



COUNCIL MEETING – 6 November 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	Horrill
2	Chamberlain
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Winchester
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Question under Council Procedure Rule 19.1

QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Horrill

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

“How many empty homes does the Council have in total in the District and how many by ward?”

Reply

Figures provide by the Revenues and Benefits Team show that in October this year there were 1043 homes registered as empty.

Of these 815 (78%) have been empty for less than one year, 112 (10.7%) one to two years, 90 (8.6%) two to five years, 20 (1.9%) five to ten years, 3 ten to twenty years and 3 over twenty years.

Thus the total empty for more than one year is 228.

There are 58,651 homes in the district, therefore the homes empty for less than one year represent 1.39% of the total and more than one year 0.39%.

The less than one year figure is always at its peak in early autumn as many students have yet to register – annually the figure always declines to reach a low point in April before rising again as students complete their courses and leave their accommodation.

In the Winchester Town the total empty is 433 (41.5% of the district total), of which 335 (77.3%) have been empty for less than a year and 98 more than one year). The detailed figures by parish rather than ward, which amounts to a substantial spreadsheet which I don't propose to read out but am happy to publish with this answer.

In total there are 610 empty homes across the parishes of which 480 (78.6%) have been empty for less than a year. This figure is distorted by the MDAs – for example Whiteley has 100 empty homes, 96 of which are for less than one year, Newlands has 21, 100% of which have been empty for less than one year.

Parish	Empty Period							Grand Total	% of Properties Empty	Total no. of Properties	
	1 year or less	% empty < 1 year	1 to 2 years	2 to 5 years	5 to 10 years	10 to 20 years	20 years plus				
Badger Farm	22	1.96		1	1			0.18	24	2.14	1,122
Beauworth		0.00			1			2.00	1	2.00	50
Bighton	3	2.04	1					0.68	4	2.72	147
Bishops Sutton	3	1.57						0.00	3	1.57	191
Bishops Waltham	44	1.23	6	3	1	1	1	0.34	56	1.57	3,567
Boarhunt	2	0.48			2			0.48	4	0.96	418
Bramdean & Hinton Ampner	3	1.34			2			0.89	5	2.23	224
Cheriton	6	2.12	1					0.35	7	2.47	283
Chilcomb		0.00						0.00		0.00	60
Colden Common	20	1.03	1	2				0.16	23	1.19	1,933
Compton and Shawford	6	0.82	1					0.14	7	0.96	730
Corhampton and Meonstoke	4	1.04						0.00	4	1.04	383
Crawley	5	2.65	1					0.53	6	3.17	189
Curdridge	8	1.35			1			0.17	9	1.52	591
Denmead	28	0.91	10	3				0.42	41	1.34	3,068
Droxford	2	0.63	1					0.31	3	0.94	319
Durley	3	0.66			1			0.22	4	0.88	454
Exton		0.00	2	1				2.70	3	2.70	111
Hambledon	5	1.05	2	1	1			0.84	9	1.88	478
Headbourne Worthy	10	1.19	2	2				0.48	14	1.67	840
Hursley	8	2.02	1					0.25	9	2.27	397
Itchen Stoke and Ovington	2	1.90	1					0.95	3	2.86	105
Itchen Valley	8	1.27	1	3				0.64	12	1.91	628
Kilmeston	1	0.90						0.00	1	0.90	111
Kings Worthy	19	0.90	2	4	2			0.38	27	1.28	2,107
Littleton and Harestock	8	0.54	2	2	1			0.33	13	0.87	1,494
Micheldever	11	1.60	1	1	4			0.87	17	2.47	689
New Alresford	32	1.18	7	2				0.33	41	1.52	2,705
Newlands	21	1.47						0.00	21	1.47	1,427
Northington	1	0.93		1				0.93	2	1.87	107
Old Alresford	5	2.07	1				1	0.83	7	2.89	242
Olivers Battery	1	0.15						0.00	1	0.15	688
Otterbourne	7	1.09			1			0.16	8	1.24	645
Owslebury	5	1.40	1	1		1		0.84	8	2.23	358
Shedfield	9	0.47			1			0.05	10	0.52	1,931
Soberton	5	0.71	5					0.71	10	1.43	701
South Wonston	6	0.49						0.00	6	0.49	1,227
Southwick and Widley	4	1.30		2				0.65	6	1.95	307
Sparsholt	3	0.99	1	2	1			1.32	7	2.32	302
Swanmore	9	0.63	1	2	1			0.28	13	0.92	1,419
Tichborne	1	0.90	1					0.90	2	1.80	111
Twyford	7	0.98	2	1				0.42	10	1.40	716
Upham		0.00						0.00	0	0.00	318
Warnford	2	1.79						0.00	2	1.79	112
West Meon	4	1.08	1					0.27	5	1.35	371
Whiteley	96	3.12	4					0.13	100	3.25	3,075
Wickham & Knowle	21	0.92	8	2				0.44	31	1.35	2,288
Winchester Town	335	1.84	43	49	4	1	1	0.54	433	2.38	18,225
Wonston	10	1.46	1					0.15	11	1.60	687
Total	815	1.39	112	90	20	3	3	0.39	1043	1.78	58,651



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Chamberlain

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

“In early October 2024 WCC and their waste partner Biffa implemented a significant revision to the waste and recycling collection routes.

Please can the Cabinet Member update us on how the implementation of the new routes across the district has gone from the Councils perspective, and whether there has been any significant feedback from our residents?”

Reply

The objectives of the new routes were to simplify the round structure, to balance the rounds so that a similar number of properties are collected each day, to reduce mileage and carbon emissions of the collection trucks, to allow for future housing growth, and allow the introduction of food waste collection to be carried out smoothly.

All of the properties across Winchester are now operating on the new schedules, and despite the inevitable few hiccups the change has gone remarkably smoothly with very few complaints from residents.

Issues have been thrown up by very new housing areas not on the system, houses which don't have letterboxes and a few homes with collections requiring local knowledge but these are being worked through and put us in a good position to deliver the new food waste service which all properties need to get by April 2026.

The revised format hard copy posted calendars have been well received, and the on-line collection day pages have been simplified, and now enable calendar downloads into a personal calendar.

We have also now started emailing bin day notifications to those that have signed up to the QR code on the posted calendar.

We are seeing the benefits of more efficient rounds with fewer miles travelled and less time taken to deliver the service, building in more resilience to collections.

I have thanked our contractor Biffa privately for their part in helping all this happen but would like to take this opportunity to thank them in public for a job very well done.



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Godfrey

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

“The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance kindly gave a reassuring answer to my question on support for the most vulnerable at the last meeting. Can he now tell the Council what specific measures are now to be implemented to protect affected residents from the spending changes announced in last week’s budget statement from the Chancellor of the Exchequer?”

Reply

I realise that Cllr Godfrey had to submit the question before the budget was announced and I’m sure that he recognised that in order to deal with the gaping hole in the public finances left by the previous Conservative government the Chancellor would have to increase taxes substantially thereby potentially significantly affecting some of our residents.

However, the approach taken by the Chancellor in raising the main proportion of tax via the increase in employers’ National Insurance contributions means that we are unlikely to see an immediate effect on our residents. Similarly the changes in Capital Gains tax and Inheritance Tax are unlikely to have an effect on our most vulnerable residents. So, to answer the question, we have no plans to implement specific measures as a result of the Budget, but will monitor the longer term effects and consequences of the budget to ensure that our most vulnerable residents can be supported.

We will of course continue with our plans to review the Council tax Reduction Scheme and Hardship Funds to reflect the changes in Universal Credit. Yesterday Cabinet Housing Committee approved an updated temporary accommodation plan and the MTFS paper published on Monday seeks approval for an increase in the budget for homelessness, and we have previously discussed in this meeting our work in response to the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Payment promoting Pension credits.



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Tippett-Cooper

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

“Despite some local authorities being forced to close public toilets, Winchester City Council last year announced a programme of works to refurbish a number of the District’s public toilets. How are these works progressing?”

Reply

Thank you for your question.

I am delighted to report that our program of refurbishment of our public toilets across the district is progressing well. Works completed so far include the toilets at Alresford, Chesil Multi Storey Car Park and the heavily used toilets in Market Lane. Work is now underway on the main park and ride toilets.

After Christmas we will start work on the toilets in Abbey Gardens when they will close to allow a major refurbishment to take place. They are expected to reopen in March 2025. We will also begin work on Bishops Waltham as well as engaging with other town and parish councils to see how best we can deliver toilet provision going forward.

It is worth pointing out that in 2023 despite pressure on resources, this administration put in place additional cleaning as well as a full refurbishment program. We certainly don’t underestimate the importance of keeping our public toilets clean and in a good state of repair. It is beneficial not only for our residents but also our visitor economy and contributes to enhancing our reputation across our district, as a great place to visit.



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Bolton

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

“When canvassing in Bishop’s Waltham recently one of the matters that came up was the bin stores in the Houchin Street/Basingwell car park.

The parish Council and Town team carried out surveys that showed that the commercial bins left on the roads were unsightly and spoilt the approaches to the High Street. I understand that the City Council agreed to install bin stores in both the Lower Lane car park and the Houchin Street car park. This project was also backed by the Chamber of Trade.

The Lower Lane store was built with wooden fencing that hid the bins as required. The Houchin Steet store was bult with low metal fencing that was not going to stop the bins being seen. As a result of this traders have not used it.

I also understand that HCC want the commercial bins removed from Houchin Street as they want to create a pedestrian area.

Can you please give a date when the correct fencing will be installed and if possible what steps will be taken by the Council to persuade traders that they must either keep the bins on their own property or use the bin stores?”

Reply

The objective of the provision of the bin stores was not to hide bins from view but to enable bins to be removed from the highway, creating a more attractive environment in the centre of Bishops Waltham and making the area safer for all highway users particularly the disabled.

Both bin stores are complete and are available for use. The Lower Lane car park is being well used, but use has not taken off on the Basingwell car park adjacent to Houchin Street in the same way, and commercial waste bins are still being permanently left on the highway.

Many of the businesses will need additional bins from April 2025 when the Environment Act requirement on the recycling of commercial waste and food waste from business comes in and the obstruction to the highway has the potential to get significantly worse.

Our service lead for engineering, transport and special maintenance recently spent the day in Bishops Waltham alongside local ward Councillor Jonathan Williams. They met the interested parties from the local community to explain the reasoning behind the location of bin store, and the need to clear the highway and this was well received.

The City Council cannot make the owners move their bins however anything stored on the highway constitutes an obstruction under the Highways Act which the County Council are able to enforce. Owners are also risking compensation claims in the event of an accident. Changes to the Basingwell bin store will be considered when traders use it.



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Lee

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

“Global temperatures are on course for a dangerous 3°C rise, with six out of nine planetary boundaries already breached, compromising our planet’s resilience and accelerating biodiversity loss. This highlights the urgent need for integrated adaptation and resilience strategies that also support climate mitigation. The focus on resilience and adaptation will be pivotal at this year's COP29 (Climate) and COP16 (Biodiversity) conferences.

Despite the UK’s National Adaptation Programme, the Government’s resilience plans are insufficient for a 2°C rise, let alone 4°C. Fortunately, local authorities can play a key role in preparing communities and ecosystems for climate impacts. This is underscored by the Local Government Association who emphasize the need for councils to coordinate local adaptation and resilience needs and opportunities.

Additionally, the Climate Change Committee’s ‘Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk’ identified 60 risks and opportunities relevant to councils, reinforcing the need for integrated strategies. <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/accelerating-adaptation-action-councils-preparing-climate-change>

Does the Council agree there is now a need for a Council 'Adaptation and Resilience Strategy', building on our Climate and Nature Emergency plans, to proactively manage climate risks and stay ahead of the climate risk curves?”

Reply

Given the international failure to tackle the climate crisis we will of necessity be incorporating adaptation and resilience into our new council plan currently in development: the Leader explicitly addressed this point during council plan consultation at the Scrutiny and both the Policy Committees. Our Regulation 19 proposed submission Local Plan already includes planning for adaptation as well as mitigation as necessary for new developments as recommended by the Local Government association.

The actions needed for effective adaptation however involve more than just this Council. A local strategy will still need to involve commitments from the County Council, National Park Authority, utility companies, Environment Agency and many others. A joined-up approach is needed, and central government guidance is needed to clarify roles and responsibilities.

While continuing to take actions as a Council ourselves where practicable, we will be considering how we can best lobby government for not only guidance but increased resource to fund adaptation and resilience measures



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Warwick

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

“Is there any update on the naming of the King George V Pavilion after former Highcliffe resident and world cup football hero, Terry Paine?”

Reply

The KGV Pavilion opened in the summer and is proving to be a great success. Since the project began and as referred to in your question, the pavilion had become to be known as the King George 5th Pavilion.

In my last answer to you on this question I said that we would be raising the issue with the KGV steering group, which includes the football and cricket clubs that regularly use the site, as well as representatives of the local community – I can confirm that we did raise it during our first meeting and while they were supportive of naming the beautiful function room after Mr Paine they preferred to continue to have the pavilion itself referred to as the KGV pavilion to avoid any confusion for players and visitors – so that is what we have done.

However, despite the best efforts of our officers we have no contact details for Mr Paine and to date it has not been possible to contact him, so it has not been possible to proceed with the suggestion – if you have contact details for him we would be happy to raise the suggestion with him.



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor White

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

“Waste is a climate issue; not only are there the emissions caused by the manufacturing of products that are then thrown away but also those released from incineration and landfill disposal of waste. Recent reports indicate that burning waste is now the UK’s dirtiest form of power, releasing the same amount of greenhouse gases per unit of energy as coal power.

Besides the work to increase recycling rates, what is the Council doing to encourage a ‘circular economy’ in terms of reducing consumption and supporting reuse and repair?”

Reply

To reduce the amount of waste going to incineration our number one priority is introducing food waste collection: no other initiative is likely to have anything close to the same impact in reducing waste. The introduction of the new service will be accompanied by a communications campaign not just encouraging recycling, but also reduction of food waste as well. Experience elsewhere has shown this service highlights to households the amount of food they are wasting and leads to them buying less.

In addition to the items collected in the green recycling bin we offer the recycling of batteries and small electricals at kerbside and provide clothes banks which in 2023/24 collected over 200 tonnes of clothes for reuse and recycling from around the district.

We have supported local initiatives such as repair cafes and welcome further grant applications for similar schemes.

The amount of residual waste is a key performance indicator for both this Council as the collection authority and Hampshire County Council as the disposal authority and as part of Project Integra we are working with authorities across Hampshire on campaigns to encourage waste reduction and reuse.



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Brook

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

“Administration has placed a lot of emphasis on the need for more social housing within the district and increasing the Winchester City Council housing stock.

With discussions at a recent Scrutiny meeting regarding the use of temporary housing, I wondered how many children we have currently housed in temporary accommodation?”

Reply

The council is committed to preventing and relieving homelessness, ensuring that everyone within the district receives housing advice and appropriate support if they are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In the last financial year, the council has experienced a 122% increase in approaches from households who were homeless or at risk of homelessness, thereby intensifying pressure on the availability of accommodation and staffing resource.

We are fortunate to be in a position where our use of Bed and Breakfast is low, and we make good use of our own housing stock to manage this demand.

Despite the rising demand, the council has maintained top quartile performance in preventing homelessness, with the use of emergency accommodation remaining within budget.

In recognition of this rising demand, at my Cabinet Committee Housing meeting yesterday, I agreed new measures not only to expand accommodation options but also to ensure adequate staffing and resources to effectively manage homeless households.

As of Monday 4th November, the Temporary Accommodation figures were as follows:

- 74 households were in Temporary accommodation, of which 35 were households with children. 21 of those households were in self-contained accommodation.
- In total, 76 children were in Temporary Accommodation, of which 52 were in self-contained accommodation.

The council does not have any children currently in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Langford-Smith

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

“The residents at Newlands have been waiting for a long time for appropriate facilities. Can the administration provide a firm date that the build of the Doctors Surgery will commence and detail what this administration has done to support the progress of this?”

Reply

Thank you for your question, Cllr Langford-Smith

This Council knows that for the wellbeing of our residents we expect and work towards local and accessible Primary care and GP services.

We regard it as a priority in our discussions around building communities, right across the district.

Healthcare provision *is* in the plan for West of Waterlooville and has been discussed at the West of Waterlooville Forum.

Every facility is linked to a trigger, and in this case, the trigger is 1500 homes. 1200 homes are completed, so the next reserved matter application includes the healthcare center, which will be subject to pre application discussions and with local engagement in the coming months.

My fellow Cabinet Member, Cllr Cutler, chairs the West of Waterlooville Forum. The developer is engaging with the expected Health Care provider and Cllr Cutler has been in active conversations with Grainger and the Chairman of Newlands Parish Council to progress this.



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Lee

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

“In my Winchester City Council CMV ward, 70% of which falls under the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA), we have two distinct yet complementary planning enforcement approaches. On October 29, 2024, there were 73 active enforcement cases in CMV, with 43% within the SDNP and 41% concentrated in a single parish, Soberton. Several cases have been unresolved for up to 8 years.

The high volume of unauthorized developments, often involving land use changes, leads to environmental damage, community stress, and increased burdens on our planning staff. If this high volume of cases is not addressed, we are putting both this Council and the SDNP at reputational risk.

Urgent solutions are needed, potentially including enhanced monitoring, prioritization, community engagement, ecologically sensitive enforcement, and possibly exploring ‘enforcement undertakings’ (similar to the Environment Agency model) as an alternative to prosecution.

Can the Council, perhaps in collaboration with the Local Government Association (LGA), lobby for increased powers and resources to help prevent or reduce these high number of enforcement cases? Additionally, can we prioritize the reduction of CMV enforcement cases, particularly in Soberton, as an urgent matter?”

Reply

Thank you for your question, Cllr Lee

National Legislation sets out the approach to enforcement action, and we have provided training to councilors, provided by our planning KC on the law surrounding this area of planning.

This includes case law, and WCC has influenced this.

We refer to the same esteemed counsel, Andrew Fraser-Urquhart KC for specific cases as necessary.

Many of these cases require action from the Environment Agency. Our officers work with Environment Agency officers and the County Council Enforcement team.

I urge Councilors to report all incidents where they think environmental crime has taken place to the EA’s hotline 0800 80 70 60, 24 hour service.

Like WCC and the SDNP, the EA has its own Enforcement Policy, prioritising on the scale of harm to the environment and to people, the duration, and number of occurrences.

It is encouraging to see the EA's 24/25 business plan specifically referring to finding their voice as a confident regulator, which responds to the concerns of communities affected by not only by poor water quality but also by poor waste management and waste crime.

At WCC, officers treat each ward fairly, providing up to date information regularly on new cases, existing cases, and any outcomes of enforcement actions, with named officers listed if you have a particular query. The officers have invited ward members to contact them with any new information they may have.

The team invites ward members to confirm which cases they believe are the most significant in their wards.

Enforcement action takes a long time, and often ends up at an appeal. Many breaches are minor and do not warrant enforcement action. Winchester City Council has to strike the right balance with the resources available.