



## PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

### INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### TOPIC - MARKET TOWNS DEVELOPMENT

#### PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

#### Contact Officers:

**Case Officer:** Alison Woods, Economy and Arts Development Manager, [awoods@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:awoods@winchester.gov.uk) or 01962 848 347

**Committee Administrator:** Nancy Graham, [ngraham@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:ngraham@winchester.gov.uk); 01962 848 235

#### SUMMARY

- The past year has seen the creation of a 'Town Team' in Bishop's Waltham, in response to the recommendations in the Government's review of high streets led by Mary Portas.
- The Town Team includes representatives of the Chamber of Trade, the Parish Council, Bishop's Waltham Society, Bishop's Waltham in Bloom, and Winchester City Council.
- Although The Team failed in its bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government to become a Mary Portas Pilot (attracting a £100,000 grant), The Town Team was awarded £10,000 last autumn to become a Portas Town Team Partner, with backing from MP George Hollingbery. Winchester City Council holds these funds on the Town Team's behalf.

- Based on the consultation carried out locally, the Town Team decided to use this money to employ a part-time Market Towns Development Officer on a two day per week basis in order to deliver an agreed action plan to strengthen the resilience and success of the town centre ready for the advent of the new Sainsbury's store.
- The Parish Council has agreed to match the Government grant for two financial years from 2013/14. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development has indicated his support for the City Council to do likewise (such funding to come from the Economic Development base budget).
- Winchester City Council invited other market towns (Denmead, Wickham and Alresford) to participate in the initiative to make best use of its investment of funds and staff time. Denmead and Wickham Parish Councils have both decided to pay for one day a week each for the post, over the same, two-year period.
- Following consultation with the Portfolio Holder, the Head of Organisational Development and the Corporate Management Team approved the appointment by the Council of the Development Officer on a one year contract, with potential to extend to a second year if it is a success. The post reports to the Head of Economy and Arts, but will work with a steering group in each of the three towns/villages to ensure that the work which is delivered is what is required locally.
- The initiative directly supports the Economic Prosperity outcome of the Winchester District Community Strategy. Although most economic development activity is designed to support businesses across the Winchester District, Member feedback to officers suggests a desire to see more done to support very directly the business communities of the District's rural areas.

## **DECISION**

That:-

- a) the decision that Winchester City Council act as the employer for the shared Market Towns Development Officer post, for a maximum two year period, be endorsed; and
- b) the Assistant Director (Economy and Communities) be authorised to establish a five-way funding programme (as shown in the resources section below) to pay for the employment of the above Post.

## **REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

The decision to appoint a Market Towns Development Officer was based on extensive consultation in Bishop's Waltham, which led to the creation of a local action plan which there was no capacity to deliver. At the time, the Chamber of Trade was on the verge of cessation, and the business community was extremely worried about the impact this would have on the established programme of town centre events. Although the Chamber has since been revived, the Town Team sees the value of a professional who can support marketing, research, new events and other initiatives which will add value to the services delivered by the Chamber and Parish Council.

In Wickham, local traders were consulted about the desirability of such a post and were very much in favour. The proposal led to an offer of some seed-funding for the post-holder from the local Co-op, and the decision by traders to re-establish the defunct Chamber of Trade.

In Denmead, where a Neighbourhood Plan is currently being drawn up, the Parish Council saw the value of a resource which could help to establish a strong network of businesses locally, providing a clear voice for business need and helping to galvanise efforts to promote the local economy.

Although the Economy and Arts Team does work with all three communities, there was a consistent view that a dedicated post, based locally and focussed exclusively on the development of the three centres, would be the best means to deliver specific local objectives.

Advice has been sought from the Head of Organisational Development about the proposal for Winchester City Council to employ the post. No other organisation involved in the partnership currently has the resources to employ this officer, and although the Town Team did consider setting up as a limited company in order to do so, members of the Town team agreed that this would divert energy from delivery of their action plan.

### **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development has already supported the use of monies from the Economic Development base budget over two financial years to co-fund the Town Team initiative.

The expenditure plan and five-way funding partnership contributions are set out below:

	2012/13 £	2013/14 £	2014/15 £
<u>Expenditure Plans</u>			
Salary + on-costs, and associated costs of a Grade 4 @ 0.8FTE		27,000	27,000
<u>Funding</u>			
Department of Communities and Local Government Funding for Bishop's Waltham	10,000		
Bishop's Waltham Parish Council (2 days per week)		5,000	5,000
Denmead Parish Council (1 day per week)		3,500	3,500
Wickham Parish Council (1 day per week)		3,500	3,500
WCC - Virement from Economic Development Budget		10,000	10,000
Brought Forward of Budget (DCLG Grant)	-10,000	5,000	5,000
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>27,000</b>	<b>27,000</b>

This sum is enough to fund the salary and on-costs of the 0.8 FTE grade 4 post which has now been appointed.

### **CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION**

- In March 2012 local consultation events took place in Bishop's Waltham to help form the Mary Portas bid. The Town Team had strong local support with 18 letters of support from local groups..
- The Economy and Arts Development Manager attended a business breakfast for businesses in Denmead to consult them on the proposal, and the Assistant Director for Economic Prosperity attended a meeting of businesses and parish representatives in Wickham for the same purpose.
- New Alresford Town Council was also approached on several occasions, but has decided not to take part on this occasion. They feel that the Chamber of Commerce is very active, and that the Town Council would struggle to justify additional funding to benefit the business community.

**FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED  
FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION  
NOTICE**

None.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR  
OFFICER CONSULTED**

None

**DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

None.

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision: 24.06.13

Councillor Cllr Robert Humby – Portfolio Holder for Economic Development