

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

Wednesday, 10 November 2021

Attendance:

Councillors

Becker (Chairperson)

Craske
Edwards
Ferguson
Green
Learney
Radcliffe

Scott
Tippett-Cooper
Tod
Weir
Westwood

[Full audio recording and video recording](#)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Murphy and Councillor Thompson.

2. **DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Tod declared a non-pecuniary interest concerning agenda items that may be related to his role as a County Councillor.

Councillor Becker and Councillor Tippett-Cooper both declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Minute 9 (North Walls Park Plan) below, as both had children who were pupils of St Bede's School, who were consulted regarding the North Walls Park Plan

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson made the following announcements:

River Park 3G Pitch – Briefing Note

The Chairperson made reference to the briefing note that had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting which advised of issues surrounding the 3G pitch at the River Park Leisure Centre site where a high number of incidents of anti-social behaviour, including illegal trespassing, disabling of the electrical systems and damage to the gate, fencing and surface of the pitch had occurred and been reported to the Police. The proposed solutions for short term and long term measures were summarised which would include replacement fencing, floodlighting and vegetation clearance at a cost of £99,000. It was noted that a

report seeking approval on this matter would be considered at the next meeting of the Forum in January 2022.

At the invitation of the Chairperson, the Open Spaces Support Officer responded to questions from Members regarding the online booking mechanism, deterrent lighting and designs, funding and maintenance options and the investigation of revenue funding streams.

Petition for Lido at River Park

The Chairperson referred to the petition seeking a lido at River Park and stated that a meeting with authors of the petition had taken place and the benefits of outdoor swimming were recognised. The Chairperson announced that the support of Members of the Town Forum had been offered to assist the lido petitioners with their request for swimming in the town centre generally and that Members interested in participating on this working group should advise in due course.

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2021**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 September 2021 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Four members of the public spoke regarding various agenda items, with two of those speaking at this point on the agenda, as summarised briefly below.

Janet Berry (on behalf of Highcliffe Community Forum for Action (HCFfA))

Spoke in respect of the Bar End Depot site and the petition submitted to the Council which included 350 signatures from the local community. In summary, she stated that the petition requested that the Council carries out an adequately funded community engagement exercise to determine the potential of Bar End Depot site for the community before any further action was taken. She considered that community engagement was essential to enable residents to have a voice and would identify gaps in local needs and aspirations as well as develop opportunities, as set out in the Vision for Winchester.

In response, Councillor Learney advised that in her capacity as Cabinet Member for Housing and Asset Management, she was keen to maximise community benefit and to investigate plans for a foodstore further as this would fit in with the Bar End design framework and the Winchester Sports and Leisure Park. Councillor Learney stated that she would be discussing this matter further with Janet Berry and other representatives from HCFfA later in the week to establish how best to move forward.

Vicki Bolton

Raised points in respect of wild swimming at River Park in response the North Walls Park Plan. She referred to points in relation to evidence and access and stated that there was no evidence to suspend historic access wild swimming in the river or that this would continue at the high levels it was during the pandemic when no alternative facilities were available. In addition, she stated that there was little access to river water for swimming and bathing elsewhere in Hampshire and that the opportunity to use this site was a special feature for Winchester and that the care and protection of wildlife in their natural habitat was fully respected by wild swimmers.

In response, the Open Spaces Officer clarified that historic access for swimming in the river had been included within the park plan and there was no intention to remove this. However, it was necessary to consider the ecological impact and a survey would be carried out on that area of the river and this also needed to be balanced with the concerns of the nature reserve and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and signage and accessibility would be investigated further in due course.

6. **CORE FUNDING GRANTS PROGRAMME 2022-2025 (WTF302)**

Councillor Radcliffe introduced the report which set out a review of the criteria and outcomes for the council's three-year cycle of community and voluntary sector grants from the Strategic and Priority Outcomes Fund which was due to end in March 2022 to ensure they remain in line with Council Plan priorities.

The Forum were reminded that they currently contribute funding £40,000 per year via the Strategic Fund and endorsement was sought for the continuation of funding for the next three year period 2022 to 2025.

RESOLVED:

1. That the continued support of Citizens Advice Winchester and Play to the Crowd with annual contributions of £20,000 each for 2022/23 be approved;
2. That further grants for the following two-year period 2023/24 and 2024/25 of £20,000 each to Citizens Advice Winchester and Play to the Crowd, subject to approval each year of the Town Account budget, be approved in principle. It was noted that the awards are also subject to a satisfactory annual financial review; and
3. That authority be delegated to the Corporate Head of Economy and Community to release the grant allocations in instalments, based on performance data provided during the financial years.

7. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL POSITION (WTF304)**

The Finance Manager (Strategic Finance) introduced the report and provided an update on the key elements of the report, the current budget setting options and considerations for the four year medium term period from 2022/23 to 2025/26. It was noted that this planning would enable the Forum to recommend a budget precept for 2022/23 to Cabinet early next year. In addition, he stated that the Winchester Town Forum Accounts Informal Group had met during October to consider options and priorities for the budget process and their continued feedback, together with the comments of the Forum would be incorporated in the final paper for consideration by the Forum at its next meeting on 27 January 2022, prior to its approval by Cabinet in February 2022.

The Finance Manager (Strategic Finance) responded to detailed questions from Members in relation to growth bid proposals, increases to fees and precept proposals, future costs and scope within the town budget and level of reserves, the demographic of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts and distribution, resource implications and options for additional project funding.

During debate, Members raised concerns in relation to CIL funding and how this was being invested to ensure a benefit to all across the whole of the town and to the current level of the town precept. Reference was made to the need for consideration to be given to how the Forum could make adjustments to continually deliver an improved quality of service going forward.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received; and
2. That the comments of the Forum be noted and reported back to Cabinet in relation to the wider budget consultation.

8. **FUTURE 50 - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Historic Environment Team Leader provided a verbal update regarding the background to the Winchester Future 50 project. In summary, she stated that Future 50 was a pilot project that ended in 2020, prior to lockdown and focussed on conservation area guidance and management strategies with the involvement of Members, various interested parties and community groups and was supported by the Town Forum.

The pilot scheme consisted of two small areas of St Giles Hill and Central Winchester taking a themed approach to the conservation areas which included the space, character and general area to pull together easily accessible guidance material to feed back into the planning system, support planning applications, inform robust decision making and the local plan process by

working collaboratively with Historic England and all mapping documentation for this was available on the Council's website.

In response, Members raised questions in relation to the linking of Future 50 with the Town Forum Heritage Group, the postponement of the public exhibition of Future 50 previously arranged in early 2020 and the maintenance of war memorials.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

9. **NORTH WALLS PARK PLAN (WTF303)**

Emma Back (SALT) and Rachel Remnant (on behalf of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust) spoke during public participation as summarised briefly below.

Emma Back (SALT)

Noted the investment in engaging consultants to develop ideas to improve the open space around the old leisure centre site and emphasised the importance of both formal recreational activity and informal play going forward. She stated that at present it was not possible to tell in the masterplan if the long term deficit of multi-use games areas (MUGAs) access would be addressed, stressed their importance and need for provision at North Walls and asked that this be reviewed for inclusion. In addition, Ms Back suggested that the use of CIL funding for MUGA provision be explored further going forward.

Rachel Remnant (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust)

Emphasised that nature needed to be at the heart of Council decisions and welcomed that Park Plan's ideas and the inclusion of meadow patches, paddling areas and enhancements to the river channels. However, she considered that the Council's proposals could raise expectations and would have a negative impact on nature and wildlife habitats. In addition, she made reference to the impact on the SSSI zone, flood risks and suggested changes to areas of the plan to alleviate risk and make nature a priority.

The Open Spaces Officer introduced the report which set out the final version of the Park Plan for North Walls Recreation Ground which was recommended to the Forum for adoption and provided the masterplan for the future of the site to enable to progression of the project to the next phase and highlighted the key changes to the Park Plan made since it was considered at the last meeting.

She responded to points raised by Ms Back during public participation, including confirming that the Council was keen to support informal play and that survey feedback had failed to identify MUGAs as a high priority for the site. However, it was recognised that there was a need for MUGA provision and these were being

delivered where possible. It was emphasised that the Council needed to balance the most sought after facilities in the limited area available at North Walls to accommodate the preferences of the majority favoured for the site, which included the café and toilet facilities.

The Natural Environment and Recreation Manager and Open Spaces Officer responded to a number of detailed questions from Members, including concerns regarding a reduced survey response to capture feedback from teenagers and young people on the use MUGAs, open engagement with groups, the demographic response of the consultation process, the need to create adequate provision for MUGAs and structured access to the river for outdoor swimming and the management of these activities whilst ensuring the protection of the nature reserve, the establishment of a park user group with key stakeholders, the scope of the terms of reference, river water quality for wild swimming and exploring river access options at Winchester College.

During debate, the Forum welcomed and commended the North Walls Park Plan and thanked officers for their dedicated work in the preparation of the plan and the detailed analysis included within it.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Park Plan, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be adopted; and
2. That the development of the proposals to the implementation stage including consideration of funding options be authorised.

10. **INFORMAL GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Forum received Individual updates from the Chairpersons of the Heritage, Planning and KGV Town Informal Groups which summarised the work that had been carried out by the respective groups over the previous two month period.

In addition, the Chairperson provided an update on the Pavilion Project to advise that architects had been appointed to draw up revised plans. It was anticipated that drawings would become available over the coming weeks.

RESOLVED:

That the updates received from the Town Informal Groups, be noted.

11. **WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

The Forum considered the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year, 2021/22.

During discussion, Members suggested the addition of a list of rolling items and topics be placed on the work programme with dates noted as 'to be confirmed/assigned' for matters to be brought forward for consideration as and when current updates became available or reviews became necessary. Specific reference was made to Multi-use games area (MUGA) provision and an update on Vision for Winchester which would to be added to a list of open agenda items to come forward in due course.

Following previous discussion, it was agreed that an Outdoor Swimming Informal Group be established. The membership of this new informal group was agreed as set out below.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the 2021/22 work programme be noted, subject to the addition of rolling items onto the work programme, as listed above; and
- (2) That a Winchester Town (Outdoor Swimming) Informal Group be established, with membership agreed as set out below:
 - (i) Winchester Town (Outdoor Swimming) Informal Group:
Members: Becker, Tod and Tippett-Cooper
Lead Officer: S Croker

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.50 pm

Chairperson