

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

21 September 2016

Attendance:

Councillors:

Weir (Chairman) (P)

Ashton (P)

Berry (P)

Burns

Elks (P)

Green (P)

Hiscock (P)

Hutchison (P)

Learney (P)

Mather (P)

Scott (P)

Tait (P)

Thompson

Tod (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Weston (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Built Environment) and Councillor Byrnes (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Professional Services)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Godfrey (Leader)

1. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman announced that she had recently attended a presentation by the County Council regarding devolution proposals. Work was ongoing to consider how proposals would impact on the Town Forum and a Report would be submitted to the newly formed Winchester Town Forum (Local Democracy and Decision Making) Informal Group.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 27 June 2016, be approved and adopted.

3. **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 Learney declared a personal (but non prejudicial) interest in respect various items below, due to her role as a Littleton and Harestock Parish Councillor.

4. **MEMBERSHIP OF SUB-COMMITTEES ETC**

One Member queried the status of the Informal Group which had been appointed at the previous meeting of the Forum to consider improvements to the appearance of the Town Centre and specifically whether there would be a Report to the November meeting to take the work forward.

The Chairman responded that it was intended to progress the work on St Maurice's Covert before examining the wider issues regarding town centre improvements. She acknowledged that it was open for specific issues regarding, for example bins, to be taken forward as a Ward issue by the Councillor prior to the Forum examining the matter.

One Member asked whether an update on Speedwatch would be available for the next meeting. In response, Councillor Green stated that the speedwatch machines had been received and there were 12 trained volunteers, however there were currently difficulties in finding a date suitable for all. The Chairman commented that it was proposed Councillors would also be asked to volunteer to receive training in order to increase participation.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ray Luckie spoke as a representative of the Cats Protection Charity which currently used St Maurice's Covert to raise monies through its table top sales. He expressed concern that the proposals for the Covert could prevent the use by charities for such sales and asked that, if this was the case, an alternative facility be provided.

The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) advised that Mr Luckie's concerns would be addressed during the presentation on the Covert.

Kate Macintosh spoke in support of the proposals for St Maurice's Covert as she believed it had great potential as a space and was one of three marked routes through to the Cathedral. She highlighted the requirement to address the various rubbish bins currently located within the Covert. She commended ScottWhitby for their work to date on the scheme.

6. **ST MAURICE'S COVERT – PRESENTATION BY SCOTTWHITBY STUDIO** (Oral Report)

The Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) highlighted the proposals for the Covert had resulted from a Town Forum initiative led by the Informal

Group consisting of Councillors Hutchison, Mather, Tod and Tait. The architecture practice ScottWhitby had been appointed through a competitive tendering process to take the project forward and were in attendance this evening to present their initial proposals following an information and evidence-gathering phase, and to seek guidance on moving forward. Boards outlining the proposals had also been on display outside the meeting room with representatives from ScottWhitby in attendance to answer any questions.

The Forum received a presentation from Alex Scott-Whitby and Cherng-Min Teong from ScottWhitby Studio. A copy of the Exhibition is available via the Council's website: <http://www.winchester.gov.uk/assets/files/28090/160921-Town-Forum-Exhibition-All.pdf>

During their investigations, a number of issues had arisen including the number of disparate elements, clutter and bins currently located in the space. Also, it was not clear to visitors that the Covert offered a route through to the Cathedral. The Tower was currently used as a fire escape for Debenhams but had potential to be better promoted as a heritage asset. The Covert also had great potential as a space for performances. The key aspirations of the project were for the Covert to become a new "urban room" for Winchester, with an improved connection to the Cathedral. The aim was to add value to existing businesses and the economy.

Proposals would retain the use of the Covert by charities for their table top sales. In addition, it was proposed a fixed (fold-up) stall for the flower seller. New lights would be installed shining up from the floors and a new structure created along the Market Street side of the Covert to include bin and cycle storage, together with improved signage. Proposals could include a shared use pathway from the Covert, across Market Street and through the Mercure Wessex Hotel car park, towards the Cathedral. The existing stone floor could be improved with jet washing. It was understood it would not be possible to undertake all the suggested improvements at the same time and it was therefore proposed work be phased, with decluttering and unifying the space being progressed first.

The Chairman thanked Alex Scott-Whitby and Cherng-Min Teong for their presentation and Members of the Forum generally welcomed the proposals presented as offering an exciting opportunity to make improvements to the Covert area.

The Assistant Director, together with Alex Scott-Whitby and Cherng-Min Teong responded to Members' questions as summarised below.

With regard to the proposals to clean the stone flooring, discussions were ongoing with the County Council and the possible difficulties of jet washing sandstone paving were acknowledged. The proposals would include cycle storage with some level of cover, although not as many spaces as currently in place as examination of the current facilities had indicated they were not all used.

With regard to the issues with the various bins, Mr Scott-Whitby mentioned the approach adopted by Westminster City Council (where his offices were based). The Assistant Director advised that she would be arranging a Councillor visit to Westminster City Council to investigate further whether Winchester City Council could make changes to its current policy regarding collecting commercial waste.

Mr Scott-Whitby confirmed that discussions had been held with the Mercure Wessex Hotel regarding a path across their land but further discussions would be required, together with the County Council regarding proposals for a shared use pathway across Market Street.

The Assistant Director advised that the presentation display boards would be available in the Tourist Information Centre for public viewing and comments for the following four days. In addition, comments could be submitted via a Tumblr blog: www.stmauricescovert.tumblr.com. The next stage would be for ScottWhitby to bring a fully designed and costed scheme back to the next meeting of the St Maurice's Covert Informal Group to consider. A further report for approval would be submitted to the Town Forum in early 2017. The Assistant Director stated that pre-application discussions were also ongoing with Planning and Historic Environment Officers regarding the elements of the proposals that would require planning permission.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the presentation and the proposals for progressing the scheme be noted.

7. **PROPOSED REPLACEMENT PAVILION AT NORTH WALLS**
(Report WTF231 refers)

The Forum received a presentation from Mike Caldwell, Andy Ramus and Tracy Dunlop local residents supported by the community organisation Hyde900, regarding proposals for the replacement of the pavilion.

Mike Caldwell emphasised that the current pavilion was no longer fit for purpose and it was proposed to replace it with one new pavilion, which could also be utilised for other uses. It was not possible for funds to be raised for a new pavilion until a guaranteed project was in place. The Group had worked closely with local Councillors and Council Officers and were grateful for assistance received to date.

Andy Ramus (Hyde resident and owner of a local architecture practice) displayed pictures and a model outlining initial proposals for a bespoke, new building which would serve both cricket pitches. Any building would be environmental friendly, with a low visual impact and would be robust, secure and low maintenance.

Tracy Dunlop outlined the proposals for fund raising which would include three separate strands. The group had a wide network of contacts with local businesses with potential access to corporate social responsibility budgets. In addition, proposals would include community fundraising, including with other potential users of a new pavilion. The possibility of accessing grants from the English Cricket Board would also be examined. In summary, the group were not requesting any additional funding from the Council but were aiming to raise the extra funds required to supplement funds already identified within the Council's budgets.

The Chairman thanked the group for their presentation and the proposals were generally supported by Forum Members.

In response to questions regarding the procurement process, the Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) advised that the Council could waive procurement rules if there were sound reasons to do so. Therefore, if adequate monies were raised by the group, the Council could select a community based option, separating out the design element from the construction costs. Full authority would be sought for this through Members in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures.

In response to some concerns, Mr Caldwell and Ms Dunlop confirmed that the facility would be used by cricket teams from across the District (and not just the Hyde team) and it was proposed the wider Winchester community would be fully involved. Further information about the way the pavilion would be owned and managed would be submitted in a report to the Forum in January, with a business plan for ongoing running costs.

RESOLVED:

1. That the options available for replacing the pavilion be noted and the recommended way forward set out in Paragraph 3.3 of the Report be supported.
2. That the presentation on behalf of Hyde900 in relation to an enhanced facility for the North Walls site be noted.

8. WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017/18 TO 2021/22
(Report WTF243 refers)

The Head of Finance introduced the Report and responded to questions from Members as summarised below.

The budget included an annual sum of £5,000 for bridge repairs and the Asset Management Plan would include detail of works proposed. It was recognised that the largest element of the budget related to recreational groups and open spaces and the Town Account Grants Informal Group continued to carefully monitor this. Options for the 2017/18 budget would be presented to the next

Forum meeting in November, following consideration by the Informal Group. The Chairman requested that other Members advise the Informal Group of any ideas regarding next year's budget as soon as possible.

The Forum noted that the Financial Strategy recommended retaining the Winchester Town Account reserve at a level of approximately 10% of the total annual net expenditure. In response to questions, the Head of Finance advised that Town expenditure was governed by legislation and consequently only certain approved items could be funded from it.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Winchester Town Account Financial Strategy for 2017/18 – 2021/22 be approved.
2. That the 2015/16 outturn on the Winchester Town Account be noted.

9. **UPDATE OF PLAY AREA REFURBISHMENT PLAN 2015-2020**
(Report WTF237 refers)

The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces introduced the Report and responded to questions from Members as summarised below.

One Member expressed concern that before agreeing a Plan it was first necessary for work to be carried out to prioritise the play areas within Winchester Town in terms of usage etc. The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces confirmed that the Play Areas Informal Group had undertaken a great deal of background work, as had Officers. Any recommendation to decommission a play area would only be brought forward when considered to be necessary.

One Member expressed concern regarding proposals in Appendix 3 of the Report to decommission play areas at Bath Place and Marnhull Rise and highlighted these proposals had not been included in the previous version of the plan. He believed there might be a potential conflict of interests in these areas between, for example the wishes of older residents and younger children. The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces advised that the Informal Group had identified these two areas as it was considered there might be more suitable uses than a formal play area. She confirmed that consultation with local residents had not yet been undertaken but would take place. The Interim Managing Director advised that Appendix 3 contained a proposed work programme but would be subject to further consultation. Following discussion, it was agreed that Appendix 3 be amended to specifically note that the proposals contained would be subject to consultation.

Some Members also expressed concern regarding the timing of the Report seeking agreement to spending CIL funds and/or reserves prior to other budget options being agreed. Following discussion, it was agreed that Recommendations 2 and 3 of the Report be noted at this stage and not

approved. The new Town Improvement Informal Group could then examine the use of CIL funds in relation to play areas and other budget options.

RESOLVED:

1. That the four year refurbishment programme be approved, subject to identifying the necessary funding, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the Report, as amended as outlined above.

2. That the proposed strategy as set out in the options below for the delivery of the four year refurbishment programme be noted, namely:

- a) That the Town Forum uses its CIL funds to fund the cost of the Play Area Refurbishment Programme;
- b) That, as part of the budget setting process, the Town Forum identifies funding within the Winchester Town earmarked reserves, in order to fund the costs of the Play Area Refurbishment Programme;
- c) That the Town Forum agrees to use a combination of the Town Forum's CIL income and Winchester Town earmarked reserves to fund the costs of the Play Area Refurbishment Programme;
- d) That the Council can consider allocating District CIL funds for, or as a contribution towards, the cost of delivering those projects in the programme which provide strategic or more than local benefits;
- e) That if no funding strategy is agreed as set out in a) to d) above, play areas will be decommissioned once they come to the end of their operational life.

3. That it be noted that if any option other than e) (decommissioning) is chosen then funding will need to be identified and the exact phasing of the four year refurbishment programme will need to follow this. If it is decided to only use CIL funding then there are likely to be delays in delivery of the programme due to insufficient funds currently being available within the Winchester Town budget for works in 2016/17 (it is anticipated that year two of the programme will now take place in 17/18).

10. **ABBOTTS WALK PLAY AREA**
(Report CAB2828 refers)

The Forum noted that the Report had been considered at Cabinet on 7 September 2016 which had approved its recommendations.

One Member expressed some concern about the proposed location of the play area and considered it might have been better located nearer the centre of Abbots Barton. However, the Forum noted that the facility would be available for all to use and welcomed the provision of facilities for older children.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals for the creating of the play facility for Abbots Walk, which would involve capital expenditure of up to £79,655 and recurring revenue expenditure of £2,910 be supported.

11. **UPDATE ON CENTRAL WINCHESTER REGENERATION INFORMAL POLICY GROUP (IPG)**

(Oral Report)

The Forum noted that the 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 to enable the views of Forum Members to be sought without delay.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Weston introduced this item as Chairman of the new IPG. In summary, at their first meeting, the IPG had discussed a process regarding how a new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the Central Winchester area could be produced. It had agreed to ask the Town Forum to assist in leading and contribute with initial public engagement and consultation.

Councillor Weston distributed background information to Town Forum Members regarding this suggestion which outlined three initial strands of consultation work moving forward in parallel (information available on the Council's website via the following link: <http://www.winchester.gov.uk/meetings/details/1531>). If the Forum agreed, it was proposed it would lead the public engagement strand and the mechanisms for doing this would be determined by the Forum itself. Councillor Weston emphasised that the Town Forum was also an important stakeholder itself and as such would be included within the second proposed strand (stakeholder contributions).

Councillor Weston stated that the IPG had organised a Workshop to be held on 3 October 2016 at 5.30pm to generate ideas for the Engagement Strategy for both the public and stakeholder engagement and to develop a brief for this piece of work. There were currently four members of the Town Forum who were also members of the IPG and she requested an additional two Town Forum Members also be nominated to take part, possibly Ward Members for the area.

During discussion, some Members expressed concern that it was essential the consultation made clear the various constraints involved in any new development. For example, existing Local Plan Policies, the specific constraints of the site and the requirement for a scheme to be viable. It was also noted that there was statutory public engagement required in the production of a SPD.

In response to questions, Councillor Weston confirmed that the public engagement process to be adopted would be discussed at the Workshop and then proposals submitted to a future Town Forum meeting to agree. The Interim Managing Director advised that the Forum were being asked to design the consultation process but would not have to fund the cost of consultation as there was a separate budget allowance for this. Members noted that it was intended that the new SPD be adopted by June 2017 and the timescale for consultation was therefore tight.

As a Trustee of St John's Winchester Charity, Councillor Tait stated that the Charity was a key stakeholder in the area and should be fully involved.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Byrnes stated that he wished to contribute to the debate and would email Members of the Town Forum his thoughts outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the proposal for the Town Forum to agree public engagement on the Central Winchester Regeneration be supported.
2. That the Central Winchester Regeneration IPG Workshop be supported and the following Councillors be nominated to attend: Councillor Mather (in her role as County Councillor) together with Councillors Thompson and Tait.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.40pm

Chairman