



**Winchester**  
City Council

**COUNCIL MEETING – 12 January 2022**

**Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)**

**QUESTION 1**

From: Councillor Cunningham

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

“In 18<sup>th</sup> June’s Corporate Communications Cllr Thompson stated, “We are at a critical phase of our Local Plan and COVID-19 has helped shape this. We know residents want to enjoy good quality open spaces, so this is going to be an important part of our new look Local Plan.

Recent speeches from PM Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, Minister of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, have referenced Brownfield as a priority for building and development of much needed new homes. The Prime Minister had said there was no reason that the countryside should be lost to new, unaffordable homes, saying ‘you can see how much room there is to build the homes that young families need... beautiful homes, on brownfield sites in places where homes make sense.’

Would the Cabinet Member therefore agree with me, the Parish Council, HIWWT, CPRE, Sparsholt College, Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, English Heritage, Historic England, our MP, local Ward Councillors and the entire community, (discussions ongoing with Winchester University, Winchester College and Sparsholt Primary) that housing development at Sir John Moore Barracks must be limited to the legitimate central brownfield site inside the security fence. That full protection is afforded to open spaces of the historic unspoilt and biodiverse countryside of the Northern Fields and to create a Local Nature Reserve for the long-term health benefits & well-being of all Winchester residents and especially those on the doorstep of the ever-expanding northern special areas such as Kings Barton, The Worthys, Littleton, Harestock, Weeke and Tegdown.”

**Reply**

“We cannot say at this stage which sites will be included in the council’s draft (Regulation 18) Local Plan, which is due for public consultation later this year, or to prejudge the possible merits and outcome of future planning applications

which may be submitted on this or other sites which could be included in our new Plan.

The strategy for development in our Plan will generally favour a brownfield land first approach in line with national policy. However, owing to the quantum of housing development we will be required to plan for, which is set by the Government's standardised housing methodology, the Plan will unavoidably need to identify greenfield land to accommodate the expected level of growth.

Sir John Moore Barracks site has been identified by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) as surplus to military requirements and they are therefore already bringing forward plans for its re-use and redevelopment. It will therefore be appropriate to consider this land in the context of the new Plan and officers have entered into pre-application discussions with DIO and its planning consultants to discuss the future use of the site.

We would expect any plans for redevelopment of this site to involve making the best use of the land available. Clearly identifying the extent of previously developed land is an important part of this process but is not the only consideration.

In order to inform the master planning process ahead of the submission of a planning application, and prior to the publication of the draft plan for consultation, the DIO has commissioned a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for the whole of the site. One of the key reasons for undertaking this work is that it will be used to help inform the future re-development of the site. This work has not yet been completed so we would not wish to pre-empt the outcome and what it is going to tell us.

We understand that the DIO are now currently considering a range of issues such as the amount and distribution of development across the site, mix of housing and other uses, the potential re-use of buildings, and how the site and areas of open space will be used and accessed by new residents and neighbouring communities. This will involve undertaking a further round of public consultation on a range of different options for the redevelopment of the site following on from the feedback that they have already received.

We would, therefore, encourage anyone with an interest in the site to participate in this consultation and provide their comments to the DIO as the plans for redevelopment of the site are still evolving and have not yet been finalised as part of the master planning process.

As I said at the outset it would not be appropriate for me to start setting out requirements at this point as to how this site should be developed in future in relation to matters such as the location of development or the provision of green areas and open spaces. These are matters we will need to carefully consider when preparing a draft plan which includes an allocation at Sir John Moore Barracks, and in relation to the assessment of any future planning applications.”



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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)**

**QUESTION 2**

From: Councillor Rutter

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

“What are the latest official recycling rates and how do they compare to other Hampshire authorities?”

**Reply**

“The national waste and recycling figures came out on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2021, and as you can see from the results below, the Winchester City Council recycling rate has gone up by 2.4% to 40.5% (the highest growth in Hampshire, and our highest ever level), and we are now the second best performing waste collection authority across Hampshire, Southampton and Portsmouth.

Winchester City Council has also moved to be the best performing authority across Hampshire, Southampton and Portsmouth for residual waste production (black bag waste), moving ahead of Eastleigh to the top position in Hampshire for the first time in the most important statistic.

The highest annual tonnage of green waste was collected at 6,600 tonnes, reflecting a period when we moved across to the charged for service. All green waste is composted into ProGrow, a soil enhancer. Glass, whilst not detailed in the national statistics, from our data, had a full year of the new collection for the first time, collecting 4,100 tonnes - 1,500 tonnes more glass than in 19/20.

This is nationally verified data, comparable with all other authorities in England. It shows a very positive direction of travel.

The main reasons for these improvements are the first whole year with glass collection, the introduction of an improved and more effective garden waste collection service, the continuation of all our services during COVID when other local authorities paused or stopped some of their services stopped, and the introduction of WEEE and battery collections.

Authority	19/20		20/21		Change	
	Residual waste kg/hh/year	Recycling %	Residual waste kg/hh/year	Recycling %	Residual waste kg/hh/yr	Recycling %
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	555.9	30.6%	573.3	30.4%	17.4	-0.2%
East Hampshire District Council	453.4	34.6%	497.2	36.2%	43.8	+1.6%
Eastleigh Borough Council	429.3	43.1%	487.6	40.2%	58.3	-2.9%
Fareham Borough Council	467.9	33.4%	488.8	35.6%	20.9	+2.2%
Gosport Borough Council	486.8	24.8%	527.7	26.6%	40.9	+1.8%
Hart District Council	471.7	41.8%	496.1	41.7%	24.4	-0.1%
Havant Borough Council	506.1	31.8%	552.3	33.0%	46.2	+1.2%
New Forest District Council	464.5	34.1%	504.7	34.1%	40.2	0.0%
Rushmoor Borough Council	547.0	29.6%	556.8	31.9%	9.8	+2.3%
Test Valley Borough Council	488.6	36.9%	523.3	37.6%	34.7	+0.7%
Winchester City Council	449.2	38.1%	475.2	40.5%	26.0	+2.4%
Rank	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	5th	1st

These figures in kg/hh/year (kilograms of residual waste per household per year) mean that Winchester produces over 6,000 tonnes of black bag waste less than a same sized population performing at the level of the worst performing authority in Hampshire.

Although these figures show Winchester making encouraging progress there is more to be done, and the government's awaited response to its consultations on waste and recycling in the Environment Bill, will allow us to plan for further improvement which will support our move towards carbon neutrality for the District."



**COUNCIL MEETING – 12 January 2022**

**Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)**

**QUESTION 3**

From: Councillor Cook

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

“Can the Cabinet Member please advise what action Winchester City Council is taking when it comes to the surveillance of known Fly Tipping Areas that blight our District on a regular occurrence and the cost that is incurred to clear? What Action is taking place to provide prevention and the penalties that any offender faces?”

**Reply**

“In common with many other local authorities Winchester has seen an increase in fly tipping during the COVID pandemic, as the amount of household waste increases, and restrictions on access, which still exist in Hampshire, were applied to household waste recycling centres.

The clearance of fly tipping is included in the IDV grounds maintenance and street cleansing contract, however due to the increased fly tipping volumes the city council has contracted IDV for additional collections and clearances at circa £6k per month.

Over the summer, signs were installed at some of the most frequently fly tipped locations indicating that surveillance cameras and a number of small wildlife cameras had been installed. The current camera surveillance locations are;

- Morestead Road
- Chidden
- Pigeon house lane
- A31 Laybys
- Widley Walk
- Old Mill Lane
- Crawley lay-bys
- Hambledon B2150 lay-by

There are a range of penalties that may be applied if sufficient evidence is sourced. This can be from the flytipped material itself or witnesses or both.

- *Written Warning* – this will be held on file at Winchester City Council.
- *Simple Caution* – these are logged on the Police National Computer and would be disclosed upon request.
- *Conditional Caution*- this can include a financial penalty based on the cost of clearance. These can be logged on the Police National Computer and would be disclosed upon request.
- *Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) - £400* – A FPN can be potentially issued to the individual who illegally deposited the waste.
- *Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) - £400- duty of care*. A FPN can be potentially issued to the individual who arranged for the waste to be cleared – usually the householder, where they have not taken reasonable steps to check that the person who removed their waste held waste carrier's licence.
- *Prosecution via the courts* – if found guilty, in addition to a criminal record, the individual may be liable for a fine along with costs and potentially a victim surcharge, or be handed down a custodial sentence.



## COUNCIL MEETING – 12 January 2022

### Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)

#### QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Ferguson

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

“Can the Cabinet Member for Economic Recovery please explain what additional support the City Council has or is giving to local businesses adversely affected by the introduction of additional Covid measures in December?”

#### Reply

“As highlighted at December’s Cabinet, as soon as it became clear how local businesses were being affected by the omicron COVID variant, the City Council grants team started work on a revised grant programme to support such businesses. Shortly afterwards, on December 21, the Government announced two extra grant programmes for the council to administer.

We are awaiting the Grant Offer letters from government but are already putting in plans in order to make the grants available to businesses as soon as possible. The new grant programmes are: -

- Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant
  - Grants for business rate payers ranging from £2,700 to £6,000, dependent upon level of business rates payable
  - The deadline for applications is 28 February 2022
  - All funds need to be administered by 31 March 2022
- Additional Restrictions Grant (discretionary) top up
  - A discretionary grant to support businesses from all sectors that may have been severely impacted by restrictions, or by the Omicron variant, including those outside the business rates system
  - The additional grant fund for the Winchester District is estimated to be £400,000
  - All funds need to be administered by 31 March 2022

The Discretionary Grants Panel met on Friday 8 January 2022 and agreed the following:-

- Combine the third top up (c£400,000) with the remaining £1,003,275 from Additional Grants Fund (This 25% of the initial grant allocation has already been developed as a Winter Support Payment but held back in preparation to support businesses in the event that restrictions were re-introduced)
- Subject to confirmation of the top up from government, a two week application window for all eligible businesses will open week commencing 10 January and payment will be made from end of February onwards
- All funds will be administered by 31 March 2022

In addition to the direct grant giving programmes outlined above, the Economy & Tourism teams have continued to support business across the district throughout the pandemic via the High Street Recovery plan and specifically in terms of the re-introduction of restrictions including:-

- keeping businesses updated with the latest guidance and advice via our regular e-communications and updates to the business pages on the city council website
- initiatives such as the introduction of the e-commerce platform delivered by ShopAppy to our city and market towns have provided independent businesses a quick and easy route to trade on-line whilst continuing to promote their high street presence
- proportionate levels of consumer marketing promoting what is on offer across the district via social platforms has continued. Specifically in December, to support businesses the council deployed:
  - dedicated Christmas parking electronic signage
  - festive wayfinding signage on the walking route from Barfield Park and Ride
  - associated resident focused social media
  - a Christmas in Winchester campaign incorporating “hands, face, space, fresh air” and “respect, protect, and enjoy” messaging including:
    - a dedicated website with content specifically promoting what’s on across the district
    - a sustainable travel festive campaign in partnership with Southwest Railways
    - 12 days of Christmas competition
    - 15 Christmas blogs
    - 3 festive consumer e-newsletter
    - Christmas in Winchester film
    - Shop Christmas Local promoting all market towns
    - 5 things to do this week
    - extensive social media promoting events and activities undertaken by local businesses and organisations across the district, including the gingerbread trail and city light

switch on delivered by the BID, Steam Illuminations on the Watercress line at Alresford, Marwell Zoo, Bombay Sapphire, Science Centre, Whiteley Shopping etc.

- A light up Winchester event is being planned to take place at the end of January, featuring key locations across the city providing an incentive to visit and spend locally in what is traditionally a quieter trading period

In addition, the Council has continued to support any businesses that wish to maintain or extend pavement seating, the extension to the pavement license programme by government has enabled a fast-track access to business wishing to benefit from this. Our Environmental Health teams have maintained regular liaison with businesses throughout the pandemic offering advice and guidance, particularly around the management of festivals and events and taxi drivers have been offered the opportunity to spread the payment of their annual license fee across the year.”



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**QUESTION 5**

From: Councillor Isaacs

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

“In November 2017 I spoke at cabinet as a member of the public and Chair of Alresford Chamber of Commerce. We presented the parking survey and outlined the needs and issues with parking within the town. As a result a Parking Strategy was requested. In May 2019 there was a change of leadership at the council and despite requesting the Alresford parking strategy ever since, it has never been provided. There have also been numerous request from the Town Council. When can the town after over 4years expect to see the parking strategy that was requested and is much needed?”

**Reply**

“After your presentation to the November 2017 cabinet, no action was taken or meeting called until the leadership of the council changed and an Alresford Parking & Access Strategy Scoping Meeting was held on February 18, 2020 – 26 days before the “stay at home order” was issued by central government on March 16 and the commencement of lockdown.

This highlighted a range of issues primarily relating to on-street enforcement on East Street, West Street and Broad Street – and options for a potential introduction of a controlled parking scheme as well as a new off-street car park in the Dean – although some opportunities for existing off-street car parks were also identified and also for improved bike parking.

It also outlined the necessary process of engagement ahead of any new Parking & Access Strategy being agreed.

Once lockdown started, the work on revised parking strategies were put on hold – because parking patterns changed so dramatically and because staff resources were needed to support the local economy and active transport measures across the district – including in Alresford.

Since then, despite the challenges of the pandemic, all decisions and proposals relating to off-street car parking – such as a revised pricing scheme to reflect the new Mid-Hampshire Railway lease – as well as new on-street bike parking and new EV charging in the off-street car parks – have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented.

This was confirmed at a follow-up meeting on January 15, 2021.

It has proved harder to make progress on resolving the on-street issues – due primarily to the uncertainty caused by the County Council’s proposal to take back the on-street parking agency.

Although I agreed a ‘post-COVID’ Traffic Regulation programme at my decision day in September 2021 which highlighted the Alresford Parking & Access Plan as a priority to be progressed between September 2021 and March 2023 – on around the same timing, Hampshire County Council announced that they were intending to take back responsibility for on-street parking across the county.

While their first attempt at this in September 2021 was cancelled at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour following opposition from many districts – including our own – and from opposition councillors at Hampshire County Council, almost immediately afterwards they informed us that they would be revisiting the decision – and have now set a date for this in March 2022.

All published papers so far have made it clear that Hampshire propose to run the service on a full cost recovery basis – which, since they have very little car park revenue to share the cost of enforcement – poses severe challenges to the kind of strategic options that the City Council and Town Council were keen to pursue in Alresford – such as continuing to offer free 1 hour or 90 minute parking on East Street, West Street and Broad Street – with new more efficient and effective models of enforcement.

While we do not yet know the details of the County Council’s plans, we have asked that they commit to a joint Parking & Access Strategy for Winchester, Alresford and our other market towns – where it’s essential that off-street and on-street parking policies are closely coordinated – and that both meet the need of local businesses and residents – as well as wider air quality and climate change objectives.

As soon as we have clarity on Hampshire’s plans – including their longer-term strategic priorities – and their proposals for any transition process and future integrated parking and access plans – we will report back on a revised timetable for an integrated Parking & Access Plan for Alresford and for our district’s other market towns.”



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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)**

**QUESTION 6**

From: Councillor Power

To: The Leader (Cllr Thompson)

“Given Government advice that we should prepare for a level of staff absence of 25% could The Leader advise what level of absence Winchester City Council experienced in 2021?”

**Reply**

“In 2021, the council experienced absence rates of 8.5%.

The average number of days of sickness per employee is currently 6.07 days. This is below the average sickness rate for the public sector of 8 days per employee in 2020 as reported by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Compared to the potential absence rates as reported nationally, this is an incredibly low level of absence. Our staff have proved themselves to be remarkable over the past year time and time again. They have worked tirelessly whilst facing their own personal challenges to continually deliver services as has been reported in these meetings on many occasions.

We have all been through such a tough and challenging 24 months. The LGA have confirmed Local Government has never been so challenged or so fatigued. This is something we must all be mindful of while we seek to recover from the pandemic.”



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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)**

**QUESTION 7**

From: Councillor Lumby

To: The Leader (Cllr Thompson)

“Members of Council were recently required to sign non- disclosure agreements (so called NDAs) in order to receive exempt sections of the CWR report. The first drafts of the NDAs sent out contained indemnity provisions. The requirement for an NDA was subsequently withdrawn.

Please provide a breakdown showing how many members signed an NDA with those indemnity provisions, how many members signed a modified form of NDA and how many received the exempt report without an NDA (prior to the requirement for an NDA being withdrawn), distinguishing in each case between members of the Cabinet and other members.”

**Reply**

“12 members signed an NDA with those indemnity provisions (all non-cabinet members), 2 members signed a modified form of NDA (both non-cabinet members) and 7 members received the exempt report without an NDA (all cabinet members).”



**Winchester**  
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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)**

**QUESTION 8**

From: Councillor Radcliffe

To: The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency (Cllr Williams)

“As councillors are aware, Winchester has an acute air quality problem, especially in the city centre. The current Administration is to be applauded for taking steps to tackle this issue, including improved monitoring, stricter planning controls and measures to encourage more use of car parks on the edge of the city centre. Even so, improvements in air quality recorded to date have, arguably, been modest and, from a public health perspective, insufficient. Last year, the World Health Organisation revised its advice on safe levels of certain pollutants. According to these new, global standards, levels of nitrogen dioxide and fine particle pollution in central Winchester are, on average, between two and three times the level deemed safe — on some days in the past few months have been up to ten times the safe level.

Is the Council looking at strengthening our air quality standards, taking into account the latest advice from the W.H.O., and, if so, when can we expect an announcement on this?”

**Reply**

“Councillor Radcliffe will probably be aware that Winchester’s City Centre has been a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) since 2003, meaning that it must have in place an Air Quality Management Plan with measures designed to improve air quality.

During the past 18 years, Winchester’s air quality has been steadily improving such that it is expected that during 2022, we will be in a position to make an application to central government (DEFRA) which would enable a significant reduction to be made to the size of the AQMA, with only a linear section along Romsey Road and the upper High Street likely exceeding current statutory limits.

I acknowledge the 2021 new revised World Health Organisation (WHO) objectives, seek to achieve significantly more stringent particulate and

nitrogen dioxide levels, than the mandatory standards currently set down in both UK and EU law. These revised WHO standards were brought before the government during its final deliberations of the Environment Bill, as enacted in November of last year, but were not then adopted into UK law.

It is also worth noting that the WHO does recognise the significant challenges of meeting its new standards in many parts of the world, so has allowed for a staged approach by setting interim targets, before meeting their final annual mean objectives.

The new Environment Act 2021 doesn't seek to set new standards for nitrogen dioxide meaning that the current UK annual mean statutory standard of 40  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  will remain in place at least for the foreseeable future. On  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$  finer particulates, the Act requires that government set new standards through supplementary regulation by the autumn of 2022, so we await these with interest.

Notwithstanding the current national picture, Cabinet remains undeterred in its objective of improving air quality and public health benefits for its citizens and have tasked officers with investigating the feasibility of the Council adopting its own more stringent local air quality standards which go beyond current national requirements.

To this end we have started the process to appoint a consultant to validate the current air quality results but also what particulate and nitrogen dioxide standards could be realistically achieved, what measures need to be practically adopted to achieve such standards and over what time frame.

The contract for this piece of work should be awarded by the end of January and the draft report is expected by the end of April 2022.

We will then be in a position to undertake an informed review of air quality and to develop a future strategy aimed at delivering further improvements taking into account both national requirements and the WHO guidance.

'It is worth noting that there is additional information regarding these matters that can be found in the Air Quality Briefing Update (HEP019), to be presented at the Health and Environment Policy Committee on January 19<sup>th</sup>'



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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)**

**QUESTION 9**

From: Councillor Pearson

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

“With reference to papers CAB3328 (Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy) para 19, and HEP020 (Future of Waste and Recycling) dated 7th/8th December withdrawn but both now in the public realm.

“We notice that both papers refer to likely changes to the Project Integra (Waste Disposal) Partnership, and the 'likely direction of travel' of Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) that would be needed because of the Environment Act 2021.

We also note in para 19 of CAB3328, and para 2.8 of HEP020 that there is an expectation that the new collection regimes of the WCAs and the WDA infrastructure be "fully funded by the government through the 'new burdens approach' under the Extended Producer Responsibility regulations".

Would the Cabinet Member suggest what new Infrastructure in addition to the MRF in central Eastleigh, along with the equipment likely to be needed by the WCAs (especially Winchester reference para 2.8 of HEP020) and the likely financial burden to Central Government, and the local tax payers?”

**Reply**

“Cllr Pearson is not quite correct that the papers were withdrawn, the HEP committee was deferred and therefore the paper was not considered at Cabinet in December. The HEP meets at the end of this month and the paper sets out the potential approaches for the new systems and infrastructure that the government is introducing under the Environment Bill.

As fully set out in the reports the latest guidance from government is that the food waste systems that need to be introduced will be fully funded by government through their 'new burdens' approach, and under the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations there would be additional funding to local authorities from producers of packaging to cover the costs of delivering the collection and processing of packaging materials.

None of the final funding details have been published, and we await with interest the response of the government to the second consultations which concluded over 6 months ago, which will set out what we need to do and what funding is available.

The potential collection system to operate across Hampshire would mean that the following changes to collection in Winchester would occur.

- a) The introduction of a weekly food waste collection to all properties in Winchester via a small food waste bin to be collected from kerbside, or larger bins in communal properties
- b) Stopping the 4 weekly collection of glass, and adding glass to the fortnightly collection of recycling
- c) Introduction of a container specifically for paper and card to be collected on a fortnightly basis
- d) Retention of a fortnightly residual waste collection, the charged for garden waste service, and the WEEE and battery collections
- e) The introduction of a wider range of recycling (pots, tubs and trays) into the recycling bin, along with the glass being collected in bin with recycling

As a result of these potential changes, it is likely that there would need to be infrastructure for the collection and disposal of food waste, including kitchen caddies, bags, small food waste bins, compostable food waste bin liners, lorries and transfer disposal points, as well as an additional container for paper and card, to replace the black glass box.

The cost to national government and local tax payers is obviously dependent upon the system that the government chooses to implement and where the cost for the implementation fall.

However, the government has outlined the expected costs and benefits to the three main policy drivers:

- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR),
- a new deposit return scheme for drinks containers (DRS) and
- consistent collections,

which are set out in the following table taken from the documents produced by the government, along with the expected carbon savings from these three policies.

Table 1 – summary of the costs, benefits and NPVs associated with each reform<sup>3</sup>

EPR (2023-2032)			All-in DRS (2022-2032)			Consistent collections (2023 – 2035)			Total
Costs	Benefits	NPV	Costs	Benefits	NPV	Costs	Benefits	NPV	NPV
£16,942 m	£17,216 m	£275m	£6,829m	£12,920m	£6,091m	£6,843m	£9,610m	£2,766m	<b>£9,132m</b>

Table 2 - Total carbon savings over the entire appraisal period, MtCo2e<sup>4</sup>

EPR (2023-2032), (MtCo2e)	All-In DRS (2022-2032), (MtCo2e)	Consistent collections (2023-2035), (MtCo2e)	Total
4.38	3.41	53.9	<b>61.69</b>

Source: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/consistency-in-household-and-business-recycling/>

The outcome of the consultation responses will significantly shift how waste and recycling is undertaken across England, and once published will allow all local authorities to begin planning how to implement them for the benefit of their communities.”



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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)**

**QUESTION 10**

From: Councillor Horrill

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

“Please can the Cabinet Member advise why WCC HRA properties continue to remain empty despite hundreds of our residents seeking a home on the Hampshire Home Choice register?

Is it political dogma preventing them from becoming available or sheer lack of focus on the affordable housing needs of the District?”

**Reply**

“Over the last six months the total number of applicants on the Housing Register has reduced by over 200.

There are currently 37 properties subject to void works out of a housing stock of 5174 properties as well as 7 properties that are currently held as “long term voids” which are either subject to major works or being held for potential development. The council’s rent loss due to voids for 2020/21 was 0.70% placing it in the top quartile for the sector and compared to a sector average of 1.71%.

The latest national benchmark report (prepared by Housemark for the year 2020/21) concluded “*The pandemic caused unprecedented disruption to lettings during 2020-21 and in-year void loss was on average 60% higher than in previous years. Most landlords are still grappling with persistent voids backlogs*”.

The council continued to let its housing stock throughout the pandemic in order to meet local housing need when many other housing providers paused lettings. We held a number of homes empty for a considerable period for the Afghan resettlement scheme and these are now all occupied.

We are in addition tackling the challenge of changes in demand for various types of housing. We are working closely with Hampshire County Council to improve occupancy of older extra care accommodation and reviewing our lettings policy and letting standards to ensure we can more easily let two bedroom flats.”



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**Question under Council Procedure Rule 15(3)**

**QUESTION 11**

From: Councillor McLean

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

“Could the Cabinet Member please update the members on the number of outstanding enforcement cases in the district?”

**Reply**

“Open cases can be at a variety of stages in the formal process and these are set out in our Local Enforcement Plan. It is important to note that current cases will include sites where a planning application has been invited, has been submitted and is pending decision, or has been refused and is at appeal.

The number of live cases also includes situations where an enforcement notice has been served and appealed. The final decision is taken by a government appointed inspector in these circumstances, and this is currently taking much longer than was historically the case, which can extend the time needed for a breach to be resolved and the case closed.

As at 6th January 2022, the number of live enforcement cases is 342. Our enforcement team remains very busy given that in 2021 we received 461 new enforcement complaints compared to only 300 in 2020. However, last year we managed to close 411 cases compared to 185 in 2020 so we are making real progress as we continue to implement improvements to the way the service is delivered.”