

City Councillors Report for December 2022

We wish you a Happy Christmas and Peaceful (and hopefully less distressing) 2023!



We are delighted to see that **the Alresford and Villages Christmas Lunch** for those that may be alone is being revived after a very difficult few years, and even happier that this has been organised by those somewhat younger than the previous organisers, Well Done Sarah and Ani Cavell. Margot has retired to the comparatively stress free job of driving the town bus to collect and return to homes.



Water Quality

The Chalk Stream and Headwaters Forum brought some good news, the big takeaway was the Chalkstream Strategy Restoration Plan <https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/chalk-stream-strategy-3/>

Vitacress Conservation have undertaken a project to assess the success of growing watercress with no application of fertilisers, one of the main sources of pollution in our rivers. I got very excited when the no input watercress was found to be just as good a yield and a more attractive product, visualising a system where developers would pay the watercress industry for nutrient credits just to grow something we all love more cheaply. My excitement was punctured when it was explained that those strains resistance to other factors affecting yields was yet to be proven.

Nutrient Credits are a major cost to Winchester Council in building new council homes. We are looking at methods, and costs, of installing nutrient capture methods to the twenty three sewage treatment plants we own, as well as our other land holdings, to save on building costs.

Housing company

The creation of a Housing Company to meet an identified shortage in the rental housing market is looking more possible. The risks have been mitigated to a degree we find acceptable, legal advice is being sought to clear up some more, and market testing has shown that our housing will meet the need. The unforeseeably high jump in interest rates has undermined what were sound business plans.

Local plan.

Comments on the policies have to be completed by December 14th. Apart from the issue of development sites, which effect some parishes rather more than others, there are some 100 policies on planning and development matters. These range from addressing the priority of climate change, Policy CN3 Energy efficiency standards to reduce carbon emissions, to NE 1 Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and the natural environment of the district and E6 Retaining employment opportunities. Please submit your comments at <https://winchester.citizenspace.com/policy-and-planning/local-plan-regulation-18/>

WCC Tree Strategy

For the first time the council is developing a tree strategy. The draft for this has been approved. This covers both the legislative and managerial duties of the council for its tree cover. The problem of ash dieback is particularly damaging, not only due to the loss of one of the district's commonest and most attractive

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trees, but also due to the resulting structural problems which means the tree has to be taken down in many locations. Additional tree planting has a part to play in the carbon reduction targets and in increasing biodiversity. The new requirements and ash die back have all had a serious impact on the budget for tree work. An increase in finance has been agreed.

Carbon Reduction targets

A recent report by respected consultants, WSP, to monitor Winchester's progress towards achieving carbon neutrality both for the council and the district shows that Winchester has to go 'Greener Faster' to meet our targets. Not the news that we would want, but it shows progress is being made and importantly that we have to try harder. The purpose of such external monitoring is to have impartial and accurate information. We listen and we improve our performance as a result.

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