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WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

Thursday, 12 September 2024

Attendance:

Councillors

Reach (Chairperson)

Aron	Murphy (for items 1-8)
Batho (except for Item 8)	Scott
Becker	Thompson
Eve	Tod
Learney	Tippett-Cooper
Morris	Wise

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Cramoysan

[Full video recording](#)

1. **APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON FOR THE 2024/25 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Reach be elected Chairperson and Councillor Batho be appointed Vice-Chairperson for the 2024/25 municipal year.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Westwood.

3. **DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Batho declared a disclosable pecuniary interest concerning agenda item 8 (Update from Stagecoach) as an employee of Stagecoach. He left the room during the consideration of this item taking no part in the discussion thereon.

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 prejudicial) interest concerning agenda items that may be related to his role as a County Councillor.

4. **CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairperson announced that this was the first meeting for the 2024/25 municipal year which was taking place later than expected due to the General Election held in July.

The Chairperson made reference to concerns expressed regarding the facial recognition trial that was taking place in the town centre and other areas of the district. He suggested that members and residents raise their views with Hampshire Constabulary who were running a consultation on their website regarding the trial.

5. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2024**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 March 2024 be approved and adopted.

6. **TO NOTE THE DATE AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE FORUM AS SET OUT BELOW:**

RESOLVED:

That the date and times of future meetings for 2024/25, as set out on the agenda, be noted.

7. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Councillor Cramoysan spoke during item 8 (Update from Stagecoach) and a summary of his comments are set out under the relevant minute below.

8. **UPDATE FROM STAGECOACH (VERBAL UPDATE)**

Councillor Cramoysan addressed the committee on this item.

In summary, Councillor Cramoysan made reference to the following points:

- The dependence of residents in The Worthys to access city centre amenities and the need for reliable and frequent bus network links to ensure accessibility.
- Referred to the Number 6 bus (formerly known as The Spring), which was the primary service serving the residents of Kings Worthy and stated that since

the Summer, regular bus users had reported improvements to the punctuality of the service.

- Would welcome a two-way dialogue approach to help enforce messaging with the local community to manage expectations and establish how best to assist Stagecoach in the continued delivery of punctual bus services.

The matters raised by Councillor Cramoysan were addressed during the discussion of the item.

The Chairperson and the Head of Programme: Place welcomed James O'Neill, Commercial Director for Stagecoach South to the meeting who provided an update from Stagecoach as the largest bus operator in the area. The update included details of the following:

- Network performance and focussed changes to routes over the evenings and weekends.
- Changes to demand and frequency of bus services during the day in the working week.
- Investment in longer distance service routes.
- The use of HVO fuel in local business and the cost implications of this.
- An overview of the current position including passenger numbers, differences in the way people travel and trends pre and post pandemic.
- The background to the most recent changes including Hampshire Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) and Park and Ride.
- Future challenges and opportunities including plans for the long-term fleet such as seeking electrification of the fleet.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and comment on the following matters which were responded to by James O'Neill and the Head of Programme: Place.

- (a) Opportunities to work collaboratively with Stagecoach and Hampshire County Council to ensure the success of the bus network in the city centre going forward.
- (b) Targets to change and modernise the fleet to reduce the use of diesel buses, improve emissions and work towards electrification.
- (c) Advice, direction and signage to keep residents aware of the cancellation of services and assistance for elderly and vulnerable residents accessing the Stagecoach app on mobile devices.
- (d) Plans to introduce new bus routes to accommodate areas where there were growth areas of development.
- (e) The number of users required to make a service route viable.
- (f) Concessionary rates, fare caps and the return rate from concessionary pass holders and fare payers.
- (g) The fare cap and transferrable tickets.
- (h) Reviews of financially sustainable routes.
- (i) Commercial viability.
- (j) Planned works for the maintenance and repair of the bus station.
- (k) Longer distance routes in the southern parishes.
- (l) Future bus development and dialogue with Stagecoach to feed into the planning process.

- (m) Transport mitigation and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments to support bus services.
- (n) The retention of bus services at Teg Down.
- (o) Public notification of changes to bus services. The need to regularly update bus timetables and issue timely notifications of changes to bus schedules.

At the conclusion of debate, the forum thanked James O'Neill for attending the meeting to provide an informative update and welcomed further updates from Stagecoach in the future.

RESOLVED:

That the update be received, and the comments raised by the committee, as summarised above, be noted.

9. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT FINANCIAL PLANNING 2024/25 (WTF331)**

The Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency introduced the report in her capacity as Chair of the Town Accounts Informal Group which outlined the forums medium term financial projections to assist the forum with looking at any changes the forum may wish to make in next year's budget which would be drawn up in the coming months. Councillor Learney drew members' attention to the projections, as set out in Appendix 1. It was noted that the increase in precept and the reprofiling of play area expenditure had helped to stabilise the budget, with reserves staying marginally above the recommended level in the medium term.

However, it was emphasised that there were pressures on the budget over the next few years not indicated in the figures, with increases to the cost of building works on a number of projects including the Pavilion and works connected to the park plan at River Park, with contract renewal likely to increase costs of looking after parks, sports facilities and public conveniences. Unlike Parish Council's the town was capped with limited scope for increasing the precept, therefore savings would need to be sought with spending on cemeteries and grounds maintenance currently under review.

An additional source of finance available for capital expenditure was the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The report set out the balance and the funds already allocated to town forum and community projects and consideration could be given to any projects that may be required in high pressured areas of development.

The Finance Manager (Strategic Finance) provided an update of the current financial position of the Winchester Town Account and financial projections over the medium and long term to support the development of a refreshed financial strategy with final budget recommendations due for consideration by Town Forum in January 2025, prior to final approval by Cabinet and Council. In addition, he stated that feedback from the Winchester Town Forum Accounts Informal Group had been incorporated within this report and that a further report

on the budget options would come forward for consideration by the Town Forum at its meeting on 11 November 2024.

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

- (a) The impact of changes to inflation rates on the town account budget and reserves.
- (b) The responsibility and scale of work undertaken on bus shelter maintenance and bus shelter advertising contracts.
- (c) Opportunities for income generation from external hire and use of sport facilities and community use of facilities.
- (d) The allocation of CIL funding and the process to secure future CIL funding for projects.

At the conclusion of debate, the forum commended the officers and the Town Accounts Informal Group for their prudent financial management set out within the report.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the financial projections, set out in Appendix 1 of the report be noted and the budget timetable for 2025/26, be agreed.

10. 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 Batho – Parks and Recreation Informal Group

Progress updates from the group included:

- (i) The KGV Pavilion has been formally handed over with work completed. Redevelopment of the play area and MUGA was underway with the MUGA being repainted to provide a clear surface for activities. A pathway was due to be installed from the Garrison Ground to the MUGA to complete works in this area.
- (ii) A contractor has been appointed to complete works to Talavera Road play area to bring this facility back in use, with works due to commence mid-November.
- (iii) Remedial works were being undertaken at Abbey Gardens play area with the swing repairs due to be completed by the end of September.
- (iv) An update on River Park Park Plan was available on the council's website.

RESOLVED:

That the update received from the Town Informal Group, be noted.

11. **TOWN FORUM INFORMAL GROUP APPOINTMENTS AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2024/25 (WTF330)**

The Forum considered the work programme and the proposed changes to the Winchester Town Informal Groups for 2024/25, as set out in the report and its appendices.

RESOLVED:

1. That the items listed in Appendix 1 and 2 of the report be noted, the 2024/25 work programme be approved and authority be delegated to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Chairperson, to further set the detailed work programme for the municipal year.
2. That the changes to the Informal Groups set out in paragraph 11.3 of the report be approved and appointed for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.
3. That the membership of the Forum's informal groups for 2024/25 be approved as stated above and set out below:
 - (i) Winchester Town Forum (Streets and Spaces) Informal Group
Members: Cllrs: Wise (Ch), Batho, Learney, Tod, Thompson and Westwood
Lead Officer: C Williams
 - (ii) Winchester Town Forum (Climate and Open Spaces) Informal Group
Members: Cllrs: Batho (Ch), Becker, Learney and Tippett-Cooper
Lead Officer: R Smith
 - (iii) Winchester Town Forum (Account) Informal Group
Members: Cllrs: Learney (Ch), Reach, Tod and Wise
Lead Officer: D Kennedy
 - (iv) Winchester Town Forum (Culture) Informal Group
Members: Cllrs: Tippett-Cooper (Ch), Eve, Morris, Thompson and Westwood
Lead Officer: A Gostelow
 - (v) Winchester Town Forum (Grants and Community Empowerment) Informal Group

Members: Cllrs: Batho (Ch), Becker and Scott
Lead Officer: S Lincoln

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 7.55 pm

Chairperson

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