

WINCHESTER DISTRICT REPORT – for ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

Denmead Village Centre, Phase II Improvements – you will be pleased to learn that all shop-owners have now signed the contract for Phase II village centre improvements. A Cabinet Resolution is now required to bring forward the £62,000 budget for this project. Given the extensive lead-up time for this project, it will also be necessary to seek a supplementary budget to cover increased costs.

Redevelopment of White Wings – the Council’s Sheltered Housing Scheme at White Wings House in Denmead comprises 36 flats. One wing of the building contains 18 one-bedroomed flats, which remain fairly popular and are relatively easy to re-let when they become vacant. The other wing contains 18 bed-sits, for which there is little demand. This has resulted in serious under-occupation, causing a loss of revenue and a waste of a housing resource.

There is a proposal to redevelop the bed-sit wing of White Wings House in partnership with Housing 21, a leading housing association, to provide 22 x 2 bedroomed flats for extra care sheltered housing, including a small number of flats dedicated to dementia care. Under the proposals the existing wing of one-bedroomed flats will be retained and improvements to existing communal facilities would be improved to include provision of a fresh food kitchen, communal lounge to offer a restaurant facility for tenants and other people in the community; an additional lift in the existing wing to reduce walking distances; electric buggy store; improved laundry; consulting/treatment room; guest room(s); office, etc.

Cabinet have agreed the recommendation authorising a mixed tenure scheme, providing a minimum of 9 flats for low cost home ownership, with the remainder being for social rent.

Affordable Homes – Winchester City Council total for affordable housing completions for the year are 158. This is a record year with the previous best at 133.

Housing Repairs - 292 of Council houses have been improved to the Decent Homes Standard. 98 % of all urgent repairs to Council houses were completed on time. Over £31,000 is budgeted to be spent on home energy conservation in the coming year. A crackdown on rent arrears has meant that there is less than 1% of outstanding debt on rents.

Housing Benefits - Winchester City Council has estimated that residents made bogus claims for more than £550,000 in the last financial year. So far, the Council has secured 11 prosecutions through the Courts. Four Officers are employed on a full-time basis to investigate benefit claims and carry out home visits.

Audit Report

External auditors recently carried out a review of Winchester City Council’s approach to efficiency and were impressed by measures taken to review services in order to determine where value for money is obtained. To date the City Council has achieved efficiency savings of £365,000.

Local Access Points, Key and Local Hubs : Local Development Framework Issues & Options Consultation – Approval has been given approval for the provision of Local Access Points (LAPs to be provided in the proposed “key hubs” of Bishops Waltham, Whiteley and New Alresford. A LAP will be a local office where people can access a range of information and outreach services, with WCC officers assigned to the key hubs in order to respond to local needs more effectively. It is intended that each LAP will also host a range of advice surgeries, eg Housing and Benefits, Planning or Building Control. It is currently proposed that Denmead be designated as a “local hub” but there are no immediate plans to install LAPs in local hubs. There is also the suggestion that the Council might draw in partners from over the border (Waterlooville) to participate in building the role of Denmead as a hub. Results of public consultation on “Issues and Options Paper” will be known later in the year.

Rural Development Programme - Funding is being made available from the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) to support a wide range of activities undertaken by rural communities, businesses and community organisations. There is potential to unlock around £350,000 per year for five years for projects which support the rural areas and a “local action group” (LAG) has focused around the needs of the southern parishes (Denmead-Wickham-Bishops Waltham, etc.) and worked in partnership with East Hants to cover the East Hants Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. LAGs have to deliver projects which support broad objectives associated with “agriculture and forestry;”

“environment and countryside”; and “rural quality of life and diversification of the rural economy.” A bid was submitted to SEEDA and Winchester City Council are awaiting the outcome.

Council Tax – Claim your Benefits

Did you know that among benefits available to older people on low incomes, Council Tax benefit is the most unclaimed benefit of all – with up to 2.2 million older people nationwide missing out on up to £1.4 million. If you are an older person living on a basic pension in Denmead, you could be entitled to claim – so contact the Winchester City Council Office to enquire – telephone 01962 848539.

Telephone the same number if you are disabled and have made alterations to your home for mobility reasons, you may qualify for a Council Tax reduction. This benefit is not means tested. The cost of a ‘phone call might save you a lot of money!

Recycling – The City Council has made considerable investment in meeting recycling targets and minimising waste over the past two years and in 2007/2008 achieved a combined recycling and composing rate of almost 38%, exceeding the statutory target of 30%. Customer satisfaction rates currently stand at 91%; street recycling bins will be trialled at selected locations in Winchester City Centre and a feasibility study is to be undertaken which will review the practicalities, disposal options, costs and sustainability of undertaking the kerbside collection of food waste. The Council are also examining the possibility of the kerbside collection of glass.

2012 Olympics and Paralympics – The City Council, working in partnership with representatives from Sparsholt Agricultural College, the University of Winchester and Westgate School, has learnt of its successful bid for the three establishments to become pre-Olympic Games Training Camps. Over 1,200 bids were submitted nationally, only 600 were selected and all three of Winchester’s bids were successful. Winchester will now be included in the list of pre-training camps available for use by visiting countries and this information will be distributed at the Beijing Games.

UK Athletics Award for Winchester City Council - At a recent Awards presentation, Winchester City Council picked up the Award for the best management team from a Local Authority (South East Region) supporting an athletics club. The Award was presented by representatives from UK Athletics, the governing body for athletics. Winchester and District Athletics Club also won several awards at this presentation for all their efforts over the past year.

Discovery Centre - Winchester’s Discovery Centre in Jewry Street opened at the end of November 2007 and now houses the City Council’s large exhibition space. The City Space Gallery will host a mixed programme of arts and heritage displays to reflect the culture and history of Winchester District. The programme provides an opportunity, not only to enjoy the work of local artists, as has been the case for many years at “The Guildhall Gallery,” but also to explore exhibitions based on the City Council’s extensive museum collections that are normally not available for viewing. The Discovery Centre houses over 100,000 books; has a 180 seat performing arts space; a gallery of national standard and a café. Huge increase in Issues (children and adult loans) and visitors since Centre opened.

Artist to make film in Denmead

A London based film-maker has been commissioned to work with young people in Denmead. The film project, funded by a partnership of local Councils in Hampshire and Arts Council England (South East) will be managed by Winchester City Council. Members of Denmead Youth Theatre who are aged 8 – 16 years will make a short film which will be screened in venues around Hampshire as part of a project to increase skills and access for film-making. Denmead Youth Theatre is one of a group of youth theatres in the Winchester District, managed by Winchester’s Theatre Royal and funded by Winchester City and Hampshire County Councils.

Lottery Grant for Children’s Play Areas – Winchester City Council has been awarded a £200,000 Big Lottery Grant which will be used to provide informal woodland play areas on Forestry Commission land at Creech Wood in Denmead, West Walk near Wickham, Micheldever Woods and West Wood just north of Winchester. There will be a three year part-time Outreach Worker post to encourage outdoor and physical activity.