

## PARISH CONFERENCE

1 OCTOBER 2014

RBWM Councillors: Mrs Christine Bateson (Chairman)

RBWM Officers: Suki Coe, Rob Cowan, Andrew Elkington, Andrew Green, Simon Hurrell, Mike McGaughrin, Dave Perkins and Ben Smith

Parish and Town Councils:

Bisham: Councillors Amanda Robson Brown and Mary Cooper.

Datchet: Councillor Ewan Larcombe, Katy Jones (assistant clerk) and Councillor Linda O'Flynn.

Horton: Councillor Freda Bovingdon and Betty Marlow (clerk),

Hurley: Councillor Sandra Baker (also Secretary of DALC) and Cherry Woodley (clerk)

Old Windsor: Councillors Malcolm Beer (also RBWM Councillor), Jane Dawson, and Tony Troughton (also Chair of BALC)

Shottesbrooke: Councillor Des Warren

Sunningdale: Councillors Anne-Catherine Buxton and Christine Gadd

Sunninghill and Ascot: Councillor Barbara Story

Waltham St Lawrence: Councillor John Birkett

White Waltham: Councillor Keith Robinson and Mr Douglas Stuart (clerk),

Wraysbury: Councillor Andrew Davies (also Chairman of DALC) and Michael Kiely (clerk).

### PART I

#### WELCOME

The Chairman of the Conference, Councillor Mrs Bateson, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mandy Brar (Cookham Parish Council) and Pat Brockwell (Cookham Parish Council).

#### MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 3 April 2014 were approved subject to the following amendments:

- At the end of the item entitled 'Minutes', an additional paragraph be included stating: "It was agreed that an informal meeting take place between representatives from DALC and the Borough to discuss the Borough's involvement with Parish level vacancies and elections".

In the ensuing discussion, the Conference noted the informal meeting had taken place. It was unclear what had been agreed as a result of the informal meeting as

Councillor Andrew Davies, Chairman of DALC, was under the impression the Borough would 'back off' on Parish elections. The Chairman of the Conference, Councillor Christine Bateson, stated that she had met with representatives of the Parishes to discuss the Borough's involvement in Parish vacancies and elections. The Parishes wanted the item be included as an item on the agenda of the Big Society Panel.

Councillor Bateson informed the Conference that she had taken their request to Councillor David Burbage, Leader of RBWM Council and the Chairman of the Big Society Panel. However The Leader decided not to allow this request as the item had already been discussed. The Big Society Panel had previously decided that the Borough would still advertise the Parish elections. Advertisements would include a quote from the Parish Council Chairman and would require the approval of the Parish before being published. It was democratic that all residents be made aware of vacancies and their ability to stand for election. Councillor Bateson agreed with the Leader's decision.

Although the informal meeting was described as constructive, disappointment was expressed at the decision by The Leader not to allow the matter to be brought as an item to the Big Society Panel.

It was noted that there was no legal requirement that the Parishes had to inform the Borough of a vacancy. The reason the Borough advertised the vacancies was to let everybody know as the Parishes only advertised to a proportion of the people. There was also nothing that legally prohibited the Borough from carrying out its own advertising.

### BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN

The Conference received a presentation from Simon Hurrell, Head of Planning, regarding the Borough Local Plan and how this affected the Neighbourhood plans.

Mr Hurrell stated that the rules were not just for development control but also for projects and the Council wanted groups to be involved.

He noted that the rejuvenation of Ascot High Street where the Council were not land owners except for the highway. The matter was not just about property but also promotion.

Mr Hurrell informed the Conference that Full Council had approved the introduction of an extra speaking spot for local residents groups at Development Control Panel meetings allowing two minutes of speaking time. The local resident group required 21 members.

Andrew Davies questioned whether the Council was analysing responses to the Borough Local Plan. Mr Hurrell stated that a consultation had taken place and 6000 responses from 1000 organisations had been received, a large number of which had been received from Maidenhead Gold Club. An officers group had subsequently been organised to consider the responses. Officers would also be taking into

account other factors such as Maidenhead town centre, employment and flooding etc.

It was noted that Councillor Derek Wilson, Lead Member for Planning, had a report going to Cabinet in December 2014 which summarised the responses with a draft strategy. A public consultation was to take place in February 2015 and a final draft was anticipated to be in place by June 2015. It was noted that local elections were scheduled to take place in April 2015 following which the new administration would then consider the Plan. Once this was agreed the Plan would be sent to external examiners however there was currently a shortage of inspectors.

Councillor Barbara Story, Sunninghill and Ascot Parish Council, questioned if the Plan was deferred, would the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) also be deferred. She highlighted that this would allow parishes more funding in April 2015, as a replacement to s.106 money. It was noted that if no Plan was in place by 2015/16, consultation on the levy could not take place. Mr Hurrell stated that the real issue was the Royal Borough currently received £7-8 million per year however this would be lost if no Plan was in place. Mr Hurrell confirmed that s.106 money would not continue. Even with CIL, the rate of money received would be greatly reduced.

The Chairman highlighted the need for sustainability. Even with CIL the Panel had to decide if it was sustainable. For example, if there were 50 new houses was there a school and surgery etc. to provide the required services for those residents.

It was agreed that Mr Hurrell's slide show be circulated electronically to the Parishes.

**RESOLVED: The presentation of Simon Hurrell, Head of Planning, be circulated to the Parishes.**

### PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

The Conference received a presentation from Suki Coe, Development Control Manager, regarding Permitted Development Rights.

Mrs Coe informed the Conference that The Growth and Infrastructure Bill had been passed by Parliament on 8th May and secondary legislation had been published on 9th May 2013. The changes to the permitted development rights were effective from the 30th May 2013. The extension of the permitted development rights was designed to support business growth and development.

The changes were intended to:

- Simplify the planning control system,
- Encourage business development especially in town centres,
- Bring empty buildings back into beneficial use,
- Help with the establishment of new schools,
- Help homeowners to extend their properties with the minimum of bureaucracy.

Mrs Coe noted that there were a number of key changes in May 2013. For example, there was a greater choice of changes of use, including: shops to offices, restaurants, cafes, state funded schools; offices to residential uses; and larger extensions for residential properties and commercial property.

Further changes were introduced in April 2014. This included more choice of changes of use, including: shops to residential uses; shops to banks; agricultural buildings to a school or nursery; agricultural buildings to up to 5 homes; and general industrial buildings and institutions to a school or nursery.

An on-going consultation proposed the following changes: powers to enlarge homes be made permanent; permit the change of use of commercial and industrial buildings to residential uses; permit the change from laundrette, night club, casino to residential uses, shops and cafes; permit mezzanine floors; allow PV panels on commercial buildings; as well as permitted development rights for the film industry, waste management facilities, sewage undertakers. Mrs Coe believed that it was likely most of the proposals would be adopted by legislation.

Mrs Coe noted that if a development obtained the required permission and subsequently deviated from what they had said they would build, it would then require planning permission.

**RESOLVED: The Parish Councils be provided with an email address for the Travellers Consultation.**

**RESOLVED: The Cabinet report regarding the Travellers Consultation be forwarded to the Parish Councils when produced.**

**RESOLVED: The response to the Consultation on Travellers be circulated to Parish Councils following it has been considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel.**

**RESOLVED: Suki Coe, Development Control Manager, to organise training for Parish Councils regarding permitted development rights.**

**RESOLVED: Hilary Oliver, Special Projects Officer, to produce a guidance note on how to correctly fill out the required s.106 form. The guidance note to then be circulated to the Parish Councils.**

## DEVOLUTION OF SERVICES

The Conference received a verbal presentation from Harjit Hunjan, Community and Business Partnership Manager, and Dave Perkins, Head of Neighbourhood and Streetscene Delivery, regarding devolution of services.

Mr Hunjan stated that the verbal presentation was an update on how the Borough was trying to devolve services to the Parishes so as to better meet local needs. Mr Hunjan noted that an officers and parish working group had been organised which was chaired by the Chairman of the Parish Conference. This looked at concerns regarding resources and funding. There was an option to rotate parishes who

attended. Workshops were also being set up to look at how Parishes could take on devolved services. It was noted that, should a Parish Council wish to take part they should inform the clerk of the Parish Conference.

Mr Perkins noted that he had been tasked with being a bridge between the Parish Councils and the Borough Council. Mr Perkins informed the Conference that he had visited 10 Parishes so far and was looking forward to meeting all Parishes eventually. He stated that he had been given this role as he knew who was best placed to resolve issues at the Borough. If a Parish Council had an issue they were encouraged to contact Mr Perkins.

Mr Perkins was contactable on via telephone at 01628 79-6860 or via email at [David.Perkins@rbwm.gov.uk](mailto:David.Perkins@rbwm.gov.uk).

Mr Perkins stated that, effectively, the reset button had been pressed on devolution of services. Focus was not on getting Parishes to do the work but rather determining what areas wanted. For example, street cleaning, although the Borough believed they were doing a good job, officers conceded that Parishes would have a better idea of what their local area needed. It was also hoped that a better balance regarding costs could be reached.

It was noted that requests for changes to services could be made at anytime and officers would endeavour to accommodate any requests that improved services. However if they were significant changes to resource management it would take longer. Also, Mr Perkins highlighted the fact that winter gritting of primary and secondary routes could not be amended but other changes could be made.

It was noted that increased discussion had been constructive and that devolution of services was a two way process. The Chairman noted that all Parishes were different and that some may wish to keep the status quo whereas others may wish to do something new. In terms of budget it was noted that money could not be moved from one service to another. The goal of devolution of services was to keep Parishes clean, tidy, good places in which to live.

**RESOLVED: Parish Councils to inform the Clerk of the Parish Conference if they wish to attend any workshops for looking at devolving new and existing services.**

### OVERHANGING VEGETATION

The Conference received a verbal presentation from Dave Perkins, Head of Neighbourhood and Streetscene Delivery, regarding overhanging vegetation.

It was noted that from April onwards vegetation growth was quicker and clearing overhanging vegetation dominated the workload of the street care team. The Parish Councils were informed that if there was any overhanging vegetation causing concern they should contact the Borough's customer services or the streetcare team directly.

It was noted that the duty to cut back overhanging vegetation rested with the owner of the land from which the vegetation grew out of. If the Council owned the land the situation could be rectified quickly. Mr Perkins stated that if the land was privately owned, most of the time it could be resolved with a polite knock on the door. The 10% of land owners who did not comply could be given a 28 day notice and the Council did possess enforcement powers under the Highways Act. It was noted that the Council issued approximately 200 letters or notices each summer. Mr Perkins highlighted the fact that the Council would work with residents wherever possible, for example if the landowner was unable to cut the vegetation back themselves. It was noted that the main priority was safety and this was non-negotiable.

The streetcare team could be contacted by telephone on 01628 683804 or via email at [streetcare@rbwm.gov.uk](mailto:streetcare@rbwm.gov.uk). Customer services could be contacted by telephone on 01628 683 800 or via an online contact form at the following link: [http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/csc\\_index.htm](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/csc_index.htm).

### LITTER BIN EMPTYING

The Conference received a verbal presentation from Dave Perkins, Head of Neighbourhood and Streetscene Delivery, regarding litter bin emptying.

Mr Perkins informed the Conference that all bins on the highways were emptied on a frequent basis, for example once a week, by a contractor. He noted that if bins were becoming full very quickly this information needed to be provided to the Council so the bin schedule could be amended. These changes could be made immediately. A similar approach was taken with the bins in the parks.

It was noted that if anyone did have concerns regarding specific bins, they should contact customer services, the streetcare team or Mr Perkins.

The streetcare team could be contacted by telephone on 01628 683804 or via email at [streetcare@rbwm.gov.uk](mailto:streetcare@rbwm.gov.uk). Customer services could be contacted by telephone on 01628 683 800 or via an online contact form at the following link: [http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/csc\\_index.htm](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/csc_index.htm). Mr Perkins was contactable on via telephone at 01628 79-6860 or via email at [David.Perkins@rbwm.gov.uk](mailto:David.Perkins@rbwm.gov.uk).

### FLOODING

The Conference received a verbal presentation from Ben Smith, Highways, Strategy and Traffic Manager, regarding flooding.

Mr Smith informed the Conference that he had been involved with flooding since earlier in the year, working with Mr Perkins. He highlighted the need to work with Parish Councils to harness local knowledge.

It was noted that the officers had been capturing data which was to be put into some kind of tracker. There was a relevant report to Cabinet in August 2014 which could be accessed at the following link:

<http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/minsys3.nsf/AMByMonth/1C6B5BFB0B24940480257CCB0051F095?OpenDocument>.

Mr Smith noted the long term plan for flood prevention. The Environment Agency was developing a scheme for the River Thames which would encompass a number of Boroughs and would require major infrastructure.

Mr Smith stated that there would be a meeting of the Flood Group on 20 October 2014. It was noted that sewage capacity would be an item on the agenda. Furthermore, a relevant report was to be considered by Cabinet in November 2014.

Commissioned studies were taking place to look at ditches. It was noted that Mr Perkins had met with effected communities over the summer and collected information on the lessons learned. Mr Smith noted that he had met with Datchet Parish Council and spoken to Cookham Parish Council to utilise Parish knowledge. Funding had been provided in the form of over 100 repair and renew grants for those effected by the floods. It was also noted that the controversial newt survey had been completed.

It was noted that the Leader of the Council, Councillor David Burbage had written a letter to Thames Water regarding sewage in Bisham however it was unclear if a response had been received. Mr Smith offered to clarify if a response had been received.

Councillor Malcolm Beer, Old Windsor Parish Councillor and Borough Councillor for Old Windsor, stated that the problem was, by 2009 prices, £256 million of funding was needed to address flooding problems. However central government would only cover half this. Local government was expected to provide the other half of the funds. Councillor Beer believed the whole amount needed to be nationally funded.

Mike McGaughrin, Managing Director of RBWM, stated the funding should come from central government. He stated that the Local Authorities needed to come together and lobby this back to government.

Mr Davies highlighted the fact that a funding package was available, Grant in Aid, which had been created approximately 5 years ago. However this was better suited to smaller schemes.

The Chairman stated that the Local Authority was doing all it could with regards to flooding concerns.

Finally, it was noted that the Borough's regular publication, Around the Royal Borough included a Parish page and Parishes were encouraged to submit articles. A successful project in Sunningdale was highlighted where an old telephone box had been converted into a book exchange. All that was required was the books needed tidying up every now and again.

**RESOLVED: Ben Smith to clarify whether a response had been received from Thames Water to Councillor Burbage's Letter regarding sewage in Datchet.**

### DATE OF NEXT CONFERENCE

It was noted that the next meeting of the Parish Conference would be on 17 February 2015 in the Desborough Suite, Maidenhead Town Hall.

### MEETING

The meeting, which began at 7.00pm, ended at 9.20pm.