

REPORT TITLE: VISION FOR WINCHESTER - UPDATE

19 MARCH 2020

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Jackie Porter, Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Wellbeing.

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WARD(S): ALL TOWN WARDS

PURPOSE

The report provides an update on the appointment of consultants to assist in the production of a new 'Vision for Winchester' and explains the key stages of the work to be undertaken over the next few months.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the report be noted.

**IMPLICATIONS:****1      COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES**

- 1.1 Within the Vision for Winchester document the Town Forum may articulate projects or policies which support all of the objectives of the Council Plan.

**2      FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 2.1 Following a procurement process it has been possible to appoint consultants at a cost which is within the budget available for the work. A small contingency has also been allowed which means that should it be expedient to extend the scope of engagement or consultation as a result of feedback during the process this would be possible.

**3      LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The procurement exercise to seek the best proposals from consultants is in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

**4      WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None

**5      PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None

**6      CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION**

- 6.1 The preparation of the new Vision for Winchester requires first and foremost an extensive engagement process to ensure that the widest possible cross section of people who live and work in Winchester are able to participate in a discussion about the future of Winchester as it meets the challenges of economic and social change. The procurement proposals from consultants were scored for quality with a high percentage of marks available for their approach to engagement in imaginative and diverse ways which would try to reach people who might not normally participate in this type of exercise. The report explains some of these proposals and the approximate timetable for the process.

**7      ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 7.1 The Vision for Winchester is not a decision making document, but it is highly likely that a broad range of environmental issues will feature as issues with which the community is concerned and to which it will suggest a response.

## 8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The principles in the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy were followed during the procurement process, and therefore the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 discharged.

## 9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 No personal data is expected to be collected during the process.

## 10 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 The principle risk in a project which involves extensive public engagement followed by the preparation of an output which draws on that engagement is that the expectations of some of those taking part will not be met. To some extent this is inevitable in any process where there are likely to be a diverse range of opinions and ideas, some of which may be contradictory. It is therefore essential to ensure that there is a good understanding of the purpose of the consultation process while it takes place and that there are clear links between that consultation and the 'vision' which is articulated in the final result.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<i>Property</i> <i>None</i>		
<i>Community Support</i> <i>That the preparation of the new vision fails to engage or attract interest from the community</i>	Incorporate extensive engagement into project plan and appoint consultants with experience and enthusiasm to promote engagement	The process could develop new mechanisms and experience which the City Council could use in future engagement
<i>Timescales</i> <i>Scheduling of a range of events and activities can be subject to logistical delays</i>	Produce a realistic timetable taking account of constraints such as pre election period	
<i>Project capacity</i> <i>A change in key personnel working on the project could affect the schedule for delivery</i>	Ensure that the project team is fully briefed and not reliant on a single individual for delivery	
<i>Financial / VfM</i> <i>None</i>		
<i>Legal</i>	Ensure representations to the	The appointment of the consultants will enable

	Council's Local Plan have a sound evidence base.	informed evidence based input to the Council's Local Plan
<i>Innovation</i> <i>None</i>		
<i>Reputation</i> <i>The Council's reputation could be harmed if there is a justified belief that the project has not accomplished its objectives</i>	Explain clearly the purpose and extent of the project, particularly with stakeholders. Work closely with consultants and maintain flexible approach. Recognise that there is often much lower awareness of consultation and engagement activities within the target audience than is assumed by those conducting the process. Design promotion and engagement materials accordingly.	
<i>Other</i> <i>None</i>		

## 11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 11.1 In September 2019 the Town Forum and Cabinet each considered report CAB3191 and after due consideration agreed to provide funding for the preparation of a new 'Vision for Winchester' to replace the version which covered the period between 2012 and 2017. A budget of up to £75,000 was approved to commission external consultants to undertake the community engagement needed and to prepare a draft document for consideration. The use of external consultants was considered useful to bring new ideas into the engagement with communities and an additional level of objectivity to the process.
- 11.2 The Vision has proved itself useful in a number of ways since the first version was published in 2006. Its primary purpose is to provide a high level 'sense of direction' which describes what the communities of people who live and work in Winchester value most about the city, and how it evolves in response to environmental, economic and social trends which pose questions for every large population centre. It can help to define what the right response might be when important and sometimes unexpected questions are asked by opportunities, events or the need to make investment decisions. The Vision itself is not intended to be a detailed action plan or site by site analysis, but it enables detailed work to be carried out purposefully on specific projects by helping to define the outcomes which they should seek to achieve.

- 11.3 By articulating the way in which the Town Forum wishes to see Winchester evolve, the Vision has an important role to inform the relevant policies in the Council's Local Plan. Providing clarity of vision and purpose helps to ensure that policies can be prepared which will promote the outcomes that are desirable and reduce the likelihood that they will not. Although the Vision is not intended to address individual sites in detail, it will help to set the context for decisions about the way in which sites might be used and what aspects of the end result are most important.
- 11.4 A brief for the preparation of the Vision was prepared and agreed by the members of the Town forum's planning sub-group. This was then offered to the market through an open procurement exercise and eight proposals were received for evaluation. Following that evaluation and a meeting between the members of the planning sub-group and the consultants, an appointment has been made.
- 11.5 The successful team is led by Southampton based consultants Boyle and Summers with support from specialists in planning, engagement and media. Their proposal includes extensive use of social media and interactive media to promote participation through an engagement process which is designed to encourage a discussion about the issues Winchester faces and the response which all of those involved in decision and policy making, including communities themselves, can make to these. Members of the Boyle and Summers team have undertaken similar work in a number of other major towns, such as Bournemouth and Lewes, and are therefore building on a successful track record.
- 11.6 A broad timetable for the project is now being refined taking account of the constraints of the pre-election period and Council elections. It is expected that the main phase of public engagement will take place in June and that a draft of a new Vision for Winchester should be available for consideration in the early autumn.
- 11.7 The members of the Town Forum planning group will work with officers to oversee the project and ensure that it stays on schedule. If any adjustments to the engagement process are needed these will be made in discussion with the planning group.
- 11.8 There is undoubtedly a high degree of public interest in the idea of setting out a vision for the future of the city and it is important to capitalise on this to produce a 'forward look' which has broad support and is relevant to as many people as possible. Because it is deliberately meant to be a high level approach, it is likely that further work will be required on specific issues once these are identified. It would be of considerable assistance for individual members of the Town Forum to promote the engagement process and the benefits of producing the Vision within their local area wherever they have the opportunity to do so.

12 **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

- 12.1 The decision to produce a new 'Vision for Winchester' was taken by the Town Forum and Cabinet in September 2019 after careful consideration of whether this would be a worthwhile exercise and compared with the option not to do so. The use of external consultants rather than an in-house team was considered appropriate so as to ensure a high level of transparency and creative thinking, and to ensure that the work could be completed on the necessary timescale.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-**

**Previous Committee Reports:-**

CAB3191 Local Plan 2036 Consultation and Engagement Process -  
Winchester Town Forum 11 September 2019, Cabinet 18  
September 2019

**Other Background Documents:-**

None

**APPENDICES:**

None