

PARISH CONFERENCE

TUESDAY, 13 JUNE 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Christine Bateson (Chairman)

Also in attendance: Jo Stickland (Datchet), David Burfitt (Hurley), Katy Jones (Datchet), Jane Clemance (Wraysbury), Peter (Wraysbury), Mandy Brar (Cookham), Ruth Davies (Sunningdale), Anne-Catherine Buxton (Sunningdale), Martin Coker (Cookham), Neil Cole (Horton), Linda O Flynn (Datchet), Chris Graham (Bray), Susan Cook (Bray), Amanda Robson Brown (Bisham), Jane Dawson (Old Windsor), Anne Horner (Old Windsor), Stephen Hedges (Cox Green), Ian Harvey (Cox Green) and David Lee (Maidenhead Advertiser).

Officers: Alison Alexander, Harjit Hunjan, Andy Jeffs, Shilpa Manek and David Scott

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (5 MINS)

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and introductions were carried out around the room.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (5 MINS)

Apologies for absence were received from Bob Austen, Benta Hickley, Barbara Story, Des Warren, Diana, Freda Bovington, Ken Elvin, Maggi Bevan, Mandy Robson Brown and Mary Cooper.

MINUTES FROM LAST CONFERENCE (5 MINS)

The Minutes of the last meeting on 22 February 2017 were **Unanimously Agreed**.

PURPOSE OF THE PARISH CONFERENCE (15 MINS)

David Scott, Head of Communities and Highways, advised the Conference operated to reflect the following key points:

- Alternate between Maidenhead and Windsor venues at 7pm, three meetings per year;
- Meetings no longer than two hours, maximum 20 mins per item, items should have a cross parish relevance not single parish;
- DALC to submit items on behalf of Parish Councils, and the Conference Chairman to meet DALC in advance of the meeting to discuss suggested agenda items;
- Parish and Town Councils to share their experiences and successes in relation to projects;
- Information items to be provided in writing for operational questions.

These were largely based upon the feedback from the Conference following a consultation undertaken in 2008.

Members of the Parish Conference raised the following points:

- The main reason for the Parish Conference was to build on relationships and share experiences between Parish Councils and the Royal Borough Council. This was supported and agreed.

- A request that as well as the Agenda, that all papers be sent before the meeting allowing Parish Councils to review items, think of questions and encourage parish members to attend. The Parish Councils would like more details included in the Agenda Pack.
- Better ways of working were also discussed and using more evolving ways of communication.

The Chairman informed Conference Members that she would be visiting the Parish Councils with the Managing Director, Alison Alexander, during two weeks of September (weeks beginning 19 and 26 September). All Parish Councils would be contacted to arrange the meetings very shortly. The meetings would be an opportunity to discuss local priorities and identify shared needs.

COMMUNICATION UPDATE (20 MINS)

David Scott, Head of Communities and Highways, informed the Conference of the revised structure for RBWM implemented with effect from April 2017. David Scott went through the Directors, Heads of Service, Service Managers, which made up the Senior Leader Team who are supported by Service Leaders. Up to date charts of these details were circulated, but the importance of referring to the RBWM Website for current versions, as they were always published to the website. The Parish Council Hotline and email access were discussed. The Conference was encouraged to look at the website for most up to date function charts and organisational structures as these are not routinely re-sent.

Members of the Conference highlighted their concerns and specific examples that they had recently had. The Conference asked for more specific numbers for the planning team. The Conference was encouraged to use the Customer Service Centre for all communication. This would allow enquires to be tracked and followed up.

Alison Alexander informed the Conference that the Customer Service Centre was currently being monitored very closely to enable improvement to be made. Additional resources had been taken on to respond to feedback about the slow or none answering of incoming calls.

Member's from the Conference explained that there were still issues with lack of communication and follow up response once the initial acknowledgement email had been received. However, there were some good stories too of matters being resolved very quickly. Specific examples of none response should be raised with either Heads of Service or Executive Directors to help RBWM improve areas of poor response. The Executive Director and the Managing Director both gave their personal commitment to action and address cases where responses had not been forthcoming. Their emails were confirmed as: Alison.Alexander@RBWM.gov.uk and Andy.Jeffs@RBWM.gov.uk

DEVOLUTION OF SERVICES - EXPERIENCES (20 MINS)

A number of points were discussed during this item. The key points are listed below:

- The Conference Members felt that the position had changed on the Devolution of Services. Many Parish Councils had been interested in taking over the planning work; however this had not been pursued. It was noted that in Bray PC when the process was explained by RBWM, and the implication fully understood, a different conclusion was reached.

- The Highways Verge Maintenance devolution was an area where it was considered devolution had worked well.
- The Chairman reassured the Conference that if devolution of services was wanted then the Council was happy to take it forward.
- A number of Parish Councils confirmed that they were still interested in being involved in the Devolution of Planning, but had not been contacted by RBWM. This message would be relayed to the Head of Planning.

Alison Alexander suggested that Parish Councils send through any specific questions they have and would like to discuss, once the visit meetings had been booked and those could be addressed when Councillor Bateson and Alison Alexander visited them.

LOCAL POLICE AND COMMUNITIES (10 MINS)

Inspector Louise Warbrick was unable to attend the Parish Conference due to operational demands. This item was deferred to a future meeting.

PARISH VISITS (5 MINS)

The Chairman confirmed the earlier reference to Conference Members that she would be visiting the Parish Councils with the Managing Director, Alison Alexander, during two weeks of September (weeks beginning 19 and 26 September). All Parish Councils would be contacted to arrange the meetings very shortly. The meetings would be an opportunity to discuss local priorities and identify shared needs.

FOR INFORMATION ITEMS ONLY

A) Bus Services

David Scott, Head of Communities and Highways, informed the Conference that a tender exercise had been carried out, and the successful contractors had now been told, and the formal announcement would be made later this week. The outcome of the additional resources RBWM had approved was that all services would be maintained as they were.

It was noted that in times of flood, the service providers would change to smaller vehicles where possible to maintain the services wherever this was possible.

Cookham Parish Council asked specifically whether the smaller buses were fitted with a snorkel and could go through the water and whether bus passes could be used on the trains as had been raised previously with the train operators but not confirmed. David Scott would check and respond back to Cookham Parish Council.

ACTION: David Scott to check with Ben Smith and respond to Cookham Parish Council.

Waltham St Lawrence Parish Council asked about extending the bus route that goes through their area to enable residents wishing to travel west, to travel to Twyford (in neighbouring Wokingham Borough) but which was significantly closer than coming back to Maidenhead. The Chairman asked if this question had been raised with local Ward Members, and advised that the Parish Council speak to their Ward Councillors.

David Scott advised the Conference that any issues previously raised with Lynne Penn in connection with Access matters, should be now sent to Ben Smith as Lynne Penn's role had changed.

B) Business Rates and Parish Councils

Andy Jeffs, Interim Executive Director and Head of Revenues and Benefits, took the Conference through a short presentation on the revised arrangements for Business Rates following the revaluation process announced and published earlier this year.

The following questions were asked by the Conference:

- What happens to the funds received from Business Rates? Andy Jeffs explained that 49% of business rates were kept by the Council, this was used towards the costs of running services for residents. By 2020, the full amount would be kept by the Council.
- What if there are businesses in the area that are struggling, what is the process. Andy Jeffs explained that the RBWM website has forms that can be completed to apply for relief, alternatively, the business could write to the borough.

ACTION: Provide email address for business rates in minutes.

- Since the website has been revamped, nothing is easy to find. Could Parish Councils be provided with a list of the most popular email addresses.

ACTION: To provide Parish Council with most popular generic email addresses. Add email addresses here as a list

Andy Jeffs informed the Conference that all forms were being updated and were going to be more user friendly and compatible with all systems.

C) River Thames, Environment Agency and Canal and River Trust responsibilities.

David Scott, Head of Communities and Highways, informed the Conference that the RBWM Local Flood Risk Management Strategy was on the RBWM website and had a very useful summary on page 21, section 3 which sets out the roles and responsibilities of various agencies. The link to this is would be included with the minutes. [Local Flood Risk Management Strategy | The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead](#)

ACTION: To include the summary from the RBWM Risk Strategy with minutes.

David Scott informed the Conference that Thames Water had been invited to the next meeting and the Conference would be able to explore fully their role at the next meeting. There was no change in our borough in the roles of the Environment Agency and the Canal and River Trust responsibilities. The borough's role for ditches and water courses was available on the borough website.

D) Superfast Berkshire – Broadband Update

Points covered by David Scott included the below:

- This has been a pan-Berkshire project with the Lead on this project by West Berkshire.
- The project started in 2011, there had been a significant development.
- Phase 1 had started in January 2013, Phase 2 was between 2015 till autumn/winter 2017 and the award for Phase 3 works was just completing the contract award process, but had not been published yet. The third phase would award works in two lots and both contractors would be formally told at the end of June, and public press announcements would follow also.
- In Phase 1, by January 2013, in RBWM 87.8% properties had superfast broadband, by September 2015, 92.6% had superfast broadband and at the end of phase 2, this would have increased to 93.7% of RBWM properties would have access to superfast broadband. Since this percentage was lower than the county's average, RBWM (and Wokingham also at the lower end of the Berkshire spectrum) would benefit the most from the Phase 3 contract awards. It is expected that at the end of this next phase, the borough would have 98.9% of properties with access to superfast broadband.
- David Scott had been asked by one of the three broadband companies (Call Flow) to garner support as there had been a very low uptake of the service now on offer. Many Conference members highlighted that they had never heard of the company. It seemed as there had been no publicising so residents were not aware of the company. It was agreed that Parish Councils would be happy to support where local take up levels were low and they could help cascade the messages on what is now available. Call Flow will be given PC Clerks details.

E) Borough Local Plan Update

Alison Alexander, Managing Director, took the Conference through a short presentation. The Following comments were raised:

- The Borough Local Plan Regulation 19 was going to be discussed at Full Council on Monday 19 June 2017. The papers for the Council meeting were published on the RBWM website.
- Regulation 18 had received a little over 7000 comments, which were available on the RBWM website along with responses. The Conference requested a link to the comments. The link for the comments. This will take the viewer directly to the consultation website used for Regulation 18: <http://consult.rbwm.gov.uk/portal/blp/blp/blp>

ACTION: Send link for Regulation 18 comments to all Parish Councils with minutes.

- Parish Councils requested copies of the Borough Local Plan when published.

ACTION: The Managing Director agreed to provide five copies of the Borough Local Plan to each Parish Council when published (Harjit Hunjan).

- A question was asked about affordable housing and whether they would be continued to be built. Alison Alexander responded that the borough was committed and will continue to work with Radian and Housing Solutions, to ensure social housing would continue to be built.
- Cox Green Parish Council asked what if Regulation 19 was not approved at Council, and why Regulation 18 was a six week consultation over Christmas and Regulation 19 was an eight week consultation. Also why was the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) not published with Regulation 18. Alison Alexander informed

the Conference that the vote for Regulation 19 was on Monday 19 June and if it was not approved then it would be revised to get approval. Regulation 18 was a six week consultation over Christmas and Regulation 19 would be an eight week consultation over summer. Finally, the IDP is not due to be published until Regulation 19 stage, so RBWM are therefore following the guidelines correctly. The nature of the IDP means it was not possible to publish at the Regulation 19 stage and this had now been published.

- Cox Green Parish Council requested the link of the justifications of what was kept in and taken out after the Regulation 18 consultations.
- Datchet Parish Council asked why the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Travellers Plan were not considered together, when they should be treated equally. Alison Alexander informed the Conference that it was a requirement by law that they were produced as separate documents and RBWM was following normal published procedures.
- All comments would be welcome in the Regulation 19 consultation. The comments could be as simple but should include all information that was relevant. The comments received at Regulation 19 stage are then bundled together with the Draft Plan and provided to the Secretary of State for allocation to the Planning Inspector.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman advised Conference Members to inform Sandra Baker (DALC) OR Shilpa Manek of any items for future Agenda's.

Sunninghill and Ascot Parish Council requested information on the First Stop Shop. As far as they know, they are no longer a First Stop Shop as indicated in the Borough Year Book.

DATE OF NEXT CONFERENCE

The next Parish Conference will be on Monday 9th October 2017 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Maidenhead.

The meeting, which began at 7.10 pm, finished at 9.25 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....