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WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

Thursday, 25 January 2024

Attendance:

Councillors

Reach (Chairperson)

Batho
Becker (from item 6)
Edwards
Eve
Learney
Morris

Prest
Scott
Thompson
Tod
Tippett-Cooper (from item 6)
Wise
Westwood

[Full video recording](#)

1. **APOLOGIES**

No apologies of absence were received for the meeting.

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 welcomed Councillor Hiscock, Hampshire County Council, to the meeting.

The Chairperson announced that Christmas 2023 in Winchester had been a huge success. Preparations and plans for Christmas 2024 were now being worked up, together with lessons learned from previous years to make further improvements to the Christmas Markets going forward.

4. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 November 2023 be approved and adopted.

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ian Tait spoke during item 6 (Update from Sarah Davis, BID) and a summary of his comments are set out under the relevant minute below.

6. **UPDATE FROM SARAH DAVIS, BID MANAGER REGARDING BINS AND REFUSE IN WINCHESTER CITY CENTRE (VERBAL UPDATE)**

Ian Tait addressed the committee on this item.

In summary, Ian Tait made reference to the following points:

- The history of a high volume of trade waste bins stored in Hammonds Passage – it took until 2018 with the development of the Trade Waste Action Plan to get the bins removed, similarly in Parchment Street.
- Recently problems have been recurring in The Square from businesses.
- Planning process has been used to ensure conditions were in place for the storage of rubbish internally, but this is not always followed or enforced.
- A focus with officers and the BID was required to ensure the businesses follow a protocol for the storage of bins indefinitely.

The Chairperson welcomed Sarah Davis, BID Manager to the meeting who provided an update regarding bins, refuse and waste from businesses in the town centre and highlighted concerns regarding storage issues and the volume of bins kept with 112 food outlets in the city centre and most using more than one bin.

The impending bin store facility at Cossack Lane was welcomed by BID and it was emphasised that there was a need to raise awareness to ensure bins were stored in an appropriate manner going forward to keep the town centre clean, free of bins and clutter and the associated repercussions of this.

The committee proceeded to ask questions and comment on the following matters which were responded to by Sarah Davis and the Head of Programme: Place.

- (a) It was reported that ward councillors in town wards received regular reports as a result of the lack of bin storage from residents and businesses and questioned what appetite there was among businesses in the town centre for a fundamental change to the way in which waste was collected.
- (b) A complex situation that required input from various authorities with their associated powers i.e highway obstruction, environmental health issues, change of use requiring planning permissions etc – what could BID do to encourage businesses to better manage the disposal of waste and reduce food waste going forward. Areas to explore included improved education on 'recycle, re-purpose, re-use and reduce', the streamlining of suppliers and business sign up to apps such as 'Too Good To Go' to reduce end of day food waste.
- (c) Clear guidance for all businesses on how and when bins should be put out for collection and stored in the meantime and of the potential of resulting

- penalties and enforcement action that could be taken against persistent offenders that do not follow the process.
- (d) The need to reduce the number of bins used by each business going forward – a possible charging scheme for commercial bin store and maintenance use to ensure bins are stored appropriately by businesses at a defined number in order to prevent penalties for inappropriate storage being applied.
 - (e) Changes to bin storage at God Begot House were still being investigated following archaeological works to establish if this was feasible and an additional bin store had been constructed at Cossack Lane.
 - (f) Detailed discussions with individual businesses using an increased number of bins.
 - (g) Streetscene Officer post currently vacant and in the process of recruitment will work with businesses on this matter going forward.
 - (h) Early campaigning and raising awareness for the preparation of businesses with the introduction of new food waste and recycling requirements coming into force for businesses in 2025.
 - (i) Shared responsibility for the disposal of refuse.
 - (j) Methods of communication.
 - (k) One-stop shop for contracts with negotiation.

At the conclusion of debate, the forum thanked Sarah Davis for attending the meeting to provide an informative update and welcomed the collaborative work that would take place progress this matter going forward.

RESOLVED:

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

7. **WINCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNT BUDGET FOR 2024/25 (TO BE RECOMMENDED TO CABINET) (WTF328)**

Councillor Learney introduced the report setting out the Winchester Town Account which was an expense set within the council budget paying for expenditure in the unparished area of the district; the five town wards, with the exception of Harestock which sits within Littleton and Harestock Parish Council.

It was reported that three quarters of this expenditure was used to fund recreation grounds, play areas and open spaces and was also used for public transport provision, community safety, public conveniences, grants to community organisations. With the majority of spend connected to inflation linked contracts, costs have increased considerably in the last few years.

In order to balance the budget, reviews have been carried out to play area refurbishment by lowering capital spend and increasing reactive maintenance and granted reductions have been agreed for future years. In addition, during 2024/25 a review of cemeteries and open space management would also take place for net efficiencies and savings.

It was emphasised that the town had small sources of income including allotments, pitch pavilion and court rental, cemeteries charges and for capital

expenditure, the local portion of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Forum continued to support the provision of great recreation and public facilities which could be demonstrated by the new KGV pavilion, the skate park and the work carried out in the town's parks and playgrounds as well as the aspirations strongly supported by the public in the River Park Park Plan and the Vision for Winchester. In addition, it wished to continue the greener faster agenda, and the Pride in Place work in town ward areas, therefore spending plans and unexpected expenditure needed to be carefully considered to achieve this.

It was recognised that for financial resilience, it was prudent to increase the level of reserves which would result in a precept increase greater than the 3% indicated in projections set out in the report. When looking at the level of council tax precept in the town area for 2024/25, it was therefore proposed that Cabinet be asked to endorse the maximum increase allowed under the combined town and district referendum limit for final approval by Council in February 2024.

The forum asked questions and raised comments, particularly in relation to the inflation and financial pressure, the impact of the capping limits that constrained the town forum budget, CIL funding, the disparity in the forecast between cemeteries and grants, awareness of potential shortfalls as an impact of cuts to county council services and the Government's funding announcement which were addressed by Cabinet Member and the Finance Manager (Strategic Finance) accordingly.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Forum;

1. Agrees the draft budget for 2024/25 and the indicative projections for the strategy period, as shown in Appendix 1 of the report;
2. Approves an increase in the target minimum town reserve balance from 10% to 15% of annual net service expenditure;
3. Approves an increase of £5,841 to the baseline town revenue budget from 2024/25, in respect of increased reactive maintenance and annual life expectancy reports on play equipment; and
4. Recommend to Cabinet that the Council Tax precept for the Town area be increased to the maximum commensurate with the council tax referendum limit for 2024/25, noting the requirements for the council to keep within overall referendum constraints.

8. **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 – Heritage Group

Progress updates from the group included:

- (i) The Buttercross and Hyde Abbey Gateway – Restoration works were still scheduled to commence by Spring 2024. The council had engaged an historic architect to prepare and submit plans to Historic England for both scheduled monuments which were due to be submitted within the next two weeks for their approval and the schedule of the key elements of work expected at both monuments were detailed.

RESOLVED:

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

9. **WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

The Chairperson reported that an update from the Friends of St Giles Hill Park regarding preliminary works was due to come forward to the forum at the first meeting of the new municipal year in June 2024.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to noting the inclusion of the item above to the work programme for the next municipal year 2024/25, the work programme for 2023/24 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and concluded at 7.30 pm

Chairperson

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