

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

Wednesday, 9 November 2022

Attendance:

Councillors

Craske (Chairperson)

Becker
Batho
Ferguson
Learney
Radcliffe

Reach
Scott
Tippett-Cooper
Thompson
Tod

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Edwards, Green and Westwood

[Full audio recording and video recording](#)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for the meeting were noted as above.

2. **DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Tod declared a personal (but non prejudicial) interest concerning agenda items that may be related to his role as a County Councillor.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson announced that he had asked the Chairperson of each Informal Group to provide a brief written update report going forward for circulation with the agenda pack to increase transparency of the work carried out by the groups and to facilitate the verbal updates currently provided.

In addition, the Chairperson also announced that he had recently attended the 878 AD – Step into Anglo-Saxon Winchester Experience ran by Hampshire Cultural Trust which he recommended to the Forum.

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting adjourned on 15 September 2022 and reconvened on 22 September 2022 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ian Tait spoke in relation to item 7 (Town Bus Shelters). His comments are summarised under the relevant item below.

6. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL POSITION (WTF313)**

Councillor Learney provided an overview of the report as member of the Town Accounts Informal Group who had reviewed the medium term financial position. Councillor Learney made reference to the notable increases to contract inflation and utilities which had a significant impact on the Town Account during 2022/23 and going forward. It was recognised that there were currently uncertainties regarding the level of income that may be available to the town at this stage and that there would be expenditure challenges moving forward with reference made the reduction of discretionary expenditure and capital funding options and a review of fees and charges for further consideration going forward.

The Finance Manager (Strategic Finance) 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 2023/24 to 2026/27. It was noted that this planning would enable the Forum to recommend a budget precept for 2023/24 to Cabinet early next year. In addition, he stated that the Winchester Town Forum Accounts Informal Group had met recently 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 26 January 2023, prior to its approval by Cabinet in February 2023.

The Finance Manager (Strategic Finance) responded to detailed questions from Members in relation to playground expenditure for refurbishment/replacement, the additional recreation grounds and open spaces budget, the importance of play park facilities in the community in line with wider objectives, income generation from user charges, sponsorship and commercial use of new pavilion facilities and the effects of increasing the town precept for council tax in 2023/24 which it was recognised had risen significantly less than parish council precepts over recent years throughout the district.

RESOLVED:

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

7. **UPGRADES/REPLACEMENTS TO BUS SHELTERS (WTF312)**

Ian Tait spoke during public participation as summarised briefly below. Mr Tait queried why the forum was only responsible for 62 bus shelters across the five town wards when there were many more in the town area and asked what criteria was for a bus shelter as he had assumed it was a Hampshire County Council responsibility to supply them? In addition, he asked whether the £10,000 bus shelter budget covered damage caused by vandalism such as the one opposite Kings School/Kings Road. In conclusion, he stated that in poor weather conditions the provision of bus shelters was an important benefit for users and should be continued if the council wished to encourage use of bus services.

In response to points raised during public participation, Councillor Learney clarified that, whilst Hampshire County Council (as transport authority) had responsibility for bus poles, timetable cases and passenger information, the provision of bus shelters were the responsibility of parish or district councils. In its capacity as the non parished part of the city council, the forum did have responsibility for 62 of the bus shelters across the five town wards. In addition, other bus shelters in busy prominent locations across the town were cleaned and maintained by 'Clear Channel UK' in exchange for billboard advertising displays in these locations. It was noted that the current £10,000 budget was sufficient to clean and maintain the 62 existing bus shelters but would not cover replacement or refurbishment costs.

Councillor Learney introduced the report which provided an update on bus shelters in the town area following a recent assessment and sought approval for an additional budget to refurbish and replace ageing bus shelters. It was recognised that several of the shelters were now in need of replacement or significant repair and that an additional budget of £10,000 would be sufficient to slowly repair and replace the affected bus shelters over time, as set out in the report. It was emphasised that without an additional budget in place, it was likely that shelters would be removed once they reached their end of life.

Councillor Learney and the Service Lead: Engineering responded to detailed questions from Members in relation to the consideration of the use of CIL funding for the provision of additional bus shelters and associated maintenance going forward, bus shelter use and increases to bus services in City Road, changes to the size and design of advertising boards, further exploration of shared repair costs with partners (i.e Stagecoach, Clear Channel), the benefits and importance of bus shelters to residents, the design, standard and life expectancy of replacement bus shelters with adequate seating areas and green roofed bus shelters.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received; and
2. That the comments of the forum, as set out above, be noted.

8. **TREE STRATEGY (CAB3351)**

Councillor Learney introduced the report which set out the need to consider additional funding to look after the trees in the town area and ensure they were maintained safely. Councillor Learney outlined the Strategy which pulled together all tree policies into one place to enable the council to address its statutory duties, both legislative and managerial, in order to protect and enhance the district's tree stock in an appropriate manner whilst recognising the significant impact and importance of trees to people and places.

In addition, the Strategy set out the challenges the council faced including tree stress due to climate change and as a result of ash dieback disease. It highlighted an approach whereby only essential maintenance would be carried out to existing tree stock and careful consideration would be given to the species and location of new planting to increase biodiversity and resilience going forward.

Councillor Learney, the Service Lead: Communities and Wellbeing and the Principal Tree Officer responded to detailed questions from Members in relation to the advice given and the legal obligation of tree owners, tree surveys of stock, revenue implications for tree replacements, maintaining tree stock going forward, tree preservation orders with extensive planning and legal resource requirements, residents' tree reporting council webpage, concerns regarding budgetary requirements as a result of ash dieback moving forward and the deliverability and maintenance of planting of new trees to meet priorities in respect of the climate emergency.

The Forum noted that the report was due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 14 December 2022.

In conclusion, the Forum welcomed the strategy and thanked officers for their informative report and the work carried out to protect the council's tree stock.

RESOLVED:

1. That the budget overspend estimate of £21,864 for tree works in 2022/23, funded from the Town Account, be agreed; and
2. That the Town Accounts Informal Group be asked to consider the additional budget requirement of £11,864 for tree works to be funded from the Town Account budget from 2023/24 onwards.

9. **LOCAL PLAN UPDATE – REGULATION 18 PUBLIC CONSULTATION (PRESENTATION)**

The Strategic Planning Manager gave a presentation regarding the Regulation 18 Local Plan and set out the main changes to the draft plan, based on 'Your Place, Your Plan' which was currently out for public consultation, the key dates, stages and events to note in the local plan process, the visions and topics based on the primary focus being climate emergency, development management and

site allocations. The views of the forum were sought to feed into the consultation process before this closed on 14 December 2022. Members were encouraged to use and promote the use of the local plan website and to channel all contributions via Citizen Space to ensure all comments and common points are collated in one place to improve policies.

The Chairperson clarified that comments from all forum members regarding the local plan could feed through to the 'Planning for the future in Winchester Town Informal Group' virtually to enable a submission from the forum to be submitted into the local plan process; this would also include the involvement of one ward member from each of the five town ward areas.

The Strategic Planning Manager responded to detailed questions from Members in relation to the advertisement methods used by the council to promote the draft local plan consultation process (concern was raised regarding community Whatsapp groups not responding to the process via the necessary channels), the possibility of promotion and pop up events in schools, universities and supermarkets and the need for ward members to raise resident awareness regarding the process, with the assistance of the strategic planning team wherever possible.

In conclusion, the forum thanked the team for their active feedback, workshops and events carried out on the local plan process to date.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received and the comments raised above be noted.

10. INFORMAL GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE

The Forum received individual updates from the Chairpersons of various Town Informal Groups. Each summarised the work that had been carried out by the respective groups over the previous two-month period.

Councillor Radcliffe – Parks and Recreation Informal Group

North Walls River Park – A technical survey had been commissioned to look at the required groundworks to implement the North Walls Park Plan to inform decisions on which elements should be brought forward first. It was reported that the council had adopted an ambitious ten year programme of improvements where soaring construction costs were creating challenges. Officers were working on costings towards the initial phase of planned works and carrying out a technical study.

St Giles Hill Park – Work was now progressing on the new management plan for the park. The plan would set out ongoing tree maintenance alongside short term improvements and longer term projects for consideration. The draft plan was due to be published in early 2023 with a public consultation to give park users the opportunity to provide feedback before it is presented to the forum for approval.

Tree officers have been conducting tree survey work at St Giles Hill which had been completed, including identifying the council's response to the presence of ash dieback on site.

Councillor Edwards – City Centre Group.

In his absence, Councillor Edwards had provided a detailed briefing note on recent work that been carried out by the City Centre Group. This update paper was circulated with the agenda and its contents were noted by the forum.

Councillor Tippett-Cooper – Heritage Group

Progress updates from the group included:

- (i) All works to the King Alfred statue were now complete.
- (ii) Temporary boarding had been placed over windows at the City Museum due to urgent repairs to take place and will be reinstalled by the end of November.
- (iii) The Buttercross - surveys for the structure had been completed and reports were to be submitted to Historic England for works including cleaning, repairs and pigeon proofing to be carried out in due course.
- (iv) Hyde Abbey Gateway surveys for the restoration works had been completed and the report was awaited for submission to Historic England with works anticipated to commence in Spring 2023, subject to Historic England's consent and public realm works due to start at a similar time with key pieces of work including the laying of the flooring to Hyde Gateway.
- (v) Pigeon proofing works had been successful with dramatic improvements noted.
- (vi) Deployment of three CCTV cameras in and around the Hyde Gate sheltered housing area to address anti-social behaviour

RESOLVED:

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

11. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Forum considered the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year, 2022/23.

RESOLVED:

That the 2022/23 work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.52 pm

Chairperson