

Winchester City Councillors report Hambledon Parish Council December 2016

Council's Strategy

Next week at cabinet 7th December we will be revising our Council Strategy. The draft strategy covers the period 2017-20 and prioritises five new outcomes for the district: improving housing options, the environment, and the health and happiness of residents together with support for business and becoming a more entrepreneurial council. The refreshed strategy is launched against a backdrop of major financial challenges and changing Government policies that impact on the Council's work as well as a desire to protect the public purse and focus on the district as a whole. A consultation on the strategy will be available on the Council's website where residents, businesses and interested groups and organisations can make comments.

The report about the draft Strategy is available on the Council's website: <http://www.winchester.gov.uk/meetings/details/1547>

Buy your own home ... with help from the City Council

Another paper coming to Cabinet on the 7th December is to help would-be home-owners could take their first step on the property ladder, with an innovative new scheme being considered. We are proposing to set up an 'Open-Market Shared Ownership' scheme. This would support local residents by providing equity to buy a property in the district for those who do not have the substantial deposit required for a house. Through charging a rent on the deposit element the Council will ensure a good financial return for the local taxpayer whilst ensuring that the Council's investment activity is targeted in the local area. Local residents will need to meet criteria to access the scheme, with higher scores for those who have lived in the district for over ten years, work in the district and are first-time buyers.

The household will normally own 70% of the property - with a deposit of at least 5% of this value depending on circumstances - with the Council owning a 30% share. In the future, the household can buy the Council out of its share.

City Council plans investment to support services

Up to £10m could be invested in property by Winchester City Council to produce rental income that supports services and compensates for loss of Government grant.

The City Council has lost £2m in funding over the past four years, with a further £1.5m of reductions expected by 2020. Now Cabinet is recommending property investments with an expected rate of return of

5-6% as part of its new strategy over the next three years. The 'Strategic Asset Purchase Scheme' will focus on the two Local Enterprise Partnership (LEPs) areas of which the City Council is a part: the Solent LEP and the Enterprise M3 LEP.

Council gears up for winter

As cold winds and rain replace the record mild days of autumn, Winchester City Council has been reviewing its preparations for potential severe weather events over the winter. Alongside improvements to local infrastructure that have cost millions of pounds over the last two years, the Council has been ensuring that it can quickly mobilise staff and materials in a weather emergency. A portable flood barrier has been purchased, that can quickly be deployed to hold back water in the most vulnerable areas.

SALT BINS If you have any salt bins that need attention or are less than $\frac{3}{4}$ full and needs refilling the quickest way to let HCC know is via the link on the HCC web page www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/severeweather/salting.

Devolution and the future of local government in the Heart of Hampshire area

Along with five other district councils in the 'Heart of Hampshire' group Winchester City Council has jointly commissioned a report from consultants PwC to provide an independent assessment about devolution and the future of local government in the Heart of Hampshire area.

The report has been prepared in parallel with the work undertaken by Hampshire County Council and districts in the Solent area of Hampshire which have each been looking at their own response to the Government's devolution agenda.

Heart of Hampshire authorities want to work in partnership with the County Council to benefit businesses and residents by agreeing a devolution deal with the Government which will attract additional funding into the Heart of Hampshire area. There is real concern that investment opportunities may be missed if we cannot present an agreed position to Government in the near future.

The report makes the Heart of Hampshire case for improving the current system with improved working between the tiers of local government.

There is no momentum for the upheaval and cost that the creation of unitary councils would incur and certainly not for the single, remote unitary council which has been floated as an option by others. If the Heart of Hampshire had local government reorganisation imposed upon it, then two unitary authorities for the area – one covering the north and the other the middle of the county – would provide the best outcome balancing cost savings with democratic representation and accountability.

The report sets out the case for the establishment of two devolution deals, one covering the Solent councils and the other covering the Heart of Hampshire. The Heart of Hampshire councils fully support the continuing role of Hampshire County Council as a provider of vital public services across the County as part of this outcome.

The City Council sees the report as the basis for a conversation with the County Council, district colleagues and our Parish Councils as to how services and decision-making can be improved within the current framework but taking a new look at existing ways of working.

The six Heart of Hampshire Councils are Test Valley, Basingstoke, Hart, New Forest, Rushmoor and Winchester.

To view the report

<http://www.winchester.gov.uk/about/devolution/39-devolution-future-local-government/>

For WCC Consultations go to <https://winchester.citizenspace.com>

Consultation on Modifications to LPP2 closes 12 December 2016

Winchester District Club Profile Questionnaire closes 1 Jan 2017

Council Strategy opens 8 December 2016

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year