

## **WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**

### **PUBLIC MEETING**

#### **MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT IN WINCHESTER**

**9 March 2006**

#### **Chairman's Introduction**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting approximately 60-70 members of the public, representatives of local groups and Councillors.

Mr Robert Heathcock (Winchester City Council's Head of Environmental Health) and Mr Pat Smyth (Highways, Hampshire County Council's) gave presentations on the responsibilities of both Councils on issues that effect the local environment. Slides of their presentations are attached as an appendix to these notes.

In summary, the Forum discussed the following issues:

#### **Air Quality**

Government had required all Local Authorities to monitor air quality and the City Council had discovered that two pollutants (Particulates and NOx) had exceeded the levels set by Government in central Winchester. To alleviate this, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) had been declared, which covered most of the town centre and part of the main routes into the town. Currently the Council was evaluating an Action Plan which contained a number of options that would improve air quality in this area. These options included a comprehensive review of the traffic management system in the town, parking policies, bus partnerships and improving public transport and encouraging sustainable developments. More details on air quality and the action plan are available at:

<http://www.winchester.gov.uk/SubTopic.asp?ID=155>

During debate, several members of the public stated that they would welcome a review of the one-way system and that deliveries to St Georges Street should be better controlled. Others suggested that, to help reduce emissions, the Councils should only use environmentally friendly vehicles.

A member of the public also commented that the AQMA made no reference to aircraft noise and fumes.

#### **Trees**

There were approximately 6,000 trees on City Council owned land across the District for which the Council was responsible. The Council had begun a detailed survey on all these trees which would result in a database setting out their location and condition to aide future maintenance. It was anticipated that the survey would be completed next year, but at this stage, it had concentrated on those areas most at risk from poor tree maintenance (such as play-areas) and a number of remedial works had been completed at Abbey Gardens and North Wall Recreation Field. To speed the progression of the survey, the Council had recently appointed Mr Ivan Gurdler who was an experienced arboriculturalist.

Several members of public that spoke raised concerns about the condition of trees in the town centre, new trees that had vandalised, and the importance of careful planting of trees to maintain views across the town.

### **Public Conveniences**

Mr Heathcock had explained that although the City Council was not legally obliged to provide public conveniences, the Council had agreed to maintain and improve its existing facilities. New toilets would be provided in Jewry Street as part of the Cultural Centre development and there were plans to refurbish the facilities at Abbey Gardens, which were often visiting tourists' first impression of Winchester.

### **The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005**

The new Act had been introduced as a result of pressure from Local Authorities for more powers to deal with environmental issues. The Act increased Councils' ability to tackle graffiti, flyposting, litter, abandoned vehicles and the collection of shopping trolleys and would come fully into effect from April 2006.

With regard to graffiti, the Forum noted that there were a number of organisations involved in its removal, including the Council's contractors, Graffiti Busters, the Neighbourhood Wardens and the Probation Unit.

The Forum also discussed street clutter and the proliferation of advertising boards for events and new developments that were often tied to lampposts. Mr Heathcock advised that Birmingham City Council had tackled this problem by putting "cancelled" stickers over these illegal notices.

Separate from the Act, the Forum noted that further legislation was proposed that would deal with light pollution.

### **Refuse and Recycling**

Councillor Wagner (the City Council's Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health) explained that following a successful trial, an alternative weekly recycling scheme would be introduced across the District. This would help towards meeting Government recycling targets and, in response to concerns, it was explained that advisors from the Council would be available to visit residents that required assistance to better recycle their waste.

In response to other comments made, Mr Heathcock explained that the management arrangements for the Council's waste contractor had recently been improved and that he would investigate suggestions for more bottle and cardboard recycling points in the town where requests were received.

The Forum also considered tackling the problem of recycling at its source by reducing the amount of wrapping that retailers such as supermarkets used. Mr Heathcock stated that this was an issue that that Local Authorities were involved in through Project Integra.

### **Communication**

Several members of the public that spoke suggested that there needed to be a better way to report problems regarding environmental issues to the Council. Although it was understood that the problem may not always be the responsibility of the City Council, it was suggested that these should be dealt

with by one call to preferably one person. Others suggested that the City Council should adopt a message taking and call-back system. In response, Mr Heathcock explained that an on-line service would be shortly available, whereby members of the public could report abandoned cars and graffiti etc.

It was also suggested that recycling initiatives could be promoted to school children through activities at school and through street plays at the annual Hat Fair.

### **Pavements and Road Cleaning**

Concerns were raised regarding damage caused to the pavement of Jewry Street by large delivery lorries and at the effect of illegal cycling on the pavement.

Concerns were also raised regarding sweeping of the roads outside the immediate town centre, the state of some gullies, leaf clearance and the difficulties of cleaning roads with parked cars. As an answer, the Forum considered publishing the days of when roads were intended to be cleaned.

### **Litter**

The Forum discussed the work of the Winchester Litter Pickers voluntary group and in response to other comments, Mr Heathcock confirmed that the Council did surveillance to combat fly-tipping.

### **New Developments**

In response to comments, Mr Heathcock explained that all large new developments in the town centre had to submit an environmental assessment with their application to demonstrate that the proposed new development would not be detrimental to the environment.

### **Conclusion**

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chairman thanked everyone who had attended for their contribution to the debate and recommended that if anyone had any further comments about the services provided by the Council, that they were welcome to contact the Council directly or their Ward Member.

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and concluded at 9.00pm

Chairman