

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**5 October 2011**Attendance:Councillors:

Collin (Chairman) (P)

Berry (P)
Higgins (P)
Hiscock (P)
Hutchison (P)
Love (P)
Mather (P)
Maynard (P)
Mitchell (P)

Nelmes
Pearce (P)
Pines (P)
Prowse (P)
Sanders (P)
Scott (P)
Tait (P)
Thompson (P)
Witt (P)

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 July 2011, be approved and adopted.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Councillor Scott read a statement from Mrs Vining, who was unable to attend the meeting due to ill health. In summary, Mrs Vining raised concerns regarding the National Planning Policy Framework and stated that although Winchester needed growth and development, this should take account of the town's green fields and setting. She had also sought clarity on the provision of additional grit bins.

As above, Councillor Mitchell conveyed the concerns of one of his constituents who was unable to attend the meeting due to ill health. Following an accident, the constituent had recommended that the Council investigate ways to reduce traffic speed along Hampton Lane.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Thomas (Winchester City Residents' Association) and Mrs Slattery addressed the Forum during consideration of the Vision for Winchester item as set out below.

3. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman encouraged all Members to publicise the County Council's street light replacement scheme to their constituents and that, at this early stage, the County was likely to be receptive to suggestions to move lamp posts slightly or to insert cowls above the lights.

4. **UPDATE ON BRIDGES** (Oral Report)

This item had been requested by Councillor Tait, under Council Procedure Rule 36 of the Constitution.

The Corporate Director (Operations) explained that the Council had appointed the engineers Upton McGougan in 2008/9 to inspect City Council owned bridges. From this, a list of works and priorities had been prepared (Report [WTF133](#) refers). Nine of these bridges were located in the North Walls Recreation Ground and were therefore charged to the Town Account. In 2010, the Forum had agreed to allocate £30,000 for the financial year 2009/10 and a further £30,000 to be spread over the following two years (£15,000 in 2010/11 and £15,000 in 2011/12).

The majority of the construction works to rectify structural defects had been completed, which included replacement of corroded steelwork, masonry and concrete repairs, resin injection, treatment of timber and metalwork and vegetation control. All these works had been completed in consultation with the Environment Agency.

Weight restrictions had been placed on Nuns Road bridge (7.5 tonnes) and Banana Bridge (13 tonnes) and both Dutton bridges had vehicle access denied due to corrosion of the supporting steel.

Some works which were deemed necessary by Upton McGougan had not been carried out, such as increasing the height of handrails, road narrowing, provision of crash barriers or re-casting bridge decks to enable 40 tonne vehicle loading. In these instances, a second opinion had been obtained from Hampshire County Council's bridge engineers who had also been commissioned to carry out the scheduled, biennial surveys of the City Council's bridges. It was recommended that £5,000 pa be set aside from the town account for future routine maintenance and survey costs.

Therefore, although the Council had repaired its bridges to what it considered to be a satisfactory standard, the parapets and handrails of two bridges adjacent to the Leisure Centre and the two Duttons bridges could potentially fail the lateral pressures exerted if large crowds passed through these bridges. This was a particular concern for the Roundtable's Fireworks Display or any other organiser of large events at North Walls. However, the Roundtable had agreed a suggested compromise from officers in so much as the town account would provide £1,500 as a one-off cost for the November 2011 event to erect scaffolding inside each parapet to strengthen the bridges.

For subsequent years, the Council would have more time to consider whether to undertake a full repair of these bridges or continue to provide temporary scaffolding for the fireworks event on a yearly basis.

Following discussion, the Forum agreed to contribute £1,500 to provide temporary scaffolding for the November 2011 Fireworks event and noted that another report on bridges would be considered at a future meeting. The Forum also noted that the recommended future commitment of £5,000 per year had been included in the Town Account Draft Financial Strategy (Report WTF161 below refers).

In response to questions, the Corporate Director (Operations) confirmed that emergency vehicles could still reach the playing pitches in North Walls.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Report be noted with thanks to the officers for the progress thus far.
2. That £1,500 be drawn from the Town Account to provide temporary scaffolding on bridges for the November 2011 Fireworks Event.
3. That a further update report be provided to a future meeting.

5. **UPDATE ON VISION FOR WINCHESTER**
(Oral Report)

The Corporate Director (Operations) reported that the Forum's Vision for Winchester Informal Group had met throughout the summer. Although the Group had heard from a wide range of witnesses and had considered its initial conclusions, work on amendments to the Vision statement had been delayed following the Secretary of State's recent announcement regarding the Barton Farm Major Development Area.

The Secretary of State had dismissed the appeal by Cala Homes to develop 2,000 units at Barton Farm and had agreed that the allocation of development land should instead be decided locally by the City Council.

As the development or otherwise of Barton Farm was central to the Vision for Winchester, the Corporate Director (Operations) explained that to publish a revised Vision with an unknown outcome on Barton Farm would be premature.

The Forum noted that the original programme for the revised Vision included a public launch event at the Theatre Royal on 27 October 2011. However, in light of the above, Members agreed that this event should be cancelled and that an additional meeting of the Informal Group be held to consider the above issues. It was agreed that the conclusions of the Group would now be

reported to the next meeting (23 November 2011), with a subsequent public launch event and that (as a consequence of the public consultation) a revised Vision document be considered by the 25 January 2012 meeting of the Forum before Cabinet.

During public participation, Mrs Slattery commended the existing Vision document and suggested that any amendment should take account of the responses received to the Blueprint exercise and the 10 Principles for the Future of Winchester produced by WinACC and the City of Winchester Trust. In particular, she recommended that the Vision should seek to ensure that Winchester remained sustainable and committed to preserving its history, heritage and setting.

Mrs Slattery also regretted that there had been no written report on this issue to consider before the meeting and suggested that the Forum could better engage with the public if it allowed public speakers a right to reply at the end of its discussions.

In response, the Chairman stated that the Informal Group had taken account of concerns raised by Mrs Slattery and agreed to re-consider the public participation procedures for the Forum.

Mr Thomas addressed the Forum and, in agreeing with the comments made by Mrs Slattery, also recommended that the Forum re-introduce its large-scale public meetings.

In summary, Mr Thomas drew the Forum's attention to the City of Winchester Residents' Association submission as part of the Blueprint exercise. This had suggested that, whilst the suburbs had taken significant in-fill development in recent years, the Council should investigate what similar opportunities for development were available on its own estates. He suggested that this could provide affordable homes for local people and prevent the release of greenfield land.

Whilst concerns were raised at the prospect of in-filling the Council estates, the Chairman stated that the Informal Group would invite Mr Thomas to its next meeting to consider the issues raised. The Chairman also recommended that this meeting should consider the Planning Inspector's report on Barton Farm, the Housing Technical Paper and DTZ Economic Study update and the emerging report from the Academy of Urbanism.

During debate, it was noted that the figure of 4,000 new dwellings for the Winchester area had yet to be adopted by full Council as part of the LDF process, but whatever figure was chosen needed a robust evidence base.

The Forum also agreed that the Vision should reference the potential opportunities for the regeneration of the area around the station and encouraged the Cabinet (Local Development Framework) Committee to consider a planning brief for this issue. The Forum also noted the on-going

work undertaken on this matter by the Estates Department, as part of the emerging Asset Management Plan.

Members also discussed the need for the Vision to refer to education and the existing need for additional primary school places. The Director of Operations explained that, whilst there was good communication between officers, the County Council had not approached the City Council to request a reserve site for education uses in the town. Without a reasonable chance of a new school being delivered, the City Council could not reserve sites for that purpose within the LDF.

At the invitation of the Chairman, County Councillor Dickens explained that she had been discussing this matter with the relevant County officers and, following debate, the Forum agreed to consider the issue further and invite County officers to its 25 January 2012 meeting.

At the conclusion of debate, the Chairman invited Members to attend a meeting held by WinAcc and the City of Winchester Trust on 15 November 2011 which would discuss many of the above issues.

RESOLVED:

1. That, in light of the Secretary of State's decision on the Barton Farm application, the progress of the Vision for Winchester document be delayed by one committee cycle.
2. That a further meeting of the Winchester Town Forum Vision for Winchester Informal Group be held to consider the above issues.
3. That Hampshire County Council Education Officers be invited to attend the 25 January 2012 meeting of the Forum to discuss provision of primary school places in Winchester.

6. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2012/13 TO 2014/15**
[\(Report WTF161 refers\)](#)

In introducing the Report, the Chairman explained the Winchester Town Forum Town Account Informal Group had considered the Financial Strategy and drawn up eight possible further budget options for 2012/13. These were (in no particular order);

- Flashing Speed Signs
- Neighbourhood Design Statements
- Unmanaged Council land at St Cross/Garnier Road
- Waterways Strategy
- Additional Street Cleaning
- Additional CCTV coverage
- Work with the BID to improve property management

- Additional support for Neighbourhood Wardens

He requested that any further suggestions be forwarded to the Head of Finance, so that they could be considered at the next meeting of the Informal Group (to be held 1 November 2011). Following an initial debate, the Forum agreed to include a review of the equipment and location of play areas and youth facilities in the town. It was noted that the Council would consider alternative methods of funding these options.

In response to questions, the Head of Finance explained that the Government was proposing to freeze Council Tax for 2011/12, although it was possible that the compensating grant would be applicable for one year only. The Forum noted that when this grant expired, it was likely that precept would require a significant increase to keep pace with inflation.

The Head of Finance agreed to provide further information after the meeting regarding grants available to the organisations formerly based at the Tower Arts Centre and information on the account relating to footway lighting. He also corrected the Report that the grant to the Theatre Royal from the Town Account was £20,000, not £45,000, as set out on page 2 of Appendix A.

Members noted that the Informal Group would be considering in detail the savings from the Town Account which arose from the new Depot Services Contract.

Following debate, the Forum agreed to continue to reserve £4,000 to provide additional grit bins in the eventuality that the County Council was unable to provide the number of new bins Members had requested.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Winchester Town Account Financial Strategy for 2012/13 to 2014/15 be approved.
2. That the 2010/11 Town Account outturn be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.05pm

Chairman