



## **COUNCIL MEETING – 24 February 2021**

### **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.

	From:
1	Ian Tait
2	James Batho
3	Rebecca Butler
4	Patrick Davies



**Winchester**  
City Council

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**QUESTION 1**

From: Ian Tait

To: The Leader (Cllr Thompson)

“In light of the chronic under provision of affordable and Inclusive Housing in the Winchester area, has any consideration been given to approaching the consortium promoting the Royaldown development as to whether some of the available land could be given over to the Council to build a new 21<sup>st</sup> Century Council Estate. If there was land available rather than housing units (if and when the scheme goes ahead) then the delivery of affordable housing wouldn't be linked to the delivery of the open market housing as it is at Kings Barton and therefore the homes could be delivered far more speedily. Also it would allow the Council to use some of the affordable housing money coming from the North Whiteley Urban Extension where it was decided to take a commuted sum (£17.5m) rather than deliver the affordable housing on-site.”

**Reply**

“The land known as Royaldown has been put forward for inclusion in the city council's Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, and like every other site put forward for consideration, requires a formal statutory process before determining whether or not the site is considered suitable for development.

The allocation of new sites for housing, including affordable homes, and other forms of development is part of the Local Plan process and the amount and location of sites is based on a range of factors including housing need. The methodology which produces a figure for the district is set by Government and defines the number of homes we are to plan for.

We have launched our initial consultation of the new local plan and are looking for feedback on Strategic Issues and Priorities including how we meet the challenge of housing delivery which meets the needs of all our residents.

We have not discussed with the promoter of the land known as Royaldown the possibility of developing this site for council housing and we not intending to as the statutory process must run its course.

We all agree that providing affordable homes is important, and a priority for the council, and this is why we have developed an ambitious building programme to bring forward 1000 dwellings over the next 10 years which will help deliver high quality accommodation for those who are unable to purchase the homes they need in the open market.

Off-site contributions received by developers support the provision of affordable housing throughout the district, delivered by the council, Registered Providers, Community Land Trusts and other voluntary providers.

Furthermore the Council plans to invest £125m in new homes throughout the district over the next 5 years. The funding for the development of new homes will come from a number of sources, these include council house rents, Homes England grant, developer contributions and Right to Buy receipts. ”



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**QUESTION 2**

From: James Batho

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

“What does it take to remove the County Council’s Royaldown land from the SHELAA?”

**Reply**

“We have been in correspondence and met with officers at Hampshire County Council about this site. They have now confirmed in writing that their land (CS03) was submitted for consideration as part of the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) without their authority or consent.

On the basis of this information, we will be in contact with the site promoter who put forward the site and ask them to consider updating their submission to reflect the fact that HCC have not given land owner consent for the land to be submitted for consideration under the SHELAA process.

We shall also ask for clarity regarding the possible implications for the wider Royaldown site in relation to access, number of dwellings other infrastructure requirements and deliverability.

When the council is in receipt of this information, the site will be reviewed, and SHELAA will be updated accordingly.”



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**QUESTION 3**

From: Rebecca Butler

To: The Cabinet Member for Service Quality and Transformation (Cllr Tod)

“For nearly a year now the nation’s collective focus has been on hospitals and the wonderful work our NHS clinical staff perform in treating the sick and dying. An overlooked section of the caring community has been Social Care Workers. They are not trained nurses and yet have been at the forefront of visiting and caring for the elderly during the pandemic. Often, the care worker has been the sole contact with normality for those being cared for in their own homes. It must have been a very long, lonely year.

The nature of domiciliary care work is solitary and time-pressured. Nearly always women, on zero-hours or agency contracts, many from immigrant and BAME communities, their work is emotionally draining, physically demanding and low paid. They are typically allocated a 30 minute slot per patient and not paid for their travelling time between patients. They must fund their own costs of fuel, car usage and parking; all of which erodes their hourly rates to below the minimum wage.

Would the Council agree with me that we need to care for our carers as much as we care for our NHS and Critical Care staff? One small contribution would be to grant them the same benefit by granting them a free windscreen pass for City Council Controlled car parks?”

**Reply**

“Thank you for raising this issue. We are absolutely committed to support for carers – and our focus is not just on car parks, but also in Controlled Parking Zones in the residential areas where carers do most of their work.

Currently, as you highlight, we allow anyone who is linked to the NHS or critical care providers to have free parking – a scheme we introduced ahead of the national one at the start of the crisis.

Our scheme for carers is similar, and was in place before the pandemic but focused on residential areas where carers do most of their work. We keep vehicle records for multiple care providers allowing them to park for free near to where they need to provide care. This also allows them more time with their clients rather than having to worry about displaying a visitor permit for example.

This is a very flexible arrangement to support residents who need care and the care provider needs only to contact our parking team to see what can be arranged in various locations. It could be one resident who needs care from a variety of different care staff over a period of time, or it could be for one carer for one resident.

Companies wishing to use this arrangement to support carers should contact [parking@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:parking@winchester.gov.uk).”



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**QUESTION 4**

From: Patrick Davies

To: The Cabinet Member for Local Economy (Cllr Ferguson)

“What is the current estimate of the proportion of retail business, now closed, which is likely to reopen in Winchester City centre once all Covid 19 restrictions are removed and what proportion of all forms of employment in the City centre is expected to similarly return? How are these trends being monitored in the work on the Council’s new Local Plan, particularly the likely scale of online shopping and working from home?”

**Reply**

“The council is not aware of any further planned, permanent closures of retail businesses in Winchester city centre however in common with many town centres there have been a number of national brands that have announced store closures including Debenhams, Kath Kidston, Laura Ashley, Jigsaw and West Cornwall Pasty Company. The loss of these brands from the high street is very disappointing and has led to the city centre vacancy rate increasing to 11.3% in January 2021 from 6.9% in January 2020.

We all look forward to the time when retail businesses can trade without restrictions and analysis from KPMG suggests that the percentage of jobs expected to continue being done from home post-COVID in towns and cities could vary from 11% to 27.7%.

Evidence concerning the changes to ways of working will be gathered as part of the work to create the council’s new 10 year green economic development strategy, which is currently in the process of being procured. It requires that:

*“The economic strategy must clearly address and quantify the economic impact of COVID-19 across the district and the various sectors of our economy. It needs to identify the district’s potential (or not) to respond the changes in working practices and lifestyle choices that have been precipitated and accelerated by COVID-19 and to make the most of the potential for a green recovery. “*

The council's current Local Plan consultation seeks to determine the high level priorities to address and is the opportunity for everyone to comment on the Strategic Issues & Priorities document.

The new Local Plan will also play a key role in retaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres against a background of the changing economic circumstances and new ways of work, leisure and shopping that may emerge following the pandemic. Changes to work patterns and possible reduction in footfall in town centres may adversely influence the economic viability so the Local Plan needs to respond positively to these challenges and manage these changes appropriately.”