

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**29 July 2003**Attendance:Councillors:

Pearce (Chairman) (P)

Bennetts (P)
Berry (P)
Beveridge (P)
Craig (P)
Davies (P)
de Peyer
Hiscock (P)
Love (P)Mather (P)
Maynard (P)
Mitchell (P)
Nelmes
Nunn (P)
Pines (P)
Porter
Rees (P)
Tait (P)

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no questions asked or statements made.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum held on 19 May 2003, numbered 21-31, be approved and adopted.

3. OVERVIEW OF FINAL ACCOUNTS

(Report CAB663 refers)

The Director of Finance outlined Appendix 2 of the report which detailed the outturn against the Town budget.

In response to questions, it was explained that at the next meeting of the Forum on 30 October 2003 Members would be invited to consider the proposed Town budget for the 2004/5 financial year. However it was noted that the service level agreements for grounds and tree maintenance were the responsibility of the Community, Arts and Social Performance Improvement Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

4. **REVIEW OF THE PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON 17 JULY 2003 ON HOUSING ISSUES**

(Report WTF16 refers)

The Forum considered the minutes of the public meeting attached as Appendix One.

The Forum expressed its thanks to the officers and Councillor Hiscock (Portfolio Holder for Housing) for their presentations at the Public Meeting in the absence of the guest speaker, Mr Couttie of DCA.

Councillor Hiscock outlined the work the Council had made on meeting the housing need in the district. He explained that the Housing Enablement Section was considering more long-term solutions including shared equity properties and further assistance to help often older residents downsize. It was agreed that this should be publicised, together with the Forum's progress report (to be considered at the 30 October meeting), in the next edition of "Insight".

In discussing the publicity arrangements for the Forum, Members requested that information be presented at the 30 October meeting on the possibility and cost of a Town Forum newsletter being sent to every town area property.

The Forum also discussed the problems created by some houses in multiple occupancy (HMOs) in terms of their maintenance, parking and potential fire risk and the community's concerns over student housing. It was noted that the Council had introduced a voluntary accreditation scheme for HMO landlords and, unlike licensing schemes, this did include student accommodation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That information concerning the possibility and probable costs of a Winchester Town Forum Newsletter be investigated and reported to the next meeting.
3. That the Council's policies and successes in helping to address the Housing Needs Issue be reported in "Insight" along with a resume of the outcomes of previous meetings of the Forum.

5. **SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR FUTURE MEETING DATES**

(Report WTF14 refers)

Members considered the report and agreed the following subjects for public meetings. All the meetings will be held in the King Alfred Hall, Guildhall, Winchester.

RESOLVED:

1. That a public meeting be held at 7pm on Monday 17 November 2003 focusing on Community Safety and the Quality of the Environment in the town area. Members agreed that the Chief Executive and the new Director of Development Services, along with representatives from the Police and the County Council, should be invited to make presentations at this meeting. (However, subsequent to the meeting, it was agreed that this meeting would be held on 12 February 2004)

2. That a public meeting be held at 7pm on Thursday 12 February 2004 to focus on the Parking arrangements in the town area. (However, subsequent to the meeting it was agreed that this should be held on 17 November 2003 to allow the views of any public in attendance to feed into the review of parking charges.)

3. That a public meeting be held at 7pm on Thursday 11 March 2004 to discuss Modern Architecture in Historic Towns. Members agreed that this discussion could help inform the debate on some of the town centre's contentious planning applications. Members also recommended that an advocate for and an opponent against modern architecture in historic areas be invited to make presentations and help stimulate the debate.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.00pm

Chairman

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

PUBLIC MEETING ON OLDER PEOPLE'S ISSUES

1 September 2003

1. **Chairman's Introduction**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting approximately sixty members of the public and representatives from local community organisations, in addition to City and County Councillors.

He explained that the purpose of the evening was to provide an opportunity to discuss the issues that effect older people in Winchester.

2. **Presentation by Mr Chris Perry of Age Concern, Hampshire**

Mr Perry reported on a survey conducted by Age Concern that had highlighted the main issues effecting older people both locally and nationally.

This had shown that the primary concern was financial and underlined the need to retain final salary schemes, the protection of investments and the restoration the earnings linked pensions.

Mr Perry explained that change from earnings linked pensions to prices linked pensions in 1981 had dramatically effected the quality of life of many older people. As an example he explained that a £10,000 pension in 1981, under the prices linked scheme, was now worth £24,000 whilst if the earnings linked scheme had remained the £10,000 would now be worth £33,000.

Mr Perry also stated that life expectancies were increasing to the extent that it is predicted that a baby born today has a 40% chance of living to 150 years old. He added that in 1901 there were only 60,000 people over the age of 85 years old compared to 1.2 million today.

The increase in life expectancy meant that it was no longer practical nor desirable for the majority of people to work for only thirty years and Mr Perry stated that Age Concern were working to combat ageism in the work place. He explained to the Forum the difficulties older people suffered in securing employment that matched their skills and experience. Age Concern were therefore advocating positive discrimination through the selection process for the over 50s. He explained that this was part of the need to change society's perception of what was a "working age" in order that older people should be able if, they wished to, to continue working and contributing to the economy beyond the current retirement ages.

It was noted that the Government intended to pass anti-ageism legislation, but this was unlikely to be enforced until 2006.

Mr Perry commented on the important role played by older people in the voluntary sector and that active retirements should be promoted and encouraged.

Mr Perry also explained the problems older people faced in regard to long-term care. Over twelve percent of over 80 year olds required long-term residential care and, with the growth of owner occupation, the majority of these were liable to have their care paid through the sale of their homes. A Royal Commission study into the problem

suggested that this system in England and Wales was unfair and that care should be funded through general taxation.

The Age Concern survey also highlighted fear of crime as an issue for older people. Although they were statistically the least likely population group to be the victims of crime, 47% of over 75 years had said that they were afraid to go out at night.

In terms of transport issues, Mr Perry commented that the older people get the more reliant the majority tend to be dependent on the use of the private motor car.

Other issues raised in the Age Concern survey were keeping warm at winter (when 40,000 more elderly people die than in the summer) and the installations of smoke detectors.

3. **Presentation by Mr Steve Tilbury, Director of Community Services, Winchester City Council**

Mr Tilbury explained that the City Council was acting to ensure that the services it provided to older people, in common with any age, was more holistic and customer focused. He explained that the Council was working with its Local Strategic Partners to improve the drawing together of the services provided by the health care groups, local authorities etc, and to define more clearly what was hoped to be achieved by these services.

4. **Public Comments**

The Chairman opened the debate to the public and in summary, the following comments were made:

The Forum heard from members of the Winchester Council Tax Action Group who commented on the punitive effects recent increases in the Council Tax had had on the District's older population and explained that they were preparing petitions to the Prime Minister requesting that the Tax be restructured. The increases in Council Tax exceeded any increase in pensions and a representative of the Winchester City Residents Association who spoke requested that the budgetary process should be more open to public scrutiny, debate and influence with a view to cutting Council services.

Mr Tilbury responded that the budget process had began and that the City Council collected the Council Tax on behalf of the County Council (who took 77% of the total), the Police (who took 10%), the Parish Councils (who took 4%) whilst the City Council retained only 9%.

County Councillor Peskett added that a recent change in the distribution of central government's grants towards more deprived areas of the country had resulted in many south-east Councils having to raise their Council Taxes in order to maintain similar levels of service. She advised that the Community Grants made by the City Council represented excellent value for money and were small in comparison to the benefits they gave the community.

A member of the public underlined the importance the environment had on the quality of life experienced by older people and in particular the need to preserve the Bar End Meadows. He also stated that many older people in his opinion would view a nightclub in the town centre as inappropriate.

A representative Winchester City Residents Association spoke of the problems faced by older people who did not own their own cars. He suggested that there should be more low-floor buses in operation and a new bus route linking Stanmore with the hospital.

In response, Councillor Beveridge as the City Council's Portfolio Holder for Transport and Access explained that the Council was working with the County and the transport operators through the "Miracles" partnership. This sought to improve public transport provision in the town centre and gain access to European funding through the use of low emission buses.

A member of the public also suggested that a short-term maintenance contract should be agreed with the operators of the Winchester bus station to make it a better facility for all users. Councillor Beveridge acknowledged that the bus station was in a poor state of repair and explained that the area would be redeveloped as part of the Broadway/Friarsgate re-development.

County Councillors Dickens and Peskett commented on the provision of bus services in the town area and their efforts to get the private operators to increase their services.

The Forum also heard of the problem of loneliness suffered by some older people and Mr Perry explained that some schools worked in partnership with the social services to enable the two generations to share their experiences. County Councillor Hindson commented that the Ford Theatre Group also did similar work, which made each generation more aware and less afraid of the other.

Councillor Pines explained that the Council was in the consultation period of drafting a Social Exclusion Policy that would embody the belief that all residents of the community should be able to participate in community life and to benefit from the available opportunities. It was anticipated that this would result in more focused services provided by the Council and its partner organisations. Councillor Pines added that the draft Strategy would be re-considered in the light of the comments made at this meeting.

Others at the Forum acknowledged that there were lots of voluntary groups that were of interest to older people but that it was difficult to find out about such groups. Councillor Peskett commented that the Winchester Area Community Action Group held a forum every quarter that was attended by most of the active voluntary groups. It was also noted that the County Council's Social Services Department had published a leaflet that contained a comprehensive guide to all the services available to older people.

It was also suggested that the re-mit of the City Council's Housing Support Worker should be extended to include non-Council tenants to help the District's vulnerable elderly residents.

A representative of the Hampshire Voluntary Care Group briefly summarised the work they did for older people and explained that there was a shortage of volunteers to maintain this work. She explained that over the last few years the number of voluntary care groups in the town area had dropped from ten to two and asked that anyone interested in volunteering could contact the Group at Church House, Winchester Cathedral.

5. **Conclusion**

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to the debate and, in particular, Mr Perry for his presentation. He stated that the comments made would be considered further by Councillors at their meeting on 30 October 2003 and passed on to the appropriate Council Committee if further action was required.

The next meeting of the Forum would be on the subject of Parking Facilities in Winchester and would be held on Monday 17 November 2003 at 7pm in the Guildhall, Winchester.

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and concluded at 9.00pm

Chairman