



## **COUNCIL MEETING – 8 July 2020**

### **Questions by the Public** **under Council Procedure Rule 15(1)**

- Each questioner will have 2 minutes in which to ask their question. The order of the questions to be asked is as set out below and an officer will pass a microphone to the questioner when their name is called by the Mayor.
- Please note that following the response given by the Councillor, the questioner may also ask a supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original question or the reply.
- The total time allocated for questions will *normally* be limited to 20 minutes. For any question which cannot be dealt with at the meeting, a written answer will be provided, normally within one working week.

#### **Questioner:**

1. Martin Wilson
2. John Tippet-Cooper
3. Michael Kurn
4. Judith Martin



**Winchester**  
City Council

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**QUESTION 1**

From: Martin Wilson

To: The Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management (Cllr  
Learney)

“Can the Leader please confirm that when indoor sports facilities are allowed to reopen after the Coronavirus crisis, the Council is not due to pay compensation or to make any payments to the operators of the River Park Leisure Centre (RPLC), whether they relate to before, during or after the period of lockdown? Can the Leader also please confirm that, before the indoor sports facilities at RPLC re-open to the public, a full and documented inspection will be carried out by the Council's "Authorised Officer" and dilapidations and rectification notices issued in accordance with the Contract to ensure the facility is safe and fit for purpose?

My previous questions asking about 1) costs to the Council of £13,000,000 expended by previous Administrations, and 2) as to why the condition of RPLC was allowed to become so poor, have still not been satisfactorily answered, so I would ask the Leader to ensure that there is complete transparency about all dealings with the operators from now on.”

**Reply**

“The Council is awaiting Government Guidance on when Leisure Centres can reopen and under what conditions.

Full inspections of both leisure centres are carried out on a monthly basis and this has continued during lockdown.

Costs are still incurred even whilst Leisure Centres remain closed in order to enable the subsequent reopening and to maintain security.

All of these matters will be carefully considered by Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. The public are welcome to speak at all Cabinet meetings and the live stream is available to listen to.”



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**QUESTION 2**

From: John Tippett-Cooper

To: The Leader (Cllr Thompson)

“Winchester is one of the best places in the country to live and I am sure the Council will agree that our district is enhanced by the diverse groups and communities that live in it. What more can the Council do to engage different communities in its decision-making?”

**Reply**

“Thank you for your question which gives me the opportunity to set out how much the City council values the views of all our communities across the District.

It is absolutely vital to ensure that all our meetings are accessible to all and this is why we introduce audio recording and webcasting of our meetings live on our website last September. During recent months in response to the Covid-19 outbreak, we have created virtual meetings which allow residents across our diverse district to attend and ask questions and to allow us to maintain maximum engagement during this crisis.

Our commitment to make sure that we engage with all communities across our district means that we are always looking for better ways to do this. There are many minority groups within our district and we are keen to ensure that they all have a voice. So going forward we are pleased to account that we will be establishing a new Advisory Group to consult and engage with these minority groups to ensure we capture the feedback of all our residents and take this into account as we make decisions going forward.”



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**QUESTION 3**

From: Michael Kurn

To: The Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Wellbeing (Cllr Porter)

“I am a resident in Durley right on the boarder with Eastleigh, who’s rate of development has been astronomical and the works are getting closer and closer to this picturesque local village. With One Horton Heath right on our doorstep. I am in favour of development and progress and I appreciate that everyone must play their part in taking a share of new development to support the growing demand for housing, and as an active member of my local community I firmly believe we can not have a “not in our back yard mentality”. But I believe with that there comes a responsibility to protect residents and their safety and to protect our natural habitat and wildlife, an issue you were partly elected on.

Durley is a village like many with little infrastructure there is no village shop and only a very small primary school. It has a long narrow road like many small villages and cannot take much more traffic. There are currently several application in at the moment for the village which all hold many concerns for the village, these are yet to be passed. But there is a much bigger issue in our communities which is the enforcement or should I say the lack of it.

I would like to give just two brief examples in Durley, which I am very confident will be replicated in many rural communities under your duristinction where the lack of enforcement is creating real concern.

I bring to the councils attention a development just near the school, opposite shady oaks farm, where copes has been completely destroyed over a bank holiday weekended. The land owner wants to put in three holiday lets, but began the work to clear the well established copse and create an access which didn’t exist before without planning permission being granted and in a very underhanded manor which has angered the residents. The application also has several errors in it including naming a road which doesn’t even exist. By destroying the copse this takes away any chance of an environmental

survey and many animal habitats have now been destroyed which offered shelter between two open fields.

Secondly In Durley we also have a Travellers site, this was initially rejected by planning, but this didn't stop them as they still moved on to the site with four static caravans. After appeal it was then granted for them to have those four residences. The village seemed to accept this and the site initially was presented to a high standard and there was no issue.

This however has now been taken advantage of, there is now at least ten dwellings on site and thats not all, the site looks a mess, there has been a shooting, illegal Dog breeding and fights yet the councils enforcement team has done nothing. Im pretty sure if this was happening on any other residential site in the village you wouldn't hesitate in taking action.

I believe you have been advised along with the police to go with a gentle approach, but I'm sorry if a resident walked around with a gun and shot someone, or was walking the streets with illegal bread dogs, I'm sure the situation would not be dealt so lightly.

I also understand the enforcement department is over stretched, so the officers are under a lot of pressure so I have empathy with them, but a vital part of your wheel is broken due to a lack of support.

I could run off a list of issues affecting our rural communities that seem to be being unheard and ignored. I appreciate we are living in difficult times but this is an issue that pre dates covid and its now being taken advantage of. So I would like to know:

What do you plan to do about this issue? Do you intend to fix this department and make it fit for purpose and support those officers trying to do the job? OR will you continue to run it in to the ground putting rural as well as city communities under threat?

and will that include you take a stronger stance against those who have no disregard for the rules going forward?"

### Reply

"I welcome your support for development that occurs in a plan led way which enables local communities to have their say in what development is planned within their area. Winchester City Council is currently reviewing its local plan and expect to publish a strategic issues and options paper later in the year.

The new local plan will ensure that the councils climate declaration runs through the heart of the plan. Engagement with local communities is an essential part of this process.

In terms of handling planning applications the council must assess them in accordance with national legislation and our own adopted local plan.

I fully understand the frustrations you raise when land owners do not secure the necessary consents before undertaking work that needs planning permission. However in the majority of cases, it is not a criminal offence for land owners to undertake works without first obtaining the necessary planning consents. In the case of the holiday accommodation you refer to, an application has been submitted and is the subject of a current planning application. I am aware that there are a number of current planning applications being considered in Durley. Please be assured that the planning team will assess these carefully before reaching a final recommendation taking in account comments from local residents that raise material planning considerations.

The traveler site in Durley was permitted on appeal and I am aware of the anti-social behavior that you have reported as well as an increase in the number of caravans at the site.

Dealing with longstanding enforcement matters does take time, and the council must direct its resources to those cases which cause planning harm, and in this case, the enforcement team are working with a number of agencies to deal with the matters raised.”



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**QUESTION 4**

From: Judith Martin

To: The Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management (Cllr  
Learney)

“While I wholeheartedly welcome urgent meantime uses for Kings Walk, whose recommendation was it that these uses should start with the removal of the canopy to Middle Brook Street, and why did it have to be done on the day of the Farmers Market on 28th June? This required a large lorry with crane, which restricted the passageway to the market on the car park, meaning people had to pass well within 2m of each other. The timing probably meant it was a more expensive exercise (with Sunday rates of pay) and it is a cosmetic change at most.”

**Reply**

“The removal of the canopy was an essential piece of work that needed to be undertaken following the failure of the security shutter (beyond repair) which had been fabricated as part of the original canopy. The removal of the canopy was programmed for Sunday which is a quieter day for the premises within Kings Walk to ensure escape routes were maintained. In addition the benefit of the removal of the canopy has certainly improved the street presence of Kings Walk.”