

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

27 November 2013

Attendance:

Councillors:

Hutchison (Chairman) (P)

E Berry (P)

J Berry (P)

Collin (P)

Green (P)

Hiscock (P)

Mather (P)

Maynard (P)

Nelmes (P)

Pearce

Pines (P)

Prowse (P)

Sanders (P)

Scott (P)

Tait (P)

Tod (P)

Weir (P)

Witt (P)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Humby (Deputy Leader)

1. **DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Mather and Tod declared disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of Report WTF196 due to their roles as Hampshire County Councillors. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, they remained in the room, spoke and voted under the dispensation granted on behalf of the Standards Committee to participate and vote in all matters which might have a County Council involvement.

2. **MINUTES**

Councillor Collin thanked the Town Forum for its good wishes regarding his recent illness.

The Chairman thanked the Parking Strategy Informal Group for its work in submitting comments to Cabinet on the Strategy, on behalf of the Forum.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 11 September 2013, be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Bespoke Biking

Mrs H Evans explained that she was a Hyde resident who had established Bespoke Biking about a year ago, with the aim of encouraging beginner cyclists (of all ages). She worked with local schools, including with Kings School who were aiming to include cycling within the PE Curriculum. She also worked with various local community groups and asked that Councillors contact her with any suggestions for groups who would benefit from the initiative. She was a member of the Cycling Working Group, which included representatives from the Council, and was in contact with the Council's Cycling Champion, Councillor Southgate.

Mrs Evans stated that she would like to see the introduction of a Bike Hub in Winchester, where people could hire/repair bikes and which could also act as a meeting point for cycling clubs. In connection with this, she queried what the Council's long term strategy was regarding the current Bikeabout scheme, which was largely underused. In response to questions, Mrs Evans advised that she would be utilising the experiences of both Bristol and Gosport regarding their recent Bike Hub initiatives.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Evans for her comments and encouraged all Councillors to contact her with suggestions. In general, Members were enthusiastic about the idea of a Bike Hub and requested that further investigations be made. The Corporate Director noted this request.

Casson Block, St Georges Street

Mr Smyth addressed the Forum to request that the possibility of improving the aesthetic appearance of the Casson Block be examined, possibly by involving local artist groups, such as The Colour Factory. He believed that the area offered good quality shops and restaurants, with an international flavour. In addition, he understood that the Council had previously had plans to refurbish the area, but these had not been progressed.

The Corporate Director advised that there were no current plans to refurbish the area, as there were ongoing discussions as part of the Winchester Town Access Plan (WTAP) regarding traffic management in St Georges Street. The aim was to reduce the volume of traffic and increase permeability across the road, which could potentially impact upon the frontage of the Casson Block.

Members requested that the Corporate Director provide information on the likely timescales involved with the WTAP and include consideration of the impact on the Casson Block.

Station approach

Mr M Carden and Mr D Ashe addressed the Town Forum and their comments are summarised under the agenda item below.

4. **THEATRE ROYAL – PRESENTATION FROM MARK COURTICE (CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF LIVE THEATRE WINCHESTER, THEATRE ROYAL WINCHESTER AND HAT FAIR)**
(Oral Report)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Courtice who gave a presentation updating the Forum on the Theatre's work.

Mr Courtice explained that he had last addressed the Forum about two years ago, shortly after he had taken over as Chief Executive. Since that time, he was pleased to be able to report that the Theatre had delivered on its plans for the future. In summary, he drew Members' attention to the following:

- Better use was being made of the Theatre building – for example, the new café was open all day and the whole Theatre building was used at times for various productions;
- More joint working was taking place with the Winchester Discovery Centre;
- The Theatre continued to be involved with working with local schools in Winchester and across the District;
- It organised six youth theatre sessions each week within the Town, along with other youth theatre groups around the District.
- He was also Chief Executive of the Hat Fair and the Theatre had been more involved with this work in general;
- The Theatre had improved its working relationship with major national touring companies and, as such, was being more successful in attracting these companies. In addition, it was continuing to work in partnership with local theatre companies;
- In response to funding cuts, the Theatre had reduced its own costs (including a reduction in its staff). It was making better use of electronic means of promotion, including its website;
- The Theatre was celebrating the centenary of the building and would be using the opportunity to raise additional funding to install additional seating.
- Work was ongoing to build the next generation of the Hat Fair – a new funding submission would be made to the Arts Council.

In general, Mr Courtice stated that the Theatre was seeking to consolidate and develop its plans and continue to work towards being at the heart of Winchester's culture. In response to questions, he emphasised that it would continue to be essential for the Theatre to receive funding support, but he believed this could be repaid through the various initiatives carried out by the Theatre and by using the building to its full extent.

5. **PROGRESS REPORT ON STATION APPROACH DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT**
(Oral Report)

The Head of Strategic Planning drew Members' attention to CAB2540, which would be considered by Cabinet on 4 December 2013 and contained the Development Assessment Report from Tibbalds on the Station Approach area as an appendix. The report to Cabinet recommended:

1. That Cabinet notes the concept masterplan and development principles set out in the report from Tibbalds and that these be used to inform the development of planning policies and proposals for the area.
2. That officers arrange to discuss with key stakeholders the conclusions of Tibbald's report, to inform how matters are taken forward.

The Head of Strategic Planning emphasised that the Development Assessment was not a planning policy document in itself, but would be the basis for detailed discussion and possibly future work. It had been produced in response to requests from various sources from both within and outside the Council. From a planning point of view, the area had the potential to be used for a wide variety of developments and it was therefore important for the Council to decide what development it considered appropriate .

The Corporate Director also reminded the Forum that an all Member briefing had been arranged for 4 December 2013 at 6.30pm, which would include a presentation from Tibbalds.

Mr M Carden and Mr D Ashe (2020 Group) spoke during public participation and their comments are summarised below.

Mr Carden welcomed Tibbald's report but expressed some concern that the Council should ensure the following were in place:

- Public engagement;
- A flexibly programmed Action Plan;
- A flexible overall Framework, including Building Design Guidance;
- A Strategy for the Public Realm (largely composed of streets around the area)

Mr Ashe believed that the Tibbald report should be used as the basis for the start of further discussions, not as a final proposal. To this end, a public meeting should be arranged, including stakeholders such as the 2020 group.

He raised a number of initial queries:

- Should there be an increase in car parking on Gladstone Street?
- Should the remit be widened to include proposals to improve Sussex Street?

- Regard should be had to the possibility that the development of the Cattle Market car park could impact upon the views of Winchester Cathedral from Andover Road railway bridge.

The Chairman thanked Mr Carden and Mr Ashe for their contributions. He requested that, in discussions, Members focus on the process whereby proposals for the Station Area could be taken forward, including the possibility of consultation with stakeholders.

During discussion, there was some disagreement about whether it was appropriate for the Town Forum to organise a meeting with stakeholders, as the development of the Station area could affect the wider District. As such, it might be more appropriate for Cabinet to oversee any consultation exercise on a wider basis. . However, whilst some Members believed it was important to involve the wider public, rather than just invited stakeholders, they considered it equally important that the Town Forum led on this.

In addition, some concern was expressed about the need to contact local residents and businesses who could be directly affected by any proposed redevelopment of the area.

Following further debate, it was agreed that the Town Forum should recommend that Cabinet be encouraged to organise a stakeholder/public meeting in January 2014, in conjunction with the Forum. It was also agreed that the complex subject matter would necessitate a series of consultation events as any proposals developed.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet be encouraged to organise a stakeholder/public meeting in January 2014 to discuss the Station Approach Development Assessment.

6. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT BUDGET 2014/15**
(Report WTF190 refers)

The Chairman reported that the Informal Budget Review Group had met on a number of occasions to discuss the budget.

Following discussions about the reasons for the fluctuations in the Recreation Grounds and Open Spaces budget, the Chairman suggested that the Informal Budget Review Group be asked to examine this budget area further. This was agreed.

The Head of Finance confirmed that the projections in Appendix 1 assumed a Council Tax freeze. The decision as to whether to freeze Council Tax would be recommended by Cabinet and the Town Forum would then not have any discretion over the level of its precept. A number of Members expressed concern about the predicted budget shortfall when the current level of Government support for Council's who chose to freeze the council tax was

withdrawn. It was suggested that the Informal Group could examine this further.

Members noted that Appendix 2 set out a budget growth proposal in relation to continuing the Winchester Town evening bus service. It also set out proposals for further strategic review.

RESOLVED:

That the budget growth proposal to increase the baseline budget by £3,000 per annum (£13,000 in total, subject to inflation) in order to cover the entire cost of the Winchester Town Evening Bus Service be recommended for inclusion within the Town Forum Account budget, to be approved at the next meeting in January 2014.

7. **PUBLIC TRANSPORT**
(Report WTF196 refers)

The Corporate Director explained that the above report had been produced at the request of Members at the previous Forum meeting which resolved as follows:

That a short report be brought by the officers to the Forum's next meeting setting out what strategic documents there were on public transport and whether there were any gaps that any work on behalf of the Forum could usefully fill in.

Officer advice was that the Forum does not need to commission any work relating to public transport provision at the present time.

RESOLVED:

That the public transport documents which already exist and work which is ongoing further to the recent Informal Scrutiny Group on Public Transport be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.40pm

Chairman