

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

Thursday, 21 March 2019

Attendance:

Councillors

Weir (Chairman)

Scott
Ashton
Becker
Berry
Burns
Hiscock

Hutchison
Learney
Mather
Murphy
Thompson
Tod

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Green

1. **TO APPROVE THE DATE AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE FORUM**

The Forum noted the dates and times of its meetings for the 2019/20 municipal year as follows:

Wed 12 June 2019, 6.30pm
Wed 11 September 2019, 6.30pm
Wed 13 November 2019, 6.30pm
Thu 23 January 2020, 6.30pm
Thu 19 March 2020, 6.30pm

2. **DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Learney declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in relation to a report on the agenda, reference WTF268, Winchester Night Bus Service Update due to her being a Member of Littleton and Harestock Parish Council.

Councillors Hiscock and Tod declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in relation to a report on the agenda, reference, WTF268, Winchester Night Bus Service Update due to their role as Hampshire County Councillors.

3. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- All Members were encouraged all to attend the consultation event at North Walls Park on the 22 and 23 March 2019.
- It was pleasing to note the progress being made regarding the Handlebar Café.
- That Winchester Radio would be launching on Sunday 24 March 2019 and could be found at 94.7FM.

4. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 17 January 2019 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mike Craske addressed the Forum in respect of a petition entitled, “Caring for the future of St Barnabas” which was available on the Councils website. Mr Craske explained his reasons for instigating the petition. In particular, he highlighted; the local environment, the character of the local area, the affordability of local housing and community cohesion. Mr Craske believed that a neighbourhood plan for the St Barnabas community could help significantly with many of these issues, and he urged the Forum to consider this.

The Chairman invited comments from Forum Members. Members asked a number of questions regarding Neighbourhood plans which were responded to where appropriate. In general, Members were supportive to the issues raised and thanked Mr Craske for raising awareness of the petition with the Forum.

Ian Tait then addressed the Forum with two issues for consideration. Firstly, he wished to highlight the issue of speeding and whether more could be done to ensure existing limits were respected by drivers. Secondly, Mr Tait explained that he was working on behalf of a number of local businesses located in “secondary areas” of the Town such as St Georges Street and Kings Walk. Mr Tait highlighted a number of issues which he felt, with Council support, would have a positive impact for these businesses.

The Chairman thanked Mr Tait for his comments and advised that speeding traffic would be timetabled as a topic for a future meeting of the Forum. Members of the Forum made a number of comments concerning support for local businesses, which related to:

- non-domestic rate relief
- the importance of Wayfinding and Signage
- the links to the Movement Strategy
- the importance of including the BID in any initiatives

Overall, Members felt that the current vibrancy of the High Street was good and thanked Mr Tait for his contribution.

6. **WINCHESTER NIGHT BUS SERVICE UPDATE**

The Corporate Head of Regulatory introduced the report which updated the Forum following a previous report, ref WTF 261 that was discussed in March 2018. The Committee was advised that the current contract for the night bus service expired in September 2019 and the Forum was being asked to decide whether to continue to support the night bus financially for another two year contract or other such time period. Secondly, changes to the timetable had resulted in a cost saving to the Forum of approximately £4,900 and views were sought from Members regarding the priorities for this saving.

The Forum debated the report in detail. There was general support for the service and Members were pleased that they had been able to use a relatively modest amount of funding to stimulate a wider service being provided. Members raised additional points in debate concerning:

- Whether short wheel based buses would provide a better financial return over the long term?
- the accuracy of passenger numbers statistics and whether all passengers were being accurately recorded?
- That the reliability of existing services was a major priority for residents

Regarding the accrued savings, there was support for this to be ring-fenced for “Public Transport Measures” but to remain unspent for the time being.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Town Forum supports the funding of the Winchester night bus service in principle by asking Hampshire County Council to tender for a new contract for a period of 2 years with a 1 year extension from September 2019.

2. That the Town Forum asks Hampshire County Council to tender the night bus service with the results of the tendering exercise being reported back to the next meeting of the Forum in June when a final decision can be made whether to continue funding the night bus service.

3. That the Town Forum agrees to approach Littleton and Harestock Parish Council to request a financial contribution towards the running of the service.

4. That the Town Forum agrees to defer committing the funding of bus services in addition to the night bus until the cost of continuing the night bus is known.

7. **OFFICER PRESENTATION - PEER REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT FUNCTION AND WHAT NEXT**

The Development Manager provided the Forum with a presentation regarding the “Peer Review of the Development Management function”. The purpose of the presentation was to provide Members with an update on Peter Lerner’s review of the planning service and the Council’s plans for the next steps.

It was explained that the Peer Review had been conducted by independent consultant, Peter Lerner. As part of the review he had conducted interviews with Councillors, Parish Councillors, Officers and Customers of the planning service. The three key areas of the review were:

- Performance and quality of the Enforcement Service
- Performance in Development Management
- Effectiveness of decision making of the Planning Committee

The overall assessment was “*Winchester City Council’s planning service is, in general, an effective and well managed planning service.*” The review had a series of recommendations which were being taken forward. Members raised a number of points regarding the presentation which were summarised as:

- Enforcement action - were changes required to strengthen or to provide additional powers to enforce Council policy?
- Pre Application Service – and early engagement with Ward Members.
- Cumulative impact of development - how do Officers take into consideration details of previous development when deciding on applications?
- Houses of Multiple Occupation - was there a cumulative impact assessment undertaken when a number of properties in a small area had been converted to Houses of Multiple Occupation.
- Property Sizes – concern was expressed that whilst the Local Plan policy encourages the development of two and three bedroom properties, it does not give size guides.

Officers responded to the points in detail. In summary, Officers suggested that a revised Local Enforcement Plan would assist in determining local priorities and resources. A group of representatives from Parish Councils will work with Officers to review the Local Enforcement Plan and it would be helpful for a representative of the Town Forum to be represented. Regarding Ward Member involvement on Pre-applications, there was ongoing work to look at how this could be best achieved, the Councils Statement of Community Involvement encourages those considering submitting an application to engage with Ward Members, Parish Councils and neighbours and Officers will actively encourage this at the pre-application stage. Regarding the queries concerning property sizes, the Local Plan refresh will provide an opportunity for issues such as these to be reviewed. Officers were thanked for their work and the Forum looked forward to the next steps.

8. REVIEW OF CURRENT WORKPLAN AND FUTURE WORK PLANNING

The Environmental Services Manager provided the Forum with a presentation regarding waste, recycling, grounds maintenance and street cleaning. Following

the presentation, Members raised a number of questions which were summarised below:

- The visibility of static street cleaners.
- Issues of leaf clearance around parked cars.
- The use of “Bee Friendly” weed killer.
- Clarification around the continued use of dog waste bins.
- The frequency of weed spraying by Hampshire County Council.
- Issues connected with foliage encroaching upon pavements.
- Instigating ward visits involving Members and officers.
- Partnership working with the BiD regarding securing extra resources for street cleaning.
- The need for residents to be given a clear picture of the expected standards.

Officers responded to the points in detail. In summary, Officers agreed to review the coverage of the static cleaners and advised that the current weed killer used was regarded as being environmentally friendly. Consideration had been given to the issues of parked cars when leaf clearing and further work was required on this issue. Officers would liaise with Hampshire County Council regarding the frequency of weed spraying and foliage encroachment. The council is removing its red dog bins and replacing with dual purpose bins. The Winchester BiD will be invited to contractor meetings to help co-ordinate work on the town centre. Finally, the Environmental Services Manager welcomed any opportunity to undertake Ward visits with Members.

The 2018/19 Work plan, as contained on the agenda was reviewed. The Chair circulated three proposals received from Forum Members for consideration for the 2019/20 Work plan. These were:

1. Winchester Town Forum - future governance. “to form a task and finish group of the Town Forum to consider options and to make recommendations to Cabinet on this.”
2. Safer Streets for Winchester Town. “that the Town Forum undertake a short review (as appropriate in consultation with the Police) of the means available to support residents in addressing concerns about speeding traffic in their neighbourhoods.”
3. Planning for the future in Winchester. “Proposals have come forward to the Town Forum - including an urban design framework and a neighbourhood plan. A task and finish group will consider the options and make early recommendations to Cabinet on preparation of a plan for Winchester Town to be adopted as an SPD under the LP refresh (2036).”

In addition to these three proposals, a request was made that the Forum be given information regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy scheme and in particular how Members and the Public could access the scheme and for what purpose.

In summary, the Chair asked that the work plan items were noted and that they would be brought back to the June meeting for formal inclusion in the work plan

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 9.00 pm

Chairman