

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**23 March 2010**Attendance:Councillors:

Maynard (Chairman) (P)

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

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

1. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

This meeting of the Forum was held at the new home of YMCA Winchester, St Johns House, Winchester.

2. MINUTES

In response to a Councillor's question, the Corporate Director (Operations) clarified that it had become apparent after the previous meeting that the North Hill Drive play area (which had been referred to under consideration of Report WTF143) had yet to be built and therefore could not be included as a refurbishment cost. However, there was no need for Members to reconsider the Five Year Playground Refurbishment Plan.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the above, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 January 2009, be approved and adopted.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No statements were made or questions asked.

4. **YMCA PRESENTATION**
(Oral Report)

Councillor Love declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in this item as he knew Mr Simpson. Councillor Love spoke and voted thereon.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Mike Simpson, Chief Executive of Winchester YMCA.

Mr Simpson gave the Forum a presentation. In summary, the presentation set out the YMCA's hopes for its new base in Winchester and the organisation's role.

Following the presentation, the Forum adjourned for ten minutes to view the undercroft of St Johns House, in the company of officers and Mr Simpson.

When the Forum reconvened, Mr Simpson explained that he anticipated that work to transform the undercroft into a youth facility and cafe would begin in early May and conclude in autumn 2010. The YMCA was placing £300,000 of its reserves from the sale of its previous building in Weeke into the conversion of the undercroft. The remainder of the cost was being met from grants.

The YMCA had agreed a ten year lease of St Johns House and this included the first floor Assembly Room. Mr Simpson explained that the YMCA anticipated that proceeds from the hire of the Assembly Room would help off-set the operation costs of the youth facility in the undercroft beneath.

The Forum welcomed the initiative to provide new facilities for young people in Winchester, but concerns were raised regarding the significant costs previously associated with maintaining the historic St Johns House and, as a consequence, the YMCA's ability to provide the facility in the long term. In response, Mr Simpson explained that there were break clauses in the lease and that, once converted, the undercroft would provide a better facility than the previous building had at Weeke.

Mr Simpson also clarified that, apart from specific events such as discos, young people would not be charged an entrance fee to the building. He added that charges for the cafe were likely to be less than existing commercial cafes in the town centre.

At the conclusion of debate, the Chairman thanked Mr Simpson for his presentation and tour of the building.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted

5. **WINCHESTER BEFRIENDERS PRESENTATION**
(Oral Report)

Councillor Love declared a personal (but not prejudicial interest), as a Trustee of WACA (where Winchester Befrienders were based) and he spoke and voted thereon.

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Stuart Banks who gave a presentation about Winchester Befrienders, which is available electronically [here](#).

In response to questions, Mr Banks explained that the scheme would be open to anyone over 18 years old needing its help, but he anticipated that most of its users would be middle-aged.

The Forum congratulated Mr Banks on the scheme, which they considered would meet a need not currently being met by other providers, and they noted the indications of support they had received from health care professionals.

In response to questions, Mr Banks explained that the majority of users would be referred to the scheme by GPs and that, if it became overwhelmed by the number of users seeking its services, he would apply for more funding. He explained that the scheme would be run on approximately £35,000 per year and that the majority of its work would be done by volunteers (through WACA) with relevant experience. In time, the befrienders would come from former clients and Mr Banks anticipated that each befriender could deal with 3-4 clients each. Six befrienders were required for year one of the scheme.

Mr Banks confirmed that the scheme was initially set to operate for three years. In its last year, Mr Banks expected that his efforts would be focused on attempting to continue the project, either by getting the scheme adopted by the Primary Care Trust, sponsorship or achieving charity status.

At the conclusion of debate, in addition to welcoming the scheme and thanking Mr Banks for his presentation, the Forum agreed that it should consider (as part of its work programme for the next municipal year) inviting the Primary Health Care Trust to a meeting to discuss the provision of mental health care in Winchester.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted and that the provision of mental health care be considered as part of the Forum's 2010-11 Work Programme.

6. **WINCHESTER GUILDHALL REFURBISHMENT PRESENTATION**
(Oral Report)

The Head of Estates gave the Forum a presentation regarding the on-going refurbishment of Winchester Guildhall, details of which are available electronically [here](#).

In response to the questions that followed, the Forum noted that the refurbished Guildhall would be marketed in partnership with the Winchester Discovery Centre. Following the 2009 Frank Turner concert, the potential to hold larger-scale music events had been successfully demonstrated.

In response to a question, the Head of Estates explained that the refurbishment of Abbey House did not fall within the existing phase of works, but that he was considering the potential of the building; not withstanding the constraints of its use and listed status.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

7. **REFUSE COLLECTION AND STREET SCENE ISSUES**
([Report WTF145 refers](#))

The Head of Environment explained that the Report had been produced at the request of the Chairman to discuss the issues regarding refuse and recycling bins in the town centre and their impact on the street scene.

Several Members commented on the difficulties faced by those residents with seemingly no alternative but to drag their wheelie-bins through their homes for collection. The Head of Environment explained that to prevent this problem, the Council had negotiated with the Depot Contract Provider a service to provide weekly collections of refuse and recycling bags for such properties. The contract limited this to 2,500 dwellings and the Council currently provided the service to 2,000 dwellings, where it had anticipated the need. The Forum noted that if Ward Members wanted an extension of this service, they should contact the Head of Environment directly.

The Forum also discussed the lifespan of the average wheelie-bin. The Head of Environment explained that the manufacturers expected the bins to last between 10-15 years, but this was variable depending

on use and exposure to direct sunlight. The majority of the Council's bins in use were 20+ years old. Whilst the Council would repair the lids and wheels of bins at no cost to the resident, there was a 50% subsidised charge of approximately £20 to provide a replacement bin.

Members discussed the thousands of bins which were being stored in the Chesil Street Tunnel and the Head of Environment explained that these had become redundant, following the switch to twin-bins because of their smaller, 140 litre, size. They had been stored as they currently had no significant re-sale value, but were offered to residents as replacements if they were content with the smaller bin size.

Finally, the Forum discussed the effect of wheelie-bins on the street scene. The Head of Environment stated that in cases where residents had persistently left their wheelie-bins out on the pavement the Neighbourhood Wardens could become involved. He requested that Members inform him of any other cases where left-out wheelie-bins caused a problem. In reference to the recent debate regarding commercial A-boards, he added that the same principle of blocking the pavement/highway applied to wheelie-bins and that this could ultimately be a matter for the County Council.

He also explained that the Council worked with the City Centre Manager to minimise the possibility of commercial waste being intermingled with patrons retiring from the town centre's late night establishments. In addition, the Head of Environment agreed to investigate concerns regarding the collection of commercial waste from the rear of God Begot House.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

8. **WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM 2009/10 WORK PROGRAMME AND THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**
[\(Report PS402 refers\)](#)

The Forum noted its 2009/10 work programme (which was attached to the agenda) together with the Scrutiny Work Programme. Members had earlier requested that consideration be given the provision of mental health care in Winchester (see above) and a Members suggested greater scrutiny of the Council's strategic partnerships.

RESOLVED:

That the work programmes be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm, adjourned between 6.45pm and 6.55pm and concluded at 8.35pm.

Chairman