



COUNCIL MEETING – 18 September 2024

Questions by Councillors under Council Procedure Rule 19.1

- Each questioner will have 2 minutes in which to ask their question.
- If a questioner who has submitted a question is unable to be present, the Mayor may ask the question on their behalf, or invite another Councillor to do so, or indicate that a written reply will be given and published on the website following the meeting. or decide, in the absence of the questioner, that the question will not be dealt with.
- Please note that following the response given by the Leader, a Cabinet Member or Committee Chair, the questioner may also ask a supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original reply.
- The **total** time allocated for Councillor questions will normally be limited to 40 minutes.
- Written answers will be published to questions submitted (but not supplementary questions) following the meeting.

	From Cllr:
1	Batho
2	Lee 1
3	Clear
4	White
5	Power
6	Godfrey
7	Wallace
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Winchester
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Question under Council Procedure Rule 19.1

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Batho

To: The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency (Cllr Kelsie Learney)

“How do the recent decisions to invest in food waste trucks and converting Park and Ride buses to run on HVO help Winchester City Council to achieve the plan to go Greener Faster?”

Reply

“The move to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil for both our existing waste vehicles and the Park and Ride buses has enabled a cut in the City Councils scope 3 carbon emissions of over 1000 tonnes per year.

It is estimated that recycling food waste will cut the districts carbon emissions by 1900 tonnes of CO₂e per year. Using HVO and ensuring a start of roll out next year rather than risk the extended lead time for electric vehicles will maximize the carbon saving achievable over the lifetime of the vehicles.

The move to HVO is a good example of how taking pragmatic decisions now is enabling significant reductions in the Council carbon footprint in the short term rather than waiting for the ideal solution which may take years and significant extra funding to achieve.”



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Lee (1)

To: The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency (Cllr Kelsie Learney)

“The Council recognizes the importance of expanding renewable energy alongside energy efficiency improvements. There is significant value in community and locally owned energy to reduce grid pressure and accelerate decarbonization to the District and Council.

With Government commitments to double onshore wind capacity by 2030 and the Council’s ambition for development of a Local Area Energy Plans, it is crucial to explore opportunities for community energy ownership and regulatory changes to maximize local benefits for wind and community energy opportunities.

Does the Council agree we need to urgently pursue options for a fast-track approach for the development of onshore wind and increased community-owned energy project opportunities in the district, including lobbying for regulatory changes, exploring more council investment opportunities, and consulting with potential community energy partners to ensure direct local benefits?”

Reply

“In line with the Council’s greener faster priority we are aiming to accelerate the pace of the development of renewables of all kinds in the district and recognize the positive impact community ownership and community benefit have for public support of schemes.

The Council continues to look for opportunities for renewable energy on our own land and buildings will work with community energy partners where this is appropriate. Our Regulation 19 local plan currently out for consultation has policies which are designed to support the expansion of renewable energy in the district while being technology neutral. However most of the potential for wind is in the area of the district covered by the South Downs National Park and we will look for opportunities to influence their planning policies.

Nationally we are going through a period of rapid policy change with a new National Policy Planning Framework on its way and a government which is making very positive noises about on-shore wind. The Council will be supporting changes to the

NPPF with regard to on-shore wind and asking for further guidance to be provided to give both councils and potential operators certainty about what should be permitted. With the changes that are coming down the line, I have suggested to the Chairman of the Health and Environment policy committee that looking at the opportunity changes to the policy environment give for expanding renewable energy in the district may be a piece of work that the committee might want to add to its work programme at an appropriate time.”



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Clear

To: The Cabinet Member for Kelsie Learney (Cllr Kelsie Learney)

“May I ask when are the new parking machines in Wickham Square to be installed as the current ones are continually out of order?”.

Reply

“Thank you Councillor Clear, I apologise for the length of time this has taken.

The current programme is for the installation of new machines to take place in Wickham and the park and ride car parks from the w/c 23rd Sept to be complete by the 1st of October.

The new machines will take card payments which should improve reliability going forward.”



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor White

To: The Cabinet Member for Business and Culture (Cllr Lucille Thompson)

“Access to arts and culture has many benefits for our rural villages, not only in improving well-being but also in providing a sense of community and preventing social isolation. The Council’s Draft Cultural Strategy acknowledges the value of our community buildings, such as village halls, school halls and faith buildings, as places where much of the cultural activity (e.g. classes, workshops and performances) takes place in rural areas.

In what practical ways will the Council’s revised Cultural strategy help our rural community buildings improve access to arts and culture, especially for young people?”

Reply

“Thank you for your question which I am grateful for, as it gives me the opportunity to speak about our role in the new Cultural Strategy.

The Strategy has been a major piece of work over the past 18 months and was approved by Cabinet earlier this year. Putting this into context, only 50% of councils across the country have a Cultural Strategy in place. I am very proud that our Liberal Democrat administration has shown our commitment to culture and the creative industries in this way.

We know that the cultural and creative sector provides a really significant contribution to our district’s economy. In addition, we know the transformative power of culture, providing a sense of belonging, encouraging connections, improving wellbeing and also can be used as a tool to help tackle difficult issues.

This strategy has brought together a very diverse group of organisations from those delivering arts and culture, to businesses, groups and individuals. They have really taken ownership of the development of the strategy and indeed have helped to co-write it.

So whilst it was the City Council who took the lead in gathering the information for the strategy, we recognise that we cannot and should not lead when there is such an amazing array of expertise in the sector already. This strategy has been a team effort – partnership working at its best – it’s owned by the sector as a whole and isn’t

just a City Council document. Of course we have a role going forward but it is one of an enabler – helping to support, and champion culture across our district and, importantly, it can be used by our partners within the sector as a lever to attract much needed investment.

One piece of work which we carried out during our investigations was to map our cultural offer including venues such as village halls and locations where events and festivals take place. I am very pleased to say that as a result of the Rural England Prosperity Fund, many of those halls across the district benefitted by improvements such as improved staging, the installation of ground source heat pumps and solar panels.

All these improvements make our village halls more attractive to organisations wishing to run events which in turn benefit the providers with increased bookings and lower energy costs.”



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Power

To: The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency (Cllr Kelsie Learney)

“Would the Cabinet Member kindly advise on the performance of the garden waste collection service from inception, in terms of bins paid for and tonnage collected?”

Reply

“The garden waste service started in February 2021, and just over 22,000 bins were sold in the first year. Since then the popularity of the service has grown and last year we had 23,338 bins sold, and we are on track to significantly improve upon that again, with 23,592 bins sold so far this year, our highest number ever. In addition we have also seen a switch to larger bins demonstrating how residents value the service.

This has seen a corresponding increase in the amount of garden waste collected, and whilst weather and how much the growing conditions vary has a significant impact on the tonnage, in the year 20-21, 6,297 tonnes of garden waste collected, whereas last year there was 7,324 tonnes collected – a 16% increase. In the first 4 months of this year we collected 3,274 tonnes of garden waste while in the same period last year, the previous most productive year, we collected 3,007 tonnes.

I am very pleased to say we are on track to collect more garden waste this year than ever before, from more subscribers.”



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Godfrey

To: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance (Cllr Neil Cutler)

“If the Government do remove Single Person Discount for Council Tax at the Autumn Statement on 30th October, how many Winchester pensioners would probably be affected?”.

Reply

“The City Council holds information on the number of single person households for Council Tax purposes but does not keep records of the age of those paying Council Tax. Currently there are 17,301 one person households, 29% of the 58,576 council tax dwellings in the district.

Census data at March 2021 shows 51,716 households in Winchester district, 14,331 (27.7%) of which were one person households. One person households over the age of 66 were 7,280 (14.1%).

Properties liable for council tax are not the same as ‘households’ for the purpose of the census, but the figures for one person households in both cases are broadly similar – 29.5% and 27.7%.

The census figures show that slightly more than half (50.9%) of single person occupants are aged over 66, so the best estimate would be that the number of Winchester pensioners receiving Single Person Council Tax discount is in the range 8000-9000.”



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Wallace

To: The Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan (Cllr Jackie Porter)

“Please can you advise on the Winchester City Council's plan for supporting the North Whiteley development going forward, in particular how long the Council plans to retain a North Whiteley Implementation Officer? As you know, North Whiteley recently passed the milestone of 1,500 properties occupied of 3,500 total.”

Reply

“As you rightly highlight, the North Whiteley development continues to move ahead at pace.

- The Governance Review has been completed – and the Whiteley Town Council boundaries redrawn so that the entire Whiteley community is included.
- There are only 2 phases of housing applications left which we envisage being submitted this year or early next.
- In line with the original planning agreement, the focus now is shifting towards support the continued development of the community rather than the details of planning and construction.

This means that there will be changes – as originally agreed in the planning decision – in how the development is supported.

- In addition to its planned role running the North Whiteley Forum, which will continue to have active City and County Council member involvement, Whiteley Town Council will take the lead on community development – accessing the significant S106 sum for community services to fund a community worker and a part share in an Accredited Safety Officer shared with Swanmore – supported by Steve Lincoln's team at Winchester City Council. This is new and vital work.
- As far as planning is concerned, the two remaining planning applications and will be dealt with by the Planning Team Leaders who have historically dealt with North Whiteley and will continue to lead on planning issues.
- And because, as agreed at the time of the original planning decision, the 5-year period of S106 funding the Implementation Officer comes to an end, funding for this role will come to an end in December.

Our thanks go to the Implementation officer. I know how valued her work has been by local members and the Town Council. She also played a vital role in the Governance review – and helped take us to the stage where we can move to the next stage of community support. I wish her well for the future.”



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Horrill

To: The Cabinet Member for Housing (Cllr Chris Westwood)

“Does the council have a policy to enforce the retrofitting of council properties to improve their energy efficiency?”

Reply

“The council is absolutely committed to cutting carbon and cutting bills in our council homes, with a £45m investment on retrofit planned in the HRA, but we do not believe it is necessary to enforce retrofitting to achieve those goals. If a tenant does not want retrofit work to reduce the running costs of their home that is their decision. Our priority is to roll out the programme at pace - in voids - and where tenants welcome the programme.

We also continue to seek ways to improve the programme, working closely with residents to get their thoughts and, where possible, adapt the work programme to their needs - so that a greater number of tenants choose to get their home retrofitted over time - and the proportion choosing not to have their home retrofitted goes down. We have already provided retrofit upgrades to over 400 of our tenant’s homes, and this financial year we are focusing on some of our most poorly insulated homes to bring them up to EPC C standard as a minimum.”



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Tippett-Cooper

To: The Cabinet Member for Housing (Cllr Chris Westwood)

“This summer saw disruption caused by antisocial behaviour in The Hyde area of St Bartholomew’s ward and, following concerns being raised by residents in the area, a decision by A2Dominion to close West View House (around which the ASB issues were most acute). Council officers worked really hard to address ASB issues at the time alongside the police and I now understand that WCC Housing officers are working hard to plan for the withdrawal of A2D’s service.

I would be grateful if the Council could confirm whether progress has been made to explore options to support those affected in West View to appropriate accommodation.”

Reply

“The Council, A2 Dominion and Hampshire County Council are working collaboratively with all the remaining residents of Westview to support a positive move on from West View House before the closure in April 2025.

All the residents have an allocated housing options officer who will be working closely with the residents.

The council has moved resources around internally and have allocated a dedicated officer to assist in supporting the residents to become tenancy ready, so they are able to sustain independent living.”



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Bolton

To: The Cabinet Member for Community and Engagement (Cllr Kathleen Becker)

“Just weeks after the election, the new Labour Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, has announced a cut to the Winter Fuel Payment which will reduce it by between £100 and £300, money that would usually have helped pensioners with their heating bills during the winter.

Only those people on pension credit will receive the Winter Fuel Payment, meaning pensioners with an income of just £13,000 a year will lose out.

The new Labour Government has chosen to remove the Winter Fuel Payment from around 27,000 pensioners in the Winchester district and this will have a devastating impact on vulnerable people this winter.

As a result of this, what will the administration do to support our most vulnerable pensioners through the winter months ahead?”

Reply

“I am pleased that you’ve asked this question – while it is inevitable that the Government needs to make tough decisions, this decision will make it a difficult winter for a lot of older people.

This Council is committed to assisting where it can to provide support to older residents who may suffer as a result of this decision.

The main area in which we offer support is through our ongoing funding of Citizens Advice, which offers support to residents across Winchester District, both from its physical hubs in Winchester and Wickham, and from its hubs held in other locations. Citizens Advice remains the highest funded organisation through the council’s community grant programme, in recognition of the vital support it offers to struggling households. It will continue to provide advice and support services and continues to adapt its services to meet client demand, with the cost-of-living programme helping to bring about an expansion of its outreach services. One of the key services it offers is budget advice, and making sure that residents are receiving all benefits that they are eligible for, and provide assistance with applications.

We also work closely with other organisations through the Council-chaired Social Inclusion Partnership to ensure that we are aware of issues arising in the community

and can help support projects to support and address issues. We expect that this is one issue we will be following closely.

In respect of support provided directly by the Council, for tenants in Sheltered Housing, officers already carry out benefit checks with all new tenants to ensure that they are receiving all the benefits they are eligible for, and will be double checking with tenants. For other tenants, throughout September and October officers will be contacting all tenants of pensionable age to promote the uptake of pension credit, where we find tenants who are not eligible but struggling with fuel bills, we'll be supporting them to access free fuel vouchers from the Housing Association Charitable Trust.

For other residents, the Council decided to retain the Council Tax Support Fund this year, despite the funding being closed by the previous government and residents are able to seek support for paying council tax where necessary. The Household Support Fund has been extended for a further six months, and we are waiting to hear from Hampshire County Council about eligibility and the types of support available under that scheme – WCC officers attend meetings relating to that fund. And of course through our ambitious retrofit programme we are bringing down the energy costs for tenants, and delivering low carbon homes through the new homes programme.”



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Brook

To: The Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan (Cllr Jackie Porter)

“Now the decision has been made to speed up the local plan process to prevent us being in a situation in June where we have no land supply and open ourselves up to unplanned building across the district, could the portfolio please advise of the cost to continuing and recommencing the data for the new housing numbers straight after, vs pausing and including those numbers in this iteration?”

Reply

“At this stage, it's hard to exactly compare the cost of a brand new Local Plan following NPPF publication, vs. the cost of an early review of our current draft plan – assuming it is agreed by the Inspector.

We should also remember that the draft NPPF is not yet agreed – and we don't know how the Government will react to the responses they receive in consultation.

If it is agreed, the scale of the proposed housing numbers in the draft NPPF means we would have to go back to first principles in any early review and re-consult and assess the Development Strategy; it will not be a straightforward or cheap exercise – although the exact scope of what would need to be redone vs. the current plan – and what could be carried over - isn't yet clear. And our focus is on driving ahead with our current plan rather than calculating the cost of hypothetical scenarios.

We can say now though that the biggest cost though will be those incurred by having a period without an up-to-date Local Plan. Dealing with speculative planning applications and appeals is not cheap. So, while there may not be a huge difference in Strategic Planning costs, there could be very major additional staffing, legal and consultant costs in Development Control ahead of a brand new plan being agreed.

More importantly, moving to planning by appeal would be bad for our district – bad for our cities, towns and villages – bad for our countryside.

The focus of our team now has to be driving ahead with the Regulation 19 process. That's our focus. And that's how we believe we will deliver the best outcome for our district.”



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QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Miller

To: The Cabinet Member for Place and Local Plan (Cllr Jackie Porter)

“At the meeting of the Council held on 28th August, the submission of the Local Plan regulation 19 was approved. It included the site at Tollgate Mill in Bishops Waltham as a possible site for a doctors’ surgery. Something that is very much needed and welcomed by many residents.

However, I understand that this must have been included without the consent of the landowner, as at present, it seems it has not been possible to establish who does own this land. Does inclusion of that site, which it seems is unlikely to be deliverable, mean that part of the plan is unsound?”

Reply

“Thank you for raising this issue.

As you highlight, the Tollgate Mill site is allocated for employment and residential development in the current adopted Local Plan. Through the production of the new emerging Plan that has just gone to Regulation 19 consultation, officers have been in touch with the owner’s agent to confirm the availability and deliverability of this site.

The proposed submission plan brings forward the allocation but broadens the mixture of uses to include a relocated surgery for the Bishop’s Waltham practice, which is understood to have outgrown its current location.

This broadening of uses may help to bring the site forward, and provides the Bishop’s Waltham practice with a potential option for a new location.

As you highlight, it also the council’s understanding that the ownership of the site has changed.

Officers are seeking contact with the new owner to confirm the availability of the site and their response to the current local plan consultation. As with all site allocations, it will be important to demonstrate deliverability to our Local Plan Inspector at the Examination next year.”



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QUESTION 13

From: Councillor Langford-Smith

To: The Cabinet Member for Business and Culture (Cllr Lucille Thompson)

“There is a lot of public disquiet about the cleanliness of Public Toilets and the provision of facilities for disabled people therein. There is a public expectation of good quality facilities and a refurbishment programme has been mentioned with some toilets in central Winchester already having been refurbished. Can the administration advise when we might expect the toilets in Denmead to be refurbished?”

Reply

“Thank you for your question.

I do agree that keeping our public toilets in a good state of repair and cleanliness helps improve our reputation for being a great place to visit whether you are a local or a visitor.

That’s why in 2023 and despite pressure on resources, this administration introduced additional cleaning and agreed a major toilet refurbishment programme. So far toilets refurbished are Market Lane, which incidentally have the highest useage of all our public toilets and Chesil Multi Storey Car Park. The programme has now moved onto improving toilets at the park and Ride car parks and in Bishops Waltham.

As agree last year, funding for work is subject to further discussions with town and Parish councils about the long-term plan for refurbishment and improved cleaning – and parishes that actively engage in this programme have priority. We look forward to Denmead Parish Council positively engaging in due course. Once this is happening, we will be able to put in place a timetable for improvement.”



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QUESTION 14

From: Councillor Lee (2)

To: The Cabinet Member for Community and Engagement (Cllr Kathleen Becker)

“Many residents are facing increasing cost-of-living pressures, particularly vulnerable households and those in financial hardship. The Government’s extension of the Household Support Fund (HSF) to March next year is a crucial support measure for financially stressed families and individuals. Of real concern, are the forthcoming energy price rises (13% in two phases) and changes to winter fuel payment eligibility, which now excludes many who are not in receipt of pension credit or other means-tested benefits.

An early update to our Council Webpage – ‘Money, Benefits and Bills’ with additional information might be useful for vulnerable residents’ peace of mind - [Money, benefits & bills - Winchester City Council](#)

How does the Council plan to target the extended Household Support Fund to effectively address specific needs, especially for households that may be unaware of their entitlement to Pension Credit, and are there any new or creative methods being considered to maximize support through collaboration with local agencies?”

Reply

“As you’ve noted, the government announced last week an extension to the Household Support Fund for the remaining 6 months of this year (to April 2025). They stated that “Vulnerable households will receive support for the cost of essentials this winter...”. However, as yet it is not known whether further food vouchers, or funding for the loss of winter fuel payments, etc, will be provided to WCC for distribution to our residents. The funding is provided to Hampshire County Council initially, and they decide ultimately how these sub-schemes will operate and who will benefit. We are party to a liaison group which the Council’s Benefits Manager attends.

In respect of the website, there is also information included on the Cost of Living ‘Energy’ page about the support available to residents and I have already asked officers to update these sections to address the loss of the Winter Fuel Payment for so many.”



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QUESTION 15

From: Councillor Lee (3)

To: The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency (Cllr Kelsie Learney)

“In England, too many healthy trees without a TPO (Tree Preservation Order) are frequently cut down having been labelled as a (i) nuisance and/or for (ii) safety reasons and/or to (ii) facilitate development projects.

The absence of comprehensive national or local data on the exact numbers and reasons for the removal of these viable trees in these three categories is a critical gap in our understanding of the resulting ecological/biodiversity and carbon sequestration losses and any mitigation counter measures. This gap in our District knowledge undermines efforts to address the climate and nature crises, including our ability to implement effective Nature-based Solutions (NbS).

Since Winchester declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and a Nature Emergency in 2023, how many trees, including those under TPOs, have been removed in our District within the three categories above? And, what measures can we implement to reduce tree loss and avoid undermining our climate and nature emergency actions, as well as the benefits of NbS?”

Reply

“The City Council directly controls the management of only a small percentage of trees in the district and has regulatory control in relation to tree protection orders, conservation areas, planning applications and planning enforcement. Since 2019 there have been 396 TPO trees the City Council has permitted for felling, 99 since 2023. Since 2021 when we started to use our current tree management system 781 trees have been felled or coppiced on council owned land. Those coppiced regrow and we plant an average of 250 trees on our own land per year. We do not aggregate data on trees that are removed as a consequence of development and not all those that are permitted to be felled are necessarily removed.

Felling licences for removal of a significant quantity of timber are issued by the forestry commission based on cubic metreage not number of trees.

While preservation of existing trees is a priority, this is not a black and white area of council work. For example, thinning of woodland may be undertaken by nature and wildlife organisations or landowners to create a better canopy structure which

improves biodiversity and helps the nature emergency, but this does come at a carbon cost.

The City Council has a robust tree strategy agreed in July 2022 and a clear priority of maintaining and managing the districts existing stock as opposed to new tree planting.

The tree strategy sets out how we will respond to our duties as regulator and we will continue to utilise the planning tools available to us including arboricultural and biodiversity net gain requirements, ensuring trees retention and planting is part of the development process and that we have the “right tree in the right place”. We will continue to take enforcement action when required and have undertaken several prosecutions in the last few years.”