

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FORUM

THURSDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Rayner (Chairman), Gerry Clark, Jesse Grey, Shamsul Shelim and Nicola Pryer (Vice-Chairman)

Also in attendance: Don Yates (French Brothers), Amanda Bryatt (Windsor Tourist Guides), Rebecca Sparrow (Windsor Carriages), Paul Sedgewick (The Crown Estate), Ingrid Fernandez (Legoland) and Susy Shearer (WNP / WES).

Officers: Julia White, Paul Roach, Ben Smith and David Cook

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Persad (Windsor Great Park).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

MINUTES

Resolved unanimously: that the Part I minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 12 September 2017 were approved.

ARRIVA CLICK SERVICES

The Forum received a presentation on Arriva Click Demand Responsive Service from Simon Mathieson, Business Development Manager at Arriva.

Mr Mathieson explained that Arriva had been piloting a 'corner to corner' demand responsive bus service in Sittingbourne, Kent since March 2017. The pilot had been successful and popular. Arriva had big ambitions to develop the service elsewhere. Arriva was aware that local authorities were facing cuts to budgets, increased demand for social transport, falling passenger numbers, increased congestion and concerns over air quality.

The demand responsive bus scheme helped to address some of the issues as it aggregated people travelling from multiple origins to multiple destinations in an efficient and convenient way. The automated system matched journeys and adjusted routes. There was no manual intervention required, but back office back up was available if needed. Algorithms were used to ensure optimal routes were chosen within built-in parameters. In Sittingbourne routes were never more than 20% away from the direct route. The 16-seater vehicles were high specification and could be configured in various ways. The vehicles used in Sittingbourne were 10 seater plus space for one wheelchair.

The technology was able to teach itself demand patterns so an unbooked bus would be sent to the position nearest the next likely booking. The offer was a 20 minute window for collection; in Sittingbourne average waits were 10-11 minutes. Customers were able to book a ride via an app or by telephone or website. Journeys could be purchased via credit, on a pay as you go basis, or via a season ticket. Once booked, customers received details of the vehicle and driver who would pick them up, including a direct telephone number, along with journey details. Customers could cancel bookings before pick up at no cost.

Mr Mathieson highlighted elements of the customer proposition including convenience, quality, accessibility, safety, shareability and excellent customer service. The Forum were informed that the demand responsive services could be used in a number of environments including urban areas and also where services had traditionally been subsidised because of low demand. Members noted the growth in the Sittingbourne pilot, which was now achieving over 2000 rides per week.

Via the usage of the app, Arriva was able to obtain instantaneous and very detailed data, which was used to improve the service and manage driver and vehicle resourcing. It was noted that the proportion of people using the service in Sittingbourne for their daily commute had reduced over time, with increased use for leisure, shopping and visiting friends and family. The data also showed that 30% of respondents had shifted from using their car.

In response to questions Mr Mathieson confirmed that current legislation allowed for on-demand services to operate without additional licences. As a bus service rather than a private hire operator, the service could take concessionary passes and receive the fuel subsidy. The model and zone used would be informed by stakeholders; if demand was clear then it could be included in the zone. The service was not restricted by, for example, borough boundaries and there had been no safety concerns raised by users.

Mr Mathieson informed that the fare was pitched between a bus and a taxi at approximately £1 per mile. The fare price did not change based on number of users; yield management was not allowed under the regulations. A potential zone for Maidenhead would be larger than the current zone in Sittingbourne, therefore would require more vehicles.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mathieson for his presentation.

RIVER STREET CAR PARK - IS AN ADDITIONAL PARKING DECK A GOOD IDEA?

It was agreed to vary the agenda running order.

Ben Smith informed that Cabinet had reviewed parking across the borough and with regards to Windsor there was an opportunity to put a single deck on the River Street Car Park.

There were no comments from the Forum.

WHAT SUPPORT DO PARTNERS NEED FROM THE LOCAL COUNCIL

The Chairman asked if there were any specific issues. It was felt that more help from RBWM would be appreciated regarding planning applications and the tourism industry could be a consultee.

THAMES STREET TRAFFIC FLOW PILOT

Ben Smith informed the Forum that a temporary one-way system on Thames Street in Windsor was introduced for a nine-week trial period to see if the change in layout could help better manage access to bus services and improve traffic flow.

The new route allowed traffic to travel in a southbound direction (towards the town centre) along the stretch of Thames Street between Datchet Road and River Street.

Any vehicles travelling northbound on Thames Street (away from the town centre) were directed to turn off onto River Street where they can then turn left, or right and re-join Datchet Road. The traffic lights were adjusted to reflect this change.

There had been feedback regarding cyclists in River Street ignoring routes but overall feedback had been positive.

The Forum were supportive of the changes as traffic flow had improved.

(The Chairman left the meeting and the Vice-Chair took the chair).

UPDATE ON MAJOR EVENTS 2018

Julia White, Visitor Manager, provided an update on major events that were due to take place which included the Royal Wedding, which was expected to take place in May 2018 after the Horse Show. This was a major event for Windsor. Other events included the Spring Garden Show between the 13th and 15th April at Ascot Race Course, a combined (with London) Commonwealth heads of state visit on 20th April, the Annual Forces Day on 30th June and a National Town Crier competition on 4th August. There were also the usual Christmas events.

The Forum felt that the Royal Wedding was an important opportunity for Windsor and the town should capitalise on the exposure.

The update was noted.

REPORT FROM TOURISM DEVELOPMENT DAY

The Visitor Manager informed the Forum that the Tourism Development Day took place at Ascot Racecourse on October 4. This was an annual event to bring partners together and a number of workshops were held.

70 businesses had attended the event with three speakers. The feedback was positive but there was more work required on networking and encouraging new partners to attend. It was hoped that UKinbound would be able to present at the next event.

The update was noted.

UPDATE ON WINDSOR COACH PARK

The Visitor Manager informed the Forum that the Council had appointed consultants to look at car parking including the Windsor Coach Park. The findings were due to be reported in February 2018. If required an update could be provided at an appropriate future meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEM: HOW MUCH OF AN IMPACT IS THE HOMELESSNESS SITUATION IN WINDSOR CAUSING ON LOCAL TOURISM/BUSINESS, IF AT ALL?

Cllr Pryer informed the Forum that this discussion item had been added to the agenda as there had seem to have been a rise in homelessness and anti-social behaviour in Windsor.

The Town centre Manager informed that there had been a number of briefings at the Town Forum regarding this and a strategy was being formulated to look at a number of key elements and the night time economy. A number of partner agencies would be consulted. There had been reports of aggressive begging that may not be from the homeless. There were a number of issues that needed support especially as some of the people were vulnerable adults. Some of those concerned had been willing to engage with the Council but others had rejected support. There were also possible enforcement issues and public space protection orders may be used.

Feedback from businesses had been that a lot of rough sleepers / anti-social behaviour had been seen but there had been little reported to the police. It was important to report incidents to the police so they have an evidence base.

The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol was in place and would be extended beyond the Council's statutory duty.

Cllr Grey informed that there seemed to be two issues those who were homeless and needed our support and those who chose to be on the streets. It was important to get the appropriate action in place.

Cllr Pryor mentioned that there were vulnerable adults so there was no one fix for all and each case had to be looked at individually so the appropriate support could be given.

The Forum were informed that Slough BC were also looking at homelessness and they could be contacted for advice. It was noted that there was a homeless shelter in Windsor.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.50 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....