

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**22 March 2007**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
 Nunn (P)
 Pearce (P)
 Pines (P)
 Saunders (P)
 Stephens
 Tait
 Worrall (P)

Others in Attendance who addressed the Meeting

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

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Tait.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum, held on 16 January 2007, be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Weeks (Winchester City Residents' Association) and Ms Clark (Save Barton Farm Group) spoke in relation to the Vision for Winchester evening (Report WTF92 refers) and their comments are set out in the relevant item below.

4. **ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION – POWERS OF THE TOWN FORUM**

(Report WTF90 refers)

The Forum had requested a report to its meeting on 22 November 2006 to enable it to consider a review of its method of operation and terms of reference (WTF79 refers). However, due to the late hour of the meeting at which the Report was reached, it was decided that the item be deferred to this meeting for consideration.

The City Secretary and Solicitor outlined the proposed main changes to the powers of the Forum as set out in the Appendix of the Report. In summary, these recommended that the Forum's role as a consultative body representing the town be formalised with regard to future significant policy reports, such as the Local Development Framework and Licensing policies.

The Forum would also act in a similar manner to a parish council in considering the programme for the use of Open Space Funds, although the final decision, as with the parished areas, would remain with Cabinet or the Portfolio Holder. In response to a question, the Forum noted that these funds could only be spent on projects reasonably related to the development which had generated the fund, but depending on its scale, it could be possible to transfer funds between Wards and for large scale projects to be funded from a wider area.

The Report also recommended that the Forum play a greater role in the formation of future Town Account Budgets. The final decision on the budget would remain with Council (acting on the recommendation of Cabinet) but within this, it was proposed that the Forum should exercise some flexibility.

Councillor Beckett spoke in support of the recommendations as set out in the Report. He added that Cabinet would look upon any further devolved powers to the Forum in a positive manner.

During debate, Members discussed the prospect of establishing a Town Council. It was agreed that this was likely to incur considerable additional costs to residents, create an additional tier of bureaucracy and duplication. An empowered Forum was a more effective way forward.

Members also discussed the need for future consultation exercises to be more comprehensive, to include neighbouring parish councils, to be more open minded and better able to respond to the needs of residents. Another Member suggested that, in future, the Forum may wish to seek devolved responsibilities from the County Council on issues such as highways and footpath maintenance.

The Forum also considered the powers of parish councils as set out in Appendix B and agreed that these should be referred to when the Forum considered the Town Account Budget during summer 2007. The Forum also considered that it may be necessary to establish a small informal group to further investigate the budget in the new Municipal Year.

In conclusion, Members welcomed the proposed changes and agreed with the recommendation as set out in the Report.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet be recommended to approve the revised terms of reference for the Winchester Town Forum, as set out in Appendix 1 of Report WTF90.

2. That the Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Programme be included as standing items on agendas of the Winchester Town Forum (Councillors' Meetings) so that potential future agenda items on emerging major issues can be identified.

3. That the Chairman of the Forum and Corporate Management Team also be asked to give consideration to key stages of major emerging policies which could be brought to the Forum which, in appropriate circumstances, could involve the use of suitable public consultation methods.

5. **COMMUNITY PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR WINCHESTER'S COMMUNITIES**

(Report WTF87 refers)

The Director of Communities gave a presentation based on the information contained in the Report. In summary, this explained that, to date, there had been an absence of a coherent response from the Council to community plans and that the Community Planning Guidance sought to address this and was itself a reflection of national guidance.

In response to questions, the Director explained that there was no prescriptive definition of what constituted a community and that there was not an additional budget to support the development of Community Plans.

The Forum also noted that the use of the Guidance was voluntary, but that the Council would be encouraging communities to develop their own Plans where community groups were already established. The Director explained that Community Plans were wider ranging than Village and Neighbourhood Design Statements, in that they considered issues beyond purely the built environment, to include transport, recreational facilities, public art and other issues. The Guidance would also ensure that advice to communities from the Council and its partners was easily accessible and available at an earlier stage. With a better evidence base, it was hoped that future Community Plans would be more robust and realistic and would therefore be better able to help communities meet their aspirations.

During discussion, the Forum noted that the Guidance would only be of help to communities that had already come together and that more work was required to encourage community groups in some areas.

In response to a suggestion, the Director agreed to circulate examples of Community Plans that had been completed in Whiteley, Otterbourne and Alresford.

In conclusion, the Forum broadly welcomed the Guidance and established an Informal Group (with a membership of Councillors Beveridge, Pines and Saunders) to consider the Forum's formal response to the consultation documents in detail.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Community Planning Guidance for Winchester Communities, as set out in Report WTF87, be welcomed.

2. That the Forum's formal response to the Community Planning Guidance, Report WTF87, be delegated to the Director of Communities in consultation with an Informal Group of Councillors from the Forum (Councillors Beveridge, Pines and Saunders).

6. **NOTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING – LIFE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN WINCHESTER HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2007 AND RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**
(Reports WTF88 and WTF89 refers)

The Forum considered the notes and results of the questionnaire from the Life for Young People in Winchester public meeting held on 22 January 2007. From this discussion the Forum considered that the meeting had benefited greatly from being held at Peter Symonds College.

RESOLVED:

That the Reports be noted.

7. **NOTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING – CREATIVE WINCHESTER HELD ON 7 MARCH 2007**
(Report WTF91 refers)

The Forum considered the notes of the Creative Winchester public meeting held on 7 March 2007 and congratulated the officers in organising an interesting debate.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

8. **NOTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING – VISION FOR WINCHESTER HELD ON 13 MARCH 2007**
(Report WTF92 refers)

The above item had not been notified for inclusion on the agenda within the statutory deadline. The Chairman agreed to accept the item onto the agenda, as a matter requiring urgent consideration, in order that the Forum's review of the evening could take place as soon as possible after the meeting.

During public participation, Ms Clark (Save Barton Farm) spoke against the press reports of the evening, which had underlined the Panel's support for the development of Barton Farm to achieve more affordable homes in Winchester. In summary, she advised that there remained no compelling justification to release the reserve Major Development Area (MDA) site for development.

During public participation, Mr Weeks also referred to the Panel's comments in relation to the Barton Farm MDA. In summary, he questioned the Forum's and the Panel's authority to represent Winchester's residents.

In response, the City Secretary and Solicitor explained that the Winchester Town Forum (Councillors' Meeting) was legally constituted as an Area Committee, comprised from District Council Members that represented, and were elected by, the six town wards of central Winchester. With regard to Mr Week's comments on how representative the Panel had been of Winchester's residents, the Chairman recommended that Mr Weeks send his comments and suggestions in writing to the Council for further consideration.

The Chairman added that the comments he made at the Vision for Winchester evening were in a personal capacity and that he was not speaking on behalf of the Forum, the City Council nor his political party.

During debate, the majority of the Forum agreed that the evening had generally been a success and well attended, but that there were lessons that could be learnt to improve future meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

9. **VOTE OF THANKS**

The Forum thanked the Chairman for his guidance and the officers for their hard work and support during the past Municipal Year.

The Chairman reciprocated appropriately.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.00pm

Chairman