

CABINET

14 November 2007

Attendance:

Councillor Beckett – *Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism* (Chairman) (P)

Councillor Allgood – *Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources* (P)

Councillor Coates – *Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities* (P)

Councillor Hollingbery – *Portfolio Holder for Performance and Communications* (P)

Councillor Pearson – *Portfolio Holder for Environment, Health and Safety* (P)

Councillor Stallard - *Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Sport* (P)

Councillor Wood – *Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport* (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillors Beveridge, Biggs, Busher, Evans, Jackson, Learney and Hiscock

1. **MINUTES**

Councillor Allgood clarified that he had attended a Management Studies Award *Ceremony* at Winchester Royal County Hospital.

RESOLVED:

That subject to noting the above point, the minutes of the previous meetings, less exempt items, held on 17 October 2007 be approved and adopted.

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Cabinet noted that Mrs L Banister wished to speak under the item on Tower Arts Centre (Report CAB1558 refers).

3. **LEADER AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Allgood stated that the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association Recruitment Portal would go live on 3 December 2007. In addition, he reported on the usefulness of the recent Audit Commission visit which had considered access to Council services. The final report from the visit was expected soon.

Councillor Coates stated that at last week's Winchester Housing Forum, Adamson and Partners had given the keynote address on the subject of the standard of homes throughout the District, which were amongst the highest in the country in terms of energy efficiency.

4. **TOWER ARTS CENTRE – RESPONSE TO PETITION**
(Report [CAB1558](#) refers)

Under the Council's Constitution, Access to Information Procedure Rules (Rule 15.1 General Exception), this was a Key Decision, which had not been included in the Forward Plan. Under this procedure, the Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee had been informed.

Councillor Allgood declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of this item, as the Tower Arts Centre was owned by the County Council, of which he was a Member. He remained in the room during the public participation session, made a brief statement on the current situation (as outlined below) and then left the room and took no further part in the debate.

Mrs L Banister addressed Cabinet under the public participation procedure, on behalf of the petitioner, Mr A Marsden, who was unable to attend this meeting. She advised that she had helped establish the "Save Towers Arts" campaign group and the e-petition against the Centre's closure, referred to in the Report, now had over 2,000 signatures. In summary, her arguments for keeping the Centre were: its inclusive nature; its accessibility (both physically and psychologically); it encouraged active participation in its activities; and its engagement with the Stanmore Ward. She emphasised that the recent public meeting on the future of the Arts Centre was attended by approximately 450 people, the vast majority of whom supported its retention. The campaign group had already raised some funds to seek to achieve this and could become the nucleus for a future management committee. However, she requested that the City Council increase its financial contribution towards the Centre and work with the County Council to achieve a realistic timeframe for a transfer to a new management body (suggested to be three years).

Councillor Allgood stated that he had met with the Head and Deputy Head of Kings School, together with the Chairman of the School Governors, to discuss the way forward. The School had stated that if a decision was not reached by the County Council on 7 December 2007, it would withdraw any possible support for the Centre the future. The School had offered to continue day-time activities at the Arts Centre, but not an evening programme, which would have to be addressed through other means. Councillor Allgood left the meeting after making this statement.

In response, the Chairman advised that he had spoken to the Leader of the County Council on a number of occasions regarding this matter, who had indicated that their position regarding the transfer of the ownership of the Centre to Kings School was unlikely to change. Therefore, the focus of the City Council would be whether there was any possibility of assisting the management of the Arts Centre through a new framework, such as a new body to provide for the continuation of the evening programme. The City Council had already committed £21,000 revenue funding and would investigate whether there was any possibility of a small increase to this sum, having regard to the difficult budgetary pressures facing the Council as a whole. The County Council would be encouraged to provide match funding to allow the evening programme to continue. In addition, discussions would be held with other bodies such as the University and Theatre Royal.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Evans queried whether a business plan had been produced for the future use of the Centre, if the building was to be transferred to Kings School.

In response, the Chairman stated that the County Council had not yet received a business plan, but he would expect one to be produced before the decision was made on 7 December 2007.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked Mrs Banister and the other campaigners for their presentation and advised that discussions would continue with the County Council and other relevant bodies before the County Council's decision day on 7 December 2007.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

1. That having regard to the petition received in relation to the Tower Arts Centre and, in the light of the public opposition to the proposed transfer of the Centre to Kings School, the County Council be invited to continue discussions aimed at securing a viable long term solution for the future programming and management of the facility.

2. That the City Council's willingness to continue to financially support the Tower Arts Centre programme in accordance with its existing policy be confirmed.

5. **CORPORATE STRATEGY 2008-2013 – CONSULTATION DRAFT**
(Report [CAB1552](#) refers)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillors Beveridge, Hiscock, Evans and Busher spoke regarding this item.

Councillor Beveridge requested that the necessity for *sustainable* economic growth be emphasised in the Strategy, having regard to the conclusions of the Economic Employment Study which had been reported to the Cabinet (Local Development Framework) Committee on 6 November 2007 (Report CAB1542(LDF) refers). He requested that this theme also be referred for further discussion at the Local Economy Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Hiscock queried the proposed new statement that "people have the opportunity to enhance their quality of life by working close to their home" and in particular whether Winchester had enough affordable accommodation to enable this. He emphasised that many people already commuted into Winchester.

Councillor Evans welcomed the additions to the Strategy, but considered that the priorities listed under the "Effective and Efficient Council" title were not specific enough. In addition, she suggested that the wording of the second bullet point under the "promote health and well-being" heading be rearranged to ".. increase opportunities to participate in sporting and cultural activities, including making full use of the 2012 London Olympics."

Councillor Busher requested that an additional point be included under the promotion of inclusive society heading, to make sure affordable housing was not marginalised by design or structure, but was fully integrated into a development site.

In response, Councillor Hollingbery stated that the points raised by Councillors Beveridge and Hiscock would be addressed as part of the consultation on the Local

Development Framework (LDF) “Issues and Options” process and it would not be appropriate to pre-empt consultation by including them in the Strategy at this stage. Similarly, he believed that Councillor Busher’s suggestion was too detailed for the Strategy and would be better considered through the LDF process.

With regard to Councillor Evans’ suggestion, Councillor Stallard stated she wished the emphasis on the 2012 London Olympics to be retained as the driver for increasing participation in sporting and cultural activities.

Councillor Allgood believed that the priorities under the “Efficient and Effective Council” heading were as specific as possible, whilst not being too prescriptive as to how efficiencies could be achieved.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Corporate Strategy be agreed as a basis for consultation with Members, staff and partner organisations over the autumn, on the understanding that the documentation would continue to be refined as the budget was developed.

6. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2008/09 – PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION**
(Report [CAB1556](#) and [Addendum](#) refer)

Under the Council’s Constitution, Access to Information Procedure Rules (Rule 15.1 General Exception), this was a Key Decision, which had not been included in the Forward Plan. Under this procedure, the Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee had been informed.

The Head of Finance circulated an Addendum to the above Report which contained amended Appendices B, C and D based on a number of revisions to budget projections. The Chairman agreed to accept the Addendum onto the agenda as an item requiring urgent consideration, in order that Cabinet could consider the most up to date information in its debate.

The Head of Finance further clarified that the figures in the “Total (Headroom)/Shortfall” line in revised Appendix B should be reduced by £30,000 as the Revenue Support Grant had mistakenly been omitted. The shortfall figure for 2008/09 should therefore be £194,000, rather than the £224,000 stated. The Head of Finance agreed to circulate the corrected Addendum to Members of Cabinet and also of Principal Scrutiny Committee, prior to its consideration on 19 November 2007. The revised Addendum would also be available on the Council’s Website.

Councillor Allgood gave further information regarding figures contained in each of the Appendices.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Evans expressed disappointment that the results of the recent fundamental service reviews had not been published. She was also disappointed regarding the proposed reduction in neighbour notifications regarding planning applications. She requested further information on the following:

- the reason for including an increase in planning fee income in the revised figures;

- the latest situation regarding concessionary travel;
- the latest situation regarding the Design and Print review.

In response, the Chairman stated that the aim of the fundamental service reviews was to inform Cabinet in its informal budget discussions and it was not intended that they be published more widely. Councillor Allgood advised that the figures for concessionary travel and planning fees were estimates based on the latest information available from the Government. Councillor Wood reported that the proposal for reduced neighbour notifications would be debated by Planning Development Control Committee the following day. However, he emphasised the reduction was proposed in order to achieve savings and there was no statutory requirement on the Council to undertake any such notifications.

The Corporate Director (Policy) stated that the Design and Print Review was ongoing and the £25,000 saving proposed for 2008/09 was in addition to the saving already achieved in the current year.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That consultations be held on the current budget proposals as set out in the above Report and Addendum, in the context of the draft Corporate Strategy and the current projection of the Council's financial position.

7. **EFFICIENCY UPDATE – ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT**

(Report [CAB1548](#) refers)

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That progress at Quarter Two 2007/08 against the Annual Efficiency target be noted.

8. **SUB-REGIONAL CHOICE BASED LETTINGS**

(Report CAB1553 refers)

Cabinet noted that this Report had been deferred and would be submitted to the next Cabinet meeting on 12 December 2007.

9. **A CAR CLUB FOR WINCHESTER**

(Report [CAB1526](#) refers)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Beveridge spoke in support of the proposals outlined in the Report. He requested that the scheme be introduced as soon as possible and also extended further into the residential areas of Winchester town.

In response, Councillor Wood advised that if the experimental car club scheme was successful, investigation into extending it into wider area would be undertaken. In addition, it might be possible for similar schemes to be introduced in other new large developments within the District.

In response to questions, the Corporate Director (Policy) confirmed that he was undertaking a review of Council lease cars, which would include consideration of whether use could be made of a car club.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the City Council's support for the provision of a car club for Winchester and its agreement to provide the necessary parking spaces free of charge for a period to serve such a club be confirmed.

2. That Officers continue discussions with the car club operator 'Whizzgo' with a view to developing a contract for Whizzgo to provide a car club for Winchester and Cabinet authorises the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport under the portfolio holder decision-making scheme to agree terms of operation and the most appropriate method of publicising the introduction of a car club.

3. That Officers investigate the potential for cost savings to the City Council by the possible use of car club vehicles to replace pool cars and other council vehicles.

10. **POST OFFICE CLOSURES**
(Report [CAB1557](#) refers)

Under the Council's Constitution, Access to Information Procedure Rules (Rule 15.1 General Exception), this was a Key Decision, which had not been included in the Forward Plan. Under this procedure, the Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee had been informed.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Biggs addressed the meeting as Ward Councillor for Upper Meon Valley, with regard to the proposed closure of West Meon Post Office. She highlighted that the shop and the Post Office (which was located inside) was closed for some months last year, which would have significantly impacted on its business. In addition, residents had contributed funding towards keeping the shop and post office open, and it had received £20,000 in a rural post office grant. Councillor Biggs considered that the proposals for an outreach provision for West Meon would not work. In summary, she believed that the circumstances surrounding West Meon Post Office warranted it being given special consideration.

In response, the Corporate Director (Policy) stated that the Post Office would not supply details of the business turnovers of individual post offices. In addition, the current Post Office consultation was on accessibility, rather than financial viability. However, the individual circumstances affecting West Meon Post Office would be emphasised in the Council's response.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillors Busher and Jackson also addressed Cabinet. Councillor Busher spoke in opposition to proposals to close the post office at Newtown, Bishops Waltham. She pointed out that Newtown had a high proportion of accommodation for elderly people who would have particular difficulties travelling to the post office in Bishops Waltham. The Newtown Post Office also served the wider rural areas of Durley, Upham and Ashton. Councillor Jackson highlighted that

the post office in Littleton was about the only facility in the village and was close to a mobile home park where a large number of elderly people lived.

In response, the Chairman requested that Councillors with particular local knowledge pertinent to the proposed post office closures contact the Corporate Director (Policy) directly. The Director advised he required the information by 20 November, in order to respond by the deadline of 26 November 2007.

Councillor Allgood suggested that the City Council's response be copied to the County Councillor Perry who was providing a detailed response on behalf of the County Council. This was agreed.

In conclusion, Cabinet agreed that the Council's response to the proposed post office closures be strengthened, taking account of comments outlined above. The final response would be agreed by the Corporate Director (Policy) in consultation with the Leader.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That a response to the Post Office consultation be compiled, taking account of the views of Ward Members and their communities, as well as those of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association (HIOWA) that consideration be given to the particular question of outreach services and authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Policy), in consultation with the Leader, to finalise the representation on behalf of the Council.

11. PROPOSED TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2008/09
(Report [CAB1551](#) refers)

Cabinet noted that the Report would be considered by Principal Scrutiny Committee on 19 November 2007 for it to comment on the timing of scrutiny meetings.

Cabinet noted that although Appendix 2 proposed fewer meetings of the formal Scrutiny Panels, the opportunity to hold Informal Groups to consider matters in more detail would remain.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons set out above and outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That subject to consideration by Principal Scrutiny Committee, the Timetable of Meetings for 2008/09 be agreed as set out in Appendix 2 of the Report.

12. MINUTES OF THE WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM – 11 OCTOBER 2007
(Report [CAB1555](#) refers)

Councillor Pearson confirmed that he and the Head of Environment had held a meeting with the management of Winchester Station regarding the installation of wall-mounted cigarette receptacles.

Cabinet agreed to the following for the reasons outlined in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Winchester Town Forum held 11 October 2007 be received.

13. **FUTURE ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

Cabinet noted that the Council Offices progress report would be submitted to the next Cabinet on 12 December 2007.

RESOLVED:

That the future items for consideration, as set out in the Forward Plan for November 2007, be noted.

14. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
##	Exempt minutes of the previous meeting) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). (Para 3 Schedule 12A refers)
##	Disposal of Avalon House	
##	Relocation of Historic Resources Centre, Hyde	
##	Silver Hill – Land Matters Update	
##	Cultural Services Division Staff Changes) Information relating to any individual. (Para 1 Schedule 12A refers)
##	Personal Assistant Review) Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual. (Para 2 Schedule 12A refers)

)
) Information relating to any
) consultations or negotiations, or
) contemplated consultations or
) negotiations, in connection with
) any labour relations matter
) arising between the authority or
) a Minister of the Crown and
) employees of, or office holders
) under, the authority. (Para 4
) Schedule 12A refers)

Exempt minutes of the
 previous meeting) Information in respect of which
) a claim to legal professional
) privilege could be maintained in
) legal proceedings. (Para 5
) Schedule 12A refers)

15. **EXEMPT MINUTE**

Councillor Wood raised a point of clarification regarding the exempt minute on Silver Hill – Land Matters (detail in exempt minute).

16. **AVALON HOUSE WINCHESTER - DISPOSAL**
 (Report CAB1550 refers)

Cabinet considered the above Report which set out the next steps in consideration of the disposal of Avalon House (detail in exempt minute).

17. **RELOCATION FROM HISTORIC RESOURCES CENTRE, HYDE**
 (Report CAB1549 refers)

Cabinet considered the above Report which contained proposals regarding the relocation from Historic Resources Centre, Hyde (detail in exempt minute).

18. **SILVER HILL WINCHESTER – LAND MATTERS UPDATE**
 (Report CAB1554 refers)

Under the Council's Constitution, Access to Information Procedure Rules (Rule 15.1 General Exception), this was a Key Decision, which had not been included in the Forward Plan. Under this procedure, the Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee had been informed.

Cabinet considered the above Report which contained an update on land matter relating to Silver Hill (detail in exempt minute).

19. **CULTURAL SERVICES DIVISION STAFF CHANGES**
 (Report PER132 refers)

Cabinet considered the above Report regarding the possible financial implications of the proposed Cultural Services Division staff changes (detail in exempt minute).

20. **PERSONAL ASSISTANT REVIEW**
(Report PER133 refers)

Cabinet considered the above Report regarding the possible financial implications of the proposed Personal Assistant Review (detail in exempt minute).

The meeting commenced at 9.00am and concluded at 11.40am.

Chairman