

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**12 October 2006**Attendance:Councillors:

Rees (Chairman) (P)

Bennetts (P)
 Berry (P)
 Beveridge (P)
 de Peyer (P)
 Higgins (P)
 Hiscock (P)
 Love (P)
 Mather (P)
 Maynard (P)

Nelmes
 Nunn (P)
 Pearce (P)
 Pines (P)
 Saunders (P)
 Stephens (P)
 Tait (P)
 Worrall (P)

Others in Attendance who addressed the Meeting

Councillor Beckett (Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism)
 Councillor Stallard (Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Sport)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Nelmes.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Forum, held on 7 June 2006, be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Skinner, Mrs Edwards and Mr Carden of the City of Winchester Trust made comments on the Vision for Winchester item, as set out below (Report WTF76 refers).

4. **WINCHESTER TOWN AND THE UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER**

(Report WTF77 refers)

Councillor Rees declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in this item as a self employed associate lecturer at the University. He spoke and voted thereon.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Professor J Carter (Vice-Chancellor) who gave the Forum a presentation on the University of Winchester and its role in the local community.

In summary, she explained that although the University had only been awarded university status in 2005, its history dated back 166 years when it was established by the church as a teacher training college. Since becoming a university, it had been shortlisted by The Times as University of the Year and currently employed 800 staff (200 of which were academics) and had 5600 students (80% of which were female in what was until the 1960s a male-only college). The University principally operated from two sites (West Downs and the King Alfred Campus) and had a turnover of £30m pa.

The University was divided into three faculties (Education, Arts and Social Sciences) and offered post and undergraduate courses in addition to professional training. Although it did not offer courses in engineering or the sciences, the University was active in research and had established itself as a conference centre for businesses.

Professor Carter stated that the University generated an estimated £100m a year and that its students played a vital part in the local economy. In explaining its links with the local community, Professor Carter added that the University employed a full time member of staff to co-ordinate student volunteers. It was also active in local partnerships, sponsored local events and had involvement in the Theatre Royal, the Winchester Business Hub, the Hat Fair, Winchester Writers' Conference, Arts and Mind Festival and the English Centre Proposals. The University had also recently completed a new student venue (much of which was underground to contain noise) at Sparkford Road and had proposed sports development space on its land at Bar End Road.

In setting out the challenges that the University faced, Professor Carter highlighted traffic, parking and accommodation space as issues. But she added that the University operated its own travel plan (which included free loans for students to buy bikes, encouraged car sharing and limited the number of student parking permits) as well as involving itself in the discussions regarding a potential additional Park and Ride site. With regard to accommodation issues, the University had established good communication links with local residents to help resolve problems associated with student housing and managed its own housing scheme, which totalled 55 houses and 217 bed spaces through the University Student Housing Service.

In discussing student behaviour in the town, Professor Carter stated that the vast majority were well behaved and that the University had established two neighbourhood liaison groups, employed a team of wardens, security staff and senior students, and played an active role in PubWatch.

In concluding her presentation, Professor Carter explained that the University sought to raise its profile and increase its number of international students from 4% to 10%, i.e. from 200 to 500 students. It also sought to increase its research base and further improve links with the town.

The Forum thanked Professor Carter for her presentation and unanimously congratulated her on the good work the University had achieved.

During the discussion that followed, the Forum discussed the potential for the University to expand and noted that, whilst Winchester was a relatively small University, expansion was restrained by the Funding Council, particularly with regard to the number of domestic students. Professor Carter agreed to

consult with the City Council at an early stage regarding any future development. A Member added for information that an initiative by Leeds City Council to restrict the number of students living in one area had been found to be illegal.

In order to formalise the links between the University and the Council, a Member suggested closer future working through the Forum and this was welcomed by Professor Carter and the Chief Executive, who agreed to report back to the next meeting with proposals.

It was also suggested that the University could benefit from the Council's twinning arrangement with Giessen in Germany and in welcoming this proposal, Professor Carter added that it could form part of the European Higher Education Zone Action Plan.

In response to other comments, Professor Carter agreed to investigate the idea of underground car parking and also explained that their children studies facility at Basingstoke helped broadened the University's appeal to all of Hampshire. Professor Carter also explained the University's efforts to increase participation from under-represented groups through "Aim Higher", which included summer schools and performances. She further agreed that greater publicity should be given to the University's close links with the local community.

RESOLVED:

1. That the many and varied links with between the Town and the University be noted.
2. That the Chief Executive report back to the next meeting on proposals to formalise and improve links between the City Council and the University.

5. **VISION FOR WINCHESTER DOCUMENT**
(Report WTF76 refers)

During the public participation section of the meeting, Mr Skinner, Mrs Edwards and Mr Carden of the City of Winchester Trust addressed the Forum.

Mr Skinner commented that the green wedges and gateways into the Town should be emphasised within the Vision and that references to Barton Farm should be deleted. He also considered it unwise to refer to the proposed new square at Silver Hill by name, as he understood it would be smaller than the current Post Office Square and was a lost opportunity to redevelop Middle Brook Street with trees and views to the Cathedral.

Mr Carden stated that the Vision was a welcome improvement on earlier drafts, but that it should further emphasise the historic environment and landscape setting. It was also vague on how to resolve conflicts between the sometimes contradictory aspirations within the Vision which would inevitably develop. He suggested that a working party, involving the Trust, should monitor the progress of the Vision.

In summary, Mrs Edwards raised concerns regarding the level of public participation at the Councillors' meetings of the Forum, their publicity, how agendas were formed, and the confusion in the public's minds regarding the two types of Town Forum meetings.

In response, the Chairman thanked the Trust for their comments on the Vision and agreed to consider the points raised further. The Chief Executive added that the website for the Forum was currently under review and that agenda items for the public meetings of the Forum were generated having regard to the completed questionnaires from previous meetings (Report WTF75 refers).

The Chief Executive also explained that it was not realistic to delete references to Barton Farm from the Vision, but that the document would evolve as the aspirations of the town changed. With regard to the historic environment, it was noted that Cabinet had recently appointed Councillor Stallard as Historic Environment Champion and that the role of the Vision was to set out aspirations; conflicts would be resolved on a case by case basis.

Other comments from the Forum included the need to highlight the Air Quality Management Area, a 20mph speed zone and support for the Theatre Royal.

At the conclusion the debate, the majority of the Forum agreed to publish the Vision for consideration by the public, local community groups and the Winchester Strategic Partnership. It was also agreed that the Informal Group of Councillors Rees, Saunders and Bennetts should continue to consider any necessary changes to the Vision and that the document should be reviewed and monitored by the Forum every year. Councillor Tait requested that his vote against the publication of the Vision be recorded, as he doubted whether the document would make a difference for local residents.

Following further comments, the Leader suggested that Cabinet may well consider favorably a request from the Forum for additional delegated responsibility to enable it to undertake more functions in the town area. It was considered that such a move would improve public participation at the Councillors' meetings of the Forum and better engage the local community. It was therefore agreed that a report exploring this possibility be presented to the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the draft Vision for Winchester document be agreed.
2. That the Informal Group of Councillors (Rees, Saunders and Bennetts) continue to monitor the progress of the Vision and that this be reported back to the Councillors' meeting of the Forum every year.
3. **That Cabinet be invited to consider how they can give effect to the aspirations the Vision sets out.**
4. That the Vision be sent to other partners in the Town to encourage them to consider how they can help realise its aspirations.

5. That a report be presented to the next meeting setting out options for the Councillors' Meeting of the Forum to take on additional responsibility to help improve public participation and to better engage and respond to the local community.

6. **OUTDOOR SPORTS CENTRE – BAR END**
(Report CAB1247 refers)

The above 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, because of the need to consider it without further delay.

The Director of Communities updated the Forum on the latest progress of the Outdoor Sports Centre since the publication of the Report. In summary, she stated that discussions were on-going between the City and County Councils to lease part of their land to the University, to accommodate the athletics track. The City Council had agreed to contribute £1,010,000 plus a section of land towards the scheme (total cost estimated to be £2-3m) and further financial contributions had been committed from the University, Winchester District Athletics Club and grant applications will shortly be submitted to Sport England and SITA Landfill Tax Credit Scheme.

In August 2006, the University had appointed architects for the project and it was anticipated that the planning application would be submitted in November 2006, with a view to opening the site to the public in April 2008. Access and transport issues were being addressed (which would include the local community) and it was hoped the site would benefit from a link between the nearby Park and Ride site.

The new facility would be available for use by the University, local sports clubs - particularly the Winchester and District Athletics Club, Winchester Hockey Club and Winchester and District Girls Football League, local schools and the wider community.

The Director also explained that, along with other facilities in the District, an application would be forwarded for the Centre to become a Pre-Olympic Games Camp in 2012.

In concluding the presentation, Councillor Stallard thanked the officers for their work on the project and commended Winchester and District Athletics Club for already raising £20,000 of their target £28,000 towards the scheme.

During debate, several Members raised significant concerns regarding the funding of the Scheme. Whilst they supported the scheme in principle, they considered it unfair that a project which would also benefit residents from outside the town, would be funded solely from the entirety of the Town Account's current and future open spaces reserve, whilst Parish Councils were merely being asked to make a voluntary contribution. They were also concerned that there was no contribution from the General Fund towards the scheme. It was argued that access to the facility from Parishes, such as Badger Farm, was easier than from some parts of the town.

In response, it was noted that 70-85% of the users of the facility were anticipated from be from the town, its schools and clubs, but that it would not

exclude people from using the facility who lived outside the non-parished area. It was also explained that the terms of the Open Space Fund limited its spending to local projects, which could otherwise be challenged by developers. The City Council also had no powers to dictate funding to Parish Councils and this was why they were being contacted by letter, to demonstrate the benefits of the scheme to their residents and to request voluntary funding contributions.

The Director of Communities also explained that, because of the large number of developments and limited available space in which to spend Open Space Funds, the town had accumulated over many years a large reserve for which there were no other plans.

Councillor Stallard added that, if the Pre Olympic Games Camp bid was successful, there would be an economic benefit centred on the town.

The Leader also spoke in support of the scheme and the funding arrangements as set out in the Report. He explained that there were examples of the General Fund being used to support facilities elsewhere in the town which were mostly used by town residents (such as River Park Leisure Centre) and that a holistic approach was required. In response to Members' concerns, he gave an assurance that any other future open spaces project of a modest nature in the town would be financed by a loan from the General Fund.

RESOLVED:

That, whilst the Forum broadly welcomes the development of the Outdoor Sports facility, the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Sport be requested to note Members' concerns, as set out above, and to investigate alternative actions accordingly.

7. WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM – 2006/07 PUBLIC MEETINGS PROGRAMME
(Oral Report)

In addition to the programme set out below, the Forum considered future meetings on sports facilities and the effects of the Olympic Games on Winchester, the Council's ownership of historic buildings, alcohol exclusion zones and the need for the Forum to more rapidly react to issues in the town (for example, dog walking on St Catherines Hill)

RESOLVED:

1. That the Public Meetings Programme for 2006/07 be agreed as:

a) Young People's Issues (Children and Young People's Action Plan – to be held at Peter Symonds College) 30 November 2006

b) Creative Winchester (the role of culture and creative business in the local economy – possibly to be held away from the Guildhall) 18 January 2007

c) Silver Hill (subject to planning permission, what the next steps are, the programme for development, and its impact) 1 March 2007

8. **NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS PUBLIC MEETING AND RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE: "PUTTING WINCHESTER ONTO THE MAP – CREATING A HIGHER GLOBAL PROFILE" 21 JUNE 2006**
(Reports WTF74 and WTF75 refers)

During debate, Members reflected on what they considered to be a generally successful meeting, but raised a concern that the length of the presentations were too long and that further thought and preparation should have gone into the organisation of the breakout groups.

RESOLVED:

That the Reports be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.10pm.

Chairman