



Winchester
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 22 September 2021

Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Brook

To: The Leader (Cllr Thompson)

“On 8th September, there was a BBC news story regarding Councillors and how the lack of Parental leave is limiting the number of women pursuing careers in local government. As a working mother of young children, I often face challenges in attending meetings. With the administration refusing to move key meetings such as Cabinet to a time of day where working Councillors can easily attend, despite being asked many times, it is evident that there is resistance to accommodating and attracting working age Councillors to senior positions. The BBC asked all Local Councils for a response and 303 of them replied. I would like to ask whether we were one of those who replied and what our response was?”

Reply

“The council did respond to the request for information from the Fawcett Society. We confirmed that, although we don’t currently have a formal policy in place for maternity, paternity, adoption and kinship care for councillors; we do offer support to those with parental responsibilities on a case-by-case basis. For example, councillors are able to claim expenses for childcare / dependent carers’ costs if they are needed to enable attendance at meetings both during the day and in the evenings. And we have welcomed Members caring for very young babies to several meetings in recent times.

The LGA have published a *Parental Leave Policy for Councils* which can be implemented locally on a voluntary basis. The policy mirrors the statutory rights given to employees – for example, elected members would continue to receive their basic or special responsibility allowance while on maternity, paternity, shared parental or adoption leave. Implementation of the LGA policy is being reviewed and this review process will include consultation with members.

But turning to your second point. Since forming the administration in 2019 we have introduced a number of measures to ensure our meetings are more

accessible. For example, the ability to join a meeting and contribute digitally means that both Members and members of the public don't have to spend valuable time travelling to a meeting but can make their contribution when the item they are interested in comes up. In addition, we have made sure that everyone has the ability to listen in to meetings by live streaming.

Of course being part of the administration involves a greater time commitment than just turning up to meetings of Cabinet. It does require members to be available during working hours to not only enable discussions with officers at a time when they are available, but also be in regular contact with the plethora of organisations that we also work with. This does mean that it is difficult to hold down a full time job and members are compensated for this by our special responsibility allowances.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Tippett-Cooper

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

“After the incredibly saddening and alarming events in Afghanistan over the last few weeks, it has been uplifting to see both Council Leader Cllr Thompson’s statement on the support that Winchester City Council are willing to provide to Afghan evacuees and the Winchester District community’s reaction to the crisis – acting with typical generosity, kindness and openness by donating thousands of clothing items, baby and toddler equipment and digital devices at our vital community hub at Unit 12 in support of the excellent efforts of Community First who are managing the logistics around supporting Afghan evacuees who are based in Hampshire.

Can the Council confirm if the Home Office has provided any response to Cllr Thompson’s August 2021 letter and what more can the Council do to support Afghan evacuees who will be (temporarily or otherwise) based in our District over the upcoming months?”

Reply

“When the Government encouraged Local Authorities to come forward with offers of properties the Leader quickly responded with her statement and pledge of support.

Our Chief Executive and Strategic Director have attended national briefings and we are working with Hampshire County Council who remain the administering authority collating local district and borough housing offers. I am pleased to say that Hampshire’s target of 22 properties from across the 11 districts has been met.

It is the Home Office who is coordinating the relocation and resettlement of Afghan families, working through the Strategic Migration Partnerships and Local Authority Leads, and we are working with two resettlement frameworks

The council has currently submitted 4 property offers to the Home Office in support of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) which looks to support Afghan locally engaged staff and their families. Ultimately, the Home Office will match families to the 4 offered properties. The matching process takes account of the relative size of the family and the local accommodation offer to ensure it is of the right size and also takes account of any special needs of the family, such as adapted accommodation or access to specialist health provision.

The Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) supports those brought to the UK as part the evacuation programme and further people will be brought to the UK over the coming years. The council is working with Registered Partners, other non-profit housing providers and private sector landlords and has acquired 3 suitable property offers to support the scheme. We are also holding a small list of other potential accommodation offers from members of the public. Again, we work with the Home Office who undertake the matching process.

It is important that the council works in a measured way with the Home Office, following guidance and processes to ensure the safety of families as they arrive in our district. It is also important to make sure that local support infrastructures are in place to help ease the resettlement of families. Once families arrive the council is willing and able to provide additional settling in support both practical and financial through the Tenant Sustainment Team and Welfare Fund.

We look forward to receiving and welcoming our 4 families once the Home Office completes its processes.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Clementson

To: The Cabinet Member for Built Environment (Cllr Gordon-Smith)

“The Denmead Ward is facing yet another Appeal by travellers against the refusal of this Council to grant planning permission for the creation of one Gypsy/Traveller Pitch at Paddock 2, Pony Paddocks in Worlds End, Denmead.

As this Council will be aware, there is already 8 traveller pitches in Paddock 6 of Pony Paddocks in Worlds End which has a 5 year temporary planning permission granted by the Planning Inspectorate in 2019. This site was also refused initially by this Council but was given the temporary permission because of a lack of alternative traveller pitches in the District. Comments and/or objections relating to the Paddock 2 Appeal, Ref. No: 20/00048/REF, must be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by 28th September 2021. With this in mind, would the Cabinet Member for the Built Environment please confirm that, **when this latest Appeal is heard, will this Council be able to state - categorically - that there are sufficient alternative pitches available in the District for this particular Applicant and that there will be no repeat of the fiasco at Appeal which lead to the Inspector granting of a temporary 5 year permission to the siting 8 No pitches on Paddock 6?** Would he also update this Council on progress in the acquisition of new Gypsy/Traveller pitches in the District to ensure there will be an adequate supply to enable the Travellers at Paddock 6 to be relocated in October 2024 when their temporary residency ends and confirm the Paddock 6 will revert to its original state of pasture land at that time.”

Reply

“It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the details of a specific live appeal case which is being considered by a Government appointed Inspector following refusal of planning permission by the council.

In general terms, and as part of the development of our new Local Plan, the council has commissioned work regarding an assessment of need for the provision of pitches for the gypsy and traveller communities. This will form part of the evidence base of the Local Plan and will inform the policies we bring forward designed to accommodate this need.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Scott

To: The Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing (Cllr Clear)

“Can the Cabinet Member explain why the student welcome booklet is on line again and has not be restored to physical visits where WCC Officers, local Ward Members & student volunteers advise students how to live in a community and be good neighbours?”

Reply

“Welcoming new students to Winchester is an important part of our work as we want to ensure our new young residents receive all the information they need to enjoy their time here and understand where help is when they need it. The Council has worked with the University and Police for many years to welcome students during their early weeks here by visiting them at home. But last year the pandemic forced us to adopt a more digital approach. The University advise that feedback from the students was positive and that the e-booklet was useful, therefore a digital welcome booklet has been prepared this year.

This digital approach will provide students with easily accessible information, hosted on the University’s landing page. Information can be easily updated in real time and be used to promote collaborative community messaging throughout the year. Our team attended the Fresher’s Fayre to signpost the e-booklet and provide in person support. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the online booklet again this year to ensure our welcome best meet everyone’s needs.

However, we will continue to concentrate on targeted work within the community by promoting the usual message of ‘being a good neighbour’. The council banner will still carry the message ‘Welcome to the neighbourhood’ and team will remain focused on anti-social behaviour. We are currently producing a council flyer which will be hand delivered where necessary to reinforce the messages around ‘be a good neighbour’ as part of neighborhood targeted visits.



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Cramoysan

To: The Cabinet Member for Built Environment (Cllr Gordon-Smith)

“What steps is Council taking to hold CALA to account for delivering on their promises to Residents and on infrastructure?”

Reply

“The outline planning consent (09/02412/OUT), and two s106 legal agreements, set out the planning obligations the developer must fulfil in the delivery of the Kings Barton development. One agreement is with the City Council and the other with the County Council.

The agreements cover a range of matters which are being considered by both councils. The lead authority for each matter will depend upon the type of infrastructure being provided by the developer which includes affordable housing, provision of a community building and open space as well as highway infrastructure improvements and education provision. This infrastructure should be delivered in line with the terms and conditions of the agreements. The City Council actively monitors these agreements.

It should be noted that the City Council is not able to take action in relation to the S106 agreement between the developer and County Council. Infrastructure delivery under this agreement is a matter for CALA Homes and Hampshire.

I am pleased to advise that the Leader and I, along with senior officers, met with CALA’s Managing Director in August to discuss implementation and delivery at the site. We agreed that our team would continue to engage with Hampshire in order to assist in unlocking and accelerating the delivery of all of the infrastructure which needs to be provided as part the Kings Barton development.

In addition to the Kings Barton Forum, we have also agreed to work with Hampshire through a technical group to help increase momentum regarding the delivery of all aspects of the development in accordance with the requirements of the legal agreements.”



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Horrill

To: The Leader (Cllr Thompson)

“Can the Leader explain why all Councillors are not being invited to discussions about the desired outcomes of a County Deal, when it potentially has a massive impact on the District?”

Reply

“We were informed by the County Council that their Leader had submitted an expression of interest to Government on a County Deal without any consultation with us or the other districts throughout the County. We have since learnt that the County are planning to submit their formal response at the end of this month and only once that had been done, would any meaningful engagement with districts take place.

District Councils throughout Hampshire are at one in their opposition to the speed with which the County are acting and also the lack of any engagement with us. Indeed all Chief Executives have signed a letter to Hampshire’s Chief Executive asking for meaningful consultation to be carried out with the districts before submitting the offer.

I am more than happy to brief members on this once more information is to hand.”



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Power

To: The Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery (Cllr Tod)

“We are immensely pleased with the installation of a further four Tetrapak recycling points around the district. Could the Cabinet Member kindly confirm that this is a long term commitment and not dependent on community use?”

Reply

“We now have five carton recycling banks across the Winchester district – in Alresford, Denmead, Worthy Lane in Winchester, Colden Common and South Wonston. We are very grateful to the Parish Councils involved for their support in getting them installed and it’s great to know that the installation of these banks has gone down so well. The carton bins are located in areas where the communities have asked for them and are generally alongside or as near as possible to other recycling opportunities such as bottle banks so as to minimize other materials being put in the bin.

While not contributing enormous tonnage, they do enable residents to recycle types of material which, to date, have not been taken anywhere, whether via bring sites, kerbside collections or County Council household waste recycling centres.

It is early days but there is no reason for us to remove these bins in the short term and we wait for the delayed Environment Bill, which will see funding available to introduce a wider range of recycling including pots tubs and trays. Hopefully we can further expand what we can recycle.



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Lumby

To: The Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery (Cllr Tod)

“Would the relevant Cabinet Member please confirm whether the council intends to have its own economic strategy or to join into a wider economic strategy for the broader region?”

Reply

“ We are in the final stages of developing a 10 year Green Economic Development Strategy for the district as it is important for us to have a robust and evidenced based framework to direct our work in becoming a carbon neutral district by 2030 and having a vibrant local economy.

Of course that this strategy has not been developed nor will it be implemented in isolation and will need to both support and benefit from our neighbouring economic region. This includes close working with our Local Enterprise Partnerships Enterprise M3 and Solent and the Hampshire 2050 and Hampshire Story etc. We also work with our neighbouring local authorities and the County Council when opportunities for collaboration arise. This is illustrated for example by the suggested action to collaborate with EM3 LEP to extend the digital spine as part of the innovative business and economy theme.

The (draft) Green Economic Development Strategy recognises this in how the GEDS will be delivered by stating “Not all aspects of the GEDS can be delivered by Winchester City Council in isolation. Successful execution therefore requires establishing and communicating Winchester City Council’s clear identity around the GEDS. Whilst the GEDS has been commissioned for and is 'owned' by Winchester City Council, successful delivery of the key priority actions within this report will require cooperation, co-creation, and partnership working.” And “working with regional partners such as EM3 LEP and HCC, as well as local anchor institution stakeholders such as Winchester University and the South Downs National Park Authority, is important to efficiently and effectively deliver the GEDS.”



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Radcliffe

To: The Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery (Cllr Tod)

“With traffic levels returning to pre-pandemic levels - if not to pre-pandemic patterns - what has been the impact on air quality in the city centre? What plans does the Council have to reduce the volume of polluting vehicles in the centre of the city, including changes to the traffic system, parking arrangements and bus links, and to encourage more walking and cycling?”

Reply

“Car parking and traffic levels have returned strongly with car parking revenue at pre-pandemic levels – but are still different in nature to patterns pre-2020. The County has not had all its staff return to work and parking associated with railway commuting is not at pre-pandemic levels. at car parks near the railway station, for example. Our published air quality data at ukairquality.net for St George’s Street suggests NOx levels remain below 2019 – but we do not yet have the most recent trends from our extensive network of diffusion tubes available to give a wider geographical view.

The Winchester Movement Strategy remains the focus to improve levels of cycling, walking and public transport – and our primary route to improve the air quality problems caused by congestion and traffic. This includes working with the County Council on a bus improvement plan, enhancement of cycling and walking facilities and better freight management and enhanced park and ride services.

Consultation will take place during the autumn on a suggested programme of priorities for investment, that build on the proposals set out in this report. The plans include:

- New park and ride provision on the Andover Road corridor and extension of South Winchester P&R;
- High quality pedestrian and cycle routes including on Stockbridge Road, Worthy Road and between the railway station, city centre and new Leisure Centre at Bar End;

- Working with the Business Improvement District (BID) and the logistics sector to pilot initiatives to manage freight deliveries to reduce congestion and delays in the city centre;
- Enabling two-way traffic on Friarsgate and Union Street to reduce unnecessary traffic circulation and enable public realm enhancements on Jewry Street and The Broadway;
- Working with bus operators to persuade bus and Park and Ride users to return to using these services and, as demand recovers, to increase park and ride bus frequency and improve the quality and reliability of bus routes to exceed what was provided before the Covid-19 pandemic.

We are also looking to further improve facilities in the Square by extending pedestrianisation into weekday evenings.

In addition the Council's Parking and Access Strategy has maintained the price differential between the central car parks and those less central to encourage parking outside of the air quality management zone, and have maintained free parking on Sundays in those car parks out of the air quality management zone.

We continue to look for further measures to cut improve air quality – including the use of RingGo or other similar technologies – to introduce higher price differentials for more polluting vehicles.

One unknown factor which we need to address is the impact of the County Council's proposal to serve notice on all districts' Traffic Management and Civil Parking Enforcement Agency agreements. This is due to be decided tomorrow, but the current plans only refer to income and make no reference to tackling pollution, congestion or air quality – or to active travel, walking and cycling – or to supporting agreed plans (including those where the County are co-signatories) such as the City of Winchester Movement Strategy and the Air Quality Action Plan. We are actively working to clarify this.”



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Warwick

To: The Cabinet Member for Built Environment (Gordon-Smith)

“When will details of SHELAA sites allocated for development along with the additional housing numbers for the refreshed local plan be announced?”

Reply

“A presentation on the 2021 SHELAA is going to a Local Plans Advisory Group meeting on the 27th September and then onto Cabinet on the 20th October. The SHELAA is a register of the sites that the Council has been advised by developers and landowners that could be potentially available for development.

Using the Government’s current standard method calculation, the city council needs to plan for 665 dwellings per annum but in order to provide some flexibility it is being proposed that we plan for 700 dpa in the draft Local Plan. The timetable for the consultation on the draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) is planned for Sept/Oct 2022.”



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Becker

To: The Cabinet Member for Built Environment (Cllr Gordon-Smith)

“One of the significant assets in Winchester is its range of heritage features. Can the Cabinet Member please provide an update about how these assets are being cared for, and steps being taken for their future?”

Reply

“Winchester is blessed with many heritage assets which we care for, often following prescriptive maintenance requirements. Our team is currently refreshing our capital works programme in the light of a recent conservation study and the Town Forum has recently set up a Heritage Group to increase focus on conservation matters across the city looking at buildings and structures in both council and private ownership.

Some of the council’s assets are leased to external parties with varying obligations for the tenants to keep in good repair the buildings they occupy. We undertake periodic inspections to ensure obligations are being adhered to, and where necessary, will take action if problems are identified.

The responsibility of other heritage assets rests with private owners. Where it becomes apparent that a building is in a poor condition, due to neglect, we will work with the owner to negotiate remedial works as far as possible. Ultimately, where efforts to work with an owner does not address the problem, formal action will be considered.

More broadly, the Winchester Future 50 project, which was part funded by the Town Forum and Historic England, was a well-received pilot project focusing on part of the city centre. It sought to trial ways of updating the current conservation area appraisal and management plan for the city by engaging with local groups of volunteers to gather information and assess the condition of the area. We are also working on a further project funded by MHCLG, supported by Historic England, which is investigating the production of local lists. These would relate to buildings which have heritage value to the area in which they are located but do not meet the national criteria for statutory protection.”



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QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Godfrey

To: The Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery (Cllr Tod)

“I am sure that many Councillors have been approached by residents and parish councils about the failure of the City Council to deliver the contracted grass cutting across the District this year. Seriously overgrown grassed areas in settlements from Alresford to Micheldever to South Wonston to Weeke have been raised with me in the last fortnight. Tall grass on the corners of Weeke Manor Road and of Waverley Drive are 2 examples of junctions made more dangerous as the grass there has not been cut for months. Will the Cabinet Member tell me why our contractor is not cutting the grass to the normal schedule and when will the service that residents are paying for return to normal?”

Reply

“As you may be aware the summer has been an extraordinary challenge due to the unusual weather contributing towards conditions which have caused an unprecedented and significant amount of growth, which shows no sign of stopping. Our contractors have worked tirelessly to maintain all our schedules to time over the period of the pandemic.

The table below shows the volumes of garden waste collected through the new garden waste service, which demonstrates how much additional growth there is compared to previous years.

	Tonnage 2020	Tonnage 2021	Growth In tonnage
June	639.94	968.38	51%
July	613.74	770.30	26%
Aug	447.12	697.22	56%

We have looked at the examples you cite, and checked with our contractors, and as an example, Waverly Drive in South Wonston has been cut in April, May, June and August, and is scheduled for its September cut soon.

Other cuts are proceeding as per the expected cutting schedule, except where the significant growth and wet weather conditions causes delays.

Clearly the schedule is weather dependent, and if the grass is too wet, as has been the case frequently over the summer, it cannot be cut, however if you become aware of locations, such as Waverly Drive where driving conditions cause an issues with safety please let our teams know so that they can prioritise these locations.

We were unable to find Weeke Manor Road on our list of addresses, but if you can clarify the location, we can review the cutting schedule there and confirm dates when a cut was made and when the next cut is due.”



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QUESTION 13

From: Councillor Gemmell

To: The Cabinet Member for Built Environment (Cllr Gordon-Smith)

“Could the Cabinet Member please tell me if there has been any recent liaising with Fareham council over the proposed Welbourne site.”

Reply

“I am advised by the officer team that there have been no recent discussions with Fareham council regarding the proposed Welbourne site.”



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QUESTION 14

From: Councillor Cook

To: The Cabinet Member for Built Environment (Gordon-Smith)

“Does the Relevant Cabinet Member consider the Planning Service provided to The South Downs National Park Authority primarily as a benefit to the residents that are in the National Park or is it a Profit Centre for the Winchester City Council?”

Reply

“Like many other local authorities set within the national park, we provide a development management and enforcement service set out in a contractual arrangement. At Cabinet on 15th September the council agreed to continue to provide this service for at least another two years, from October 2022, and details about the proposed future financial arrangements are set out in the report.

It is important to me that decision making is retained at the most local level for the benefit of those residents who live in the SDNP area which is 40% of our district.”



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QUESTION 15

From: Councillor Cunningham

To: The Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Quality (Cllr Cutler)

“The latest and most recent loss of 3 more senior officers from the Planning Department is bound to have a serious adverse effect on the work of the department and lead to a backlog in the system.

Could the Cabinet Member please advise how many officers have now resigned from the Planning Department in the past 4 months, including Enforcement, and have all leavers had an exit interview?”

Reply

“Staffing in our Development Management team has remained stable for some time with only limited turnover of staff, but in the last four months, four of our team have resigned along with one colleague from Strategic Planning. Our council has a positive reputation in the profession for bringing on young talent, and the complex nature of planning in our district is a draw for many at the start of their career. However, with this experience, it is not unusual for officers to move on – and there can be a range of reasons for this, but in many cases it is to progress their careers at a senior level in another council or the private sector.

There have been no resignations in the Enforcement team. Members will not doubt recall I responded to a question at Council on 7th July 2021 (question 13), where I explained that the Enforcement team would be fully staffed at the end of that month, following a period of recruitment, which I am delighted to confirm is now the case.

<https://democracy.winchester.gov.uk/documents/s16086/210707%20-%20CLLR%20QA.pdf>). We are arranging sessions for members and parish councils to introduce the new team members and to explain how we will delivering this important part of the planning service moving forwards.

However, the departure of experienced staff is a loss to council and, in the short term, can unavoidably impact upon the service. This is not unique to the planning or indeed the council. However, this is for a relatively short period of

time, and does provide an opportunity for internal career progression for existing staff with the right experience. We have a strong record in this respect, which is good for our planning staff, and the service overall. There is also opportunity to recruit externally, and bring in new people, and we can draw upon their experience to help us improve the planning service.

I can advise that exit questionnaires are sent to all staff leaving the council and they are also offered the opportunity of an interview. We will take on board any feedback given and, again, this can help us develop the service we provide.

I remain fully committed to ensuring we have an appropriately resourced planning team. A recruitment strategy has already been agreed for all these posts, as well as bringing in temporary resources, with the aim of continuing to provide an efficient and effective service whilst the recruitment process is carried out.”



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QUESTION 16

From: Councillor McLean

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

“Could The Leader let us know how many refugees from Afghanistan WCC has housed following her letter to the Prime Minister?”

Reply

“As answered previously, see question 2.”



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QUESTION 17

From: Councillor Scott

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

“Can the Cabinet Member explain why The WCC Valley development of 77 units has not had it’s official opening yet?”

Reply

“The Valley development was substantially completed and handed over from the contractor in June / July 2021. The official opening was originally planned for August 2021 however landscape works had not been completed and two tenants had reported defect issues which needed further investigation and rectification to ensure it was not a site wide issue.

It is planned to link the official opening of the scheme with a celebration of 100 years of Council housing in Winchester (the first housing being built in Cromwell Road in 1921 and opened by the then Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII).

With efforts focused on completing the largest scheme to be delivered through the Council’s New Homes programme to date, including signing up new tenants and resolving the issues referred to above, there has been a short delay in organising an event befitting the significant achievement of the completion of 77 affordable houses and flats for Winchester residents which is now planned for autumn 2021.”



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QUESTION 18

From: Councillor Cramoysan

To: The Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery (Cllr Tod)

“If a community wanted a TetraPak collection point, what are the requirements to get on the list, and what would the organisation who collects need to see from the existing collection points, in order to increase the density of collection points?”

Reply

Members or communities should contact the lead for environmental services (Campbell Williams cawilliams@winchester.gov.uk)

The main considerations are

- There to be safe access and space for a bank to be installed and serviced;
- For it to be near a center of population
- For the community to want it to be there
- For the landowner of any space to agree that it can be accommodated there

For it to be alongside other recycling facilities to reduce contamination and increase ease of use.”



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QUESTION 19

From: Councillor Power

To: The Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery (Cllr Tod)

“What is the total of funds now distributed to businesses in Winchester District, and more particularly the value of applications for the latest Transformation, Adaptation and Diversification Grant - Round 2?”

Reply

“The total value of business support grants now distributed to businesses across the Winchester District is £50.3m.

A second round of the Transformation, Adaptation and Diversification (TAD) grant opened on Monday 16 August and closed on Monday 13 September 2021. This grants forms part of the discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant fund. It has attracted 35 applications in total. The total value of grant that has been applied for is £412,668. The applications are currently being reviewed for eligibility and to determine the level of grant offer.”