

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

23 September 2015

Attendance:

Councillors:

Weir (Chairman) (P)

E Berry (P)

J Berry (P)

Burns

Gosling (P)

Green (P)

Hiscock (P)

Hutchison (P)

Mather

Maynard (P)

Osborne (P)

Prowse (P)

Sanders (P)

Scott (P)

Scowen

Tait (P)

Thompson (P)

Tod (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Godfrey

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillors Byrnes, Read and Twelftree

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous special meeting, held on 28 July 2015, be approved and adopted.

2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Mather and Tod declared disclosable pecuniary interests 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.

Councillor Godfrey declared a disclosable pecuniary interest due to his role as a County Council employee. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, he remained in the room and spoke under the dispensation granted on behalf of the Standards Committee to participate in all matters which might have a County Council involvement.

In relation to Report WTF224, Councillor Thompson declared a personal and prejudicial interest due to her involvement with The Carroll Centre. She left the room during consideration of this Report and took no part in the discussion or vote thereon.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

During public participation, County Councillor Jackie Porter updated Town Forum Members on the relaunched Britain in Bloom project. In summary, there were now two categories which could be entered: "It's your neighbourhood" and "Britain in Bloom". She requested that Town Ward Councillors contact her if they would be interested in participating and added that she believed Britain in Bloom could attend a future Forum meeting if wished.

4. **ROGER BROWN'S MODEL OF VICTORIAN WINCHESTER**
(Oral Report)

The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) provided an update on the proposals to find a permanent home for the model, following a working group meeting, which had included the Chairman of the Town Forum. Two favourite locations had emerged as a result of these discussions: Winchester Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and a possibility being explored by the Hampshire Cultural Trust (exact details to be confirmed). Both locations have the potential to provide a medium term home for the model, although some work would be required in each case.

The Assistant Director highlighted that, having viewed the model, officers believed some repairs were required if it was to go on display all year round. In addition, there was scope for enhancing the model with lights and sound, as proposed by the City of Winchester Trust. Plans were being drafted for both options which would be available for the next meeting of the Working Group on 26 October 2015. A budget would also be required for either proposal and the Assistant Director suggested that the Town Account Budget Working Group could consider this further.

The Assistant Director advised that it was intended to submit a more detailed report to the December meeting of the Forum (and possibly Cabinet).

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

5. **SOLAR CITY UPDATE**
(Oral Report)

The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) advised that two meetings of a working group had taken place to take forward proposals outlined in Report WTF218 to the 10 June 2015 meeting. An exercise was undertaken over the summer to establish both the landlords and the tenants of

approximately 20 buildings identified in the consultant's report as having the most potential for participation in the project. The list was revised and it was agreed six buildings be selected to trial the best approach. All six buildings were in public, rather than commercial ownership.

The Assistant Director advised that the consultant who undertook the original Town Forum study has offered his time on a voluntary basis (as a WinACC member) to assist with these initial approaches. Following a preliminary written letter from the Council, the consultant would visit each landlord, accompanied by one other member of the working group, to gauge interest in being part of a pathfinder project. He would provide a summary of costs and benefits for each building. It was hoped to schedule visits in October/November, ahead of the next Government reduction in Feed in Tariffs (FITs).

Options would include:

- Paying for procurement and installation of PV and taking the full benefit (reduced price electricity and FIT);
- Power purchase agreement – a third party leases the roof, installs and owns panels and takes the benefits, but the landlord/tenant benefit from reduced price electricity;
- Community scheme – essentially as above, but the community own the panels and take the benefits.

The Assistant Director explained that depending on the views of the individual landlords and their tenants, the Council could simply act as a facilitator, or it would choose to be an investor.

A more detailed report would be returned to Town Forum in due course, with findings from these initial approaches and a suggested way forward.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

6. **STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**
(Oral Report)

The Corporate Director advised that there had been a lengthy discussion at the Special Cabinet meeting on 17 September 2015 regarding the proposals for the Design Brief (Report CAB2716 refers). He highlighted that at the Cabinet meeting, a speaker in public participation had stated that the Council had not sought RIBA advice. However, it was subsequently ascertained that there had been some confusion as to information provided to the speaker and the Corporate Director confirmed that the Council had consulted RIBA.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Godfrey also emphasised the lengthy and useful discussions at the Special Cabinet meeting and it was intended that comments made would be incorporated into a revised Design

Brief. Councillor Godfrey also responded to questions from Town Forum Members and, in summary, the following points were made:

- In response to concerns that those contributing to discussions on the Station Approach did not feel their concerns were being properly addressed, Councillor Godfrey highlighted that the Brief had been amended in response to comments. In addition, minutes of the Station Approach Panel were publicly available and individuals contacting officers directly on specific points had received direct replies. He agreed to respond to any Members' particular concerns outside of the meeting.
- Councillor Godfrey stated that following discussions at the Special Cabinet meeting, it was agreed that the distribution of car parking spaces would be a matter for the Brief. He confirmed that those entering the Design Brief competition would be made fully aware of concerns raised during consultation in relation to the reliability of the traffic/parking analysis.

Councillor Hutchison put forward the following recommendations for consideration by the Forum, as seconded by Councillor Thompson:

“That Winchester Town Forum:

1. Notes the decision made at Cabinet to proceed with the Design Brief for Station Approach;
2. Is concerned that once the Design Competition begins, there will be no proper public engagement or consultation and questions whether this process is appropriate for such an important area;
3. Is concerned that the timescale is extremely tight;
4. Is further concerned that comments and offers of help made by the City of Winchester Trust, the 2020 Group and others have not been taken up;
5. Calls on Cabinet to look at this again and take into consideration the points raised by the Town Forum.”

The Corporate Director suggested that rather than a motion, the above could be noted in the minutes for the attention of Cabinet and highlighted that the Leader was also present at the meeting and was, therefore, informed.

Following discussion, the Forum wished it be noted that the above motion was voted upon in the following manner:

Support: Councillors J Berry, Gosling, Green, Hiscock, Hutchison, Prowse, Scott, Tod, Thompson and Weir

Against: Councillors E Berry, Mather, Osborne, Sanders and Tait

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet have regard to the concerns outlined above.

7. **EVENING BUS SERVICES IN WINCHESTER - UPDATE**

(Report WTF228 refers)

In response to questions about the possibility of alterations and/or additions to existing services, the Corporate Director emphasised that Stagecoach decisions would continue to be based on whether new services were considered to be commercially viable.

Some Members also highlighted the importance of a joined up approach towards encouraging public transport use at the same time as dissuading non-essential car travel into the town.

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that the meeting with neighbouring parishes to discuss the provision of mid-evening bus services was no longer required.

8. **TOWN FORUM SMALL GRANTS 2015/16: AWARDS SUMMARY**

(Report WTF224 refers)

Councillor Thompson declared a personal and prejudicial interest due to her involvement with The Carroll Centre. She left the room during consideration of this Report and took no part in the discussion or vote thereon.

The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) thanked the Town Account Grants Informal Group for their work. As Chairman of the Informal Group, Councillor Scott reciprocated and in particular thanked the Grants Officer for her involvement. He also highlighted the importance of Councillors input on local groups work in their areas and stated that most groups received a significant percentage of the grants requested.

As County Councillors, Councillors Mather and Tod stated that there were funds available to local groups through the County Council delegated grants process. The Assistant Director confirmed that all potential grant applicants were informed of all the different potential funding streams, including the County Councillor grants. She highlighted the importance of Councillors publicising the availability of different grants within their own Wards.

RESOLVED:

1. That the grants which have been awarded under the third round of the Town Forum Small Grants programme be noted.

2. That the Assistant Director (Economy and Communities), in consultation with the Chair of the Group, be authorised *not* to make the recommended award, should Officers determine that there are reasonable grounds not to do so, and to reallocate any such monies to The Winchester Town Account reserve, which may be used for future emergency grant payments.

3. That the Small Grants Programme be continued, and that the existing budget of £5,000 per annum is considered by the Town Account Informal Budget Group as part of the Forum's 2016/17 budget-setting cycle.

9. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: SPREADING THE WORD – COMMUNITY GROUPS, NEIGHBOURHOOD NOTICEBOARDS AND NEWSLETTERS**
(Report WTF226 refers)

The Community Planning Manager advised that the Report had been prepared at the request of the Town Forum. It set out a number of mechanisms in place across the Town for engaging and communicating with the community and sought the views of the Forum as to how this could be developed.

During discussion, the role of Councillors as community leaders/champions was acknowledged as being of vital importance. Some Members expressed concern that Officers did not inform them of significant matters within their Ward. The Corporate Director acknowledged that improvements in this area were always possible but it was the Council's stated intention that Members be kept fully informed.

The use of noticeboards was highlighted and the Corporate Director confirmed that new boards did not always require planning permission, depending on size and location. The Forum suggested that future Town Forum meetings be advertised on noticeboards within the Town area. The Community Planning Officer agreed to investigate this further, in discussion with the Democratic Services Team.

One Member queried whether parishing the Town area might improve community engagement. The Corporate Director advised that any such request would be Member led and the Forum noted that it might not necessarily lead to better community engagement.

Members also commented that the Winchester Town area contained within it a number of separate communities, such as schools, churches and geographical areas. It could also be divided into age or choice of transport method. The type of communication used probably altered according to the particular matter for consideration. The Corporate Director also highlighted the increasingly limited resources available to the Council.

One Member suggested that the Town Forum could have its own "Facebook" page, although there were some concerns expressed about the need for caution with social media communication.

The Forum agreed that an Informal Working Group be established to consider the matters raised in the Report and the above discussion further.

RESOLVED:

That an Informal Working Group be established to consider further matters relating to community engagement within the Town area.

10. **COUNCIL POLICY RELATING TO MEMORIAL TREES AND STREET FURNITURE**

(Report WTF225 refers)

The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces confirmed that the charges were based on actual costs to the Council, including future maintenance charges for a 10 year period. However, it did not include the cost of Officer time in facilitating the request. For example, in the case of memorial trees, this would include a site visit by the Officer to meet the person making the request.

Some Members commented that some areas of the Town had a high number of memorial trees and benches and whilst recognising the sensitivities involved, questioned whether additional items were appropriate.

In response to questions, the Head of Landscape and Open Spaces confirmed that she could examine the possibility of incorporating public consultation within a strategic review. In addition, it would be possible to extend any scheme to include other items such as fountains, shrubs and bulbs. One Member suggested it could also be extended to include grit bins.

The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces explained that it was not considered appropriate for the public to be asked to undertake their own maintenance of items on Council-owned land, although watering plants/trees could be included in any future review. She confirmed that the forthcoming review of the Council's Tree Strategy would include consideration of memorial trees. In addition, regard could be had to links with the Walking Strategy in identifying appropriate places for new benches. The requirement to link in with the County Council Highways Team was also highlighted.

RESOLVED:

That the Head of Landscape and Open Spaces undertake a strategic review of the current system with regard to the future of memorial trees and street furniture, having regard to the comments outlined above.

11. **MAGDALEN HILL CEMETERY**

(Report WTF229 refers)

The Assistant Director (Policy and Planning) outlined the background to the current Report and drew Members' attention to the Cabinet resolution, as contained in Appendix 2 to the Report. He advised that the increase in costs for the project related to difficulties of accessing the site. The current

operating costs of the cemetery were approximately £50,000 per annum with an income generated of approximately £105,000 per annum.

In response to questions, the Corporate Director confirmed that the income stream would only continue whilst the cemetery had plots available and consequently could not be expected to continue beyond 30-40 years (unless further cemetery extensions were possible). He confirmed that the Council were not under legal obligation to provide a cemetery, but chose to do so as offering a public service.

The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces advised that approval was being sought for the use of metal railings, as set out in the Report. The Assistant Director (Policy and Planning) stated that the metal railings were not included within the planning application and consequentially would require a minor amendment, which would be consulted upon.

In response to questions, the Head of Landscape and Open Spaces explained that the siting of plots allocated depended upon denomination. The numbers available for each area had been agreed through consultation with the various groups involved.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Magdalen Hill Cemetery Extension Scheme be proceeded with including the Metal Railing option and additional cost of archaeology.
2. That when fees and charges are reviewed in the 2016/17 budget process, options to increase charges should be considered to address the impact of the scheme on the Town Account budget.

12. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016/17 TO 2020/21**
(Report WTF227 refers)

The Chief Finance Officer emphasised the significant funding constraints on the Town Account, particularly around the freezing of the Town Precept and the short term nature of the compensatory Government freeze funding. It was confirmed that the budget options and financial projections would be submitted to the November meeting of the Forum.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Winchester Town Account Financial Strategy for 2016/17 – 2020/21 be approved.
2. That the 2014/15 outturn on the Winchester Town Account be noted.

13. **2015/16 WORK PROGRAMME**

(Report WTF223 refers)

The Forum agreed the following amendments to the Programme requested by the Assistant Director (Economy and Communities):

- To November 2015 - St Maurice's Covert;
- To January 2016 – Solar City update.

One Member queried why the recent Cabinet report regarding improvements to the Casson Block on St George's Street, Winchester had not also been referred to the Town Forum for consideration? It was agreed that these concerns be noted.

Other items suggested were as follows:

- Air quality in the Town Centre – it was agreed this be included;
- Working with the University – it was suggested a representative be invited to a future Forum meeting to give a presentation.
- Community engagement/consultation – report back following meeting of Informal Working Group as discussed above
- Affordable Housing – although this was on the list of business items, one Member highlighted the need for this to be allocated to a scheduled meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents and the setting of items within the Work Programme for 2015/16 be noted.

2. That the following additional be considered during the 2015/16 Municipal Year and where not stated, authority be delegated to the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Chairman, to set these items within the detailed work programme:

- To November 2015 - St Maurice's Covert;
- To January 2016 – Solar City update.
- Air quality in the Town Centre
- Community engagement/consultation – report back following meeting of Informal Working Group as discussed under Report WTF226 above
- Working with the University – it was suggested a representative be invited to a future Forum meeting to give a presentation.
- Affordable Housing – although this was on the list of business items, one Member highlighted the need for this to be allocated to a scheduled meeting.

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>
##	Magdalen Hill Cemetery (exempt appendix)) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). (Para 3 Schedule 12A refers)

15. **MAGDALEN HILL CEMETERY (EXEMPT APPENDIX)**
(Report WTF229 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the exempt appendix be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.00pm

Chairman