

**WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**

**18 November 2015**

Attendance:

Councillors:

Weir (Chairman) (P)

E Berry (P)

J Berry (P)

Burns

Gosling (P)

Green (P)

Hiscock (P)

Hutchison (P)

Mather (P)

Maynard (P)

Osborne

Prowse (P)

Sanders (P)

Scott (P)

Scowen (P)

Tait (P)

Thompson (P)

Tod

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Izard

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1. **MINUTES**

In relation to the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2015, Councillor E Berry made a personal statement that she could not support 'Winchester in Bloom' at the present time and would reserve her opinion on this matter until the Election had occurred in May 2016.

The Committee also noted that Councillor Mather was in attendance at the meeting held 23 September and therefore this should be corrected.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 September 2015 and the special meeting, held on 8 October 2015, be approved and adopted, subject to one amendment to the minutes of 23 September 2015, to record that Councillor Mather was in attendance at the meeting.

2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Mather declared disclosable pecuniary interests due to her role as Hampshire County Councillor. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, she 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.

### 3. **MEMBERSHIP OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

Following discussion of this matter at the previous meeting held on 23 September 2015, the Forum gave further consideration to the appointment of a Community Engagement Informal Group with the purpose of identifying what was required from community engagement in the Town area and to establish the best format to progress this matter for the future.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Winchester Town Forum (Community Engagement) Informal Group be appointed and comprise of the following membership:

Councillors Hutchison (Chairman), E Berry, J Berry, Maynard and Osborne.

### 4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

During public participation, Vicky Halliden and David Adams addressed the Forum under public participation. A summary of their comments are outlined below:

Vicky Halliden spoke in her capacity as Chair of Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at Western Primary School raising her disappointment that Western Primary School had received little capital funding over the last few years, despite intake increasing. However, no expansion plans to increase the size of the school had been put in place. It was reported that facilities at the school were poor compared to the neighbouring schools of St Peters and All Saints; who had all received recent funding. Western Primary School was struggling with leaking roofs into classrooms and relied on porta cabin facilities to provide extra space for the increasing number of pupils. She asked the Forum to consider more capital funding provision for the school.

In response, the Forum advised that whilst they were in support for the provision of funding to improve the school and recognised the challenges that the school faced. However, it was clarified that the capital funding of schools was the responsibility of Hampshire County Council (HCC). The Forum suggested that Councillor Tod would be best placed to progress this matter in his capacity as Member of the Town Forum and as a HCC Councillor.

Following questions from Members to establish if the school had approached HCC regarding funding provision, Vicky Halliden advised that she was unsure if this process had taken place and would consult with the school on this matter. The Forum also suggested that HCC Executive Member, Councillor Peter Edgar be contacted accordingly.

David Adams also addressed the Forum and in summary, he advised that he was seeking support for the parents of Weeke Primary School who were campaigning to bring back a formal school crossing patrol presence. Following redundancy taken by the last post holder and the submission of traffic survey results which demonstrated the need for a school patrol in this area, HCC had refused to fill the vacancy and reinstate the post.

In response, the Forum was sympathetic and supportive of the campaign and noted that this involved relatively low costs by comparison but noted that this was an operation that remained with HCC to fulfil to safeguard children. It was recognised that this was not a Town Forum function and also the spiralling costs that would be involved if the Forum were to consider taking on the campaign may set a precedent. The funding for school crossing patrols in the Town area could not be sustained by the Town Forum budget.

The Forum felt it would be beneficial for HCC to be flexible and consider providing safety and assistance training to volunteers, should parents or grandparents wish to facilitate a crossing patrol between themselves., It was suggested that the Community Engagement Informal Group may wish to consider this matter further in due course.

In conclusion, the Chairman thanked Vicky Halliden and David Adams for making their representations to the Forum.

The Forum also received a presentation by Emma Back of Sport, Art and Leisure Trust (SALT) and Marty Orton in respect of Item 5 below. A summary of their comments and presentation are outlined within the relevant Item below.

5. **RIVER PARK LEISURE CENTRE – UPDATE ON PROCESS**  
(Report WTF232 refers)

Councillor Green declared a personal but not prejudicial interest as an employee of Tesco which owned land discussed as part of the development proposals contained in this Report.

Emma Back and Marty Orton addressed the Forum during public participation and provided a presentation regarding the visions for leisure facilities at Bar End. Copies of the presentations received were circulated to members at the meeting.

Emma Back spoke on behalf of SALT (Sport, Art and Leisure Trust) and outlined the vision of 'A Better Sporting Facility for Winchester'. It was noted that Ms Black had previously addressed a number of meetings of the Council regarding the provision of leisure facilities in Bar End. The presentation contained details of a Flexible Accessible Sustainable Community Hub. This had the potential of becoming a facility that would attract people County wide, working in conjunction with Solar City, Winchester Walking Strategy, Living Streets, HCC and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. SALT would

also continue discussions on the provision of Leisure Facilities with the City Council.

Marty Orton presented his project proposal 'Be Mountain' to the Forum. He sought support from the Council that the road bridge land at Bar End be used to create a climbing activity centre and play area for families in the Winchester District to provide a much needed outdoor facility for younger people to enjoy.

One Member reported that they had visited the site with Marty Orton and was supportive of the project and was endeavouring to provide assistance where possible. Details of land ownership and use were currently being taken forward with HCC in the hope of obtaining a land lease to develop this project.

The Chairman thanked Emma Back and Marty Orton for their informative presentations.

The Corporate Director introduced the Report which provided an update on progress since the decision taken by Cabinet in September, whereby the options based on financial projections were looked at and officers were asked to pursue based on the two viable options available with the development of the Bar End site being the preferred option.

It was noted that Cabinet had taken the decision that the Bar End Depot site was not available for the purpose of leisure facilities as the site needed to generate a revenue income. Despite contact with Tesco regarding the acquisition of the land owned by them, no substantive response had been received to date.

In response to questions, it was reported that site testing would be a requirement and consideration would need to be given to ancillary facilities when establishing which leisure facilities were to be provided in terms of what would be needed to support their use (i.e. parking facilities) and the feasibility of options may need to be reviewed in this process.

The Corporate Director reported that the Council was currently working in partnership with the University, but was aware of their aspirations and requirements in terms of facilities but could not report on their behalf on at this time as it was necessary to respect the confidentiality of those discussions. Members were assured that officers would continue to work with all interested parties, including SALT.

The proposed timescales of the process going forward were considered by the Forum.

It was noted that Cabinet would likely receive a Report in January to give a clear steer on if there were two options or only one, taking into account financial parameters. If there were two options, then detail on the configuration of Bar End would be firmed up with discussions on partnership allocations taking place to ensure partners were able and willing to make that commitment long term in order to bring the project to realisation. This would

then be followed up with a further Report to Cabinet around May 2016 (if possible due to elections), in the hope that by Autumn 2016 Members would then be asked to take firm decisions to move forward into the design process.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

6. **ST MAURICE'S COVERT**  
(Oral Update)

The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) provided an update on the work of the St Maurice's Covert Informal Group which outlined the terms of reference for the working group.

It was noted that the group met on 29 October 2015 to review the past discussions, agree key features of the design brief and consider the next steps of the project. The Forum were reminded that a budget allocation of £10,000 was made from the Town Account for the commissioning of the design brief for the Covert and surrounding area with a further £30,000 allocated for the delivery of designs.

Members of the Group agreed that there should be a partnership approach to the project which would involve local stakeholders and, wherever possible, contributions should be sought towards the project budget.

The brief was revised to this effect and letters sent to invite the involvement of stakeholders on the project, these included Debenhams, Greggs, the Church Commissioners and the Wessex Hotel. To date Debenhams and the Church Commissioners had responded positively. A further meeting would be arranged once all responses had been received involving all parties, the Winchester Business Improvement District (BID) and Town Forum representatives.

It was noted that the intention was to finalise the brief with stakeholder input, ready to advertise the commission early in 2016, with evaluation and selection at the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED:

That the positive update on the St Maurice's Covert Informal Group be noted.

7. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT – DRAFT BUDGET 2016/17**  
(Report WTF235 refers)

Members noted that the Report had not been made available for publication within the statutory deadline. The Chairman agreed to accept the item onto the agenda as a matter requiring urgent consideration due to the need to consult with the Forum on its content prior to consideration by Cabinet.

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the Report which outlined the Winchester Town Budget for 2016/17, the revenue projections for the Town Account in line with the baseline assumptions and reflected the work carried out by the Informal Budget Review Group, as set out in Appendix 2 of the Report.

The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces advised that cemetery income made up a significant part of the overall income, but details of cemeteries were being looked at in relation to their respective fees and charges. Other neighbouring authorities were to be used as a benchmark to help evaluate the fees for services offered at Magdalen Hill cemetery.

It was reported that charges for Magdalen Hill would be tiered as follows:

- Tier 1 - residents within the Town Forum area who pay a precept which contributes towards the running costs for the cemetery;
- Tier 2 - those outside of the Town Forum area but within the wider Winchester City, including Badgers Farm, Oliver's Battery and Harestock; and
- Tier 3 - those who live outside of these areas.

The fees would be set with those in Tier 2 paying double those in Tier 1. Those in Tier 3 would pay just under triple the cost of those in Tier 1. There would be some exceptions to this pricing strategy such as the burial of children. This new approach to tiered charges would help alleviate the additional costs incurred due to the new extension and would bring Winchester's charges in line with neighbouring authorities. .

One Member made reference to the Town boundaries and indicated that Pitt Manor fell within the St Luke boundary and needed to be included within the Central Town boundary, this was acknowledged by officers who, consequently, agreed to make a change to reflect this.

In response to questions in relation to the collection of Council Tax for 2016/17, officers confirmed that capping had not yet been confirmed but was expected to be in line with previous years at approximately 2% overall.

The Forum noted that the Town Forum precept for Council Tax had not been increased for five years in line with the increases made to Parish Council precepts and recognised that a minimal increase was justified for 2016/17 in order to close the projected deficit gap, as set out within the Report.

It was agreed that, should Cabinet be minded to increase Council Tax for 2016/17, the Town Forum would support an increase of 2% in the collection of the Town precept for 2016/17.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Cabinet note the budget issues drawn to their attention by the Town Forum, as set out above; and**
- 2. That Cabinet note the feedback from the Town Forum as part of the consultation on the current budget proposals in relation to the Town Account, as set out above.**

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.45pm

Chairman