the period from 2016-20. The settlement for 2018/19 is per the Government’s offer, with an additional £8k of Rural Services Delivery Grant which now remains at the 2017/18 level.

There are other potential future year impacts, such as the move to 75% Business Rates Retention and the Fair Funding Review which is currently out for consultation. It is currently too early to quantify the impact of these announcements though these could have a significant impact on the medium term financial position from 2020.”



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Gemmell

To: The Leader with Portfolio for Housing Services (Cllr Horrill)

“Can the Leader explain further about the plans that WCC is working on with other agencies and charities regarding the homeless and rough sleepers in the city?”

Reply

“The Council is committed to ensure its preventing homelessness service is embedded in local practices and polices, in partnership with our district wide statutory and voluntary sector partners. We recognise that the provision of targeted help and support to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community is crucial to our prevention work, to the sustainment of tenancies and reducing rough sleeping levels.

In recognition that a number of agencies and charities support the same individuals, (although not always in a coordinated way and with some duplication of effort and funding), a senior level multi agency meeting was introduced in the autumn of last year. We anticipate formalising in the spring a panel which the Chief Executive is likely to take a lead role to oversee and explore joint best practice examples of working together, joint commission opportunities and sharing of funding pots.

Central government introduced new legislation in the form of the ‘Homelessness Reduction Act’ due to come in to effect from the 3rd April 2018. The Act recognises and supports the benefit of working together in partnership to protect the most vulnerable in society. It also seeks to ensure councils offer housing advice and options in a timely manner to anyone who approaches the council as homeless or threatened with homelessness. We are very well placed to deliver on the new Act having been working this way since 2012. The housing team received the National Gold Standard Award in January last year to recognise its positive partnership working and prevention outcomes.

Most recently housing officers have been robustly contributing to County level discussions to ensure local funding is still fully utilised to support our local single homeless and rough sleeping community. We are currently in talks with a housing provider to jointly commission an alternative ‘Housing First’ model of provision to reach those more entrenched rough sleepers.”



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Weston

To: The Portfolio Holder for Environment (Cllr Warwick)

“Does the Council have another community litter pick planned for 2018? We had “Clean for the Queen” in 2016 and then the “Spring Clean” again in 2017. Please can you let us know if one is scheduled for this year and if so we need to get this message out as soon as possible to organise collection points for collection by the council’s contractor.

Our country lanes around our villages are littered with rubbish thrown out from passing cars, etc. We see many take away cups and food packaging, energy drinks and beer cans, and much more in our ditches and hedgerows. What can we do as a council to educate the population to dispose of their rubbish sustainably and responsibly without antisocial littering?”

Reply

“The City Council will be supporting this years’ Great British Spring Clean event which takes place from 2nd – 4th March 2018. We are currently working with our street cleaning contractor ID Verde to agree the final details for the provision of free equipment, safety clothing and litter sack collections.

The event will be promoted in this month’s Parish Connect and members will also get an email confirming these details. Next month further information will follow on how to register and take part. Anyone who took part last year will also receive an individual email with this information so they can confirm whether they participate in this year’s event.

This is an excellent event which demonstrates the commitment many communities and individuals have for the area in which they love and ensuring that it is litter free. I would therefore like to thank in advance anyone who takes part for their support and contribution. I also know Members will be promoting the event with their own Parish Councils.

Events like this help to support other campaigns to raise awareness of the issue of litter and the City Council watches closely National developments through the Government’s Litter Strategy which includes a number of future possible initiatives including making it an offence to litter from vehicles which is a significant problem across the Country.”



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Tod

To: The Portfolio Holder for Built Environment (Cllr Brook)

“Against how many construction projects in the last year and currently – for which planning permission should have been sought, but has not been sought – has the council decided not to take action?”

Reply

“During period 1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017 there were 64 new cases received alleging that unauthorised building works had commenced without the benefit of planning permission. Of these there were 33 cases where no breach was found, 18 planning applications were received, and in 11 cases, breaches of planning control existed but were not causing significant harm in planning terms. As a result taking formal enforcement action would not have been expedient so those cases were closed. In 2 other cases the breach halted and the unauthorised development was removed.”