

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**25 November 2009****Attendance:****Councillors:**

Maynard (Chairman) (P)

Barratt
Berry (P)
Fall (P)
Hicks (P)
Higgins (P)
Hiscock
Love (P)
Mather (P)
Mitchell (P)

Nelmes
Pearce (P)
Pines (P)
Sanders (P)
Stephens
Tait (P)
Thompson (P)
Worrall (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Beckett (Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism)

1. MINUTES**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 September 2009, be approved and adopted.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mrs Savage (Trustee of the Winchester Rent Deposit Scheme) referred to the Minutes of the Winchester Town Forum Public Meeting on Homelessness held on 28 October 2009. She drew attention to page 4 of the Minutes, where it was reported that Councillor Coates (Portfolio Holder for Housing) had advised that 'the Council had also increased its funding to the rent deposit scheme above inflation'. Mrs Savage advised that the Council's contribution had actually been considerably less than had been requested by the Scheme.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Savage for her comments and advised that the Forum would consider them under the relevant agenda item below.

Mr Weeks (Vice Chair of Winchester City Residents Association) spoke with regard to the following issues:-

- a) The Association was concerned at aspects of the existing proposals for the Silver Hill redevelopment of the town centre and would be writing to the Council's Chief Executive accordingly.
- b) The Association had attended a recent Stanmore Residents' meeting where there had been considerable concern expressed about the impact of Winchester University in the area. In particular, many homes on the estate had become student lets. These homes had originally been designed to provide affordable family accommodation. Mr Weeks reported that the Pro Vice Chancellor of the University, Mr Geddes, had given an undertaking to that meeting to take action to alleviate these concerns where possible.
- c) Mr Weeks referred to a recent Board Meeting held at the Royal South Hants County Hospital. He advised the Forum that the Association took an active part in these meetings which discussed important operational aspects of the hospital service.
- d) Mr Weeks reported on recent promotional activity of the work of the Emmaus Project. This was to include a personal visit by Terry Waite. Mr Weeks reminded the Forum of the important work of the Project in assisting clients to become self sufficient in their lives, some of whom were under medical supervision for mental illnesses.
- e) The Association had expressed strong reservations as to whether the provisions of the Bapsy Bequest to provide a community hall for Winchester were being met.
- f) Mr Weeks reminded the Forum of the important role of the Winchester City Residents' Association as a key stakeholder in the town area. He expressed concern that the Association could only engage with the Town Forum during the limited public participation part of its agenda, or alternatively; through the local press.

The Chairman thanked Mr Weeks for his comments and confirmed that the Town Forum recognised the importance of the Winchester City Residents Association as a key stakeholder, in addition to the several other active resident associations within the town area. He emphasised that all its members were very welcome to attend and speak at Forum meetings.

3. **PRESENTATION FROM HOME-START**
(Oral Report)

The Forum welcomed to the meeting Ms Anne Vince and Ms MacPherson who gave a presentation about their charity, Home-Start.

In summary, the Forum was advised that Home-Start provided support to families in the town area and elsewhere in the District. Its volunteers visited families within their homes who had at least one child aged under five years of age, who required support in their day-to-day lives. The service was free and

confidential and volunteers were trained and 'matched' to specific families. Many of the families who benefited from a Home-Start volunteer had experienced problems such as isolation, low self esteem, financial problems, illness and disability etc. Home-Start could provide assistance for up to six months or even two years in certain circumstances.

In addition to home-visits, there was also a weekly drop-in centre (at Lantern's Children's Centre in Bereweke Road, Winchester) and occasional family days out, with transport provided.

Home-Start encouraged parents to develop their own education to help secure employment. It also provided the volunteers with new skills.

Responding to questions from the Forum, Ms Vince advised that there was no charge for the services to its families and there was a waiting list. Home-Start was currently working with 27 families.

Home-Start was partially grant supported and had benefited from Lottery Funding for the first three years of its existence, after it was first established in Winchester in 2005. It regularly advertised for volunteers, was currently seeking new trustees and was regularly involved in fund raising.

At the conclusion of discussion, the Forum thanked Ms Vince and Ms MacPherson for the presentation.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

4. PRESENTATION FROM WINCHESTER ROUND TABLE
(Report WTF139 refers)

In respect of this item, Councillor Worrall declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest as he was an honorary member of the Round Table.

Councillors Pines declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest as he was a previous honorary member of the Round Table.

Councillors Tait and Mitchell also declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest as they were previous members of the Round Table.

The Forum welcomed to the meeting Mr Matthew Sturgeon and Mr Conor Gately who gave a presentation about the Winchester Round Table.

In summary, the Forum noted that the annual bonfire and fireworks were a tradition for Winchester, now in its 52nd consecutive year. The event was enjoyed by many people and supported Winchester's night time economy, in addition to giving its proceeds to its trust fund for many charitable beneficiaries.

Mr Sturgeon and Mr Gately had requested further stakeholder involvement in the event, to ensure its continuation. It was also noted that the limited membership of the Round Table were currently personally liable to underwrite the event, should it ever make an overall financial loss. Therefore, Mr Sturgeon and Mr Gately requested that the City Council, as a key stakeholder in Winchester, take over this responsibility. The City Council was also asked to consider providing funding towards the increasing costs in the organisation of a safe event and to provide a single point of contact to assist in its efficient organisation.

During debate, the Forum considered the suggestions made by Mr Sturgeon and Mr Gately.

The Corporate Director (Operations) recognised the difficulties caused to the organisation by the lack of a single point of contact at the Council, and undertook to investigate the situation.

With regard to additional funding from the Council to the Round Table, he suggested that this would be essentially sourced from the Town Account, as opposed to the Council's General Fund. However, he advised that although a grants application could be made, grants were not normally made to organisations which then used that funding, even indirectly, to distribute onwards to others.

The Director advised that the City Council also recognised the significance of the Bonfire event in Winchester, as well as its organisational burden on a small amount of people. Therefore he advised that the City Council would give consideration to any mechanisms there might be to reduce the financial risk to individuals.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Beckett, as Director of the Winchester Business Improvement District (BID), advised that BID would continue to take an active interest in the continuation of the bonfire event. He would also support officers in investigating the possible underwriting of the event. However, he suggested that grant payments from the City Council might not be the most appropriate method.

At the conclusion of debate, the Panel agreed that officers report to its next meeting on how the Town Forum and the City Council could assist the Round Table, in its organisation of the Bonfire event. This should specifically consider the provision of a single point of contact at the Council, the possibility of the City Council underwriting the event and also providing some grant support.

The Chairman thanked Mr Sturgeon and Mr Gateley for the presentation and advised that they would be kept informed of the Forum's consideration of the matters raised.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Report be noted.

2. That a Report to the next meeting of the Town Forum detail how the City Council could assist the Round Table in its organisation of the annual Bonfire event, in particular consideration of:

- the provision of a single point of contact at the City Council;
- the City Council underwriting the event;
- the City Council providing grant support to the event.

5. **PRESENTATION REGARDING POLICING IN WINCHESTER**
(Oral Report)

The Chairman advised that, due to prior commitments, no representatives from the Police were able to attend the meeting.

Therefore, this item had been deferred to a future meeting where the City Council's Community Safety Officer would additionally give a presentation regarding her work with the Police in the town centre.

6. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT BUDGET 2010/11**
[\(Report WTF137 refers\)](#)

The Head of Finance introduced the Report and the Forum noted that, due to additional costs to the Town Account over the previous year and an emerging deficit to its reserves, an average increase in local tax precept for the town area of up to 12% was likely, unless significant savings could be identified.

Members noted that finalised budget options for the setting of the Town Account 2010/11 would be presented to the Forum at its meeting on 20 January 2009, for recommendation to Cabinet as part of its consideration of the wider General Fund Budget setting exercise.

These options would have regard to issues that might be raised during the Forum's consideration of the baseline assumptions, as set out in this Report, in addition to the deliberations of the Forum's Town Account Sub Group.

The Head of Finance responded to detailed questions on the charges to the Town Account.

It was agreed that a plan of those bridges maintained at charge to the Town Account be circulated to the Forum, to remind Members of their location in relation to the Town area. The Forum was also reminded that it had previously agreed the charges to the Town Account in relation to the Theatre Royal and public conveniences. With regard to the latter, the Corporate Director (Operations) confirmed that Parish Councils had been advised that they would have to make the same proportional contribution to conveniences in their areas.

Following debate, the Forum agreed that it should firstly investigate options to reduce expenditure from the Town Account, before it considered any tax increases. Following further discussion, it was agreed that there be particular investigation of expenditure in the Recreations Grounds and Open Spaces budget and whether saving could be achieved in this area, or possible increases to its income. Officers were requested to bring these suggestions forward to the next meeting of the Town Account Budget Sub Group for consideration. Those discussions would then inform the drafting of the detailed Budget options report to be considered at the next Forum meeting on 20 January 2010.

RESOLVED:

That officers bring forward options to reduce expenditure in the Town Account Recreations Grounds and Open Spaces budget, in addition to increases to its income, to the next meeting of the Town Account Budget Sub Group and that those discussions inform the drafting of the detailed Budget options report to be considered at the next Forum meeting on 20 January 2010.

7. **WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM 2009/10 WORK PROGRAMME AND THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**
[\(Report PS382 refers\)](#)

The Forum noted its 2009/10 work programme (which was attached to the agenda) together with the Scrutiny Work Programme.

Following discussion it was agreed that ideas for panellists for a 'Question Time' style public meeting be emailed to the Chairman. It was also agreed that further consideration of matters related to the Royal South Hants County Hospital be confirmed in due course, including the possible invitation of the Chairman of the Hospital Trust to a future meeting of the Forum.

It was noted that the next scheduled Forum meeting on 20 January 2010 would consider a Report detailing officers' responses to the presentation by the Round Table outlined above, in addition to the Forum's deliberations on its 2010/11 Town Account Budget options. Members were also mindful that the proposed presentation by the Police was to be rescheduled to a future meeting.

The Chairman also noted requests for topics for future reports and/or presentations. There were requests for presentations on the new YMCA youth facilities proposed at St Johns House in The Broadway, the work of 'Relate' and also the Council's involvement in arranging major events in the town area. The Chairman advised that he would consider those requests.

RESOLVED:

That work programmes be noted.

8. **HOMELESSNESS PUBLIC MEETING – 28 OCTOBER 2009**
[\(Report WTF138 refers\)](#)

The Corporate Director (Operations) responded to the comments raised by Mrs Savage (Trustee of the Winchester Rent Deposit Scheme) during the public participation session above.

The Corporate Director advised that the Council had maintained its grant to the organisation at existing levels and it had therefore not been increased.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

9. **COUNCILLOR SUE NELMES**

The Forum resolved to send its best wishes for a speedy recovery from ill health to Councillor Sue Nelmes, member of the Town Forum and a Ward Councillor for St Bartholomew.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.50pm

Chairman