

Winchester City Councillor Monthly Report March 2019



_____ Cllr Lisa Griffiths

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If you have any comments or questions on the content of this report, please do not hesitate to get in touch. And of course, on any matter relating to WCC responsibilities where I will help.

An update on running 5k. I'm now regularly running 5k and participated in my first Winchester Parkrun on 2nd March – a daunting task with 440 other runners around me, but best time achieved and I'm ready for the next! Running continuously for 90 seconds in Week 1 of Couch to 5k, was tough, but the encouraging words through the downloadable App means I've kept going. Some days it's tough, and others I still have energy to run further. Why don't you amaze yourself?

Alresford & Itchen Valley have a wealth of opportunities for exercise and activity, whatever your age. There are also GP referral classes for those with long term heart and lung conditions, and stroke recovery, held at River Park. Any activity can provide great opportunities to build friendships and make the time pass quickly (and healthily).

WCC finances

The Conservative Administrations' budget was agreed on 28 February 2019 – securing a council tax freeze for 2019/20; doorstep glass collection from Autumn 2019; a commitment to build 1000 new council houses over 10 years, plus Extra Care properties; building a new leisure centre at Bar End; the Dean Car Park; progressing new homes, offices and retail space at Station Approach and Central Winchester, as well as continuing to invest and improve in your existing services. Spending our reserves? Yes, we are spending some but we've been saving, knowing we have expenditure coming to invest in our District.

You may have read that a looming hole in our finances is not being addressed by the Conservatives, however the picture presented is the 'IF WE DO NOTHING' scenario. **WE ARE NOT A DO NOTHING ADMINISTRATION!** Be assured too, that our Chief Financial Officer would not allow us to put the Council at risk by having no plans on how we are going to address the funding gap. A council-owned estates renovation programme is underway to secure income for the Council (and residents), as well as providing new employment opportunities – our economy is a top priority. What we will not do is to 'count our chickens before they hatch' and show an income yet to be realised; completed renovations this year have been successful and tenants secured. It would be easy to save money by cutting services, but instead a reorganisation led to savings of over £2m last year and further possibilities have been identified for year on year savings – showing a responsible attitude and keeping services that residents want and need.

Winchester City Council tenants

Tenants will receive a Tenancy Information Form and covering letter with your annual notice of change to rent and charges in the post. Tenants are asked to review the information on the form and contact us using one of the ways detailed in the letter. Responses are required by **31st March 2019** to advise if details are correct or any changes are needed.

Universal Credit

WCC and the Citizens Advice Bureau assist residents who are affected should their circumstances alter. These are free services for money advice and personal budgeting; you do not have to be a Council tenant to receive help – as a resident, it's there should you need support.

Housing Delivery against the Local Plan

All Councils are required to meet a new homes delivery target, and a Council finding itself below 100% is likely to see Government intervention and penalties. WCC are at 120% of their delivery target – so we're ahead of where we need to be, thus, showing confidence in our District as developers are building new homes.

The Local Plan review for 2032-36 includes smaller sites and WCC are currently undertaking some research to see whether windfall sites can show a consistency of supply. If this can be supported, WCC will include windfall sites in the Local Plan when it is updated. We still await housing numbers for the District for 2032-36.

Local Economy

Two shops in Alresford have been re-let and opened in the past few weeks. The new coffee shop in the old Barclays building is now due to open in June. And, despite the scaremongering (and the rents and rates!), both Winchester and Alresford have a very low rate of empty premises – we are way below the national trend, so keep shopping local and keep us vibrant.

Business Rate Relief will be automatically awarded on qualifying premises and WCC are hoping 2019/20 bills will be issued with the discounted amount. As I'm sure businesses know, rates are applied dependent on the use and type of premises – let's not be misled into thinking it should be the same across all premises. We know that a national review is sorely needed, and both WCC continue to press for reforms via the Local Government Authority which represents Councils and by our MP, Steve Brine, in Government.

'**Brexit clinic**' - Businesses located in the Winchester District can attend a free clinic at an event provided by Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership and Winchester City Council, to support small businesses with scenarios and risk assessments to guide them through the challenges which Brexit presents. A panel of experts will give advice on human resources and employment, customs and tax implications, exporting, importing, regulations and standards. **It takes place on Thursday 21 March at 9am at the Guildhall Winchester.** Places are limited and will be booked on a first-come, first-serve, basis. To secure your place, with the opportunity to have a one to one session with our expert panel, visit enterprisem3growthhub.co.uk/events or email events@enterprisem3growthhub.co.uk

Responsible with our rubbish

With the new waste collection contract due for renewal, we will look at the most cost effective and environmentally friendly way of dealing with our rubbish. It's great to see the high rates of recycling continuing at the Alresford tip, on Facebook New Alresford, and clothes recycling shops. 'Someone else's rubbish is another's treasure', rings very true in our Ward.

The Great British Spring Clean starts in the coming weeks across the Ward – Parish/Town Councils should contact WCC for bags, litter picking sticks and high visibility jackets for their local litterpicks.

In brief :

- **New Leisure Centre** : Wilmott Dixon, our construction company, will start to be up the site from 1 March 2019. Due to open early 2021. To take a look around the new centre, go to <http://bit.ly/WinchSportCentre>
- **Station Approach** : outline planning application due for submission March 2019.
- **Taxi licensing** : we are working closely with taxi companies to improve the service, safety, environmental impact and security for all passengers in the Winchester District.
- **Winchester Junior Parkrun** : will relocate to North Walls from 3rd March (the same location as the Adult Parkrun)
- **Changes to bus timetables and services**: <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/passenger-transport/WinchesterTravelGuide.pdf>

Consultation:

North Walls & River Park Area Project : closes 23 March 2019

On **March 22nd (3-7pm) and 23rd (10am-4pm)** there is an opportunity to go to the marquee on North Walls Recreation Ground (behind the tennis courts) to share your ideas for future ideas on what WCC should do with the land once the River Park

Leisure Centre closes. Free activities for children throughout the event! You can contact the team on : 01962 848 533 or email landscape@winchester.gov.uk