

CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 21 APRIL 2016

PRESENT: Councillors Richard Kellaway (Chairman), Ross McWilliams, MJ Saunders, Adam Smith (Vice-Chairman) and Simon Werner

Also in attendance: Jane Wright (Maidenhead Town Partnership Board Chairman) , Steph James (RBWM), Tamra Booth (Shanly Group) and Jeremy Spooner (Maidenhead Advertiser)

Officers: Russel O'Keefe, Simon Fletcher, Ben Smith, Richard Bun, Chris Hilton and David Cook.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr Rankin. Cllr McWilliams reported he would be late.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Kelleway declared a personal interest in item 4, Maidenhead Town Partnership, as he was the vice-chairman. As this was not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest he stayed and considered the item.

MINUTES

The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2016 were approved as a true and correct record.

MAIDENHEAD TOWN PARTNERSHIP

Jane Wright (Maidenhead Town Partnership Board Chairman) , Steph James (RBWM), Tamra Booth (Shanly Group) and Jeremy Spooner (Maidenhead Advertiser) attended the meeting to give a presentation on the Maidenhead Town Partnership.

Jane Wright informed the Panel that the Maidenhead Town Partnership (MTP) aimed to work with its partners to make Maidenhead an attractive and memorable destination for residents, businesses and visitors.

MTP is a public/ private sector partnership with a full seat on the board costing £3,000 per year. The contribution from RBWM covers salary costs for town manager and assistant and office space and facilities at the Town Hall, this totals £71k. Sponsorship and events gives a final income of £185k per year.

Jane informed that we needed the MTP because the way people use our town centres had changed dramatically over the last ten years which had led to a decline in the health of high streets nationwide. Shoppers were faced with many options, many of which were more convenient than a visit to the town centre. Town centres must adapt and offer something different in order to compete and thrive.

The objectives of the MTP were:

- Creating a unique sense of place
- Supporting local businesses and attracting further investment in Maidenhead

- Creating an attractive public realm
- Creating a safe and welcoming environment
- Creating a sustainable and effective 'Town Team' in Maidenhead

Jeremy Spooner informed the Panel that Maidenhead was one of 100 towns across the country to be awarded support from business in the community healthy high streets campaign. This gave the MTP access to national business support from M&S, Boots, Santander and The Cooperative further raising the profile of the town centre. Maidenhead had been recognised as a good practice example of a town partnership achieving a lot with little resource by engaging with the business and local community.

With regards to footfall on the high street MTP have a footfall count which allowed them to monitor the success of events and the general health of the town. They were also able to compare Maidenhead against the national and South East averages. Between 2011 and 2015 footfall in the town centre dropped 15% however 2016 had got to a positive start with footfall currently tracking 10% up on the same period last year.

The Panel were informed that other measures showing the success of the MTP was and thus the health of the town centre was the car park usage which had been falling over the past 10 years and the use of social media and the website.

Steph James informed the Panel that the Enjoy Maidenhead website was launched in 2010 with funding from the owners of the Nicholsons Shopping Centre and RBWM in response to the need to support the town during the tough economic climate. The website promoted local events, listed town centre businesses and offered a free platform for businesses to promote themselves.

Enjoy Maidenhead had 2242 followers on Twitter, 604 likes on our Facebook Page and 594 members on our Facebook Group. They used social media to promote events in the town, support local businesses and generally be positive about the town centre.

Steph James informed the Panel that In 2015 MTP delivered or supported 37 events in the town centre (excluding markets). These events help drive footfall to local businesses and create a sense of community pride. MTP acted as a point of contact for local people who want to get involved in their town and try to facilitate where possible local people organising events, for example the Art on the Street, Fuhaar, Shabbytique, Eat on the High Street and Maidenhead Festival.

The MTP also delivered 155 market trading days in the High Street in 2015. The success of the Night Market was built upon in 2015 with a larger event than the inaugural 2014 market.

Tamra Booth informed the Panel that Maidenhead was going through a huge period of change with millions of pounds being invested that would change the town. Although this was positive and would result in many benefits it was vital that the disruption whilst building work was taking place was kept to a minimum and the local community felt. MTP was working alongside RBWM and local developers to help spread the word about regeneration through door drops and social media.

The Panel were informed that if there was no MTP there would be:

- Fewer events
- No coordination of market traders
- Increased calls to RBWM from businesses and members of the public
- No coordinated marketing message for the town
- Reduced footfall
- Loss of community engagement
- No business support

The Chairman of the O&S Panel informed that the presentation showed the importance of the MTP and that Sunday parking charges was due to be discussed at Council. The Chairman also informed that the economic development manager was now in place and she was working on the website and that free wifi would be coming to the town centre.

Cllr Werner reported that the MTP was doing an excellent job, however Maidenhead was still seen as a place not to visit even though there were a number of excellent events. It was important to change this false and negative perception.

Cllr Saunders reported that there needed to be a step forward to explain what the latest vision was; there needed to be a master plan. This plan should show how the towns infrastructure would work both during and after regeneration.

Russell O'Keefe informed the Panel that there was a vision; although it did need updating. With regards to infrastructure the Infrastructure Development Plan was currently being produced.

The Chairman thanked MTP for attending the meeting and giving the presentation.

FINANCE UPDATE

Richard Bunn introduced the latest financial update due to be considered by Cabinet. The Panel were informed of a projected underspend of £483,000, whilst noting the addition of £2.2m to the Adult Social Care budget earlier in the year.

The Panel was informed that Two5Nine Ltd would be renamed RBWM Property Ltd. Cabinet were being asked to increase the lending limit of the company by £200,000 to £1.5m to enable the refurbishment of a property in Windsor to be used for affordable rental. There was also to be a review of the company.

Cllr Werner asked if the company could be subject to a freedom of information request and if it currently made money for the Council. The Panel were informed that it would not be subject to FOI but this Panel could scrutinise it if required. The company currently did not make a profit and it was agreed that the accounts would be circulated. It was agreed that there would be a future paper to the Panel on RBWM Property Ltd.

Richard Bun informed that the business debt write off mentioned in the report had been fully investigated and all opportunity for recovery had gone.

Cllr Saunders raised concern about the pressure on high needs funding from the DFG for Manor Green School and the fact that they did not know their income until 2 days before year end. Officers agreed to discuss this with Cllr Saunders outside the meeting.

Resolved Unanimously: That the Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the latest financial update report and fully endorsed the recommendations being put to Cabinet.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Russel O'Keefe introduced the Economic Development Strategy that was a three year strategy aimed at strengthening the council's relationships with business and helping residents achieve economic wellbeing through greater employment and training opportunities.

A year 1 Action Plan 2016-2017 had been devised to facilitate the delivery of the strategy driven by the following three key aims and objectives:

- Improve Business engagement
- Increase Inward Investment

- Equip residents with the skills of today and for the future

Cllr Saunders commented that it was a great first step but raised more questions than answers. The challenge was how we would take forward our weaknesses and the document needed to point other strategies / work being undertaken that would improve our weaknesses.

The Chairman recommended that the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce needed to be added along the Windsor and Maidenhead Chamber of Commerce, that a welcome letter to new businesses could also come from the major and that there was no mention of the LEP.

Cllr Saunders questioned why the identified weaknesses, threats and opportunities did not appear in the year one action plan; he recommended that we should take actions that have the least effort but most impact first.

Resolved Unanimously that: The Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the report and fully endorsed the recommendations being put to Cabinet. During discussions it was questioned if the Maidenhead Town Partnership were amongst the consultees, it was felt that the strategy should point to other strategic documents dealing with the weaknesses / challenges raised, that weaknesses identified should have remedial actions in the plan, that the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce should be added to the year 1 action plan, that the welcome letter to new businesses could also incorporate the Mayor and there was no mention of the LEP under Thames Valley Business Growth Hub. It was noted that the Council had set CIL at £0 for domestic builds in the Maidenhead Area Action Plan areas and the Panel requested an update on the expected cost of this policy.

TOWN CENTRE WIFI

Ben Smith introduced the Cabinet report that provided an update on the introduction of town centre wi-fi and an offer from InTechnology Wi-Fi which would deliver free public wi-fi in Windsor and Maidenhead town centres. The proposal was initially for large parts of Maidenhead and Windsor Town Centres. Eton and Ascot would be looked at a later date. The Visit Windsor app would be replaced.

In response to questions the Panel were informed that other Council's had spoken highly about the provider, that the coverage area to areas such as Kidwells park would be expected in the future and that the company received revenue from in app advertisement.

Resolved Unanimously that: The Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the report and fully endorsed the recommendations being put to Cabinet.

HOUSING INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP PLAN

(Cllr Werner left the meeting)

Chris Hilton introduced the Cabinet report that considered changes that were emerging in the Housing and Planning Bill and a plan to maximise delivery of the manifesto commitments in the borough. A Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which would form part of the Borough Local Plan, would be developed by December 2016. Members noted the range of housing types proposed in paragraphs 2.5-2.13 of the report. The proposals were aimed to help and encourage young people to get on the housing market ladder.

(Cllr McWilliams joined the meeting)

Cllr Saunders questioned the figures for the potential affordable housing units (table at 2.29 of the report) and felt it should be shown how the 30% affordable housing from the private sector in the Borough Local Plan had been calculated. He also felt that it was wrong to have no

financial implications in the report and was informed that these would be included in future reports on specific projects.

Resolved unanimously that: The Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the report and fully endorsed the recommendations being put to Cabinet. The Panel questioned the figures for the potential affordable housing units (table at 2.29 of the report) and felt it should be shown how the 30% affordable housing from the private sector in the Borough Local Plan had been calculated. The Panel discussed if section 4, Financial Details, of the report should have been included as it was showing no financial implications. The Panel acknowledged that financial implications for specific projects would be contained within individual reports but it was felt that having no financial implications in the report could be misleading and there should have been a more explicit explanation.

STAFFERTON WAY LINK ROAD - FINANCE UPDATE

Simon Fletcher introduced the report that Cabinet would be considering regarding the financial update on the Stafferton Way Link Road project. Unfortunately the cost of the project had increased by £1.25m. Members noted the four areas of overspend as detailed in the appendix and that there was detail of costs that had been approved by Members, cost that would have been approved if approval was sought and costs that Members would not have approved if known / asked.

Cllr Saunders mentioned that when the project was being proposed he would have assumed that the risk analysis would have concluded that there were un knowns that should have been built into the contingency planning for the budget. The report gives the impression that this had been ignored. The Panel were informed that the contingency was less then that shown in the risk register.

Resolved Unanimously that: The Corporate Services O&S Panel considered the report and fully endorsed the recommendations being put to Cabinet.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on items 9-10 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1-7 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.50 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....