

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM – 13 JANUARY 2004

PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9 FEBRUARY 2004

CABINET – 11 FEBRUARY 2004

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM - REVIEW

REPORT OF CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR

Contact Officers: Chris Ashcroft/Colin Veal Tel No: 01962 848284/848438

RECENT REFERENCES:

WTF 15 – Progress on the Forum’s Recommendations (30 October 2003)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Winchester Town Forum was launched at a Community Conference in the Guildhall on 12 September 2002. Since that time, a number of public meetings have been held to discuss matters of importance to the Town area, such as housing, planning, transportation and youth involvement.

Amongst the recommendations of the Best Value Review of Democracy (which reported in May 2003) was a requirement to submit a report to this Committee, reviewing the Town Forum after one year of operation “to determine the extent to which it is meeting its objectives, the effectiveness of the methods used and its standing within the community”. This report sets out a summary of the activities undertaken by the Forum for Members consideration.

For clarification, this report uses the term ‘Forum (Councillors meeting)’ to describe those meetings at which the 18 Members sit as a committee, as opposed to ‘Forum public meeting’, which are the presentation/question & answer evenings at which the public participate fully.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Members indicate how they consider the work of the Forum has progressed during its first full year of operation, identifying any particular areas where current activities and/or methods of community involvement should be developed or curtailed.



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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

1.1 At its meeting held on 17 April 2002, full Council approved a recommendation by Cabinet (which originated from a Notice of Motion by Councillor Beveridge) regarding the formation of a Town Forum for the unparished area of the District. The Motion sought the establishment of a Committee, consisting of those Councillors representing the six wards of the Winchester Town area, to consider and recommend to the appropriate committee or other body how:

“1. All matters relevant to the City area other than specific applications for decision by or on behalf of Licensing, Regulatory and Planning Development Control Committees can be raised and discussed with the public, including amenity and community groups, and

2. The recommendations of the Committee are considered by the Council.”

1.2 Following this decision, an informal workshop involving all 18 Winchester Town Members was held on 8 July 2002. The discussions from that workshop were reported to Cabinet on 24 July 2002 (Report CAB 453 refers) and Cabinet recommended to Council on 30 October 2002 the following terms of reference for the establishment of a Winchester Town Forum, which were slightly amended by Council and then approved as follows:-

- (i) To act as a consultative and advisory body regarding issues affecting the six Winchester Town District Wards which, on occasions, may also include “cross-boundary” matters involving adjoining areas (eg. Badger Farm, Olivers Battery and Harestock).
- (ii) To forward any recommendations for action principally to Cabinet, but also to one of the overview and scrutiny committees, regulatory committees and/or Council when appropriate.
- (iii) That the incurring of expenditure be limited to the cost of meeting facilities, officer time arranging and attending meetings, plus occasional research work.
- (iv) That no discussions take place about specific applications which fall within the remit of any of the Council’s regulatory committees.”

## 2 Establishment of the Winchester Town Forum

- 2.1 Cabinet on 24 July 2002 also decided that a productive way to launch the Forum would be to hold a 'Community Conference', to which representatives of all local organisations would be invited. The principal purpose of the Conference would be to help the Forum identify what local people perceived as the current key issues in the Town area and to shape its initial work programme.
- 2.2 The Community Conference was held on 12 September 2002 and attended by about 80 people. The attendees were divided into nine randomly selected groups and requested to highlight what they considered to be the major problems facing the Town area. A briefing paper was circulated at the Conference and is reproduced as Appendix A, because it is still a useful 'scene setting' document.
- 2.3 All those who attended were given the opportunity to be placed on a database for circulation of future information. A considerable number registered at that time and the current distribution list totals over 200 organisations and individuals. A web page was also established solely for the Town Forum and is updated regularly with agendas, reports and minutes.

## 3 Forum Public Meetings

- 3.1 The Forum (Councillors meeting) met on 16 September 2003 and, after considering the comments made at the Conference, decided upon the initial topics for Forum public meetings. It was also agreed that Councillor meetings of the Forum be held after each public session, to assess the feedback and, if necessary, amend the format of forthcoming Forum public meetings.
- 3.3 To date, seven Forum public meetings have been held as follows:-
- (i) Planning and Housing (7/11/02)
  - (ii) Traffic and Parking (including public transport) (23/1/03)
  - (iv) Youth Issues (13/3/03)
  - (v) Broadway/Friarsgate (7/4/03)
  - (vi) Housing Issues (17/7/03)
  - (vii) Older Persons Issues (1/9/03)
  - (viii) Parking Issues (17/11/03)
- 3.4 The average attendance has been about 80 people, with the most recent parking meeting attracting over 100 people.
- 3.5 The next scheduled Forum public meetings are as follows:-
- Thursday 12 February 2004 - Community Safety and Quality of the Environment in Winchester Town
  - Thursday 11 March 2004 – Modern Architecture in Historic Towns

3.6 For completeness, there have been nine Forum Councillors meetings held to date and meetings are now one per cycle (i.e. 5 per year). The two County Councillors for the Eastgate and Westgate County Electoral Divisions are invited to attend all Forum meetings and have done so on several occasions.

#### 4 What has the Forum Cost?

4.1 Taking into account staff time, overheads, room hire, subsistence, printing and postage, the Forum has cost £3,500 to administer for April – October 2003. For the 2002/03 financial year, the final cost was £4,714.

4.2 The Forum has requested that a budget report be submitted to the Councillors meeting to be held on 13 January 2004, to allow any recommendations it may wish to make to be considered as part of the budget process (see elsewhere on the agenda). The Town Charge budget is currently £600,000 and every £1 raised in precept generates £13,000.

#### 5 What has the Forum Achieved?

5.1 The Forum has asked itself this question and, at its meeting held on 30 October 2003, considered a report (WTF15) which set out all the recommendations made since its inception and what action had been taken to date.

5.2 Information has been taken from that report and re-formatted into a list of what has/has not been achieved and this is set out at Appendix B.

5.3 Perhaps the principal benefit of the Forum public meetings has been the opportunity for interested Town residents to engage more directly with the City Council. These meetings have allowed information to be given about new Council initiatives, government and local policies and, arguably of greatest importance, provided an excellent platform for explaining what the Council can and cannot do in a range of situations.

5.4 Anecdotal evidence suggests that, in general, people do find these meetings useful, informative and well-run, although (unsurprisingly) there are occasions when some members of the public have not been satisfied with the explanations given. The fact that an average attendance of around 80 people is regularly achieved, must be regarded as some indication of the demand for, and interest in, a forum of this nature. As a number of attendees are the same people coming to every meeting (usually representing local organisations), this is perhaps another indication that the evenings are viewed as worthwhile.

5.5 The benefits have been two-way, because these meetings have also provided Members and officers with another avenue of communication with local people, to hear views expressed first-hand and to be able to gauge the strength of feeling accordingly. Feedback in this form is always useful.

#### 6 Conclusion

6.1 With limited resources, it is inevitable that not every recommendation of the Forum has resulted in action being undertaken. However, as shown in Appendix B, many of the views of the public as expressed at public meetings and the decisions of the

Forum when meeting as a committee, have been acted upon and/or fed into consultative processes.

- 6.2 Having regard to this point and the comments contained in paragraph 5 above, it is considered that, in its first full year of operation, the Forum has performed satisfactorily and recorded certain achievements, which can be built upon for the future.

7 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 7.1 To be more open and democratic.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 See paragraph 4

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Briefing Note from Community Conference (12/9/02)

Appendix B – Extract of information from Report WTF 15

**Appendix A****WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM****12 September 2002****Background - What is Winchester Town Forum?**

Although Winchester City Council is the local authority for the whole 250 square mile area of Winchester District, serving over 110,00 people, the rural parts of the District also have local community representation through Parish or Town Councils or Parish Meetings. These local councils and meetings provide a forum in which local issues and priorities can be aired, and solutions can be examined. For the six district wards covering the town area of Winchester, there is no similar elected forum, and this can result in a 'democratic deficit'.

Legally, the position is that, for 'unparished areas' the whole City Council of 57 councillors drawn from the whole district share equal responsibility for the town's local affairs.

There are problems in creating a separate town council for a community like the town area, and these include, not least, questions of cost, so the City Council has not gone down this route. Your Councillors are, however, concerned about the lack of a locally focused representative body for the town, and so have decided to set up a separate grouping of the 18 councillors who represent the unparished town wards. This body will be known as the Winchester Town Forum.

**What powers will the Forum have?**

Under the new administrative systems which the Government brought in from 2001, most decision-making by councils cannot be done by traditional committees, but has to be done by the Council's 'executive' (in our case by the Cabinet). Therefore, the new Forum will be a consultative body which will consider local town issues and recommend proposals for action to the Council and the Cabinet.

Because matters such as individual planning applications and licensing proposals are semi-judicial in nature, they cannot be discussed through a body like the Town Forum, but otherwise, it will be able to consider almost all Winchester town issues.

**When does it start working?**

The 18 town area members wish this new body to be consultative from the outset, and are therefore calling an inaugural meeting of representative groups and interests in the town area, to discuss with them the issues which the local community would like to see addressed.

### **How will it be run?**

To begin with, the new Forum is not tying itself down to any particular way of working, since the Members wish it to be flexible and to be able to work with and on behalf of the local community in different ways when dealing with different issues. Then, in the light of experience, it may settle in to a more structured way of working at some time in the future.

At this first consultative meeting on 12 September, all local community and other organisations in the Town Area are being invited to attend and suggest what are the issues which they consider and prioritise the issues affecting the Town Area. The locally elected 18 Members of the Forum, based on consultation with that community conference, can then select an initial agenda of relevant issues, and establish meetings to have these aired in whatever manner is appropriate to each issue.

From their work as Councillors within the community, Town Area ward Members may also themselves have issues which they consider should be discussed, and they will be able to make suggestions in the same way as other parties.

### **Who will be involved?**

From the beginning, the Council wants all local representative groups and individuals to feel that they can help to set the agenda and influence the discussions in the Forum. Therefore as wide a range of representatives as possible is being invited to this initial community conference. These include:

- Community Associations,
- Civic Groups,
- Tenants' Associations,
- Church Groups
- Business interests
- Schools and Colleges
- Sports Clubs
- Etc.

### **All are welcome.**

Every effort is being made to ensure that the community conference will be as inclusive and consultative as possible. Individual residents who feel that they have something to contribute are also invited.

### **What are the Big Issues?**

Just over 2 years ago, the City Council employed the independent Mori polling organisation to carry out a detailed market research exercise in the district about local government services and local issues. The survey covered the whole district, but the results can be broken down into areas, including the town area.

At that time, although no particular subject was of concern to more than 25% of the town residents interviewed, the matters of most concern to local residents in the town area wards were mainly traffic and car related. When asked what issues the local residents considered that the Council should tackle as priorities, the main ones were:



- Car Parking (25%)
- Traffic Congestion (22%)
- Speeding (14%)
- Lack of on-street parking (14%)
- Road repairs (10%)
- Pavement repairs (9%)
- More for children/young people to do (8%)
- Dog fouling (7%)
- Air quality/traffic pollution (7%)
- Crime, Law and Order (6%)
- Homelessness (5%)

Since that survey was carried out, work has been done on a number of the issues identified, and other new issues have come on to the local community agenda. It is intended to use much of the time at the meeting to discuss what are the current perceptions of the issues which the Council, working with the local community, ought to be working on, so that the above list can be updated, and an agenda for the work of the Forum can be built up based on community consultation.

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## **Appendix B**

### **What has the Forum Achieved?**

#### **Winchester Town Forum: Planning and Housing Issues Public Meeting - 7 November 2002**

- 1.1 This first public meeting of the Forum discussed the effects of the Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (PPG3) which encourages denser housing developments in town areas. The Council's policy remains to seek development in urban areas in preference to previously undeveloped countryside areas. It is important to meet the Structure Plan Housing requirements, not least to help prevent the triggering of a major development area (MDA) at Winchester City (North). At present, the strategic planning authorities of Hampshire County Council, Southampton and Portsmouth City Councils agree that the rate of housing development in the area is sufficient to avoid the need to release reserve sites. The Strategic Authorities have been set a target by Government to develop 6000 dwellings per year in the South Hampshire region and this target will be next reviewed by SEERA in producing a new Regional Spatial Strategy.
  
- 1.2 A series of seminars were undertaken in October on PPG3 issues, in response to concerns expressed by Members and the public. The Local Plan Committee, Principal Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet considered a report on the outcome of the seminars on 3, 6 and 18 November 2003 respectively. As a result, several Pre-Inquiry Changes to the emerging District Local Plan were recommended, along with changes to development control practice. The Council was also asked to consider whether it wishes to be more proactive in producing design guidance and the Environment and Access Performance Improvement Committee has recommended a financial bid to achieve this.
  
- 1.3 The Forum also heard concerns about the way in which the City Council decided planning applications. Since the meeting, and following a Notice of Motion, an Informal Member/Officer Working Group was established to investigate options for improvement, including the possibility of Area Planning Committees. The Informal Group reported to Cabinet on 15 October and Planning Development Control Committee on 26 November 2003, with a number of proposed improvements to procedures, although it did not recommend the introduction of Area Planning Committees at this stage. Both meetings supported all the recommendations, subject to a review after six months operation of all the changes.

#### **.2 Winchester Town Forum: Traffic and Parking Public Meeting - 23 January 2003**

- 2.1 At the Traffic and Parking Public Meeting, the Forum discussed the Park and Ride extensions and it was suggested that a detailed origin/destination survey should be conducted.
  
- 2.2 However, traditional 'origin and destination' (O&D) surveys are no longer widely used by transport planners. Such methods of data collection are time consuming, labour intensive and expensive to both collect and analyse. Their function was traditionally to obtain data to use in traffic models that could then be used to assess the implications of new road construction and traffic management strategies. Either way, the emphasis was placed on vehicle movements, not people movements.
  
- 2.3 Over the last decade, and more, the congestion on our highways has led motorists to react to congestion on a day to day decision basis in choosing their route. O&D

surveys, capturing data at a set point and a set time, cannot respond to or replicate travel patterns. It has been shown that the delays/congestion caused by O&D surveys are sufficient alone to cause motorists to alter their journey.

- 2.4 Current thinking reflects a growing awareness that we cannot continually seek to accommodate the ever increasing demands for car-based travel. We need to develop strategies and schemes that will encourage more people to make use of non-car based travel. To this end, we need to carry out surveys and investigations that look at travel patterns, not just vehicle movements. Hampshire County Council, as local highway authority, make use of great number of such surveys including Transport Surveys, the National Census and Workplace Travel Surveys.
- 2.5 The Traffic and Parking Forum also discussed the poor air quality in parts of the town centre.
- 2.6 The nitrogen dioxide and particulate levels within the town centre requiring the development of an action plan to ensure these are addressed over the next few years. Following agreement to declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) within the town, an Informal Officer/Member Working Group has been established to develop the action plan over the next 18 months in partnership with other agencies involved in traffic management and transport. Once the draft action plan has been completed there will be widespread consultation on its content before revision and implementation. The AQMA Group would also investigate ways in which to reduce traffic congestion, which was another concern raised at the Forum, as congestion was the single greatest cause of poor air quality.
- 2.7 A Member of the public commented on the traffic and parking situation along Parchment Street and Councillor Beveridge indicated that, as there was a possibility of traffic improvement works in this area, he recommended that concerned local residents should contact the Council. Since the meeting, consultation has commenced on the option of changing the direction of traffic flow in Parchment Street, but progress will depend on any objections received when the proposal is formally advertised.
- 2.8 A representative of the Riverside Bowling Club also spoke at the Forum and stated that the Club needed more than the 18 free car spaces the Council had allocated them, following the introduction of Pay and Display at the River Park Leisure Centre Car Park. Since the meeting, Pay and Display has commenced at this car park and a total of 19 spaces and two disabled bays are available for the use of the Bowling Club members, which is considered reasonable having regard to the overall provision.

### **3 Winchester Town Forum (Councillors Meeting) - 4 February 2003**

- 3.1 Graham Love, the City Centre Manager, recommended that the Council should consider increasing its expenditure on Christmas Lights to cover more of the town centre.
- 3.2 Since the meeting, a new three year contract for the erection of the lights has been agreed. As the sum is within the existing budget, it has been possible to renew some fittings and make some minor additions to the lights for 2003/04. The cost of making a more extensive extension to the lights (for example to include 10 new strings in a section of Jewry Street) would require a one off cost to set up the electrical supply and fittings in the order of £15 - £25,000. This would also lead to an increase in annual costs of £2,000.

- 3.3 In the current financial climate it is suggested that such additional expenditure is unlikely to be considered a priority for funding.
- 3.4 At the meeting, the Director of Finance stated that the balance on the Town account was higher than originally anticipated. Forum was requested to give an indication of whether this reserve should be spent, or whether Members would prefer a one year reduction in the Council Tax for the Town.
- 3.5 Members discussed a number of potential spending items, such as the improved maintenance of recreation grounds and play areas. They agreed to recommend to Cabinet that the Council Tax for the Town should be set at the previous year's level (£46.75) to maintain a reasonable level of reserves, whilst allowing a measure of increased spending. This was agreed at Cabinet on 12 February 2003 (Report CAB 543 refers).
- 3.6 At its meeting, the Forum requested that reports on the Christmas Lights budget and the projected spending on recreation grounds be considered at the 7 April 2003 meeting of the Forum. Updates on these points are set out in the Budget report to the Forum councillors meeting on 13 January 2004.

#### **4 Winchester Town Forum: Youth Issues Public Meeting - 13 March 2003**

##### **4.1 Communication:**

- 4.2 One of the main themes that came from the Youth Issues Forum was the need for the Council to improve its communication with the young people who live or study in the town area.
- 4.3 Discussions on communication with young people are a regular feature of meetings of the Winchester Young People's Agency Group (WYPAG). Work has started on assessing the feasibility of a young people's website maintained with young people. The Connexions web-site for young people is already established and contains a great deal of useful information. It is not possible to go further than this without additional expenditure for which there is no budget provision.
- 4.4 A Youth Council is still being considered. Whilst it has obvious merits, it is also necessary to support it and resource it, both of which may be difficult at present
- 4.5 A dedicated officer responsible for Youth Issues was suggested, but this would depend upon additional expenditure and would be difficult to achieve given the Council's agreed financial strategy.
- 4.6 Other suggestions from the Forum to improve the way the Council communicated with young people included: more information on what was available through schools, posters at bus shelters etc; to improve the awareness of groups such as Face to Face and the Young Carers; greater interaction in the decision making processes (such as Broadway/Friarsgate) with on-going feedback; more school visits by the Council; and learning best practices from other authorities.

4.7 The Forum also noted that delays in the provision of services had been caused by staff shortages in the Community Services department and it was recommended that more temporary staff should be considered. This situation is being addressed by the Director.

#### 4.8 Better Facilities

4.9 There is clearly a major issue for Winchester as to how to develop facilities and services for young people which are not based around the 'pub and club' culture. The County Youth Service, many voluntary sector organisations, churches and the police have given support to activities such as the SNAPs discos held at River Park Leisure Centre. Major developments, such as the Broadway/Friarsgate scheme, will have an impact on what is available for young people who are too young for, or not interested in, pubs and clubs. It is important that this be considered when decisions about the content of the Broadway/Friarsgate scheme are made.

4.10 A number of comments were made about the need for a facility which young people could use without costing them money. Broadway/Friarsgate and the County Council's 'discovery centre' plans for the replacement library complex provide good opportunities for providing more low or no cost places for young people to meet, socialise and gain access to services.

4.11 The newly established Highcliffe Action Group formed with support of the Winchester Neighbourhood Initiative will look into the establishment of a Youth Club in the area.

4.12 The Forum picked up a concern relating to the maintenance standards of the playing fields and their standards are currently under review.

4.13 A Graffiti wall by the skate-park was suggested and is being considered but there are mixed views on pros and cons.

4.14 However, new play equipment in King George V playing field has been ordered following a highly successful public consultation. Consultation on a new skateboarding facility at King George V playing field has been completed and the installation will be undertaken in the autumn.

4.15 In response to other suggestions, Broadway/Friarsgate provides an opportunity for these to be pursued, such as an informal music venue and more clothes shops focused on young people.

4.16 However, in terms of music events the Theatre Royal currently works in partnership with the Tower Arts Centre to promote smaller events and activities.

4.17 Those at the Forum meeting also raised concerns about the need to help homeless people/drug users, drop in creches, band rehearsal and venues for live music in Winchester, and a cinema better aimed at young people's needs.

#### 4.18 Safety and Drug Issues

4.19 A number of young people at the Forum voiced concerns with regard to safety and drug issues. The Council has supported the development of new support services for drug users via the Trinity Centre outreach work.

4.20 With regard to safety, the actual number of incidents is small, but it is true that some people feel intimidated by the atmosphere in a small part of Winchester. This issue is considered very carefully in licensing decisions and community safety work with the police. A budget bid for this has been submitted to Cabinet in considering the 2004/05 budget.

4.21 In addition, concerns were raised at the Forum about child protection issues, the need for better public lighting (white rather than orange bulbs), an extension to CCTV and identity cards to prevent underage drinking.

#### 4.22 Homelessness

4.23 Winchester City Council has now completed its homelessness strategy that was approved by Cabinet on 30 July 2003. The strategy included conducting a review of all services, and an assessment of the current provisions within the wider community following consultations with service users, and partner agencies in the voluntary and private sector. In summary the strategy sets out in its delivery plan, how it intends to work towards meeting three clear aims,

- The prevention of homelessness
- Ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available for homeless people
- Ensuring there is satisfactory support for people who are homeless, or who need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again

4.24 A concern was also raised at the Forum for tighter controls at the Night Shelter.

#### 4.25 Transport

4.26 Concerns were raised about the provision of bus services between Winchester and the surrounding areas, the loss of public transport passes to sixth form students, and the need for more secured bike parking.

#### 4.27 Financial

4.28 A number of comments were made relating to how to help young people with debt. The Council attempts to provide advice to all people who come to it with debt problems and, in most cases, the matters are referred to the CAB who have particular expertise in this area. The Housing Service has been working closely with the CAB in the last year to help those who are homeless, or have tenancy problems and are in need of financial advice. Finally, the Council has been supporting the development of a Credit Union in the Winchester area which will attempt to provide a savings and loan service for all who live or work in the Winchester area. This may go a long way to help those who feel excluded from high street financial institutions.

### **5 Winchester Town Forum (Councillors Meeting) - 7 April 2003**

5.1 This meeting considered the views and comments raised at the Youth Issues Forum.

5.2 Councillors noted the need to improve the recreational grounds in the Town area and recommended to Cabinet that the standards of the grounds maintenance contracts be improved. The Community Services Department is currently reviewing the grounds maintenance specification to examine ways in which a greater proportion of available resources can be put into this area.

- 5.3 Members also recommended that signs should be erected at the entrance to the recreational grounds advising visitors whom to call if there was a maintenance problem. Signs are being designed and will be installed as soon as they have been manufactured.
- 5.4 The Forum noted that many of the young people at the Forum requested that the Council consider additional lighting and CCTV in recreational areas. Although permanent CCTV is not likely to be an option, the use of temporary CCTV in hotspots is considered feasible.
- 5.5 The Councillors' Meeting also recommended that the results of Councillor Porter's Youth Survey be fully analysed by officers, that the City Council should have officer level representation on the Winchester Young People's Agency Group (WYPAG), and that a progress report on the outcomes of meeting be sent to those who had attended the Public Meeting. Officers from various departments do attend WYPAG meetings on a regular basis (as they always have) but a report has not yet been prepared as the Council as a whole has not conclusively addressed its position on youth issues.

## **6 Winchester Town Forum: The Broadway/Friarsgate Redevelopment Public Meeting - 7 April 2003**

- 6.1 This meeting was held as part of the public consultation on the re-development of the Broadway/Friarsgate area. A number of comments were made by the public in attendance and it was requested that these were put into writing so that they could be taken into account when considering comments on the draft Planning Brief. Comments on the draft Planning Brief were considered and several changes made prior to the adoption of the Brief in June 2003.
- 6.2 In particular, the suggestions to employ a number of architects across the re-development to encourage a variety of architectural styles, the concerns about the re-location of the health facilities and, if the health facilities remained in the area, the need for vehicle drop-off points, were all noted at the Councillors' meeting of the Forum held on 19 May 2003.

## **7 Winchester Town Forum (Councillors Meeting) - 19 May 2003**

- 7.1 In addition to the consideration of the issues raised in relation to the Broadway/Friarsgate redevelopment, Members also discussed community safety issues and Community Wardens. A trip to Southampton City Council was organised and attended by Members of the Forum and a trip to Andover was undertaken by officers in early November to look at other approaches.
- 7.2 It was agreed that a report on suggested topics for future public meetings be presented at the 29 July 2003 meeting of the Forum. This was covered in Report WTF14.
- 7.3 This meeting of Forum also requested that the Community Safety Officer investigate the proposed reduction in Police Liaison Officers. Those investigations revealed that the proposed reduction arose from a best value type review and the Chief Constable appointed an Inspector (working in the Community Safety Section) to develop a new programme, which is now underway. It is unlikely, however, that there will be anything to report before Easter 2004.

## **8 Winchester Town Forum: Housing Issues Public Meeting - 17 July 2003**

- 8.3 Arising from this meeting was the need to increase the number of affordable houses in the District. It was noted that the Council had adopted policies in its emerging local plan that meant that 35% of all new developments above five units were to be affordable.
- 8.4 Other comments concerned student accommodation in the town and the condition of houses in multiple occupation. The Council has introduced a voluntary accreditation scheme for landlords, to ensure that their properties reach certain basic standards for fire safety, repair and amenity provisions. The scheme also requires tenants to co-operate with landlords to ensure that satisfactory standards are maintained. Breaches of these standards may result in the loss of accreditation status and further action to resolve any contraventions.

## **9 Winchester Town Forum (Councillors Meeting) - 29 July 2003**

- 9.1 In discussing the publicity arrangements for the Forum, Members requested that information be presented at the 30 October meeting on the possibility and cost of a Town Forum newsletter being sent to every town area property. (Report WTF17 refers and a decision was deferred to the 13 January 2004 Councillors' meeting.)
- 9.2 This meeting also established the topics and dates of the 2003/04 Public Meetings and these were agreed as Older Peoples Issues, Public Parking, Community Safety and Quality of the Environment and Modern Architecture in Historic Towns.

## **10 Winchester Town Forum: Older Peoples Issues Public Meeting - 1 September 2003**

- 10.1 Some of the main issues that were raised included discrimination against older people at the workplace.
- 10.2 The City Council's equal opportunities policy states;
- "Regardless of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other differences, we are committed to equality for all people. We recognise and value diversity and believe that equality is central to the provision of modern quality services."
- 10.3 The Council's current employment practices aim to reflect this statement and do comply with current employment legislation. This will be reviewed in the light of any legislative changes and in line with our commitment to promoting equality and diversity.
- 10.4 Some of the public at the meeting expressed concern at the level of Council Tax and recent increases which they considered exceeded any increase in the rate of pensions.
- 10.5 The City Council collects the Council Tax on behalf of the County Council, the Police and the Parish Councils, and retains approximately 9%. The budgetary process for 2004/05 has just begun and there would be opportunities for public participation at the various Committee stages of the process. The Council's approach in recent years has been to endeavour to adopt a neutral budget with any requests for increased budgets (for additional services or staff, for example) being matched by reductions in budgets or increased income. This year is no exception and a similar process is being



followed, but with more emphasis being put on providing services that are in line with the Council's corporate priorities.

- 10.6 A large part of the Council's budget is financed by Government grant and, because of a number of changes to the way in which it will be calculated for next year, there is uncertainty about how much the grant will be. If it is considerably less than is received currently, budgets may need to be reduced to make up any shortfall.
- 10.7 Cabinet considered the overall budget at its meeting on 15 October and the Performance Improvement Committees are considering the details in this cycle. Updates are contained in the budget report elsewhere on the agenda.
- 10.8 The City Council is not likely to know until Christmas what its grant will be and Cabinet will be making decisions about the budget and Council Tax in the New Year.

#### **11 Winchester Town Forum (Councillors Meeting) - 30 October 2003**

- 11.1 At this meeting, Members requested that the Director of Finance investigate other possible areas of expenditure that would be normal jurisdiction of Parish Councils which the Forum could consider, such as commuted maintenance and Open Spaces funding. It was agreed that the Director of Finance be requested to prepare a budget report for the 13 January 2004 meeting of the Councillors' Forum.
- 11.2 With regard to the five-year programme of works for the town's play areas, Members requested that the Forum should consider this before any final decision was made on the strategy.
- 11.3 Members also discussed Community Wardens and requested to be informed of the progress of this scheme and appointed Councillor Nelmes to monitor and report back to future meetings.
- 11.4 Councillor Nunn commented on the nuisance caused by illegal fly posters in the town area. Whilst it was noted that some of these advertised the type of events that were encouraged at the Youth Issues meeting, Members requested that the City Secretary and Solicitor provide further information on what steps the Council could take. A Member also commented at the amount of graffiti in the town area and requested information on what measures the Council takes in combating this. (This is covered in Report WTF21)

#### **12 Winchester Town Forum: Car Parking Public Meeting - 17 November 2003**

- 12.1 It was explained that the City Council had just embarked on a review of public car parking and that the comments made would be considered as part of the review. The questions and their responses are set out in full in the minutes of the Forum (Report WTF13 refers).

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