

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**21 March 2012****Attendance:****Councillors:**

Collin (Chairman) (P)

Berry (P)
Higgins (P)
Hiscock (P)
Hutchison (P)
Love
Mather (P)
Maynard (P)
Mitchell (P)
Nelmes (P)

Pearce (P)
Pines
Prowse
Sanders (P)
Scott (P)
Tait (P)
Thompson (P)
Witt (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

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

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported further discussions had taken place since its previous meeting of the feasibility of the Town Account contributing towards the continuation of some evening bus services in Winchester. It was hoped that a Report on this matter would be presented to a future Town Forum meeting.

2. MINUTES

With regard to Item 6 – Winchester Market Update (report CAB2274 and WTF168 refers), the Corporate Director (Operations) advised that Cabinet's update Report on this matter had been delayed. Once available, this would be also be referred to the Town Forum.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 January 2012, be approved and adopted.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no questions asked or statements made.

4. **THEATRE ROYAL PRESENTATION FROM MARK COURTICE – CHIEF EXECUTIVE**
(Oral Report)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Mark Courtice, Chief Executive, Theatre Royal Winchester.

Mr Courtice reported on the Theatre's continuing mission to be a good business neighbour and also to be at the cultural heart of Winchester and beyond.

He drew attention to the theatre's diverse programme of conventional performances, including major national theatre companies. It was also the place where like minded artists could meet and develop new skills. Mr Courtice reminded the meeting that Theatre Royal Winchester was involved with BID and the Jewry Street traders and town centre events throughout the year. It also directly benefited Winchester's economy from theatre patrons visiting restaurants and bars. He referred to its close working with the adjacent Discovery Centre where it was hoped that better use of the open space between both facilities could be utilised in the near future.

Mr Courtice reported on the Theatre's work within communities that was undertaken away from its theatre base, as part of its work to help engage people with cultural life. This included youth work (including Winnall Rock School, street dance and Wessex Dance Academy etc) and a new initiative in partnership with Age UK, where touring companies worked with lunch clubs etc. The theatre also provided a base for local cultural entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and worked closely with Winchester University in artistic, business and academic roles. It also provided work placements.

During questions from the Forum, Members referred to the positive social inclusion work undertaken by the Theatre. Members were also advised that the successful Christmas pantomimes were usually the only show produced in-house by the Theatre. They provided a degree of financial flexibility for the Theatre throughout the year. Mr Courtice also referred to the Theatre's café, which was now open during the daytime and where some informal performances had been recently trialled.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the presentation be noted

5. **NORTH WALLS SKATE PARK**
(Report [WTF169](#) refers)

In response to a query whether the site of the old putting green adjacent to the existing Bowling Club had been considered as an alternative for provision of the new skatepark, the Head of Landscape and Open Spaces reported that this area had not been looked at but will be considered as part of the feasibility study. Its potential would be discussed with existing users of the

skate park and regard would need to be given to its suitability given its relative proximity to Winnall Moors Nature Reserve.

The Forum was in agreement that the existing facility provided an excellent service to young people of the area. Its improvement was unanimously welcomed and should be progressed without delay. Members were generally of the opinion that North Walls remained the best location for the skate park as the site was not isolated and it also benefited from the facilities of the adjacent leisure centre, including first aid. Members also noted that the adjacent MUGA was an important facility and expressed concern at the potential loss of this to increase the footprint of the new skatepark. The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces advised that the needs of the users of the MUGA would be considered as well as those of the skatepark. If it was necessary to extend the footprint of the skatepark into the MUGA area, then an alternative location for the MUGA would need to be found as part of the project.

In order to help progress a scheme, it was agreed that a group of Members appointed from the Forum provide informal advice and assist the Head of Landscape and Open Spaces with his work in bringing forward a scheme for approval, hopefully by the autumn of 2012.

RESOLVED:

1. To give approval for officers to pursue the proposal to replace the existing skate park at North Walls Recreation Ground with a completely new modern skate facility suitable for the current and future needs of users.

2. To note that the proposal for a completely new modern skate facility may require additional demand for Open Space Funding over and above the £45,000 approved as part of the Five Year Plan for play area refurbishment.

3. That the following Members from the Forum provide informal advice and assist the Head of Landscape and Open Spaces with his work in bringing forward a scheme for approval by the autumn of 2012: Councillors Hiscock, Maynard, Pearce and Scott.

3. That Cabinet consider the views of the Town Forum on the proposal as above.

6. TREE SURVEY OFFICER
(Report [WTF170](#) refers)

In response to discussion, Councillor Stallard advised that the Trees Informal Scrutiny Group had previously concluded that the Council must continue the tree survey programme to ensure that the on-going risk to the Council from trees was addressed. The recommendation of the ISG applied equally to trees

within the Town Forum area. The ISG had recommended that a permanent Tree Survey Officer post should therefore be established to ensure that the Council (and Town Forum) properly managed the risks arising from trees.

The Corporate Director (Operations) explained that the existing Tree Officers within the Landscape Team, who deal with protected trees and development control, could not also deliver the Tree Survey Programme. He confirmed that the proposed Tree Survey Officer post would be funded partially from the Winchester Town Account (45%) with the General Fund making up the rest (55%). He also advised Members that Parish Councils were entirely responsible for resourcing equivalent surveys of trees on their own land.

At conclusion of discussion, the Forum were in agreement that the need for the new officer had been demonstrated and that the details of the post's establishment would be considered by the Personnel Committee in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Forum approves an annual contribution of 45% of the total cost of a new full-time Tree Survey Officer post, which is within the budget allocation of £18,000 approved at January Town Forum (WTF165) from 1 April 2012. The post of Tree Survey Officer would ensure that the Town Forum was appropriately managing risks arising from trees through a properly resourced tree monitoring and maintenance programme.

7. HOCKLEY VIADUCT - UPDATE
(Oral Report)

The Assistant Director (Economic Prosperity) circulated maps to the Forum which showed the proposed route of the final section of National Cycle Network Route 23, which will incorporate the Hockley Viaduct. It was explained that the route as proposed had been a conclusion of work to find the most accessible and safest route. The comments of the Forum were welcomed and would be included in a Cabinet report currently being drafted to finalise the various elements of the project.

The Assistant Director reminded Members of the recent history behind the proposal. The Forum noted the wider benefits of the scheme which included securing the renovation and greater use of the viaduct, and a proposal to transfer responsibility for the operational management and repair of the structure to Sustrans. In addition to providing a new leisure route for cycling and walking, the proposal would also establish a car-free route leading from the South Winchester Park and Ride to the town centre for use by commuters.

The Forum was given the latest situation on funding, with officers confident of securing the £500,000 needed as match funding for the £500,000 already identified in the Council's capital programme. Work was ongoing to secure formal funding agreements, and also final permissions for land access. A

positive public meeting held in Shawford last year suggested widespread public support for the project.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following comments on the proposed route of the cycle path and requested that Cabinet have regard to these matters:

- As the access route to the cycle path from the South Winchester Park and Ride led up to Badger Farm roundabout and back down the opposite side of Hockley Link, users may be tempted to take a more direct route by cutting straight across Hockley Link.
- The proposed cycle path diverted away from Wharf Hill, along College Walk and then back towards The Weirs. Users may therefore be more likely to take the shorter route along Wharf Hill, past Wharf Mill towards The Weirs.
- The Weirs, in particular, was a sensitive area and therefore there should not be excessive use of new signage etc to define the cycle route, particularly at this location.
- The Weirs was currently well used by pedestrians etc and there was potential for their conflict with cyclists, posing safety concerns. Also, the final access point to Bridge Street was extremely constrained, with only a narrow pavement separately from the busy traffic. This had already been observed as a hazard, especially for those cycling with young children. Would it be preferable to take the route via Barfield Close?
- As the new route was likely to increase the number of visitors to the town centre arriving by cycle, further consideration should be given to increasing the number of places for people to park their bikes in the town.

RESOLVED:

1. That the content of the presentation be noted.
2. **That Cabinet have regard to the comments of the Forum as set out above.**

8. **QUEEN ELIZABETH II COMMEMORATIVE FIELDS**
(Report [CAB2303](#) refers)

The Forum noted that Cabinet had considered the Report at its meeting held 14 March 2012 and had approved the recommendations as set out.

The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces drew attention that since publication of the Report, Hampshire Wildlife Trust had had raised concerns of the proposed designation of St Faith's Meadow and Winnall Moors Nature

Reserve. However, the Forum was reminded that designation would not change the operation of any sites or how they were currently managed or operated, with current restrictions on public access etc remaining in place.

The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces also reported that designation would potentially improve accessibility to funding for enhancements to open spaces. However, these enhancements would not be 'forced' by the designation. Members were advised that it was envisaged that the new status of the sites was likely to be commemorated by a small plaque. It was not clear at this stage of the process whether designation would necessitate a change in the name of sites. Concerns were expressed by various Members about the potential re-naming of sites, which they deemed would be inappropriate for sites whose names had historical significance in the City. The Forum also raised particular concerns that St Faith's Meadow should continue to be operated as a nature reserve with restricted public access and that Oram's Arbour continued as an informal recreation area with the same historic name.

At conclusion of discussion, the Forum noted that the decision of the Council with regard to the proposed designations was only 'in principle' at this stage, pending a further report on the matter. As the Forum continued to have some reservations, similar to those expressed by Hampshire Wildlife Trust, the Chairman agreed that he would make representations at Cabinet when it considered the further report seeking authority to enter into the deed of designation.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet have regard to the comments of the Town Forum as set out above.

2. That the proposal to nominate the following sites as Queen Elizabeth Fields be approved, subject to Cabinets consideration of representations of the Chairman of the Town Forum on the further report seeking authority to enter into the deed of designation:

- a) Oram's Arbour
- b) St Giles' Hill
- c) Winnall Moors Nature Reserve (Southern Section)
- d) St Faith's Meadow

9. VISION FOR WINCHESTER – PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROPOSALS
(Oral Report)

The Corporate Director (Operations) circulated a draft version of the Vision for Winchester document. The Council would issue a press release, drawing the public's attention to a version of the document on the Council's website, requesting comments by a date to be confirmed, but likely to be before the election. Stakeholders within the town area would also be sent hard copies.

Town Forum Members were therefore invited to comment on the draft document outside of the meeting.

Any modifications resultant from this consultation would be incorporated into a later version which would be officially 'launched' at an event where other major stakeholders will be invited to attend to promote their own wider visions.

During discussion, the Corporate Director advised that although the Vision for Winchester document was not intended as having any particular material planning relevance, it would have an important role in evidencing how it was envisaged development should take place in the town area. This would be reflective of the work undertaken by elected Members and the public in drafting the final Vision document.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals for consultation of the draft Vision for Winchester document be noted.

10. **WINCHESTER TOWN SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD PANEL - UPDATE**
(Oral Report)

As Chairman of the town area Safer Neighbourhood Panel, Councillor Nelmes drew attention to changes in how the police intended to work with community representatives. 'Police and Community Together' (PACT) were to be rolled out across the town area and the district and Ward Councillors would continue to have an important role in their operation. The PACTs were police initiatives who would arrange suitable accommodation for their meetings and ensure their governance arrangements. The role of the Town Forum was still to be clarified and the Forum noted that there was also to be a wider review by the Head of Policy of how the Council scrutinised the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.05pm

Chairman