

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM (COUNCILLORS' MEETING)

23 March 2011

PUBLICITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FORUM

REPORT OF HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

[WTF17](#) – Publicity Arrangements for the Forum – 30 October 2003

[WTF34](#) – Publicity Arrangements for the Forum – 14 September 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

During the public participation section of the previous meeting of the Forum, held 26 January 2010, it was suggested that Members should re-consider how the Forum engages with local residents on town issues and this Report sets out possible responses for Members' consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Forum identifies which, if any, of the following suggestions it wishes to delegate to the Corporate Director (Operations) to pursue and implement (in consultation with the Chairman);

- a) better use of existing community newsletters;
- b) a new Town Forum website.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At the previous meeting, a member of the public addressed the Forum and expressed their concern that the majority of the town's residents were largely unaware of the Forum's work and the issues it discussed. As a quasi-Town Council, she suggested that the Forum should improve its communications with residents, to engage a broader spectrum of society and therefore help it to make better informed decisions.

2 Previous Reports on the Forum's Publicity

- 2.1 Reports WTF17 and WTF34 that previously considered the Forum's publicity, focused on the promotion of the large scale public meetings. It was explained that these meetings were publicised through:
- a) Press adverts (usually on the front page of the Hampshire Chronicle).
 - b) Posters sent to key holders of the town's noticeboards, local bus companies, pubs, schools, college and university etc as appropriate.
 - c) Notices sent to the Forum's distribution list of residents and organisations that had expressed a previous interest in the Forum's work.
 - d) To all City Councillors through the Democratic Services Update (previously known as the Members' Briefing Note) and by contacting the town's County Council members.
- 2.2 In considering the previous reports, the Forum rejected the idea of generating its own leaflet for residents on the grounds of cost. The 2004 report stated that to produce and distribute a leaflet for the 15,000 properties in the town, would have cost between £4,000 and £5,000. The Forum had also identified the opportunity for the Forum to publicise its public meetings through the Council's biannual "Perspectives" magazine; although there were problems with the timing of the publication of the magazine not coinciding with the public meetings and the fact that the magazine was district-wide, not just for town residents. Funding for the magazine has since been removed from the financial year 2011/12 and so this would no longer be a method of communication that could be used.
- 2.3 However, it is worth underlining that the previous reports concentrated on publicising the large scale public meetings, and not how to better communicate the quasi-Town Council and on-going work of the Forum.

3 Suggested Improvements

3.1 Members should be aware that there is a Code of Practice on local authority publicity which was issued in 1988 and altered in 2001. A revised Code has been produced and consulted on, although it will not come into effect until it has been approved by Parliament. Both versions require publicity to be cost-effective, and Members should be mindful of this requirement and give consideration to whether value for money is being achieved, when considering the report. Otherwise, the principles of the measures set out below would be within the requirements of both versions of the Code.

3.2 Using existing Community Newsletters

3.3 Distinct from a one-off leaflet publicising a specific Town Forum event, many Parish Councils distribute a parish magazine or newsletter for their residents. However, it is not recommended that the Forum pursue this option as there are insufficient officer resources within the City Council to support the production of such a magazine and the cost issues raised by the Forum in 2004 remain and are, if anything, a greater consideration in the current climate.

3.4 However, within the Town there are a number of publications, produced and distributed by local residents' organisations or church groups etc, such as the "All Saints Parish and Community News" for Bar End, Chilcomb, Chesil, Highcliffe and St Giles Hill residents. Ward Members may wish to assist officers identify these publications in each of the six town wards. Officers could then contact the publishers, to reserve a page in future publications to highlight the work of the Forum.

3.5 A Town Website

3.6 The Forum currently has a webpage on the City Council's Council and Democracy pages (there is no link from the Council's Homepage):

<http://www.winchester.gov.uk/CouncilAndDemocracy/ElectedRepresentatives/Committees/Committee.asp?id=SX9452-A77FB7B2>

3.7 However, Members may wish to improve the profile of this page and the identity of the Forum by creating a new website, to provide residents with a one-stop-shop facility, with links from the Council's Facebook and Twitter pages. There are lots of good things going on in the town, often with their own websites, but it appears that there is nowhere these are drawn together for town residents, as might be expected in a parished area.

3.8 This new website could include:

- a) a brief introduction with photographs etc
- b) a News Section including:

News relating to a particular area or address in the town on:

- i) bin collections

- ii) Street Cleaning (to move parked cars to one side of the road)
- iii) New Traffic Regulation Orders (links to Portfolio Holder Decision Notices)
- iv) Highway Works from the Hampshire Area Action Team
- v) Planning applications (although these and Licensing Applications will continue not to be determined by the Forum)
- vi) Licensing Applications

News relating to the whole of the town:

- i) Link to Town Forum agendas
 - ii) BID news
 - iii) WDSP news
 - iv) Allotments
 - v) Budgets
 - vi) New policies and consultation exercises, such as Blueprint, and links to how residents can get involved.
 - vii) Barton Farm
 - viii) A link to the Council's petition page
 - ix) WMAP/AQAP
 - x) Conservation Areas
 - xi) Safer Neighbourhood Panel
 - xii) Surgery News
- c) What's On Section
- i) Concerts at the Cathedral
 - ii) Public Lectures at the Colleges or Universities
 - iii) Wardens' Five a Side games
 - iv) Festivals
 - v) Pub quizzes etc
 - vi) Community Groups' events, such as street parties, the Big Sleep Out etc
 - vii) Link to www.visitwinchester.gov.uk
- d) General Interest Section
- i) Historical articles about the town
 - ii) Interviews with local people of interest
 - iii) Points of view articles (submitted by Ward Councillors, town charities, WinACC etc)
- e) Vacancies
- i) Volunteering opportunities – link to WACA's pages
- f) Contacts

- (i) How to contact your political representatives (MEPs, MP, County and City Councillors) a link to “Where I live” and to include surgery times etc
- (ii) A link to the Hampshire Action Team webpage
- (iii) The Neighbourhood Wardens
- (iv) The Police’s Safer Neighbourhood Teams
- (v) A Directory of residents and community groups
- (vi) Links to other groups/charities/youth groups (eg Litter Pickers, WACA, Roundtable, WinACC, Roundtable etc)
- (vii) Churches, schools, doctors etc by area
- (viii) Tenants’ Groups

- 3.9 The “What’s on” section, if updated regularly, could generate additional internet traffic to raise awareness of the Council’s work, along with the work of other community groups. The “What’s on” facility could also provide an opportunity for residents’ associations to publicise their events, such as street parties.
- 3.10 In addition to (and as part of) a publicity driven launch of the new website, the Forum could pilot an initiative to get local school children to, through their classes, think about the ten things they like best about Winchester and the ten things they like least about the town. These could be uploaded to the website and, beyond the usefulness of the exercise in itself; it could raise awareness of the new website with teachers and local parents.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

4 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 4.1 The proposals are intended to reinforce the Council’s practices as an Efficient and Effective Council.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 If the Forum were minded to support a new website, it would require an on-going, dedicated officer time resource of approximately one day per week.
- 5.2 In all cases, any costs arising from these proposals would need to be charged to the Town Account and the Town Forum would need to set a budget to cover the costs arising. Although the Town Account is in many ways treated in a similar way to a Parish or Town Council it is treated as part of the District for Council Tax capping purposes. Therefore any changes to the total Town Account Budget that would require an increase in its “precept” would be subject to approval as part of the overall total District Budget considerations.
- 5.3 Alternatively if costs could be contained within the total expenditure budget for the Town Account for example by virement, this would avoid the capping considerations.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES, BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS & APPENDICES: None