



Winchester

City Council

COUNCIL MEETING – 27 February 2025

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 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 Councillor, the questioner may also ask a supplementary question which must arise directly out of the original reply.
- 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	Alex Harman
2	Dr Catherine Phipps
3	Phoebe Nunn



Winchester
City Council

QUESTION 1

From: Alex Harman

To: Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency)

This year will be the first year we will exceed the 1.5 degrees global temperature increase, a limit set by the Paris agreement. This is not a political target, this is a physical limit of the planet. Given that our food system is a leading driver of the climate crisis, and recognizing the urgent need for action to stabilize our climate, will Winchester City Council endorse the Plant Based Treaty?

Furthermore, acknowledging the importance of transparency and education, will the council commit to actively communicating with the public about the environmental and health consequences of animal agriculture, empowering residents, including children and future generations, to make informed choices? Finally, to demonstrate a true commitment to reducing carbon emissions, will the council integrate the principles of the Plant Based Treaty into its existing Carbon Neutrality Action Plan, specifically exploring local implementations that prioritise increasing access to plant-based foods and raising awareness about the devastating impact of animal agriculture, thereby supporting a just transition to a more sustainable food system?

Reply

Thank you very much indeed for your question. And thank you very much for raising the issue of the Plant Based Treaty.

It's an interesting and thought-provoking document – and I'm pleased to confirm to you that the council has a range of policies and plans in place that support the three main principles of the treaty – relinquish, redirect and restore.

Specifically:

- Relinquish - No land use change, ecosystem degradation or deforestation for animal agriculture
- Redirect - An active transition away from animal-based food systems to plant-based systems
- Restore - Actively restoring key ecosystems, particularly restoring forests and rewilding landscapes



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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 part of signing the charter the council pledged that when it offers catering at events and meetings it organises, it will be on a vegetarian by default basis and confirmed its commitment to sourcing seasonal, local and ethically produced food wherever possible.

Other policies supporting principles of the treaty include the declaration of nature emergency, our new local plan and Biodiversity Net Gain technical advice note and sustainable procurement policy.

While we support the broad principles, the full version of the treaty also consists of 40 detailed proposals – and these we are not currently able to commit to. These would require a good deal of thought, work and consideration of the wider implications – including budgetary implications - before a commitment to sign could be made.

The Council's Carbon Neutrality Action Plan prioritises the actions including nature based solutions which this Council can take to move towards carbon neutrality by 2030. As due to local government reorganisation, this authority is unlikely to exist for more than a few more years we are already having to further prioritise the actions within the existing plan rather than add to them. However where opportunities arise we will continue to promote the benefits of reducing the consumption of meat for both health and environmental reasons



Winchester
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QUESTION 2

From: Dr Catherine Phipps

To: Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency)

Winchester City Council has declared a climate emergency and have also identified animal agriculture as a driver of carbon emissions. Given that even if all fossil fuel production ceased today, food system emissions alone would still push us beyond the 1.5°C and 2°C Paris Agreement targets, and considering that food accounts for a third of all greenhouse gas emissions, with meat and dairy consumption being the largest contributors (and a recent analysis showing UK food emissions could be cut by 75% with plant-based diets), doesn't it make sense for Winchester City Council to prioritize addressing this crucial aspect of the climate crisis?

The IPCC has stressed the urgent need to transform our food system from an emissions source to a carbon sink. Cities and councils are vital in driving climate solutions, and local actions can have a significant national impact. Following the lead of cities like Amsterdam and Edinburgh, which have endorsed the Plant Based Treaty and implemented impactful changes like increasing plant-based options in public institutions and schools, including dedicated "Earth Days" with 100% plant-based menus, will Winchester City Council endorse the Plant Based Treaty, joining a growing global movement for positive environmental change and demonstrating our commitment to a sustainable future?

Reply

Thank you for the question, I refer to my previous answer on our existing policies and signing the plant based treaty but am happy to take a supplementary question.



Winchester
City Council

QUESTION 3

From: Phoebe Nunn

To: Councillor Learney (Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency)

Recognizing the significant health implications associated with diets high in processed meats, classified as carcinogenic by the WHO, and considering the Plant Based Treaty's call for honest food labeling, including cancer warning labels on processed meats, what steps will the council take to promote transparency in food labelling within our community? Beyond simply informing consumers, how can the council leverage this information to support a shift towards healthier, plant-based diets, aligning with the treaty's emphasis on public health and preventative care? Will the council endorse the Plant Based Treaty as a commitment to prioritizing the well-being of our residents alongside environmental sustainability?

Reply

In line with national guidelines we would recommend that all our residents follow a healthy balanced diet with minimal consumption of highly processed food. Processed meat in particular is a recognised carcinogen, increasing the risk of bowel cancer. The City Council does not however have any responsibility for or powers over food labelling and the experience of public health campaigns generally is that frightening people into positive behaviour only works at the margins. Making better choices more attractive and easily available is a better way to drive behaviour change.

I refer to my previous answer on our existing policies and endorsing the plant-based treaty but am happy to take a supplementary question.