

WINDSOR FORUM

Tuesday 12 March 2024

Present: Councillors Alison Carpenter (Chair), Amy Tisi (Vice-Chair), Neil Knowles, Mark Wilson, and Councillor Wisdom Da Costa

Also in attendance: Councillors David Buckley and Devon Davies

Officers: Laurence Ellis

Officers in attendance virtually: Paul Roach, Chris Joyce, Danny Gomm and Carolyn Richardson

Apologies for Absence

The Chair, Councillor Carpenter, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Forum members then introduced themselves.

No apologies for absence were received.

Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

Minutes

The Chair reminded attendees that the Forum meeting originally scheduled in January 2024 was cancelled due to flooding taking place at this time.

The Chair went through the actions from the last meeting:

<u>ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS</u>	<u>UPDATE</u>
Vision for Windsor to return to the next Forum meeting in January 2024.	COMPLETED – Windsor Vision had been added to the agenda.
Paul Roach to investigate information on any improvements to lantern lights in Windsor.	Answer pending.
Paul Roach to investigate information on visitor overseas spending and overnight stays.	COMPLETED – Answer was provided in the Q/A sheet attached to the agenda.

Outstanding actions:

- **Paul Roach to investigate information on any improvements to lantern lights in Windsor.**

Councillor W. Da Costa raised that the previous minutes should include an action on Andrew Durrant, Executive Director of Place Services, opening the coach park to improve access from the Footbridge to The Arches to save walking distance as well as facilitate businesses under The Arches.

Councillor A. Tisi, Vice-Chair, replied that she brought the subject to attention to Andrew Durrant to consider, elaborating that it would be part of a wider view of place making and

routes through Windsor. She was not certain on what Andrew Durrant would present at a Forum meeting. Councillor W. Da Costa responded that there was money potentially available from the Gateway to Windsor Fund and would like him to come to the Forum to elaborate about the proposition of opening such a route. The Chair suggested Councillor A. Tisi could ask about it.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meetings held on 9th November 2023 were a true and accurate record.

Flooding and Emergency Response

Chris Joyce, Assistant Director of Placemaking Partnerships and Sustainability, informed that it was only himself and Carolyn Richardson, Service Manager – Joint Emergency Planning Unit, attending the meeting as Ben Crampin, Principal Flood Risk Manager, was presenting this item at Maidenhead Town Forum on the next day.

Chris Joyce informed that the presentation was to outline the roles and responsibilities which the Council had in relation to flooding and emergency responses in backdrop of the flooding event in January 2024.

The Borough had two key roles within flooding and incident response. The first is being the Lead Local Flood Authority which included the following responsibilities:

- Maintain a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy,
- Being the relevant authority for surface water and groundwater flooding,
- Investigate flooding events,
- A consultee on planning applications, such as new homes and business proposals to ensure they were not increasing flood risk,
- Maintain RBWM-owned drainage systems,
- Ensure riparian owners on ordinary water course were maintaining their responsibilities.

The second role from RBWM was its responsibilities in Emergency Planning which encompassed:

- Review risks in the area,
- Prepare plans relating to these risks, such as Adverse Weather Plan, which was implemented during the recent flooding event,
- Undertake training and exercising with the Council and with multi-agency partners to ensure preparedness,
- Support information sharing and engagement to help the public and community groups prepare for emergencies,
- Work with Parish Council and local groups to help create community plans and encourage flood resilience, including property-level protection.

The Environment Agency (EA) were the Strategic Flooding Authority who had the following responsibilities:

- Strategic oversight, including modelling for flood risk and maintaining a National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy,
- Relevant authority for Fluvial Flood Risk, notably flooding from the River Thames,

Thames Water were the Sewerage Provider, who were responsible for:

- Managing and maintaining the public sewer network,
- Being the relevant authority for Sewage flooding.

During an emergency response, the relevant aforementioned authorities work in a multi-agency environment. After the Cabinet Office had set up Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR), the Borough would establish the following structure:

- At gold level, a Multi-Agency Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) and a Strategic Emergency Management Team (SEMT),

- At silver level, the Multi-Agency Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) and an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC),
- At bronze level, Multi-Agency Operational Coordinating Group and a Reception/Rest/Humanitarian Assistance Centre etc.

The Borough was in the process of developing a new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, with the current one having been published in 2014 and thus requiring an update to bring it in line with current policy and to ensure it was line with current local flood risk (defined as surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses).

The new strategy would include:

- Identification of Risk Management Authorities and their roles,
- Known flood risk in the Borough,
- Aims and objectives to mitigate local flood risk,
- Action Plans detailing how these objectives would be achieved.

The strategy would be developed into a multi-agency document with other risk management agencies, Town Forums and Parish Councils being consulted throughout the process.

In terms of timescale, the consultation was supposed to take place at around March 2024, but this was delayed due to the recent flooding event in January 2024. The new timescale for the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy:

- **Summer 2023:** Internal Consultation workshops.
- **Winter 2023/24:** Held a drop in event for parish and borough members; and started organising further consultation events.
- **January 2024:** Flooding from River Thames, which caused a delay to strategy development.
- **Summer 2024:** Recommence consultation workshops for Parish and Town Forum areas with opportunity for feedback on draft objectives.
- **Ongoing:** Development of action plans; complete the Strategy Document; a Statutory Consultation period for whole document; and finally, a Cabinet sign off.

While finding it reassuring that there was an ongoing flooding strategy, Nigel Griffin, a resident, raised that there was an issue of drain clearance, pointing out that King's Road had blocked drains which usually developed a large puddle. Chris Joyce responded that there was a program of gully clearance and another one to improve highway drainage. Regular issues could also be reported ahead of floods so that the Borough was aware of them and could respond to it. He offered to take the issue at King's Road away and report it back to the relevant team.

Councillor Knowles said that there was an accumulatively affect whereby debris on unswept roads go into drains and then block them, followed by water coming out the drains, then moves around on tarmac rather than dissipating. From this, Councillor Knowles perceived that there was a flood management plan which did not contain a risk management. He then highlighted a water runoff issue at St Leonard's Hill due to a reservoir. He stated that a flood management plan could not happen without looking at the root causes, notably water flowing on hard surfaces. He suggested that the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy included a proper risk assessment of areas and an action plan to resolve them, theorising that there would be a noticeable difference if all the drains were cleared.

Speculating that was a misunderstanding, Chris Joyce clarified that an objective of his presentation was to announce that there was going to be further consultation on Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, which would cover the key risks and issues on flooding. From here, a detailed action plan would develop around to respond to this. In addition, the Emergency Planning Arrangements would include consideration on how to respond to flooding incidents. He reassured that the points covered by Councillor Knowles would be picked up in

the Strategy, in which Ben Crampin would give further detail in Summer 2024. He was also open to pick up the specific points that were mentioned outside of the meeting.

Councillor Knowles then commented that the timescale was too stretched out, stating that flooding was an immediate issue. As the consultation was expected to be completed by Summer 2024 and was to be followed by an action plan, he expressed concern that the relevant mitigation works would not be in place before another flooding event. Chris Joyce responded this process required a long-term strategy and that it was impractical to fix the issues immediately due to the Borough's financial situation. Nevertheless, some quick wins may be implemented through the current capital program before the winter 2024.

Councillor Wilson reiterated Councillor Knowles's point on the importance of an action plan for effective drainage infrastructure, which include blocked culverts and waterways.

Councillor W. Da Costa asked a series of questions. He first asked which department in RBWM was the relevant flood authority, particularly for making comments on Planning applications clarify. After thanking Chris Joyce, his officer colleagues and the Planning Response Team, he then asked what the costs for the emergency response were in terms of resources and officer time as well as who paid for this response. He then asked how Chris Joyce would advise the Borough to deal with the increased expectations of more frequent and severe flooding which were expected to occur in the coming years and the subsequent costs.

Answering in order, Chris Joyce replied that Ben Crampin and the Flooding Team acted as the lead local flood authority. He stated that the Borough recently brought the flooding planning application advice back in-house within a larger flooding team after it had been outsourced. He then said that he only had the direct cost during the emergency flooding response in terms of the overtime being paid and not the overall cost. He offered to write an answer on the outline of the costs back to the Forum. Chris Joyce added that there was an ability to reclaim some of the costs from central government if it reached a certain level (though he believed RBWM had not reached this level at the moment). In effect, the response arrangements needed to be funded by the Borough, such as the Cookham Causeway Plan, officer time, and temporary accommodation for flood-affected residents. If the costs reached a large amount, then the Council could trigger the Bellwind Grant.

In regard to climate change and the expectation of an increased frequency of extreme weather events, Chris Joyce said that a resilience plan would need to be put in place. He conveyed that there had been some discussions with other Berkshire authorities in regard to this, such as suggestions to jointly work around managing climate resilience and adaptation as well as collectively working to protect critical infrastructure and homes.

ACTION: Chris Joyce to forward an answer on the overall costs for the emergency response in terms of resources and officer time as well as who paid for this response, and how the Borough would deal with increased frequent and severe flooding and weather.

John Holland, a resident, commented that the Borough Local Plan anticipated significant housing development on flood plain and asked whether this had been taken into account in terms of the risk analysis. Chris Joyce answered that there were different levels of flood plain with different zones. A number of sites which appeared in Flood Zone 3 were taken out in the revisions to the Borough Local Plan. As part of the Planning application process, the applicant would need to demonstrate how their proposals would not increase flood risk. In addition, the Borough, as part of the planning process, ensured that many homes were not built in the highest risk flood plains.

Ian Haggart, a resident, highlighted fly-tipping going into small streams, causing them to become blocked and then cause water to flow into residential areas. After stating that the Borough responded to the residents reporting on this that the local landowner was responsible for this, he wondered whether the local flood authority could take any responsibility in dealing

with this. Chris Joyce confirmed that it was a riparian owner's responsibility to maintain watercourse, but he added that the lead local flood authority had powers to enforce against the owners to either push them to undertake maintenance or undertaken the works themselves and then charge the riparian owner.

Ian Haggart then requested that the Borough inform the relevant officers to take action against the riparian owner rather than deflecting it back to the reporting resident/s. Chris Joyce replied that if it was a case of fly-tipping causing a flooding issue, he would report it to the Flooding Team. The Chair also suggested that residents could also report to their local Councillors if they were not receiving satisfactory answers.

John Webb, a resident, asked what was to be done to clear the blocked drains around Windsor, how many drains would be cleared this year compared to last year, the measures put in place and the criteria for success. Chris Joyce replied that he did not possess the number of drains which were cleared in Windsor in 2023/24, stating that he could forward the answer in future. The Borough had a capital budget which provided funding for highways drainage and flooding issues. He further stated that the Borough would clear blocked drains though these would need to be reported so that it would be notified of it.

Following up from the mention of a capital budget for drainage works, Councillor Wilson asked if there was a maintenance budget as well, stating that some elements would fall under maintenance. Chris Joyce answered that this was covered in the highways contract.

In relation to the highways contract and maintenance, Sarah Walker, a resident, asked how frequent were the drains being maintained as well as how frequently the small waterways, which she stated were RBWM's responsibility, were being dredged and cleared under the contracts. Chris Joyce stated that he would need to find the answer as highway contracts were out of his remit. He then said that while RBWM-owned infrastructure was its responsibility, it was not responsible for every drainage infrastructure with some instead being responsible by the riparian landowners.

ACTION: Chris Joyce to forward an answer on how frequently the drains being maintained as well as how frequently the RBWM-managed small waterways were being dredged and cleared under the contracts.

Vision for Windsor

Chris Joyce first off informed that he had taken feedback from the last time Vision for Windsor was presented at the Forum, namely what the Windsor Vision entailed and further details on the project. He added that he would welcome a discussion on the next steps and priorities.

Giving the context, Chris Joyce explained that the Vision for Windsor, adopted by Cabinet in February 2023, was a high vision statement which involved a lot of community and stakeholder engagement. While the intention was to move the project to the delivery phase following the adoption by Cabinet, this had been put on hold as the new administration focused on setting a balanced budget for the financial year 2024-25.

Chris Joyce explained the vision statements. The overall vision statement was "[a]n attractive, thriving and welcoming town for the local and global community", balancing out the recognition of the Windsor brand as a world class visitor destination as well as the impact on the local community. The five Vision Statements were:

- Transport and movement: "Develop sustainable, convenient & affordable options to travel into Windsor town centre."
- Built environment: "Protect and enhance the heritage, character and identity of Windsor."
- Natural environment: "Promote, activate and improve access to the natural assets and resources."

- Local community: “Create a thriving local economy of business and community partnerships that benefit from Windsor’s global brand.”
- Global community: “Deliver a world-class visitor experience supported by a diverse and resilient hospitality industry.”

Chris Joyce then went through each strategy area, their action points and any developments taking place for them.

For **Gateways and Arrivals:**

- 1) Develop satellite parking sites – Recognising the difficulty in providing sufficient parking in the Town Centre and investigate whether satellite parking sites around the town edges could be developed.
- 2) Celebrate Arrival into Windsor – Belief that the vehicle routes into Windsor were not giving a welcome.
 - Maintenance works on the Coach park footbridge and lifts (with some funding from the Welcome to Windsor project).
 - Surface car parking improvements, including resurfacing, relining and signage improvements.
 - Welcome signage at entry points.
- 3) Invest in improving transport connections – Investigate improving public transport connections, recognising the changing travel patterns which affect the bus and trains.
 - Bus enhanced partnership meetings established to engage with bus operators.
- 4) Encourage a shift in active travel – Implement the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) in Windsor as well as consider accessibility and movement around Windsor.
 - Stovell Road/Barry Avenue scheme, promoting active travel investments.
 - Windsor Leisure cycle parking hub
 - Improve crossing points at Thames Street/Datchet Road junction.
 - Windsor Great cycle link.

For **Town Centre Movement:**

- 5) Discourage unnecessary vehicle movement and through-traffic in the Town Centre – Investigate options on where to prioritise traffic and movement of people.
- 6) Improve cycling and walking connections – Focus on movement around Windsor.
 - Stovell Road/Barry Avenue scheme.
 - Improve crossing points at Thames Street/Datchet Road junction.
 - Update wayfinding information monoliths.
- 7) Take advantage of the Rover Thames for Access and Movement – Taking advantage of the River Thames in terms of access and movement as well as make use of it as an asset to raise revenue.
- 8) Consolidate Town Centre Parking – Look at a broader strategy for car parking within the Town Centre and the role that satellite parking could create and the already-established surface-level car parking.
- 9) Maintain priority parking and access – Maintain access for people with reduced accessibility.

For **Character and Uses:**

- 10) Invest in the Riverside to create an attractive entrance into Windsor – Create an attractive entrance into Windsor.
- 11) Employ guideline and regulations to maintain the character of the heritage core – Possibly create a character area strategy for Windsor, such as different fields (e.g., heritage core, Riverside, etc.).
- 12) Diversify Town Centre uses.
 - Windsor Yards development, which would bring different uses into the Town Centre, such as a cinema.
- 13) Nurture the local culture, arts and retail.
 - My Royal Borough network activity

- Series of social events in Windsor.
- Training programmes for local businesses

For **Public Realm:**

- 14) Apply and maintain a quality materiality of the public realm.
 - Castle Hill public realm improvements
- 15) Improve engagement with the River and Riverfront
- 16) Develop a framework for regeneration of Riverside parking sites.

For **Local Governance and Community Partnerships:**

- 17) Build a directory of community groups and partnerships.
 - Work in progress to develop the directory.
- 18) Establish a collective voice of stakeholder representation across Windsor.
- 19) Create a register of ownerships and landlords.
- 20) Engage with Windsor Castle and The Crown Estate.
 - Engagement with Windsor Castle and the Crown Estate through existing channels.
- 21) Capitalise on Royal warrants and the Windsor brand.
 - Tourism Strategy in development through Visit Windsor Partnership

To conclude, Chris Joyce informed on the next steps of the project:

- An officer meeting was followed up with a workshop session with a group of Councillors.
- A presentation to Cabinet to take place to establish proposed options for priority projects to take forward.
- A stakeholder steering group to be established.
- Ongoing updates to key business partnerships and Town Forum as work progresses.

Chris Joyce stated that he welcomed views and feedback from the Forum, residents and Councillors on who should be involved with the project as well as discussions on the project's priorities. He informed that there would be ongoing updates in the delivery of the Vision for Windsor project to businesses partnerships and the Forum.

Teresa Haggart, a resident and Chair of Heritage and Environment Committee of the Windsor and Eton Society, stated that the Society were involved in a two-day planning session for the project and had since then not been contacted by the Borough. She further stated that she sought to get meetings between the Society and the Borough back on track for the last year but had experienced repeated cancelled meeting arrangements. She said that it would be ideal for the Windsor and Eton Society (alongside the Windsor Neighbourhood Plan Group) to be part of the Vision for Windsor project, stating that the Society had a vast knowledge of the heritage and environment of Windsor and Eton, and alleged that these were being ignored.

Chris Joyce responded that he would be open to having a meeting with the Windsor and Eton Society and the Windsor Neighbourhood Plan Group and how to involve the two community groups as the project moved forward, requesting for an email address either directly sent to him or through Councillor A. Tisi. He subsequently highlighted that there had been significant financial challenges amongst officers at the Borough, such as in-year budget overspends and achieving a balanced budget, which slowed progress on the project.

Teresa Haggart responded that this was not about the money but rather the expectation and developments which Windsor needed. She stated that planning could have taken place in the meantime in preparation until things settled down. Teresa Haggart asserted that she did not know about the final plan since the two-day planning session before seeing the Chris Joyce's presentation.

Chris Joyce clarified that progress on the project had been slow due to officer time rather than due to money as they had been focused on rectifying the Borough's financial challenges. Regarding the aftermath of the two-day workshop, the final report was published and

presented at RBWM Cabinet and then published on the Council website. Chris Joyce further added that Andrew Durrant had presented the Vision for Windsor at a Forum meeting in [March 2023](#) and Chris Joyce himself gave an update in [September 2023](#). He reassured that the Borough sought to publicise the final Prince's Foundation report and how this would be taken forward.

Teresa Haggart reiterated that her last meeting with Borough officers and Councillors was November 2022. The Chair then stated that the project had been relaunched and that she could forward Teresa Haggart's details to Chris Joyce.

ACTION: The Chair to forward the email details of Teresa Haggart from the Windsor and Eton Society to Chris Joyce.

Martin, a resident, asked if Chris Joyce was approached by Windsor Forest College for any input on support, labour or finance for the Town Centre plan. Chris Joyce answered that Windsor Forest College were a member of the Windsor and Eton Business Partnership and thus would be engaged through this body.

John Bowden asked about the status of the Windsor Yards development, namely the current position between the Borough, the freeholders and the developers on progress and the financial impact. Chris Joyce was aware of ongoing discussions but did not know the details as he was not involved with those discussions. He mentioned that he could pick this up with colleagues though he added he would not be able to publicly reveal the details of the commercial elements as the discussions were ongoing.

Councillor Knowles stated that he viewed the Windsor Forum as a stakeholder group as it brought together Borough Councillors from Windsor wards, concerned residents and sometimes a few local societies, and therefore it should be approached as such rather than just simply presenting updates. He argued that the Forum could create a better pool of information whereby differing groups could be gathered and represented. Chris Joyce replied that the reason he attended the Windsor Forum was to acquire feedback on some of the big priorities and how to gather stakeholders. While he would use existing partnerships and forums to help guide the Windsor Vision, he also sought to acquire views from Windsor Forum attendees on the project's priorities based on which had greater value, such as whether to focus on the Riverside, parking or movement.

When Councillor Knowles perceived that the stakeholders had already been selected and that the Windsor Forum was mistakenly not included, Chris Joyce responded that he had raised the question at the end of his presentation which included who should be included and how they should be included.

The Chair stated that it would be good to include the Windsor Forum as part of the stakeholders of the Vision for Windsor project. She then suggested that a specific topic could be published ahead of a Forum meeting and then attendees could come along with their views and suggestions.

Councillor Wilson firstly expressed his support of the thought on how the project was going to be organised, stating the importance of the governance and organisation being sufficient. He then mentioned the Windsor and Eton Business Partnership, asking for them to be considered as a key stakeholder, stating that they had some proactive ideas. Chris Joyce was to attend a Windsor and Eton Business Partnership on the following day and therefore he would pick this up there.

Councillor W. Da Costa highlighted that Borough officers were spread quite thin in terms of time and costs with many responsibilities, such as environmentalism, climate change and emergency planning, which then meant there could not be any focus on the Windsor Vision project. He suggested that more people in resourcing need to be included to ensure proactiveness with issues. Raising his points, he first asked how the issue of costs and

funding were being dealt with. He agreed that Windsor Forum should be involved as stakeholder group alongside local businesses, community groups and Windsor Councillors. He then asked whether the implementation of a night bus could be accelerated, namely working with local businesses who would fund it to encourage travel into Windsor and overcome the issue with parking.

Chris Joyce believed that some teams have had meetings with Councillor W. Da Costa to discuss the night bus proposal, adding he would check this out. In regard to funding, he stated the Borough possessed capital funding to finance some of the projects and expected that other funding opportunities and pots of capital may open up. He stated he was happy to discuss this after the meeting.

Councillor A. Tisi highlighted that young people was a stakeholder group which was noticeably missing from the Forum, arguing that it was important to get them involve as the projects were long-term. She suggested groups like Youth Council and Girls' Forum should be stakeholders.

(Chris Joyce left the meeting at 7:43pm)

Thames Valley Police Update

PC Matt Gleave, Neighbourhood Officer for Windsor East, Datchet, Horton, Wraysbury and Old Windsor (Thames Valley Police, TVP), firstly informed that he was assigned to the meeting at the last minute. Starting off by giving the crime statistics in the last three months:

- **Windsor East:** antisocial behaviour (ASB), 12; business burglary, 1; residential burglary, 8; criminal damage, 22; theft from vehicle, 13; theft of vehicle, 8; and theft of pedal cycle, 2.
- **Windsor West (including Dedworth and Clewer):** antisocial behaviour (ASB), 14; business burglary, 2; residential burglary, 11; criminal damage, 18; theft from vehicle, 20; theft of vehicle, 16; and theft of pedal cycle, 2.
- **Windsor Central:** antisocial behaviour (ASB), 12; business burglary, 6; residential burglary, 9; criminal damage, 29; theft from vehicle, 19; theft of vehicle, 7; and theft of pedal cycle, 10.
- **Town Centre:** Shoplifting, 51.

The Chair raised that she had seen a large amount of graffiti everywhere from Clewer East to Clewer and Dedworth East and West in the last month; and when she reported it to TVP, they responded that they could not do anything. She asked what could be done. PC Matt Gleave replied that graffiti should still be reported to TVP as it allowed them to record them and build a picture of where its most prevalent. Graffiti was still nevertheless considered criminal damage.

Richard, a resident, asked to what extent had crimes had been resolved. PC Matt Gleave replied that Land Rovers and Jaguar cars were particularly targeted for theft whereby organised gangs exploited vulnerabilities in the car design and would often then dismantle them for parts. He anticipated that many were sent to a chop shop in Slough, which was revealed to be the largest chop shop in the UK. Some stolen vehicles were retrieved due to having trackers attached on them.

When Richard asked how many vehicles were recovered, PC Matt Gleave replied that he did not know the specific number, but it was a high percentage for stolen vehicles. Richard then asked if any statistics get published, stating that a neighbour of his was waiting for their stolen vehicle to be recovered; by which PC Matt Gleave replied that this was not the case and that the crime statistics were based on reported crimes which were ongoing.

Nigel Griffin critically commented that the Forum were not doing police/crime updates properly, namely crime data not being published in advance of the meeting and being assigned to an officer at the last minute, and asked whether the Chair would notify TVP on the format of updates. The Chair responded that there was no desire for a lengthy presentation for

the meeting due to receiving many presentations already, but nevertheless suggested that the format could be improved upon.

PC Matt Gleave highlighted that the TVP website gave details of crime within specific areas, including an illustrative map.

Sarah Walker raised that there was an announcement before the May 2023 local elections of 4 new police officers being recruited and asked what happened. PC Matt Gleave answered that 3 were recruited with one due to arrive shortly. PC Oscar Ross was for Dedworth alongside another officer who was due to start in April/May 2024. The Town Centre had two new officers, with a third one going to be added. Meanwhile, PC Matt Gleave would be assisted by a new officer in Windsor East, Datchet, Horton, Wraysbury and Old Windsor, hopefully by May/June 2024. Overall, the officers were being recruited but the process was slow.

Sarah Walker heard that there was a new communication system with town shops to help reduce shoplifting and asked for further information about this. PC Matt Gleave stated that he was not aware of this as the Town Centre was not his area. He speculated that this was referring to Shopwatch whereby the Town Centre Team sent photographs every month of the top 30 'targets' (i.e., individual perpetrators), with constant updating, and that each retailer had a radio to directly communicate with TVP officers, including officers on patrol, to inform 'Target One' had committed an offence and their location. This helped reduce the timing for 999 calls and police officers getting a description of the perpetrator.

Councillor D. Davies heard that the police would be visiting shops which had experienced theft and would actively arrest shoplifters, asking whether this had started and how effective it had been. PC Matt Gleave answered that this had always been the case. If the perpetrator was a child and first-time shoplifter, they would be dealt with in a certain way. Other than that, shoplifters in Windsor tended to be 'career shoplifters' and would always be arrested, remanded, and then go to court. He highlighted that officers also had to prioritise risk-and-life crimes (e.g., assaults) over shoplifting if there was a limited number of officers in area.

Councillor W. Da Costa raised that a lot of police work were not reflected in police statistics, such as tending people with mental health issues. He asked about non-stat activities which significantly take up police time, such as mental health. PC Matt Gleave answered that it was the case, by which the police handled non-crime mental health incidents (alongside mental health crime incidents), namely the police and ambulance services investigating mental health incidents, particularly if there was an immediate risk to life, as helplines like Samaritans were only accessible on the phone. He heard a national statistic whereby 75% of police time was focused on non-crime mental health issues. He added that lack of funding meant there was a lack of resources in police and ambulance services to help manage mental health issues.

(PC Matt Gleave left the meeting at 8:02pm)

Family Hub Service in Windsor

Danny Gomm, Family Hub Manager (Achieving for Children, AfC) gave an overview of the Family Hub Service in Windsor.

The Family Hub Service was launched on 1st May 2021 through the merging of Children's Centres, Youth Service, Family Resilience and Parenting Service to form the Hub. While the Family Hub sat within the Early Help service, it supported children, young people and families on statutory plans, such as social interventions like child need plans or child protection plans. The work was focussed on supporting targeted families across the age range of 0-19 years, but also focussed up to 25 years-of-age if the young people had learning difficulties and/or disabilities or was a care leaver. A majority of staff were divided into 2 main hubs (Windsor and Maidenhead). Despite this, the teams were not restricted to working with families in their area. There were also the Families Together Service, which worked to stop children from

going into care and keep them in their families or return them to their families if they were already in care.

There were two hubs/buildings within Windsor, with the main building being the Windsor Family Hub (near the Police Station and Holiday Inn). The Hub provided parenting groups and 1-1 support for children, young people and parent groups and a safe space for young people (e.g., pool tables, kitchen). It was also used by community groups who paid a fee as well as AfC partnership services like the Domestic Abuse Charity. The Manor was another building used by the Family Hub to meet families, deliver services and be used by community groups. Contrastingly, unlike the Family Hub building, it was not open from 9:00am-5:00pm for families to drop in.

Chris Caughey, Family Hub Lead (AfC), gave an overview of what was on offer from the Family Hub Service in Windsor. For children/young people, service offers included:

- Esteem Project to help young people who were struggling with their emotions, self-esteem self-confidence and social isolation by building their confidence, give them experiences, meet and make friends and encourage them to join clubs.
- Educational workshops across schools in Windsor and the Borough, covering Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation, Substance Misuse, Digital World and Safety, Realities of Pornography, and Youth Violence.
- BREATHE program to support young people experiencing parental conflict and domestic abuse.
- Youth Participation Groups, such as the Girls Forum and Youth Council, with regular meetings and one-off events.
- Positive activities for children in care during weekends and holidays, such as meeting other children in care groups from other local authorities.

For parents, service offers included:

- SPACE support group to support parents and carers' emotions, and Triple P support parenting strategies.
- Baby Massage (Datchet and eventually Windsor and Ascot) which provided a 6-week health check as well as help with parent-child bonding.

The FUEL holiday activity and food programme which offered children who claimed free school meals activities and food during Easter and Christmas holidays.

The Family Hub had community links with local charities and organisations, providing strong working partnership and making use of all these groups knowledge and expertise to ensure families were being fully supported. The organisations included Abri, The Green Room, West Windsor Hub, Tesco Dedworth Community Champion, The Baby Bank, The Link Foundation and Foodshare. Regular meetings with the community groups and volunteers were held at Windsor Family Hub as well as The Green Room and Windsor Castle to further promote collaboration.

To conclude, Danny Gomm displayed the [Family Hub webpage](#) which included links to online resources (e.g., online parenting courses) and parental advice.

Councillor Tisi congratulated the Family Hub Team for receiving an AfC Staff Award they had received and thanked them for their work.

After complimenting the presentation, Sarah Walker asked if all the services, facilities and events were free. She then wondered whether there were income opportunities for the Council with these courses, stating that some parents may be willing to pay for some of these courses. Danny Gomm confirmed that the services were free and that most families who used them were those who struggled financially. He added that the Hub was a discretionary service which always sought to investigate different ways to be more efficient and generate income. He also stated that the school workshops were free to ensure pupils received the information as charging the schools could cause them to not invite the workshops.

After commending the Family Hub's work, Councillor Knowles asked whether the delivery of services had improved and whether there had been any noticeable difference in the amount of engagement with families and young people after the merging of Children's Centres, Youth Service, Family Resilience and Parenting Service. Danny Gomm, who initially worked in the Youth Service alongside Chris Caughey, answered that the service was much stronger after the merging of the individual services and taking a 'whole family' working approach. Regarding the amount of engagement, anecdotally, Danny Gomm believed that re-referrals back into the service had dramatically reduced due to the 'whole family' working approach. Chris Caughey added that the merge brought a wider skill sets and experience which had improved the service based on feedback.

Councillor W. Da Costa asked what were key factors which drove the need for support for vulnerabilities in young people. Danny Gomm believed that it was young people who were struggling to go to school due to anxiety. Mental health and anxieties were increasing in the service, likely due to isolations during Covid lockdowns. Other factors included the cost-of-living crisis which meant some families could not travel to the Hub building.

Councillor Wilson expressed appreciation of the work by the Family Hub, particularly the early help. He then asked if there was any interaction with the police. Danny Gomm answered that there were strong links with the police, including the exchange of intel and regular meetings, such as the youth violence and exploitation panels. These panels not only look at young people but also locations of concern.

(Councillor Buckley, Danny Gomm and Chris Caughey left the meeting at 8:31pm)

Town Manager Update

Paul Roach, Windsor and Eton Town Centre Manager, presented his Town Manager update. Beginning with the monthly footfall count in Peascod Street in February 2024, he informed that there had been a significant drop in footfall in the last few years by 8.7% year on year. Meanwhile, there was a decline in 5.5% in terms of the year to date. Paul Roach stated that this trend was reflective across Windsor. While Windsor Town Centre fared better across south-east England, it fared worse compared to across the UK, describing it as unusual. He speculated that the reasons include February 2024 being the wettest month on record as well as a limit on disposable income amongst visitors in midst of the cost-of-living crisis. Another likely reason was the refurbishment works at the Coach Park, which affected the movement and therefor causing footfall counts to be measured differently, as well as refurbishment works of the car park at Windsor Yards.

Overall, while Windsor had experienced a good footfall over the last 12 months, January and February 2024 had experienced a drop. Paul Roach informed that the Windsor Town Team would stop comparing new footfall statistics with those from 2019 (pre-Covid pandemic), instead statistics would be compared in the last three-to-four years.

Car parking followed a similar trend to footfall: a drop in car parking usage in the Town Centre had dropped in January 2024 by 9%. Meanwhile, coach parking had seen a steady increase, which Paul Roach added that an increase was expected in 2024-25 due to countries reopening after the Covid pandemic and thus tourists would start to pour in.

In terms of vacancy rates, Paul Roach reported that the rates in Windsor and Eton had remained stable at 9.4% since Christmas 2023 with Windsor not losing many businesses. The only vacated unit in the last month was Leo Mancini; meanwhile in the same period, Mango had been opened. The units which were in development and were about to open were Trailfinders in the old 24 High Street unit (formerly Cath Kidston), Build-a-Bear in the old jewel unit, a likely restaurant in the former Halifax bank unit, a Karen Millen unit, and several units in Windsor Royal Station.

Paul Roach mentioned that he regularly talked to agents representing the various units around Windsor. He stated that there was a potential offer on the Harte and Garter Hotel after a long period of it being empty.

Moving forward, the Council had changed the way it collected data on visitor numbers in the Town Centre by using Visitor Insights, which tracked visitors by picking up GPS devices like phones, tablets, and smartwatches. This allowed the Windsor Town Management Team to collect more sophisticated and granular visitor data for the whole of the Town Centre rather than only on Peascod Street. The system also provided information on where visitors had come from, visits to specific buildings, dwell time, and a break down by day and time.

Paul Roach informed that the Council had funding for Visitor Insights for 2024 and 2025. Afterward, further funding would need to be found. He added that the Finance Team had secured funding for a three-year contract. Behind the scenes, Town Management Team had registered every business in the Town Centre to allow the collection of data for specific units. Paul Roach informed that Visitor Insights covered not only Windsor Town Centre but also Maidenhead, Eton and potentially Dedworth.

Paul Roach then listed the recent activities which had taken place, including:

- The first Lunar New Year celebration on 10th and 11th February 2024, which experiencing an unexpected high turnout. While special funding was provided for new cultural projects in 2024, further funding needed to be searched for if this was to continue.
- Annual Pancake Race, experiencing an increased turnout and raising money for the Alexander Divine Children's Hospice Services.

To conclude, Paul Roach then listed the events and activities for 2024, highlighting that a key objective of the Vision for Windsor was to ensure that there was an active events program which attracted and incentivised people to visit. The key events for 2024 he highlighted included:

- 1st April 2024: **Easter events** (including an Easter egg hunt).
- 21st April 2024, Dedworth: **St George's Day Fair**.
- 6th June 2024: **80th Anniversary D-Day Celebration** (beacon lighting event).
- 25th and 26th May 2024: **Windsor Royal Shopping**.
- 7th July 2024, Windsor Great Park: **Parallel Games**.
- Christmas events:
 - 14th November 2024: **Eton Christmas Lights Switch-on**.
 - 15th November 2024: **Windsor on Ice**.
 - 16th November 2024: **Windsor Christmas Lights Switch-on**.
 - 23rd November 2024: **Dedworth Christmas Lights Switch-on**.
 - 30th November 2024: **Vegan Christmas Market**.
 - 1st December 2024: **Living Advent Calendar**.
 - 7th and 8th December 2024: **Windsor Yards Festive Weekend**.
 - 13th December 2024: **Carols on the Hill**.
 - 24th December 2024: **Windsor Living Advent Calendar Finale**.

The Chair asked if the rise in car parking prices had any impact on residents and tourists.

Hype on social media. Paul Roach replied that while he had this in mind, he had not interrogated the parking data yet and therefore did not present the data. He added that it was likely multiple factors, such as high rainfall in February 2024 rather than usual snowfall in February which encouraged residents to buy winter gear. He stated that he would look into this.

John Holland asked whether Paul Roach had any talks with large banks on providing a banking hub in Windsor. Paul Roach replied that he had been in communication with the team which decided where community banking hubs would be located. He completed a form to register interest in one being installed in Windsor in January 2024, but he received a response that Windsor did not meet the criteria for a banking hub to be installed after a review. In spite of Paul Roach challenging this decision by pointing out that Windsor and Eton had lost banks and cash points over the years, the decision had remained unchanged, with Paul Roach requesting for the rationale behind the decision. He added that the team could be review the criteria which could then lead to Windsor being reviewed for eligibility again.

John Holland then asked if there was an update on the lift at Windsor Yards car park being repaired. After some initial misunderstanding on which lift, clarified as the one within the Co-op multi-storey car park, Paul Roach was unaware of this lift being out-of-action. He stated that he would notify the surveyor team to investigate the issue.

Sarah Walker asked whether the footfall could now be split between residents and visitors with Visitor Insights. She then asked Bracknell, Staines and Marlow had similar tracking systems and therefore measure Windsor residents shopping in these areas, stating that she heard Windsor residents go to other towns due to the price of car parking.

Answering the first question, Paul Roach said the data could not be separated between visitors and residents, with a possible exception between the data showing where visitors came from, whether from the Windsor catchment or outside of Windsor. In regard to the second question, Paul Roach was not aware of how other towns collect footfall data. He said he could ask his counterparts in Bracknell for an answer. He also informed that parking in other towns was generally cheaper and sometimes free in other places, such as The Lexicon in Bracknell; but parking would always be a challenge. He added that one way was to build up Windsor and thus incentivise people to stay. He stated that he had been having talks with Q-Park who managed Windsor Yards on when this would be back up and running as well as what it would look like.

The Chair highlighted that there was the 1-hour resident parking discount which residents could register for, alongside frozen parking for up to three houses at Victoria Street car park.

Councillor Wilson asked whether the collected footfall data could be sold to the local businesses. He then asked about the footfall data in February 2024 which, when going into further detail, included a rough 27% increase. Paul Roach did not have the answer but speculated that the data was collected from a far wider catchment, and thus capturing more people, in contrast to previous data collection being focused on Peascod Street and its shops. While visitors go to Windsor, they may not visit shops and thus translate into sales.

(Paul Roach left the meeting at 9:09pm)

Resident Questions and Item Suggestions for Future Forums

John Holland asked whether the Aviation Forum would be revitalised. Councillor Knowles answered that an email had been circulated which announced the date of the next meeting: Tuesday 23rd April 2024 at 7:00pm at York House, Windsor. John Holland elaborated that the new Chief Executive of Heathrow announced that he wanted to make Heathrow Airport more efficient (theorising that it meant increasing the number of flights) and thus suggested that someone from Heathrow attend the Forum and explain what this meant. Councillor Knowles informed that the intention of the revived Aviation Forum was to ensure Heathrow Airport was better engaged as well as the Forum being more resident-led.

Nigel Griffin stated that a tourist tax had been imposed in Paris. Referring to the financial situation of the Borough, he wondered whether a tourist tax could be considered. Councillor A. Tisi responded that a tourist tax could not be imposed in England (like with Paris), but she

added that a semi-voluntary 'tourist tax' could be applied, such as a business improvement district, which officers were considering. The Chair added that she believed that this scheme was taking place in Manchester and Liverpool.

Highlighting that the meeting had been going on for a couple of hours, John Bowden suggested that resident questions should be placed first rather than receiving presentations and updates from Council officers and then alleged that Councillor questions were being answered rather than the residents. He then expressed disapproval at the management of the Aviation Forum, namely the fact that no meeting had taken place in a long time in spite of a major airport nearby affecting Windsor, alleging that it was a failure of the current administration. The Chair responded that the Aviation Forum was being addressed and countered that she usually asked residents for their questions first before receiving questions from Councillors. Councillor Knowles added that a consultation had taken place after the May 2023 local elections and that there was much activity taking place at Heathrow, thus making it crucial to revive the Aviation Forum.

John Bowden then stated that there was the Community for the Independent Scrutiny of Heathrow which he attended in October 2023 and that a Borough Councillor from Maidenhead attended as well but the responsible Councillor for the Aviation Forum did not attend. Stating that no one attended these Community meetings, he asserted that it was a failure of the Lead (Cabinet) Member.

Highlighting that there had been a maximum increase in Council Tax over the years (in spite of repetitive assertions of low Council Tax) as well as an increase in parking fees, Sarah Walker asked whether the Councillors in attendance were concerned about the impact of parking. In addition, she asked whether the budget included any income generating opportunities which were missed, alleging that the Borough were charging residents without investigating alternative solutions to raise funds. The Chair replied that the answers may have to be investigated and then presented at the next Forum meeting.

Sarah Walker reiterated her query on whether income generating opportunities for the Borough had been explored, such as commercialisation, sponsorship in the budget, advertising on the website, yields from rental income and hiring out halls.

After the Chair replied that she believed that alternative solutions were investigated, Councillor Wilson subsequently recommended to look through [Appendix O \(Report of the Chief Finance Officer\)](#) in the recently-approved budget, which summarised the overall position of the Borough. He added that almost every Councillor and Borough officer had been forwarding ideas on alternative sources of income, mentioning that he had raised the suggestion of a tourist tax at a recent Cabinet meeting.

Councillor W. Da Costa added that he and Councillor C. Da Costa had been presenting ideas to the administration since May 2023. He believed that there were a few options being missed, such as grants which stated were available but there was no officer looking into this.

Councillor A. Tisi highlighted that Borough officers had been focusing on preparing the budget, namely getting it balanced. She then highlighted that the budget included a growth item on having some officers being able to explore grants and income streams with some potential opportunities with groups like Visit Windsor and Business Partnership. An example she gave was selling the services of Educational Psychology to other Boroughs who do not have access to this and then expand the team. She assured that Borough officers had been considering ideas to generate income within their teams and that this was being taken seriously.

Councillor Knowles gave a couple of suggested agenda items. He first suggested an officer from Environmental Health to attend and do an item on the rat infestation across Windsor. He then suggested that the Heritage Committee of the Windsor and Eton Society should attend the Windsor Forum at least once a year to present about the conservation area.

The Chair reiterated a couple of other suggestions: contract management and grass cutting.

The item suggestions for future Forum meetings were:

- Rat infestation
- Heritage Committee of the Windsor and Eton Society
- Contract management
- Grass cutting

Date and Location of Future Meetings

The Forum noted that the next meeting would be held on 8th May 2024 at 6:30pm at York House, Windsor.

The subsequent meeting dates (all 6:30pm) were:

- 23 July 2024
- 18 September 2024
- 26 November 2024
- 28 January 2025
- 18 March 2025
- 13 May 2025

The meeting, which began at 6.31 pm, finished at 9.26 pm

Chair.....

Date.....