

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**13 January 2004**Attendance:Councillors:

Pearce (Chairman) (P)

Bennetts (P)
Berry (P)
Beveridge (P)
Craig
Davies (P)
de Peyer
Hiscock (P)
Love (P)Mather (P)
Maynard
Mitchell (P)
Nelmes
Nunn (P)
Pines (P)
Porter (P)
Rees
Tait (P)Others in Attendance:Councillor Allgood1. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Craig, Nelmes, Rees and de Peyer

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum held on 30 October 2003 be approved and adopted.

4. **FLYPOSTING AND GRAFFITI**

(Report WTF21 refers)

The City Secretary and Solicitor explained the limitations of using prosecutions to deal with flyposters. The Council's current approach to dealing with graffiti was limited to properties within the Council's ownership and areas included in the current cleansing contract. The Probation Service working with The Community Safety Partnership (the Police, Probation Service, City Centre Manager and the City Council) had proposed that the Probation Service would provide labour to remove flyposters and graffiti from the town centre. The work would be undertaken by people fulfilling Community Punishment Orders and it was anticipated that this work would be provided free of charge to property owners (subject to a small voluntary contribution to cover materials).

In response to Members' questions, it was explained that a follow-up meeting of The Community Safety Partnership would establish the details of the scheme and would clarify whether it could be broadened out to include other tasks, such as river clearance or litter picking and areas out of the town centre. However, it was noted that the Probation Service would be responsible for seeking the permission of private owners before clearing any graffiti off their property.

Members reiterated the need to consider designated areas where flyposting could be managed, as it was recognised that this was often a useful method to advertise youth events. The Forum also discussed the role of education in preventing graffiti and what influence the Development Control process could assert on owners of vacant buildings with applications pending.

In conclusion, Members welcomed the proposals from the Community Safety Partnership and recommended that further consideration be given to its publicity.

RESOLVED:

That the approach of the Community Safety Partnership to the problems of graffiti and flyposting be endorsed.

5. **WINCHESTER TOWN BUDGET 2004/05**
(Report WTF20 refers)

The Director of Finance explained that the report set out the Winchester Town Account base budget and services for the 2003/4 and 2004/5 financial years and that Cabinet had sought the Forum's view on the level of precept and any potential growth items.

The Forum noted that whilst good practice suggested that reserves should be set at 10% of the total budget (currently about £60,000) without a change to the precept or spending items, the Town Account reserve would reach approximately twice this at £120,000 by 2004/5.

Whilst considering potential growth bids, the Director explained that the Town Account could only be used on items treated as Special Expenses within the terms of Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Members discussed the need for Community Wardens and it was agreed that a growth bid for three, rather than two, Wardens should be supported. The rationale behind the proposed increase was that, as Wardens needed to work in pairs, occurrences such as leave, sickness and training would not automatically mean that their work in the community would have to cease during these periods. In response to comments as to which areas of the Town the Wardens would work, the Director of Community Services explained that proposals for this and other details would be brought forward in a report to the Forum and Cabinet. It was therefore agreed to recommend to Cabinet that (subject to confirming the legality of such expenditure) approximately £15,000 from the Town Account should be recommended as a contribution towards the costs of three Community Wardens.

The Forum also discussed and agreed to recommend the provision of £4,000 towards the provision of recycling bins in the Cathedral Close (£2,000 of this cost would be a one-off charge to cover the additional bins and £2,000 per annum to cover the revenue costs). In response to a comment, Councillor Beveridge agreed to suggest to the Cathedral that more benches be erected in the Close.

Members considered the need for Notice Boards in the town area and following advice from the Director of Community Services, agreed to recommend a budget of £5,000 to provide eight boards, which could be periodically updated by the Community Wardens. It was also agreed that a report be presented to the next meeting on how the Council could better communicate with the public and with community groups in the Town area.

Following a discussion on the condition of the Town's allotments, the Director of Community Services agreed to update Members outside of the meeting.

In response to a question, the Director of Community Services explained that grant applications from organisations within the Town were funded on a matching basis with contributions from both the General Fund and Town Account. He added that the Forum would consider future applications although the final decision remained with Cabinet.

At the conclusion of the debate, Members discussed the relatively large estimated reserve on the Town Account in 2004/05. Following a discussion, the majority of members present agreed that the precept should remain at the current level, as it was likely that the extra expenditure items would reduce the reserve in the following year.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet be recommended to approve the following additional spending items:

- a) £5,000 towards Notice Boards
- b) £15,000 towards Community Wardens (subject to confirmation of the legality of such expenditure)
- c) £4,000 towards additional recycling bins in the Cathedral Close

2. That the Town precept remain at the 2003/4 level of £46.75 for the 2004/5 financial year.

3. That a report be presented to the next meeting of the Forum on how the Council could better communicate with the public and with community groups in the Town area.

6. **PLAYGROUND FIVE YEAR REFURBISHMENT PLAN**
(Report WTF24 refers)

The Director of Community Services explained that the proposals within the report sought to set out the refurbishment plans over a five year period (subject to available funds) for playgrounds across the district. He explained that this would replace the current system of refurbishments that were agreed on an individual basis and which were often liable to delays through public consultations etc.

In response to Members' comments, the Director agreed to include the play areas at North Walls and the Home Nursery Green, Nursery Gardens, Fulflood which had been omitted from the play area list in the report.

The Forum discussed the safety implications of play areas. It was recommended that any refurbishment should therefore have regard to the desirability of providing adequate lighting, visibility to surrounding properties (through landscaping etc), CCTV, increased monitoring to prevent vandalism and general maintenance. Members also

discussed the need to improve at a number of play areas access for the disabled and those with pushchairs.

The Forum acknowledged the importance of involving children in how the play areas should be refurbished, with the aim of encouraging creative play and exercise.

During the discussion, Members noted the lack of facilities for the 11-16 year old age range and it was recommended that the location of the play areas should be checked to ensure that they were still close to where most children lived.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet be recommended to approve;
 - a) the principles set out at paragraph 7.1 of the above report which define the decisions taken in respect of the provision and maintenance of children's play areas,
 - b) the implementation of the five year refurbishment and maintenance programme as set out in the report,
 - c) the expenditure of any approved funds from the Open Space Fund or Play Area Capital budget on these schemes over the next five years, subject to annual reviews of the programme as part of the Community Services Department business planning process.

7. **PROGRESS ON FORUMS' RECOMMENDATIONS**

(Report WTF15 refers)

The issues in the above report relating to the Community Services Department had been deferred from the previous meeting when the Director was not present.

Members discussed the potential danger of the shared pedestrian/bus route along the High Street and it was noted that this would be considered as part of the Broadway/Friarsgate Re-development.

In response to a Member's comment, the Chief Executive explained that Cabinet would consider a report on economic development that contained proposals to better engage with small local businesses.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8. **WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM – REVIEW**

(Report WTF22 refers)

Due to the lengthy considerations given to the earlier items on the agenda, it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting to be held on 26 February 2004.

RESOLVED:

That the report be deferred to the 26 February 2004 meeting of the Town Forum.

9. **PUBLICITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FORUM**

(Report WTF17 refers)

The Forum agreed that its publicity should be contained within the "Insight" newsletter, which it was noted would be revised. It was also agreed that the City Secretary and Solicitor should re-examine the Forum's distribution list.

RESOLVED:

That, having regard to the estimated costs involved, any publicity for the Forum should be included in future editions of Insight, rather than as a separate newsletter.

10. **CONSIDERATION OF THE PUBLIC MEETING ON PARKING, HELD 17 NOVEMBER 2003**

(Report WTF23 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

11. **CONSIDERATION OF THE NEXT PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY, THURSDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2004**

(Oral Report)

Members discussed the need for the debate to be focused and therefore agreed that it should centre on community safety rather than the quality of the environment. The debate would deal with the perceived and real threat of crime in the Town, which areas were most affected, the impact of licensing regulations and anti-social behaviour. Members also recommended that the meeting should be informed of the positive measures the Council had taken in regard to Community Wardens, CCTV and increased lighting.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.30pm.

Chairman