

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**22 November 2006****Attendance:****Councillors:**

Rees (Chairman) (P)

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

Nelmes (P)
Nunn (P)
Pearce (P)
Pines (P)
Saunders (P)
Stephens
Tait (P)
Worrall (P)

Others in Attendance who did not address the Meeting

Councillor Beckett (The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism)

1. MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum, held on 12 October 2006, be approved and adopted.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mrs C Adamson (a resident of St Cross) spoke on behalf of approximately 20 residents who attended the Forum, against the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's recent decision to allow sheep to graze on St Catherines Hill, which meant that dogs had to be kept on a short lead. The decision had effectively meant that local dog walkers were forced to stop using the hill. She explained that the Trust had not undertaken any consultation before implementing their decision, and that this had had a detrimental impact on dog walkers and the wider community. Mrs Adamson had raised a petition of approximately 1000 signatures which represented the level of concern regarding the decision. She explained that the petition would be presented to the local MP, Mark Oaten.

In response, the Forum acknowledged the concerns raised by Mrs Adamson and agreed to forward these in writing to the Trust, to try and encourage a better dialogue between local residents and the Trust.

Miss J Pope expressed her concern regarding the possible contra-flow for buses from the Silver Hill development, as she considered that this could result in an unnecessary proliferation of traffic lights and roundabouts in the town centre. In response, the Chief Executive explained that highways

issues, such as those raised by Miss Pope, would be considered by the Planning Development Control Committee in determining the application early in the New Year.

3. **OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION STUDY**
(Report WTF78 refers)

The Forum welcomed to the meeting, Mr Phillips and Mr Chichester from Inspace Planning, the Council's consultants on the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study. Mr Phillips and Mr Chichester gave the Forum a powerpoint presentation which is available on the Town Forum's webpage at www.winchester.gov.uk.

In summary, the presentation explained that the new Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) required all local authorities to audit open space, sports and recreational facilities within their districts. At its conclusion, the audit would identify gaps in provision and be able to recommend a strategy for improving open space, sports and recreational facilities, to which local authorities and its partner organisations could work towards.

During discussion, the Forum underlined the opportunity for greater Member involvement in the Study and that the issues at St Catherines Hill should be considered as part of the review.

Members also noted that the new guidance encouraged local authorities to set its own standards for open space, sport and recreation facilities and agreed to forward any comments they may have through the Chairman, who sat on the Study's Advisory Group, or through Inspace's website at www.inspaceplanning.co.uk.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Forum thank Inspace Planning for their work to date on the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study and that Ward Members feed any comments relating to the Study through the Chairman of the Forum, for further discussion through the Study's Advisory Group.

2. That local organisations within the Town be encouraged to assist the consultants with information and feedback wherever possible.

4. **CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU – PRESENTATION BY JENNY MEADOWS,**
BUREAU MANAGER
(Oral Report)

Ms Meadows gave the Forum a powerpoint presentation on the work of the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in Winchester, which is available on the Town Forum's webpage at www.winchester.gov.uk

In response, Members congratulated CAB on their excellent work in the community and noted their financial concerns. With regard to the level of rent for which CAB were liable, the Chief Executive explained that negotiations were on-going with Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) regarding the future of the building.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

5. **OUTDOOR SPORTS CENTRE – BAR END, WINCHESTER**
(Report WTF84 refers)

Members noted that Report WTF84 had not been notified for inclusion on the agenda within the statutory deadline. The Chairman agreed to accept the item as a matter requiring urgent consideration as Cabinet (at its meeting on 15 November 2006) had requested that it be considered by this meeting, which was after the dispatch date for the Forum.

All Members supported the proposed Sports Centre, but some concerns had been raised at the previous meeting of the Forum held on 12 October 2006 regarding its funding.

The proposed Sports Centre was a partnership between the University, the City Council and three local sports organisations. The City Council had agreed at Council on 19 July 2006 and at Cabinet and Principal Scrutiny (both held on 10 July 2006) that it would contribute £1 million towards the total cost of the scheme. Approximately £666,000 of the Council's contribution would come from the Town Account's Open Space Fund for Sports Provision. The Fund had grown to this significant amount because, to date, there had been little opportunity and space to spend the contributions which had been gained from developments in the town.

However, several Members were concerned that the shortfall in the Council's contribution (approximately £334,000) would, in effect, be loaned to the Town's Open Space Fund from the General Fund. Cabinet and Council had agreed that this loan would be repaid by the Town's Open Space Fund as and when new developers' contributions became available, such as through the proposed Silver Hill development.

Several Members argued that the Centre would serve the whole District and as such, it was unfair that the entirety of the Council's contribution should come solely from the Town's funds. Therefore, they suggested that Cabinet be asked to follow the precedent set at other sports facilities which served the wider District (such as those at Swanmore School and Denmead Pavillion) with a permanent contribution from the General Fund to make up the £334,000 shortfall. In suggesting this, they highlighted the £5m reserve held by the General Fund for capital expenditure.

Similarly, they suggested that Parish Councils be requested to contribute their uncommitted sports funds towards the scheme. During discussion, it was suggested that the Open Space Strategy permitted Parish Councils to commit funds outside of their immediate local area. Other Members at the Forum suggested that this was not possible.

Members also raised concerns regarding the Fund's ability to repay the loan to the General Fund. The Chief Executive explained that proposed changes to the way developers' contributions were administered, meant that some of the money currently collected in the form of Section 106 Legal Agreements may be pooled for national or regional projects. This could result in a smaller

amount being available for local projects such as the Sports Centre. However, Section 106 contributions would not be abolished completely.

During debate, a Member highlighted that the proposed Sports Centre would result in a net loss of sports space, as there were no plans to replace the football pitches on which part of the Centre would be built.

In response to a suggestion that the current Sports Provision Fund had been saved to acquire additional land for sports use, the Director of Communities explained that no such land had yet become available and that the proposed Sports Centre represented an excellent use of this Fund. The Director also explained that the funding of the scheme would not affect the five year programme of playground refurbishments.

The Forum noted the Leader's commitment that, should they come forward, other modest sports projects in the town would be unaffected by the Centre. In clarifying this, the Director explained that all projects would be assessed by officers, to ascertain whether they met the criteria for funding. However, several Members remained concerned with regard to the Town's ability to support any other large scale sports projects which may come forward in the future.

In contrast, other Members had no objection to the funding of the scheme, which they argued had been previously agreed by the Council and over which the Forum had no executive control. They also stressed that the Centre was a legitimate and practical use of the otherwise unused Fund, that they noted the constraints on the General Fund, and that the Forum should be cautious not to jeopardize the success of a bid for further funding from Sport England and the Sita Trust, to be submitted on 4 December 2006.

However, at the conclusion of debate, the majority of the Forum agreed with the amended resolution as set out below, so as to provide Cabinet with an opportunity to reconsider the Centre's funding.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Forum re-affirms its support for the provision of an Outdoor Sports Centre at Bar End, Winchester and approves the allocation of the uncommitted Sports element of the Open Space Fund for Winchester Town (approximately £666,000) towards the £1m required from Winchester City Council towards the cost of the Sports Centre.
2. That the Forum advises Cabinet of its deep concern about the requirement in the Council's resolution of 19 July 2006 regarding the Sports Centre, that future sums received in the Open Space Fund of Winchester Town for Sports Provision (the maximum amount being approximately £334,000) be used to repay the sums provided by the City Council's General Fund towards the £1million contribution for the Sports Centre.
3. That the Forum asks Cabinet to:
 - a) acknowledge that the Sports Centre is a facility which will serve the whole District;

b) authorise officers to request Parish Councils in the District to contribute their uncommitted sports funds in accordance with the provision of the Open Space Strategy towards the £1million required from the City Council;

c) and, follow the precedents when sums from the General Fund have been allocated towards the cost of sports and other facilities which serve a significant part of the District and to commit permanently from the General Fund the balance required to complete the £1 million total.

6. **WINCHESTER DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – CORE STRATEGY**

(Report WTF81 refers)

The Chief Executive summarised the Report.

During discussion, the Forum agreed that it could have a future role to play in the consultation process of the Strategy, although this was likely to become clearer through the work of the new Cabinet (Local Development Framework) Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

7. **REPORT BACK ON THE CITY COUNCIL'S LINKS WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER**

(Oral Report)

Following Professor Carter's presentation to the previous meeting, the Chief Executive explained that he, together with the Leader and Chairman of the Forum, would meet with the University every six months. During discussion, Members noted an initiative from Giessen to improve their links with the University.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

8. **NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS SCHEME – FIRST YEAR EVALUATION**

(Report WTF80 refers)

Following the Director of Communities presentation of the Report, the Forum unanimously congratulated the Wardens on an excellent first year of operation. During discussion, the Forum noted that the Wardens had developed a mutually beneficial relationship with a local supermarket regarding the collection of shopping trolleys; their role in litter picking; and the collection of used hypodermic needles.

In response to comments, the Director explained that route plans and shift patterns had been devised to ensure that the Wardens would be more visible on-foot and therefore more accessible to local people. The Director also

clarified that Police Community Safety Officers and Accredited Community Safety Officers would not duplicate the work of the Wardens, if introduced.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

9. **WINCHESTER ACCESS PLAN**
(Report WTF82 refers)

The Director of Development explained that the process for drafting the Winchester Access Plan would be launched by a joint Members' seminar between the City and County Councils on 23 January 2007. Members suggested that the City of Winchester Trust and other appropriate groups should be invited to attend subsequent events. It was noted that the Plan would consider traffic management issues in the town and the impact of the new Park and Ride.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

10. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT BUDGET 2006/07**
(Report WTF83 refers)

The Director of Finance explained that, at its meeting on 16 January 2007, the Forum would be asked to recommend a Town Account Budget to Cabinet. The purpose of the above Report was to help identify any issues Members may wish to consider in further depth at the January meeting.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed that its next budget report should include details regarding each spending item. The Forum also indicated a reluctance to reduce its Grants Budget and that, if savings were unavoidable, they could be drawn from the much larger Recreation Grounds and Open Spaces Budget. Members also requested further information on the possibility of extending the Neighbourhood Wardens Scheme to Weeke (with a financial contribution from Littleton and Harestock Parish Council), further information on footpath lighting and the Town Account's support for the St Faiths Meadow Project.

RESOLVED:

That the 2006/07 Town Account Budget Report be presented to the next meeting of the Forum, to be held on 16 January 2007, containing the information as set out above.

11. **POWERS OF THE WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**
(Report WTF79)

Due to the late hour at which the Forum arrived at this item on the agenda and the importance of the implications it set out, it was agreed to hold an informal meeting of the Forum to consider the above Report. It was requested that this meeting be attended by the City Secretary and Solicitor to provide legal advice and that examples of how similar organisations worked elsewhere be provided.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations in the Report be deferred to the next meeting (16 January 2007) and that an informal meeting of the Forum be held prior to this to highlight any issues that may need further investigation.

12. **UPDATE ON THE PUBLIC MEETINGS SCHEDULE**
(Oral Report)

The City Secretary and Solicitor reported that the next public meeting would be held on youth issues at Peter Symonds College, at 4.45pm on Monday 22 January 2007. It was explained that the time and location were chosen to maximise the number of young people that could attend the event.

The following public meeting would be held to discuss Creative Winchester. It was proposed that this meeting be held at the University of Winchester, but at this stage, a date had not yet been finalised.

During discussion, a Member suggested a further public meeting to discuss the impact of aircraft noise on the town.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.50pm

Chairman