

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

Monday, 10 November 2025

Attendance:

Councillors

Westwood (Chairperson)

Eve
Batho
Becker
Learney
Morris
Murphy

Reach
Scott
Tippett-Cooper
Tod
Wise

Apologies for absence:

Councillors Aron and Thompson

[Full video recording](#)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received as set out above.

2. **DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Tod declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of items 6 and 8 on the agenda due to his role as a Hampshire County Councillor. However, as there was no material conflict of interest, he remained in the room, spoke and voted under the dispensation granted on behalf of the Audit and Governance Committee to participate and vote in all matters which might have a County Council involvement.

3. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson provided an update regarding the Community Governance Review (CGR) following the request of the forum at its meeting on 23 January 2025 for the council to undertake a review covering the unparished town wards.

It was noted that the first stage of public consultation had been launched to consider whether to create a new parish/town council for the town area, which would run until the end of the year. All residents, businesses and community groups were encouraged to participate to ensure the Winchester town area continued to have adequate community engagement, local democracy and effective delivery of services in the future.

Public engagement drop-in sessions had been arranged to support the consultation and inform residents of this process, prior to second stage consultation during Summer 2026 and final decision-making expected in Autumn 2026. These were scheduled to take place as follows:

- 12 November 2025 - Guildhall, Winchester
- 18 November 2025 - Badger Farm Community Centre
- 26 November 2025 – Community Lounge, Henry Beaufort School
- 29 November 2025 – Guildhall, Winchester

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2025**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 September 2025 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ian Tait and Madeleine Durie (Chief Executive Officer, Youth Options) spoke during public participation, and a summary of their comments are set out below:

Ian Tait

He considered that there had been a lack of progress in the regeneration of Central Winchester, with particular reference to the derelict state of the former R.A.O.B Club building in Cross Keys Passage, noting to the previous planning application to develop the site which was refused by the planning committee in September 2024.

He stated that he had attempted to track regeneration progress through various websites and via council papers which he suggested had not been updated in some time and stated that the last Cabinet Committee: Regeneration took place in October 2024 with no further meetings scheduled.

In response, Councillor Tod stated that a number of public events had been held during July 2025. These had been well publicised with further to follow in due course. Up-to-date information was available on the Jigsaw: Partnerships and Places website relating to the regeneration project and access links to information boards were also available on the council's website, including an option to sign up for electronic newsletters. Councillor Tod agreed to forward these details on to Mr Tait for his reference.

Madeleine Durie

Addressed the forum in her role as Chief Executive of Youth Options regarding the organisations work within Winchester, the challenges faced and the need for continued support for young people, making particular reference to the following points:

- Youth Options taking over youth work responsibilities in Winchester from Street Reach for the past 18 months having worked together previously.

- Secured funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to include two additional nights of street-based youth work within the town centre this month.
- The varied services offered by Youth Options which included targeted support for children and young people, as well as street-based youth work. Working with schools providing one-to-one support, progression opportunities and training and employment programmes for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Subject to funding, Youth Options hoped to be able to offer programmes to NEET young people in the Winchester area.
- A youth club was currently held at Unit 12 in Winnall, which had proved successful with high attendance. However, as this space was a shared amenity with other users it was not adequate for future use. Youth Options were actively seeking new space in central Winchester to offer young people drop-in support. On-going youth support for young people was considered critical, and the importance of the safeguarding role of youth workers in bridging the gap between teachers, parents and the police in providing advice and guidance. It was requested that this continued to remain significant during Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

In response, the forum raised a number of comments and questions which were responded to by Madeleine Durie, these related to the need for enhanced collaborative working practices at local level, the need for an accessible, central, adequate sized safe space for young people, the continuation of crucial community based prevention work for young people, the diversity of youth needs, supporting young women and girls in safe spaces, linked dialogue with the police and the council's community safety team regarding anti-social behaviour, and details of the Millbrook project, a successful well used facility funded by significant government grant. This enabled the refurbishment of a purpose-built youth centre facility approximately a year ago, which had also generated income by other service users who rented the facility when it was not utilised by Youth Options.

Councillor Westwood thanked Madeleine Durie for her comments and suggested Youth Options linking with other organisations and businesses such as Chesil Theatre (Stephanie Danby, Chairman of Chesil Theatre also present at the meeting) who had similar aims and aspirations to engage and enhance capabilities for young people in central Winchester.

6. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL POSITION (DRAFT BUDGET OPTIONS) (WTF341)**

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 and precept for 2026/27 to Cabinet in January 2026.

In addition, it was highlighted that were further recommendations set out in the report, namely, to approve additional expenditure of £60,000 for emergency tree

works in 2025/26 and an allocation of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) of £50,000 towards the extension of Chesil Theatre, which was fully supported by the forum and would provide an improved community facility for the town.

It was noted that due to the successful implementation of savings, the town account was in a better financial position than since previously considered. As such, the Town Account Informal Group had proposed several changes in respect of Grants and Vision Delivery, Public Conveniences and Tree Works, as set out in paragraph 11.10 (a) (b) and (c) of the report. With the amendments, the town account reserve balance was projected to fall below the recommended 15% of expenditure which would need to be considered in final budget recommendations.

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) The possibility of further investment of reserves.
- (b) The review of fees and charges for cemeteries and open spaces, including adequate measures and charges for damages to open spaces, such as at River Park.
- (c) Winchester Speedwatch – previous support from the forum to fund equipment, the concerns of residents regarding speed limits and the need to raise speed awareness.

In addition, Councillor Batho raised a request for the forum to consider evaluating the capital revenue costs associated with the installation of speed indicator devices to be included in the financial budget for 2026/27. In response, this approach was welcomed and supported by forum members and Councillor Learney agreed to investigate this as part of the budget.

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 bring forward any initiatives for consideration by the informal group in the setting of the budget.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be received and the budget issues identified be noted for consideration;
2. That the comments of the Forum be noted and reported back to Cabinet in relation to the wider budget consultation;
3. That the additional revenue expenditure of £60,000 for emergency tree works in 2025/25 funded by the town centre, be approved;
4. That the allocation of Town Community Infrastructure Levy contributions of £50,000 towards the extension of Chesil

Theatre, be approved, subject to meeting the conditions and release of grant by 31/03/2027; and

5. That the provision of speed indicator devices be investigated for potential inclusion in the town account budget, to be recommended to Cabinet in January.

7. **INFORMAL GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE**

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

Councillor Murphy – Streets and Spaces Informal Group

Progress updates from the group included:

- a) The latest vacancy rate for the High Street was 2.3% compared to the national average of 13.3%.
- b) Forthcoming events were discussed, including the Christmas light switch on taking place on 13 November organised by Winchester BID.
- c) Managing the enforcement of on street parking by delivery lorries, particularly in the one-way system.

Councillor Tippet-Cooper - Culture Informal Group

Progress update from the group included:

- a) The Buttercross – the website had been updated. It was noted that the contractor appointed to start the refurbishment works has advised that the scaffolding would be erected in February 2026, with works to commence in March.
- b) Hyde Gate – A landscaping plan had recently been received, to be submitted with the building plan to Historic England for approval. Subject to planning permission, works should be progressed in due course.

The importance of clear communication and information regarding the details of works due to take place at both sites was emphasised. Councillor Tippet-Cooper agreed to report this for action.

Councillor Eve - Climate and Open Space Informal Group

Progress updates from the group included:

- a) Oram's Arbour works had recently been completed
- b) River Park works were progressing well with the pavilion and planning for the footpath – thanks were given to the officers for their progress of maintenance works.
- c) The opening of Allegra's Ambition at the Garrison Ground had taken place recently and the forum were encouraged to visit this excellent facility.
- d) Councillor Batho provided an update on the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at St Matthew's field and made reference to comments received from Emma Back of Winchester Sports and Leisure Trust. It was noted that discussions

had taken place with officers to investigate the submission of an application for district CIL to provide this facility, as well as potentially looking at spaces in Dean Lane Park. Support for providing a MUGA facility in northern Winchester was proposed and feedback was sought.

In response, forum members supported and endorsed a MUGA at St Matthew's field. In addition, Councillor Learney suggested that when the amount of available town community CIL was explored, that it should be sufficient to fund a MUGA at St Matthew's field and still leave a surplus to spend. She encouraged members of other town wards to come forward with possible ideas and a list of proposals for consideration to ensure the funds were used to benefit the local community.

Councillor Aron - Grants and Community Empowerment Informal Group

An update was provided on behalf of Councillor Aron with progress from the group including:

- a) Previously small grants had an underspend which had been lost at the end of the financial year, this had seen an increase in grants and recipients included Friends of St Giles Hill, the new life church in Stanmore, and Joyful Jams who provided movement session for elderly people in Winchester. Grants continued to be validated carefully, and thanks were given to the finance team for ensuring that grant funding continued and had not been cut as had previously been envisaged.
- b) Members were encouraged to attend the session where a grant application had been submitted by a business in their ward.

RESOLVED:

That the updates received from the Town Informal Groups as set out above, be noted.

8. **WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26**

The Chairperson advised that officers had been in discussion with Chief Inspector Korine Bishop who would be attending the forum in January or March to provide an update on policing in the town area. This item would be added to the work programme once a date to attend had been confirmed.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme for the remainder of 2025/26 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 7.40 pm

Chairperson