



# CABINET

THURSDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY, 2020

At 7.00 pm

in the

GREY ROOMS - YORK HOUSE, WINDSOR

## SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

### PART I

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>PAGE NO</u>
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## Cabinet 06/02/2020 – Comments from O&S Panels

### **Cabinet Report**

#### Budget Report

The following comments from scrutiny panels have been collated by the Panel clerks and are not the approved minutes. Lead Members attended their appropriate panels to listen to comments and answer any questions.

#### **Communities O&S Panel:**

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel discussed the Budget Report 2020/21 in detail and submitted the following comments to Cabinet on Appendices A, B and C:

- The reduction of Community Wardens was raised with the main issue being around the rural areas. The Panel were informed that there would be fewer Community Wardens however their work would be prioritised and tasked differently, so that they would still deliver what they were currently delivering but tasking would be prioritised to reflect need. The Community Wardens would continue to focus on problem solving. The police and the Community Wardens would continue to work closely together in the community.
- York House, The Lead Member reported that the usage of York House had been trialled and it had been found not to be well used hence all RBWM front facing customer services currently operating from there were moving back to the library. The decision was totally resident lead. There were now three private rooms there for confidential conversations. The use of York House for RBWM was raised, only currently used by Optalis, Housing, Town Centre Management, CLT, Members, staff Smarter Working, Visitors Services, colleagues from the Guildhall and some meetings.
- Concerns over the reduction in library hours was discussed. The Panel were informed that the hours were being cut but our libraries would still be above the average compared to other neighbouring libraries. It was stated that a member had concerned about children who did not have the facilities at home. The Panel were reassured that the library would still be open in the evening but with slightly reduced hours.
- Going digital in the library and the RBWM website were discussed and residents feeling alienated as a member felt they could not use the technology and this may cost the council more in the long term. The Panel were informed that members of staff would always be on hand assisting residents. Currently there was a major project being undertaken to improve the RBWM website to make it more user friendly with a better search facility. All digital subscriptions would remain as they were and work was taking place in the community to provide information.

- The loss of WAM Get Involved support was raised however the Lead Member and Lead Officer informed the Panel that WAM Get Involved were based in Slough and the SLA with RBWM was naturally coming to an end and RBWM would change the way RBWM engaged with and supported captured volunteers. The "Know your Neighbourhood" function on the website was in the process of being refreshed and it could be used to help interested residents find local volunteering opportunities.
- STRIVE was discussed and the Panel were informed that RBWM did not provide match funding this year. Housing Solutions had done so instead. Radian would be contacted to see if they offered something similar in the Windsor.
- Some items such as CAB, Old Court and Norden Farm grants were not being considered by the Communities O & S Panel even though in some cases the annual progress reports, updates and annual performance reports were considered by the Panel. It was confirmed that these currently would be considered by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel as they were grant funded activity. This overlap with the Communities interest in these activities would be reconsidered for the budget process next year.
- The charges for green waste collection were discussed. The Panel were advised that even after the increase, RBWM were still offering good value for money.
- The proposed increases in Fly tipping and dog fouling fines were warmly welcomed by the Panel.

### **Infrastructure O&S Panel**

The Chairman informed the Panel that this was the Panel's opportunity to ask Lead Members questions regarding the proposed budget and agree any appropriate comments to Cabinet.

The Panel were informed that they would only be considering areas that come under the Panels remit, other O&S Panels were also being asked to comment on the budget prior to the report going to Cabinet and then Council to approve. Corporate O&S Panel would be looking at the whole budget.

A local resident Mr Scarborough had registered to speak and addressed the Panel. Mr Scarborough said that he did not feel that the proposed savings would positively influence behaviours to address the environment and climate emergency which the Council had recently declared. Increasing green bin charges would result in more bonfires, more queuing at the tip, more waste in black bins and thus increase emissions. On public transport, cutting subsidies cannot be the right way to go and parking charges being increased can lead to longer journeys as people try and find cheaper spaces.

Cllr Clark, Lead Member for Transport and Infrastructure, informed the Panel that with regards to bus subsidies he had found out that some subsidies that the council were paying for a journey were more than the cost of a full ticket so savings were possible, there were also subsidised large buses doing rounds that were often not

used that would be better served with smaller buses and services that met public need. There were also plans to look at the possibility of having electric buses, although this was for future years.

Cllr Stimson, Lead Member for Environmental Services, Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside, informed the Panel that she was currently working on a climate change strategy and this would include looking at garden waste. With regards to the cost it was planned to bring costs in line with other authorities, especially as council tax was so low. Even with the increase, paying £2.50 for garden waste collection was excellent value for money and better than having to drive to a recycling centre.

Cllr Da Costa said that with regards to green bins and Saturday waste collection there was a planned increase from £37 to £65 but predicting no change in volume was this realistic and should there be a prudent 10% drop in usage. The Lead Member for Finance and Ascot replied that it was anticipated that at the start there would be a small drop in use but as it was realised the value for money that the service provided the public would revert to using the service as it only cost £2.50 per week collected.

Cllr Da Costa said that anticipated savings were overstated by £50,000 for a 10% fall in users. Ben Smith replied that the line should read £25,000 and thus would be amended for Council.

Cllr Werner asked if the reduced usage for the increased charges had been factored into the budget and also the increase in black bin volume. The Panel were informed that there were over 17,000 users of the service and in increasing the costs it had been modelled with a 20 to 25% decrease in use, although this was not anticipated.

Cllr Werner also asked if the administration had considered giving free food green waste bins and was informed that when introduced they were provided for free and thus those that needed them had already received them.

Cllr Brar said that she had concern that there would be an increase in black bin usage and fly tipping. Cllr Taylor mentioned that there was a need to educate residents towards better recycling and suggested that was there an alternative to using green waste that could be useful for allotments.

Cllr Haseler mentioned that local residents had contacted him regarding the parking tariff reduction re the advantage card and asked if it had been considered the impact on town centre footfall, especially during maidenhead regeneration. Cllr canon, Lead Member for Public Protection and Parking, stated that parking charges had been frozen and were and were considerably lower than comparable authorities.

Cllr Da Costa raised considerable concern about the disparity between the car parking charges and loss advantage card discount for residents between Windsor and Maidenhead, especially as Windsor charges had been considerably increased over the past years. He asked had the administration considered how many trips utilise the advantage card. He mentioned that the number of residents not using the cars parks will increase, which then starts a snowball effect of reduced footfall, loss making local businesses, increased shop closures, greater numbers of unemployed and, reduced business rates. He asked that Windsor residents be taken in consideration and have parking discounts maintained.

Cllr Brar reiterated that by removing car parking discount would have an adverse effect on town centre footfall and said the administration should consider the loss of residents using car parks. The Panel were informed that car parking charges remained cheaper than other authorities and analysis had been done on potential impact of the proposals.

Cllr Davey gave examples of neighbouring authorities car parking charges to illustrate that there were cheaper alternatives for shoppers. Lead Members informed that comparisons had been undertaken with appropriate statistical authorities and RBWM charges remained excellent value for money, it was noted that you needed to compare like for like and not just picking the cheapest charges from other authorities.

Cllr Taylor said that residents would not like the loss of a parking discount and that the offer in neighbouring authorities would increasingly look more attractive. She recommended that a basic discount should be retained for people such as careers who provided an important service for vulnerable residents.

Cllr Tissi also mentioned that there were workers who relied on car parking discounts in Windsor who would be affected by the increased charges as their pay remained the same as areas such as Maidenhead. She also recommended that consideration be given to reviewing parking season tickets so shorter term tickets could be purchased.

Cllr Johnson, Leader of the Council and Chairman of Cabinet, Business, Economic Development and Property, said that they had to make difficult decisions to present a balanced budget. There was a balance to make between having realistic bus substances and appropriate car parking charges. The borough retained good value for money.

Cllr C Da Costa mentioned that there were a number of disabled drivers that had to be considered especially as they may have individual needs that meant they could not walk distances and she asked Cabinet to consider parking discounts for them.

Cllr Werner reiterated the discussion regarding division between parking charges between Windsor and Maidenhead, the need for advantage card discounts to alleviate this and said that Members should be provided with the figures that the decision was based upon.

Cllr Davey questioned the £100,000 predicated savings from buses and asked what routes would be affected. Cllr Clark replied that due to the adverse discount provided he was confident that the savings would be made, as for routes this would be subject to a review before any decision was made. Cllr Werner questioned how a saving could be included within the budget before a review had been undertaken and how concessionary fares savings could be included without data. Cllr Da Costa also felt that members should be provided with the data behind the proposed savings at Council even if it had to be part II.

Cllr Da Costa asked about revenue from advertising and was informed that this varied between adverts on tickets or within parking areas.

Cllr Hilton mention how in Ascot there were volunteer services that provide local bus services and transport for residents to get to shops and hospital appointments.

Cllr Da Costa reiterated the need for councillors to have the data that informed the administrations decisions being made on proposed savings such as figures for the affect of increasing green bin charges, explain what the £2.8 million Saturday waste related to and any assessment done on how many residents would stop using car parks with the loss of the advantage card discount and the effect this would have on town centre vibrancy and drop in business rates.

Cllr Werner questioned how the Lead Member had come up with a saving figure of exactly £100,000 from concessionary fares. Cllr Da Costa also asked how the savings would be materialised and were users being expected to pay more. The Panel were informed that there were instances where a bus route was subsidised and at the same time some passengers were getting discounted fares that the council also paid for. Also about 12% of trips discounted were made before 9.30am when charges were higher. A change in behaviour could see some people travelling later or using different forms of transport.

Cllr Da Costa requested that the supporting data behind the savings and the predicted effect of increasing fees and charges be provided to councillors for Council.

The Panel noted the proposed budget report.

### **Adults, Children and Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

Councillor Story said that the Panel had a direct responsibility for vulnerable people and that two of the changes that had been made in the proposed budget were applicable to the directorate.

Before the main debate on the item, the Chairman invited two members of the public to speak on the item. Janet Hayes-Brown explained that her son had a disability but had benefitted from 'Ways into Work' which had helped him gain a job. The service provided ongoing support for those that were part of the scheme, and there was concern that the Budget cuts would affect the level and quality of the service that Ways into Work provided.

Becky Beechen, who was representing Ways into Work, explained to the Panel that funding was needed to continue to provide employment opportunities. RBWM had been closing the disability employment gap and support had been provided to over 90 participants on the programme. A reduced workforce would not be able to provide the same level of support and service as before and this would directly affect the opportunities available.

Councillor Carroll, Deputy Chairman of Cabinet, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Health and Mental Health, said that the council was not looking to remove things that were already there and was looking instead to transform and change existing services. He said that it was important to still deliver a good quality of service to residents but to also gain value for money.

Councillor C Da Costa asked if the changes that had been made would therefore have been made anyway. Councillor Carroll said that they would have due to the financial pressure that the council currently found itself in. He passed on his gratitude for the work that Ways into Work had done but said that the strategy was to consider which services needed to be outsourced. By working with Optalis, RBWM could save money while still providing the same high level of service as Ways into Work.

Hilary Hall, Director of Adults, Health and Commissioning, Strategy and Commissioning, said that they wanted to work with Ways into Work and form a close partnership.

Councillor Story stated that he would like to know more about the youth and early services that the council provided, as well as placements for children.

Kevin McDaniel, Director of Children's Services, said that placements are covered by third party providers to look after children in care. They were focussing on work which would help to promote independent living and they were optimistic that the amount of money spent could be streamlined.

Councillor C Da Costa said that it was important that young children in care were ready and well equipped to live independent lives.

Kevin McDaniel confirmed that Ofsted had recently conducted a visit to ensure that children in care were achieving the expected levels and the result of this inspection would be available towards the end of February. He also told Members that a Cabinet paper would be created which would be a consultation on how RBWM could combine services into a 'family hub'. This would enable more efficient targeting in services for the most vulnerable in society and a reduction in the number of duplicated services that were being offered.

Councillor Tisi said that by already making the saving in the budget, the process of holding a consultation was pointless as the decision had already been made.

Kevin McDaniel said that all services were open between set times and that they were not closing down any routes which would enable access to these services for the most vulnerable in society.

Councillor Werner commented that he believed the consultation to be pointless as the savings had already been agreed. Councillor Carroll reiterated his commitment to holding a consultation.

Councillor Del Campo asked about those children that 'slipped through the net' and were not picked up their families, and what support they would now be getting. Kevin McDaniel said that there was a wide degree of training in order to spot any signs at sessions.

Councillor Tisi asked what would happen to parent led groups at children's centres. She was told that children centre buildings were well used but did not know which services were valued.

Councillor Jones expressed concern about the area that would be invested, saying that in 2012 there was a cut of £400,000 but this was not built back into the Budget.

Hilary Hall said that there would be investment in prevention and ensuring that residents in the borough were stay healthier for longer. Councillor Carroll said that he thought the savings were achievable.

Councillor Werner said that Optalis had not yet confirmed what their proposals would be regarding Ways into Work. He said that he would need to see the plans before he could support the Budget.



Councillor Carroll responded by saying that there would be investment in the service through Optalis, but could not guarantee an exact delivery on the timescales.

Duncan Sharkey, Managing Director, said that the council needed to continue to deliver excellent services and that additional resources would be needed to deliver on the change.

Councillor Tisi asked if there were sufficient incentives offered that would encourage social workers to come and work in the borough. Kevin McDaniel said that it was a high priority and that they needed an organisation where it was safe for social workers to practise.

Councillor Jones said the council needed to ensure that the terms and conditions of contracts were attractive, as it was the conditions rather than the money which were important in retaining social workers to a particular area.

At the end of item, the Panel noted the recommendation and agreed that comments made in the debate on the item would be passed on to Cabinet for consideration.

### **Corporate O&S Panel**

Councillor Hilton, Lead Member for Finance, informed the Panel that they had been given the proposed savings, fees and charges and capital schemes in the Budget for 2020/21. The Panel was asked for its comments on the Budget, which would be passed on to Cabinet for consideration.

The Chairman said that the Panel would look at four key savings that had been picked out in advance of the meeting for scrutiny. With regard to parking, the Chairman said that it was fair to have a paid residential parking scheme to tackle the problem of commuters taking up parking. However, this charge could be dependent on the council tax band of individual residents, along with discounts for electric vehicles and key workers.

Councillor Werner asked how the saving figure for parking had come about and what would happen if a resident wanted to opt out of the parking scheme.

Councillor Haseler said that the parking scheme in poorer areas of the borough could hit some residents hard and that the council should find a way to give those who may struggle to pay the parking permit charge some sort of exemption or discount.

Councillor Jones said that increasing the price of visitor vouchers, which was higher than neighbouring councils, would hit residents hard. She said that this needed to be looked at. Councillor Price said that volunteers who would need to park would also be hit, for example those that volunteer to care and look after the elderly.

Councillor Rayner, Deputy Leader of the Council, Resident and Leisure Services, HR, IT, Legal, Performance Management and Windsor, said that RBWM not charging for parking permits was very unusual as the majority of other councils do charge their residents. It was planned to be £50 for the first permit and £70 for the second. They were currently considering how to link the permits to council tax bands to ensure that the system was fair.

Angela Huisman, Library and Resident Contact Lead, said that the £250,000 figure that was in the savings for parking took into account two thirds of residents adopting

new paid parking permit scheme, with the other third deciding not to apply for one. There was an easy process in place to remove the permit if it was no longer wanted available to residents and there would be an increase in visitor vouchers. It was also confirmed that the borough received the funding from tickets given out, this applied to any area under the enforcement of RBWM.

Councillor Sharpe said that the schemes were currently in place where parking had been deemed a problem and that in his view residents felt that a parking permit was worthwhile paying for.

Councillor Werner said that the process to apply for a permit was not clear, so questioned how the process of opting out would be made clear for residents. The costs versus the income gained from enforcing parking permits was meant to be cost neutral.

Councillor Johnson, Leader of the Council, confirmed to the Panel that residents with an electric vehicle would receive an exemption from having to pay for a parking permit. Other discounts would also be considered in due course. He compared figures from Reading, which had increased parking permits from £30 to £40 for the first car, while a second parking permit would cost £150.

Councillor Taylor asked if parking permit schemes that were issued by Housing Solutions but enforced by RBWM would also have a charge. Councillor Cannon, Lead Member for Public Protection and Parking, said that there were around 30 streets in the borough which had private schemes in place, where the permits were issued and managed externally but RBWM was responsible for enforcing. These schemes would remain running for another year before anything was to change.

Councillor Davey said that electric cars needed to be in a certain spot to allow them to be charged and therefore this would prove to be a challenge when parking and issuing parking permits for certain areas. Councillor Clark, Lead Member for Transport and Infrastructure, said that it would be based on demand and that it was not an issue directly relating to the permits.

Councillor Werner asked for confirmation on whether the permits would be cost neutral. Councillor Cannon said that parking permits incurred costs to enforce them and for things like appeals, so therefore a charge was needed to cover this cost.

Moving to grant payments, Councillor Jones said that in the previous years budget, grants had been increased yet this year they had been decreased again. She asked why the amount of funding was decreasing, especially as community groups that benefit from the grants can help the council.

Councillor Rayner said that it had indeed increased a few years ago, but due to financial pressures they had taken the decision to reduce them again. Councillor Hilton suggested that there were other sources of funding available to groups and charities, and that they should not rely on the council's grants scheme.

The Chairman said that that had been a reduction in funding for Norden Farm to put into CAB grants.

The debate then moved to look at the council tax level being increased. Councillor Werner said that it would hit the most vulnerable in society and asked how many people would be affected.

The Leader of the Council said that RBWM had the lowest level of council tax outside of London and was less expensive when compared to other Berkshire authorities. He said that the rise was fair and affordable and for the 6,000 residents who received council tax benefits would only be paying a modest amount on their bill.

Councillor Price asked if residents had been informed of the increase. Louise Freeth said that they would consult with individuals about the rise and would raise awareness of this through social media, emails and leaflets.

Councillor Jones raised concerns for Norden Farm and asked if RBWM had been in communication with them regarding the cut in funding, especially as they did a lot of educational work. Councillor Rayner confirmed that there had been discussions with them to ensure that they would still be able to cope with a reduction in funding.

Councillor Werner asked about 'Around the Royal Borough', which was a newsletter about events in the borough, and whether this would be sent digitally or still have hard copies produced. The Leader of the Council said that they were looking to move fully digital but that residents could request a hard copy if they wished.

Councillor Jones asked if mobile phones that RBWM gave out to staff were being used effectively. Nikki Craig, Head of HR, ICT and Corporate Projects, said that they had been ensuring that all phones were being used and any that were not being used had the contract cancelled so as not to waste money.

Councillor Werner queried if posts in the council which would be made redundant had been identified. Duncan Sharkey said that there were no specific posts and that all but one were currently vacant.

The Chairman said that, in the capital programmes section of the Budget, that the library heating was a significant sum of £250,000, along with the cost of the cooling system in the Town Hall.

Angela Huisman said that the heating system was old but they were looking at ways to reduce the amount of time that the heating was on for. The Leader of the Council said that the Town Hall would need to be renovated to meet modern day standards and also to meet carbon targets.

Councillor Davey asked about the 24 hour pothole pledge scheme and why this investment was not listed as part of the budget. Duncan Sharkey said that the pothole pledge was not part of last year's budget because it was implemented in the middle of the year. Councillor Clark said that the commitment was not required anymore as targets had regularly reached 100% and it was felt that other things were more of a priority.

Looking at the fees and charges, Councillor Jones and Werner expressed concern that residents who lives in the areas surrounding Windsor would be unable to easily access the town centre due to this increase in parking charges. It was suggested that this should be looked at, especially to continue to allow Windsor's shops and high streets to remain open and vibrant.

Councillor Werner suggested that the advantage card discount for parking could still be kept in Windsor. Councillor Taylor said that another option could be to give an advantage card discount for the first hour of parking for residents.

Councillor Jones reiterated that she would like Cabinet to consider the number of visitor vouchers, to ensure that there were no barriers to opting out of the scheme

and that anything agreed in regard to Norden Farm went through the Communities O&S Panel for consideration.

With regards to fees and charges, Councillors Jones and Werner expressed concern that residents who live in the areas surrounding Windsor would be unable to easily access the town centre due to this increase in parking charges. It was suggested that this should be looked at, especially to continue to allow Windsor's shops and high streets to remain open and vibrant.

The Panel agreed that the comments made by Members would be passed on to Cabinet for consideration.