

## **WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**

**Monday, 11 November 2024**

Attendance:

Councillors

Reach (Chairperson)

Aron  
Batho  
Becker  
Eve  
Learney

Morris  
Murphy  
Tod  
Westwood

[Full video recording](#)

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### 1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Scott, Thompson, Tippet-Cooper and Wise.

### 2. **DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Aron declare a personal (but not prejudicial) interest concerning any matters relating to Stanmore Community Association due to her role as Chair of Trustees.

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

Councillor Eve disclosed a personal but non-pecuniary interest as a member of Friends of St Giles Hill that was referred to within the agenda items.

### 3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson made reference to the recent busy period and highlighted issues such as road closures in the north of the city and the replacement service contracted to Stagecoach from Southern Gas Networks.

### 4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2024**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 September 2024 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ian Tait and Deidre Wood addressed the forum during public participation and their comments are summarised below.

Ian Tait

Raised concerns regarding anti-social behaviour in the city centre, particularly around the old fountain in front of King's Walk and St Maurices Covert. He mentioned issues such as groups of people openly drinking alcohol, taking drugs, begging, and using offensive language. The council had previously removed the fountain and benches, which temporarily resolved the issue, but the group had since moved to other areas.

In response, Councillor Becker highlighted the complexities of the behaviours involved and emphasised that the council continued to endeavour to address these issues with the support of Outreach services such as Trinity Winchester, The Winchester Beacon (formerly Winchester Churches Nightshelter) and the NHS and would raise the anti-social behaviour issues with the Community Safety Team.

Deidre Wood (on behalf of Flashing Lights Action Group (FLAG))

Made reference to the heavy traffic and pollution in Hyde Street. She proposed the installation of a speed management device under Hampshire County Council's new process. She highlighted the dangers and health risks associated with the current traffic situation and requested the council's support in addressing these issues.

In response, the Forum supported the statement made regarding excessive traffic flow and speeds in Hyde Street, although it was recognised that this was a Hampshire County Council matter. Councillor Batho, on behalf of Speedwatch Winchester, spoke regarding the significant speed of traffic measured in Hyde Street and in other areas such as North Walls and Stanmore Lane and advised that he had been in early discussions with officers regarding the installation of speed management devices. Councillor Batho agreed to liaise with Mrs Wood to establish if there was an opportunity to arrange an informal meeting to review suggestions and report back to the next meeting of the Forum.

6. **TOWN FORUM GRANTS PROGRAMME UPDATE (WTF332)**

The Chairperson introduced the report highlighting the successes and achievements of the grant programme in 2023/24 and the revised criteria for applications in 2024/25, which were closely in line with the town vision outcomes. The report set out the important role that members provide in supporting the community engagement process and also outlined the requested budget saving of £10,000 for the next financial year, with reductions to the community grant scheme, Play to the Crowd, and Citizens Advice.

It was reported that the team were running a webinar on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to provide insights into how previous recipients had used their grants and the Chairperson encouraged members of the forum to participate on this webinar.

The Town Centre and Community Manager sought continued engagement with members in the allocation of remaining grant funding for 2024/25.

During debate, the impact of small grants on organisations across the town area and the importance of the grants programme were emphasised.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the recommendations set out in 1 to 5 of the report, be noted; and
2. That the £10,000 budget saving for 2025/26 achieved by a reduction of £5,000 to the Winchester City Community grant scheme and a reduction of £2,500 each in core grant contribution to Citizens Advice and Play to the Crowd, be approved.

7. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL POSITION (DRAFT BUDGET OPTIONS) (WTF333)**

Councillor Learney provided an overview of the report as Chairperson of the Town Accounts Informal Group who had reviewed the medium-term financial position. Councillor Learney outlined that the report set out the financial position of the town account and provided an opportunity for discussion prior to recommending a final budget in January 2025.

Reference was made to the capping regime that affected the town account. The Forum noted that the town charge was a special expense combined with the council's charge for council tax for the purposes of determining whether a tax referendum should be held and resulted in a lower charge annually in comparison to the precepts set by other parishes within the district.

Councillor Learney highlighted several pressures on the budget including costs related to the new King George V pavilion and the proposed River Park pavilion, coupled with high inflation. Expenditure reviews were underway which may provide opportunities for rebalancing expenditure.

The forum proceeded to ask questions and comment on the following matters which were responded to by Councillor Learney and the Finance Manager (Strategic Finance).

- (a) Context of the interaction between the council's medium-term position and the broader TC25 project.
- (b) Opportunities for potential revenue generation, including cemetery management, sports pitch fees and the external hiring of facilities.
- (c) The need to adapt to changing patterns of public space usage was highlighted.

At the conclusion of debate, the forum supported that report and thanked officers and the Town Accounts Informal Group for a robust medium term financial position. Members were encouraged to contact Councillor Learney directly if they had specific items of detail in the setting of the budget.

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.

8. **OPEN SPACES AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE - IDV CONTRACT DISCUSSION (PRESENTATION)**

The Interim Corporate Head of Service: Place and the Contract Manager gave a presentation setting out the scope of work done by IdVerde and Wettons, the contract management process, and the upcoming contract renewal in 2027.

A copy of the presentation was made available on the website following the meeting [here](#).

The forum proceeded to ask questions and comment on the following matters which were responded to by relevant officers.

- (a) The impact of climate change on grass cutting and leaf clearance.
- (b) The need for flexibility in the new contract.
- (c) The importance of engaging with residents and raising awareness of the availability of digital tools for grass cuttings etc.
- (d) The need to minimise carbon impact within the new contract.

At the conclusion of debate, the forum thanked officers for an informative presentation and welcomed the next steps coming forward in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received and the comments raised, as set out above, be noted.

9. **INFORMAL GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Forum received individual updates from the Chairpersons of various Town Informal Groups, where updates had not already been provided within the items considered above. Each summarised the work that had been carried out by the respective groups over the previous two-month period.

**Councillor Tippett-Cooper – Culture Informal Group**

The Chairperson provided a progress update from the group on behalf of Councillor Tippett-Cooper as follows:

- (i) The Buttercross – work was scheduled in the Spring to clean the Buttercross
- (ii) Hyde Abbey Gateway – The application for the maintenance, pigeon proofing and associated works for this project had recently been submitted to Historic England.

**Councillor Batho – Climate and Open Spaces Informal Group**

Progress updates from the group included:

- (i) KGV Pavilion – a path had been constructed to join the Garrison Ground to the MUGA which had been reported as complete.
- (ii) Works had commenced to the Talavera Road play area to bring the facility back in use.
- (iii) The top surface of the central walkway to River Park had been resurfaced and barriers would be introduced in areas to prevent floor risk.

**Councillors Batho and Becker – Grants and Community Empowerment Informal Group**

Progress updates from the group included:

- (i) A number of applications had been received for the district grant which related to the town so these applications had been transferred for consideration of an award of a town grant instead.

Members of the forum were asked if they were approached by a group to come and speak in support of that organisation for the award of a town grant.

**Councillor Wise – Streets and Spaces Informal Group**

The Chairperson provided a progress update from the group on behalf of Councillor Wise as follows:

- (i) The Nunnaminster – the new interpretation boards have arrived and were due to be installed shortly.

RESOLVED:

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

10. **WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25**

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the inclusion of an update from Councillor Batho at the next meeting in respect of the matter set out in item 5 above, the work programme for the remainder of 2024/25 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 8.00 pm

Chairperson