

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**6 January 2005**Attendance:Councillors:

Pearce (Chairman) (P)

Bennetts (P)
Berry
Beveridge (P)
Davies (P)
de Peyer (P)
Higgins (P)
Hiscock (P)
Love (P)
Mather (P)

Maynard (P)
Mitchell (P)
Nelmes (P)
Nunn (P)
Pines (P)
Rees
Saunders (P)
Tait (P)

1. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman announced the sad death of Councillor Berry's husband, who had died the previous evening, and the Forum expressed their sympathy and asked that their condolences be passed on to Councillor Berry.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Berry and Rees.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 24 November 2004, be approved and adopted.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mrs Edwards and Mrs McIntosh spoke as representatives of the City of Winchester Trust. They recommended that the City Council should investigate the possibility of adopting the principles of the Cittaslow Movement and their comments were considered during the Vision for Winchester statement (report WTF44 refers) below.

5. **COMMUNITY GRANTS – REVENUE AWARDS 2005/06**

(Report WTF42 refers)

Councillor de Peyer declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect to the application from the King Alfred Youth Activity Centre as he was a Trustee of the Group. Councillor de Peyer left the room during the consideration of this item.

Councillor de Peyer also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect to the application from the Winnall Rock School, because of the relationship between the Rock School and the King Alfred Youth Activity Centre (from whom the Rock School rented accommodation). Councillor de Peyer left the room during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Higgins declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect to the application from the Winnall Youth Club as he was a member of its Committee and left the room during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Pines declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect to the application from the Winnall Rock School as he was the Chairman of the Group. Councillor Pines left the room during the consideration of this item.

Councillor Pines also declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect to the applications from Winnall Community Centre Playschemes and the Winnall Youth Club as he was a Building Trustee of the Winnall Community Centre who rented accommodation to these Groups. Councillor Pines spoke and voted thereon.

Councillor Tait declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect to the application from the Carroll Youth Centre as the Council's nominated representative on the Group. Councillor Tait left the room during the consideration of this item.

The Forum considered a number of revenue grant applications that had been made by organisations that predominately served the Winchester Town. The Director of Community Services explained that each application had been considered against an assessment matrix to ensure that each had been considered in a fair and objective manner. He advised that the level of grants recommended within the report were a result of this assessment process but advised that the large reserve of the Town Account could enable Members to recommend to Cabinet a larger grant if they so wished. In discussing this issue, it was noted that it may not be possible to provide significantly larger grants to applicants in future years, so Members agreed that to do so for the 2005/06 financial year only would hold disadvantages for the both the applicant and the Council.

During discussion, the Forum noted the on-going rent discussions between the King Alfred Youth Activity Centre and its tenant, the Winnall Rock School. As Members wished to bring about a quick and satisfactory resolution to these discussions, it was agreed that the grants to these Groups would be dependent upon this.

The Director answered a number of queries relating to the work of the Groups who had applied for revenue grants and confirmed that all the applications received had been included in the report. He also explained that each grant would be accompanied by a service level agreement which would ensure there was no duplication of administration costs between those organisations that tried to help similar groups of people.

In respect to the Winchester Live at Home Scheme, Members agreed to recommend to Cabinet a revenue grant of up to £5,000, subject to further information on the organisation's expenses and work at its next meeting to be held on 3 March 2005.

After debate, Members agreed to award the following revenue grant awards for 2005/06 as set out below.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet approve the following revenue grants for 2005/06:
 - i) Carroll Youth Centre £5,000
 - ii) King Alfred Youth Activity Centre £8,112 (subject to the speedy and satisfactory conclusion of its accommodation discussions with the Winnall Rock School)
 - iii) Winnall Community Centre Playschemes £5,000
 - iv) Winnall Rock School £5,000 (subject to the speedy and satisfactory conclusion of its accommodation discussions with the King Alfred Youth Activity Centre)
 - v) Winnall Youth Club £1,000

2. That Cabinet approve up to £5,000 grant funding for the Winchester Live at Home Scheme, subject to further information on the organisation's expenses and work, to be considered at the next meeting of the Forum (3 March 2005).

6. **REVENUE SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ST FAITH'S MEADOW RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT**
(Report WTF41 refers)

The Director of Development Services explained that the City Council owned and had responsibility for the St Faith's Meadow (near St Cross, Winchester). This meadow was part of the Itchen Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) but through a lack of adequate management its condition had deteriorated. Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 public bodies were responsible for managing their SSSIs to a favourable condition, and the report recommended that funds be made available from the Town Account for the Restoration and Management Plan which was drawn up and would be undertaken for the meadow by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust with local volunteers. The Plan proposed to clear a plantation of cricket bat willows, control invading species, allow seasonal flooding (to encourage a rich biodiversity) and to open views of St Catherine's Hill from Keat's Walk.

At the conclusion of its debate, the Forum agreed with the request for funding, subject to the balance of funding being found from other sources.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet support the project and approve funding of £5,000 per annum for three years (starting in 2005/06) from the Town Account, subject to the balance of funding being found from other sources.

7. **WINCHESTER TOWN BUDGET 2005/06**
(Report WTF40 refers)

The Forum considered a report which set out a summary of the Winchester Town base budgets and services for 2004/05 and 2005/06, the options for the tax level and reserve balance and information on the Open Space Deposits reserve. The Forum noted that if the current spending, income and precept levels were maintained, the

Town Account reserve would be approximately £159,000, which would be £96,000 more than the minimum recommended reserve of 10% of the total annual expenditure (£63,000). Members therefore considered the options for reducing the Town Account precept, but decided against this as it was likely that the precept level would need to be increased in future years.

During debate, Members considered the possibility of creating new play-areas and improving grounds maintenance. In response, the Director of Community Services explained that the latest progress on the five-year programme of improvements to play-areas would be considered by the next meeting of the Forum on 3 March 2005.

In response to comments about improving street cleaning, the Director of Health and Housing stated that it was likely that the proposed Clean Neighbourhood Bill would, if passed, lead to a significant increase in spending on street cleaning from the General Fund.

Members considered the possibility of extending the Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme if it proved to be successful. The Forum noted the likely difficulties of attracting matching funds from the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund in 2005 and beyond and therefore agreed to set aside £50,000 of the reserve to fund the possibility of an additional warden (at a cost of £25,000 per year) for two years. If necessary, it was agreed that subsequent funding could come from an increase in the tax level.

At their previous meeting, the Forum had agreed to approve £10,000 for the remainder of the 2004/05 financial year to assist Neighbourhood Design Statements and Local Area Design Statements. In considering the 2005/06 budget, Members agreed that a further £10,000 should be included for the development of Neighbourhood Design Statements and Members requested that the Forward Planning Team Manager should update the next meeting with further information.

Notwithstanding the proposed improvements to grounds maintenance the Director of Community Services outlined, Members agreed that the condition audit of the town's trees should be progressed as quickly as possible and committed up to £20,000 in the 2005/06 budget towards this. A Member also requested that the Arboricultural Officer update the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet approve the detailed budget for 2005/06 and the revised budget for 2004/05 and that the level of Council Tax within the Winchester Town area for 2005/06 remain at £46.75.

2. That it be recommended to Cabinet that the Director of Finance be asked to consider in the main budget report how the items set out above can be included in the 2005/06 budget and financed from the Winchester Town Account.

8. DRAFT VISION FOR WINCHESTER
(Report WTF44 refers)

The Director of Development Services presented to the Forum the draft Vision for Winchester Statement for comment. He explained that the draft had been circulated to the Forum, the local strategic partners, residents' associations and the Hampshire Chronicle newspaper. Members noted that some of the illustrations within the draft would be changed in the final published document.

During discussion Members welcomed the Statement and thanked the Director and his team for the work involved. In making minor changes to the Statement, it was agreed that the Vision should more clearly state that it applied to the town area only and therefore clarify all references to “the town” and “the City” (which represented the entire district) and the related statistics. Similarly, the Director agreed to reconsider the style of parts of the Vision and to eliminate technical jargon. It was also agreed that the Vision should also refer to the Council’s strategic aim of social inclusion.

In response to questions, the Director explained that the Vision would not become a legally binding document, but was a list of the Council’s and its partner’s aspirations for the future of the town to influence existing and emerging plans. The Chief Executive added that progress against the Vision could be monitored by an annual report to the Councillors’ Town Forum.

The Forum noted that the Vision included a statement to promote Winchester as a fair trade town and to examine the benefits of joining the “slow cities” or Cittaslow movement. The Chief Executive explained that the City Council had been represented on a fact-finding trip organised by the City of Winchester Trust to Ludlow, which was the first (and only) Cittaslow accredited town in England. It was noted that the Cittaslow Movement had begun in Italy as a reaction to the fast food culture, following the opening of a McDonalds store in Rome in 1986. Since then the Movement had spread to over 100 towns across Europe. It rejected the homogenisation of High Street by multi-national chains and instead encouraged local skills and produce that would better protect the local environment. The Chief Executive reported that in order to meet the City of Winchester Trust’s call for the town to become Cittaslow accredited, the Council would be required to meet 30% of the Movement’s criteria and pay an annual subscription of €500 in addition to a signing-on fee.

From the visit to Ludlow, the Chief Executive suggested that whilst Cittaslow accreditation could provide Winchester with a distinctive marketing tool and a good basis for community involvement, its promotion of small traders could have a negative impact on people living on low-incomes. In addition, he suggested that the differences between the principles of the Vision and those of Cittaslow were so slight as to question the benefit of Cittaslow accreditation.

Whilst in general the majority of Members welcomed the principles of the Cittaslow Movement, some concerns were expressed over marketing Winchester as a “slow” city and, in conclusion, it was noted that the City of Winchester Trust were likely to submit an official case for accreditation at a later date.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet approve the Vision for Winchester Statement, subject to minor amendments to be made by the Director of Development Services.

9. 2005 PUBLIC MEETINGS PROGRAMME
(Report WTF43 refers)

The Director of Health and Housing summarised the proposed arrangements for the next public meeting to be held on 1 February 2005 on Air Quality Issues.

Following debate on possible subjects for future public meetings the Forum agreed to hold meetings on:

- Tourism in Winchester Town
- The Work of the Archaeological Team with the possible inclusion of a discussion of future displays and the role of the Cultural Centre
- The Evening Economy

It was agreed that the timetable for these Forums would be agreed with officers after the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the following public meetings of the Forum be agreed:

- i) Tourism Issues: 7.00pm Monday 28 February 2005
- ii) Archaeological Issues: 7.00pm Monday 11 April 2005
- iii) The Evening Economy: 7.00pm Wednesday 11 May 2005

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

Chairman