

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

20 January 2010

Attendance:

Councillors:

Maynard (Chairman) (P)

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

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

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Beckett (Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism)
Councillor Cooper (Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Culture and Economy)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Learney
County Councillor Collin

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 November 2009, be approved and adopted.

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Weeks (Vice Chair of Winchester City Residents' Association) raised a number of issues. In summary, Mr Weeks suggested that a public meeting be held to discuss the Silver Hill development; commented on the difficulties of homeless people in Winchester and the need for the County Council Leader to reconvene a seminar to discuss the problems faced by people with mental health issues; and commented on the high rents he considered the City Council charged for retail units in the town centre. These points were noted by the Forum and the Portfolio Holders present.

3. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT – COMMUNITY GRANT
REVENUE AWARDS 2010/11**
[\(WTF141 refers\)](#)

Councillor Berry declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of her involvement with Relate Winchester and left the room during the consideration of the item and took no part in the debate or vote thereon.

Councillor Fall declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of her involvement with Stanmore Combined. She also declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a trustee of Street Reach and left the room during the consideration of the item and took no part in the debate or vote thereon.

Councillor Higgins declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest as he was on the advisory board of the Trinity Centre. Councillor Higgins also declared a personal and prejudicial interest as the Treasurer of Winnall Youth Club and left the room during the consideration of that item and took no part in the debate or vote thereon.

Councillor Hiscock (as The Mayor) declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of his involvement with the Trinity Centre and the Nightshelter (both of which were part of his Mayoral Charities) and he left the room during the consideration of the item and took no part in the debate or vote thereon.

Councillor Love declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of the applications from the Trinity Centre and Street Reach. Councillor Love spoke and voted thereon.

Councillor Mather declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest as a member of the Trinity Centre Advisory Committee and as she was a neighbour of one of the organisers of the Winchester. Councillor Mather spoke and voted thereon.

Councillor Pines declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of the Winnall Junior Youth Club (he was a holding trustee of the building the youth club used) and in respect to the applications from Age Concern and Young Carers (as he included these as the Mayors Charities during his Mayoral Year). Councillor Pines spoke and voted on all those items.

Councillor Pines also declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a committee member of the Winnall Rock School and the Winnall Community Association as a Holding Trustee of the Centre building. On these items, Councillor Pines took no part in the debate or vote thereon.

Councillor Tait declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of his involvement with Relate, the Trinity Centre and the Carroll Youth Centre. Councillor Tait also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in regard to Street Reach and he took no part in the debate or vote on this item.

Councillor Thompson declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of her involvement with Stanmore Combined. Councillor Thompson spoke and voted thereon.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Cooper addressed the Forum as the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Safety. In summary he corrected an error in the Report and explained that 37 applications had been received, and not 29 as published.

He explained the process of grant applications and underlined that the applicants for grants from the Town Account were also eligible to apply for further grant from the General Fund. Applications would be considered by Cabinet on 3 February 2010. To provide further context for the Forum's discussions, he explained that 70% of the total money given by the Council in grant was awarded to groups focused on the Winchester Town area. He asked the Town Forum to consider whether it was proportionate that the Town Account only contributed 6% of the total funding for grants, the majority of which were mainly of benefit to the town.

Councillor Cooper also expressed his disappointment that the recommendations in the Report from the Town Account Grants Informal Group had not sought to extend the grants budget and support all 24 of the grant applications considered for a Town Forum Grant. He expressed surprise that some of the groups that were recommended to have no grant aid had been considered worthy of support in previous years.

The Forum noted Councillor Cooper's comments and, during the subsequent discussion, Councillor Beckett confirmed that Cabinet would not be making any adjustment to the Town Account for grants once the Forum had set its budget. Therefore any additional grant would have to be considered now. The Forum agreed to bear these considerations in mind during their debate on the Town Account Budget later on the agenda (WTF140 refers).

A number of Members spoke in support of the application from the Winchester Festival and proposed an amendment to the Report to grant the £200 from the Town Account. However, following debate, the Forum agreed that this additional grant should not be awarded. The Forum noted that the applications had been considered in detail by the Winchester Town Forum Town Account Grants Informal Group and that the recommendations, as set out in the Report, were in accordance

with Council policies. It therefore agreed with the recommendations as set out.

RESOLVED:

That the following be recommended to Cabinet:

- 1. That the annual grant budget be increased by an additional £53 to provide a budget of £41,813 for 2010-2011.**
- 2. That subject to Cabinet and Council approval of the overall grants budget, the amount to be awarded to each of the applicants for a revenue grant from the Winchester Town Account totalling £25,813 should be as follows:**
 - (i) Age Concern- £290**
 - (ii) Carroll Youth Centre - £500**
 - (iii) Hampshire & Isle of Wight Youth Options - £500**
 - (iv) Hat Fair - £3,468**
 - (v) Homestart Winchester and Districts - £500**
 - (vi) Relate Winchester - £550**
 - (vii) Stanmore Combined - £550**
 - (viii) The Trinity Centre - £3,850**
 - (ix) Winchester & District Mencap - £1,000**
 - (x) Winchester & District Young Carers Project - £200**
 - (xi) Winchester Churches – Nightshelter - £400**
 - (xii) Winchester CAB - £9,980**
 - (xiii) Winchester Detached Youth Work Project (Street Reach) - £1,500**
 - (xiv) Winchester Live at Home Scheme - £650**
 - (xv) Winchester Mayfest - £100**
 - (xvi) Winchester Youth Counselling - £275**
 - (xvii) Winnall Community Association - £500**
 - (xviii) Winnall Junior Youth Club - £500**
 - (xix) Winnall Rock School - £500**

NOTE: In addition to the above, a sum of £4,000 has been set aside (within the total £41,813 budget) to provide a replacement programme for the Tower Arts Centre (paragraph 4.4 and the executive summary of the Report and CAB1685 refers). This commitment started in 2008/09 and will end in 2010/11.

4. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT – COMMUNITY CAPITAL AWARDS 2010/11**
[\(Report WTF142 refers\)](#)

Councillor Nelmes declared a personal and prejudicial interest in respect of her involvement with the Winchester Dramatic Society (Chesil Theatre) and she took no part in the debate or vote on this item.

Councillor Mitchell declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of his involvement with the Weeke Community Centre and spoke and voted thereon.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Cooper explained the capital grant application process and explained that, in addition to the grants set out in the Report, Cabinet on 3 February 2010 would consider a request for an additional capital grant from the General Fund towards the YMCA's re-development of St John's House Winchester. He considered that this application was relevant to the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Children and Young People's Partnership and was a positive response to the petition to Council in April 2009. Councillor Cooper added that since the new facility would be of primary benefit to the town area, he considered it may be reasonable for the Town Account to contribute £5,000 towards the recommended capital grant of £20,000.

The Town Forum was advised by the Corporate Director (Operations) that, as it had not received the details of the YMCA proposal, it should treat the request from Councillor Cooper as a request for an indication to Cabinet as to the views of the Town Forum, rather than formal consideration of the grant. That would be a matter for Cabinet. The Town Forum could, if it so wished, make budget provision for £5,000 to allow for a contribution if Cabinet decided to make the award.

Some Members indicated full support for the proposal, whilst others were concerned that Cabinet should assure itself that the YMCA's facilities would be open to all, regardless of creed, gender, sexual orientation and religion. In response, Councillor Cooper explained that the new facility was supported by the Children and Young People's Partnership and that the proposed money was a one-off capital grant, which would not require on-going revenue support.

However, at the conclusion of debate, the Forum decided that as the request had not been received in time to be considered in the usual way by the Town Account Grants Informal Group, it did not wish to support the application on this occasion. It agreed not to make a provision for the capital grant request within the budget (especially in light of the demands on the 2010/11 budget) and not to endorse any subsequent decision of Cabinet to release money from the Town Account at a later date on behalf of the Forum.

The Forum agreed to the capital grants set out in the Report.

RESOLVED:

That the following be recommended to Cabinet:

1. That Town Forum, subject to Council approval of the 2010/2011 budget provision makes the following decisions on Capital Grants:

The following capital grants for 2010/2011 be approved from the Town Account:

- (i) Winchester Dramatic Society - £10,000**
- (ii) St. Faith's Parish Hall Committee - £2,000**

2. That further consideration be given to grant aiding the Winchester Dramatic Society in the financial year 2011-2012.

3. That, because the application had not been considered by the Town Accounts Grants Informal Group, coupled with a lack of information, the Forum agreed to make no provision for the capital grant request from the YMCA for their re-development of St Johns House, Winchester and was unable to endorse any subsequent decision of Cabinet to release this money from the Town Account at a later date on behalf of the Forum.

5. PLAYGROUND FIVE YEAR REFURBISHMENT PLAN
[\(Report WTF143 refers\)](#)

The Head of Environment introduced the Report and corrected it by explaining that an additional scheme to refurbish North Hill Drive play area in Year 3 had been omitted from the Report in error. In response to a concern from a Member, he agreed to check whether any ownership questions may affect the feasibility of this scheme.

The Forum noted that the five year plan was likely to draw £100,000 from the Town Account Open Spaces Fund and £50,000 from the Town Account. Members questioned whether a greater proportion of

these costs could be charged to the Open Spaces Fund and noted the Open Space Strategy Report (Report CAB1276 refers). The Corporate Director (Operations) added that the existing legislation and the Council's current planning policies limited the use of developers' contributions (the Open Spaces Fund), but that these policies would be reviewed as part of the Local Development Framework. However, notwithstanding this, the Forum requested that officers investigate the possibility of drawing more money from the Open Space Fund to the refurbishment plan and examine whether it could be used to finance the resurfacing of play areas in addition to providing new equipment.

RESOLVED:

1. That the five year refurbishment and maintenance programme be agreed as set out in the Report and Cabinet note this decision accordingly.

2. That Cabinet agree the expenditure of any approved funds from the Open Space Fund or Play Area Capital budget on these schemes over the next five years, subject to the annual review of the capital programme.

6. THE WINCHESTER "OPEN SPACE" FUND
[\(Report WTF144 refers\)](#)

In response to a Member's comment, the Head of Environment agreed to check status of the play provision at Marston Gate.

In response to a Member's suggestion, the Corporate Director (Operations) commented that the Local Development Framework Committee would review the Open Space Funding and this could include extending it to incorporate cultural projects.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet be recommended to make no amendments to the Open Space Strategy 2009-2010 in relation to the Winchester Town area.

7. WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT BUDGET 2010/11
[\(Report WTF140 refers\)](#)

The Head of Finance introduced the Report and distributed to Members an additional appendix which set out Members' options in setting the budget.

The Chairman reported that the Town Account Informal Group had examined the budget in detail throughout the year and had requested that officers identify savings. These were set out in Appendix 2 of the

Report (various budget headings of Community Open Spaces, bus shelter cleaning and footway lighting).

Following debate, and in addition to the savings and costs set out in the Report, the Forum agreed that it did not need to set aside £10,000 as a contribution to implement 20 mph speed limits (as progress was being made on the issues without a funding requirement). The Forum also agreed that it was unnecessary to make any budget provision for new noticeboards in 2010/11 (saving £5,000 from the proposed budget), as this amount could be funded by County Councillors' budgets. Members also agreed that, subject to the Head of Property Services being assured that there would be no health and safety issues, the provision for the repair of bridges be spread over two years rather than one at £15,000 per annum. Furthermore, the Forum agreed with the proposed increased income of £6,000 from interment fees.

In response to a question, the Head of Finance explained that any potential saving from a greater use of the Open Space Fund (Report WTF143 above refers) would have a minimal impact on the 2010/11 Town Account Budget. This was because this cost was calculated as a capital financing charge, which would only be accounted for commencing in the financial year following the year of expenditure (2011/12).

Following advice from the Head of Finance, the Forum agreed to budget to repay the forecast Account deficit and to fund the forecast recurring baseline expenditure.

Further to these, the Forum agreed additional spending on public convenience repairs and improvement (£5,000) and NNDR (£5,000) and Urban Neighbourhood Plans (£1,500). In response to public concerns following the recent snow and ice, the Forum agreed to allocate £4,000 towards additional grit bins. The location of these additional bins would be determined by the Head of Access and Infrastructure (in consultation with Ward Members) and take into account any existing bins or proposed new bins from the County Council.

To meet the spending and income decisions the Forum had agreed above (in addition to the recommendations it had agreed in the Report), the Head of Finance explained that Forum had to increase the Town Account precept by 6.3% to produce a balanced budget. She advised that this figure would produce nothing to replenish the reserves, which the Town Account Financial Strategy had recommended be set at 10% of the total budget (approximately £90,000).

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Beckett indicated that Cabinet was likely to agree an increase in the District's Council Tax of less than 2%. This meant that the maximum by which the Town Account precept could be increased was 10.6% and that this would put approximately £35,000 into the reserves.

However, following consideration of higher levels of precept, the Forum agreed that, in the wider current economic context, it would not raise the precept beyond the 6.3% increase, which equated to a Council Tax at Band D of £61.32 (a £3.64 increase over the 2009/10 precept).

Members also discussed the proposal from the Winchester Roundtable, which had requested that the Forum provide financial assistance as a fallback in the event of a crisis affecting the funding of the annual bonfire event. The Forum agreed that, whilst it was sympathetic to the Round Table's situation, it could not provide such an open-ended commitment.

RESOLVED:

1. That the revised estimates for the Town Account for 2009/10 be noted.
2. **That for the 2010/11 the following Town Account and Town Precept be recommended to Cabinet for approval:**
 - a) **That the sum of £827,845 be treated as Special Expenses under Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, in respect of the Winchester Town Area (total net expenditure);**
 - b) **That the total Charges on the Winchester Town Account be set at £863,500 (precept) and;**
 - c) **That the Council Tax for the Special Expenses in the Winchester Town Area at Band D be set at £61.32 for 2010/11.**
3. That in regard to the request from the Winchester Round Table, the Forum agreed that although it was sympathetic to the Round Table's situation it could not provide such an open-ended commitment.

8. **WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM 2009/10 WORK PROGRAMME AND
THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**
[\(Report PS396 refers\)](#)

The Forum noted its 2009/10 work programme (which was attached to the agenda) together with the Scrutiny Work Programme and that the next meeting (23 March 2010) would be held at St John's House, Winchester and receive a presentation from the YMCA.

RESOLVED:

That the work programmes be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 10.10pm.

Chairman