



COUNCIL MEETING – 14 January 2026

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.

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QUESTION 1

From: Councillor Warwick

To: Councillor Porter (Cabinet Member for Place & Local Plan)

What assessment has been made of the deliverability of a mixed-use scheme at Bushfield Camp within the context of the current economic climate and the timeframe of the emerging local plan?

Reply

Thank you for your question.

All of the sites that were allocated for development in the Local Plan Reg 19 and put forward for Public Examination needed to demonstrate that they were deliverable.

The Inspector sought information on deliverability on all of the sites put forward in the Plan. She voiced no concerns about this site in her final report.

You can read her report ED38a on the examinations page of the 'Your place, Your plan' local plan section on the WCC website.



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QUESTION 2

From: Councillor Lee

To: Councillor Becker (Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities)

The withdrawal of the UK telecommunication landline (PSTN) and the shift to digital voice services have exposed significant weaknesses in emergency communications during prolonged power outages, particularly in rural settlements. Broadband-based VoIP remains dependent on powered networks and short-duration household back-up. Patchy or non-existent 4G/5G coverage limits alternative telecom access inc. to emergency SMS. In practice, all these services rely on powered networks, which are unlikely to be available during area-wide outages.

Satellite services (including LEO) and battery-powered radios offer partial alternatives, but the fundamental vulnerability remains - the loss of local power to all ground-based equipment during extended outages. There is of course an affordability issue for these alternatives.

Community resilience hubs could help alleviate some community anxiety, but only if equipped with suitable communications equipment, resilient local power back-up, and clear arrangements to support households—particularly vulnerable residents and those in telecoms “not-spot” areas. No access to blue light services or contacting family is the key anxiety.

While councils can support parish telecoms resilience planning, sustainable solutions may require some dedicated funding and technical expertise that most parishes do not have. Member briefings alone will not address the telecommunication resilience challenges.

Can the Council prioritize a practical way forward for parishes to establish emergency telecommunications resilience measures for extended power outages especially in high-risk telecoms ‘not-spot’ areas for residents?

Of course, statutory multi-agency partnership responses to major emergencies and civil contingencies would also of course benefit from solutions that can be delivered for the above.

¹ Telecommunications ‘not-spot’ areas = where mobile and/or broadband coverage is poor or absent

¹ [Pioneering place-sensitive nature recovery at the hyper-local scale: a multi-tier, multi-directional governance approach](#)

Reply

Thank you Cllr Lee – I know this is a longstanding concern of yours. This is not specifically within the responsibility of this Council - However, the council, working in partnership with colleagues from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum (LRF) offers support and guidance to parishes and communities enabling them to create their own community resilience plans that can be activated in the event of an emergency incident, including a power outage.

LRF has published guidance on the specific risk of loss of telecoms and on the loss of electricity, which is available on their website.

Communities might prepare for such an incident by noting:

- **Mobile Coverage & Emergency Calls:**
While coverage varies by operator, in an emergency your mobile phone will attempt to connect to *any available network*. Even if your phone shows “no service,” you may still be able to make a 999 call. If voice calls fail, residents can register for the **Emergency SMS service**, which works with very low signal strength.
- **Improving Connectivity:**
5G rollout and network upgrades are ongoing, improving coverage and signal strength. In low-signal areas, external antennas or boosters can help indoors. Satellite technologies, including low-earth orbit (LEO) systems, are evolving rapidly and may offer future solutions for hard-to-reach areas.
- **Battery Back-Up:**
The Public Switched Telephone Network charter sets out a voluntary agreement between the government and communication providers to protect vulnerable people when they are moved onto digital services. The charter requires providers to offer vulnerable customers with battery back-up units (BBUs) for routers, typically lasting at least one hour. In practice, some units have lasted 4–7 hours. Residents should speak to their provider about available options.
- **Community Support:**
Parish councils may wish to create **community hubs** for use during power outages, especially to support vulnerable residents. Funding for resilience projects was previously available through schemes such as SSE’s community grants.

A further practical solution might be to increase awareness and create a template/example for communities and households to prepare for such incidents as well as reaching out to telecom providers to understand the low or no mobile areas of coverage and their future plans.

To maintain telecoms during a power outage and in areas of low mobile coverage, alternatives such as Starlink installed at a community building with back-up power would provide a workable solution.

SSE funding for community resilience measures was made available to parishes during 2025.

The government has also published guidance for households [Prepare - Prepare](#) and I have asked officers to signpost to this on our Emergency Planning page of the website.



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QUESTION 3

From: Councillor Horrill

To: Councillor Reach (Cabinet Member for Good Homes)

As of December, there were more than 1600 residents on our Hampshire Home Choice register. Winchester is one of the most expensive places to live with an average house purchase price of £593,926 (source: Rightmove, 2024). Our tenants are supportive of building new council properties.

Can the portfolio holder therefore say why the Lib Dems have walked away completely from a commitment to build new Council homes from 2032?

Reply

I thank the member for her question. Winchester City Council has a proud record of delivering council homes. With over 5,100 properties stretching from Denmead to Micheldever, good homes are available in every corner of our district. And we're committed to adding ever more to our stock, having added 333 homes since 2020, with over 146 new homes at Kings Barton purchased shortly before Christmas, with the first residents already settling in. On 14th October 2025, Cabinet also approved the construction of five new homes at Woodman Close, in the member's ward. Taken together, these schemes mean we are well on the way to our target of adding 1,000 affordable homes to our stock by 2032, as envisaged by our recently adopted Housing Development Strategy for the period 2025-2032.

The member is right that we currently are not programmed to acquire or construct any further homes after 2032, but this is not to say a decision has been made to abandon our plans after this date. Indeed, as I have said repeatedly, I would like to see our ambitious programme continue and have asked Cllr Batho, the Chair of the Economy and Housing Committee to consider programming in a session to advise on the course that Committee would like the Council to take. I understand the Member has already spoken to Cllr Batho to impress upon him the importance of such a discussion.

Given the discussions earlier in this meeting of Council, it would be remiss of us not to recognise the challenges to medium-term planning posed by Local Government Reorganisation, with Government-stipulated rules requiring approval for even minor capital expenditure, coming into force later this year. However, I am concerned that this will not derail our plans, so I have asked the Council's Legal Director to seek clarification whether Government will permit us to ringfence decisions relating to our housing service, to allow us to proceed at the pace required.

So, in summary, the member's contention is incorrect – we have not walked away from new council homes after 2032, and I look forward to working with her and members from across the Council to help shape our plans to add ever more homes to our stock.



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QUESTION 4

From: Councillor Bennett

To: Councillor Porter (Cabinet Member for Place & Local Plan)

The Aquind Interconnector scheme has been in limbo since a judicial review overturned the previous government's refusal of planning permission.

The scheme would cause considerable disruption to the residents of Denmead Ward and the surrounding area.

What is the council's view on the scheme and what action can the council take to encourage a final decision to be taken as soon as possible?

Reply

Thank you for your question Cllr Bennett.

You are correct: WCC is frustrated the application is still undecided – leaving concerns that it could still be approved. So much has changed since the first application was submitted.

Following recent meetings with Portsmouth and Havant Councils, our Winchester City Council Leader, Cllr Martin Tod was a joint signatory to a letter to the Government from the three English authorities and our French counterparts, raising the main concerns and objections again and asking for a final resolution to the matter.

The work on the NSIP application for the Interconnector has been ongoing for several years, through several Secretaries of State and Governments and through that time, WCC has endeavoured to keep Denmead Parish Council up to date on the application.

The DCO (development consent order) would affect 3 authorities: Portsmouth, Havant and Winchester, but we have always been conscious that the impact of the massive building and much of the road disruption would be borne by our residents in the Denmead and surrounding area.

Although the impacts of the development outside our area are not strictly a matter for us as a planning authority, the effect on those of our residents who visit, work in or otherwise travel to Portsmouth and Waterlooville and would be affected by the works to construct the interconnector would be severe, which is why we decided to stand

with our neighboring authorities on our opposition to the wider scheme – not just its impacts in the Winchester District.

Latterly, the MoD expressed their concerns about the scheme, and on August 15th, 2025, the Planning Inspector website stated that the applicant's representative and the MoD would be addressing the MoD concerns about sensitive matters of defence and national security: effectively putting the process into a 'confidential session' between Aquind and the MoD. That situation exists today.

Please be reassured that Winchester City Council will continue to take a strong interest in this application.

WCC supports the principle of interconnectors, but this NSIP has been fraught with difficulties and as the MoD has lately decided, with security and infrastructure risks too.



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QUESTION 5

From: Councillor Cunningham

To: Councillor Porter (Cabinet Member for Place & Local Plan)

What submission is WCC making during the current public consultation on the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Local Plan Draft Spatial Strategy, particularly in relation to the proposal to allocate land for a new town of 4,250 new homes on Popham Airfield and its impact on Micheldever railway station, the settlement and infrastructure?

Reply

The draft response is written, ready to send.

We have challenged the choice of just two sites for major new development in the Basingstoke and Deane district and within that context, the impact of any development there on residents in our district. This is especially relevant not only for the Station, and for village facilities, but also for additional traffic which would be generated and resources/utilities.

WCC has made it clear that it would be for BDDC to mitigate that impact, not for WCC.

The response specifically raises the impact of additional traffic on Overton Road from the proposed site itself back into the roads in Winchester district, and the poor station facilities which would need to be upgraded at that development's expense.

WCC has expressed concern that the development proposed does not enjoy good access to Basingstoke nor to Overton, which puts additional pressure on car travel, and because the provision for active travel is poor.

Importantly, WCC is strongly urging BDDC to keep Winchester involved as their plan progresses

The response is ready to go, and I am confident that it reflects local concerns as well as those of our Strategic Planning team, but I am happy to meet with you to consider further thoughts, if you'd like to do so.



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QUESTION 6

From: Councillor Tippet-Cooper

To: Councillor Cramoysan (Cabinet Member for Recycling & Public Protection)

Under the Liberal Democrats, Winchester City Council's has earned recognition as one of the top-rated councils for climate action. Can the Cabinet Member update Council on the impact on the Council's overall recycling performance as a result of the implementation of food waste collection across the district?

Reply

Thank you, Cllr Tippet-Cooper, for highlighting that Climate Emergency UK's Climate Action Scorecard last July ranked Winchester City Council as the top-performing district council in the country.

The scorecard covers a wide range of activity, not just recycling, but I can comment on food waste collections.

The service is being rolled out in seven phases and, as of Christmas, four phases are complete. That means around 35,000 of our 58,000 households — about 60% — are now able to have their food waste recycled.

We won't have definitive recycling data until the service is fully rolled out and we have a full year of figures, which won't be until April 2027. What I'm sharing today are best estimates based on current evidence.

Once fully established, we expect to collect around 3,000 to 3,500 tonnes of food waste a year. Assuming similar participation across the rest of the district, that would reduce residual waste from about 23,000 tonnes to below 20,000 tonnes.

If overall waste levels remain broadly the same, that would increase the council's recycling rate from just over 40% to just over 50%. We're also seeing early signs of fewer recycling bins being rejected due to food waste contamination, which will help further.

In short, our best current estimate is that food waste collections will deliver a significant improvement in the council's overall recycling rates.



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QUESTION 7

From: Councillor Bolton

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

Will Councillor Tod please explain why he and Cabinet decided to only announce the suspension of the Station Approach project in the November scrutiny papers without any explanation or other public announcements on such an important project?

Reply

We didn't. The Q1 Performance Report – scrutinised at the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on Monday 8th September – laid out exactly what we intended to do and gave the members of the scrutiny committee a chance to pre-scrutinise the decision before the report was accepted at Cabinet on Wednesday 10th September.

Actions for the next quarter

Over the next quarter, the project team will prepare an end-of-stage report to formally close Stage 2 of the project. The findings will be presented to the PAC Board in August for review and discussion. Additionally, the Station Approach website will be updated to include the final version of the CMP, making it publicly accessible and ensuring the site reflects the current stage of the project.

As I said in that meeting:

In terms of Station Approach, we're absolutely clear about our way forward. It's impacted by the change that is happening to the Combined Authority system, and it's impacted by what's happening by the impact of Local Government Reorganisation.

Cllr Pett asked questions about Station Approach and the actions for next quarter. I answered them.

And this isn't the first time we've highlighted that we would be pausing the project.

It was also made clear at the Station Approach concept masterplan discussion at Cabinet on June 18th, for example, that the opportunity for Station Approach was linked both to the Mayoralty and to the timing of the Sir John Moore Park & Ride.

In light of that, and the resulting difficulty in getting the project fully away ahead of the restrictions in a Structural Change Order this summer, the administration put forward its proposals for scrutiny in September. They could have chosen to scrutinise the proposal in more detail at that meeting: the fact that they chose not to do so is a matter for the Scrutiny Committee, not the Cabinet.



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QUESTION 8

From: Councillor Chamberlain

To: Councillor Porter (Cabinet Member for Place & Local Plan)

With work already underway on the next Local Plan (2040 onwards), what steps will the City Council be taking to ensure that a situation such as the one with the proposed development at Southwick Road and School Road, Wickham, does not occur again - specifically that our residents are better informed if we (WCC) are simultaneously i) preparing to argue against the development at appeal ii) making offer to the developers to buy affordable homes within the proposed development and iii) negotiating a draft Section 106 with the developer for the proposed development. I ask as there was significant frustration within the Southwick and Wickham Ward when, at the last minute, WCC decided not to defend its decision on the appeal hearing associated with the development - leaving residents little to no time to react and respond ahead of the appeal hearing on the aforementioned development.

Reply

Thank you for your question Cllr Chamberlain.

I appreciate your frustration: I am afraid that this was a particularly unique situation which rarely happens, but it demanded a rapid decision.

I believe the reason was outlined to you, but it is useful to rehearse this so that other members will be aware of this dilemma if it happens in your ward too.

WCC had fully prepared to attend the Appeal Hearing, and as part of any appeal, WCC prepares S106 conditions just in case the Inspector does not dismiss the appeal.

Why do we do this?

If the appeal is granted, and there are no S106 conditions, the permission goes through without any conditions. Providing those to the inspector is therefore 'good practice'.

Just the day before the appeal hearing, the Planning Inspector at the Local Plan inspection made it clear that she would not accept our 'brownfield first policy' and that all sites in the emerging plan would be considered available within the plan period. It was made clear (and tacitly agreed) that this would be a 'main modification' So in this case, the case for appeal would be won by the developer.

A meeting was held between the WCC Planners and lawyers at 5pm that Friday. They agreed: to continue to defend the case in the face of this evidence would be poor use of Public money.
One councillor was made aware, but not all ward councillors.

With regard to affordable housing: I have spoken to my fellow portfolio holder about this.

There is demand in the area for affordable housing and so it is right that we try to secure affordable housing for the site, whether or not we support the application. If it works for WCC we may wish to proceed. If not, an RP may be interested.

However unique this situation is, I recognise that the position could -and should- have been relayed to you, and the Parish Council quickly.

Unfortunately, it may have not given residents the opportunity to make their case because the decision *not to defend* the case was made late the day before - which was as a result of the planning Inspector's proposed change to the emerging plan.

.....but this is a learning point and we accept that the earliest possible communication to you and the PC was key so you could inform residents too. This procedure will be rectified.



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QUESTION 9

From: Councillor Langford-Smith

To: Councillor Becker (Cabinet Member for Healthy Communities)

This administration has provision of Public Toilets across the district. These are an important resource for residents and visitors to the area and, for Denmead, are vital to the sustainability of the village centre shops. Can the administration provide assurances that this provision will not be withdrawn if the Parish Council does not take full financial responsibility of the toilets?

Reply

The administration recognises that public toilets are an important community asset across the district, supporting residents, visitors and local economies. In locations such as Denmead, we are very conscious of the role that public conveniences play in sustaining the village centre and supporting local shops.

We are currently at a very early stage of engagement with parishes that have public toilets managed by Winchester City Council, including Denmead. Officers are meeting with parishes individually, recognising that each parish is unique, with different usage patterns, financial circumstances and local priorities. These conversations are intentionally exploratory and are focused on listening and understanding each parish's views, rather than proposing a single, uniform solution.

The Council is fully committed to ensuring that public toilets continue to operate as valued community assets, and we are working collaboratively with parishes to explore sustainable, long-term options for their operation and upkeep. No final decisions have been taken, and no assumptions are being made about the outcome of these discussions.

Alongside this engagement work, the Council continues to invest in its public toilet estate. Upgrade works have already been completed at Bishop's Waltham, Chesil Car Park, Market Lane and Abbey Gardens, with further improvements being rolled out as part of our planned programme. This demonstrates the administration's ongoing commitment to maintaining and improving facilities for public use.

In response to the specific point raised, the administration can give assurance that the provision of public toilets will not be withdrawn as a default position if a Parish Council is not in a position to take on full financial responsibility at this time. Any future decisions during the life of this council will be made transparently, on a case-by-case basis, and in dialogue with local communities, with the clear objective of protecting access to public conveniences, wherever possible.

Of course, any commitment cannot last beyond March 31, 2028 if the Government's plans for Local Government Reorganisation continue as planned. Without a change to local government funding arrangements, any new authority is likely to face extreme financial pressure and, based on previous reorganisations, any assets that do not generate sufficient revenue to cover their costs are likely to be disposed of. This is one of the main reasons why we are so keen to work with parishes to secure the future of our district's public toilets before that date.



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QUESTION 10

From: Councillor Morris

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

Given that the social media application known as x and formerly known as twitter has introduced a facility that it is understood has been used to modify photographs of minors into CSAM (child sexual abuse material) can you confirm that it is WCC's policy not to upload or share any photographs of minors to that social media site?

Reply

Following the horrific news about the child sexual abuse material on X, the City Council has stopped posting any material on X.



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QUESTION 11

From: Councillor Godfrey

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

Following the announcement last month from the MHCLG that the inaugural elections to select a Mayor for the New Hampshire Mayoral Combined Authority would not take place until May 2028, can the Leader kindly inform me what response has been made to the Government by the City Council either directly or with other council leaders in Hampshire?

Reply

The work on establishing the Mayoral Combined Authority is being led by the Upper Tier Local Authorities. They have made clear – not just their concern about the delay to the election of a Mayor, but also the resulting cut in funding to the authority – and continue to discuss a way to bring forward the election to a more sensible and pragmatic timing **and** put in place a more ambitious programme of investment. We are intending to support them in developing their investment proposals and as needed, publicly supporting their call for earlier Mayoral elections.



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QUESTION 12

From: Councillor Batho

To: Councillor Reach (Cabinet Member for Good Homes)

Following Winchester City Council's self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing in January 2025 and the Judgement issued in April 2025 can the Cabinet Member give members an update on progress to address the issues identified?

Reply

Following the expansion of the powers of the Regulator on 1 April 2024, Winchester City Council decided to self-refer for assessment. In the assessment of the Regulator, Winchester City Council's housing service was rated C3, which means "significant improvement" was needed. Historical problems identified included: incomplete or duplicated stock condition surveys and an inability to provide up-to-date fire and asbestos assessments of our stock.

Since that time, we have been working hard to address the issues raised. Officers have worked closely with the Regulator and tenant and leaseholder representatives to ensure they are fully engaged with our improvement plans.

The Regulator has recognised the good progress Winchester City Council have made in addressing these long-standing issues and have consequently reduced their inspection frequency, noting the good work being done. Representatives of the Social Housing Regulator attended the regular meeting of the TACT (Tenants and Council Together) Board earlier this month and were presented with an up-to-date snapshot of the service's performance against the key Compliance metrics measured by the Regulator.

On 8 of the 15 areas measured by this scorecard, we are now scoring 100%, with 6 further metrics above 99% and one metric standing at 97.5%, representing one lift out of service at Albert Court. The repair to this lift is expected very shortly.

Given this, I am confident that the Regulator will upgrade our assessment at their next review. But I will also add that, while compliance metrics are important, it is tenant satisfaction that is absolutely key and feedback from residents is broadly good.



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QUESTION 13

From: Councillor Lee

To: Councillor Tod (Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration)

Ahead of the Government's March decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, it is widely recognised that reorganization must go beyond an administrative exercise. Experience elsewhere shows new councils can take years to bed in, underlining the need for early preparation ahead of shadow and new authorities.

There is also growing recognition that hyper-local leadership alone is no longer sufficient to address the combined challenges of LGR and an expanding legislative framework. This reflects findings from British Academy and the Institute for Government, which identify systemic weaknesses in parish capacity nationally.

Key risks arise from:

- a shift to larger, more remote unitary authorities with fewer councillors and officers;
- limited parish-level capacity and expertise to meet new requirements such as LNRS, BNG, the Environment Act, NPPF and planning reforms;
- inconsistent national support structures and uncertainty over future governance roles; and
- a widening gap between national environmental ambition and local delivery capability.

Together, these risks disproportionately affect small parishes and weaken community plus environmental resilience. Raising these issues now is not resistance to change, but essential to ensuring the best reforms work for our communities and staff. It is inappropriate to leave all these challenges to shadow and new unitary authorities.

Can Winchester City Council, alongside its LGR Programme Board, prioritize in early 14 January 2026 the development of additional support mechanisms for Parish Councils to future-proof their governance, strengthen environmental leadership and enhance community resilience for the coming challenges.

This approach would also help future Shadow Councils and then our Unitary Authority avoid the prolonged bedding in process of previous LGRs supported by strengthened Parish Councils with improved local capability to deliver and work in any new processes.

¹ [Reorganising district councils and local public services - challenges and options](#)

Reply

The Chief Executive, Cllr Cutler and I have met multiple times with our local parish councils during the LGR process – and as we move into design and implementation phase will continue to do so.

One of the most important elements of LGR will be ensuring strong local governance and representation within the new unitary authorities – and involving the parishes in co-designing that process will be essential. So we will continue with them as essential partners in designing a system for the new unitary that can be responsive to local needs.

It has also been a top priority for this administration to enable the establishment of a Town Council for Winchester – should local people want it.

In terms of the coming quarter, this is a particularly intense period of LGR activity. We have been tasked by Central Government with a huge programme of work to prepare ahead of the announcement of the new authorities in March – including the design of our own transitional governance – and this has to come first.

While we will continue to brief parishes on the process and how they can get involved, we do not have capacity to do take on any significant extra programmes beyond that – particularly given the need to deliver a range of other council programmes and projects – alongside Local Government Reorganisation – ahead of the financial restrictions that come with the Local Government Reorganisation Structural Change Order due this summer.

It's also important that we respect parish councils as sovereign bodies. They are responsible for their own training and development – and we have been encouraging our parishes – and the Hampshire Association of Local Councils to reach out to parishes in areas that have already undergone LGR to reapply best practice on their own account.