



COUNCIL MEETING – 2nd June 2026

Questions by the Public under Council Procedure Rule 19.1

- Each questioner will have 2 minutes in which to ask their question (or may simply state to “refer to the order paper”). The order of the questions to be asked is as set out below and an officer will direct the questioner to the microphone when their name is called by the Mayor.
- 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 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 Councillor, the questioner may also ask a supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original .
- The **total** time allocated for questions will *normally* be limited to 20 minutes.
- Written answers will be published to questions submitted (but not supplementary questions) following the meeting and all members of the public who have asked a question will be notified accordingly.

	From:
1	Dr Catherine Phipps
2	Phoebe Nunn
3	Hannah Smith
4	Myleta Wilkins
5	Vincent Fitzgerald
6	Jack Hargreaves
7	Ariana Saly



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QUESTION 1

From: Dr Catherine Phipps

To: Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency)

Winchester City Council has declared a climate emergency and recognised the importance of reducing emissions across all sectors. Food systems are increasingly recognised by the IPCC and UK Climate Change Committee as a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, with meat and dairy production having a particularly high environmental impact.

Since this issue was last raised with Winchester City Council in February 2025, more than 35 additional towns and cities worldwide have endorsed the Plant Based Treaty, including Southam Town Council in Warwickshire, which recently became the 7th UK council to support the initiative.

Winchester City Council has previously stated that it supports the broad principles behind the Plant Based Treaty, while raising concerns around committing to all of the detailed proposals contained within the initiative.

Given this, and considering that many councils have endorsed the general principles of the Plant Based Treaty while retaining flexibility around implementation and local decision-making, would Winchester City Council now consider becoming the next UK council to endorse the general principles of the Plant Based Treaty?



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QUESTION 2

From: Phoebe Nunn

To: Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency)

The UK's legally binding climate targets will be impossible to achieve without addressing emissions from food systems. Research increasingly shows that shifting towards more plant-based diets can significantly reduce emissions while also delivering public health benefits.

As Winchester City Council continues implementing its Carbon Neutrality Action Plan, will the Council explore how food-related policies and procurement can contribute towards its climate goals, including increasing plant-based catering options at council-run events and encouraging greater awareness of sustainable diets within the community?

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QUESTION 3

From: Hannah Smith

To: Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency)

Studies have shown that diets rich in plant-based foods can help reduce the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and certain cancers, while also reducing pressure on the NHS.

Given the growing evidence around the health benefits of plant-based diets, what role does Winchester City Council believe it can play in supporting healthier and more sustainable food choices through public awareness campaigns, partnerships with local organisations, and food provision at council events and community venues?



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QUESTION 4

From: Myleta Wilkins

To: Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency)

Many residents are facing ongoing cost-of-living pressures, and research has shown that staple plant-based foods such as beans, lentils, rice, pasta, vegetables, and oats can often provide affordable and nutritious meal options.

Would the Council consider supporting initiatives that help residents access affordable and healthy plant-based meals, such as community cooking workshops, partnerships with local businesses, or educational resources promoting low-cost sustainable meals?

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QUESTION 5

From: Vincent Fitzgerald

To: Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency)

Cities around the UK are increasingly supporting initiatives that encourage sustainable food choices while also benefiting local businesses and attracting visitors.

Alongside campaigns such as Veganuary and Climate Action Week, Plant Based Restaurant Week initiatives have been used in some areas to encourage cafés and restaurants to introduce new plant-based menu options or offer promotions and discounts on plant-based meals, helping residents try more sustainable food choices while supporting local businesses.

Would Winchester City Council consider working with Plant Based Treaty, local businesses, and community partners to support or promote similar voluntary sustainable food initiatives within the district?

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QUESTION 6

From: Jack Hargreaves

To: Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency)

Winchester City Council has already taken positive steps by committing to provide vegetarian catering by default at council events and meetings it organises, alongside wider commitments through the Winchester Food Partnership and sustainable procurement policies.

Given this existing leadership on sustainable food, would the Council consider building on these commitments by exploring further measures to support lower-carbon and plant-based food choices, including increased public awareness initiatives, greater availability of plant-based options at council-supported venues and events, and potentially endorsing the Plant Based Treaty as part of its wider climate and public health work?

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QUESTION 7

From: Ariana Saly

To: Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency)

Young people are increasingly concerned about climate change, biodiversity loss, and the future of food systems. Many residents want to see practical and positive local action that supports both environmental sustainability and public health.

Would Winchester City Council be open to meeting with local residents and campaigners to discuss how the Council could support more sustainable food initiatives locally, including the possibility of endorsing the Plant Based Treaty and learning from implementation examples already taking place in cities such as Edinburgh?

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RESPONSE TO ALL QUESTIONS (Councillor Learney)

Thank you all for bringing this matter back to the City Council. It is widely recognised that a shift towards plant-based diets has considerable benefits for both the environment and public health.

This council does not lightly sign up to treaties and charters unless we believe that we will be able to support them in full and avoid creating levels of public expectation we cannot fulfil. We always consider what is right for this district rather than just following what other councils are doing.

In March 2023 the City Council signed up to the Winchester Food Partnership's Good Food charter, a local initiative which supports the principles of the plant-based treaty. Quoting the Good Food Charters preamble "Food systems create 40% of greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity in the UK has fallen by 70% since 1970. Our actions can help to combat the climate and nature emergency. Good food is vital to the quality of all our lives. As well as being tasty, healthy and affordable the food we eat should be good for nature, good for workers, good for local businesses and good for animal welfare. Our vision is to create a healthy and sustainable food culture for people living and working in the Winchester District, regardless of income."

As is confirmed by signing up to our local food charter this council is broadly supportive of the broad principles of the plant-based treaty and is taking action on many of the proposals within it. However, these actions are not always consistent with all parts of the treaty. As an example, in order to restore local downland and reverse ecosystem degradation, which is an aim of the treaty we have, following professional advice, introduced cattle onto land formerly used for arable farming which is against one of its principles.

A reduction in meat and dairy consumption has considerable benefits in reducing emissions and improving health and I support an approach which can be summed up as "Eat real food, mostly plants, not too much." And, although as a district council we do not have the lead role public health or education, we do take action when the opportunity arises to get messages across around healthy, sustainable diets.

When this council offers catering at events and meetings we host, it is on a vegetarian by default basis, with entirely plant based options available and we are committed to sourcing seasonal, local and ethically produced food wherever possible.

We provide Carbon literacy training for all our councillors and staff which includes covering the carbon impact of the food choices we make around food and the benefits of reducing the amount of meat we eat.

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At last year's green fair we provided the opportunity for the local food partnership to promote healthy, affordable local food and diets to local people as well as encouraging local people to consume less food and reduce emissions through wasting less - messages we will be repeating this year as part of the work being done to promote food waste collection and we will once again be running our green fair as the launch event for Winchester Green week.

We are always conscious of the cost-of-living pressures affecting many of our residents even in the best of economic times and would welcome applications for either community or greener faster grants from local organisations wishing to run community events or workshops around healthy affordable eating. Similarly, we are always happy to look at initiatives which support both our environmental objectives and local businesses. While Winchester is an area where it is unusual not to find plant-based options on menus and our Visit Winchester website has an excellent blog on vegetarian and vegan Winchester advertising some of the best of our local restaurants for plant-based food there is undoubtedly more we can do.

With the caveat that Local government reorganisation has now been confirmed and that means not only that this authority will no longer exist in less than two years but that in the time we have left, our ability to take on new projects and make meaningful policy decisions is severely constrained, While we might not be willing to sign the plant based treaty I am very happy to meet any or all of the questioners to discuss how we can deliver and support practical local action that contributes to lower emissions while respecting individual choice.